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Sierra Leone – The Transition from Post Conflict to Fragile Development

Aim

To present a brief overview of the situation and the security transformation process in Sierra Leone with a view to assessing possible next steps

Map of Sierra Leone



Sierra Leone at a Glance

Name: Republic of Sierra Leone

Capital: Freetown

Political:

Government: Constitutional Democracy

Political Parties: All People's Congress (APC); Peace and Liberation Party (PLP); Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP); numerous others

People:

Population: 5.5 million (World Bank)

Languages: English (official), Mende (southern vernacular), Temne (northern vernacular), Krio (lingua franca)

Area: 27,700 square miles

Parliament: unicameral.

Last election result: SLPP 70.06%, APC 22.35%, PLP 3%, others 4.59%; seats by party - SLPP 83, APC 27, PLP 2.

Life expectancy at birth: male 38 years, female 42 years.

Religions: Muslim 60%, Christian 30%, indigenous beliefs 10%.

Economy:

Gross National Income: \$1.2 bn

Industries: diamond mining and other extractive enterprises and small-scale manufacturing

Imports: foodstuffs, machinery and equipment, fuels and lubricants, chemicals.

Annual Inflation: 13.1% (World Bank 2005)

% of population below national poverty line: 70% (2003)

Security Forces:

Police: Sierra Leone Police (SLP): 9,500.

Gross National Income per capita: US \$220 (World Bank, 2006)

Agriculture: rice, coffee, cocoa, palm kernels, palm oil, peanuts; poultry, cattle, sheep, fish

Exports: diamonds, rutile, cocoa, coffee, fish

Annual GDP Growth: 7.5% (World Bank 2005)

Military: Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF): Army (includes Air Wing and Maritime Wing): 10,500.

Background and Setting

Sierra Leone is an extremely poor country. It has the lowest average income in the world. It does have substantial mineral and fishery resources and agricultural potential. However, the economic and social infrastructure is not well developed; development was seriously hampered by an 11-year civil war which ended in 2001. Alluvial diamond mining remains the major source of hard currency earnings, accounting for nearly half of Sierra Leone's exports. About two-thirds of the working-age population engages in subsistence agriculture. The IMF has completed a Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility program that helped stabilize economic growth and reduce inflation. The recent increase in political stability has led to a revival of some economic activity, such as the rehabilitation of bauxite mining. Compared to other conflict-affected developing countries, the source of Sierra Leone's political instability lies less in ethnic and religious rivalry but more in poor governance, widespread corruption, and the marginalisation and disempowerment of the rural communities. These problems were compounded by the collapse of local government administration shortly after independence.

Sierra Leone became an independent nation in 1961. A military coup overthrew the civilian government in 1967; this was in turn replaced by civilian rule a year later. The country declared itself a republic in 1971. A coup attempt early in 1971 led to then Prime Minister, Siaka Stevens, calling in troops from neighbouring Guinea. Stevens turned the government into a one-party state under the aegis of the All People's Congress Party in 1978. In 1992 rebel soldiers overthrew Stevens's successor, Joseph Momoh, calling for a return to a multiparty system. In 1996, another military coup ousted the country's military leader and president. Nevertheless, a multiparty presidential election proceeded in 1996, and the People's Party candidate Ahmad Tejan Kabbah won with 59% of the vote, becoming Sierra Leone's first democratically elected president.

But a violent military coup ousted President Kabbah's civilian government in May 1997. The leader of the coup, Lt Col Johnny Paul Koroma, assumed the title of Head of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). Koroma began a reign of terror. The Commonwealth demanded the reinstatement of Kabbah, and the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the Nigerian-led peacekeeping force, intervened. In March 1998, after ten months in exile, Kabbah resumed his rule over Sierra Leone. The

ousted junta and other rebel forces continued to wage attacks, which included the torture, rape, and brutal maiming of thousands of civilians; amputation by machete was the horrific signature of the rebels. In addition to political power, the rebels, who were supported by Liberia's president Charles Taylor, sought control of Sierra Leone's rich diamond fields.

A power-sharing agreement was reached in July 1999, the Togo Accord. The accord dissolved in May 2000 after the RUF abducted about 500 UN peacekeepers and attacked Freetown. This triggered a UK military intervention. With the signing of the second Peace Agreement in Abuja in May 2001, and with the arrival of ECOMOG and later the UN peacekeeping missions (UNAMSIL), disarmament got underway, civil authority began to be gradually restored in the country, and internally displaced persons started to resettle in their communities. The multi-donor funded Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme and the Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (RRR) programme supported the disarmament of ex-combatants and resettlement of displaced persons.

By January 2002 50,000 combatants had been demobilised, the peace process was consolidated and the conflict was officially declared over. An estimated 50,000 people were killed in the decade-long civil war. President Kabbah was re-elected with 70% of the vote in May 2002. The DDR programme was completed in February 2004. A total of 72,490 combatants were disarmed and 71,043 demobilised, including 6,845 child soldiers. By end February 2004, about 55,122 ex-combatants had received support for their reintegration into active community life. In 2004, the United Nations Security Council commenced a gradual, phased withdrawal of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), taking into account a number of security-related factors, including the continued restructuring and development of the national military and police forces, but a civilian UN office remains to support the government.

For the past several years, the UN has listed Sierra Leone as the world's "least liveable" country, based on its poverty and the poor quality of life endured by its citizens. The social and economic impact of the 11-year civil conflict was devastating. There was a mass exodus of skilled professionals, to Freetown and out of the country, leaving most of the country drained of any skilled manpower. Much of the country's social, economic and physical infrastructure was destroyed. Local community social and productive infrastructure such as markets, stores, rice mills, and community service buildings were completely vandalised. At the height of the civil conflict, there was almost a complete breakdown of civil and political authority in the country, giving rise to widespread human rights abuses. Mining and agricultural activities, the lifeline of the country, were essentially brought to a halt. Farms were destroyed or abandoned and the livestock population was almost entirely wiped out.

Sierra Leone's post-conflict economic, social and political rebuilding had to cope with the aftermath of decades of economic mismanagement, wide-spread corruption, inefficient state control over economic and political activity, lack of investment in critical economic and social areas, and a decade-long devastating civil war. Although significant progress has been made in stabilising the economy and removing many of the structural impediments to growth the implementation of the macroeconomic and structural adjustment programmes has not brought the country the expected benefits in terms of sustained growth and human development. The future of the economy depends upon the maintenance of domestic stability and the continued receipt of substantial aid from abroad, this is essential to offset the severe trade imbalance and to supplement government revenues. Mounting tensions related

to planned 2007 elections, deteriorating political and economic conditions in Guinea, and the tenuous security situation in neighbouring Liberia present today's challenges to Sierra Leone's stability.

Development of the Security Sector

Development of the security sector since 2001 has been largely led by the UK using Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP) and DFID funds. For example the 2006/07 ACPP allocation to Sierra Leone was estimated as £16 out of an ACPP total of £63 million; DFID spent an additional £1.1 million on its Sierra Leone Security Sector Programme (SILSEP). The situation today is that the UK led International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) leads on the continuing transformation of the military, a DFID funded Justice Sector Development Programme is tackling the justice sector and some police-work aspects and the DFID led SILSEP programme is providing advisors and infrastructure support to The Office of National Security, the Ministry of Defence and to the Sierra Leone Police. UK is by far the largest donor in the security sector. In addition, in 2005 the government established a Poverty Reduction Strategy, with security as its cornerstone, underpinned by a 5 year Security Sector Reform programme that seeks to enhance the transformation of the security sector. The Security Sector Reform Implementation Programme aims to support projects within the security sector which are relevant to poverty reduction.

Poverty and the low national income are the greatest challenges faced by Sierra Leone. If the National Revenue Authority meets its 2006 4th Quarter target then in 2006 they will have collected £94.6 million to run the country. In 2004, the latest year for which complete data is available, net bilateral and multilateral Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Official Assistance (OA) from donors was £229 million.

The security sector, which has gone through the challenges posed by post conflict transformation, including DDR, gaining the trust of the public, adapting to civil oversight and working within the constraints of a budget, has reached crisis point. The current position is unsustainable given the size of the current security sector budget and the national revenue. For example, within the MOD, less than 3% of spending is devoted to capital or development projects. The armed forces, the police and the intelligence community are all dependent on aid and assistance for development projects including the rebuilding of soldiers accommodation destroyed during the war.

Some of the usual security sector indicators read as follows:

- Defence expenditure as a % of GDP is estimated at 1.7%, the ECOWAS average, less Guinea and Liberia, is 1.46% (but such figures in the Sub-Sahara region are distorted by financial and other assistance and by whether such assistance is recorded or not).
- Defence expenditure as a % of revenue is 14.84%, the ECOWAS average, less Guinea and Liberia, is 8.84%.
- There is a National Security Council, chaired by the President.
- The Office of National Security (ONS), which is headed by a Coordinator, deals with security and intelligence related matters, but has very limited input into police or military affairs.
- No National Security Policy exists, but one is in the process of being drafted (by ONS).

- There is a parliamentary Defence, Internal and Presidential Affairs Committee but it has no awareness of how to go about oversight; the relationship with the MOD is adversarial.
- There is only one local NGO which deals with the security sector, a one man band and weak.
- There is little security sector related input into the political science course at university.

Key Questions

- What are the likely reasons for the apparent delay in producing a National Security Policy, given that security sector transformation with advisor assistance started in 2001?
- One possible way forward is to downsize the armed forces, but to increase their capability – what are the challenges of this course?
- What are the advantages and the disadvantages of a single donor arrangement which currently exists in the Sierra Leone security sector? – Look at the problem through the eyes of the recipient as well as from the point of view of the donor.
- How is donor co-ordination best achieved across the security sector, what are the possible differences between a single donor and a multi donor situation?
- Development needs security and security needs development, discuss in the context of Sierra Leone today.

SUSTAINABILITY

Sierra Leone emerged from a 10 year civil war in 2001. Since then it has been going through the phase of development frequently described as “Post Conflict”. The World Bank web site speaks of a transition from Post Conflict to Sustained Development. This transition phase has been aptly described as “Fragile Development”; sustainability has still not been achieved. This is particularly true in the security sector.

Discussion

Given that the key enablers for sustainability are:

- Human capacity;
- financial affordability;
- institutional structures and systems (including governance structures);
- local ownership and
- cultural appropriateness.

Discuss how the security sector reform and restructuring process in a Post Conflict state can best be organised to minimise the time in the Fragile Development phase. How and by whom is the process best coordinated?