

**DISSERTATION TITLE:**

**‘AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CONFLICT  
MANAGEMENT: SIERRA LEONE A CASE STUDY’**

**MA in Contemporary Diplomacy**

**Mrs Florence N. Bangalie**

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## **DECLARATION**

Sir/Madam,

I hereby certify that this dissertation, and all related research, is my own original work

Signature

Mrs Florence N. Bangalie

March 30 2011

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I am acknowledging that this dissertation project has been possible through generous support of my colleagues at the Embassy and my family, not to mention the constant support I received from tutors and lecturers of the Diplo Foundation in these undertakings. I am grateful to the Sierra Leonean community for giving me the information, insight, knowledge and understanding of the issues confronting women and women's groups, and their contribution, during the bloody civil war and the peace process that followed in Sierra Leone. All of these people their time, and generously shared knowledge, experience and expertise. I interviewed many of them personally, some of whom did not want their names mentioned in my dissertation.

## **DEDICATION**

This thesis is dedicated to all Sierra Leonean women who have and are still working hard to contribute to the development of our beloved nation.

## ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of women in conflict management, using Sierra Leone as a case study. It argues that despite the traditional challenges women faced they were able to contribute significantly to the conclusion of the 11-year civil war in Sierra Leone, and have since earned a position of respect in society that has given them a larger role to play in government, politics and the private sector. Major barriers remain, but a brighter future has been created. Furthermore, this paper recommends constructive actions that should be taken to assure that the productive involvement of women continues.

### Introduction:

- the aims and objectives of the study
- the justification of the research
- a statement of the problem
- the significance of the study
- the scope and limitations of the study
- methodology

**Chapter One** will deal with the history of Sierra Leone before, during and after the Civil War, including: A brief history of the rebel war—1991-2002; the interventional roles played by various local, regional and international forces; the First Intervention: Executive Outcomes and Women's Roles; the Second Intervention: The Economic Community of West African States; and the Third and Fourth Interventions: United Nations and British Forces

**Chapter Two** incorporates a literature review of the role of women before, during and after the war: the role of women played in managing the conflict during the war; the role women in resolving the conflict in Sierra Leone; the contribution of FEMMES Africa Solidarity (FAS) to women's movements in Sierra Leone; women's roles in the negotiation of the Lomé Peace Accord and the consolidation of peace; the increased role of women in politics; and women and the implementation of UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820 in Sierra Leone

**Chapter Three** discusses the role of women in the intervention of various regional and international forces: understanding the critical role played by women and women's groups in the UN and British interventions

**Chapter Four:** Conclusion and Recommendations

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

APC	All People's Congress Party
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CEDSA	Centre for Development & Security Analysis
CIVPOL	Female Peacekeepers
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Committee of West African States
FAS 2000	Femmes Africa Solidarity
GDD	Gender Disaggregated Data
ICMS	International Conflict Management System
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IRC SL	Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone
MARWOPNET	Mano River Women's Peace Network
MDA's	Ministries Department and Agencies
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NEP	Network for Peace-building – Sierra Leone
NOW	National Organisation for Women
ONS	Women in the Office of National Security
RUF	The Revolution United Front
SGBV	Violence Against Women/ Children
SiLNAP	Sierra Leone National Action Plan
SLAUW	Sierra Leone Association of University Women
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SLWF	Sierra Leone Women's Forum
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programmes
UNHCR	United High Commission for refugees
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
WAND	Women's Association for National Development
WANEP	West African Network for Peace-building – Sierra Leone
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy (a group 50 women)
WF-SL	Women's Forum (an umbrella association)
WILPF-SL	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom-Sierra Leone
WMP	Women's Movement for Peace
WOMEN	Women Organised for a Morally Enlightened Nation
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

## INTRODUCTION

Africa's history, during the last two decades has seen the emergence of public diplomacy, together with heavy involvement by international organisations such as the UN, in the solution to multiple challenges, civil conflict, discrimination and abuse. This public diplomacy has supported local diplomatic efforts normally and historically undertaken by the state. Increasingly, Sierra Leone's public diplomacy has incorporated women, and women's groups, into the programs and efforts that have brought progress and a measure of lasting peace. In Sierra Leone public diplomacy focused on working with Sierra Leonean officials and United Nations peacekeepers in restoring a tormented, broken nation into a stable, democratic nation. Dialogue helped the war-torn country of Sierra Leone get back on its feet and initiate efforts to establish sustainable peace. Increasingly, during the past few decades, women played a significant role in the successes of public diplomacy and contributed meaningfully to Sierra Leone's progress.

Conflict arises when different opinions from different individuals or groups pursuing different goals collide. The conflict in Sierra Leone was caused by economic factors, mainly greed. Violence against women and children became the norm during the decade long civil war. This motivated women to play a vital role in conflict resolution and the establishment of a lasting peace. Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone has been impressive in its scope. The establishment of an initially fragile peace in Sierra Leone drew on intensive collaborative international efforts by women's groups in many African states and around the world. Women and young Sierra Leoneans have gradually filled the political and moral vacuum, which existed between interest groups long before the outbreak of war. Because there were

powerful forces opposed to this trend, there was a continuation of chaos and brutality instigated by groups opposed to peaceful resolution.

This paper examines the role of women in conflict resolution and management. The 20<sup>th</sup> century had seen a change in the nature of conflict. Interstate conflicts have given way to civil wars or intrastate conflict with civilians disproportionately bearing the brunt of the conflicts. Women have been particularly targeted with rape, forced pregnancies, sexual slavery and assault becoming deliberate instruments of war. Women have also played other varied roles such as being agents of destruction as well as an inspiring force that instigates transitions from violent conflict into peaceful negotiated settlements.

Given these varied roles played by women in this type of conflict, it has become of extreme importance that any attempts at managing conflicts or preventing them, must bring women into the process at an early stage as contributors and active participants in all stages of conflict management. Women themselves have answered to this clarion call and have become part of the process by undertaking activities starting from grassroots, including humanitarian assistance, demobilization and disarmament, child and health care, hostage exchange and using traditional conflict management approaches such as the peace tent etc. They have often extended their roles to a wider political agenda, clamouring for a representation of women in politics in their respective countries.

The conflict in Sierra Leone, how it began and how it played out, is a testament to the conditions described above. Decades of bad governance caused and prolonged the war and its impact. It was characterized by massive corruption, authoritarian rule (in which all shades of opposition were suppressed) and the marginalization of both urban and rural youths. The conflict brought untold suffering to Sierra Leoneans, with women disproportionately the

victims of the worst forms of abuses. In the face of their ordeal, women also developed varied skills and strategies to ensure their survival. They became involved positively and negatively. They were both active participants, contributing to the planning and execution of the war, and passive and abused victims serving as bush wives, sorcerers etc.

Of profound importance was the role of women and in women's organisations in the clamour for peace in the face of massive destruction of lives and properties and egregious human rights violations. The women of Sierra Leone emerged from their former dormant role in society to take centre stage in the push for a negotiated settlement when all seemed lost. Women championed the advocacy for election before peace leading to the transition from military rule to a democratic rule; one that ultimately ushered in the start of fruitful peace negotiations. Their contributions were also critical in the reintegration of ex-combatants in spite of their marginalization in the demobilization and disarmament process. Women continue to play crucial role in the current peace-building process in Sierra Leone.

Experience in the Sierra Leone civil war shows that women have specific skills that make them natural conflict managers. It shows that efforts to resolve to conflicts can only be successful when all who are affected by it are involved in the solution. This especially includes women because they have been excluded from prominent roles for so many years.

The aim of this dissertation is to bring the role of women and women's group organisations into clearer focus, and to discuss the accomplishments they have achieved.

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**Chapter Four:** Conclusion and Recommendations

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate the role women played in bringing about the conclusion of the Sierra Leone civil war and demonstrate that their was substantial and effective. Recommendations will be made for a continuation of women’s positive role in moving the country forward. The dissertation will be divided into four broad topics.

- A brief history of Sierra Leone and the origins of its civil war
- The effectiveness of interventional roles played by women, independently and in cooperation with various local, regional and international forces
- A literature review of the topic in question
- Summary of the findings, conclusion and recommendations made by the researcher.

## **JUSTIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH**

The research that has gone into the development of this thesis, and the conclusions of this dissertation, was undertaken because the role of Women in Conflict Management is underappreciated and is still being undermined by male dominated societies (including Sierra Leone) around the globe. The research aims to highlight the importance of ensuring that international communities protect women in conflict situations and address the imbalances between men and women in conflict situations. The research is further justified by its support for recommendations that appear in later sections of this dissertation.

## **STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The central problem to be addressed in this dissertation is the marginalization of women during the pre-Civil War history of Sierra Leone. Sierra Leonean women have had a long history of marginalisation, and molestation by their male counterparts, since pre-colonial days. The cultural practice in those days was that, if a man rapes a young girl, he would be fined for deflowering that girl but not for raping her; and that man would be forced to marry the deflowered girl, hence forcing the girl to marry the man who raped her.

Until three years ago, women had no property rights, that is, they had no right to inherit their parents' assets, or those of their husbands should he die intestate. Even during colonial rule women were considered less than full human beings.

Throughout colonial rule there was only one notable woman, Ella Koblo Gulama, who was able to participate in the realms of power. She was a Paramount Chief and was believed to

sway a lot of influence in the colonial administration. Other schools of thought claim that she had an extra marital affair with the then Governor. Sierra Leone never had a female governor all throughout its colonial period which is evidence that even in the colonialist era no one ever imagined that women could make any meaningful contribution to national development.

Subsistence farming is practised widely throughout Sierra Leone. In this environment, men made themselves leaders while the women did the bulk of the farm work.

“Sierra Leonean women have historically constituted the majority of the rural labour force, often as informal agricultural workers or petty traders. They have played a key role in food production and in providing basic goods for the family, but despite this, women are also frequently economically insecure.” (Barnes et al, 2007:17).

Women were responsible for carrying all the farming implements and other loads on their heads. Additionally they were the cooks and they did all the weeding on the farm and many other jobs including harvesting. The place of the woman has long been in the kitchen and other worse places. When the rebels invaded Sierra Leone they worsened situations for women because the frequency of such harassment became rampant. The fighting forces of the civil war in Sierra Leone used a campaign of terror to subdue abductees and potential non-sympathisers causing them to cower and give in to the aggressors’ philosophy and campaign. Women were summarily raped at no cost to the men and the latter could marry any woman of their choice without regarding the woman’s consent. Unspeakable sexual violence crimes were committed against women and girls, regardless of their age.

“Of all these Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), at least 55% of them were women and girls. In 2003, Human Rights Watch published

a report in which they stated that as many as 275,000 women and girls may have been sexually violated during the war.” (UNFPA/UNIFEM 2007:54).

During the war, however, there was an influx of NGOs that helped to sensitise women to their rights and responsibilities. Nonetheless some of these very NGO workers who were primarily meant to be saviours or rescuers turned out to be perpetrators of sexual violence against these women and girls. Because of the social and economic abjection of vulnerable women and girls, aid workers traded relief items for sex, especially to those in displaced camps. It must be noted here that these women/girls had to practice prostitution in order to be able to take care of their families.

“Women and girls were not safe even in these camps. Humanitarian workers – there to offer respite and protection - also violated their rights. Women and girls were compelled to barter their bodies in order to survive and access aid to which they were rightfully entitled.” (UNFPA/UNIFEM 2007:53).

There were countless atrocities, amputations, and sexual exploitation of young girls, women and children, with many used as child-soldiers in this process.

Historically, women have been discriminated against and under-represented in the traditionally male-dominated political and socio-economic structure in Sierra Leone. The inequalities are prevalent in most male dominated societies around the globe. Sierra Leone is no different. Women are more likely than men to be illiterate and suffer extreme poverty. Because of this their rights are frequently violated, and they have little access to local resources or opportunities. In Sierra Leone these disadvantages made it difficult, but not

impossible, for women to contribute towards the achievement of sustainable peace and economic development for its people.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

This research is intended to be of use to peacekeepers and peace builders the world over. This is so because it will discuss the techniques that the Sierra Leonean women employed in their efforts to bring peace to their country. These techniques could be of use to peacekeepers and peace builders in other parts of the world. The research can also be of great use to students of Peace and Conflict Studies. The skills used by these women could be a model to students intending to be involved in the art of negotiation and conflict management. It is also expected that this research will potentially be beneficial to diplomats because diplomacy is mostly about negotiation and persuasion.

### **SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This research will generally deal with women's role in conflict management and peace-building and other related concepts. The crux of this research is to bring to the fore the diplomatic and other efforts individual women and women's organisations employed as their contribution towards the conclusion of the civil war and peace-building thereafter. The scope of this study is nucleated around the peace efforts on Sierra Leone.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This research examined the role of women in conflict management, using Sierra Leone as a case study. It also included conversations with residents, especially women and women's groups, who have been active in Sierra Leone and others who are living in the United Kingdom. It was also based on my experience as a diplomat both during the war and afterwards.

A range of written materials and recorded interviews were used to provide adequate understanding of the background of the conflict as well as to consider common concerns and criticisms of the handling of events before, during and after the war. In order to remain current with development issues and the concerns of women and women's groups, I have relied primarily and heavily upon articles, journals, books, news briefs, press releases posted on the websites of African newspapers and the official website of Sierra Leone, as well as other international websites.

Articles and government websites, along with statements released by NGO's, were critically important to the understanding of the programs and practices that were implemented in efforts to reform the country and its economy and to reintegrate women into the community and the high levels of government. Many sources were reviewed using the World Wide Web. These included documents produced by the United Nations, the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions of Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL, many women's organisations, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International ICRC, etc. All were useful and helpful in achieving understanding and reaching conclusions incorporated in this research. Publications by the operating organisations, as well as reflections and inquires prepared by observing groups

(such as FAS, WOMEN, CEDSA etc) supplied excellent information that allowed me to gain enhanced understanding of the issues, and responses to them, that challenged the political and economic development of Sierra Leone.

Considering the aims and objectives of this research, the justification of the research, the statement of the problems, and the scope and limitations of the study, etc, this dissertation will now focus on a historical review of the causes of the Sierra Leone civil war during the years 1991-2002. This study will also include a review of what local and international organizations, including women and women's groups, did to contribute to solutions to the conflict and how they interacted with each other to achieve the positive results experienced in Sierra Leone.

## THE MAP OF SIERRA LEONE



The map analysis below illustrates the conflict zone within the boundaries of Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia. It illustrates the land area where the struggle for control of the country's lucrative resources and ethnic towns took place.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **1.0. HISTORY OF SIERRA LEONE - DURING AND AFTER THE CIVIL WAR**

The focus of this chapter will be on the historical legacy of the civil war that heavily victimized women and then led to the significant role played by the women and women's groups in ending the war in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone was created from its former British Colony. It borders Guinea in the North West, Liberia in the Southeast and the Atlantic Ocean in the South West. Sierra Leone has an estimated land area of 71,740km<sup>2</sup> or 27699m<sup>2</sup> with an estimated population of 5 million (www.state.gov, national census 2004 pp. 1-2). The south and eastern regions are agricultural and suitable for cash crops such as coffee, and fruit crops such as oranges, mangos, and bananas. The country's western area is home to the country's capital, Freetown, and is mostly a land of hills, mountains, rivers, streams and valleys.

Freetown has an estimated population of one million (www.state.gov, national census 2004 pp. 1-3). The Capital relies heavily on the north, south and eastern regions for food supply. Other major cities in the country include Kenema City, the capital of the eastern region, Bo City, the southern capital, Makeni, the northern capital and Koidu, the new Sembehun in the Far East. These cities have an estimated population of 500,000.

Sierra Leone is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious country where the freedom and right to practice the religion of one's choice is protected. The south and east of the country is dominated by Mendes who make up 55 percent (www.state.gov, national Census 2004 p. 1) of the population. Temnes in the eastern region make up about 35 percent of the population.

The freed resettled slaves, called Creole or Krio, dominate the western area, which makes up about 10 percent of the population. There are other minority tribes in almost every corner of the country.

With this background in mind, this dissertation will now focus on Sierra Leone's historical legacy:

- The factors that led to the long civil war, tolerated torture and exploitation of women and children;
- The abuse and torture that motivated some strong women to step forward and take a meaningful role in mediation and peace-making;
- And the lasting legacy, which despite positive contributions by women, is still refusing to give them full participation in the decision making process of the country.

The colonial history of Sierra Leone led directly and indirectly to the long civil war. This, in turn, caused women to suffer. The suffering experienced by women motivated some of them to take an active role in ending the war, establishing peace and bringing equality and human rights to women, and all citizens of Sierra Leone.

Experience in the Sierra Leone civil war shows that women have specific skills that make them natural conflict managers. During the civil war, the diplomatic efforts made by individual women and women's organisations played a major role in ending the conflict in Sierra Leone. This was possible because women's organisations operated mostly at grassroots levels. That gave them an extensive and expansive reach to the people.

“In addition to developing coping strategies, many Sierra Leonean women were also active in organising and participating in civil

society peace-building efforts within their communities, and they have continued to play an important role in advocating for peace at the local, national and regional levels.” (Barnes et al 2007:12)

The efforts of a few dedicated women made a significant difference. They offered their lives and skills to make peace a lasting solution to the conflict. Women and women’s organisations were very instrumental in returning the country to democracy after it (democracy) was violently uprooted by the military. In fact these women were also at the forefront of the campaign for election before peace, while the then government was advocating for peace before election.

“Women were very instrumental in the transition phase from military rule to a democratic civilian rule in what was known as Bintumani I, II and III with the theme “Peace before Elections or Elections before Peace”. This all important meeting was chaired by an eminent woman, who led to the conduct of the Presidential and Parliamentary elections in 1996.” (UNFPA/UNIFEM 2007:58).

After 1954 women took advantage of the establishment of the International Conflict Management System (ICMS) to provide a remarkable foundation for states to resolve their conflict using three diplomatic techniques: negotiation, mediation, conciliation. The heart of any conflict management lies in a set of diagnostic assumptions which guide the search for remedial actions. Diplomatic thought and practices are similarly premised on key notions about the nature and sources of international and national conflicts. Some may argue that a diplomatic settlement, even if guaranteed by peacekeeping forces, does not by itself assure a durable peace. In many cases violence tends to re-erupt time and time again. My premise is that this will not happen in Sierra Leone. My research suggests that the management of the

Sierra Leone conflict relied heavily on power mediation and diplomatic approaches, including efforts by women, followed by peacekeeping and peace-building after the conclusion of the protracted civil war. Power mediation and diplomatic approaches by women contributed positively and emphasized regime maintenance and the securing of written political settlements. This helped immeasurably in the case of Sierra Leone.

### **1.1. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE REBEL WAR—1991-2002**

In March 1991, a small but diverse group nationals, mostly from the West African sub-region, entered Sierra Leone and launched a rebel attack to oust the then ruling All Peoples Congress (APC) Government. The rebels first attacked Bomaru, a village in the eastern provincial district of Kailahun. Foday Saybana Sankoh, a former military corporal who was once imprisoned for alleged coup plot against the same government, led this rebellious group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). After his imprisonment in the 1970s, Sankoh fled the country and went to Libya with some other discontented political activists among which were university students, mainly from Fourah Bay College, to form a resistance group against the APC government. In Libya, they underwent guerrilla training and met with Charles Ghankay Taylor, who was there to undergo training to oust the then ruling Liberian government. (Vol. 2 & 3A, Ch 1, 2, 3 & 4 (respectively) of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, TRC, Report: 2004).

Among the people of Sierra Leone, there was a general disenchantment and political malaise. The people accused the APC Government of corruption, political victimization of perceived opposition members, the marginalization of youths and the commission of heinous human rights abuses. People were arbitrarily arrested and detained and sometimes summarily executed. The judiciary was far from independent. These and many more other vices

characterized the APC rule from 1968 to 1991, when they were militarily overthrown. (Vol. 3A, Ch 1 & 2 of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, TRC, Report: 2004).

When Foday Sankoh brought his RUF Movement into Sierra Leone it initially proved not to be difficult to find people who were willing to fight on their side. Sankoh preached the anti APC sermon, and through that, he recruited a good number of fighters willing to overthrow the APC government. His sermons, however, turned out to be lip service, as his troops soon started to perpetrate atrocious crimes on civilians who had nothing to do with national politics. Because of this, the RUF lost its popularity much sooner than expected. As a result, they could not recruit voluntary fighters anymore, and they had to resort to conscripting young men, boys and girls. (Vol. 3A, Ch 1 of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, TRC, Report: 2004).

In April 1992, a group of junior officers, on the Government side, opposed to RUF, staged a coup. They stated that they came to the Statehouse to demand payment of wages and better service conditions in the military. The coup was successful. They were able to overthrow the then ruling APC Government, led by Joseph Saidu Momoh, in a virtually bloodless encounter. The soldiers then formed the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), and appointed Captain Valentine Strasser as their leader. The NPRC ruled the country from 1992 to 1996, when the NPRC leadership changed hands in 1996 through a palace coup. For a short time, Julius Maada Bio was the new NPRC Chairman, and President of Sierra Leone. Maada Bio's NPRC faced a lot of pressure, both from national and international stakeholders, to conduct elections to establish a democratic political system. Maada Bio gave in to the pressure and finally agreed to authorize a democratic election, which was won by the Sierra

Leone Peoples Party (SLPP), headed by Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabba. The war between the RUF and the government army force was still raging on.

The warring factions targeted women and women's groups for various reasons, most of them despicable. The fighting forces committed gruesome atrocities against women and girls. These fighters abducted women and (forcefully) used them as their bush wives. A significant proportion of women in Sierra Leone was gang-raped, or at best, raped by a single man. Unimaginable gender related crimes were committed like sexual slavery, conscription and bush-wifing. Sierra Leone had however had a long history of women's marginalisation and therefore they virtually had nowhere to complain. But as a result of the war there was a proliferation of NGOs and UN agencies operating in the country sensitising women about their rights and responsibilities. Consequently, a lot of women's organisations sprouted and they made efforts to be heard.

“The SLWMP (a major women's group) remained extremely active during the height of the war until 1997 when several key members fled the country. Through participating in marches, sending delegations to meet with the various parties to the conflict, and rallying for peace within their communities, Sierra Leonean women played a critical role in the process of bringing the fighting to an end.”

(Barnes et al 2007:13)

In November 1996 the Kabba led SLPP signed a peace agreement with the RUF to cease all hostilities. The rebels flouted the ceasefire and war resumed. Kabba's SLPP ruled for about one year when the military overthrew it on May 25 1997. This new military government was

named Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) and was chaired by Major Johnny Paul Koroma.

Remarkably, the AFRC invited the RUF (against whom they have been fighting) to form a joint government. And this mixture of armies was dubbed 'People's Army' by Foday Sankoh who was then in custody in Nigeria for alleged illegal possession of firearms in Nigeria. Unfortunately for the AFRC, it suffered massive international condemnation and internal support was also lacking. There was civil disobedience and civil armed resistance pioneered by the Kamajors (a group of village hunters and farmers which came together to defend their villages against the RUF) most of whom were Mende. The 'government' then turned their guns against the civil populace. There was chaos. Indescribable mayhem reigned in the country for nine months. In March 1998, a Nigerian led sub-regional military force (ECOMOG) ousted the AFRC and democracy was reinstated with Kabba back to power. In July 1999, the RUF was given a second chance and a second peace accord was signed, dubbed 'Lomé Peace accord'. The rebels violated this again and the UN then sent troops to the country in 2000 to observe and keep peace. The RUF abducted and at times even killed a good number of the UN soldiers. Britain assisted Sierra Leone with technical military support and a military unit, independent of the UN contingent. With the help of the aforementioned troops and the Kamajors the government was able to negotiate peace with the rebels from a position of strength and the rebels acquiesced to be disarmed. The UN disarmed all the fighting factions with the exception of the constitutional (loyal) army.

The war was formally declared ended in 2002. The first post war elections were held in May 2002 and the ruling SLLP won by over 70% with Tejan Kabba running for a second presidential term. In that same year the government requested the United Nations to set up a

special court to try those believed to bear the ‘greatest responsibility’ for the atrocities committed during the war. The Special Court for Sierra Leone was established and indicted about thirteen former alleged leaders of the various factions, among which is Charles Taylor, former Liberian Head of State. Taylor is currently being tried in The Hague, Netherlands. His trial was moved to this destination for fear of regional instability as he was thought to have a lot of sway in the sub region.

As with any emerging democracy, expectations were high from the mostly youthful electorate. The government could not meet all of the population’s expectations and was voted out in 2007 in a keenly contested and somewhat controversial election. The opposition, APC, headed by Ernest Bai Koroma, won. Up to 2007 Sierra Leone was ranked the second poorest country in the world, according to the United Nations Human Development Index. (Vol. 3A, Ch 3 of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, TRC, Report: 2004).

## **1.2. INTERVENTIONAL ROLES PLAYED BY VARIOUS LOCAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FORCES**

Concerted efforts by the United Nations, other international bodies and African organisations to end the civil war contributed greatly to breaking the deadlock that had prolonged the conflict in Sierra Leone. Since 1997-2000 one of the most intensive collaborative international efforts ever attempted has been undertaken to achieve a lasting peace. This was perhaps the largest and most ambitious project ever run by the UN. The UN did not want to fail in Sierra Leone, especially after its most disastrous failings in Rwanda’s conflict where many lives were lost because international organisations failed to intervene quickly enough.

The international conflict management system established after 1945 has proved remarkably durable in the face of deep and profound systematic alterations. Aimed at providing states with a menu of dispute resolution techniques, such as diplomacy, it has enabled groups, enemies for years, to undergo a process of negotiation, mediation and conciliation. International organisations, such as the UN, regional bodies, peacekeeping and international legal bodies, have been able to assist in arbitration and adjudication because diplomatic thought and practice are premised on key notions about the nature and sources of internal and international conflict. Parties have learned to recognize that conflict and lack of security are problems caused by a break-down of law and order in a society. The latter will be a focus of this dissertation.

More than 90% of civil wars and disputes in Africa, and the rest of the world, involve, and are based on, political violence between intra-state actors fighting within boundaries of a single state. Many of these conflicts are deliberately created by 'economic greed' in which violence erupts in a scramble for control of a country's few resources. The motive is profit, power and self-protection. In Sierra Leone the root of its civil conflict was, as discussed in previous chapters, based on a failure to protect citizens from previous weak governments, and emerging war lords who entered the picture to fill vacuums, as each fought to control the country's lucrative diamond resources. Many African countries were at the same time adjusting to recently established independence. Some others continued to be affected by the remnants of undemocratic colonial practices combined with recently established military and authoritarian one-party rule.

During the past decades the consequences of this mismanagement were destructive for many weak states in Africa and around the world. The Civil War in Sierra Leone resulted partly

from the colonial legacy left behind by its former master, the British. 'Conflict' can be defined as a perceived divergence of interests, or a belief that current aspirations of different individuals or groups cannot be achieved simultaneously' (Scheper 2002, p. 2). Ending the civil conflict in Sierra Leone involved many actors in this process applying leverage to induce concessions from the conflicting parties. Africa has been marginalized in world affairs for a very long time. International conflict management in the continent is still dominated by power mediation and diplomatic approaches, along with peacekeeping missions in which African people, particularly women, play a small role. As a direct consequence, the record of success of many peacekeeping missions in Africa has been poor. Recent research has shown that the male dominated conflict management methods are outdated and out of fashion. Furthermore, the lack of, or absence of, a significant role played by women and women's groups has made an aggressive policy of diplomatic intervention in Africa more necessary. International diplomacy, with powerful national actors, can prolong matters before resolution is achieved. The most important role the UN has played, with other organisations, in the peacekeeping process in Sierra Leone, has been to deny the rebel or and government forces the means to sustain their violent struggle. The lessons learned have not been applied consistently elsewhere in other parts of the African continent.

The UN, the African Organisation (OAU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have drawn out the involvement of women's groups in the peacekeeping process in Sierra Leone. It has been impressive in scope. The UN and the women's groups have provided peacekeeping training, instruction and equipment for the mobilisation of a peaceful resolution in Sierra Leone. The response of local women's groups in dealing with conflict, rehabilitation and peace appears to be remarkably similar around the globe. Women's NGOs are mostly active in trauma counselling, voter education, gender awareness,

law reform and political advocacy. The main strategy they have used to prevent conflicts from re-emerging has been to work on fundamental economic and social change (Scheper 2002, p8).

### **1.3. THE FIRST INTERVENTION: EXECUTIVE OUTCOMES AND WOMEN'S ROLES**

The intervention of external forces in the Sierra Leone conflict first began when the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) junta being consumed by the war between 1992 and 1995 contracted Executive Outcomes (EO), a South African mercenary group to conduct military operations in Sierra Leone against the RUF forces. The mission handed to EO was threefold: to evict the RUF from areas east of Freetown, to stabilize the diamond mining area allowing Diamond Works to open the mines for the government, and to locate and destroy the RUF headquarters. In addition to the military objectives, EO was also charged with the responsibility of developing an information operations program to encourage Sierra Leoneans to support the decision to employ EO in the country (Larry J. Woods and Colonel Timothy R. Reese, 2008, p. 29)

The EO started to retrain the Sierra Leone army which soon bore fruit, and in August 1995, the combined forces of EO and the national army commenced military operations against the RUF and within a couple of months was able to restore order to Freetown, retake the major diamond mines located in the Kono district, and force the RUF to seek peace.

The government's military successes provided them the breathing space for a move towards elections as that has been a platform on which they seized power. Though reluctantly, the Junta set March 1996 as the date for national elections, the head of the Junta Captain Strasser

soon attempted to upset the process by trying to manipulate the constitutional age requirement for the presidency, that is, from 45 years of age to one more appropriate to his age, 30. This attempt led to his being toppled in a peaceful coup by his deputy, Brigadier Julius Bio. The Bio Government organized the election which the Sierra Leone People's Party headed by Ahmed Tejan Kabba won thus ushering in a the first directly elected head of state for Sierra Leone. As stated in the chapter on the history of the civil conflict, it is important to re-emphasize here that the transfer of power to Kabba by the military junta, which occurred on 29 March 1996, was orderly.

Once the Kabba government had started its reign, its first task was to continue the peace process the Bio government had put in place with the RUF. The peace process continued for the next eight months with the parties finally agreeing on 26 or more negotiating points. Meetings however ended when the RUF demanded the vice presidency and a withdrawal of all foreign troops, meaning the EO units. Since RUF units failed to adhere to the cease-fire during peace negotiations, the new government contracted EO to conduct a second offensive to capture the RUF headquarters near Bo, the provincial capital and largest city in southern Sierra Leone. In October 1996 the combined EO/SLA/Kamajor (a civil militia fighters that hailed from south/eastern regions of Sierra Leone) forces found and destroyed the RUF headquarters and Sankoh admitted military defeat. Sankoh signed the Abidjan Peace Accord on 30 November 1996.

While it could be said that the EO intervention into the Sierra Leone conflict did not actually end the war, one could assert that the interventions in 1995-1996 achieved their stated objectives. Being a highly skilled force, the EO intervention upset the balance of power and provided a victory that the NPRC could never have accomplished on its own. As Canadian

General Ian Douglas, a UN negotiator, stated, “EO gave Sierra Leone a sense of stability during this critical time” (Woods and Reese, *The Long War Series Occasional Paper* 2008, p. 35). More importantly it for the first time attempted a negotiated settlement of the conflict, albeit for only a short while, which could have set the basis for a future settlement.

Though women were not directly involved in the negotiations to contract the services of the EO as it was an exclusive decision of the NPRC military junta, or the planning and execution of its operations, the intervention of this fighting group afforded that breathing space which Sierra Leonean CSOs and politicians exploited to advocate for the elections. Amongst such CSOs were women’s group such as WOMEN and Women’s Forum. Once these women realized that the return to civilian rule was half heartedly offered by the military regime, they took a leading role and threw themselves into supporting the campaign for elections. This culminating to the holding of the first consultative conference for good governance dubbed the Bintumani 1 conference.

In January 1996, less than a month before the election date, the women came into direct confrontation with the military government which proposed a postponement of the elections on the grounds that the RUF were prepared to talk. Several women’s group including the umbrella women’s organization, Women’s Forum, Sierra Leone together with politicians organized a public demonstration and a march demanding that the election proceed as planned and insisting that a change to the initial date could only be made in another Bintumani Conference. Thus a second Bintumani Conference was called, where women lobbied delegates in the hall and clashed with soldiers outside. The result was an overwhelming vote in favour of elections on 12 February 1996.

#### **1.4. THE SECOND INTERVENTION: THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES**

The Abidjan Agreement of November 1996 was designed to bring peace to Sierra Leone. It however gave the RUF no voice in the Kabba government which had been elected in March of that year. Therefore, by mid 1997, civil war returned to Sierra Leone and a second round of external military interventions was launched by some of Sierra Leone's West African neighbours through the military arm of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) known as the Economic Community Military Observer Group (ECOMOG).

ECOMOG actually conducted its first operations in Sierra Leone in August 1990 when it intervened in the Liberian civil war to assist the Liberian government of Sergeant Samuel Doe in defeating the rebel force led by Charles Taylor. ECOMOG forces were first deployed into Sierra Leone in May 1992. They attempted to seal the border with Liberia, to cut off one of Charles Taylor's Liberian rebels' source of supplies and men. ECOMOG also used the Lungi airport north of Freetown as their supply base, and were stationed at key places in the country to guard their supply lines to the south. They however soon became involved in assisting the Sierra Leone government in its battle with RUF forces being supported from Liberia.

Their situation in Sierra Leone became tenuous in May 1997 when the Kabba government, which was supported by Nigeria, was overthrown and ECOMOG suddenly found itself in the midst of a country whose new military government demanded their exit.

The new government in Sierra Leone called the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) overthrew the Kabba administration in 1997 with the latter going into exile in Guinea. ECOWAS, African regional organizations and the international community roundly condemned the coup and agreed on a three-phase strategy to include dialogue, sanctions, and the use of military force. During the opening phase, a group of five international members met directly with representatives of the AFRC leadership to demand that the new junta peacefully return power to the Kabba government. ECOWAS held regional meetings at Abidjan, Ivory Coast in July 1997 and in Conakry, Guinea in October with delegations representing Koroma and the AFRC/RUF junta. Both groups signed the Conakry Peace Plan on 23 October 1997. Koroma agreed to return power to the Kabba government no later than April 1998 in exchange for immunity for him, his followers, and the release of the RUF leader Foday Sankoh from Nigeria. The agreement also recognised Foday Sankoh as the leader of the RUF, returned to Sierra Leone and continued to participate in the peace process. The ECOWAS peace plan particularly called for the reinstatement of the Kabba government, cessation of hostilities, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants etc. When the AFRC leader later reneged on the agreement and declared that he would remain in power for another two to four years, as it required time to restore normalcy, ECOWAS resorted putting the second strategy of economic sanctions into effect.

The strategies of dialogue and sanctions however had no effect on the junta and by November 1997, when it became clear that military intervention was the only option that will remove the AFRC from power and to restore the legitimate government to power, ECOWAS deployed ECOMOG soldiers to intervene in Sierra Leone in early 1998 to restore the democratic government.

In February 1998, ECOMOG soldiers comprised mostly of Nigerians launched an offensive to restore the Kabba government to power code named Operation SANDSTORM. Without too much resistance from the junta forces, ECOMOG succeeded in driving them out of the city to the hinterland. The Government of President Kabba was reinstated in a ceremony at the State House on 10 March 1998 with great fanfare. Prior to the official return of President Kabba on 10 March 1998, the citizens of Freetown carried out numerous executions of collaborators and perpetrators of AFRC/RUF atrocities. Vigilantes imposed mob justice during a short period civil disorder.

Once restored to the presidency by ECOMOG units, President Kabba immediately took action to hold the AFRC soldiers responsible for their rebellion. Many of the soldiers who perpetrated the coup were confined to Pedemba Road Prison, from where many of them had been earlier released. Kabba also demobilized the entire army and courts-martial were held for the coup leaders. Following the courts-martial, twenty-four AFRC military officers were executed. RUF leader and AFRC co-leader Foday Sankoh was arrested in Nigeria, returned to Sierra Leone, tried, found guilty, and sentenced to death. His sentence was not immediately carried out.

The executions of some of their leaders by the Kabba government after the Conakry Agreement, and the death sentence imposed on Sankoh in absentia infuriated the AFRC/RUF members and intensified their drive for revenge. With this as a motivation, the AFRC/RUF regrouped, remobilized their forces and trained new recruits. In January 1999, these newly mobilized forces together with their abductees amongst which were women and children re-entered Freetown. Undermanned and less than fully professional, ECOMOG forces were in disarray and unable to hold the entry points. For 2 weeks the AFRC/RUF mobs rampaged throughout the city in an orgy of looting, amputations, rape and killing. Sadly, ECOMOG

units proved to be equally ruthless, capturing and killing anyone they thought was connected with the RUF. As the mayhem continued, President Kabba who had been flown to safety to the international airport in Lungi requested additional troops from the Nigerian leader President Abubakar with the latter responding immediately by sending additional battalions of troops to Sierra Leone. The head of the ECOMOG was also replaced by another general. Within days of their deployment, the new troops launched an offensive against the RUF/AFRC forces. As the AFRC/RUF forces were gradually forced out of Freetown they turned the battle into an orgy of looting, destruction, abduction, rapes, and killings.

Having cleared Freetown of the RUF/AFRC fighters, the government of Nigeria was also anxious to pull away from ECOMOG and begin the process of disengaging its troops from Sierra Leone. Because of the immense civilian suffering and the likelihood of more if ECOMOG troops pulled out of Sierra Leone without a peace deal of some kind, the international community again intervened to mediate negotiations between the government and rebels. The United Nations, the United States, Britain, and the OAU sent representatives to Lomé, the capital of Togo, to work out a possible solution to the crisis in Sierra Leone. The now familiar pattern of partial military success by one side, followed by some sort of brokered peace returned.

In July 1999, the RUF, AFRC, and President Kabba reached a controversial peace agreement, known as the Lomé Peace Agreement, putting in place arrangements for a shared government. Under the agreement, the RUF was required to dissolve its military forces through a process of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), in return for recognition as a legitimate political party and partner in the government. This process would be monitored by a neutral force provided by the United Nations, representatives of the government, as well as RUF, SLA, and CDF units themselves. ECOMOG forces were to

remain in place until the UN force deployed to the country, though some of its troops would become part of the new United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

Women did not particularly play any direct role in the intervention by ECOMOG. However, women were to later play a significant role during the Lomé Peace negotiation which was engendered by the ECOMOG intervention. The negotiations were not only attended by many women as observers, but two of the negotiators out of the entire delegation were women, one a representative of the government and one of the RUF. Women's presence at the negotiating table may have accentuated the recognition of their position in the post conflict restructuring process as one reference in the Peace Accords of 7 July 1999 to women, article 28 which states: "Given that women have been particularly victimized during the war, special attention shall be accorded to their needs and potentials in formulating and implementing national rehabilitation, reconstruction and development programmes, to enable them to play a central role in the moral, social and physical reconstruction of Sierra Leone" (Diop 2009, p9). Ironically however, the Accord failed to make mention of female combatants, although it is estimated that they made up around 12% of the total armed forces during the war (Diop 2009, Vol 1, No 3, 808-839 web pages).

### **1.5. THE THIRD AND FOURTH INTERVENTIONS: UNITED NATIONS AND BRITISH FORCES**

The United Nations and the armed forces of Britain were the last set of interventions of the international community in the Sierra Leone conflict.

The United Nations' first intervention was established by UN Security Council Resolution 1181 of 13<sup>th</sup> July 1998 as a disarmament monitoring force of 70 military observers for an

initial period of six months. The deployment of this mission known as the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) was prompted by the optimism that followed the successful dislodgement of the AFRC military junta by ECOMOG and the reinstatement of the Kabba government. It was to monitor ECOMOG's effort to disarm the RUF and AFRC combatants as requested in the Conakry agreement, and to help restructure the government's security forces. This mission failed to accomplish any of its goals and was hurriedly evacuated when the RUF re-launched its offensive to retake the capital, Freetown.

The second wave of intervention by the UN was authorized by at UN Security Council 1270 of 22 October 1999 under Chapter VII to assist with implementation of the July Lomé Peace Agreement. As earlier stated, it was prompted by Nigerian announcement of an impending withdrawal from Sierra Leone and ECOWAS' request for an increasing UN role to ensure that all parties fulfil the terms of the Lomé agreement. Resolution 1270 authorized the creation a new UN force known as the United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), a peacekeeping and monitoring force of 210 observers and 6,000 military personnel. Unlike the UNOMSIL mission that was strictly an observer force, UNAMSIL possessed significant military power, albeit it limitation to use force only to "ensure[ing] the security and freedom of movement of its personnel and within its capabilities and areas of deployment, to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence taking into account the responsibilities of the Government of Sierra Leone and ECOMOG" (UN Security Council Resolution 1270, 1999, para. 14, p. 3)

The principal goal of UNAMSIL was to ensure that all parties adhere to the terms of the Lomé agreement. Towards this end, it planned to monitor the disarmament process, facilitate the resettlement of Sierra Leone refugees in Guinea and Liberia and assist the government to

develop its security apparatus. It also investigated human rights abuses committed by both government loyalist and rebel forces.

In response to a surprise decision by the government of Nigeria to withdraw their forces under ECOMOG, the UN later increased the size of its forces to 11,100 with a further mandate of providing security at key locations in and near Freetown and at all disarmament sites. Despite the mandate, UNAMSIL was very slow to implement the disarmament and demobilization provisions of the agreement and was considered insufficiently robust in protecting civilians. The withdrawal of ECOMOG in the late April 2000 therefore created a huge security vacuum that the UN Peacekeepers were unable to fill. The RUF exploited the situation and escalated its attacks on UNAMSIL. 500 UN troops were taken prisoners by the RUF in May.

The imminent collapse of the DDR process called for by the Lomé Agreement, and the all too obvious shortcomings of UNAMSIL forces, led to calls for a new military intervention to save UNAMSIL and the government of Sierra Leone. On 4 May 2000 the UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, requested that the United Kingdom and other countries intervene to save the UNAMSIL mission from collapse (Woods and Reese, 2008, p. 60). This prompted the first British intervention in an operation code named Pallisser comprised of 800 paratroopers.

The British troops helped to protect the capital and created the conditions that led to the release of the 500 “missing” UN troops. Troops were also dispatched to secure the local airport and then deployed throughout the capital and its environs as a buffer to the RUF offensive.

British firepower and resolve quickly put RUF forces on the defensive and bolstered the flagging morale of UNAMSIL and SLA forces. On 17 May, the rebels engaged the PARA position near Lungi Lol (meaning small Lungi), just north of Lungi Airport and the British responded with full force. As one author later wrote, “the psychological effect of the engagement was immense in deterring the RUF and in further enhancing the reputation of the British troops in the eyes of the UNAMSIL and Sierra Leonean forces” (Woods and Reese, 2008, p 62)

In response to this crisis, the UN authorized an additional peacekeeping contingent, bringing the total UNAMSIL force to 13,000 with the passage of UN Resolution 1299 on 19 May 2000 (United Nations Security Council Resolution 1299 (2000), 19 May 2000, <http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/2000/sc2000.htm>). Following the increase in its strength, the UN began to act more robustly and together with the British and Sierra Leonean forces, helped to turn the tide in favour of the government.

The long term objective of the British Intervention was geared towards capacity building assistance to help pro-government forces consolidate the gains of peace and security. To this end, the British provided technical training and assistance to the Sierra Leone Army which had been in disarray after the sudden death of its Nigerian Chief of Staff, General Maxwell Khobe in April 2000.

In August 2000, 11 British soldiers were also captured by the West Side Boys; a criminal rebel gang which included former members of the SLA, former members of the RUF, criminals from Pademba Road Prison released during the 1997 coup, and ordinary civilians who were recruited by the rebel gang members. This triggered the second wave of the British

intervention that many consider as the defining action that finally contributed to ending the conflict. On September 10 after some rounds of unsuccessful negotiations with the rebels, the British forces launched a successful rescue operation called Barras which killed scores of rebels including young boys and girls, and also captured some including their commander Foday Kallay.

In spite of the defining success, the RUF which continued to receive backing from Charles Taylor of Liberia, continued to control the diamond producing regions of southern Sierra Leone and were beginning to operate inside the borders of Guinea. In the fall of 2000, the UK found it necessary to conduct a significant show of force by conducting exercises and helicopter over flights along the coast and redeploying some of its forces to Sierra Leone to secure the capitulation of the RUF. At the same time, the Guineans inflicted a major defeat on RUF forces operating in their country. This coupled with the Liberian government's withdrawal of support from the RUF due to international pressure; found the latter on the back footing. After only a month of renewed attacks from UNAMSIL and SLA, who had grown in strength and resolve, Issa Sesay, the RUF leader, signed another cease-fire agreement at Abidjan, Ivory Coast on 10 November.

In 2001 and 2002 the UNAMSIL mission grew in strength and reached 17,500 troops, the largest peacekeeping mission in the world at that time, and became increasingly effective. The UN targeted the illicit diamond trade which was the main financial source in the fighting in Sierra Leone by adopting Resolution 1343 which demanded countries to refuse to allow so-called conflict diamonds to enter their country; demanded that the Liberian government expel all RUF members, end financial and military support to the group, cease direct or

indirect import of rough diamonds and ground all Liberia registered aircraft until registration and ownership could be updated.

The Diamond embargo coupled with UNAMSIL's aggressive challenge to RUF holdouts afterwards expedited the DRR process and in January 2002, the UN declared the DRR process complete. Reintegration of ex-combatant continued into 2003, however, after a successful presidential and parliamentary election in May 2002, the war was eventually declared officially over in January 2003.

Both phases of the UN intervention in Sierra Leone were fraught with myriads of problems. The UNIOSIL mission could not achieve any of its objectives before it was hurriedly evacuated when the RUF re-launched its offensive to retake Freetown. The second wave of UN intervention with the UNAMSIL mission was hampered by the lack of adequate logistics, equipment and the failings of the intelligence unit of the UN forces. For the latter, the UN underestimated the gravity of the situation at the RUF leader's residence. The UN DDR mission was also hampered by a lack of resources, further weakening UNAMSIL's credibility.

The most significant fact limiting progress was the lack of any link between the chaotic and violent situation inside Sierra Leone and its broad peacekeeping mission. UNAMSIL operated under Chapter VII of the United Nations, which could have authorized it to use force to accomplish its missions. However UN Resolution 1270 envisioned UNAMSIL as a neutral force to an agreement between parties already reconciled to peace. Therefore the Resolution had the effect of limiting the use of force to matters of self defense and the protection of civilians under imminent attack. The UNAMSIL commander believed that his

units must remain neutral and refrain from using force to avoid giving the appearance of favouring one party over another, thereby allowing the RUF a strategic advantage. An effective intervention by British forces gave UNAMSIL a shot in the arm that allowed it to defeat quickly the armed factions around Freetown that had been intimidating UNAMSIL forces.

There is little understanding of the nature of Africa's conflicts. As a consequence, the solutions are assumed to be the same as for all interstate conflicts, and the question of whether peacekeeping is a useful approach in civil wars where there is often no peace to keep and no clear ceasefire zones to patrol, is never fully engaged. Nor is there any real understanding of the role of peacekeeping in the conflict management process. Nor is there any appreciation for the ways in which peacekeeping can be enhanced by women's involvement. The women's role can add fuel to the fire and make conflicts worse or bring a sustainable peace. In Sierra Leone it did the latter.

Within this historical context, and despite all the hope and optimism in the years following the civil war, the effectiveness of women efforts has arguably reached a plateau. It has perhaps even gone backward in Sierra Leone. It is hoped that the findings of this research will help to reverse this trend and promote ways in which women can participate in regulating information for which they are consecutively subject to, and in a position to influence. (Osman Gbla, CEDSA issue 3 2008 pp. 8-11).

## **1.6. CONCLUSION**

Throughout the history of Sierra Leone, and within the context of the involvement of local and international organisations, women in Sierra Leone played an increasingly crucial role in

maintaining peace and stability in the country even though they were poorly represented in all levels of the political “ruling class”. During the war women were involved in community policing which helped greatly in maintaining law and order in the country. The presence of female officers improved the understanding and response of law enforcement agencies to crimes committed against women, sexual assault rape cases, harassment, domestic violence etc.

The efforts of a few dedicated women made a significant difference. They offered their lives and skills to make peace a lasting solution to the conflict. Women and women’s organisations were very instrumental in returning the country to democracy after it (democracy) was violently uprooted by the military. In fact these women were also at the forefront of the campaign for election before peace, while the then government was advocating for peace before election. This is why it is imperative for women to be active community players in promoting gender equality and empowerment.

Having established the historical factors that influenced the civil conflict in Sierra Leone, and the role international organisations’ played in ending the war, I will now turn to look at the relevant literature on the role of women in conflict management.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2.0. LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE ROLE PLAYED BY WOMEN DURING AND AFTER THE WAR:**

The focus of Chapter Two will be to review the literature that has discussed the role of women in the conflict management of Sierra Leone.

### **2.1. THE ROLE WOMEN PLAYED IN MANAGING THE CONFLICT DURING THE WAR**

There is no question that women have been on the receiving end of the most brutal civil wars in Africa. Gender equality and human rights are particularly salient features of conflict management. It is therefore vital that attempts to prevent or manage conflicts must bring women into the process at an early stage - as contributors and active participants - in all stages of conflict management.

Much has been written about women in conflict, generally, and their involvement in all that happened in Sierra Leone, specifically. What follows are a few examples of what scholars have said.

Women in Security (March 2008, Issue 3) states that “women frequently have little or no role in creating the situations from which they later suffer. In actual fact, the RUF were said to use women in a variety of ways to support their movement in 1991. “Many women were abducted, forced into combat and sometimes subjected to gang-rape and made to be sexual slaves to their male counterparts in the war zone” (Dyan Mazurana and Khristopher Carlson, From Combat to Community: Women and Girls of Sierra Leone January 2004 pp. 2-10). In

Sierra Leone, this kind of slavery is referred to as 'jungle marriage,' or forced 'bush marriage.' Some were also persuaded to join the RUF by their husbands, who were rebels themselves, while others were willing volunteers.

Although there is no official figure on the total number of women associated with the RUF, it is believed that there could have been as many as ten thousand. Of this figure, it is estimated that "nine thousand five hundred of these women may have been abducted. Others were even 'donated' by relatives. One woman, for example, was given to the RUF by her uncle" (Conciliation Resources, September (1997), and Country Reports UNHCR Refworld pp. 1-2).

The opinions expressed in the literature reviewed above summarize quite graphically the severity of the situation faced by women in Sierra Leone. In my opinion the extreme suffering and abuse is understated. Being subjected to the ordeals described above, women inevitably developed a number of skills and strategies that enabled them to survive and regain some control over their lives throughout the conflict. They served as captive 'wives' and provided logistical support to the RUF, including supplying weapons, food and clothes. They also acted as "voodoo doctors" supporting the RUF in its efforts to attain stability at their weakest points in the battlefield etc (Mazurana and Carlson, *Women Waging Peace* 2004, pp. 2-6).

Women and girls were also said to play an important role in the Civil Defence Force (CDF). "They were spies, commanders, and frontline fighters; some were herbalists, meant to supply fighters with magic potions/poultice for invulnerability. Others were cooks, medics, and spiritual leaders" (Mazurana and Carlson, *Women Waging Peace* 2004, pp. 1-6).

As the literature cited above has shown, women's involvement in the management of the war was a complex issue. It was a mixture of successes and disappointments. To summarize: women were captives who lived under the watchful eyes of their male counterparts and had no control over their future survival in the jungle, while others were also involved in the planning and administration of the war.

A few Sierra Leonean women and girls have come forward and admitted that they were involved in the war. Many in the community found it difficult to accept that such relationships existed during the demobilization in the country as the civil war came to an end.

It is not surprising therefore these women became invisible in the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration process. Women made many significant contributions during the war, but there were inadequate tangible programs in place to them. Because they were classified as "dependents" only, most of their experiences and contributions were not acknowledged. Many did not receive benefits provided to "combatants." (Mazurana and Carlson, *Women Waging Peace* 2004, pp. 1-6).

Many people assumed that that women and girls were only victims. Their exclusion from broader categories of the exploited proved to be detrimental to their future. It made it more difficult for them to make meaningful contributions to the healing of the country and the enhancing of the region's security.

One would consider this to be an understandable and natural development given the patriarchal nature of the Sierra Leonean society in which men dominate in every sphere of

life. Nevertheless, it could have been avoided if strong male and female leaders had worked together to design and implement the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programme that would have integrated both the concern of men and women alike that participated in the conflict as mere neglect of women led to them turning “to prostitution and petty crime for survival. With no hope of receiving assistance from the children’s fathers, their own families, or the state, some are turning to violence” (Mazurana and Carlson, *Women Waging Peace* 2004, pp. 2-6).

## **2.2. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN RESOLVING THE CONFLICT IN SIERRA LEONE**

In Sierra Leone the women’s involvement in the management of the war was a complex issue for them. During the war women were captives and had no control over their future survival in the jungle. They were under the watchful eyes of their male counterparts in the battlefield and were expected to participate in the planning and administration of the war. Some Sierra Leonean women and girls came forward and admitted that they had been involved in the war. A few admitted to being fighters. But the largest revelation coming from the women’s community was their experiences of being abducted, forced into combat and sometimes subjected to gang rape. Many became sexual slaves to their male counterparts in the war zone. The atrocities were so great that the mainstream community found it difficult to accept them as real. It affected the DDR demobilization in the country as the Civil War came to an end.

These atrocities occurred and became an issue because DDR planners failed to give women a sufficient role and involvement in creating the conditions that could assure peace. I consider this to be an understandable and natural development given the male-dominated culture of the country. Nevertheless, it could have been avoided if strong male and female leaders had

worked together to design and implement the work that DDR should and could have done. Despite women's contributions and experiences during the war, inadequate tangible programs were put in place to support and motivate women and women's groups to lead in the healing process of destroyed families and communities. Fortunately many women decided to take matters into their own hands to provide a future for themselves in a way it had never been seen in Sierra Leone. We will look at what some of the literature says.

“Women played a significant role throughout the conflict. They played a military role in the pro-government Civil Defence Force (CDF) and rebel movement in Sierra Leone” (Dyan Mazurana and Khritopher Carlson, 2004 pp. 2).

This quotation suggests that women had a pretty natural and effective participation in resolving the conflict. It was actually much more challenging than the quotation would suggest. The role of women had been compromised and marginalized during the war. Women's transition back into community life was made very difficult in nearly every aspect of the peace building process.

Much of the role played by women and women's groups was largely ignored or played down by the traditional male dominated society. Many women and women's groups felt disappointed by the way in which the DDR Program was conducted. The DDR program in Sierra Leone was one of the most successful demobilization efforts in history, but women were far less involved than they could have been. Even though women and children had formerly associated with fighting groups in Sierra Leone, and many had become

peacekeepers, their lack of involvement exposed serious gaps in peacekeeping programs. Important lessons were learned.

The DDR made a distinction between male and their female counterparts during the war, which made it especially hard for girls and women leaving armed groups to find reintegration support. The initial ‘cash for weapon’ approach of DDR rendered many young girls and women ineligible for formal demobilization while their male counterparts were permitted to receive those benefits.

Mazurana and Carlson observed in a 2004 publication that it was their belief that the DDR process failed to help women and girls. It was clear, they said, that women and girls were viewed primarily as victims, with no role to play in establishing peace. This limited the country’s progress, and constrained Sierra Leone’s and the region’s recovery and the development of the region’s security (Mazurana and Carlson, 2004 pp. 1-6).

These observations capture the essence of the difficulty experienced by women. Despite these challenges women chose to play the largest role they could. In some cases they were able to be active participants. Many women’s organizations emerged, and some existing ones expanded their roles. This contributed in major ways to a peaceful conclusion of the long Civil War in Sierra Leone. These are a few of the more important women’s organizations:

- The Women’s Forum - Sierra Leone (WF-SL)
- Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET)
- Women in the Office of National Security (ONS)
- West African Network for Peace-building – Sierra Leone (WANEP 2000)

- Femmes Africa Solidarity (FAS)
- Women Organised for a Morally Enlightened Nation (WOMEN)
- Sierra Leone Chapter of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF-SL)
- Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)
- Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW)
- The National Organization for Women (NOW)
- The Sierra Leone Movement for Peace (SLMP)
- 50/50 Group

From among this group I have decided to give a general analysis of the most important of these women and women's groups, and what other authors have said about them, instead of focusing on an individual group or what one particular group did during and after the civil war in Sierra Leone.

The wake of the mid 1990s crises, the world witnessed like-minded women from all over the country joining forces to create several women's movements basically aimed at forcing a negotiated conflict of the frustrating conflict. The Women's Forum was formed in mid-1994 when the Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW) proposed that women's groups meet regularly for networking, information sharing and collective action on issues of common concern. Also in the fray were the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), the Women's Association for National Development (WAND), SLAUW, The Sisters Unit, and The National Organization for Women (NOW), and long-time community activists such as Haja Isha Sasso who formed the backbone of the new structure.

The mobilization of these women increased in 1995 as fighting intensified when it became evident that the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), the military junta in power at the time was unable to protect the civilian from the rebels. The Women's Movement for Peace (WMP) was also formed in January 1995 with the objective of resolving the conflict through peaceful negotiations. This movement joined the Women's Forum. It mobilized women to form branches all over the country and at times worked in partnership with each other in order to create impact. It advocated for peace with the NPRC Government, the RUF and through the International Community. At all times, women saw to it that their activities attracted publicity both nationally and internationally.

The first significant event organized by the various women's movements was a peace march in February 1995 which took place simultaneously in the major towns of Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Makeni and Kabala, involving all sections of the Sierra Leonean populace including women's groups, youth groups, religious groups, the police, the army, schools, NGOs and people from all walks of life. It is thought to be the biggest demonstration in Sierra Leone since its independence. The message of the demonstrators was simple and compelling: "Try Peace to end this senseless war" (Bineta Diop, 2005 p.7).

As the march moved along, the crowd of women from all "walks of life" and all segments of society invited observers to join them. Many found the appeals irresistible. A notable contribution was the establishment of a negotiated peace settlement as a respectable option. It offered both the government and rebels the opportunity to retreat from entrenched positions without loss of face. The result was a nation-wide demonstration that prioritised peace as a national agenda and motivated a cessation of hostilities and the consolidation of peace. A

ceasefire agreement was eventually reached, and women were able to play a meaningful role in supporting the campaign for elections.

Women's agitation for peace reached its climax in March 1995 when again the WMP organized a press conference in which a letter sent to RUF leader Foday Sankoh, was read calling for the end to the senseless war. At the conference, the Public Relations Officer of the Organization, Mrs. Isha Dyfan, said "Women have a specific role in conflict resolution and our concern here is to bring the war to a speedy end with independence and neutrality being our main focus." Supporting Dyfan, Fatmata Kamara, a leading activist with the 50/50 Group, expressed this opinion:

"Since the public is in full support of a peaceful resolution of the conflict, we are going to keep harping on this until the warring factions come to the negotiating table" (Badmus 2009, Vol 1, No 3, 808-839 pp. 825-827).

When the call for peace could not yield dividends, women, and Sierra Leoneans in general, began to question the will of the government to end the conflict. Once it emerged that a return to democratic, civilian rule provided the best opportunity for a commencement of a negotiated settlement of the conflict, women took a leading role and threw themselves into supporting the campaign for elections.

With women leading the campaign, the NPRC government was urged to convene a national consultative conference in which the issue of elections before peace was to be debated. The Bintumani Consultative Conference for Good Governance was then held in August 1995. Through NGOs working in the area of governance and democracy, including Women

Organized for a Morally Enlightened Nation (WOMEN) and the Women's Forum, the women of Sierra Leone insisted on appropriate representation in this conference. They educated/sensitized themselves and their communities on the issues, and after debating them at the Conference, they prepared a national position paper unanimously supported by all women delegates at the Conference. Delegates at the Consultative Conference pressured the NPRC to hold an election that should not be later than February 1996.

Women's quest for peace through democratic elections reached its climax in the aftermath of the January 1996 palace coup in which the NPRC Chairman, Valentine Strasser, was replaced by his deputy, Maada Bio, when the latter lobbied for the shifting of the date for agreed general elections. The junta's efforts to circumvent the process became fruitless as women vehemently opposed the move. They held a press conference on February 6 to present their position on the general elections and issued statements to political parties, emphasizing the inclusion of women's issues on the political agenda. "The press conference attracted approximately 300 people including the United States Ambassador and other embassy staff as well as the British High Commissioner, several media houses and UN Representatives" (Diop 2005, pp.8-10).

The junta called for a second consultative conference called Bintumani II to discuss the status of the peace process and its implications for the upcoming elections. Women were very active manipulating/influencing the outcome of the conference. They influenced who chaired the meeting, how the questions should be phrased and also lobbied other delegates to support their position (Diop 2005, p. 8). At the conference women delegates met a consensus that was made public:

“We support that peace negotiations and elections must go hand in hand as previously agreed. We therefore demand that the elections...go ahead on 26 February 1996 as agreed at the National Consultative Conference and approved by the NPRC Government the political parties, civil society and the Interim National Electoral Commission.” (several women delegates cited in Badmus 2009, p. 826)

This was an effective piece of literature. The result of the conference was an overwhelming vote in favour of an election to take place on February 26 1996.

The role of women remained limited, however. All they were specifically authorized to do was call for a general election. Women’s groups continued their informal activities during the electioneering process. They took voter education into their own hands, sensitizing individuals to register as voters, recruited and trained local election observers to scrutinise the election proceedings throughout the country, and articulated and promoted women’s issues for inclusion in political parties’ manifestos. They also supported full compliance with the electoral laws, ensuring that the elections were free and fair. Thus credit for the success of the election was attributed largely to women. On Election Day, women mobilized themselves and Sierra Leoneans in general to vote. In spite of security threats Sierra Leoneans came out in large numbers to vote whilst chanting in Krio “Wi wan vote” meaning “We want to vote”, in defiance to the heavy firing- a scare tactic used by the military. However, only 5 women were on the list of 68 candidates representing the Tejan Kabba led Sierra Leone People’s Party which won the election.

No women were present at the Abidjan negotiations which immediately followed the elections in November 1996 and which culminated to the Abidjan Peace Accord. To add to this exclusion, the official DDR process prescribed by the Peace Accord did not address child and female combatants' issues. Some said this was because women did not have the prerequisite rifle needed to register as combatants and also because DDR practitioners did not consider women as potential combatants.

It is clear that Sierra Leonean women should have played a much more active role in resolving political differences, unrest, war and crisis. The literature should have made this point much more forcefully. Their involvement could have been the key to a more meaningful and lasting settlement. Combatants needed to be informed about the Abidjan Peace Accord. FM radio 98.1 should have been open to more women's voices so less force would have been necessary to restore law and order. Mazurana and Carlson have commented that women, individually and working in groups, were able to assist in the reintegration of former combatants, particularly those excluded from the official programs. Many in Sierra Leone, including men and women, ultimately acknowledged that women had played a significant role in helping this reintegration process (D. Mazurana and K. Carlson 2004 p. 4). While I am grateful for this acknowledgement, I believe Women's role could have been even more positively reviewed.

### **2.3. THE CONTRIBUTION OF FEMMES AFRICA SOLIDARITY (FAS) TO WOMEN'S MOVEMENTS IN SIERRA LEONE**

An organisation known as Femmes Africa Solidarity FAS visited Sierra Leone in 1997 at the invitation of two women's organisations—Women Organised for a Morally Enlightened Nation (WOMEN) and the Sierra Leone chapter of the Women's International League for

Peace (WILPF-SL). FAS worked closely with various Sierra Leone women's organisations, notably the Women's Forum (an umbrella association), Accord 97, Crusade for Peace, WILPF and Campaign for Good Governance (Ifeoha, FAS 2000, pp. 1-10). While these efforts did not end the civil war immediately, they put in place a foundation, which could re-ignite itself after the war ended. That foundation made it possible for a more lasting peace to be established in the post-war era.

A delegation of many of these women's organisations organized themselves to collect information on the role of women in the peace process. The goal was to share this research with others in Africa, especially those in regions suffering from war or conflict. The group had a meeting with the First Lady of Sierra Leone and other government officials including the Vice-President and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Gender and Children Affairs, and Local Government and Community Development (FAS 2000 pp. 1-10). The delegation likewise met with women in displaced camps and women working in the markets. Following discussions with the aforementioned groups and persons; and also interviews with the media, the delegation made the following assessment:

“The role of women was primordial in the peace process in Sierra Leone. They made sacrifices in coming out spontaneously and demonstrating in an attempt to foster democracy within the country. Their achievement at Bintumani I and II were widely acclaimed. Women wanted the responsibility to lead and support others...” (FAS 1997, p. 52)

The above assessment underscores the increased role women played in Sierra Leone stated by a group of women who had occupied a relatively low status in society. They became a real force to reckon with, one that defied the forces that wanted to derail the peace process. The increased involvement by women set in motion a strong foundation for a major future role in peace-building in Sierra Leone. This evolution should have been publicized much more effectively.

FAS' involvement in Sierra Leone ceased abruptly when the civil war began to rage. Women's movements dispersed and were scattered. After a while, in 1998, when possible, FAS was once again able to coordinate the efforts of women and make the voice of women heard. It publicised what women had done in the peace-making process (Ifeoha 2000, pp. 3-10). In 1999 women, refusing to bow down, decided to rally in the streets. They marched into the National Stadium to commemorate the national women's day in an unusual manner.

SLWF made an opening statement and then women who had suffered in the civil conflict told their stories. There were stories of terrible sufferings, including rape, amputation of limbs, beatings, the massacre of entire families, and the abduction of children. Women raised placards calling for an end to the senseless war saying,

“A final solution must be found to end the war. Children must not lose their childhood - No more child soldiers” (Ifeoha 2000, pp. 3-10).

This was an effective rallying cry. It became a beacon for motivating several women's movements to call for peace and address the countless problems facing women, children and families at the time. Partly as a result, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

organised feeding programmes for displaced women in camps. Special attention was given to mothers and babies born in the camps. But apart from addressing this effect of the war, there was perhaps too much focus by some groups who concentrated their attention on the causes of the war (Ifeoha 2000, pp3-11).

During this same period the National Consultative Conference on the way forward for Peace in Sierra Leone was held. Its objective was to enable the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights to collate the views of all areas of society to assist the development of the national Programme for Sustainable Peace (FAS 2000 pp. 1-10). Women took a major role in this Conference.

Thus FAS resurrected the concern that women in the country were still under-represented in community missions. This was able to occur because most of leaders involved in the earlier democratic movement were no longer present. Many had sought refuge outside the country (FAS 2000 pp. 1-10).

The Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW) contributed to the peace process by setting up a camp to give support to mothers who had given birth during this period. Women from religious backgrounds discussed ways to increase their involvement in the peace process in Sierra Leone. Amy Smythe encouraged more women from all backgrounds to join them and take greater responsibility for the present situation. This, it was hoped, could ensure that a lasting peace could be found and shared by the entire population (FAS 2000 p. 8). I concur that these efforts were of critical importance.

## **2.4. WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE NEGOTIATION OF THE LOME'S PEACE ACCORD AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF PEACE**

It cannot be stated strongly enough that women played a pivotal role in moving the country to its first successful democratic elections. The elections they supported helped make possible a peaceful negotiation of the Abidjan Peace Accord. At the conclusion of the Abidjan Accord, FAS still expressed the opinion that women were still insufficiently mobilized to participate fully in peace negotiations. Much work remained.

Ultimately the implementation of the peace accord failed to deliver its full potential for several reasons. One major cause was the refusal of the RUF to lay down arms before Executive Outcomes, the South African Mercenary group hired by the government of Sierra Leone, had withdrawn. That failure led to the creation, in July 1996, of a new NGO "The Campaign for Good Governance" to increase citizen participation in governance in order to build a more informed civil populace and a more democratic state that could promote gender empowerment and equity.

Women's resolve was further tested when the newly elected government of Ahmed Tejan Kabba was overthrown by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). This period again witnessed the rise of the multiplicity of women's organizations such as Women's in Action, Women in Need, Women's Accord etc. These women's groups organized mass rallies and civil disobedience that virtually paralyzed the country and made life very difficult for the junta. It was an effective effort.

Prominent women activists, including the First Lady of the then deposed president, Patricia Kabba, and Zainab Bangura, who had headed Campaign for Good Governance but who had

fled to neighboring Guinea. They effectively used Radio Democracy (FM 98.1), an underground media propaganda outlet that was established by pro-democracy activists, to regularly contact women activists who stayed in Sierra Leone. Generally, women, through the Women's National Salvation Front, confronted the Junta and their numerous atrocities were exposed on Radio Democracy. Anti-Junta discussions were aired on Radio Democracy which, undoubtedly, kept the civil society united and increased the tempo of their opposition to military rule.

All these efforts by women bore fruits as they encouraged ECOWAS to intervene; an intervention that happily resulted in the restoration of democracy in March 1998. These determinant roles played by women in bringing peace back to the country confirm the success of women's roles in conflict resolution as contained in the Kigali Declaration. The Declaration argued that society should "recognize women's traditional peacemaking roles and their rights to equal involvement in all peace initiatives, including early warning mechanisms and swift responses at national, regional, and international levels." (Badmus 2009, p. 827). It was an important first step that the words expressed the importance of what needed to happen.

Once the democratically elected government of Tejan Kabba had been restored, the UN and the International Community brokered the Lomé Peace Accord in July 1999, the very last of the many peace agreements in the Sierra Leone conflict. Two women were amongst the delegates that participated in the peace negotiations. However, many other Sierra Leonean women who were representatives of the women groups were also in attendance as observers; their presence of which might have led to the acknowledgement in the peace accord of women being victims of the war and hence the need for a special attention to their needs and

potential which will enable them play a central role in the moral, social and physical reconstruction of the country (Lomé Peace Accord, Part 5, Art. XXVII, Para. 2)

However, the accord again ignored the role of women in the political and economic reconstruction of the country. This notwithstanding, women remained a vital resource for peacemaking and peace-building. They particularly continued to put pressure on all the parties to adhere to the Lomé Accord. They sometimes even used confrontational means to achieve their aim. An incidence of such nature occurred when a group of women demanded a meeting with the RUF leader Foday Sankoh, when the RUF began flouting the terms of the Lomé Peace Accord. On arrival at the residence of the RUF leader, the women were mistreated and insulted by the RUF fighters. They however stood their grounds demanding that the RUF ceasefire or that Sankoh be removed from the position he was given as a Government minister. This situation ignited a mass demonstration on March 8<sup>th</sup> 2000, which proved pivotal to the struggle for peace, culminating to the removal of the RUF leader, Sankoh, from the political scene of Sierra Leone for good.

The war was finally declared over in January of 2002. Women could have rested on their laurels at this point, but fortunately they recognized that their efforts to achieve full equality needed to continue. Women continued to be key actors in creating an enabling environment in post-conflict peace-building.

As part of the healing process, women advocated forgiveness for the perpetrators of war atrocities and reconciliation of ex-combatants while they were also in the forefront in encouraging the ex-combatants to participate in the reconciliation processes and sought forgiveness through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Women were said to

later focus on the future, prioritizing reintegration of child soldiers, imparting of skill-based knowledge, lobbying for comprehensive education, particularly free education for all, and primary health care support. Through civil society organizations, they initiated programmes for the co-existence of various sectors of the society.

Some women's groups also became instrumental in the promotion of agriculture after the conflict. One of such groups was the Tamaraneh Women's Agricultural Development Association in Kholifa - Chiefdom Tonkolili District which was sponsored by the Red Cross. This women's group helped promote education on the importance of agriculture in achieving a sustainable peace in Sierra Leone.

Another important contribution by women's civil society organizations was working to create awareness through sensitization programmes focused on health related matters. A majority of health problems affecting people in Sierra Leone during and after the war was due to the lack of clean water and proper sanitation. Access to safe drinking and adequate sanitation are essential for disease control. The women CSOs dealt with this challenge through self-help projects in the country. This was sometimes done through the print and electronic media. Women also became actively involved in all government sponsored health programmes and most especially those relating to trauma counseling. It is of note that in Sierra Leone, survivors of sexual violations were employed as educators and assistants in health institutions. That was quite an achievement!

Badmus (2009) summed up the successes of women's roles in post-conflict peace-building in Sierra Leone by quoting Ogunsanya in *extenso*:

The TRC has mandated the establishment of an impartial record of the abuses committed during the war, as a step towards achieving national reconciliation. The Commission also urged reforms in Sierra Leone's legal, judicial and police systems to make it easier for women to report cases of sexual and domestic violence. It called for the repeal of all statutory and customary laws that discriminate against women in marriage, ownership of property. The Commission further recommended that the government should campaign against the customary practice whereby a rape victim is obliged to marry the rapist. The country now recognizes rape and other sexual violent acts as gender crimes and is now working towards achieving gender based laws, which will protect women from gender violence and other forms of discrimination. A Rape Bill has been introduced by the Sierra Leone legislature, dramatically changing the culture of impunity. Under the new laws, a convicted rapist may be jailed for life. To further sensitize society about the rights of women and young girls, women civil society networks have organised and provided support systems for rape victims including counseling and training to make them self-sufficient.

These successes, I believe, spawned further successes. Women began to contribute to the maintenance of law and order through community policing. This became ensured because women engaged with police forces through the Local Police Partnership Board (LPPB). This process created an awareness and acknowledgment that allowed communities to become educated regarding their human, legal and constitutional rights. Within the LPPB, women became involved at executive levels. They participated actively at meetings and assisted the

LPPB. It was mentioned in the CEDSA research of 2008 that women, by cooperating with the police were able to share information on the harmful effects of conflict on women and the contributions that women are in a position to make in transforming traditional and established politics and practices. The report suggests that women provided intelligence to the police that allowed for the establishment of a safe and secure environment for families and the community as a whole (UNIFEM Security Council Resolutions on Women 2008, 2009, pp. 5-6).

The employment of female officers improved the understanding and response of law enforcement agencies to the most vulnerable women who had been the principal victims of abuse, sexual assault, rape, harassment, domestic violence, etc. Women became involved in educating the victims of war, both male and female, and they provided care for the underprivileged within the communities of Sierra Leone. Women worked through the Family Support Unit (FSU) of the police to counsel victims of war, sexual exploitation, violence and other family related issues (UNIFEM Security Council Resolutions on Women 2008, 2009, pp. 5-6).

Additionally, women's groups worked actively with the police at national and local levels in advocating for non-violence during the 2005 Local Council elections and the 2007 National Elections. Their work was enhanced by training provided by Female Peacekeepers in the Police UN Mission (CIVPOL) with the then the UNAMSIL. The training they received helped the community at large to understand the roles and responsibilities that should be the focus of police programs. (The National Action Plan for the full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) & 1820 (2008), 2009, p. 6)

Women in the Office of National Security (ONS) played a crucial role throughout the sector through mediation and advocacy during and after the war (UNIFEM Security Council Resolutions on Women 2008, 2009, pp. 5-6). This went a long way towards changing the traditional way of thinking about the role women should play in the country. While originally relegated to jobs such as secretaries, cooks and personnel assistants, recruitment during the war became refocused on competence and ability to perform at the highest levels and to the highest standards, rather than on the gender biases of the past.

In December 2007, the Mano River Women's Peace Network, as noted in the Gbla, MARWOPNET publication, pp. 8-9), organised a sub-regional conference entitled 'Women in Security'. Its objective was to give women in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia (those countries within the boundaries on the Mano River) a voice in issues which could impact the daily affairs and influence the decision making process of these countries. This enhanced the role of women's groups in security issues and helped in the broader goal of empowering women.

In commenting on this development, Sierra Leone's President said, as quoted in Gbla, CEDSA 2008, p. 8

“We have learnt that peace and security depends on the rapid response to early indications of conflict which requires imaginative strategies, creative and flexible approaches to which our women have always taken the lead and yet the potential contributions of women in the sub-region remain severely under-valued. This, in my view, is what this sub-regional conference aims to address” (Gbla, CEDSA 2008, p. 8).

The President's support helped make possible the creation of groups such as MARWOPNET. This became a major sub-regional effort aimed at ending the conflict in the Mano River Basin. The Gbla, CEDSA report went on to comment that the involvement of women improved the quality and durability of the peace agreement established (Gbla, CEDSA 2008, pp. 8-10). It became quite clear that reconstruction is most productive when women are among the planners and implementers and not just the beneficiaries. Women were the individuals around whom the community developed. Excluding them would have been a serious violation of their rights and a significant mistake that could have weakened the fragile peace in Sierra Leone.

WANEP's 2002 'The Voices of Women in the Media', a local radio program, promoted the role of women in the peace process of the country. One woman from the West African Network for Peace-building – Sierra Leone, quoted in WANEP 2000, pp. 2-5, said that Women's involvement was crucial in building relationships for peace. She noted, when she was interviewed, that the ills of the society had to be changed in order to improve the social order. This "revolution", she believed called for a full and equal role for women in bringing about and securing a lasting peace for Sierra Leone.

## **2.5. THE INCREASED ROLE OF WOMEN IN POLITICS**

It is interesting to note that women's role in managing the conflict was not only limited to their clamour for peace through transition to democracy, as they effectively made use of their increased influence in society to further agitate for an increase role in politics in Sierra Leone. Because of the patriarchal nature of politics in Sierra Leone the participation of women on a large scale in pre-war times, was largely limited to the provision of moral support, the raising and collecting of party funds, voluntary labour and the organization of catering or

entertainment in their various political parties. Women leaders were often given the somewhat patronizing sobriquet “Mammy Queen”, indicating their aptitude in stereotypically “maternal” roles (Gender Based Violence in Sierra Leone: A Situation Analysis Research Study, 2007, para.7, p. 57). However, as the war raged on, women realized that the only realistic chance to achieving peace was through the establishment of a democratically elected government to replace military rule. Women’s efforts led to what was known as Bintumani I and II with the theme “Peace before Election, Election before Peace.

This period of women’s activism marked the first time that women had come together as such a large political force and taken such a prominent role in public life. This experience to a large extent gave women the empowerment, capacity and influences to carve out more political space for themselves in politics following the end of the war.

It was not surprising therefore when in 2000 women began the quest for increased participation in politics. A women’s advocacy group called 50/50 Group was established with the support of the British Council, Sierra Leone. The mission of this group is to increase the level of female participation in government and to ensure gender parity in all walks of life (Gender Based Violence in Sierra Leone; a Situation Analysis Research Studies, Vol 1, 2007, p. 58). It engaged in the training of both old and new women politicians and was involved in lobbying government and political parties for the adoption of conditions that would enable women to participate in politics.

In May 2002, when the country held its first post conflict election, women intensified the campaign for increased political participation. With assistance from the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the 50/50 group, over one hundred women candidates and campaign

managers were trained and as a result, developed new campaign skills, enhancing their capacity to compete in elections. Additionally, the Mano River Women's Peace Network (MAWOPNET) leaders and other women activists successfully lobbied political parties to secure improved women representation on candidate list. Of the eighteen women who eventually were elected to the Parliament, eight were graduates of NDI and 50/50 training. Women representation in the Sierra Leone parliament increased to 14.5% (Diop 2009, p. 10) Women again increased their campaign for increased participation in local councils during the local council elections of 2004 and as a result 10.9 percent of women won seats as councillors. This figure was to increase to 18.9 percent in 2008 (Diop 2009, p. 10-15).

The 2002 presidential election was a crucial turning point. It served as the beginning of the end of the country's decade of war. A peaceful solution was beginning to be sensed in the atmosphere of Sierra Leone. Women took advantage of this opportunity to cast their votes in large numbers. The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children's Protection Partnership office in Sierra Leone encouraged internally displaced women to register and vote. Binta Mansaray expressed the view that internally displaced women, through the support of the women's commission, must make sure that their participation empowers women to contribute in the decision making of the country. She said this would help sustain peace in Sierra Leone. She stated that when a woman casts a free and informed vote, she acknowledges her contribution to the public role she can and should play in the future wellbeing of her society (Binta 2002, pp. 1-8). The importance of this statement can not be understated.

Many women expressed their satisfaction in casting their vote for the first time at the country's first democratic election for peace, security, survival and self-reliance. By voting

these women sent a powerful message to the new president and his government that their needs must be met. They made it clear that the elected government should act upon their concerns with regards to peace and security, food, shelter, education, health care and income-generation. The government should drive down the path to sustainable peace and development of the country.

Women continued their quest for an increased participation in politics in during the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections. The NDI and the 50/50 Group continued to provide training and other support to female candidates. Notwithstanding this, however, female representation in parliament dropped to sixteen from eighteen women after all of the votes for parliament in 2007 had been counted (Castilejo 2009, p. 2). A reason for the drop in the number of elected women in 2007 was the shift from the proportional representation system used in 2002 to a system based on majority vote in 2007. This resulted in fewer women being selected as candidates as political parties were concerned that the electorate would not vote for them - a phenomenon that is largely attributed to the patriarchal nature of the Sierra Leone society.

Some women have been appointed to prominent positions in the country. For instance, in 2008, Umu Hawa Tejan Jalloh was appointed as the Chief. This was preceded by the appointment of Christiana Thorpe as the National Chief Electoral Commissioner. As recently as 2009, a woman was promoted to the rank of Brigadier- the very first in the West African sub-region.

However, in spite of the laudable strides made by women in their quest in active participation in decision making, pervasive discrimination against them in a male dominated Sierra

Leonean societies still poses challenges in their strive for political participation. The recent chieftaincy elections in the Kono and Kailahun occurred with women still in a secondary role. It was a clear indication that patriarchy still exists in Sierra Leone. Discrimination still rears its ugly face despite the Government's efforts to achieve full gender equity and equality goals (UNIFEM Security Council Resolutions on Women 2008, 2009, pp. 2-5).

This concern has been expressed by several observers. Scheper highlights what has been said by several others:

“Only continued and concerted international pressure and close collaboration with the civil society will get women systematically involved in the democratisation and justice. There is much work to be done to begin to put an end to the inequality of women around the globe and in Africa in particular” (Scheper 2002, pp. 15-14).

The greatest indicator of hope comes from a statement made by current Sierra Leone President Ernest Bai Koroma, on behalf of the nation. While delivering his key note address in this year's International Women's Day celebration in the Southern town of Moyamba, the President apologized to the women of Sierra Leone in accordance with one of the recommendations of the TRC in relation to women. He noted that the country failed to protect women from the brutalities of the war (Human Rights Commission of Sierra Leone, Press Release No. 21, 2010). The President furthermore assured Sierra Leonean women that his government will adopt an affirmative action policy to increase their representation in public life. The President had this to say:

“As Head of State I apologise for the wrongs wrought on women, as Commander-in-Chief I ask for forgiveness for the armed forces, as Fountain of Honour and Justice I pledge this country’s commitment to honour, protect, and defend the rights and aspirations of the women of this country. As a Sierra Leonean man, I urge all men of this nation to stand by women to defeat these long-standing injustices suffered by more than half our population... we will adhere to women’s demands for a 30 per cent quota in Parliament and other significant areas of governance; our judiciary is today headed by women and it is our belief that this singular fact will make the interpretation and implementation of justice reflective of the deep commitment of women to justice, equal rights and equal opportunities.”

(Abdullah 2010, p. 69)

As powerful as this statement was, it was not greeted as wholeheartedly as it could have been. Some even suggested that there was a known rapist standing behind him as he spoke.

## **2.6. WOMEN AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UN RESOLUTIONS 1325 AND 1820 IN SIERRA LEONE**

The women and the government of Sierra Leone have expressed full support for UN Resolutions 1325 and 1820 since their adoption. Resolution 1325 on Women, peace and Security was adopted on 31<sup>st</sup> October 2000. It addressed the impact of armed conflict, especially on women and girls. The first United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) recognised that an essential pre-requisite has been the involvement of women in the peace and security agenda at all levels (The Sierra Leone National Action Plan for the Full Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008), (SiLNAP) 2009, p. 7-11)

UNSCR 1820 was adopted in June 2008. It was the first to recognize that conflict-related sexual violence was an issue that impacted international peace and security. It acknowledged that its removal from societal norms was essential to the establishment of peace and justice. It complements in many ways what UNSCR 1325 said about what needed to happen to bring about a durable peace (UNIFEM Security Council Resolutions on Women 2008, 2009, pp. 1-6).

Following the adoption of UNSCRs 1325 and 1820, efforts were supported by the adoption of three other Resolutions, including 1886 on 15 September 2009, 1888 on 30 September 2009, and 1889 on 5 October 2009. These became part of the National Action Plan for the full implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325, published in 2000 and 1820, published in 2008 and 2009, p. 1). UNSCR 1889 complimented 1325 by reinforcing women's leadership in peacemaking and conflict prevention. UNSCR 1888 built on 1820 by focusing on the prevention of and response to conflict related sexual violence. It recommended tools for implementing 1820 by endorsing women's leadership roles, enabling judicial response, and establishing accountability mechanisms.

UNSCR 1886 addressed the Sierra Leone situation specifically by emphasising the important role women played in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace building, as also noted in UNSCRs 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). This placed an appropriate emphasis on gender issues and recommended actions that should be taken in the implementation of all the mandates of the United Nations Integrated Peace-building Office in Sierra Leone (UNPSIL). Further, it encouraged UNPSIL to work with the government of Sierra Leone making this happen (UNIFEM Security Council Resolutions on Women 2008, 2009, 2009, p. 1-11).

In an effort to translate the principles and provisions of UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 into practice in Sierra Leone, a conscious and coordinated initiative was established by women's organisations, including the Mano River Women's Peace Network Sierra Leone (MARWOPNET-SL) and WANEP. This network of civil society and other human rights organizations, under the leadership of the government, was given emphasis in 2008. It recommended a series of rigorous and inclusive efforts to create the taskforce called for in Resolution 1325. The taskforce was put in place with 35 members. It promoted a proposal by MARWOPNET and WANEP specifically aimed at creating an awareness of the taskforce's efforts. The National Consultative Conference on 'Developing of the Sierra Leone National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325' etc, eventually led to the establishment of the National Action Plan adopted on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2009 at another consultative conference. The Conference was attended by all relevant Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) including Defence, the Sierra Leone Police, the Office of National Security (ONS), the office of Foreign Affairs as well as Civil Society Organizations, Parliamentarians, UN agencies, especially UNFPA and UNIFEM (both bi-lateral agencies working with the United States Embassy in Sierra Leone ((UNIFEM Security Council Resolutions on Women 2008, 2009, 2009, p. 1-11).

A National Action Plan (SiLNAP) was established within the Sierra Leone context. Several priority issues emerged from the consultations held at regional levels. This emerged from comments and suggestions from a wide spectrum of actors at all levels, including tribal chiefdoms. In a five year (2010-2014) dynamic implementation plan, encompassing both the UNSCR 1325 (2000) and major components of 1820 (2008), progress occurred around five pillars designed to address the following overall objectives:

Reducing conflict through efforts by Violence Against Women/Children (SGBV),  
Protecting and empowering victims/vulnerable persons, especially women and girls,  
Increasing prosecution of perpetrators and rehabilitation of victims,  
Enhancing participation and representation of women, and effective coordination,  
Implementation, including ongoing mobilization of resources, monitoring and  
evaluation.

(Reporting on the National Action Plan (The National Action Plan for the full  
implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) & 1820 (2008),  
2009, pp. 1-14).

“SiNAP was finally launched by the president of Sierra Leone on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2010, the official  
global opening-day, marking the 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the UNSCRs 1325 and 1820”  
(UNIFEM Security Council Resolutions on Women 2008, 2009, 2009, pp. 4-11). With this  
launch, the full implementation of UN Resolutions became possible. These resolutions  
incorporated an increased role for women, and women’s organizations and agencies, and  
allowed the inclusion of a gender approach in the discussion of institutional reforms, strategic  
policies and plans at national and regional levels. This was a big step forward in preventing  
and responding to the continuing effects of the civil conflict on women and girls.

## **2.7. CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

A review of the literature on the role of women in managing the conflict in Sierra Leone  
reveals that women played multiple roles in the conflict both as victims, being subjected to all  
forms of egregious human rights abuses, and as agents of destruction and/or aiders and  
abettors. The latter role was adopted as a coping mechanism to enhance their survival during  
the conflict.

As women became instrumental in the transition from military rule to a civilian government, they became firm believers that peace can only be secured by maintaining democracy. With the signing of the Lomé Peace Accord, the women of Sierra Leone again played pivotal roles in the reintegration of the ex-combatants; albeit they were being generally neglected in the disarmament process. At the end of the conflict, women have continued to play significant roles in the peace-building process, including a role in community policing, health education etc.

Women's experience of conflict and role in peace-building mobilized them in political action on an unprecedented scale, opened space for women to have a greater role in public life, and shaped the post-conflict agenda for the women's movement. In the next chapter, I shall endeavour to examine the impact of women in the various interventional phases of local and international peacekeeping forces.

## CHAPTER THREE

### 3.0. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE INTERVENTION OF VARIOUS REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL FORCES

The focus of this chapter will be on the support given to women by the UN and other international and local organisations to end the conflict in Sierra Leone. Women in Local Government in Sierra Leone in 2002, known as the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD), supported the movement for a new era of reconstruction, the resuscitation of local government and the development of state institutions. A group of 50 elected women and women's community leaders were gathered to promote gender equity and inclusiveness in local governance and the decentralisation process. Civic education provided by radio and newspapers covered of the project and helped to narrow the participation gap between female councillors and ward members and their male counterparts.

“The Women's Empowerment Principles are subtitles for Equality Means Business because the full participation of women benefits business and, indeed, all of us,” said George Kell, Executive Director of the UN Global Compact” (unifem.org 8 March 2010).

In Sierra Leone this suggested the way forward if a sustainable peace was to be achieved. Experience has shown that women can be effective promoters of the law and order at the grassroots level. Tamaraneh Women's Agricultural Development Association in Kholifa - Chiefdom Tonkolili District is supported by the Red Cross. This women's group helped promote education on the importance of agriculture in achieving a sustainable peace in Sierra Leone. A majority of health problems affecting people in Sierra Leone during and after the war was due to the lack of good water and proper sanitation. Access to safe drinking and

adequate sanitation are essential for disease control. The women in this group dealt with this challenge through self-help projects in the country.

In 2002 the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children began working to ensure that refugee and displaced women, children and adolescents were given protection, and the right to participate, and have access to humanitarian assistance. This group lobbied the international communities and local governments in order to call for action to improve the lives of displaced women and children. Internally displaced women were encouraged go to the polls in Sierra Leone and choose the candidate of their choice.

As it is quoted by one such woman,

“We want the winner, regardless of whether we are for him or not, to ensure that, when we go back to our villages, there is peace. We are women and we have already suffered a lot. Our husbands have died and we have a lot of children. We have no extended family to depend on now. We have nothing. All our houses have been burnt and, when we think of that, we cry. We want the new president to remember our plight. We women have suffered a lot during this war” (Binta 2002 pp. 1-7).

The conflict in Sierra Leone underwent various phases with each phase interspersed by a foreign intervention which included a mercenary fighting group, a regional intervention group, the United Nations and a foreign government force which all had significant implications on the development of the conflict. What is not clear, however, is whether the women of Sierra Leone, who suffered most from the conflict, were able to play a significant role within external diplomatic and military forces. This chapter seeks to examine the role played by Sierra Leonean women in any and all of the interventions by external forces.

### **3.1. UNDERSTANDING THE CRITICAL ROLE PLAYED BY WOMEN AND WOMEN'S GROUPS IN THE UN AND BRITISH INTERVENTIONS**

As earlier stated, the principal aim of the UN intervention in Sierra Leone was to ensure that all parties to the conflict adhere to the terms of the respective peace agreements. This included monitoring the disarmament process, investigating the Human Rights abuses committed by the warring parties, facilitating the resettlement of refugees and assisting the government to develop its security apparatus. While the UN was to rely on lots of stakeholders in achieving these aims, including the government and various fighting factions, its mandate did not envisage the critical role that women would play. Women however proved to be the most potent pressure group that exacted pressure on non-cooperating parties, particularly the intransigent RUF, thus drawing the attention of the international community to the reality of the security situation in Sierra Leone.

From the earliest days of the war, and for many years prior, women in rural and urban centers mobilized to protest against the atrocities engaged in by rebel forces and called for peace. Women continued putting pressure, sometimes by radical means, which targeted different parties to the conflict. This was especially true after the signing of the Lomé Accord. It was a bid to force rebels and non-committed parties to adhere to the terms of the agreement. All of this came to a climax in May 2000, when the when RUF seized 500 UN Peacekeepers in the north of the country. Realizing that the RUF was continuing to flout the peace agreement, a group of elderly women demanded a meeting with Sankoh, the leader of the RUF. On arriving at the RUF compound, they were mistreated and insulted. In frustration and disgust, the women collectively hitched up their skirts, bent over and bared themselves to Sankoh and the other representatives of the RUF. In Sierra Leone, such an action by women is considered

to be the highest expression of contempt and condemnation expressed by one group for another. (Diop 2009, p. 9)

The action by very bold women had a galvanizing effect on Sierra Leoneans. It obliged Sierra Leoneans to respect and uphold the honour of women and support their condemnation of RUF's actions. On May 8, thousands of Sierra Leoneans marched on the residence of the RUF Leader carrying placards with inscriptions directed at Sankoh, such as "No Violence Sankoh," "Enough is Enough," and "Sankoh: Our People are dying." UNAMSIL peacekeepers were unable to keep the crowd away from the house. Stones, bottles and sticks were thrown at the house. Sankoh knew about the protest in advance and had over 150 members of the RUF at his home for protection. These RUF soldiers opened fire on the crowd and a battle ensued as armed civilians and soldiers in the crowd returned fire. Many RUF members were killed by the mob and the house was looted and ransacked. By the end of the day, a good number of civilians had been killed and several people wounded (Diop 2009, p. 10). The women's action and the subsequent public demonstrations were pivotal in the struggle for peace, culminating in Sankoh's arrest.

Another pivotal role played by women in the intervention of the UN in the Sierra Leone was in the Demobilization Disarmament and Reintegration process which was crucial to the mandate of UNAMSIL. The process of itself failed women and girls. By being classified as "dependents" only, their real experiences were not acknowledged, and they were precluded from receiving the benefits provided to "combatants" (Mazurana and Carlson, 2004, pp. 4-12). Not to be frustrated or stopped, women individually and in groups became critical to reintegrating former combatants, particularly those excluded from official programs. As noted by Mazurana and Carlson, many women whose children were killed opened their

homes to former child soldiers (Mazurana and Carlson, 2004, pp. 4-12). Others set their own sufferings aside and offered help believing that “If left abandoned, the child ex-combatants would have nothing positive to do...and would prove a threat to a fragile peace” (Mazurana and Carlson, 2004, p23). In one study it was noted that 55% of respondents who were ex-combatant believed that women in communities played a significant role in helping them reintegrate. This figure was higher than among traditional leaders or international aid workers, with 20% and 32%, respectively. According to them women provided guidance, shared meager resources, and perhaps most importantly, helped facilitate training and education. They also helped provide the most basic needs of childcare, clothes, and food. (UNFEM Women waging peace, January 2004 pp. 2-4)

### **3.2. CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

Although the role of women was not anticipated in each of the several interventions by international and regional forces, women, many of whom had been discriminated against in the largely patriarchal Sierra Leonean society, exploited each international intervention to showcase their importance in the management of the conflict in Sierra Leone. Their roles in each of these intervention phases were crucial to changing the landscape of the conflict. Ultimately, they had a major impact that motivated the RUF to adhere to the Lomé peace agreement.

This chapter has reviewed the diplomatic efforts made by international organizations and other international bodies, working together with women’s groups in bringing to pass a lasting peace to Sierra Leone. The final chapter, Chapter Four, will summarize conclusion and make recommendations arising from the research conducted as part of this dissertation.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4.1. CONCLUSION

The research and analysis incorporated in this dissertation conclude that Sierra Leone collapsed into a brutal civil war starting in March 1991 because of decades of bad governance, massive corruption, political abuses, victimization of those in opposition to those in power, the marginalization of youth. The events of this history are heinous abuses of human rights. They mirrored what was taking place in neighbouring Liberia. This grotesque incidence of brutality and violations of basic human rights brought incredible suffering to Sierra Leone, with women and girls the worst victims of systematic abuse.

Many studies have demonstrated clearly that these sombre experiences of women and girls were unquestionably linked to their status in society. Sierra Leone is a highly patriarchal society. Women have been excluded from positions of power and have been subjected to widespread violence and poverty. These situations were the by-product of cultural norms developed over the years in a male dominated political and socio-economic national history.

The studies further reveal that as the conflict raged on, women ceased to be mere victims of the conflict; they gradually became active agents and participants in the conflict. The latter roles became more or less coping mechanisms to ensure their survival and to regain some control over their lives.

Women's roles in managing the conflict in Sierra Leone became more noticeable with the formation of women's civil society groups through which they mobilized and galvanized the society (women in particular) to call for peace, democracy, and an end to hostilities. Of note in this regard, were the highly significant roles played by prominent women's groups

including the Women's Forum- Sierra Leone, Women Organised for a Morally Enlightened Nation (WOMEN), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW), to name but a few.

The successes of the endeavours of these women's group were evidenced in the series of events that shaped the course of the conflict. Notable of these events were the nation-wide demonstrations in February 1995 which resulted in the ruling NPRC junta's prioritising peace as a national agenda, thus culminating in the first ceasefire agreement; a consultative conference in which women read an open letter to the RUF leader demanding an end to the senseless war; and women's agitation for 'an election before peace' or 'peace before election' resulting in the Bintumani I, II, and III consultative conferences that finally led to forcing a transition from military rule to a democratic civilian rule.

The studies also highlight the role of women in the electioneering process which included voter education, sensitizing individuals to register as voters; recruiting and training local election observers to scrutinise the election proceedings throughout the country, and articulating and promoting women's issues for inclusion in political parties' manifestos. Once a democratically elected president was sworn-in, serious peace negotiations were to ensue. This led to the signing of firstly the Abidjan Peace Accord and then the Lomé Peace Accord which was brokered by the UN and the International Community.

The research exposed the weaknesses of the DDR process as it generally neglected the various roles of women in the conflict. The DDR programme failed women and girls. Being classified as victims, the real life experiences of women and girls were not acknowledged and were therefore precluded from the benefitting from the package received by the 'combatants'.

However, women were again pivotal in the reintegration of ex-combatants into communities across Sierra Leone; promoting reconciliation and helping out in the security sector through community policing which includes educating the community on their legal, human and constitutional rights.

The studies again contend that though the role of women could not have been anticipated in each of the interventions by international and regional forces, women who had before now been discriminated against in the largely patriarchal Sierra Leonean society, exploited each situation engendered by the intervention periods to showcase their importance in the management of the conflict in Sierra Leone. Their roles in each of the intervention phases were crucial to changing the landscape of the conflict, thus culminating to the RUF finally adhering to the Lomé Peace Agreement.

Furthermore, the research found that the period of unprecedented activism by Sierra Leonean women during which they came together as a large political force to take a prominent role in public life, gave them the empowerment, capacity and influences to carve out more political space for themselves in politics following the end of the war. This was later evidenced in the 2002 and the 2007 general presidential and parliamentary elections and the local council elections of 2004 and 2008 when women organized and trained by NDI and the 50/50 Group took a larger role in the elections.

Unfortunately, women still face major challenges in their quest in achieving an increased involvement in politics and decision making. The recent marginalization of women in the paramount chieftaincy elections in the Kono and Kailahun Districts in Eastern Sierra Leone is

a clear indication that there is still much progress to be made regarding women's role in decision making.

Throughout all of this, the research is conclusive. Women despite setbacks, frustrations and opposition, have not relented. The strides made in the development of a national action plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 and 1820 bear testimony of this.

The government of Sierra Leone has steadfastly recognized the need to address issues of gender inequality, the lack of women's full participation and representation in the various spheres of influence. This is clear in the signing and ratification of international human rights laws focusing on women. Examples include the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW), and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). In addition, the Optional Protocol to CEDAW and the AU Women's protocol have both signed but not ratified.

The government, through the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) has, since 2000, put in place twin policies referred to as Advancement of Women and National Gender Mainstreaming. These policies are designed to promote, protect and advance women's rights in social, economic, political and cultural fields, with special emphasis on women's participation in decision-making at all public and private levels.

Alongside these national policies, improvements have been made to legal instruments within the framework of the reform processes. These measures have established more equitable and improved access to gender justice. In June 2007, three gender bills namely, the Registration

of Customary Marriage and Divorce, the Domestic Violence and the Devolution of Estate Acts, were unanimously passed by Parliament.

Since then, other relevant bills that bear directly on enabling effective implementation of UNSCR 1820 namely, the Sexual Offences Act and the Matrimonial Causes Act, were enacted after moving too slowly through the legislative process. A major impediment to the full application of the practical tools that these three gender laws and legal reforms provided, has been the non-domestication of CEDAW, and the non-repeal of Section 27(4)d of the 1991 Constitution. This section is discriminatory against women in areas of marriage, divorce, burial, adoption, inheritance and other areas that influence gender relations at the domestic level (The Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991, Section 27 (4)d). Because the relevant section is an entrenched clause of the Constitution, a referendum is required to repeal it (UNIFEM Security Council Resolutions on Women 2008, 2009, 2009, pp. 1-11).

The Government has continued to demonstrate its belief in promoting equal access to women and men at all levels, not merely by the passage of the gender laws protecting and advancing the status of women, but by a clear effort to ensure active implementation of the SiLNAP. Thus the MSWGCA was developed and launched in November 2008 as a strategic roll-out plan promoting Gender Laws. Furthermore it formulated a holistic National Gender Strategic plan (NGSP) which details six priority issues aligned to the country's second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper referred to as the 'Agenda for Change' (AFG). This implementation of the UNSCRs 1325 and 1820 has been a key strategy articulated in the NGSP (UNIFEM Security Council Resolutions on Women 2008, 2009, 2009, pp. 1-13).

From the foregoing analysis, it is an undeniable fact that in spite of women's visible roles in managing the conflict in Sierra Leone, and the post-conflict peace building process, women are still faced with the mammoth problem of overcoming patriarchy in the Sierra Leonean society. This must be done in order to allow women to realize their full potential and avoid being exploited. Patriarchy is inhibiting women's active involvement in politics and full participation in peace processes and political decision making. If therefore the critical role played by women has to be maintained in the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone, thereby preventing a relapse into conflict, then few measures have to be taken by the various stakeholders, including the Government of Sierra Leone, the International Community and the women themselves.

All of the above leads to the following recommendations:

#### **4.2. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

##### **To the International Community**

The International Community, including the United Nations, should involve women in all endeavours that bring peace to conflict situations. This includes negotiations, post-war reconstruction, reintegration and peace-building. The role of women in managing the conflict in Sierra Leone presents a perfect lesson that managing conflicts and rebuilding societies are no longer the exclusive preserve of men. Without equal and fair participation of women in conflict management and decision-making we will never achieve the vision of a world free of the scourge of war, poverty and gender discrimination

International actors including the UN, Multinational Organizations, donor governments etc, should also ensure that women and girls are included in the planning and implementation of the official DDR process. Women should particularly be accepted into the programme even when unaccompanied by men. Most importantly, the definition of ‘ex-combatant/soldier’ should include those who were part of a “regular armed force in any capacity, including but not limited to cooks and messengers...and girls recruited for sexual purposes...” in accordance with the Cape Town Principles (UN Secretary General’s Study, Women, Peace and Security, 2002, p 130)

**To the government of Sierra Leone:**

The Government must implement the TRC recommendations relating to women. The commission noted that the state has not yet taken the necessary steps to eradicate structural inequality of women in Sierra Leonean society. Discriminatory laws and customs in the areas of marriage, divorce, land rights, inheritance and the administration of estates remain major obstacles to the transformation of women’s lives. Addressing these structural inequalities will require legal reform, access to justice, the abolition of discriminatory customary law and practices, the building of institutional capacity and the establishment of educational programmes will be essential to counter attitudes and norms which lead to the oppression of women (Witness to Truth: Report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Vol 2, 2004, paras. 320-321). The government must guarantee the educational, health and economic empowerment of women as well as political participation as priority areas for the progressive development of women in Sierra Leone.

In relation to the above, the Government should repeal Section 17 (4)d of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone. This section is discriminatory against women in areas of marriage, divorce, burial, adoption, inheritance and other areas that influence gender relations at the domestic level. The existence of this particular section in the Sierra Leone constitution serves as a major impediment to the implementation of some of the key provisions of the three Gender Acts relevant to addressing some of the pervasive institutionalized discrimination against women in Sierra Leone. The section is also inconsistent with the provision the same section in that it renders unconstitutional any provision in the Sierra Leone Constitution which is discriminatory in and of itself and in its effect (The Constitution of Sierra Leone, 1991, Section 27 (1)). The existence of such provisions in the national constitution exacerbates the situation of women with respect to the widespread discrimination they face.

Government should also ensure the timely implementation of the National Action Plan for the implementation of 1325 and 1820 (SiLNAP). As earlier discussed, the SiLNAP is an implementation tool developed for engendering national ownership and agreement that will guide the effective implementation of UN Resolution 1325 and 1820. The full implementation of the SiLNAP will go a long way towards addressing the security concerns of women in post-conflict Sierra Leone as well as ensuring the full participation of women in decision making. Government should increase its annual budgetary allocation to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA).

The Government through the Ministry has been steadfast in its commitment to ensuring the advancement of Women in Sierra Leone. To this point, as highlighted earlier, it has signed and ratified key human rights documents relevant to addressing the situation of women. This

includes CEDAW, the CRC, the AU Protocol on Women, and the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. It has also enacted laws and developed policies and plans. The laws include the three Gender Laws namely the Devolution of Estate Act; the Domestic Violence Act; the Registration of Customary and Divorce Act and the Child Rights Acts, all of 2007. It has in the past (2000) developed twin policies on Gender Mainstreaming and the Advancement of Women. In the recent past the government through the MSWGCA has developed the roll-out plan of the three Gender Acts as well as a Gender National Strategic Plan.

In spite of these massive strides, the MSWGCA, which is the national machinery for the advancement of women, remains bedevilled with several challenges including inadequate funding, problems with recruiting and retaining qualified staff and other institutional problems including logistics. The MSWGCA has a wide mandate, but yet receives less than three percent of Government's annual budgetary allocations. This has hindered the Ministry from accomplishing its purposes and achieving its commitments.

Government should incorporate CEDAW into national policy and law. Government should introduce a temporary affirmative action plan that stipulates a 30 per cent quota for women in elective and appointed positions as recommended by the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

**For the Women and Women's Groups in Sierra Leone:**

Women's group should maintain a strong network coordinated by the umbrella women's organization in Sierra Leone, the Women's Forum. Lack of coordination and rivalry among

diverse women's groups with different agendas have led to weak networking of these groups and sadly, jeopardized the goal of influencing the public sphere.

Women's groups should also work in partnership with Government and UN Agencies particularly the UNIFEM and UNFPA to fill in the dearth of gender disaggregated data (GDD) as well as to undertake appropriate gender analyses. This will ensure the understanding of the scale and nature of the exclusion of women from principal roles in Sierra Leone. There can be no effective response to discrimination against women without accurate information.

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