

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE BUILDING**  
**THE CASE OF SIERRA LEONE**

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## Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work.

.....

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14<sup>th</sup> February 2009, Tripoli, Libya

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## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my late parents.

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
APC	All People's Congress
AU	African Union
DDR	Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration
ECOMOG	Economic Community Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EO	Executive Outcomes
ICG	International Crisis Group
IMATT	International Military Advisory Training Team
MRU	Mano River Union
NCDDR	National Committee for Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration
NCRRR	National Commission for Reconstruction Resettlement and Rehabilitation
NRC	National Reformation Council
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
RSLMF	Republic of Sierra Leone Military Forces
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
RUF/SL	Revolutionary United Front, Sierra Leone.
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party.
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone

UNOMSIL United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone

UK United Kingdom

USA United States of America

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## INTRODUCTION

Armed conflicts are a common phenomenon in Africa. Some of the conflicts are not only long-running but are known to be very brutal and horrendous<sup>1</sup>. The attendant social and economic devastation of such conflicts have far-reaching implications in the socio-economic development of the affected countries. These conflicts also have the tendency of not only destroying the warring factions' involved, innocent civilians including women and children are also normally brutalized, killed, maimed and grossly abused<sup>2</sup>.

Kofi Annan, the former United Nations Secretary General in one of his reports on the work of the Organisation: The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa, states:

Conflicts in Africa pose a major challenge to United Nations efforts designed to ensure global peace, prosperity and human rights for all. Although the United Nations was intended to deal with inter-state warfare, it is being required more and more often to respond to intra-state instability and conflict. In those conflicts the main aim, increasingly, is the destruction of not just of armies but civilians and ethnic groups. Preventing such wars is no longer a matter of defending states or protecting allies. \it is a matter of defending humanity itself.(Report of the UN Secretary General, A/52/871-S/1998/318).

Sierra Leone like many other countries in Africa was plunged into a brutal armed conflict that lasted for over a decade<sup>3</sup>. Unlike some other conflicts which are provoked by inter-ethnic or religious strife, the Sierra Leone conflict was a product of a complex combination of both internal and external factors that exacerbated the whole problem into a magnitude that warrants the intervention of the international community in an effort to reaching a negotiated settlement. The conflict went on for many years with the rebels deliberately using terror tactics of various designs

to instill fear and get recognition from the civilian population before the international community could intervene. When the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner, Mary Robinson, visited the country in mid 1999, she said ‘there had been more loss of life, more suffering, more mutilations and more basic violations of human rights in Sierra Leone than Kosovo’ (Doyle M, July 1999, BBC news report by the West African correspondent)

This research paper seeks to give an account of the Sierra Leone conflict and the different measures and strategies including the diplomatic attempts and efforts that were employed by various parties in trying to secure a peaceful and durable solution to it. An important phase of a peace process is peace building, which is a long-term process, involving a wide range of activities undertaken after a violent conflict has slowed down or brought to a halt.

The sustainability and success of a peace process greatly depends on the peace building mechanisms and activities that will follow the signing of a peace agreement. This paper will therefore further discuss the peace building measures and activities that were employed in sustaining the Sierra Leone peace process after the attainment of a negotiated settlement.

The paper starts with a brief historical background of the country and an investigation into the root causes and the various factions that took part in the conflict. It continued with the many peace overtures made and the roles played by the international community including the United Nations (UN), the Commonwealth of Nations, the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) later African Union (AU), The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Mano River Union (MRU), United Kingdom (UK), the United States of America (USA) etc. in trying to resolve the conflict.

The peace building measures and strategies which form part of the holistic approach in achieving a long lasting solution to the conflict involved various groups. The paper will discuss the roles played by these groups including the various factions in the conflict, the government, non-governmental organizations and civil society movements.

The paper concludes with the lessons learned, suggestions on how to tackle and find solutions to armed conflicts and recommendations for forestalling the future occurrence of such conflicts not only in Sierra Leone but the African continent as a whole.

#### **NOTES**

1. Sub-Saharan African countries including Sudan, Uganda, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Democratic Republic of Congo have all provided a prime terrain for long-running and horrendous conflicts. In 2003, the world was cautiously optimistic that at least some of Africa's deadly conflicts were on the course for resolution.
2. Women and children constitute the greatest proportion of civilian population killed in war and target for abuse. Women suffer severe physical, economic and psychological hardships during periods of armed conflicts.
3. The Sierra Leone conflict started in March 1991 and its end was finally declared by President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah in February 2002.

# CHAPTER ONE

## FACTS ABOUT SIERRA LEONE.

Sierra Leone is a relatively small country, (71, 740sq.km or 27,699 sq. miles) located on the West Coast of Africa between Guinea and Liberia. It has a population of approximately five million people. (Report, Sierra Leone Central Statistics, 2007). It was created into a modern state in 1961 after gaining independence from Great Britain under whose rule it existed as a British Colony of former slaves in the western coastal area and a British Protectorate of Africans in the hinterland (Sibthorpe, 1970)

The country is endowed with huge quantities of diverse natural resources which include diamonds, gold, iron ore, bauxite, and the largest deposit of titanium in the World. In his final address to parliament before leaving office at the end of his two constitutional terms, President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah reported that: “the exploration for oil deposits has recently commenced with very encouraging results so far” (Kabbah, 2007). The country’s long stretch of the Atlantic seaboard also provides a huge potential for the exploitation of its marine resources. Although threatened by deforestation, the eastern and southern regions can still boast of some proportions of virgin tropical rainforests. Sierra Leone records one of the highest rainfalls in the West Coast of Africa (3,800mm or 150 inches) along the coast, diminishing to about (2,000mm.or 80inches) in the interior. This, coupled with its vast fertile land, makes it possible for a variety of agricultural crops to be grown both for domestic consumption and export. Sierra Leone is also blessed with one of the best natural harbours in the World, which could serve as a basis for the development of seaports that could promote trade and transshipment in the West African sub region.

Regardless of the huge endowment of a variety of natural resources in Sierra Leone, the economic policies of the country have not impacted much to improve the quality of life of the general populace. As result, the country still ranks second from the rare on the Human Development Index of the United Nations (UN Human Development Report, 2006)

## **POLITICAL HISTORY AND SYNOPSIS OF THE CONFLICT**

On the political sphere, Sierra Leone has had a very chequered history characterized by repeated violent change of governments. Ten different Leaders have held the top and enviable position of Head of State and Government. Out of these, only six attained the position through what one can call the democratic process of the ballot box and elections. These include, Sir Milton Margai (1964-1964), Sir Albert Margai (continued Sir Milton Margai's term from 1964-1967), Siaka Probyn Stevens (1968-1985), Major-General Joseph Saidu Momoh (1985-1992), Ahmad Tejan Kabbah (1996-2007) and Ernest Bai Koroma (2007 to date). (Bundu, 2001). The other leaders were all military men that catapulted themselves to the helm of power through the barrel of the gun.

The country enjoyed some form of multiparty democracy in the immediate years following the attainment of sovereign independence status in 1961 when it inherited from the United Kingdom a Westminster-style parliamentary democracy. These early years of independence were characterized by a period of relative peace and stability which regrettably was very short lived before it degenerated into a dictatorship.

The country degenerated into dictatorship just after the first post-independence general elections of 1967 when it witnessed the first military coup d'etat on 21<sup>st</sup> March of the same year. (Bundu, 2001 pp.19). The reign of the military was also very short-lived when they were overthrown in a

counter coup that returned the country to parliamentary government in 1968 under the Leadership of Siaka Probyn Stevens of the All Peoples Congress (APC).

The reigns of the All Peoples Congress were received with euphoria and optimism of hope and prosperity for the country which the leadership had earlier promised. This optimism was manifested in the results of the 1967 general elections which the opposition All peoples Congress won. The early years of the All Peoples Congress reign could be described as encouraging and it is also reasonable to credit them with substantial infrastructural development and bridging the gap between the diverse ethnic diversity of the country even though it made mistakes along the lines which were very serious (Bundu, 2001, pp.19).

The later years of the All Peoples Congress reign under Siaka Probyn Stevens were marked by considerable unrest, thuggery, violence and poor economic management. (Conteh-Morgan and Doxon-Fyle, 1999 pp.80-81) The country was declared a Republic by parliament in 1971 and a de facto One Party State in 1978 after parliamentary elections in the same year, although this was later legitimized in a referendum. The economic mismanagement brought about a total neglect of basic and social needs of the general populace, the impact of which engendered widespread dissatisfaction and frustration, especially among the youth and the disadvantaged segments of society. The resulting malaise is believed to partly explain the reasons behind the establishment of the United Revolutionary Front (RUF) whose main ambition was to seize political power from the ruling All Peoples Congress. This was also further demonstrated by the initial popular euphoria brought in by the immediate period of the April 29<sup>th</sup> 1992 coup that succeeded in outsmarting the Revolutionary United Front's ambition of ousting the one party All Peoples Congress government of former President Joseph Saidu Momoh. (Cox, 1976, pp. 207)

The coup brought in and installed the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) which had tried to justify its overthrow of the All People's Congress government on the grounds of the latter's ineffectiveness in defending the people against the rebel aggression. They in turn made extravagant pledges of swiftly ending the war. But in the end, these pledges were far from been fulfilled instead the war continued to spread across the country to areas where hostilities never reached during the All People's Congress era.

The war rendered most parts of the country perilous and ungovernable. Even though the National Provisional Ruling Council continued the campaign against the Revolutionary United Front, very minimal success was achieved until they sought the services of a South African private security firm, the Executive Outcomes (EO)<sup>1</sup>. The combined efforts of the Executive Outcomes and South Eastern based civil militia group known as the Kamajors (IRIN, UNHCR/ACCORD,2000), forced the Revolutionary United Front to retreat for some time but later regrouped and continued to cause mayhem in most parts of the country.

Popular and persistent uprisings from the general populace coupled with international pressure called for the replacement of the four years rule of the military junta of the National Provisional Ruling Council by a democratically elected government. The pressure yielded fruits and the first genuinely democratic elections for decades in the history of Sierra Leone were held and the results ushered in the civilian government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) in March, 1996.

Even though the Revolutionary United Front refused to participate in the elections, but in the face of mounting military setbacks against the Executive Outcomes, some Sierra Leone military loyalists and the civil militias, they agreed to peace negotiations and in November 1996,

President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and Foday Sankoh the leader of the Revolutionary United Front signed the Abidjan Peace Accord<sup>2</sup>

Peace partially returned to the country following the signing of the accord but this was very short-lived because no sooner than the Executive Outcomes withdrew from the country which was one of the conditions of the agreement, the Revolutionary United Front reneged on what they had agreed and resumed their campaign of violence and terror.

The Sierra Leone Army at this time was regarded as very unfriendly to the newly elected government for some reasons including the rivalry between them and the pro-government 'Kamajors and the loss of power to a civilian government to name but a few. This friction culminated in a coup d'état of dissident junior officers of the Sierra Leone Army seizing power from the one-year and two-month old democratically elected government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1997. Major Johnny Paul Koroma who was awaiting trial for an alleged involvement in coup attempt in September 1996 was freed from prison and named the Chairman of the newly constituted Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC).

In compliance with the trends of military juntas, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council immediately suspended the constitution, banned political activities of parties and all public demonstrations and meetings, and announced that all legislations would be made by decrees. In an effort to strengthen their grip on power, they invited the Revolutionary United Front to join them in exercising control over the country (Conciliation Resources, Profiles-Sierra Leone, no date)



Although Johnny Paul Koroma was still leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, the Revolutionary United Front seemed to have taken control over the affairs of government. The coup was widely condemned by the United Nations, the then OAU and other members of the international community. On 8<sup>th</sup> October 1997, the United Nations imposed sanctions prohibiting the importation of weapons, military materials, and petroleum as well as a ban on international travel by members of the military junta. (UNSC Resolution 1132, 1997). All these measures were meant to bring pressure to bear on them to return power to the democratically elected government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the SLPP who was in exile in neighbouring Guinea.

The military wing of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) which was already operating in the neighbouring Republic of Liberia was called upon to extend its role in Sierra Leone and to enforce the United Nations sanctions. In the process of trying to enforce the sanctions, dozens of innocent civilians were killed in the clashes between ECOMOG and the AFRC/RUF junta. The AFRC/RUF continued to prove adamant to relinquish power even after signing a peace plan in Conakry<sup>3</sup>, Republic of Guinea calling for the restoration to power of President Kabbah.

In February 1998, ECOMOG forcefully routed the AFRC/RUF out of power and marched on to Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone. In March 1998, the elected government of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was reinstated after nine months in exile. This event was indeed a milestone in the history of democracy in Africa because it was actually the first time that a coup against a democratic government in Africa had been reversed without the intervention of the United Nations<sup>4</sup>.

The international community increased its support for the reinstated government and the peace process by establishing a United Nations Military Observer Mission (UNOMSIL), in July 1998 (UNSC, RES/1181, 1998). The mandate of UNOSIL was to monitor the military and security situation in the country and the disarmament and demobilization of former combatants and to assist in monitoring respect for international humanitarian law. The Mission was to work closely with ECOMOG, the sub-regional military force led by Nigeria that was enforcing the peace.

Eventhough, President Kabbah was returned to Office, the AFRC/RUF retreated to the interior of the country causing widespread atrocities including brutal killings, severe mutilations and deliberate dismemberments, in a campaign of terror against the civilian population code-named “Operation No Living Thing” (Hawley. 1999). One common practice of the retreating AFRC/RUF junta was chopping off ears, noses, hands and legs of noncombatants whom they consider as being unwilling to cooperate with them. Such cruelty was indiscriminately meted out to the old, young and even children of very tender ages were not spared.

Forces of the ECOWAS Monitoring Group, (ECOMOG) led by Nigeria and the civil defence militia, the ‘Kamajors’ continued to pursue the AFRC/RUF junta to the hinterland in an effort to gain control of the whole country.

This resulted in fierce clashes and forces of the AFRC/RUF again attacked and re-entered Freetown in January 1999 leaving thousands dead and many more mutilated and traumatized in what is regarded as the saddest period in the Sierra Leone armed conflict.(Sierra Herald, 1999) The Nigerian-led ECOMOG peacekeeping force fought hard and was able to regain control of Freetown, pushing the rebels back to the interior of the country.

The impact of the invasion of Freetown heightened the pressure on the international community to resolve the conflict through negotiation. This reason coupled with the call of Nigeria's new civilian government to bring its troops home, forced the reinstated government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah to hold talks with the warring factions. Teams of negotiators from the government, the warring factions including Foday Sankoh, the jailed leader of the RUF and civilian groups gathered in Lome, the capital of Togo for the peace talks.

In May 1999, a ceasefire agreement<sup>5</sup> was signed which opened the way for a peaceful dialogue culminating in a peace agreement<sup>6</sup>, signed in Lome on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1999 after several weeks of difficult negotiations. The Lome Peace Agreement was regarded as the most comprehensive and operational document concluded by the warring parties to end the conflict and bring peace to the country. The agreement made provision for a comprehensive disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme that was based in the government of Sierra Leone developing a programme framework in close collaboration with the relevant stakeholders in the conflict. The peace agreement however fell under much criticism from human right organizations because it gave a blanket amnesty to all the rebels for their human right abuses.

Despite the generous provisions in the agreement, the Revolutionary United Front was again dragging its feet on honouring it and continued their attacks again. In October 1999, the United Nations agreed to send peacekeepers to help restore order and disarm the rebels. An initial number of 6,000 peacekeepers were sent but as the fighting escalated, the United Nations continued to approve an increase in the of peacekeepers for Sierra Leone until it reached a record number of 17,500<sup>7</sup>. This number was meant to take over the duties of the ECOMOG peacekeepers who were dominated by Nigerian forces that had been recalled by the erstwhile civilian government of General Obasanjo to return home.

The return of the Nigerian ECOMOG forces coincided with an increase in the clashes between the United Nations peacekeepers and the rebels and at one stage 500 peacekeepers were held hostage<sup>8</sup>. This incident nearly led to the total collapse of the peace accord. The continued deterioration in the security situation warranted increased international mediation efforts culminating in the signing of other two peace agreements, Abuja Agreements 1&2, and the sending of a robust 800-member British force to evacuate Europeans and to secure the western part of Freetown which was rebel-free at the time.

The Revolutionary United Front rebel Leader, Foday Sankoh who was believed to be the architect of all these attacks was however captured in Freetown but yet still the clashes between the peacekeepers and the Revolutionary United Front continued unabated. In another attempt to undermine the sources of funding for the Revolutionary United Front, the United Nations placed a ban on the sale of rough diamonds from Sierra Leone (UNSC, Resolution 1306, 2000)

In late August 2000, the leadership of the Revolutionary United Front changed and one of the commanders of the captured Foday Sankoh by the name of Issa Sesay was made head. The new leader appeared to be a bit reasonable and manifested some willingness to cooperate with the government in implementing the Lome Peace Agreement. It was when the implementation of the peace agreement was going on at a snail pace that a splinter group of the AFRC commonly known as the West Side Boys<sup>9</sup> took hostage a number of the British troops that were put in charge of the training of the Sierra Leone Army. Appeals from various institutions and groups were made for the release of the British hostages but this fell on deaf ears. The British in a characteristic display of their professionalism and modern weaponry raided in September 2000 the base of the West Side Boys and freed their compatriots with very minimal casualty on their side.

The country's general elections that were scheduled for early 2001 had to be postponed because the security situation was not conducive for the holding of elections. In another effort to further cripple the support and revenue base of the rebels, the United Nations imposed sanctions on Liberia (UNSC, Resolution 1521, 2003). Even with such an action, fighting continued but at very reduced pace and this enabled the United Nations peacekeepers to commence the disarmament of combatants of the various factions. The disarmament of all the factions in the conflict was carried out simultaneously though at a very slow rate. By December 2001, a great majority of the combatants that were estimated to be disarmed had surrendered their weapons to the UN peacekeepers.

It was on the 28<sup>th</sup> January 2002, that the government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and leaders of the rebel groups declared the end of the war at a special ceremony held at the International Airport town of Lungi. The elections that were earlier postponed were finally held in May 2002 and the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) secured a majority of the seats in Parliament and Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was re-elected for the second time running as President and Head of State.

The encouraging democratic process and the improvement in the security situation of the country greatly influenced the United Nations not to renew the ban on the sale of Sierra Leone diamonds.

## NOTES

1. The Executive Outcomes – was a private military company founded in South Africa to provide military personnel, training and logistical support to officially recognized governments only. They were however often accused of providing the military strength for corporations to control natural resources in failed states or conflict ridden areas because their governments mostly paid for their services with mining concessions
2. The Abidjan Peace Accord was the first treaty sign in November 1996 between the Sierra Leone People's Party government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the Revolutionary United Front rebel group led by Foday Sankoh
3. The Conakry peace was an ECOWAS six months peace plan for Sierra Leone that was brokered between the Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). It was scheduled to be implemented from 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1997 to 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1998.
4. This was the first time that a coup against a democratic government in Africa has been reversed without United Nations intervention, suggesting a new and positive level of regional cooperation.
5. Prior to the commencement of peace negotiations between the government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL), a ceasefire agreement was sign in May 1999 between the two parties for the cessation of hostilities.
6. The Lome Peace Agreement was signed between the government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone after having lengthy negotiations that stretched from 28<sup>th</sup> May 7<sup>th</sup> July 1999.
7. The 17,500 peacekeepers of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone was the largest United Nations peacekeeping operations in the world at the time
8. The Revolutionary United Front rebels took 500UN peacekeepers hostage and commandeered 13 armoured personnel carrier and thousands rounds of armoured personnel carrier and thousands rounds of ammunition in April 2003 thereby leading to a breakdown in the fragile ceasefire agreement signed.
9. The West Side Boys were an armed group in Sierra Leone, sometimes described as a splinter faction of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. It captured and held some members of the West African peacekeeping Force, ECOMOG, including members of the British Royal Regiment

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **2. THE UNDERLYING CAUSES OF THE ARMED CONFLICT**

The causes of armed conflicts in Africa are not only numerous and interconnected but are diverse in nature. This diversity of the causes of conflicts is a true reflection of the complexity of the trends and legacies of the continent. (Sesay, 2000)

The Sierra Leone armed conflict is not an exception to the complex combination of the causes and factors of conflicts in Africa. In trying to discuss the root causes and factors of the Sierra Leone conflict, an attempt is made to put them under various categories as follow:

#### **2.1. HISTORICAL LEGACIES**

The Sierra Leone conflict did not happen overnight. The causes of the conflict build up over a long period of time. The colonial and pre-independence period witnessed the adoption of dual administrative and legal systems in the governance of the country. The colony was governed under British laws and the protectorate was administered under native customary laws with chieftaincy rule (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle, pp. 41, 1999)

The dual system of governance favoured one region, the colony at the expense of the other, the protectorate in the provision of basic social amenities and access to important services including education, healthcare, electricity, water supply etc, which have far-reaching implications for the development of the two regions. (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle, pp. 41, 1999). The inhabitants of the protectorate considered themselves as being neglected in favour of those in the colony, especially when the hut tax was introduced. (Abraham,1974).

Customary laws that were applied by the chiefs in the protectorate impacted negatively as they were arbitrarily used. The colonial government was accused of manipulating the chieftaincy system and this tends to undermine its legitimacy. The traditional chiefs were seen to have betrayed the interest of their people in favour of their colonial masters. This attitude of the chiefs brought about very serious resentment among people of the protectorate.

## **2.2. POLITICAL FACTORS AND CAUSES**

Sierra Leone was deprived of true democratic and accountable government even before the attainment of independence. The advent of independence did not improve the political situation for the better as successive governments continued to perpetuate the ills of bad governance left behind by their predecessors. Most of the politicians lacked the tenets of accountability and trust between them and the governed. They were some times accused of squandering with impunity the resources of the country at the expense of the general public. (ICG Report, 2001). This action bred a lot of resentment which could be regarded as cause or factor of the conflict.

The abuse of authority by politicians was also extended to most facets of society including major institutions like the civil service, the judiciary, the police and the military. (Hirsch, 2001). These institutions were almost at the brink of collapse especially during the years preceding the conflict. The prevailing situation at the time was most unwelcome to a great majority of the population because it deprived them from enjoying the rewards that normally go with democratic societies. The features of good governance, some of which include the strict observance of the rule of law, an independent and impartial judiciary, freedom of speech and press, free and fair elections etc were not observed by politicians.



The politics of the country was dominated by the All Peoples Congress which ruled from 1968 to 1992. The All peoples Congress was well known for its politics of intimidation and coercion. Their strategy was to manipulate both the police and the military by using them as agents for suppressing opposition politicians. (Kabia, 2007 eds, pp.93-104) Elections during the reigns of the All Peoples Congress were not only associated with violence but were rigged in order to maintain the party in power over against the wish of the people of the country. This brought about a total loss of faith in the political system and growing resentment against the government.

The total failure of politicians to provide solace to the suffering masses and the loss of faith in the political system of civilian governments paved the way for military intervention in the governance of the country. (Stapenhurst, and Kpundeh. eds. 1999). The military like the civilian governments failed woefully to provide durable solutions to the problems of the poor and deprived Sierra Leonean. They were discovered to have done more harm to the country than the civilian governments they replaced through the barrel of the gun. They engaged in rampant abuse of human rights using that as a pretext for providing national security.

There was also what I will call politics of exclusion. In Sierra Leone, the political elite of successive governments excluded society at large from meaningful participation in decision process of matters that affect their livelihood. (An Experts Seminar Report, 2000). Students, youths, women's groups and other civil society groups who are key stakeholders in the society were marginalized by the political elite. It was these marginalized groups that played a central role in initiating and fueling the armed conflict.

### **2.3. ECONOMIC FACTORS AND CAUSES**

Sierra Leone like many other African countries is endowed with huge and valuable natural resources including diamonds, gold, bauxite and titanium to name but a few. Successive political regimes have woefully failed to soundly manage these huge economic potential for the benefit of all Sierra Leoneans. (Sesay, 1993, pp.293-319, 21.)

One main economic factor or cause of the conflict in Sierra Leone is the corruption that was so pervasive within all facets of society in the pre-conflict years. The corruption became very rampant to the extent of undermining the entire economy with grave mismanagement of essential institutions including the police, the civil service, and the judiciary thereby weakening them to an extent of failing the nation in the delivery of their basic functions. (ICG Report 28, 2001). These institutions became devoid of the of the tenets accountability with most workers concerned only about the self as against the interest of the country. The implication of such a status quo was, no justice for the poor. This situation rendered the country ripe for the outbreak of the conflict. The deprived and marginalized compatriots were at the forefront in fueling the conflict when fighters of the Revolutionary United Front launched their attacks on the country.

Competition for the control and exploitation of the country's huge natural resources and the inequitable distribution of the rewards from these resources led to the fomentation of grievances which successive governments failed to address. This was seen as another potential factor for the outbreak of the conflict. The Revolutionary United Front took advantage of this situation by promising combatants a better shear in the rewards from the country's natural resources should they succeed in the rebel onslaught .

Another major factor that assisted in fueling and sustaining the conflict for over a decade was the capture and annexation by Revolutionary United Front of the diamondiferous region of Kono District in the East of Sierra Leone. This gave the rebels the opportunity to freely and illicitly mine the diamonds which were part of the bread basket of the country. The revenue they obtain from the sale the diamonds<sup>1</sup> was utilized in procuring more arms and ammunition to prosecute the war. Paul Collier in his book: *Economic Causes of Civil Conflicts and their Implications for policy* stated that: “Civil wars occur where rebel organizations are financially viable”. (Collier, 2000). This was exactly the situation in Sierra Leone during the period of the conflict. The Revolutionary United Front gained widespread and international recognition when they overran the diamond rich region of Kono District.

#### **2.4. SOCIAL FACTORS AND CAUSES**

Although there is no history or evidence of deep rooted hatred among the various ethnic groups in Sierra Leone as it is the case in Rwanda, Burundi or the Balkans, ethnic relations seemed to have served an undercurrent factor in the Sierra Leone conflict. (Sesay, 2000). The Sierra Leone Peoples Party which is perceived as a southern and eastern party dominated the reigns of power in the early years of Sierra Leone’s independence. This party draws its support mainly from the largest ethnic group in Sierra Leone, the ‘mendés’ and other tribes from the same region. The mendés were said to have received preferential treatments during the reigns of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party.

Later, when the All Peoples Congress, which is perceived as a northern party with support from predominantly ‘themne’ and ‘limba’ ethnic groups, took power, it was argued that it is the turn of the northerners. They used this argument in favouring northerners for recruitment in public employments especially the military and the police forces. It was said that when the

Revolutionary United Front launched their attacks in March 1991, it used the propaganda of bringing back the Sierra Leone Peoples Party to power. This enabled them to gain support and recruited combatants from the south-eastern parts of the country. After regaining a solid base, they recruited fighters, some by conscription from all ethnic groups. The same argument was put forward when the Sierra Leone Peoples party won the 1996 Presidential and Parliamentary elections, after twenty-eight (28) years. Some people perceived the results as the return to power of the Mende ethnic group. Ethnicity as a cause or factor of the Sierra Leone conflict was not therefore all pervasive even though it played some limited role.

Long running feuds among various groups are also considered as a cause and factor responsible for fueling the Sierra Leone conflict. During the period of the conflict, families, neighbours, tribes etc supported or joined the Revolutionary United Front to get a way of avenging their anger against the group(s) they had long running feuds with. This was especially true of feuds over land properties in the provincial areas of the country. Some of the land disputes were considered to have been wrongly arbitrated upon by traditional rulers. The advent of the civil conflict provided an easy avenue for aggrieved parties to manifest their acrimony, rivalry and personal vendettas against their standing enemies. This same factor to some extent helped to spread the conflict to some towns and villages in the provincial regions of the country.

## **2.5. OTHER FACTORS AND CAUSES**

Even though there were a host of internal causes and factors responsible for the outbreak and fueling of the Sierra Leone conflict, it was also clearly evident that some external factors played some major role in sustaining the conflict for over a decade. Some of these external factors include the following:

### **2.5.1. THE ROLE OF LIBYA**

The role of Libya in the Sierra Leone conflict could be traced or based on the false assumption that Foday Sankoh, the Leader of the revolutionary United Front was a true revolutionary with sound anti-imperialist ideology and convictions as held by Colonel Muammar El-Qaddafi, Leader of the Great Al-Fateh Revolution of the Great Socialist Peoples Libyan Arab Jamahiriya (Libya). It was this conviction that made the Libyan Leader to provide military training to some disgruntled Sierra Leoneans including Foday Sankoh and students oppressed by the late president, Siaka Probyn Stevens when a nation-wide students' demonstration failed in its objective to bring about a regime change in 1977. (Conciliation Resources, Profiles-Sierra Leone, no date)

The failure in the objective of the students' demonstration was followed by mass student sensitization through various Green Book<sup>2</sup> Study Groups in University campuses on the political philosophy of Colonel Muammar El-Qaddafi otherwise known as: "The Third Universal Theory". (El-Qaddafi,1983). Members of the Green Book Study Group at Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone later established contacts with Libyan authorities. When some of these members were expelled from the University for their Involvement in riotous conduct on campus during a convocation ceremony in 1985, they traveled to Libya to acquire military training as revolutionaries with the sole motive of ousting the regime of the All Peoples Congress party.

Foday Sankoh, who emerged to be the leader of the Revolutionary United Front, was one of the disgruntled Sierra Leoneans. His disgruntlement was borne out his incarceration for having involved in a failed coup. The call to travel to Libya for military training was an avenue for him to avenge his grievance. After the training, the Libyan authorities provided them with arms and ammunition to launch a rebellion against their country. (TRC Report Vol. 3b Chapt.3)

### **2.5.2. THE LIBERIAN AND CHARLES TAYLOR FACTOR**

The commencement of the Sierra Leone conflict had a close relationship to the prevailing situation in Liberia at the time. Prior to the commencement of the conflict, there had been a long standing tradition of cross-border movement of people and goods across the two countries. Thousands of Sierra Leoneans travelled to Liberia in search of greener pastures, when the country had an economic decline in the mid 1980s. A lot found the environment conducive to work, so they settled down there.

The relationship between the two countries became sour when Charles Taylor strengthened the ties they had long established in Libya with Foday Sankoh to launch attacks in Liberia in 1989 and Sierra Leone in 1991. (Wadlow, 2006). It was Charles Taylor who provided the organizational oversight of both the National Patriotic Front of Liberia and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone even before the war in Sierra Leone was launched. Both Taylor and Sankoh had established concrete plans for a joint military operation in both countries.

Charles Taylor was believed to have provided not only training grounds for his friend Foday Sankoh but also some arms and men for the initial attack on Sierra Leone. In addition to this, the war strategy meetings of the Revolutionary United Front were held in Liberia not in Sierra Leone. He continued to provide support and advice for the sustenance of the war in Sierra Leone because of the rewards he was deriving in terms of the sale of the diamonds the rebels were mining in the country. (Wadlow, 2006). It was however later realized that the Revolutionary United Front was a mere tool of Charles Taylor, dictating its operations in Sierra Leone from Liberia

### **2.5.3. THE BURKINA FASO FACTOR**

Burkina Faso also had some influence in the initial invasion and fueling of the Sierra Leone conflict. Burkina Faso is known to be a major trainer and exporter of men as mercenaries to West African countries that have conflicts. This was quite true in the case of Sierra Leone because when the Revolutionary United Front invaded the country from Liberia, most of the fighters at the time were Burkinabes and Liberians. (Gberie, 2005).

The link between Charles Taylor of Liberia and Qaddafi of Libya was said to have been established by Blaise Campoare of Burkina Faso through one of his Ambassadors. This link was maintained through the same Burkina Faso as facilitator and transit point for men and military support to Foday Sankoh's Revolutionary Front of Sierra Leone and Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia.

### **2.5.4. THE GUINEA FACTOR**

Guinea as a country did not contribute directly to the conflict in Sierra Leone. The relationship between the two countries has traditionally been good. They have an existing Defence Agreement and Guinea hosted over one million refugees from Sierra Leone until after 2002 when the end of the war was declared. The government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was also hosted in exile at Conakry, Guinea for nine (9) months in the late 1990's.

In the mid years of the Sierra Leone conflict, Liberia was accused of providing a safe heaven for and assistance for Guinean dissidents. In retaliation for that, the Guinea government also provided anti-Taylor rebels with a base and some assistance in Guinea for three years. In counter retaliation, Charles Taylor used the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone as mercenaries to

spearhead an invasion in Guinea, although they failed in their objective because the Guinean military proved stronger.

The instability along the three neighbouring countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone affected the pace of the Sierra Leone peace process to some extent. There were instances when fighting spilled over from Sierra Leone to Guinea and into Liberia and vice versa. The situation of cross border fighting also helped to fuel the Sierra Leone conflict.

A combination of the Libyan, Burkina Faso and the Liberian factors bin the Sierra Leone conflict provided support and helped in sustaining the rebellion for over decade. The long established connections and links among these counties were not only ignored but were considered less serious by the government in its effort to finding a durable solution to the conflict. This could be one of the reasons for the failure of the Abidjan Peace Agreement entered by the Sierra Leone Government and the Revolutionary united Front. The agreement concentrated mainly on the internal factors and dynamics of the conflict thereby leaving out the regional dimension that involves the roles played by the countries of Liberia, Libya and Burkina Faso.

## **NOTES**

1. Conflict Diamonds: Otherwise known as blood diamonds are diamonds that originate from areas controlled by forces or factions opposed to legitimate and internationally recognized governments, and are used to fund military activities in opposition to governments, or in contravention of the decision of the Security Council.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **INTERNAL FACTIONS IN THE CONFLICT**

The Sierra Leone conflict was started by the Revolutionary Front (RUF) in March 1991 with support from the special forces of the National Patriotic Front of Liberia<sup>1</sup> (NPFL). As the conflict continued to extend its tentacles to most parts of the country, other factions emerged and became embroiled in it. For the purpose of this thesis, an attempt is made to look at some of the main factions that actually played some role and bear the greatest responsibility in the conflict during its decade long span.

#### **3.1. THE REVOLUTIONARY UNITED FRONT (RUF)**

The Revolutionary United Front was established out of desperation over many years of corrupt, despotic and dictatorial rule of the All Peoples Congress Party (APC) under the leadership of the late Siaka Probyn Stevens. The establishment of the group could be traced way back between 1987 and 1988. (TRC Report Vol. 3b Chapt. 3), when a group of Sierra Leoneans traveled to Libya through Ghana to acquire military training in the art of revolution under the regime of Colonel Muammar Qaddafi, whose ideas and thoughts had contributed in radicalizing some university students that were suppressed and rusticated by Siaka Stevens' All Peoples Congress government at the time.

Among the Sierra Leoneans that traveled to Libya for training, was a functional semi-illiterate in the name of Foday Sankoh who was a former military corporal and photographer that was incarcerated for seven years for alleged implication in a coup plot that failed to overthrow the All People's Congress government of the late Siaka Probyn Stevens. (Nuarmah and Zartman, 2004,

pp.133-150). It is believed that the offer by Foday Sankoh to acquire training in Libya for the purpose of mounting a rebellion against the government that incarcerated him for seven years, was a means of revenge although the leader of that party was no longer alive.

Out of the group that traveled to Libya for training, only three, namely, Abu Kanu, Rashid Mansary and Foday Sankoh ended up to establish what later became known as the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL). The other members of the group especially student activists who initiated the idea of forming a revolutionary group had to leave because of the differences between them and Foday Sankoh regarding the manner in which the rebellion was to be commenced and executed.

In the midst of the differences between Foday Sankoh and his Libyan trained colleagues, he decided to commence the formation of the Revolutionary United Front by recruiting lumpens in Liberia and Sierra Leone and these later made up the core of his group. Sankoh's plan of establishing a rebellious group was made possible through the assistance of his long-time friend, Charles Taylor of Liberia with whom they both acquired training from the same camp in Libya. (BBC News/World/Africa, 2003). Charles Taylor too had started an insurgency in his country, Liberia in 1989 to topple the then leader, Samuel K. Doe. It is believed that it was from Charles Taylor that the Revolutionary United Front gained its first outside support in the form of providing the group with hardcore Liberian guerilla fighters with a group of Sierra Leone revolutionaries who were willing to take part in the rebellion. It was also Charles Taylor who used his contacts and connections with Burkina Faso to acquire some Burkinabe mercenaries to help prosecute the rebellion in Sierra Leone. This is a fact that the leadership of the Revolutionary United Front always denied that they used mercenaries. They believed their

rebellion enjoyed support and sympathy of Sierra Leoneans. In one of the opening paragraphs of their manifesto titled: “Footpath to Democracy: - Toward A New Sierra Leone”: It stated that:

We entered Sierra Leone through Liberia and enjoyed the sympathy of Sierra Leonean migrant workers some of whom joined us to cross the border to start our liberation campaign. This generation of Sierra Leoneans who have had to migrate to make a living in Liberia are now referred as mercenaries and bandits by the Freetown based military junta. The military has also used this fact to gain support from Guinea, Nigeria, Ghana, the United Nations and Britain in its avowed policy of war to rid Sierra Leone of alien rebels.”(RUF/SL Manifesto, 1996)

The military junta they were referring to in the above quotation was the National Provisionary Ruling Council (NPRC) which outsmarts them in their objective of ending the long grip on power the All People’s Congress which at the time was led by Joseph Saidu Momoh.

The Revolutionary United Front launched their armed insurgency in Sierra Leone in March 1991. (Final Report, TRC/SL, para.159). They mounted a two-pronged full scale incursion from Liberia into Kailahun and Pujehun districts of Eastern and Southern parts of the country almost simultaneously with the expressed aim of putting an end to the Twenty-Four (24) years grip on power by the government of the All People’s Congress Party.

At the time of the commencement of the incursion, the Sierra Leone Army which has the constitutional responsibility of protecting the lives, property and territorial integrity of the country was ill equipped, weak and unprofessional. As a result of these inadequacies, rebels of the Revolutionary Unite Front were able to raid several towns and villages. (Final Report, TRC/SL, para.159). Within a month of the commencement of their campaign, they were able to put under their control most parts of the Kailahun district. This was made possible by the use of various terror tactics which were applied as a strategy meant to instill fear into the minds of civilians. They forcefully abducted children and conscripted them into combatants with death

threats; they not only massacred entire village and town communities but also targeted traditional rulers and people of influence in these communities; public and brutal executions were said to be carried out on civilians who refuse to obey their instructions or alleged to have committed crimes; the amputation of limbs and other body parts was also common when the rebels advanced to a new territory; rape and sexual violence against women and girls of different ages was widespread; the destruction and looting of property was the order of the day and a main source of survival for the group.

The terror tactics employed by the Revolutionary United Front resulted into a humanitarian crisis that made the inhabitants of towns and villages to flee for their lives especially when it became clear that the Sierra Leone Army was ill-equipped to adequately defend and protect their lives and property.

Even though one of the motives of the revolutionary United Front was to oust the government of the All People's Congress under Joseph Saidu Momoh, they never relent in pursuit of their objective even when a group of young soldiers traveled from the war front to overthrow that government and established the National Provisional Ruling Council (Gberie, 2005, pp.70-71) They continued to use their terror and inhuman tactics as their trade mark in fighting successive governments starting with the government of the All People's Congress Party, to the National Provisional Ruling Council and the Sierra Leone People's Party that was democratically elected under Ahmad Tejan Kabbah after the 1996 general elections that made an exit for the military junta of the National Provisional Ruling Council.

With the assistance of Charles Taylor of Liberia, the Revolutionary United Front were able to sustain the conflict from 1991 to 2002 and during this period of over a decade, they were able to

intermittently occupy the diamond producing region and most other parts of the country. The occupation of the diamond producing region enabled the rebels to engage in the lucrative blood diamond trade in the West African sub-region. The terror tactics used by the Revolutionary United Front in pursuing the war according to Abdallah Ibrahim's book titled: "Bush Path to Destruction", "defied traditional patterns of guerrilla movements, and in many ways defines the emergency patterns of armed struggle in Africa". (Abdallah,1998, p.203-235)

It took up to five years for people of Sierra Leon to have a clear understanding as to what the Revolutionary United Front stood for, and who their leader was and wanted. Regardless of these doubts, the Revolutionary United Front continued to grow in strength and prowess, and by 1995, they were kilometers away from the capital, Freetown. In an effort to overcoming the rebels militarily, the government in power at the time, the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) had to turn to a South African Security Firm, the Executive Outcomes (EO)<sup>2</sup> for assistance in repelling the rebels. The vigorous and combined efforts of the Executive Outcomes, the Sierra Leone Army and the Civil Militias, the rebels were cleared from the diamond region and most of the country within few months of the arrival of the foreign security firm.

By the end of 1996, the combined efforts of the Sierra Leone Army, the Civil Militias and the Executive Outcomes exerted a serious blow on the potency of the Revolutionary United Front to the extent of almost bringing them to their knees that made them to sign an unconditional cease-fire agreement that led to the Abidjan Peace Talks that culminated to the signing of the Abidjan Peace Accord<sup>3</sup> in November 1996 between President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah who was elected to power on the ticket of the Sierra Leone People's Party in May of that same year. The government on signing the peace agreement displayed diplomatic naivety by granting a lot of concessions to the rebels and depending heavily on the goodwill of the international community for the

implementation of the accord. They did not only stop at that, they went further by prematurely asking out the foreign security firm, the Executive Outcomes. The Revolutionary United Front took advantage of the situation and reneged on the peace agreement by continuing their attacks once again.

A contingent of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was sent to normalize the situation. During this period, a group of military officials were arrested in a suspected coup plot. In March 1997, Foday Sankoh, leader of the Revolutionary United Front traveled to Nigeria where he was apprehended and put under house arrest. (Hirsch, 2001, pp.54-55). In his absence, Sam Bockarie alias Mosquito, assume the mantle of leadership of the Revolutionary United Front and was directly responsible for directing military operations of the group.

In May 1997, a group of low rank soldiers attacked the Central Maximum Prisons, releasing the coup plotters that were earlier arrested and a number of hard-core criminals in what turned out to be another military coup. President Kabbah and some of his cabinet ministers fled to neighbouring Guinea. Major Johnny Paul Koroma<sup>4</sup>, one of the suspected coup plotters freed from prison became the leader of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), the military junta established to rule the country.

The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council invited the Revolutionary United Front to join them, declaring the war to be over. (Conciliation Resources, (Profile-Sierra Leone"; no date). The period of the AFRC/RUF rule was characterized by complete breakdown of law and order and a collapse of the economy with the cessation of all economic and social activities. Rape and looting became the order of the day. (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-File, 2004, pp.133-150).

In February 1998, forces of the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) led by Nigeria forced the AFRC/RUF junta out of Freetown in a battle that took the lives of many people. (Final Report, TRC/SL, para.850-865). President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was restored to Office. The rebels were forced to retreat and they mounted a violent campaign through out the country. Although some people including Foday Sankoh were arrested, charged, convicted of treason and other offences associated with the AFRC/RUF administration, the rebels continued their rampage and attacked Freetown again in January 1999 using women and children as human shield.

In the fighting that followed this second invasion of Freetown, another estimated five thousand people died. Before they could be beaten back, which was totally against their wish, a large part of the city was burned and they again took along a number of children and women. Even though ECOMOG and the civil militia pursued them, the rebels continued to play havoc in the interior of the country. In another effort to resolving the conflict, the government and the Revolutionary United Front entered into other peace negotiations but this in Lome, Togo. The chief negotiator was Nasingbey Eyadema, the then President of the Republic of Togo and Chairman of the Economic Community of West African States at the time.

### **3.2. THE SIERRA LEONE ARMY (SLA)**

The Sierra Leone Army has a constitutional and primary responsibility to defend Sierra Leone's territorial integrity against external aggressors. In order to be able to carry out this role effectively, the Sierra Leone Army needs to be strong, professionally trained, motivated and well equipped with full range military capabilities (including engineering techniques, logistics, medical and communications facilities etc.). They need sufficient forces to secure the borders,

land area and territorial waters. They also need to have a robust maritime and air capability to support the land forces in the event of an attack.

During the time the Revolutionary United Front launched their insurgency on the eastern and southern borders of the country, the Sierra Leone Army was unable to adequately carry out its constitutional and primary responsibility of defending the citizens of the country. This was due to the fact that the army was unprofessional, ill equipped and much undisciplined. (Cox, 1976 pp.207). The ineffectiveness of the army at the time was blamed on the endemic corrupt practices that were perpetrated by the All People's Congress regime that was in authority. During this period, most of the basic needs of the military were abandoned with reckless indifference to the extent of making it very unprofessional and incapable of meeting the role for which it was established. Instead the All People's Congress regime concentrated on strengthening a paramilitary force that was concerned only with the internal security at an almost inverse proportion to the army, all in an effort to entrench themselves in power.

The incompetence of the army was further exacerbated by the corrupt attitude of senior army officers who diverted to themselves most the logistical support intended for the prosecution of the war thereby undermining the defence of the country and breeding dissatisfaction within the rank and file of the army. The failure of the army to provide necessary security against the Revolutionary United Front invasion of the country brought about a loss of trust between them and the civilian population. This loss of trust reached its peak when it was discovered that some senior military officers were in connivance with the Revolutionary United Front to plunder civilian resources through ambushes and raids on civilian targets. (Wood and Reese, 2008).



It was during the period the Sierra Leone citizenry expected to be protected by the army against the atrocities of the rebels that they betrayed the trust bestowed upon them by unconstitutionally seizing power from the civilian governments of Joseph Saidu Momoh of the All People's Congress regime in 1992 to form the National Provisional Ruling Council and Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party in 1997 to form the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. It was also during the years of the conflict that the army was known to have carried out numerous human rights violations by tutoring, and arbitrarily killing civilians suspected to be rebels or collaborators without establishing the veracity of such allegations. These actions of the army helped to fuel the conflict in the sense that some relatives of the victims of their actions tried to find all avenues available, like becoming rebels in their efforts of avenging their grievances.

When it was discovered that the Sierra Leone army can no longer be trusted for the protection of the people of Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leone Peoples Party Government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah on his second coming from exile had no alternative but to disband and demobilize the army and instead depended on foreign troops including United Nations peacekeepers, British troops, and civil militia for the protection of the state. (IRIN-WA, 1998)

However, with the end of the war and through funding from Britain and other friendly countries, a newly restructured Sierra Leone Army was created with the assistance of International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT)<sup>5</sup> which tried to reorganize, retrain and reintegrate members of the former Sierra Leone Army.

### **3.3 THE NATIONAL PROVISIONAL RULING COUNCIL (NPRC)**

The National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) was a military junta of young and junior-ranking officials of the Sierra Leone Army that ousted President Joseph Saidu Momoh's All People's Congress Government on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1992 in a bloodless military coup. The coup started as a mutiny of military officials from the war front who came to the capital in the guise of protesting against the failure of the All People's Congress government to properly manage the war through the irregular payment of salaries, shortage of food rations, and the non provision of other logistics to earnestly prosecute the war.

The National Provisional Ruling Council elevated and appointed Captain Valentine Essegrabor Melvin Strasser as Head of State. Although the seizure of power by the military junta was considered unconstitutional, the regime change was welcomed by a great majority of the people of Sierra Leone especially so because the All People's Congress regime they ousted was known to be undemocratic and their grip on power was long overdue. The All People's Congress regime was also ousted at a time when the economy had plummeted to its lowest ebb. All these factors coupled with the inability of the government to end the Revolutionary United Front invasion, gave some legitimacy to the military junta. Even with the de facto legitimacy and popularity the military junta assumed the reigns of power with, it did not take long for people to realize the naivety of the young military officers in running the state. They brought with them a pattern of lawlessness and impunity to the people of Sierra Leone.

In their effort to instill fear into the minds of people and entrench themselves in power, they extra-judiciously executed a number of innocent civilians throughout the country on the pretext that they are rebel supporters or collaborators. They also in December 1992 executed 26 (Gberie, pp.79 2005) senior civilian and military members of the All People's Congress regime they

overthrew without any due process of the law in flagrant violation of international standards. They however tried to justify their action by retroactively referring to the deceased victims to be coup plotters. This was in addition to the countless number of tortures and detention of persons they considered a threat to their regime.

Among the promises made by the National Provisional Ruling Council made to the people of Sierra Leone on assuming power was, putting a quick end to the ravaging conflict at the time. It later came out that prosecuting the war as promised by the junta was not as easy as they initially thought, especially when they came to realize that a reasonable proportion of their troops were either disloyal or concentrated in acts of self aggrandizement other than trying to end the war.

The National Provisional Ruling Council administration later became embroiled in an internal power struggle that culminated into a palace coup that ousted Captain Valentine Strasser to be replaced by his deputy, Julius Maada Bio<sup>6</sup>. Prior to the palace coup, there was already a timetable for returning the country to a democratically elected civilian government endorsed by the people of Sierra Leone in a National Delegates Conference that was held for the purpose. Julius Maada Bio attempted to prolong the hand over to a civilian government by calling for and emphasizing ending the war as a priority to the holding of elections. In a second National Delegates Conference held at the Bintumani hotel in Freetown, the people of Sierra Leone stood their ground by unanimously voting for elections and the subsequent hand over to an elected civilian President. The outcome of the second National Delegates Conference was a clear manifestation that the people of Sierra Leone were totally fed-up with the junta administration.

General Elections were held in March 1996 amidst a lot of threats from the rebels and the National Provisional Ruling Council handed over power to the democratically elected President,

Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party. Before the General elections, the National Provisional Ruling Council Government under Julius Maada Bio however started peace talks with the Revolutionary United Front in Abidjan that were later continued by the Sierra Leone Peoples Party government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah that led to the signing of the Abidjan Peace Accord in November 1996.

### **3.4. THE SIERRA LEONE PEOPLES PARTY (SLPP)**

The Sierra Leone People's Party is one of the oldest political parties in the Sierra Leone political arena, spanning from the pre-independence years to present. It was the first party to be elected to rule Sierra Leone after independence until 1968 when the All People's Congress party assumes the mantle of leadership after emerging victorious in the 1967 general elections. (Bundu, 2001) The All People's Congress ruled the country from 1968 until 1992 when low-ranking military officials overthrew them and held on to power for four years until 1996 when they handed power to the Sierra Leone Peoples Party again after winning the general elections of that same year.

The newly reinstated Sierra Leone Peoples Party government assumed power at a time when the country was in a serious conflict brought by the Revolutionary United Forces. As such, the government was faced with the utmost priority of ending the war. It was in furtherance of the objective of ending the war that led the government to hastily enter into negotiations in Abidjan, Ivory Coast with the Revolutionary United Front that culminated to the signing of the Abidjan Peace Accord. The rebels in their characteristic fashion quickly reneged on the peace agreement by starting their attacks again. The Sierra Leone Peoples Party government at this time tried to utilize all resources at its disposal to carry out a systematic campaign of attacks on Revolutionary United Front bases. This was done with the combined efforts of the Sierra Army, all Civil Militia groups, the Guinean Armed Forces and the Executive Outcomes of South Africa.

When the Sierra Leone Peoples Party government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah realised that they could no longer rely upon the Sierra Leone Army for their effective defence in the face of relentless attacks by the Revolutionary United Front, they sought assistance from local civil militia especially the group known as the “kamajors” in defending the nation from actions of renegade troops and the Revolutionary United Front. The civil militias were accused of many human right violations, which the government was aware of, but failed to take necessary action to quell the situation. The government was also accused of favouring the civil militias at the expense of the Sierra Leone Army and this was advanced as one of the reasons for the May 1997 coup of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, which forced President Kabbah to flee to neighbouring Guinea. (Wood and Reese, 2008). The Sierra Leone Peoples Party government, when in exile established a war council that was directing activities of the war through the high command of the civil militia and some loyal soldiers.

The Sierra Leone Peoples Party government stayed in exile until the military junta was removed by ECOMOG with assistance from the civil militias and some loyal soldiers in February 1998. On their resumption of office the government engaged in actions that violated the human rights of persons alleged to have collaborated or supported the ousted military junta. They arrested, detained, and imprisoned a lot of people without charge for untested allegations.

The Sierra Leone Peoples Party government also failed to address abuses like summary executions, torture, mob justice, flogging etc. carried out by the ECOMOG forces that ousted the junta. The reinstated Sierra Leone Peoples Party government also court martial thirty-seven soldiers of the Sierra Leone Army. Twenty- Four (Keen, 2005) of the Twenty-Seven found guilty were executed and three were acquitted and discharged. The government continued to condone

the arrest and detention of many persons suspected of having collaborated with the Revolutionary United Front or Armed Forces Revolutionary Council.

With the assistance of the international community including the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Nations, the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States, Britain, the United States etc, the government entered into other peace negotiations with the rebels in Lome, Togo that led to the signing of the Lome Peace Agreement.

### **3.5. THE ARMED FORCES REVOLUTIONAY COUNCIL (AFRC).**

The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) was a group low ranking soldiers of the Sierra Leone Army who overthrew the constitutionally elected Sierra Leone Peoples Party government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah on 25<sup>th</sup> May 1997. The soldiers break into the maximum-security prisons and released a group of military officers among other hard-core criminals that were earlier detained on an allegation of a failed coup attempt. Among those released were Major Johnny Paul Koroma who was later appointed Chairman of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and Head of State.

The reasons given by the military junta for overthrowing the civilian government were, its failure to consolidate peace in Sierra Leone following the November 1966 Abidjan Peace Accord signed between the Sierra Leone Government and the Revolutionary United Front; they also claimed that President Kabbah's Government was undemocratic and that a majority of its key government positions were filled by members the mende ethnic group; they further accused the government of favouring the civil militias in providing logistical supplies for the prosecution of the war etc. (Wood and Reese, 2008).

The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council invited the Revolutionary United Front to join them and requested the release and return to Freetown, Sierra Leone of the Foday Sankoh, the Revolutionary United Front leader who had been detained in Nigeria by the Nigerian authorities in March 1997.(UNDHA:IRIN-WA, 1997). Foday Sankoh gave his support to the military coup and ordered his Revolutionary United Front forces to join the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, of which they did and subsequently arrived in Freetown to join the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. (Conciliation Resources, (Profile-Sierra Leone”; no date). Foday Sankoh was later appointed Vice Chairman of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and prominent members of his Revolutionary United Front group were appointed members of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Ruling Council.

The formation of an alliance between the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council and the Revolutionary United Front strengthened the resolve of the citizens of Sierra Leone to stand against the unconstitutional behaviour of the army that was meant to protect them against the rebel insurgency. Such an alliance further proved that the army was in connivance with the rebels to plunder the resources of the state and that of the civilian population. (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-File, 2004, pp.143). The AFRC/RUF on the other hand viewed civilians with contempt and regarded them as enemies and therefore employed all strategies aimed at destroying any civilian life that stood their way, regardless of any human right regulations. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council was also known to have carried out about half of the amputation of limbs and other body parts of civilians and was also responsible for the abduction of a great number of women and children.

However, the AFRC had no legitimacy or popular support like the former NPRC junta. The international community refused to recognize them and was condemned by all international organizations including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the organization of African Unity (OAU) at the time, the United Nations (UN) and the United States and the United Kingdom. Some renowned international organizations called for the imposition of sanctions and embargo against them.

Several attempts were made to broker a peace deal with the junta and into convincing them to relinquish power. The second round of peace negotiations took place in Conakry<sup>7</sup>, Guinea between the government of Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and the Freetown based junta, led by Johnny Paul Koroma. When they realised that they can no longer hold on to a semblance of state power, and with the pressure from the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), they agreed in principle to step down and hand over power to the democratically elected government in April of 1998. They later rescinded the agreement and insisted together with the RUF that all foreign troops should leave the country. This was a clear manifestation of the unwillingness of the junta to compromise on its survival for purely political gains.

It therefore became clear that the junta boys were stubborn and very unwilling to go. In February 1998, the ECOWAS Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) together with assistance from some Sierra Leone Army loyalists and the local civil militia (the Kamajors), the AFRC/RUF were forced out of Freetown in a battle that took many lives. President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was restored to office and took drastic steps to demobilize the entire army. The AFRC/RUF retreated with a violent rampage through the country as they were chased from one place to the other by ECOMOG forces without much success. Several thousands of civilians were brutally killed and



mutilated and hundreds of others were abducted from their towns and villages and then forced to join their attackers.

In January 1999 the AFRC/RUF appeared again at the doorsteps of Freetown taking the government and ECOMOG off-guard in an effort to capture the city once again using women and children as human shield. Some of the troops were able to bypass ECOMOG positions and entered to join their colleagues that have already infiltrated the city.

In the fighting that ensued again, an estimated five thousand (5,000) people died. Before the rebels were beaten back, a large part of the city was burned and a large number of children and women were abducted again as they retreated. Some of the troops transformed themselves into a gang called the Westside Boys<sup>8</sup> and settled at a place called Okra Hills, 50 kilometers from the city, Freetown. It was from this place they were causing a lot of havoc, by ambushing and high jacking vehicles. They even went to the extent of abducting soldiers of the British Army that were engaged in training West African peacekeepers. British forces in a raid that freed the hostages destroyed the West Side Boys and their base. This was how the AFRC finally ceased to function as a viable organization.

### **3.6. THE CIVIL DEFENCE FORCES (CDF)**

The Civil Defence Forces were originally hunters with bravery to face wild animals in the forest and were known to possess magical powers that assist them in the effective and successful accomplishment of their hunt. During the conflict, inhabitants of towns and villages discovered that the Sierra Leone Army was ill equipped and undisciplined to adequately protect them from the RUF insurgency. In this regard they decided to enlist young men into civil militia groups to

protect their towns and villages starting with the small group of hunters they have within their midst. This civil militia carries different names depending on which part of the country they were established. Those from Kenema district and other eastern and southern parts of the country were called “Kamajors”, those from the north especially Kabala district were called “Tamaboroh” or “Capras” and those from Kono district were known as “Donsors”. Among all these names, the one that came to prominence was the Kamajors<sup>9</sup>. It officially became known as the Kamajor Militia Movement of Sierra Leone. It is a novel form of social organization that is simultaneously political, social and economic. The movement became very powerful during the Sierra Leone civil conflict as it helped in defending most parts of the country from the rebel insurgency. In the course of defending the nation, they committed uncountable violations and abuses against the people from Sierra Leone.

In order to maintain the magical myth they were professed to possess, the Kamajors designed a fearful and cumbersome initiation ceremony for people willing to become members of their group. Initiates are sometimes forced to eat human body parts during initiation ceremonies. (Berkely, 2005). It is believed that eating human body parts will fortify them and make them immune against bullets.

Even though the civil militia helped in defending the country against the rebels, it was discovered that most of the militia fighters were poorly trained and ill disciplined which resulted in their gross human right violation and abuse. The government was said to have knowledge of some of these abuses but since they were targeted against their enemies, no action was taken to remedy the situation.

## NOTES

1. The term 'special forces' is understood to denote fighters who have been trained outside of the country they are fighting in. It is not due to special training.
2. Executive Outcomes – was a private military company founded in South Africa to provide military personnel, training and logistical support to officially recognized governments only. They were however often accused of providing the military strength for corporations to control natural resources in failed states or conflict ridden areas because their governments mostly paid for their services with mining concessions.
3. "The Abidjan Peace Accord," 30<sup>th</sup> November 1996, Peace Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL)
4. Jonny Paul Koroma was in Prison since August for an attempted coup on the elected government. This coup was part of the 'sobel' element in the army,
5. International Military Assistance Training Team (IMATT, SL) was established in 2002 following the end of the war and the disarmament of rebels by the United Nations in Sierra Leone. Its Mission is to help develop the Armed Forces into a democratically accountable, effective and sustainable force to fulfill security tasks required by government.
6. In a Council meeting, after Valentine Strasser made a statement, Mada Bio said he would not support him. Bio pulled out a pistol and pointed it at Strasser's head, a struggle ensued but was quickly contained and handcuffs were placed on Strasser and later flown to neighbouring Guinea.
7. The Conakry peace was an ECOWAS six months peace plan for Sierra Leone that was brokered between the Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) and the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). It was scheduled to be implemented from 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1997 to 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1998.
8. The West Side Boys was an armed group in Sierra Leone, sometimes described a splinter faction of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council. It captured and held members of a mostly West African Peace peacekeeping force (including members of the Royal Irish Rangers) in 2000, and was subsequently destroyed by units of the British Troops.
9. The 'Kamajors' militias are traditional hunters who fought against the Revolutionary United Front during the Sierra Leone conflict.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESOLVING THE CONFLICT**

The inability of the Sierra Leone government and its national army to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country in the face of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) invasion in the eastern and southern borders was attributed to a plethora of factors as discussed in the preceding chapters. The ineffectiveness of the army also enabled the rebels to continue to ravage towns and villages, committing serious human right violations and destroying property in unimaginable proportions.

Successive governments including the All People's Congress (APC) under the leadership of Joseph Saidu Momoh, the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) under captain Valentine Melvin Strasser and Brigadier Maada Bio and later the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) under Ahmad Tejan Kabbah continued to battle with the RUF in combat with no clear indication of bringing the war to conclusive end. Sierra Leone was essentially not on the international community radar during the early stages of the conflict. (diplomatshandbook.org, no date). International community involvement in Sierra Leone can therefore broadly be seen as one of neglect until the late 1990s, at which time the United Kingdom (UK) and the United Nations (UN) led a robust international response to a crisis that had finally become too dire to continue to ignore. (diplomatshandbook.org, no date). Before this period, the only international body that was willing to intervene in the Sierra Leone conflict was the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) led by Nigeria. The involvement of other members of the international community in the conflict came at a later time when a lot of destruction has been caused. Apart from the UK, UN and ECOWAS, a number of national, regional and international players including Sierra Leone civil society groups, the United States of America (USA), the

European Union (EU), the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) that later transformed into the African Union (AU) and the Mano River Union (MRU) contributed in diverse ways to bring the conflict to an end.

#### **4.1. THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES (ECOWAS)**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been the principal regional organization that demonstrated its willingness to search for peace in the war ravaged Sierra Leone. Even though it was said to be under-equipped and under-funded, it can be credited for preventing Sierra Leone from descending deeper into and protracted conflict. The organization was established in 1975 to promote economic integration in “all fields of economic activity, particularly industry, transport, telecommunications, energy, agriculture, natural resources, commerce, monetary and financial questions, social and cultural matters (ECOWAS in brief, no date) in the West African sub-region.

In the early 1980s, it established a collective security framework to counter external threats and resolve disputes between and within member states. Its Military Wing, the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) was constituted in 1990 to intervene in the Liberian civil war, which was brought in 1989 by Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL).

The Sierra Leone government granted permission to ECOWAS to establish the base of ECOMOG in the country for the intervention into Liberia. This was very much to the dislike of Charles Taylor who threatened to export his conflict to Sierra Leone so that they can have a bitter taste of it.

In the early 1990s, when the Sierra Leone conflict started, ECOMOG presence in the country was limited to a few hundred logistic troops in support of operations in Liberia. The government of Sierra Leone under separate bilateral agreements with Nigeria and Guinea has troops from these countries deployed in the capital Freetown, and some parts in the North and South. In the face of mounting pressure, from the advancing rebels, Sierra Leone and Nigeria renewed their agreement, and Nigeria was to provide presidential protection, strategic support, training for the Sierra Leone Army.

In April 1992, a group of disgruntled soldiers from the war front overthrew President Joseph Saidu Momoh of the APC to form the NPRC (Wood and Reese, 2008). The coup was popular at the time because most Sierra Leoneans have grown disgruntled with the APC's corrupt and ineffectual rule. Due to the NPRC's inexperience and autocratic rule, it failed to end the war as promised. As a result, they were put under immense foreign and domestic pressure to hold elections and hand over power to a democratic civilian government.

It was the lacklustre performance of the Sierra Leone Army and the failure of the international community to quickly intervene in the conflict that forced the government to hire the South African security firm: the Executive Outcomes to lead the fight against the insurgents. This action helped to push the RUF into the brink of defeat and thereby forcing Foday Sankoh to the negotiating table that led to the signing of the Abidjan Peace Agreement. The rebels were again very quick to renege on the peace agreement.

By May 1997, another group of disgruntled soldiers overthrew President Kabbah's Government and this made him to flee to Guinea. (Wood and Reese, 2008). The coup, which coincided with the OAU summit in Harare, Zimbabwe, was unanimously condemned by the leaders of the OAU

and called for the immediate restoration of constitutional order in Sierra Leone.(OAU Summit Decision, 1997). The African leaders further called upon the leaders of the regional Economic Community of West African States to assist the people of Sierra Leone to restore constitutional order and to help in the implementation of the Abidjan Peace Agreement, which continued to serve as a viable framework for peace, stability and reconciliation in the country. In October 1997, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution imposing economic sanctions (UNSC Resolution 1132, 1997) against the junta to be enforced by the ECOWAS Monitoring Group, ECOMOG.

Regardless of the request, the poor economic status of ECOWAS members with very limited resources in terms of soldiers and funds for its peacekeeping missions, Nigeria under the leadership of late General Sani Abacha was the only country in the sub-region that was willing to commit a large number of troops. In response to the request, ECOMOG deployed more troops to Sierra Leone with its force growing to 12,000 by February 1998.

With pressure mounting from the presence of this large number of ECOMOG troops, the AFRC/RUF junta agreed to negotiate in Conakry, Guinea that enabled the signing of the Conakry Peace Agreement that they also failed to respect. ECOMOG saw the unwillingness of the AFRC/RUF to relinquish power to the democratically elected SLPP government of President Kabbah and as such marched on to Freetown on February 1988 forcing them to retreat. (TRC Final Report, para, 850-863). They again invaded the capital in January 1999 but with no success of taking it, though with a huge human loss and damage to property. It was ECOMOG that prevented the rebels from occupying the entire country.

The 1999 Human Rights Report states that:

With the failure of diplomatic efforts and escalation tension, ECOMOG's mandate was upgraded from sanctions enforcement to actual military intervention, resulting in the ousting of the AFRC/RUF in February. The Nigerian dominated ECOMOG contingent in Sierra Leone was composed of approximately 9,000 troops including support battalions from Guinea and Ghana. ECOMOG's intervention in Sierra Leone came at time of sharp international criticism of Nigeria's domestic human right situation. International Human Right Groups complained that ECOMOG's shelling of Freetown led to high civilian casualties (Human Rights Watch World Report, 1999)

With the coming into office of a democratically elected president in Nigeria and with the economic and human loss on the side of Nigerians in ECOMOG, the government announced their intention to withdraw its troops. With the intention of Nigeria to withdraw its troops, diplomatic efforts were mounted by the international community to open peace negotiations between the government and the rebels. The effort yielded fruits and peace dialogue between the parties to the conflict started in Lome, Togo that culminated into the Lome Peace Agreement that provided the viable framework for the attainment of peace in Sierra Leone.

#### **4.2. THE UNITED NATIONS**

As indicated earlier, the United Nations was not directly and actively involved in the initial stages of the Sierra Leone conflict even though its development and humanitarian agencies were active through out these years. It only politically became involved in it in 1994 when the Head of State of the country at the time Valentine Melvin Strasser requested the Security Council<sup>1</sup> to assist in bringing about a negotiated settlement with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF). It was in February 1995 that the United Nations Secretary General appointed a Special Envoy in the person of Mr. Berhanu Dinka<sup>2</sup> an Ethiopian to work in collaboration with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to work out a negotiated settlement of the Sierra Leone conflict and to return the country to civilian rule.



Due to domestic and foreign pressure, the National Provisional Ruling Council government decided to relinquish power by holding Presidential and Parliamentary elections in February 1996, which elected President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah to office. This did not stop the RUF from continuing with their attacks. Regardless of the reservations held by the RUF about the neutrality of the Special Envoy in brokering a truce between them and the government, he assisted in bringing them to the negotiating table in Abidjan that resulted in the signing of the Abidjan Peace Accord in November 1996. The agreement was derailed in less than a year by the military coup of Johnny Paul Koroma in May 1997. The military joined forces with the RUF to form a junta and the President and his government flee to neighbouring Guinea.

The United Nations vehemently and unequivocally condemned the coup with a call for an immediate and unconditional return to civilian rule. The Special Envoy and other representatives of the international community tried but failed to persuade the junta to step down. The United Nations Secretary General replaced Mr. Berhanu Dinka as Special Envoy with Francis Okelo from Ugandan. (UNSC Resolution 1181, 1998). This was followed by an oil and arms embargo on the junta to be enforced by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)

The failure of the junta to respect the Conakry Peace Agreement, which was brokered by the ECOWAS Committee of Five between them and the government, led to their expulsion by ECOMOG in February 1988 and the subsequent return to office of President Kabbah. The Security Council lifted the oil and arms embargo and strengthened the office of the Special Envoy to include military liaison officers and security advisory personnel.

The United Nations Security Council further established the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone. (UNSC Resolution 1181, 1998). and the Secretary General upgraded the position of Special Envoy to Special Representative. The rebel alliance still continued fighting in the provincial areas and later advanced to retake Freetown. The Special Representative continued his work by making series of diplomatic contacts that opened up dialogue with rebels in Lome, Togo and thereby leading to the signing of the Lome Peace Agreement.

With announcement by Nigeria that they intend to withdraw it troops from ECOMOG, the United Nations Security Council moved to establish in October 1999, the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) with a 6,000 strong force to help the government and parties carry out the provisions of the Lome Peace Agreement. As stated by the United States Department:

UNAMSIL's mandate is to assist the government of Sierra Leone to extend state authority, restore law and order and progressively stabilize the country, and to assist in the promotion of the political process leading to a renewed disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. The mission's current tasks include's providing security at key installations in Freetown and Southern Sierra Leone; facilitating the free flow of people; goods, and humanitarian assistance along specified roads; safeguarding and disposing of arms collected from ex-combatants; and assisting Sierra Leone's law enforcement authorities in the maintenance of Law and order (US State Department, 2001)

The Security Council under subsequent resolutions continued to revise the mandate of UNAMSIL to meet new tasks with an increase in the number of peacekeepers that reached a record high of 17,50 (Ramires, 2002) by March 2001. With this number UNAMSIL was able with cooperation of the parties to the conflict able disarm thousands of ex-combatants, assisted in the conduct of national elections in 2002, helped to rebuild the country' police force, contributed towards rehabilitating the infrastructure and bringing government services to local communities.

UNAMSIL did not achieve these successes without encountering problems in the course of carrying out their mandate, but have always found solutions to such problems. There was one major one that took place in May of 2000 when 500 peacekeepers were abducted by the RUF. This incident endangered the United Nations peacekeeping operations and nearly led to the collapse of the mission in Sierra Leone. Through diplomatic negotiations and contacts with key RUF players especially Charles Taylor of Liberia who commanded great influence over the rebels at the time, the peacekeepers were released unharmed.

Finally by early 2002, UNAMSIL completed the disarmament of and demobilization of 75,000, ex-combatants thereby leading the government to declare the end of the Sierra Leone conflict.

#### **4.3. THE ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN UNITY (OAU)**

The Organisation of African Unity<sup>3</sup> (OAU) which has now been transformed into the African Union (AU) was among the international organizations to unequivocally condemn the May 1997 coup of Johnny Paul Koroma and called for the unconditional return of the country to constitutional order. It also further requested the Leaders of the regional Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to assist the people of Sierra Leone in returning the country to civilian rule.

The Secretary-General of the organization in June 2000 appointed a Special Envoy to Sierra Leone in the person of Ambassador Jeremiah N.K. Mamabolo<sup>4</sup>, the Ambassador of South Africa to the Federal Republic of Ethiopia and Permanent Representative to the Organisation of African Unity. This appointment was intended to enhance the continued effort, which the OAU has employed in support of regional and international effort aimed at ending the conflict and restoring peace, security and stability in Sierra Leone.

In pursuance of his assignment, Ambassador Mamabolo worked closely with the government of Sierra Leone and other countries of the sub-regional organization, ECOWAS, and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). He reported all the peace initiatives and activities in the country to the Secretary-General of the OAU. Representatives of the OAU were most times present in the meetings held with parties of the conflict in trying to reach a negotiated settlement. The OAU also served as one of the moral guarantors (witness) to the Lome Peace Agreement which provided the basis for a lasting and durable peace in Sierra Leone.

#### **4.4. THE COMMONWEALTH OF NATIONS**

The Commonwealth of Nations focused its attention on Sierra Leone mainly for the purpose of attaining the twin objectives of democracy and peace. (Report of the Commonwealth on Sierra Leone, 1999-2001) The organization provided substantial support to the transition of the country to civilian democratic governance and its consolidation and the pursuit of durable peace. The organization was seized of the situation even up to the time the civilian government was overthrown in May 1997 coup.

It commended the efforts of ECOWAS in restoring the democratically elected government of President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. Since that time, the organization pledged its support to assist Sierra Leone in its tasks of national reconstruction and reconciliation. The Commonwealth has also been very instrumental in reaching a negotiated settlement of the Sierra Leone conflict. It was in this regard that it took part and served as moral guarantor for both the Abidjan and Lome Peace Agreements of November 1996 and July 1999 respectively. The organization also further encouraged non-governmental groups and associations within the commonwealth family-working

experts, to lend their valuable experience and expertise of government, civil society, and humanitarian relief to Sierra Leone.

#### **4.5. THE UNITED KINGDOM**

The United Kingdom and Sierra Leone have long-standing historical relations, as the latter was a colony of the former. This relationship clearly shows why the United Kingdom happens to be one of the main external actors in the Sierra Leone conflict. However, some Sierra Leoneans were expecting the United Kingdom to have intervened in the conflict much earlier than they did. It should however be understood that it was the diplomatic and humanitarian leverage of the United Kingdom and other members of the international community that brought pressure to bear on the National Provisional Ruling Council to allow national elections to be held that finally brought president Ahmad Tejan Kabbah to office.

The United Kingdom never wanted to compromise the tough international stance it took against Nigeria for its undemocratic regime that happened to play the lead role in trying to bring peace to Sierra Leone through ECOWAS and its military wing ECOMOG. (diplomathandbook.org, no date). Although the support of the United Kingdom to help resolve the Sierra conflict was delayed, the United Kingdom and Nigeria commenced active cooperation once more, after the democratization of Nigeria through the holding of general elections.

The United Kingdom continued its support for the democratically elected government of President Kabbah even when it was in exile in Conakry, Guinea. It was the United Kingdom High Commission in Sierra Leone that supported the Conakry peace talks between the government and the AFRC/RUF junta. Even when the AFRC/RUF proved stubborn, it is rumoured that it was the United Kingdom that encouraged Sandline International, a non-state and private military firm to

supply arms and ammunitions to forces loyal to the exiled Kabbah government. (Prins, 2002). When the junta was finally ousted, the United Kingdom was one of those that diplomatically rallied other members of the United Nations and the international community to provide political and material support for the elected president.

The United Kingdom was also very instrumental in bringing the conflict parties to the negotiating table at Lome, Togo. It also stood as one of the moral guarantors of the Lome Peace Agreement and was involved in providing military equipment to ECOMOG and the government of Sierra Leone. The United Kingdom undertook to restructure and retrain the Sierra Leone army and police. (Prins, 2002). In addition to assisting with emergency and relief, funding for governance and civil society activities, the United Kingdom also provided support and advice to the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration process.

Also, in early May 2000, when the security situation deteriorated, the United Kingdom sent a strong-900 contingent of troops to evacuate British and other European nationals. (Richards, 2004) They helped in defending the capital Freetown in the process. They also helped stiffen the resolve of the United Nation peacekeepers, loyal soldiers and the civil defence forces. The British forces were also very successful in neutralizing the menace posed by the rogue soldiers who were nicknamed: “Westside boys (Reno, 2003). Although the British troops were withdrawn, some were left to continue their job of restructuring of and retraining of the Sierra Leone army and as well as providing military and security advice to the government.

#### **4.6. THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA)**

The United States (US) is also one of the countries whose intervention into the Sierra Leone conflict came only when a lot of havoc has been done by the RUF. The US only started taking the conflict more seriously after fighting in late 1998 forced the evacuation of staff from its embassy and other missions in Freetown. The US was more concerned with the war in Liberia thereby losing sight of regional implications of both conflicts at the time. However, Richard Holbrooke, the US Ambassador to the United Nations (1999-2001), (diplomathandbook.org, no date) had been advocating during this period for much stronger American participation in peacekeeping in Africa and pressed the US government to exert greater pressure on the Revolutionary United Council.

The US further did play a significant role in the peace negotiations that brought about lasting peace to Sierra Leone by sending a special envoy in the person of Rev. Jesse Jackson (Xinhua News Agency, 2000) to press on President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, though with criticisms, to sit on the negotiating table with the Revolutionary United Front. The US Ambassador to Sierra Leone at the time John Hirsch also took an active observer role during the peace negotiations in Lome, Togo.

Also during the expulsion of the RUF from Freetown in 1999, the US played a supporting role to the British Army. It also played a key role in realizing some of the provisions of the Lome Peace Agreement and assisted in the establishment of the United Nations backed Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and in providing support to the holding of elections and helping to ensure and maintain an independent media. Since the formal declaration of the war in 2002, the US has continued to provide its support to Sierra Leone and

remains to be the largest donor to the United Nations backed Special Court for Sierra Leone.  
(diplomatshandbook.org, no date)

#### **4.7. THE SIERRA LEONE GOVERNMENT**

The Sierra Leone Government and the Revolutionary United Front have a responsibility to cooperate and show commitment in implementing the various requirements of the Lome Peace Agreement. As earlier mentioned this agreement provides a viable framework for the attainment of lasting peace in Sierra Leone.

One important aspect of the peace agreement is the provision made for the establishment of structures and institutions for national reconciliation and consolidation of peace. Some of these structures include the National Committee on the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration; the National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation; the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the United Nations backed Special Court for Sierra Leone which was not included in the Lome Peace Agreement. For the purpose of this research paper, the above mentioned structures will be discussed in briefly.

The government of Sierra Leone on signing the peace agreement went on to establish these institutions to carry out the tasks they were required to, in accordance of the precepts set out in the agreement.



#### **4.7.1. THE NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION (NCDDR)**

The programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration is one of the largest and most important projects in the Sierra Leone peace process. The programme was launched by the Sierra Leone government in July 1998 and put under the National Committee on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration. (Report of the Executive Secretary, NCDDR). The Committee was chaired by the President and comprised other key stakeholders in the peace process and an Executive Secretary who heads the Executive Secretariat that carries out the day-to-day operations of the programme and reports to the government of Sierra Leone and donors on all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration support provided under the credit for ex-combatants.

The Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programme is a programme of assistance to all ex-combatants. This included the demobilization and reintegration of RUF, AFRC, and CDF personnel, as well as assistance to child and disabled combatants. The Committee also oversaw the implementation of the training of and employment programme for ex-combatants.

Although the DDR programme encountered some hiccups at its initial stages of implementation, it later turned out to be very successful and became one of the most important aspects of the peace process. From its commencement in July 1998, it went through three phases<sup>5</sup> and was finally completed in February 2004 after the democratic elections.

The plan of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration programme was mapped out in April 1998. The programme implementation was multi-faceted to be carried out by the government with the assistance of the regional organization of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The

programme was aimed at targeting all persons who belong to the various armed factions that participated in the Sierra Leone conflict following the ousting in May 1997 of the President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah who was democratically elected in the 1996 Presidential and Parliamentary General Elections of Sierra Leone.

The programme was however later reviewed in July 1998 with the assistance of the World Bank (Coneela, no date)

when the National Committee for the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration was formally established by the government. During its first phase, a total of 45,000 combatants were targeted. Out of this number, only a meager number of 3,200 combatants were disarmed and this constituted mostly ex-SLA/AFRC fighters who willingly surrendered to the Economic Community Monitoring Group (ECOMOG). The first phase of the programme was derailed due to the attack by rebels on the capital of Freetown on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1999 which brought a total deterioration in the security situation of the country.

The programme was resurrected to a second phase as a result of the implementation of the Lome Peace Agreement which called for the disarmament of all combatants including those of the Revolutionary United Front, Civil Defence Forces, Sierra Leone Army and other paramilitary groups.

As mentioned in earlier chapters, the Lome Peace Agreement was reached as a result of talks that took place between the government and the Revolutionary United Front following the signing of a Ceasefire Agreement<sup>6</sup>. The agreement also requested the deployment of United Nations Military Observers to monitor the ceasefire agreement. It was also during this phase that the United Nations Security Council approved and established the United Nations Mission in Sierra

Leone (UNSC Resolution 1270, 1999) with a mandate to succeed ECOMOG and carry out the disarmament of combatants.

The DDR programme was again further reviewed and redesigned to represent a multi-agency effort through an agreed Joint Operation Plan involving the government of Sierra Leone, ECOMOG, UNAMSIL, UNICEF, WFP and other agencies and donors. Although this phase succeeded in disarming about 18,898 combatants, it was again disrupted by the resumption of hostilities in May 2000 which resulted in the hostage-taking of 500 peacekeepers (Johnson, no date) by the Revolutionary United Front. The interruption had serious implications not only on the DDR programme but also on the political situation because, it led to the arrest and detention of the RUF Leader, Foday Sankoh and some of his key followers and also to his replacement by Issa Sesay who was proven to be more compromising and cooperative towards the peace process.

The third, final and most significant phase of the programme came about as a result of concerted effort by the Economic Community of West African States and the United Nations to bring the peace process back on track by subsequently signing another ceasefire agreement in Abuja on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2000 and another agreement on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2001. This led to the reviving of the DDR programme which was largely successful because the factions to the conflict came to realize that a military victory is not easily achievable. The government of Sierra Leone came to understand that it could not eliminate the insurgency nor rely on the allegiance of its army. On the other hand, the intervention of the British Army, the increased number of United Nations peacekeepers, the embargo on Liberia (UNSC Resolution 1343,2001) and other considerations especially the change in the leadership of the RUF resulted in more robust commitment by the rebels to a peaceful resolution to the conflict. In the end, the commitment of all parties to the

peace process resulted to the successful disarmament of all combatants and the eventual attainment of lasting peace.

The completion of the DDR programme was followed by a grand ceremony held at Lungi, Sierra Leone on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2002, where the President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah formally declared the end of the decade-long civil war. Based on conclusions of studies carried out by the NCDDR, the World Bank, as well as independent institutions and international organizations, it can safely be stated that most of the ex-combatants have now returned to their families and communities and like other Sierra Leoneans are now contributing to national recovery. Ann M. Fitz-Gerald in discussing the outcome of the DDR programme stated that:

Disarmament and demobilization worked well. Over the three phases and in four years, 72,500 combatants had been disarmed and demobilized and 42,300 weapons and 1.3 million pieces of ammunition were collected and destroyed. (Fitz-Gerald, p.04, 2004)

The success of the programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration in the peace process prompted the World Bank Country Office in Sierra Leone to observe that:

Officials from the neighbouring countries and even the Great Lakes region were visiting Sierra Leone because 'it is considered as the best practice example throughout the world of a successful disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. (World Bank Country Office, 2003)

The World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) along with the government of Sierra Leone worked closely with UNAMSIL in planning, funding and implementing the DDR programme.

#### **4.7.2. THE NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR RECONSTRUCTION, RESETTLEMENT AND REHABILITATION (NCRRR)**

The National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NCRRR) is the sister programme of the NCDDR established by the government of Sierra Leone for economic and social renewal in response to years of the conflict, the decade of misrule, neglect of social infrastructure and misuse of economic assets.

The NCRRR coordinated and monitored the implementation of the national reconstruction, resettlement and rehabilitation programmes as outlined in the Lome Peace Agreement. It also facilitated dialogue between and coordinated the programmes and activities of Non-governmental organizations, government line ministries, donor agencies, and the other implementing parties that are active in emergency recovery programmes. It also further monitored and reported all activities undertaken by the commission to the government and donor agencies.

The NCRRR also oversaw the implementation of the Emergency Recovery Support Fund (ERSF), a demand driven community based social fund designed to facilitate the social and economic recovery of communities and the restoration of basic social and economic services. The ERSF targets internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and ex-combatants.

The Commission was established with a short life span of three years reflecting the short-term emergency focus of the government recovery programme. By the end of its stipulated span, the NCRRR succeeded in carrying out most of the tasks for which it was established. In continuation of its work, the Commission was transformed to the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA)

### **4.7.3. THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF SIERRA LEONE (TRC)**

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone is one of the provisions of the Lome Peace Agreement and was established by the Government of Sierra Leone with help from the international community with the mandate to create “an impartial, historical record of the conflict, addressing impunity; respond to the needs of victims; promote healing and reconciliation; and prevent a repetition of the violations and abuses suffered” (TRC final report, 2007). The Commission was indeed necessary and significant for the healing of a traumatized nation after 11 years of civil conflict.

On the completion of its work in accordance with its mandate, the Commission was able to lay the foundation for the reconciliation of and healing for all those who suffered and bear the brunt of the decade long civil war. Both victims and perpetrators of atrocities were requested and encouraged to find a common ground on which to stand, live and develop the country in peace and harmony. In carrying out its mandate, the Commission tried to make Sierra Leoneans understand the conflict and also make them come to terms with its underlying causes. It is also hoped that in completion of its task, the Commission will provide the necessary road map towards finding a new society in which all Sierra Leoneans can work together with pride and dignity.

### **4.7. THE CIVIL SOCIETY MOVEMENTS.**

The Civil Society's engagement with the peace process in Sierra Leone helped in many ways in opening up dialogue between the parties to the conflict. As a result of their efforts in terms of rallies, marches, negotiations, and peace campaigns, a huge progress was made in bringing the Sierra Leone conflict to an end. The Sierra Leone Civil Society Organisations were involved not

only in bringing the conflict to a negotiated settlement; they also undertook post-conflict peace building activities that helped to bring lasting peace to the country. Some of the civil society groups include:

### **The Inter Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRC/SL)**

The Inter Religious Council of Sierra Leone is a multi-religious organization that includes representatives from the country's major religious denominations. The council emerged into a very effective facilitator, mediator and advocate for peace in the country. Apart from taking part in the peace negotiations held in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire and Lome, Togo, the council also undertook a crucial work of encouraging reconciliation and creating a culture of peace for the people of Sierra Leone.

### **Women's Groups**

The conflict brought untold suffering and negative impact on the lives of women in the country. It was as a result of this that the country's women groups under the umbrella of Women's Forum which comprised a network of women's organizations that include: the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), The Women's Association for National Development (WAND), the Woman's wing of the Sierra Leone Labour Congress and many others, decided to undertake activities and frantically work to bridge the gap between conflict parties and the civilian population at large.

## NOTES.

1. In a letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> February 1995 addressed to the President of the Security Council, the Secretary-General informed the Council that the Head of State of Sierra Leone by a letter dated 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2004, had formally requested his good offices to facilitate negotiations between his government and the Revolutionary United Council.
2. In February 1995, the United Nations Secretary-General appointed Mr. Berhanu Dinka (Ethiopian) as a Special Envoy to Sierra Leone.
3. The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) Secretary-General at the time described the 1997 coup d'état in Sierra Leone as a setback for Africa.
4. The OAU Secretary-General, Mr. Salim Ahmed Salim announced the appointment of Ambassador Jeremiah N. K. Mamambolo as the OAU Special Envoy to Sierra Leone.
5. The DDR programme in Sierra Leone adopted a phased approach; it was carried out in three phases. <http://www.unddr.org/countryprogramms.php?c=60> (Accessed 5<sup>th</sup> May 2008).
6. Article I of the Lome Peace Agreement calls for the permanent and total cessation of hostilities.



## CONCLUSION

The root causes of the Sierra Leone civil conflict could be found in the country's history, from the time it gained independence in 1961 up to the time the conflict started in 1991. Even though, it experienced some form of democracy within this period, this quickly gave way to a long period of bad governance coupled with the colonial history of indirect rule. Successive governments have woefully failed to address many of the fundamental and endemic problems that have underpinned the conflict. Some of the problems include : the pervasive corruption and lack of trust and accountability in public offices; the high level of unemployment, especially of unskilled youth who are ready to serve as prey to any conflict situation; the failure of those in authority to properly manage the country's huge economic and natural resources for the benefit of all; the total absence of true democratic practices like free and fair elections, strict observance of the rule of law, freedom of speech , free press, an independent and impartial judiciary to name but a few. It is also quite clear that the conflict unlike other conflicts in Africa was not provoked by inter-ethnic or religious strife.

The research also revealed that during the time of the conflict, the security systems of the country were not only poorly managed but were ill equipped, unprofessional and weak. This resulted in their inability to defend the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country in the face of the Revolutionary United Front invasion. It is the failure of the Sierra Leone Army to defend the lives and property of civilians that brought in a new faction, the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) into the conflict. This faction was closely tied to the Sierra Leone Peoples Party which was the ruling party at the time. It was therefore seen to be protecting its

interest of the party only. Although it assisted in defending the country in general and the localities of its members in particular against the rebels, they too committed a lot of human right violations. They also posed as rivals to even the loyal soldiers of the Sierra Leone Army which further compounded the search for peace because the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), another faction in the conflict that overthrew the SLPP government in 1997 gave the rivalry between the civil defence forces and the army as one of the reasons for the coup.

In an effort to bringing the conflict to an end, a number of peace agreements were brokered and concluded between the government and the main opposing warring factions. These include the Abidjan Peace Accord, the Conakry Peace Plan, the Lome Peace Agreement, the Abuja Ceasefire and the Abuja Ceasefire Review Agreements. However, most of these agreements were reneged upon within a very short period of their implementation. The only agreement that stood the test of time was the Lome Peace Agreement which was by far the most comprehensive among all of them. It provided for a cessation of hostilities; the transformation of the Revolutionary United Front into a political party; the creation of a broad based government of national unity; the holding of

General elections; the encampment, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants; provision on humanitarian, human rights and socio economic issues including the release of prisoners and abductees, and the establishment of a truth and reconciliation commission to address impunity and human rights violations.

It also came to be understood that even though the mining of diamond and gold was not their primary objective, it became a main source of income for the Revolutionary United Front when they took control of the diamond producing areas of the country. The illegal exploitation of the

country's mineral resources to obtain weapons assisted in no small way in fueling the conflict. The effective dealing with the illegal trade by slamming a ban on the sale of diamonds through the Kimberley process helped in bringing about a durable solution to the conflict.

It also came out clearly that Sierra Leone was not on the radar of the international community when the conflict breaks out. The response of the international community to the conflict came a little late after a lot of havoc has been caused by the rebels. However, the involvement of the United Kingdom, United States and the United Nations brought about close coordination with the Economic Community of West African States which was the first international body to intervene into the conflict. The coordination facilitated the establishment of a Contact Group on Sierra Leone which provided a forum to bring together stake holders in the conflict to set priorities, identify common objectives and develop a coordinated strategy to support the peace process. The role played by ECOWAS at the initial stages of the conflict and the role of the UK in focusing the Security Council's attention to the crisis in Sierra Leone cannot be underestimated.

The success strategy in resolving the Sierra Leone conflict involves a dual-track approach combining dialogue and negotiation on the one hand with credible military deterrence on the other hand to close off the option of war. The strong United Nations peacekeepers presence to be able to deploy in all parts of the country gave concrete meaning to the concept of robust peacekeeping thereby sending a message that the use of force is no longer viable. This strategy proved essential to the factions in the conflict and enabled especially the Revolutionary United Front which proving very stubborn to adhere to the ceasefire agreements and subsequently commenced disarmament and demobilization.

It is also important to note that the programme of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) served as catalyst to the whole peace process. However, the success of the implementation of the DDR programme can be credited to the political will of the various parties especially the government, the support of the international community that provided the necessary funds and the cooperation of the armed groups. The same could also be said about the programme of Reconstruction, Resettlement, and Rehabilitation (RRR) Programme.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) of Sierra Leone was established in fulfillment of the provisions of the Lome Peace Agreement to investigate and report the causes, context and conduct of the conflict and to provide a forum where both the victims and perpetrators could relate their experiences. During the course of its work, the commission was able to collect 9000 statements and conducted reconciliation activities. Even though the commission suffered from lack of adequate funding and serious mismanagement and staff recruitment problems, it successfully gained the participation of major stakeholder groups including women, children, amputees, ex-combatants etc.

The sister institution of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is the United Nations backed Special Court for Sierra Leone. The Court was set up jointly by the Government of Sierra Leone and the United Nations with a mandate to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for serious violations of international humanitarian law and Sierra Leonean law committed in the territory of Sierra Leone since November 1996. The court has however been criticized of been too constrained in terms of its time frame, jurisdiction and enforcement powers which they say will weaken its ability to deliver justice. Others see it as an exemplary model for other international tribunals with the ability to deliver justice at a lower cost.

It is also however worthy to mention that the attainment of peace in Sierra Leone was not only limited to the efforts of the international community alone. It involved a large number of local stakeholders including members of the civil society (the Inter Religious Council, Women's groups, Trade Unions, etc) who were very instrumental in the search for peace played a very important role towards its attainment.

Sierra Leone can now boast of a functioning government whose President and Legislature were elected in a process that received the approval of not only its populace but the international community to be free, fair and credible. Its judicial system that was seriously flawed before and during the war is now showing signs of marked improvement. With the assistance of the international community, the security sector is undergoing reforms to make it well equipped and skilled to be able to respond adequately to any unforeseen threats. Added to the very important role it played for the attainment of lasting peace, the civil society too is becoming increasingly more active in the good governance requirements of the country.

It is also worth noting that the security guarantee provided by the United Kingdom, the United Nations and other members of the international community helped in no small way to consolidate the peace and enable the country to move forward to focus upon meeting the requirements of the critical aspects of democracy which have been very lacking before the outbreak of the conflict. These aspects include institution building, combating corruption, providing openings for civil society development, ensuring freedom of speech and of the press, maintenance of the rule of law etc. Although the fulfillment of these aspects is going at a slow pace, yet the continued international engagement in the country has illustrated the general positive role the international community can play once it decides to commit itself to assisting a particular country. This has

further been manifested by the declaration of Sierra Leone by the United Nations Peace Building Commission to assist the country with its post conflict development programmes.

Finally, I would like to conclude that, resolving the Sierra Leone civil conflict involved a high level of diplomatic discourse in wooing the conflict parties to a negotiated settlement. It should however be understood that the Revolutionary United Front and the other factions to the conflict would never have succumbed to a negotiated settlement of the conflict if they had not been forced to do so through military pressure from forces loyal to the government, troops from the United Kingdom and the United Nations peacekeepers.

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