

Donors and Local Civil Society Interaction in Peacebuilding in Post-War Sierra Leone

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to the memories of my loving mother and caring father: Alice Komeh Foday and Alhaji Vandy Kanyako Snr respectively. They both had an invaluable hand in instilling in me (at an early age) the values of commitment and hard work.

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LIST OF KEY ABBREVIATIONS

AU= African Union
CAPS= Community Animation and Peace Support
CBOs= Community Based Organizations
CSOs= Civil Society Organizations
DAC= Development Assistance Committee
DACO= Development Aid Coordinating Office
DFID= Department for International Development
EU= European Union
GDP= Gross Domestic Product
GOSL= Government of Sierra Leone
IFIs= International Financial Institutions
IGOs= Inter-Governmental Organizations
IMF= International Monetary Fund
INGOs= International Non-Governmental Organizations
MODEP= Ministry of Development and Economic Planning
NEPAD= New Partnership for Africa's Development
NEW= National Elections Watch
NGOs= Non-governmental Organizations
NMJD= Network Movement for Justice and Development
NNGOs= National Non-Governmental Organizations
ODA= Official Development Assistance
ODI= Overseas Development Institute
OECD= Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
UN= United Nations
UNAMSIL= United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP= United Nations Development Programme
USAID= United States Agency for International Development
UWA= University Women's Association
WACSF= West Africa Civil Society Forum
WAND= Women's Association for National Development
WANEP= West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
YWCA= Young Women's Christian Association

ABSTRACT

DONORS AND LOCAL CIVIL SOCIETY INTERACTION IN PEACEBUILDING IN POST-WAR SIERRA LEONE

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Today civil society organizations are actively engaged in every conceivable sector of the conflict management and development realm. From pre-conflict, conflict, to post-conflict phases of societal disintegration and rebuilding, non-governmental civic groups deliver essential services, lobby the power system, advocate on behalf of the marginalized and monitor human rights abuses. Because they come in all capabilities and persuasions and operate at every layer of the social system, their impact are often far reaching. Such groups and their ever expanding peace consolidation activities have played an indispensable role in our understanding of the patterns and dynamics of conflict as well as peacebuilding. To understand the influence and limitations of such groups one has to understand both their funding sources as well as the local context in which they operate. Using the case of Sierra Leone, an aid-dependent West African country recovering from an 11-year debilitating civil war (1991-2002), this works presents the results of a research

that examined the impact of donor policies on **50** local conflict resolution civil society groups in post-war Sierra Leone. Specifically the dissertation looks at how externally funded local conflict resolution and peacebuilding organizations charged with creating a dynamic civic process, adapt their programs and strategies to fit the often unfavorable local climate. As donors curtail funding and the government of Sierra Leone closes the space for civic group activities, groups have demonstrated a wide array of ingenuity in demonstrating relevance. In a bid to remain relevant to the peacebuilding process, they have had to form vertical and horizontal alliances with the government, donors and other civil society groups. But while such arrangement has benefitted some, it has excluded other key actors that are neither part of government nor wholly part of civil society. The dissertation argues that if Sierra Leone's peace is to endure then urgent steps should be taken to engage the 'space' occupied by groups that perform different actions with the same objective: building a durable peace in post-war Sierra Leone.

Research assumptions/ Starting hypotheses

This is a study of civil society and donors and the political economy of post-conflict peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. It looks at how local civic groups engage one another and with external donors as they acquire and disburse goods and services in a bid to prevent a reoccurrence of war in a rapidly changing post-war environment shaped by events both within and without their control. By 2002, when the civil war ended, more than 80 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) amounting to some \$300 million was provided by international aid of one kind or another. This funding, provided by various

multilateral partners, bilateral partners and UN Agencies was aimed at shoring up the peace process with civil society acting as a major conduit. Of this some US\$ 94.1 million was channeled through CSOs/NGOs, accounting for some 26 percent of total support to Sierra Leone. Such funding largesse has been critical to creating a dynamic civic activism and to shaping public opinion from the bottom up as such groups engage at both micro and macro levels of society. It has also been instrumental in contributing to the exponential rise in the number of CSOs. There are currently more than 350 officially registered NGOs in Sierra Leone. If current trends are anything to go by the number would have increased exponentially by the time this research is over. This dissertation makes some initial assumptions based on my experience and observation between donor funding and civil society engagement in post-conflict peacebuilding. I began with three key hypotheses about the relationship between donors and civil society funding in post-conflict societies:

H1: Donor policies: Donors generally favor groups engaged in less contentious issues than those engaged in controversial issues. Civil society groups that are engaged in issues considered contentious (conflict resolution, human rights, anti-corruption etc.) are subjected to much higher scrutiny and have a much harder time soliciting funding from donors than groups engaged in non-contentious issues hence the uneven growth of groups in some sectors over others.

H2: Independence: Civil society groups that diversify their sources of funding have better control over the quality and direction of their programs and goals than groups that are dependent on a single key source of funding.

H3: Government concerns impact relations between actors: Government's fear of a dual public sector determines its relationship with donors and local civil society in ways detrimental to the peacebuilding process.

H1: Supporting evidence for upholding H1 was inconclusive. Research finds that even though the hard issues groups have a hard time generating income, it is not necessarily due to the nature of their work. Other variables such as location, donor, relationship with community all determine their fundraising capabilities.

H2: data analysis for H2 was not upheld. Civil society groups that diversify their sources of funding end up taking up more unanticipated commitments and heavier reporting burden which has a corresponding impact on the nature and quality of their work.

H3: There is enough evidence in the data to uphold H3. Government is concerned about the growing power of civil society as a competing dual-public sector.

Key findings

- A. Local civil society groups engaged in contentious ('hot-button') issues face far more scrutiny and constraints to their work than groups in non-contentious issues

Local CSOs engaged in 'hot button' political and advocacy issues involving human rights, anti corruption, and democratic reforms, face far more scrutiny from the authorities and constraints to their work than their peers working on less contentious issues. As the Government of Sierra Leone has grown in confidence and gained more sources of income of its own (mainly from mining rights and taxation) it has attempted to claw back some of the powers it lost during the war with a series of laws supposedly aimed to regulate the civil society and donor sector. In doing so however the government has focused lots of its energy on organizations that are critical and that work in sensitive sectors. As the space or 'public sphere' expanded so did the number of groups engaged

in a wide range of activities from advocacy, monitoring, conflict analysis and resolution, to investigating and reporting human rights abuses. It is these groups that have been at the receiving end of government regulations.

B. Civil Society Organizations are not simply a means to convey emergency help or development assistance.

Even in developed societies they are a crucial part of the operation of democracy, calling attention to problems, shifting agendas, supporting political parties and election processes, as well as delivering charitable assistance, undertaking research and education, supporting the arts. Thus Donors need to ensure that winding down support for CSO's after a conflict does not force them out of existence; rather winding down should be done slowly enough that CSO's have time to diversify their income and become institutionalized through memberships or activities that allow them to become self-sustaining.

C. Local CSO's exponential rise and influence has not had a corresponding effect in the sectors critical to peace consolidation and good governance

In the broadest sense this dissertation finds that, while local civil society influence is prominent in some sectors, it is sadly lacking in some of the most critical. In spite of paucity in funding and growing government regulations, local civil society actors in post-conflict Sierra Leone have multiplied exponentially. In spite of this notable contribution however, evidence from this research shows that even though local civil society groups have now taken on a character of its own, their impact are still limited in influencing government policies on issues of good governance, anti-corruption and stemming human

rights abuses (the very issues that created the war). Civil society division, lack of proper training, government crackdown, shortage of funding, and the absence of the requisite donor pressure all contribute to limit civil society influence in the aforementioned sectors, which are so critical to post-conflict peacebuilding.

D. Agency of local civil society groups depends on local context

For local civil society the local context matters. Whether working in the development sector (education, agriculture, health, and service delivery) or peacebuilding and good governance sector (democracy, anti-corruption, human rights advocacy) local civil society shape and are in turn shaped by the evolving socio-political systems, economy, history and varying geography of the local context. As by-products of their social settings these groups interact with micro processes with the aim of maximizing their welfare, changing attitudes, behavior and social perceptions between groups and facilitating social exchanges mainly at the grassroots, but sometimes at the national levels. Thus the strategies and relationships (both vertical and horizontal) that they develop provide a barometer with which to measure a post-conflict country's general well being. The findings inform us on the agency of local CSOs. Often these groups are depicted as reactive rather than proactive agents of change. Evidence shows civil society has taken on a character of its own. They have learnt to adapt well due to the nature of the challenges they face. In a bid to remain relevant some groups refine their core missions through reorganizing and streamlining their systems and structures. Some develop a niche and form stronger partnerships with others. Civil society organizations do make

conscious choices as they interact with one another and with their environment. Thus as these community groups adapt to their post-conflict environment they change the nature and behavior of other groups around them. This constant metamorphosis enables actors and agencies to position themselves to address new demands and tackle sometimes unforeseen challenges from the base upwards.

E. Donor 'bias' tilts the local balance of power in favor of more professional groups

Donors tend to be biased toward larger, urban, professionally-staffed CSOs, thus grass-roots organizations get less support than the size of their constituency might warrant. Such a practice contravenes one of their (donors) key goals, which is to effect social change that enhances the 'peripheries' of power. Because of this practice a small number of influential local development and peacebuilding organizations now drive the donor-funding process. These are often elite urban-based groups with urbane leadership, and its structure and modus operandi (bank account, board etc) are decipherable to the donor. As such it is not surprising that formal groups get the most support compared to informal groups. By failing to fully engage *informal* or *non-traditional groups*, donors have inadvertently created a tiered system that disadvantages the most marginalized in the community. This reinforces societal marginalization of the most vulnerable.

Like US government organizations, who are mandated by law to reserve a portion of their outside contracts for 'small businesses' to encourage start-ups and innovation rather than rely on a few large contractors, donor organizations should consider setting

aside a portion of their support specifically for grass-roots, rural, indigenous CSO's to encourage their formation and strengthen local civil society. This will create a vibrant civil society so essential to reviving social institutions in fragile societies. Indeed transformation involves interaction between micro-processes such as in the family and local communities, on the one hand and macro processes in the public institutions of governance, on the other.

F. Donors are hesitant to employ the full range of leverages against government

While donors are rightly concerned to rebuild and strengthen government institutions following conflict, donors should strongly speak out against governments restricting CSO activities. While it is right that governments take over many roles that CSO's fulfill in an immediate post-conflict setting, such as delivery of humanitarian aid, education, peacekeeping, justice, health care, infrastructure, there are other roles *for which CSO's must remain active indefinitely*, including monitoring of government actions, expression of public concerns to government, self-help for communities and needs under-served by government, and media/business/professional organizations to facilitate spread of best practices and business formation. Donors should make it clear that as governments strengthen, the roles of CSO's will change, but the *need for CSO's* remains undiminished, indeed, grows stronger with growth and increased complexity of the economy and society. Thus the balance between aid to governments and aid to the civil society sector needs to remain balanced so that both can flourish. The growing power and influence of government coupled with a desire by donors to accommodate their concerns shapes civil

society-donor relations. Donors thus have leverage that they can use to get government to become more open and acceptance of civil society groups as partners in development rather than as a threat.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview

This introductory chapter provides a general overview of the dissertation. It outlines some common trends in the growing role and influence of local civil society and of donors in post-conflict peacebuilding in general and Sierra Leone in particular. The chapter establishes a working definition of key concepts, followed by a brief outline of the research questions, relevance and hypotheses. The chapter sets out the main threads and themes that are interwoven throughout the dissertation and that are relevant to our understanding of donor support to local civil society in post-conflict peacebuilding. It concludes with a summary of all the chapters that make up the dissertation.

The dissertation evaluates the impact of donor support on the growth and evolution of conflict resolution local civil society groups in post-war Sierra Leone. It explores how local civic groups engage one another, the government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and external donors as they acquire and disburse funds, goods and services in a bid to prevent a reoccurrence of war in a rapidly changing post-war environment shaped by events both within and without their control. As the various actors engage one another in managing

the country's fragile peace environment as well as its 'zones of conflict'¹their actions carries wide ranging implications that goes beyond the mere exchange of quantifiable funds, goods and services. The main premise is that funding local civil society groups carries wide ranging implications for building institutional capacity, human development and hence consolidating peace in post- civil war Sierra Leone.

The research is guided by three key questions: How does donor policies and behavior affect the growth and evolution of local civil society organizations in fragile societies? This overarching question is critical if we are to understand the consequences of post-conflict funding and their ramifications on the search for durable peace in societies emerging from debilitating wars. Secondly, how does local civil society groups adapt to their environment as they deal with acute funding shortages and growing government pressure? Thirdly, how does recipient government's nuanced role influence the nature of relationship that evolves between donors and civil society groups? For a country still reeling from 11-years of civil war, these questions are important to understanding how to prevent a reoccurrence of violence in post-conflict settings. The disbursement of aid, no matter by whom, carries wide-ranging implications that goes beyond the 'give and take' transaction between donor and recipient. Over time it affects even non-recipients, especially in 'high context' but fragile societies such as the one

¹ This is a term that I have coined to refer to those deadly pockets of violence that have emerged since the war ended. It is a reference to the overt violence which pose a real threat to the peace and stability of the country. They are discussed in detail elsewhere but examples include politically-motivated armed clashes between supporters of various political parties; communal violence over scarce resources such as between mining companies and host communities or armed clashes between farmers and cattle herders. Usually ex-combatants are central to these clashes.

under consideration. As this dissertation shows the aid architecture or what some have referred to as the 'peace industry' is both a source and an instrument of power and control as it often involves grossly uneven power relations. As such how local groups acquire and disburse external funds has important implications for the shape and direction of a country's ability to effectively manage its rebuilding process.

Methodology

My approach made use of four major primary and secondary elements – literature review; questionnaire-based semi-structured interviews of key civil society leaders in Sierra Leone as well as representatives of the selected donor agencies with knowledge and experience on the topic; a survey (questionnaire) aimed at local civil society organizations; and two focus group events in the country's two key regional divisions: Freetown in what is generally referred to as the Western Area and the resource-rich Kenema in the Eastern province. Two sets of local civil society organizations were interviewed: **a)** those that are engaged in conflict resolution, human rights, anti-corruption, good governance and (the so-called 'hard issues'); **b)** those that are engaged in development work such as education, health and service delivery (or 'soft issues').

More than 50 local actors (CSO leaders and staff, government officials in the security and development sector and project beneficiaries), provided the population sample. The surveys and focus groups sessions included 50 civil society groups in Freetown, Kenema and Kabala. The research looked at the internal fundraising

mechanisms adopted by these local civil society groups either as a way to supplement donor funding or as a strategy to gain some degree of independence from external donors. Using mainly web-content analysis the research looked at the policies of some key players such as the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID); the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); the World Bank; the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); as well as little known private funders such as the Dutch church group Kerkinactie (Church in Action). Taken together these represent governmental, intergovernmental and private entities and are among the major donors to the Sierra Leone peacebuilding process.

Civil society and donors

There are some common themes often associated with civil society, donors, and host government in societies emerging from conflict. Because some of these themes will reoccur with frequency in the course of this dissertation, there is no better place to outline them than in an introductory chapter. Some of the terms used, especially in the case of 'civil society', are highly contested. This controversy is not just confined to academic discourse, but plays out just as intensely among local actors on the ground. I found this out at several discussions during my time in Sierra Leone where groups or individuals never seemed to agree on what exactly constitutes civil society.

This research focuses on "local civil society". The term as used here refers specifically to those indigenous groups that are staffed and run by indigenous Sierra

Leoneans. These local civil society groups have three core characteristics that are of interest in this research. One is that they are by themselves not a monolithic unit. There are *formal* as well as *informal* or *non-traditional groups* as some funding agencies now prefer to call them². Secondly while versions of civil society have existed in the country since the country's inception, the organizations that are of interest in this research are products of the country's 1991-2002 civil war. Finally, because such groups usually have extensive external linkages, one cannot fully understand their internal dynamics and *modus operandi* without fully grasping the global context within which they operate or vice versa. In other words while many were founded locally, a sizeable proportion owe their beginning or at the very least their sustainability, to external donor support. It is in this vein therefore that the research explores their relationship with "global civil society" (of which they are a subset) and especially that of International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs).

1.0 What is Civil Society?

There is still no universally accepted definition of the term civil society (see Table 1.2). While there are some general agreements on some of the key features, analysts vehemently disagree on what exactly the term should encompass. For some it is a 'space' or 'arena'; for others it is 'relationships', or 'transformation and empowerment'. Partly because of this and also because no definition would actually satisfy all the elements I will instead posit a few definitions that offer insight into helping one understand the

² USAID is among the first to start using this term, but it brought so much confusion at a recent meeting that they resorted to the use of 'formal' and 'informal'.

donor-civil society relationship and zero in on some key elements of the term that furthers this knowledge.

As much as it is grounded in the present, civil society has its root in the past. The term owes its earliest origins to early classical thinkers like Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), Emile Durkheim (1858- 1917) and Max Weber (1864-1920) in an attempt to differentiate between the government and non government arena. But even they and subsequent modern thinkers like Jurgen Habermas (1929--) and Michel Foucault (1926-1984) had difficulties delineating the state from civil society or the 'public sphere'. The mass popular movements in Eastern Europe following the fall of communism brought the concept into prominence once again. Since then the term 'civil society' has become a constant staple of analysts of every social science discipline looking to explain phenomena as varied as ethnic conflict, peacebuilding, globalization and public policy.

In contemporary usage 'civil society' is largely considered to be the voluntary participation of average citizens around shared interests, purposes and values. They are, according to Camaroff, one of the leading authors on African civil society, groups that "... undertake initiatives designed to affect positively the political, cultural, and socio-economic dynamics" to advance people's common interest (Camaroff, 2006). These include formal and informal groups operating at various national and community layers of a society.

Another important characteristic to point out is that Civil Society Organizations (hereafter CSOs) should ideally be non-politically aligned. As Zenz correctly points out CSOs should not take sides in politics. Such a neutral position would allow them to carry out their tasks more effectively without accusation of bias and favoritism. The fear is that if they become politically aligned there is the chance they will become “an extension of the state apparatus” (Zenz, 2000). As we will see in the case of Sierra Leone, the difference between neutrality and political engagement is often blurred especially in a post-conflict situation where government plays multifaceted roles and sees it in its interest to divide and rule the civil society sector.

1.1 ‘Identity crisis’? Different nomenclatures for non-governmental entities

Further complicating the discussion on civil society is the plethora of nomenclature in use. In addition to the more popular Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) and Community Based Organizations (CBOs), terms such as "PVOs" (private voluntary organizations), "POs" (people's, organizations) and “civic community” (Korten 1990; Putnam 1993) have all been used. The choice of which term one uses is not just an exercise in semantics. In the still evolving non-profit world in countries such as Sierra Leone these nomenclatures carries real-life implications. For example an organization that is labeled as an ‘NGO’ is accorded certain tangible benefits and privileges such as duty free concessions by the Sierra Leone government as opposed to one that is a ‘CSO’. The situations under which customs Duty waiver applies is clearly spelt out in the New NGO Guidelines (2007) developed by the Government of Sierra Leone:

- o Goods imported for monetization according to donor instructions
- o All items which are locally produced and are of comparable quality and cost
- o Goods donated for humanitarian relief activities that both MOFED and the NGO agree to monetize for any reason
- o Personal effects of NGO personnel (first time entrants)
- o For vehicles, NGOs will enjoy duty free concession for requests approved under the programme registration procedure (New NGO Guidelines, 2007)

In *Contributions of NGOs to Conflict Resolution Activities*, Bartoli (forthcoming) makes an interesting distinction between the two. According to the author the difference between an NGO and a local community-based organization is usually the “level of institutionalization”.

NGO are recognized legally ... and therefore they must have a direct link with a state and a legal system. Within that state and legal system they are recognized as non-state entities and yet given legal recognition. (Bartoli, forthcoming)

This is key because even in the mindset of donors where NGOs are viewed primarily as “ a form of management of program and funds (Fox and Brown 1998, in Bartoli 2008) “level of institutionalization’ determines the nature of relationship that evolves with local implementing actors. If anything the ‘eligibility criteria’ set out in the new NGO Policy in Sierra Leone (referenced earlier) seems to be moving in that direction as well. Under this policy the government clearly outlines the characteristics of NGOs as those organizations with:

- A clear mission statement outlining its purpose, objectives, target beneficiaries and constitution

- Identifiable by office space, sign board, postal address, a bank account in the organization's name and evidence to access funds to support its programmes.
- A clearly delineated administrative structure and transparent accounting system
- At least five (5) full-time staff and/or volunteers excluding secretaries, messengers and drivers
- Be willing to share relevant activity-related reports with GOSL
- A Board of Trustees or its equivalent policy making body whose constitution is not monopolized by one family group (GoSL NGO Policy, 2007)

Also of importance is how these groups evolve and the factors that propel them to adapt to change in the manner they do. As will be discussed later on, civil society organizations are dynamic agencies that adapt to their localities, changing needs and circumstances. They are active rather than passive agents of change. Not only are they acted upon but they also proactively act in ways that dramatically change the environment in which they work.

This research focuses on both local NGOs and CBOs. This is because while both play different roles and occupy different strata in their relations with the government, donors and the communities they represent in post-war Sierra Leone, they actually do have a lot more in common. There is a high degree of interaction and networking between the two. Some CBOs go on to become NGOs whilst some NGOs directly or indirectly create CBOs to facilitate their work. How these issues play out will be elucidated further on in subsequent chapters.

1.2 Forms of civil society in Africa

A third issue worth mentioning early on is the various forms of civil society that prevails in Africa. Some have questioned whether the groups that are the focus of this

dissertation actually qualify as *civil society*. Darnolf (1997) made this point when he stated thus:

Certainly there is increase in Africa in the number of farmer's cooperatives, women's organization's and human rights associations, but a differentiated civil society in which individuals organize themselves outside the family and articulates interests to the state, does not, to any large degree exist" (Darnolf 1997).

Chabal and Daloz concurred when they posited that "the explosion in the number of NGOs is not a reflection of the flowering of civil society in the sense in which it is understood in the West". (Chabal and Daloz (1999: 23).

Not surprisingly these views have been criticized as short-sighted. By focusing almost exclusively on groups that interact with the state they overlooked the vast majority of other arenas in which local civil society can engage the wider system. Seeing civil society only through a formal lens ignores the complex character of Africa's civil society organizations, thereby failing to capture the full breadth and scope of non-state actors in most of the developing world (Kasfir, 1998)

1.3. The 'local' in local civil society

For local civil society the local context matters. These groups shape and are in turn shaped by the perennial instability that characterizes large parts of the continent as evidenced in the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) of which Sierra Leone is a member. Whether working in the development sector (education, agriculture, health, and service delivery) or peacebuilding and good governance sector

(democracy, anti-corruption, human rights advocacy) local civil society are directly and indirectly affected by the evolving socio-political systems, economy, history and varying geography of the local context. As by-products of their social settings these groups interact with micro processes with the aim of maximizing their welfare, changing attitudes, behavior and social perceptions between groups and facilitating social exchanges mainly at the grassroots, but sometimes at the national levels. Thus the strategies and relationships (both vertical and horizontal) that they develop provide a barometer with which to measure a post-conflict country's general well being. Such a nuanced approach is critical to understanding civil society groups as by-products of their social settings. And as we shall see in this work, civil society in post-conflict societies such as Sierra Leone is much more nuanced. It is in this vein therefore that I have opted to use Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) as the umbrella term to refer to all those non-profit and non political organizations undertaking development and peacebuilding programs in Sierra Leone.

1.4 The 'civil' in civil society?

When juxtaposed with “the predatory state” (Fatton, 1992) on the African continent such as Zimbabwe, or oil rich Equatorial Guinea, it is perhaps understandable why civil society has been viewed as the “locus sine qua non for progressive politics” (Hearn 2005). In the general development and peacebuilding literature, most non-state actors are perceived in a much more favorable light. But as already alluded to earlier the civil society world is often one circumscribed by imperfections and contradictions. These

shortcomings and inadequacies are often more glaring in societies emerging from conflict as needs and expectations far outweigh resources and the capacity of institutions to deliver.

As this dissertation shows, civil society is at best an imperfect arena racked with contradictions. As by-products of the society, the same tensions and disagreements prevalent in the wider society also afflicts local civil society. Recent examples in the conflicts in Liberia, Cote d' Ivoire and Sierra Leone, etc. shows sections of civil society can also be manipulated and co-opted. As one prominent civil society leader told me it is through civil society that the fault line of the wider society runs. External factors such as poorly conceived donor practices of supporting groups that Howell (2002) referred to as “predominantly organizations of urban elites” also add to the problem as they reinforce social inequality. In Sierra Leone key players in the sector are quick to point out their own imperfections. In discussions with various groups I was sometimes taken aback at how candid members were about the sector’s shortcomings and the urgent need for reform or stricter oversight to “weed out briefcasing” (Women’s leader interview, January 2009)).

So what are some of these shortcomings or common criticisms?

Undemocratic: Civil society has often been accused of not practicing what it accuses government of: lack of transparency and accountability. Government officials are quick to point out absence of basic democratic principles as pertains in many local civil

society organizations. Unlike other public bodies where members are elected into office, many civil society groups tend to be dominated by powerful individuals—often the founder/s.

Privileging the privileged: In Sierra Leone the local CSO scene is generally dominated by western educated, urban based locals some of whom have little connections to the rural communities they profess to represent. Such top down process tends to privilege people with some degree of power already.

This is best captured by Putnam when he stated, rightly I believe, that:

Civil society is not the all-encompassing movement of popular empowerment and economic change portrayed in the reveling and exaggerated celebrations of its advocates. It is simply not a democratic deus ex machina equalizing life-chances and opportunities; crippled by material limitations and class impairments it constitutes at best a very uncertain substitute to what had previously been the corrupt and class-based patronage of a more profligate state....civil society is traversed by class interests, ethnic particularisms, individual egotism, and all types of religious and secular "fundamentalisms." Putnam (1993)

Fragmented exclusive projects: Coordination among NGOs is a major problem. Groups, institutions and even individuals who often have little incentive to cooperate find themselves forced to work in a setting that is not only challenging but also dangerous. In the end lack of coordination can greatly hinder the peacebuilding efforts as members of the peacebuilding community engage in projects that duplicates personnel efforts, time and money.

Misplaced priorities in post-conflict contexts: By receiving external funding CSOs have been criticized for being more response to the needs of the donors rather than that of the local population. In a postconflict setting where needs often trump available resources, this misplacement of priorities impacts the peacebuilding process.

1.4 Convergence of ideas on relevance of civil society

In spite of these shortcomings, which are by no means exhaustive, there is the general consensus however that civil society is now indispensable in any modern state system. Proponents, including donors, do genuinely believe that an active and organized civil society is necessary for nurturing peace and the building of sustainable democratic culture and institutions (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1999). To fully understand why civil society operates in the ‘space’ and manner in which it does one needs to grasp both the local and global context within which they operate. In Sierra Leone both the civil war and local civil society’s relationship with international donors are key factors in understanding the latter’s role in post-conflict peacebuilding. Without doubt, many of the groups that are the focus of this study would not have come about or even be able to sustain themselves and thrive without external funding and support.

2.0 The international aid architecture

Post- Cold War the world’s wealthy countries (mainly Western) have come to dominate foreign aid. Countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, Germany, Australia,

Canada, to name a few have become the source of the vast majority of funds and technical assistance transferred to the developing world, mostly in Africa, Eastern Europe, Asia and Latin America. Such support now amount to “at least 95 percent of overall international aid, with an average of 23 percent given through multilateral institutions” (Young 2008). But the nature of foreign aid has changed so much that traditional donors can no longer take their role for granted. Due to the changing international systems in Europe and having realized the importance of foreign aid as an instrument of international relations, many countries have now emulated the DAC countries. These reasons for the increase of donor actors was outlined more succinctly by Young (2008):

While aid of non-DAC countries is unlikely to surpass that of DAC donors and development banks in the foreseeable future, non-DAC funding is likely to continue to rise for multiple reasons. New EU members that are not yet members of the DAC are increasing ODA to meet EU membership targets (they are attempting to reach targets of ODA as 0.17% of GNI by 2010, and 0.33% by 2015, although the size of their economies makes their absolute contribution relatively small). Some non-DAC countries with large ODA programs, such as South Korea and Turkey, are expanding their programs further, as are some states with smaller programs. Finally, India and China, with their booming economies, are expanding their aid programs in a professed spirit of South-South cooperation, as well as to raise their international profile and expand access to natural resources and new markets for their goods

Such a development has serious implications for Africa in general and for countries emerging from conflict in particular. First and foremost, it is a double-edged sword. More funding actors do not necessarily translate into more funding for post-

conflict peacebuilding in general. The concerns emanates from the fact that the new comers use different standards in working with their partners in the third world. The Chinese for example tend to prioritize their national economic interests, as they have recently done in Guinea Conakry, over human rights concerns in the host country. Such pact with the ruling elites will have serious repercussions in weak states where the rulers turn to force to control their populace. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness signed in 2005 was meant to curtail this problem, harmonize aid and grant some greater degree of ownership to aid-receiving countries. Donor coordination, Smillie and Minear point out in a seminal report on donors in fragile societies are at best “an incoherent patchwork of policies and activities” (Smillie and Minear (2003).

2.1 Sierra Leone donors

Sierra Leone has a very visible international donor community consisting of some of the largest donors in the development and peacebuilding sector. This includes USAID, DFID, World Bank, various United Nations agencies, African Development Bank, to name a few. The complex humanitarian and developmental challenges in the country meant that as CSOs proliferated so did donors of all kinds. In order to harness the input of all actors involved, the government and donors created several formal and informal groups that met periodically to coordinate activities. These meetings were meant to coordinate activities and avoid duplication. In this new arrangement provision is made, in theory, for civil

society input. But because such meetings are few and far between there are limits to how best civil society can influence proceedings.

As we shall see in the course of this dissertation, even though much effort has been made to coordinate activities, donor- civil society and government interaction in the country is still often ad hoc. Donors such as the European Commission, the World Bank, and the African Development Bank are the only four donors that channel their aid money directly through the government budget (Eurodad 2008). Others such as USAID provide one hundred percent of their funding through civil society, mainly INGOs.

2.2 Civil Society sources of funding and its implications

Another key theme that is covered extensively in this research is funding sources of civil society. This is important for the simple reason that in the face of donor fatigue civil society groups have had to become creative in order to stay afloat and to continue to provide their mandated services. Having realized the unpredictability and unreliability of donor funding groups and the fact that a large chunk of funding either goes to government or INGOs local civil society have had to adopt creative means to stay relevant.

Governments are still the largest donor to civil society groups in general. Such support comes in various forms including bilateral—country-to-country aid through government ministries— or direct assistance to the CSOs themselves. For example in 2004-2005, the USA provided an estimated US\$ 33.8 million to Sierra Leone (USAID

2006). As already stated USAID channels all its support through NGOs. Such funding mainly addresses activities relating to the promotion of democracy, good governance and reintegration of ex-combatants.

In addition to governments and Inter-governmental Organizations (IGOs) such as the United Nations agencies and the World Bank, local civil society also leverage funding from local sources including independent agencies such as churches, membership dues, fundraising from social events, and earnings from research projects. In my visits I was pleasantly surprised to discover the various creative means of fundraising activities adopted by the local CSOs. This will be treated in detail in another chapter. Groups that had fundraising mechanisms were either membership driven (Sierra Leone Teachers Union) or were community based organizations that relied on members daily financial input (*Global Family*, Kenema 2009). Still there are others such as the Sierra Leone Red Cross Society which accepted external support but had massive and well-organized fundraising programs. Though such internal fundraising are often small and not a viable means to sustain their activities they nevertheless make up for the shortfall. Many local CSO/ NGO leaders are worried about compromising their mission if they become too dependent on one main donor. In several discussions two key reasons were given by organizations that had fundraising mechanisms: supplement often insufficient donor funding, or to gain better control (some level of independence) over their programs.

Advances in telecommunications have revolutionized the way local civil society groups access funds from external sources. The internet in particular is worth mentioning.

Whereas in the past groups used to depend on a middle-man (often an expatriate, Diaspora, or an INGO official) to gain access to external funding opportunities, the internet creates a direct line of communication, thereby making an intermediary redundant. Specialist websites such as www.fundsforngos.org have sprung up specifically to link civil society groups to what the website refers to as “donors, resources and skills”. Even traditional donors now have mechanisms where any civil society group can apply for funding directly from their home country.

Irrespective of where the funding comes from, some form of written and unwritten norms develop to guide the donor-recipient relationship. The amount of money involved, the type of donor (and recipient), and even the place or issue on which the money is to be spent, can all go into determining nature of norms that develop around this exchange. This difference in policies by donors are not only internal organizational choices but are also based on experiences learnt that the effectiveness of aid depends on the local context. As important as it is, money alone is not enough.

3.0 Purpose and significance of the research

This research is important for three main reasons: **A)** it will foster our understanding of the peace –development continuum in post-conflict peacebuilding; **B)** it highlights the challenges between local civil society and donors at the end of violent civil conflicts and the compromises that have to be adopted to solidify the peace; **C)** illustrates the resilience and adaptability of civil society groups to respond to changing circumstances.

Local civil society organizations are vital for grassroots peacebuilding and as gatekeepers of early warning. They are pre-requisites for good governance and the main channel for promoting durable peace, justice, accountability and sustainable development. Based on this premise therefore few would argue against the establishment of a vibrant civil society as essential to reviving social institutions in fragile societies. Without any doubt the peace processes in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Mozambique, to name a few, would not have come about without the aggregated efforts of non-state actors, both local and international. In all three cases women, professionals, students, religious bodies and rural inhabitants succeeded in making the processes more participatory (Jusu-Sheriff, 2004).

Like human actors, social organizations, of which local CSOs are a perfect example, are created to solve problems that require collaborative action. This constant metamorphosis enables them to meet old demands and address new challenges. Thus as these community groups adapt to conflict and reposition themselves they change the nature of other groups around them. (Karns and Mingst 2001). Many local organizations have memberships or constituencies that are drawn together by a common desire to effect change in their communities.

The purported goal of donors is to effect social change that enhances the peripheries of power. Proponents of community participation argue that there is a direct correlation between citizen empowerment and good governance, and by extension effective peacebuilding. A vocal and vibrant local civil society helps improves

governance at various layers of society, most especially at the grassroots. Most donors are supportive of this role for civil society as it offers one of the few opportunities for marginalized groups to engage with the state.

Local CSOs are helpful for understanding the structural transformation of a society affected by conflict. Dukes (2001), sees the participation of citizens in community life as essential to developing identity, meaning and self-worth and that it is only through such “participation that the private interest can be transformed into the creation of the public good”. In his view community life offers individuals the affiliation they seek as well as the means to extend the same to members. Within this context donor funding is viewed as a mechanism for meaningful structural change that enhances individual and collective gratification.

Local civil society also provides an indicator into why donors and the government sometimes act the way they do. During and after armed conflict, partly out of a fear of charges of politicization and partisanship, external donors are reluctant to fund groups whose actions might antagonize the government. Thus local CSOs engaged in ‘hot button’ political and advocacy issues involving human rights, anti corruption, and democratic reforms, face far more scrutiny from the authorities and constraints to their work than their peers working on less contentious issues. As Kew points out ‘Groups are encouraged to promote reform, but not to upset the social-political order’(Kew 2005). Indeed a 2005 World Bank report on the same theme came to a similar conclusion: that

donors often channel CSOs towards “service delivery and away from those controversial issues” that government regards less favorably.

Why Sierra Leone as a case study?

From a conflict resolution perspective Sierra Leone is a perfect candidate for a case study on civil society- donor interaction in post-conflict peacebuilding. The country, one of Africa’s smallest and also one of its most volatile has witnessed an exponential growth of civil society groups as well as a sizeable donor presence. The proliferation of non-state civic groups formed with the expressed aim of fostering peace, democracy and good governance has become a mainstay of the local scene. In spite of such progress there is still more to learn about such indigenous groups and the factors that shape their genesis and evolution.

The Sierra Leone civil war and subsequent peace process is also important for other reasons. Due to the convergence of both internal (natural resources, failed state) and the overwhelming influence of external factors (arms/ arms traders, mercenaries, peacekeepers, etc) the Sierra Leone civil war was in more ways than one a civil war of ‘firsts’. Peaking just after the Rwanda genocide, the war presented the international peacebuilding community (United Nations, European Union, World Bank, United Kingdom, United States etc.) with an opportunity to practicalize some of the lessons learned from previous conflicts and peace processes in countries such as Somalia, Rwanda, Mozambique, Liberia, to name a few. With its small size

(roughly the same size as South Carolina) and its small population (6 million) and only two main warring factions, Sierra Leone presented the international community with the perfect opportunity to make up for the inaction that dominated the immediate post-Somalia and post-Rwanda era. As this list of ‘firsts’ shows some lessons were learned:

- First conflict over which a sitting head of state was tried for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The president of Liberia, Charles Taylor, was blamed for instigating the conflict by arming the rebels from the sale of the country’s diamonds. He was charged with war crimes and crimes against inhumanity for among other crimes, recruiting child soldiers, amputations of civilians, and mass rape.
- First conflict to explicitly write child soldiers into its peace process. This was a key lesson learnt from the Mozambican peace processes where child combatants were largely ignored in the peace process with serious repercussions later on. Sierra Leone peace process ensured that child soldiers were not forgotten.
- First conflict in which rebels used mass amputation as a deliberate weapon of mass terror. Amputations do take place in the context of Sharia Law in the Muslim world and a few isolated cases in some African conflict, but the scale of the phenomenon in Sierra Leone was unprecedented.
- First post-conflict country in which a hybrid international legal system was initiated. The **Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL)** was set up to try those most culpable in the Sierra Leone war after 30 November 1996. The court brought together both domestic and international law presided over by local and international judges.

- First conflict in which the international community tried out a new model of peacekeeping: more than 500 British troops were deployed alongside but not under the command of the UN peacekeeping mission in the 1990s. This was a lesson learned from the East Timor conflict where Australian troops led the UN Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) but found themselves constrained by UN rules of engagement.
- First post-conflict country in which the United Nations operationalized the peacebuilding Fund. The **United Nations Peacebuilding Fund** was set up to provide sustained support to help countries make a smooth transition from “conflict to recovery” (UN.org).

Scope and limitations of study

Funding local actors as a peacebuilding mechanism is a complex undertaking that involves strengthening government institutions, private sector, as well as civil society. This dissertation does not grapple with all the nuances of the country’s aid architecture in its entirety. Support to government institutions and the private sector for development and institutional capacity building are not my concern here. Instead I focus very specifically on local civil society initiatives.

The dissertation also does not address in an explicit manner the important role of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) in post-conflict Sierra Leone. World renowned organizations such as Save the Children, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), International Committee of the Red Cross, etc. are some of the established organizations that have played an immense role in transforming the conflict

management and development landscape of Sierra Leone. They are mentioned here mainly in their capacity as donors or as external linkages to their local implementing partners. Their work alone would certainly require a separate research project.

Thirdly in terms of time-line I am mostly interested in the conflict and post-conflict phase (1991-present). Here I focus on those local civil society groups that are by-products of the civil war and the immediate post civil war period. In the case of aid effectiveness in fragile societies, in which organizations shape and are in turn shaped by the prevailing instability the task of assessing an impact over a much longer stretch of time is twice as difficult. This is because, as Cassen (1987) argues, program and project aid take effect over “different periods of time”.

Also- in terms of limitations—organizations (whether local or international or local) are skittish when it comes to discussions about sources of funding. The fears border on A) providing potential competitors with highly coveted (potential) sources of funding; B) not giving away too much in the way of financial practices. About 40% of respondents admitted they will not share information with others perceived as potential competitors.

Finally, the research does not cover civil society in the entire country. To do justice to the breadth and scope of civil society ventures in Sierra Leone would require a separate research. Instead I have focused on those regions that best illuminate the phenomenon: Western Area (seat of government with its large concentration of CSOs);

Kenema District in the Eastern Province (the region where the war started and therefore hardest hit but also with a high concentration of CBOs and the bastion of the government opposition); and Koinadugu District in the Northern Province (region least affected by the conflict and is pro-government).

Overview of the dissertation

The dissertation is divided into **two** substantive parts. **Part 1** is the introduction, background literature, methodology and significance of research. This section covers chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Here I introduce all the key issues relevant to a study of this nature: general discourse on civil society; donors in post conflict peacebuilding; and historical background to the Sierra Leone civil conflict and its impact on civil society. This section will also deal with the research methodology. **Part 2** is the data analysis section. It is the key part of this dissertation as it analyzes the relationship among the key actors and variables identified in part 1. This section will assess the impact of the relationship and interaction between donors and civil society in Sierra Leone. Part II also provides a summary of lessons from the case study as well as issues for further studies.

Chapter 1 outlines the rise of civil society and the proliferation of donors. The chapter also reviews key definitions, issues and practices as they relate to post-conflict peacebuilding.

Chapter 2 is the problem and general literature section. It explores the problem by looking at the ramifications of donor policies for conflict management in post-war

societies. This literature review outlines recent findings in the field drawing on examples in postwar countries such as Liberia, Mozambique and Angola. While the local contexts in each of these conflicts are unique (for example the conflict in Liberia and Mozambique ended in negotiated settlements while that of Angola ended in military defeat of one of the parties), donors have shown some remarkable similarity in how they responded to these situations.

Chapter 3 briefly looks at the methodology used in undertaking this research. Here I describe my utilization of the key research methods: survey, interview, focus group sessions, observations drawing on personal experiences and review of historical and contemporary literature on civil society, the state and donors in Sierra Leone in particular.

Chapter 4 outlines the theories that best explain the phenomenon and that are most relevant in furthering our understanding of this topic: Social Capital Theory and the Theory of Structuration respectively. Both deal with the powers and constraints that actors face as they interact with their social setting.

Chapter 5 provides a brief background to the Sierra Leone civil war and its impact on civil society. It traces the causes and courses of the 1991-2002 civil war and its ramifications for civil society and its position with regards both the government, the communities they serve and the international community. The effect, as one would expect, was both negative and positive. The most telling impact being that the war

opened up the space for the participation of non-state actors in governance and rebuilding.

Chapter 6 provides the first of three qualitative analysis components on the relationship or lack thereof between ‘donor bias’ against local groups engaged in hot-button issues as opposed to those organizations that are not. The state (as host, recipient, distributor, regulator as well as donor) is a critical element in determining whether or not aid is effective. The state provides the legal framework within which both civil society and donors operate. Their role therefore merits special discussions in understanding civil society and donor behavior and its ramifications for peacebuilding.

Chapter 7 covers data analysis II. This chapter provides the second of three qualitative analysis components. It focuses on one specific aspect of the donor-civil society continuum: how do we account for CSO proliferation when funding is gradually been cut back. Sierra Leone civil society has had to operate in a very challenging climate since the end of the civil war in 2002. External funding, a major lifeline of local CSOs is becoming harder to access. To make matters worse the Government of Sierra Leone has enacted series of policies aimed at curtailing the activities of the civil society sector in general and those engaged in ‘hot-button issues’ outlined in the previous chapter, in particular.

Chapter 8 provides the third of three qualitative analysis components using the three hypotheses identified in earlier sections of this dissertation. This chapter discusses

the whether there is a correlation between Civil Society organizations that diversify their sources of funding have better control over the direction and quality of their programs than groups that are dependent on a single major source of funding.

Chapter 9 summarizes the key findings as well as the conclusion and recommendations. It ends with a brief discussion of areas for future research.

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Chapter 2

Problem and Literature

Civil society organizations (CSOs) play a prominent role in conflict-affected and fragile states. In the absence of capable or credible public institutions due to conflict or weak policy environments, CSOs tend to substitute for public institutions and become primary providers of basic social services. At the same time, the international donor community has increased its involvement in countries affected by conflict and instability, often relying increasingly on CSOs to reach the poor. While the prominent role of CSOs in social service delivery and other development activities is often seen as an interim solution, it may extend for years, even decades. Recognizing that reliance on CSOs is likely to prevail for the foreseeable future in many countries, there is a need to consider how to make CSO engagement more effective and sustainable. (**World Bank Report No. 32538-GLB** Engaging Civil Society Organizations in Conflict-Affected and Fragile States: Three African Country Case Studies June 28, 2005 Social Development Department Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development)

Introduction

The last two decades has witnessed a sharp rise in the number and profile of global civil society. Like Inter-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and networks have become indispensable pieces of governance and key actors that operate at all levels of the international system: global, sub-regional, national and local. The vast majority are informal networks with a combination of formal and informal links to international counterparts. Today global civil society could be found engaged in key activities such as

promoting population control and health care, empowering women and youth, protecting the environment and human rights, managing conflict, and delivering basic social services (Karns and Mingst, 2004). In fact according to the United Nations modern civil society actors are engaged in “everything ... that relate to the way that basic values and beliefs affect the way a state is governed” (UN 2008).

Within the short time that civil society has gained wide recognition and acceptance in an international system hitherto dominated by states, there has been a growing interest in how strengthening such groups can contribute to sustainable development and durable peacebuilding. This enthusiasm has been partly driven by the fervent belief that civil society groups have an important stabilizing role to play in conflict-affected societies. Without any doubt the peace processes in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Mozambique, to name a few, would not have come about (at least in the manner in which they did) without the aggregated efforts of non-state actors, both local and international. In all three cases women, professionals, students, religious bodies and rural inhabitants utilized innovative approaches to make the processes more participatory (Jusu, 2004) .

Accounting for civil society growth and influence

Several reasons have been put forward to explain the growing influence of civic groups around the world. Globalization is a major catalyst. With globalization emerged the fervent belief that because the world is more interconnected than ever before, certain

issues (migration, Aids, global warming, overpopulation etc.) can best be addressed through transnational means involving state and non-state actors.

The end of the Cold War is particularly worth noting as it had far-reaching consequences globally but even more so in sub-Saharan Africa. At the height of the Cold War the major powers supported local regimes without much consideration for the impact of such support. Little attention was paid to the ramifications of aid on the recipients development needs. When such support was curtailed or discontinued after the Cold War autocratic regimes that had been propped up solely by super power largesse suddenly found themselves being held to account for their rule. The fall of Communism marked the turning point when non-security issues gained attention and the spread of democratic principles and norms flourished, with civil society playing a central role. The post-Cold War era saw the emergence of what the United Nations termed as “a more holistic view of development and conflict issues” which included environment, gender and civil society (UN 1992, 1994).

This was put more succinctly by Mary Kaldor (1999)

It is a paradox of the contemporary period that, at a time when more and more states all over the world have adopted democratic forms and procedures, there is decreasing trust in elected officials and politicians. This lack of trust is reflected in growing political apathy, declining membership in political parties, and low voter turnout in many elections. At the same time, however, there appears to be more trust in civil society groups...(Kaldor 1999).

Other factors such as advances in advancement in technology, especially telecommunications have also been instrumental. The rise of global communications technology also contributed immensely to the exponential rise of global civil society. The emails, internet, and cheap telephone calls break down the barrier between donors in the developed world and recipients in the developing world. The disappearance of the “middle man” and better access to information has helped create more avenues for cooperation between donors and civil society groups. With this opportunity however has also come challenges, that will be discussed later in this dissertation.

A final key factor worth mentioning here could be attributed to the growing professionalism and expertise of civil society. An increase in the number of global civil society would be meaningless if such rise was not accompanied by professionalism. Today civil society activities are not just confined to service delivery but now includes niches such as advocacy, human rights protection, research on social issues, to name a few. The epistemic communities are classical examples of such experts groups within the civil society sector that have emerged. These are networks, according to Haas, of knowledge-based experts drawn from the University, research institutes and private industry. Although they could be from various disciplines they are held together by shared normative beliefs, understanding about the causes of particular problems, criteria for weighing conflicting evidence, and commitment to seeking policy solutions (Haas 1992).

Implications of civil society's meteoric rise

With civil society's rapid rise have come huge expectations. Today civil society is viewed as one of the three main pillars (others being private sector and government) of development and post-conflict peacebuilding (see table 1). It is now widely held that civil society groups and networks are pre-requisites for good governance, transparency and sound economic development. Civil Society is deemed as the main channel for promoting durable peace, justice, good governance, accountability and sustainable development. In regions of the world circumscribed by poor governance, civil society's 'democratization from below' has widened the space for marginalized groups to engage in activities such as advocacy, monitoring government performance, conflict mitigation and investigating and reporting human rights abuses. Well established international governmental agencies alike have played their part in popularizing civil society.

The World Bank, one of the leading donors that have increasingly shown an interest in supporting civil society organizations around the world, outlines six core functions for civil society in peacebuilding. This ranges from protection of civilians to early warning to advocacy and service provision. Though each activity will vary depending on the context and actors, the analysis aims to give a snapshot of the various roles that non-governmental entities can play in today's complicated post-conflict peacebuilding environment.

Table 1 Seven Civil Society Functions in Peacebuilding

Source: World Bank: Civil Society and Peacebuilding: Potential, Limitations and Critical Factors, Report No. 36445-GLB December 20, 2006

Function	Activities	Typical Actors
Protection	Protecting citizen life, freedom and property against attacks from state and non-state actors.	Membership organizations, human
Monitoring/early warning	Observing and monitoring the activities of government, state authorities and conflict actors.	Rights, advocacy NGOs.
Advocacy/public communication	Articulation of specific interests,	Think tanks, human rights NGOs, operational NGOs (in conjunction with CBOs.
Socialization	Formation and practice of peaceful and democratic attitudes and values among citizens	Advocacy organizations, independent media, think tanks, networks.
Social cohesion	Strengthening links among citizens,	Membership organizations.
Intermediation/facilitation	Establishing relationships	CBOs and other membership organizations.
Service provision	Providing services to citizens or members can serve as entry points for peacebuilding, if explicitly intended.	Intermediary NGOs, CSO networks, advocacy organizations, faith-based organizations. NGOs, self

As useful as this analysis is, it does not fully capture the full range of functions and activities that these amorphous groups undertake. This is more so the case in societies emerging from conflict where non-civic groups can be found in all sectors of peacebuilding today. This is what Mary Kaldor (1999) had in mind when she pointed out

that NGO activities cannot be neatly compartmentalized and do not always fit neatly under headings such as ‘advocacy’ and ‘service provision’. This point was buttressed by Korten(2000) in his suggestion “that development NGOs follow a typical cycle, moving from concern with immediate relief, to projects concerned with local development, to advocacy relating to the wider institutional and policy context”. But CSO work does not always follow a linear progression. Several of the groups studied here evolved through a combination of circular and linear routes. Factors such as funding through external linkages and leadership might determine how the organization evolves and thrives.

Donors and civil society

To understand global and local civil society, one needs to understand the operations of the international donor community. The two are intricately related and have a similar trajectory over the last three decades. As alluded to already one key reason for the exponential growth in the profile of civil society across the globe, could be attributed to the financial support from both traditional and non-traditional donors. As such a growing percentage of development assistance provided by major bilateral and multilateral donors is channeled through International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs). According to Garton organizations such as Oxfam, World Vision and Doctors Without Borders all receive substantial amounts, totaling millions of dollars, in funding from their respective governments. For example the latter organization better known by its French acronym Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) received “46 percent of its income from the French...government “. From 1984 to1994, the DFID’s support for NGO work increased

by some 400 per cent” (Garton 1993). Such huge funding mechanisms, as we will see later on, have a corresponding effect on the rise and profile of local civil society organizations in Africa.

In addition to the sources of funding the nature of funding was also greatly affected. Funding global civil society is in sharp contrast to commonly held practice, especially amongst governmental membership international development aid agencies (such as the World Bank, European Union, and the various branches of the United Nations). Being government membership institutions their main focus was on supporting governments rather than civil society organizations. While the practice has not totally disappeared certainly in the last two decades these donor agencies have developed programs for transfer of not only funds but even commodities, credits and consultants to NGOs based in or working in the developing world. The World Bank’s newly established Social Funds for Development supports local groups adversely affected by its structural adjustment programs.

This period has also witnessed the emergence of new funding actors on the scene. Traditional donors such as Western governments, United Nations agencies and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) have been joined by emerging countries such as China, India and Brazil and new and powerful actors such as wealthy foundations including Ford, Soros, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundations (Anheier, 2004). With the arrival of these new actors have come new sets of rules where development aid and

support to local actors is no longer perceived to be the exclusive domain of governments, but also other non-governmental entities as well.

Donors, civil society and post-conflict peacebuilding in Africa

Perhaps nowhere is the NGO funding phenomenon more pronounced than in the developing world, especially in conflict-prone sub-saharan Africa. Donors (both bilateral and multilateral) have become more engaged in funding conflict mitigation and peacebuilding issues. The fear of failed states, the emergence of radical Islamic groups, the response to the African reform dynamics exemplified by the creation of the African Union (AU) in 2002, and other emerging dynamics have catapulted peace and security issues to prominence. No discussion on aid and its effectiveness therefore will be complete without mentioning Africa. Despite being the recipient of billions of dollars (55 per cent of ODA funding) spent in aid over the last three decades, some critics and skeptics point out that there is not much to show for it (Klingebliel 2005d). As the author points out even though nearly two thirds of African countries are now at least formally democratic this notable gain has not necessarily translated into good governance and accountable institutions. Numerous factors ranging from the endemic poverty and political instability which has spurred a large needy group comprising of refugees, internally displaced and child combatants has turned Africa into a major experimental theatre for the NGO funding continuum with all its attendant consequences. The continent now plays host to organizations and agencies that directly and indirectly fund local civil society groups. Many of the funders are propelled by the genuine belief that

the best way to manage conflicts and promote good governance in unstable African countries is to create a greater 'space' through providing technical and financial support for a vibrant and robust civil society that can better monitor government performance and actively contribute to development and peacebuilding.

But as in most discussions with civil society however, there are always many facets to the issue. This is partly because civil society does not operate in a vacuum. As a by-product of the wider society through which a community's fault line runs, CSO effectiveness depends not just on the local context but also the external anchors within which it operates. African NGOs and local civil society groups are still heavily under-represented in international circles. For example as the UN records itself shows some 66% of all NGOs in consultative status with the New York-based organization are from Europe and North America. Only 11% are from Africa. This is in spite of the fact that local CSO population has exploded exponentially over the last decade or so. This is perhaps not surprising when one considers the fact that the barriers to effective engagement on the international arena for these groups are immense.

Mary Anderson's *Do No Harm: How Aid Can support Peace or War*, (1999) encapsulates the main thread of this dissertation. This seminal work outlines both the positive and negative impact of aid on societies emerging from conflict. It provided a useful framework for analyzing the impact of assistance on conflict. Some of this analysis is reflected in the following section.

A: Positive impact of aid to civil society in fragile societies

The debate around the effectiveness (or lack thereof) of aid is often heavily polarized. Proponents argue that no matter its pitfalls, the positive effects of aid to societies emerging from conflict far outweigh its negative consequences. They argue that the consequences of allowing aid to decline have serious repercussions for societies emerging from civil wars. Without doubt donor funding has strengthened civil society. Donor support has led to the creation of an active civil society in all sectors of governance and development in Sierra Leone. Some of these groups, such as the University Women's Association, Association of Journalists and the Bar Association, have built professionalism that helps to consolidate the fragile peace that the country is now enjoying. The activities of such groups are not just confined to their respective countries but have linked up with others in the sub-region such as the umbrella peace and security focused-West Africa Civil Society Forum. So important has been civil society in Sierra Leone that when in early February 2009 an anonymous but widely circulated letter purportedly written by "The DREAM Team" which claimed to be "a network of over 850 officers ...of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces..." threatening rebellion they sent the letter to diplomatic missions, the anti-corruption commission and CSO networks (*AwarenessTimes.com*, 10 February 2009).

Post-conflict peacebuilding is an expensive venture and therefore requires a sustained financial input. It is not an exaggeration to state that the Sierra Leone peace processes would not have played out without the financial contributions of external

donors. For example, the United Nations spent over a billion dollars on the peace process in two years alone, between 2003 and 2005. The World Bank's Country Assistance Strategy Program provided \$244.6 million (World Bank, 2007) towards the peace process.

B: Negative consequences

But aid to local civil society also has its downside. In her seminal work *Dead Aid*, the Zambian political economist Dambisa Moyo advanced reasons why aid has not worked in Africa in particular. She argued that the problem is not just with the planning but also the execution of aid programs that hampers its success. The main theme of her book is in line with Cortright's (2002) argument that a minimum requirement for the success of aid or any other attempt at external influence is a "coherent recipient regime". In other words the political and social context in which aid is disbursed is critical to its success. This is because aid, of any kind, upsets the local socio-political context. Decisions are sometimes made on political expediency rather than on need (Junne 2000). In such a situation aid, where ill managed, can end up empowering the already powerful.

Furthermore, aid can distort the growth of civil society groups. By virtue of location and access, urban-based groups tend to attract the largest share of donor funding. This not only creates disparity between various groups but it also detaches some groups from their constituencies. This phenomenon was correctly pointed out by Pham:

Despite the successes of their earlier mass campaigns, many local NGOs have gradually become professionalized as a result of the resources becoming available through the international intervention. (Pham, 2004).

The nature of donor support also stifles the development of these organizations in other ways. Donors are often unwilling to commit long term, perhaps for obvious reasons. But by funding local groups on a “project-by-project basis” they inadvertently curtail the growth of these very groups they set out to empower (World Bank, 2005). Peacelinks, the local CSO that I worked with in Sierra Leone for several years, has over the last decade implemented projects on issues as wide ranging as elections, the environment, performing and visual arts, HIV/AIDS, gender, youth empowerment , family tracing and unification, conflict diamonds, rehabilitation of ex child combatants, sports, and music. While some of these were clearly within the expertise of the organization, it is without a doubt that many were also donor driven.

Another impact of donor funding can be seen in how it affects the relationship between the government and local civil society. Strengthening civic groups at the expense of strengthening governance institutions, as some donor agencies do, has led the governments in the West Africa subregion to accuse these funders of attempting to set up ‘parallel governments’. The governments in Liberia and Sierra Leone, have been very vociferous on this issue and have taken steps to regulate the activities of these groups.

Donor preferences for funding specific issues at specific times also push CSOs to respond appropriately. The speed and manner with which some organizations sprang up

to address 'gender' issues in post-conflict Sierra Leone is symptomatic of this problem. The impact of the wars on women forced them into a largely male dominated public domain to voice issues of vital importance to them in particular (abuse and rape) and to the wider society in general. As gender becomes more 'fundable', various groups, some new and others old, realigned their mandates with these "new" challenges. They formed new groups and revived old floundering ones.

But whereas Anderson's framework deals mostly with how groups disburse international assistance, this dissertation deals with how these resources are acquired in the first place. For Ann Huddock (1999) correctly observes, we can best understand the behavior of an organization depending on the difficulties it has extracting resources from that environment. This discussion will be taken up elsewhere in subsequent chapters.

Implications for post-conflict peacebuilding

The political economy of war often argues that aid flows to societies emerging from conflict has major economic, political and security implications. Too little will fail to jumpstart the economy and thus contribute to a re-ignition of the conflict. Conversely, generous and uncoordinated aid flows channeled through government will provide a steady stream of finance largesse for political elites. They raise the value of being in government and thus being able to influence the aid flows into specific sectors, regions or ethnic groups. But it is not just donors who find themselves in a quandary in post-conflict societies. If aid is channeled largely through civil society organizations, they weaken

government and state institutions and thus undermine the fragile peace. The main dilemma facing local civil society is to promote sustainable models of resource mobilization that reduces their dependency on donor funding without sacrificing the quality of their work. Many civil society actors in the field realize that until they are weaned from external funding their work will be eventually measured by how accountable they are to their communities and not to donors.

Many are also aware of their own weaknesses and limitations. Part of this emanates from the lack of accountability. In societies emerging from conflict accountability (both moral and financial) is a major issue. Structures are often weak and lack the requisite capacity to receive and diligently dispense of the resources. To make matters worse some leaders set up groups with the sole aim of capturing these external funding. While a good number of organizations do a good job under extreme circumstances, the lack of oversight makes it easy for these sorts of organizations to take advantage of the system. According to Mary Kaldor:

The accountability of NGOs is more problematic. The problem arises, fundamentally, from the solidaristic character of NGOs, the fact that donors are not the same as beneficiaries. (Kaldor, 2000)

Judging from the case of Sierra Leone, one can say that the CSOs have done a relatively decent job in navigating some of the challenges. Government regulations and the growing recognition by donors have all combined to make recipient organizations

more answerable to the groups they purport to represent. Whether that is sufficient is another matter that will be taken up elsewhere.

Conclusion: Both civil society and the international aid system have undergone rapid momentous changes over the last three decades. The end of the Cold War, advancement in communications technology, emergence of globalization, coupled with the proliferation of civil conflicts amongst others, have led to an exponential increase in the number of local non-state actors and their financial backers in post-conflict. While most of this work has been commendable, there has been sharp criticisms about the manner in which donors and civil society interact and the ramifications for peacebuilding. In this chapter I have outlined some of the common criticisms leveled against both donors and civil society actors in Sierra Leone. The key argument here, which I will expand upon in subsequent chapters, is that the nature of interaction between the various actors (donors, civil society and government) often has ramifications that goes way beyond the financial and material exchange of goods and technical training. There is therefore the need to better understand the key actors and their behavior in post-conflict societies.

In spite of such dilemmas however, there seems to be a general consensus both amongst critics and proponents alike that foreign aid to societies emerging from conflict, whether to governments through bilateral agreements or channeled multilaterally or privately through civil society groups, is critical to such issues as conflict management and peacebuilding, sustainable development, good governance, protection of human

rights, gender empowerment and institutional capacity building. This issue will be taken up in detail in subsequent chapters.

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Chapter 3

Theoretical and conceptual framework

If it is true that every theory must be based upon observed facts, it is equally true that facts cannot be observed without the guidance of some theory. Without such guidance our facts would be desultory and fruitless; we could not retain them: for the most part we could not even perceive them. (Auguste Comte: 1975)

There is no framework of empirical principles determining what counts as an explanation in all social sciences. Rather, there are particular frameworks for particular fields. Each specific framework is, in turn, highly complex, with components serving many functions. Whether a true hypothesis explains, or whether a hypothesis should be accepted as explaining, in light of given data, is determined by fact specific, say, to the study of power structures or investment decisions (Richard Miller: 1983)

Introduction

The theories of *Structuration* by Anthony Giddens and *Social Capital* theory by Robert Putnam respectively provide a useful analytical framework for studying civil society and donor interaction in post-conflict societies. The former provides a resource dependency perspective (how the structure empowers as well as constrains groups as they acquire resources within a social system) while the latter provides a resource agency perspective (how actors form alliances as they disburse resources and its attendant

ramifications). By using two distinct but overlapping theories the aim is to show that civil society and donor interaction can be understood from several perspectives and that any study in peacebuilding (as a multi-faceted process) requires an analysis that goes beyond a single paradigm. This chapter outlines the importance of theory in general and these two theories in particular to understanding the role of civil society and donors in post-conflict peacebuilding. Because there are many variants of both structuration and social capital theories the chapter will discuss the main tenets of the two theories by using key segments that are most useful in fostering our understanding of the concepts under research. The theories have not just been selected at random but rather on the basis that they complement each other very well in light of the topic under consideration. For example social capital theory's emphasis on the network of relationships as a valuable resource for the conduct of social affairs (Bourdieu: 1992) fits well with structuration theory's focus on understanding how the social structures both restricts behavior as well as create possibilities for both structural and human agency. The chapter will end with a conceptual model that incorporates key variables such as unequal power relations among key actors, 'time structure', and 'space' and the impact of the local context on the operations of local civil society.

Importance of theories to understanding actors and their motives in fragile societies

Nadin describes theory as :

a point of view associated with a tradition of inquiry. ... in which specific concepts, hypothesis, presuppositions, and empirical measurements are related to one another within a theoretical structure, as well as to the way in which they are

related to the traditional rules and practices of a scientific community” Nadin (1971).

This is similar to the definition posited by Ross & Rotham (1996) that theories are “*generalizations about how the world works...*” This point is taken up further by Schellenberg (1982) when he argued that, from a conflict resolution perspectives theories also have a practical value as “understanding social conflict also implies an approach to conflict resolution”. According to the author theories provide a framework for measuring success in process terms. In other words theories can be easily transferred from practitioner to party, so that those who are faced with systems that generate continuous conflict can develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to handle problems without seeking outside help (Murray 1993). But attempts to analyze non-state actors such as civil society have a long history.

Early attempts at a theory of civil society

Theorists’ interest in non-state actors is nothing new. For centuries great thinkers devoted a considerable amount of time to understanding civil society and its relationship (or lack thereof) to the elites and the state. Aristotle (384-322 BCE), was amongst the first political thinker to conceptualize civil society, and is credited with coining the phrase *politikên koinônían* to describe a particular socio-political phenomenon. Adam Ferguson’s (1723-1816) *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767) deals with societies based predominantly on legal contract and the logic of self-interest. Hegel’s 1821

Philosophy of Right distinguishes the self-interest of civil society from the cohesive patriotism of the nation (Pollock, 1982). The German philosopher G.W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) considered civil society as a separate realm in which groups and individuals pursued their desires in a "system of needs" (Dhanagare 2001). In short theoretical debates about civil society have been around for centuries.

But a 'theory of civil society' in its modern sense owes its origin to 19th/ 20th century thinkers such as the Italian political leader and theoretician Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937); French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault (1926-1984); and Jurgen Habermas, the German Philosopher and Sociologist (1929-Present). These three wrote extensively about the state and civil society in their discussions on hegemony, the maintenance of social order, power and legitimation respectively. In his treatment of hegemony for example, Gramsci not only explores the various strategies used by the ruling elites to cling on to power at the expense of the masses but also what the latter can do to bring about social change. He advocates among other things the cultivation of a working intelligentsia capable of articulating the views of the working class. Habermas on the other hand devoted a considerable amount of his work on what he calls the 'public sphere'. In his view such a blurring of state and society roles does not bode well for a healthy democratic society. This is because as the citizen becomes ever more dependent on the state. Foucault takes it a step further by asserting that social order is maintained through an architectural model of modern power: people are controlled by believing that they are constantly under observation as obtains in a prison system. The disciplinary

methods for controlling criminals thus become the model for controlling an entire society (schools, hospitals etc.) all reinforce this control mechanism.

Due to these earlier influences it is perhaps not surprising that theorists in other disciplines such as international relations, which had been preoccupied with issues such as international anarchy, balance of power, nuclear deterrence, and arms races between superpowers, started giving serious consideration to non-governmental actors such as NGOs. (Mitrany: 1966; Nye and Keohane:1972; Krasmer: 1983). Keohane and Nye postulated that our understanding of international relations should include transnational nongovernmental entities. Krasmer's regime theory extended the scope of international relations from state to non-state actors. (Krasmer, 1983).

In this vein they were the precursors to a more concerted and systematic effort to study the growing influence of nonstate actors in global governance. In so doing however NGOs were often lumped together with the other international organizations- multinational corporations and Intergovernmental organizations. Not surprisingly they failed to capture the complexities of NGO functions and influences in relation to nation states and other international actors. It was only with the emergence of fields of study such as conflict resolution that a more complex examination of NGOs and their relationship with states evolved. With the growing influence of such fields traditional concerns of the international system—international anarchy, balance of power, nuclear deterrence, and arms races between superpowers- were replaced or at least balance by concerns over failed states, domestic resource division and governance, identity issues

like ethnic nationalism and religious militancy; and humanitarian issues from war zones. But as Rose (1999) points out even with this change, disciplines were still divided on how best to study social systems. Whilst some emphasized the role of the structure, others placed premium on human agency. This point is buttressed by Gerring (2001) when he argues that disciplines in the social sciences have been “talking past each other... due to displaced disagreements over substantive issues”. Giddens emphasis on how the social structure impacts human agency and vice versa is what makes his theory stand out among others. In more ways than one, this is where social capital theory is related to the theory of Structuration. By recasting “structure and agency as a mutually dependent duality” (Rose 1999) and by emphasizing linkages in relationships among the elements in the social system respectively both Structuration theory and Social Capital theory cast a new light on how we approach social systems that have been affected by violent conflict.

Theory of Structuration

The theory of Structuration owes its origin to a British sociologist Anthony Giddens. It aims to explain the relationship between human agency and the wider social systems and structures. It argues that the social actor (or human agent) is only as capable as the social system allows. In other words human agents and the system feeds off of one another in a way their either reinforces or undermines the system and constrains or empowers the actor. Giddens’ duality concept is the most innovative element of his theory. By this he

meant capable human agents draw knowledge and meaning from past and present actions to guide their behavior within the confines of what the system allows. This idea is best captured by Phipps in his discussion on the significance of ‘duality’ to our understanding of the system:

The duality of structure is the fundamental but the most contentious concept of structuration theory. It represents where knowledgeable people who reflect on what they do, and what others do, draw on virtual rules and resources for their behavior, routinized from previous behaviors; and by doing this, they reaffirm these rules and resources, and therefore reproduce social life. Structure as rules and resources is distinguished from the social system as a patterning of social relations across time and space based on reproduced practices (Phipps 2001).

Critical to understanding the Theory of Structuration are the elements of ‘time and space’, which Giddens termed as the “structural properties of social systems”. Every society, the theory argues, evolves from *a network of historically distinctive rationalized purposive associations*. How can one agent seem to have more impact on the system than another either within a long or short time span? To put it another way how does some systems do well under one agent and have the opposite effect following another agent. Here he posit the direct relationship between time and space mediated by behavior and structure in which “social activities become 'stretched' across wide spans of time-space” (Giddens, 1984). The aggregate of human agency, good or bad, with time changes social structures both deliberate and accidental. Most of these changes and their impact are felt with time. Structuration theory also emphasizes the importance of rules and resources. For it is within rules and ‘allocative and authoritative resources that we can understand

the relationship between human agency and behavior are shaped and reinforced over time and space (Giddens 1984).

According to Giddens structured social organizations arise to pursue, with great legitimacy, validated individual and collective purposes and responsibilities. Whole societies are reconstructed around a network of historically distinctive rationalized purposive associations (Coleman 1973). Individuals and societies together are seen as the authorized centers and sources of all social action (hence the dominance of actor and action theories in social science). "Man" as actor-individuals, organizations, states-carries almost the entire responsibility for the now-sacralized human project, with gods, other spiritual forces, ancestors, or an animated nature drained of agency (Katz, 2002)

In addition to time-space element and its relationship to resources and rules are the twin principles of *Agency for principle* and *Agency for non-actor entities*. According to these two principles as postulated by Meyer and Jepperson (2000) the modern actor works in consultation with others for a wide variety of issues. They often do so out of the realization that their ability to impact the system and pursue their goals also partly depends on how they work with other macro and micro systems and individuals around them. As Phipps points out some of these micro and macro elements embedded in the social system are not always tangible or easily quantifiable. In almost every society a large chunk of human actions are guided by "imagined natural and moral laws". Without these, the author points out, agency and agents can quickly degenerate into incompetence or corruption. (Phipps: 2001). Modern actors also mobilize as agents for the imagined interests of nonactor entities recognized in the cultural system. For instance, individuals,

organizations, and nation-states now mobilize their agency on behalf of the ecosystem, whales, trees, birds, plants, or species in general: that is, on behalf of nonactors.

Needless to state Structuration theory has not been without its critics. The theory has been criticized on the basis that by ignoring other structural forces behind social identity or patriarchy (Apter and Garnsey, 1994), it does not address the mesh of kinship, gender and other relations in a domestic sphere. (Murgatroyd, 1989:152). Mestrovic (1998) points out that Structuration de-emphasizes a person's subconscious as implicated in everyday action and as such does not apply to human actions driven by the subconscious or the emotions. Finally, the communication, political, economic and sanction structures in the theory do not represent the changing social regulation of pleasure, desire and aggression through shame, embarrassment and revulsion (Kilminster, 1991). For others since Structuration theory is neither postmodernist nor feminist it fails in interrogating the social authenticity of the individual (Craib, 1992), and the contexts and circumstances of his or her knowledge (Hekman, 1990).

Social capital theory

Like Structuration theory Social capital theory is a complex multidimensional theory. The key difference is that while the former lays premium on actors and the structure the latter's emphasis on those "norms and networks facilitating collective actions for mutual benefits" (Woolcock (1998). Such norm come in different types and

operates at all layers of the social system. They include agents relationship with others as well as with other layers of the social structure. Social capital theory is preoccupied with how agents generate vertical and horizontal relationships to purposefully create short and long term “social, psychological, emotional and economical” benefits for self and society (Lin, 1986, Adler and Kwon 2002).

Important to understanding relationships is the context within which they operate. Much like structuration theory, in social capital, the actor is aware that he or she is operating within a system that both constrains and empowers. The actor also realizes that his/ her fate and fortunes are intertwined with those of others. As such what Bourdieu categorized as obligations (within a group), trust, intergenerational closure, norms, and sanctions’ become critical (Bourdieu, 1983). So whether at the national or international levels actors make a conscious effort to build relationships within and across groups.

Globalization is a major source of social capital. It not only expedites and thickens such relationships but also puts them into perspective. In a presentation at George Mason University Francis Fukuyama posited that ‘globalization has been the bearer not just of capital but of ideas and culture as well. It leaves new ideas, habits, and practices in its wake, from accounting standards to management practices to NGO activities’ (Fukuyama 1999). Global communications has facilitated the creation of transnational networks that that have changed the nature of relationships. Such relationships no longer have to be just local but international as well as groups are linked together by issues that may not necessarily impact all concerned in the same way and

manner. Issues such as human rights, gender empowerment, and cultural preservation are just a few around which such transnational relationships have evolved and thickened in the last three decades or so.

Social capital has often been criticized on the grounds that it neglects considerations of power (Erickson 2002). Its empowerment of groups and individuals is gross uneven. As it strengthens some it also dis-empowers the weaker members of society. As Goodhand and Hulme pointed out “anti-social capital can be whipped up by conflict entrepreneurs relatively quickly (by the use of violence to discourage civic engagement) in comparison to the long-term and incremental process of building up social capital” (Goodhand and Hulme, 2002).

Importance of Structuration and Social Capital theories to the study

So what is the relevance of the two theories to our understanding of civil society and donors in peacebuilding? Social Capital theory and Structuration theory are both important to our understanding of concepts such as the structure and the system; organizational

Social capital is frequently a byproduct of religion, tradition, shared historical experience... Policymakers ...need to be aware that social capital, particularly when associated with groups that have a narrow radius of trust-can produce negative externalities and be detrimental to the larger society. (Fukuyama 1999)

culture; actors and their motives; and last but not the least, structural change. Each of these will be discussed in detail in this segment of the dissertation. For now however one can suffice it to say that it is through concepts highlighted by Social Capital and

Structuration theories respectively that we can understand a range of issues critical to post-conflict peacebuilding such as democracy and good governance (Aldridge et al. 2002); community governance (Bowles and Gintis 2002); and problem solving (Burton 1986). Because peacebuilding is about empowering groups and individuals that have been seriously impacted by more powerful forces the concept of social capital and structuration may further our understanding of how such groups mobilize in order to rebuild their shattered lives. These will be elaborated on in the next sections of this chapter.

A. The Structure and the system

Structuration and Social Capital are important in understanding how the social system in any given society works. Both approaches' emphasis on the basic role of interactions among elements comprising a social system (collective action, political participation, accountability, economy, state, power) are key to our understanding of the role of actors, impact of structures, and the evolution of relationships in societies emerging from

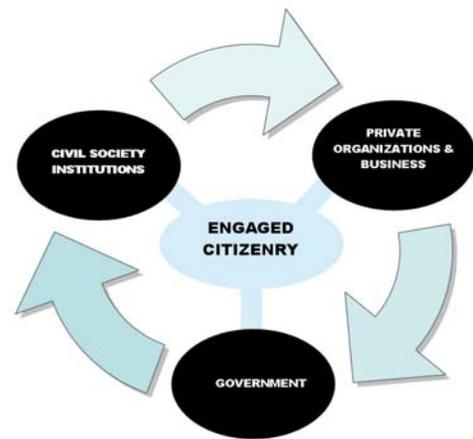


Figure 1 Civil Society and the System

conflict. As Fukuyama (1999) pointed out "... societies with substantial endowments of social capital have greater civil security and less conflict than those with less social capital". (Boyte, 1995; Sirianni & Friedland, 1997). Most inter-social issues involves

many persons and groups wielding some degree of power and influence. Because of the numerous actors and varying interest therefore understanding how the relationship works out is crucial. Thus an understanding of the demands and constraints of larger social forces is critical to one's understanding of both deep-rooted sources of conflict and of the challenges of sustainable peacebuilding. For according to Dukes (2001), to effect sustainable change we have to understand how the impact of these forces is felt at all the levels and layers of the system: individuals, institutions, and social structures. Such a broad view important to our understanding of various forms of social identity (gender, class, culture, ethnicity, religion) and how group organization impacts the larger social setting within which post-conflict peacebuilding occurs. Donor funding and donor technical support to civil society is most often geared towards nurturing the creation of professionalized local civic groups to consolidate the peacebuilding process. The importance of building social relations in post-conflict societies is to encourage the growth of a strong and vibrant civil society that builds relationships. (Lederach 1999). Effective post-conflict peacebuilding is not feasible without the involvement of a broad spectrum of the society. Each person or group has some critical role to perform.

B. Organizational culture and behavior

The two theories are also useful for understanding organization culture and behavior. This is not only because conflict affects civic life at all levels (Pouligny 2005)

but also because organizations do make conscious choices as they interact with their environment. Like human actors, social organizations, of which CSOs/ NGOs are a perfect example, are created to solve problems that require collaborative action. They change and are changed by development both within and without their control. This constant metamorphosis enables them to meet new demands and address new challenges. Thus as these community groups adapt to conflict and reposition themselves they change the nature of other groups around them. Organizations thus develop mechanisms for learning and sharing by constantly reappraising their goals, actions and objectives given the constantly evolving environment within which they operate (Karns and Mingst (2001). The authors identify four concepts drawn from international organizations theory that are particularly useful for studying civil society groups and donors in post-conflict peacebuilding:

- **Organizational culture:** organizations are organic.
- **Organizational adaption and learning.** Organizations evolve over time.
- **Inter-organizational relations:** organizations are dependent on one another, in spite of the fact that they compete with one another.
- **Networks:** international organizations do not just interact with each other; they also operate within broader networks.

This constant organizational evolution and adaptation is critical in understanding shifting social perceptions and exchanges between groups, as well as shifting power relations between locals and external actors.

C. Actors and their motives

The two theories are also useful in analyzing the role of actors and their motives in societies emerging from conflict. Most donors operate on the premise that the government is one of several actors in post-conflict peacebuilding. Other key actors involved include CSOs/NGOs, opposition political parties, private sector, and the media. The relationship between these is complex as there are many layers of interconnectedness between actors as they jockey to influence decision-making process.

Among these various actors the role of human agency is critical. In a discussion on the role of the actor in modern society Meyer and Jepperson (2000) argues that the individual in modern society is a mobilized agent for its self (or for other "principals,"). Modern culture creates an agentic individual managing goals thought to reside in a personality or life course (the "principal" for individuals); a sovereign state managing goals of a national society; and an organizational structure managing its legitimated interests. Assisted by elaborate structures of *otherhood*, individuals and collectives take up available cultural technology for developing *actorhood* (Brunsson 1989). Supported by a host of external cultural definitions and social structures, modern actors can easily shift from agency for the self to agency for other actors-from *actorhood* to *otherhood*-whether these other actors be states, organizations, or individuals.

But the individual does exist as part of a larger social system. While structuration emphasizes structural factors and human agency social capital theory emphasizes

relations between actors. This phenomenon is vividly illustrated when one takes the role of the Catholic Church in post-conflict Sierra Leone. Here the church has assumed greater responsibility for peacebuilding on the basis that its constituencies are far more extensive than all the political parties put together. Because religious leaders in general have a great influence over their followers, the Catholic Church sees itself as the channel through which peace can be enhanced. As such the church has crafted its message of peace that it is now attempting to integrate high school students who are often prone to violence. Approximately 16,000 children receive peace education; with each school creating a peace club that compete against one another on an annual basis. The expressed goal is to complement government's effort on sustaining the hard won peace.

Of the many factors that shape the success of any donor incentive (timing, motives, local context etc), the role of the state is critical. As Jusu-Sheriff (1999) points out civil society relations with the state have never been fully defined. Even though civil society is also shaped by the state structure, in large parts of Africa they still tend to largely operate in opposition to the state. For example many women, youth, labor unions, students and others have successfully challenged the state. In their role as pressure groups designed to force change civil society groups are at constant loggerheads with the state system. Not surprisingly therefore most governments are out rightly hostile, suspicious and wary of civil society groups. In weak, collapsed or collapsing states most governments are wary of any organized body of movements that might threaten its authority. Thus when civil society attempts to wade into the traditional preserve of the

state, especially in the areas of security, development and conflict management, governments tend to become defensive.

A key to understanding actors and their motives in fragile society is the concept of power and legitimization. Habermas and Foucault in particular have commented on the relationship between power and actors' motives and behavior. Habermas for example, argues that money and power are the twin foundations on which modern society rests. Their primary function is the material reproduction of society. Also they coordinate action and have an integrating effect of their own, in what Habermas calls 'social integration'. He does not see state agents as irrational or prone to errors, their actions fall into pre-established complex patterns of instrumental reasoning. For Foucault, power is not concentrated in the hands of a few elites, but rather embedded in micro-centers administered by mini-agents (school system, army, hospital etc). For him the exercise of this power is typically invisible, but it controls its objects by making itself visible. According to Foucault modern power is a chance outcome brought about by uncoordinated causes. He sees a very close relationship between power and knowledge. The latter is an instrument of power: in knowing we control in controlling we know. This view is shared by Dahl (1999) when he argues that institutions such as the church, educational system, media are all public-shaping resources that mainly serve the interest of the public office-holder.

But because of the unequal power relations as Fukuyama (1999) observes:

One person's civic engagement is another's rent-seeking; much of what constitutes civil society can be described as interest groups trying to divert public resources to their favored causes, whether sugar-beet farming, women's health care, or the protection of biodiversity.

D. Strategies for change and structural transformation

Finally the two theories also foster our understanding of change and structural transformation in societies emerging from conflict. As already mentioned the purported goal of donors is to effect social change that enhances the peripheries of power. Proponents of community participation argue that a vocal and vibrant civil society helps improve governance at various layers of society. Most donors are supportive of this role for civil society as it offers one of the few opportunities for marginalized groups to engage with the state. Habermas believed in a vibrant civil society in what he referred to as the 'public sphere' (voluntary informal arena where people converged to share ideas and operate as equals). For him it contains the seeds of true democracy. Dukes (2001), sees the participation of citizens in community life as essential to developing identity, meaning and self-worth and that it is only achieved through such "participation that the private interest can be transformed into the creation of the public good". Within this context donor funding is viewed as a mechanism for meaningful structural change that enhances individual and collective gratification.

Civil society and donor relations have undergone a lot of changes over the last few decades as illustrated in the diagram below. In *diagram 1*, we see that before the advent of what we now refer to generally as 'civil society', (mainly in the 1960's and

1970's) almost all aid to the developing world was channeled through government agencies. This was an era of immense faith in the ability and willingness of government to meet its population's basic human needs. For example in Sierra Leone between 1961 and 1971 of the approximately \$155 million that the government secured from foreign aid of one kind or another, none was earmarked for what we now know as local civil society. In fact at the time the term 'civil society' did not even exist.

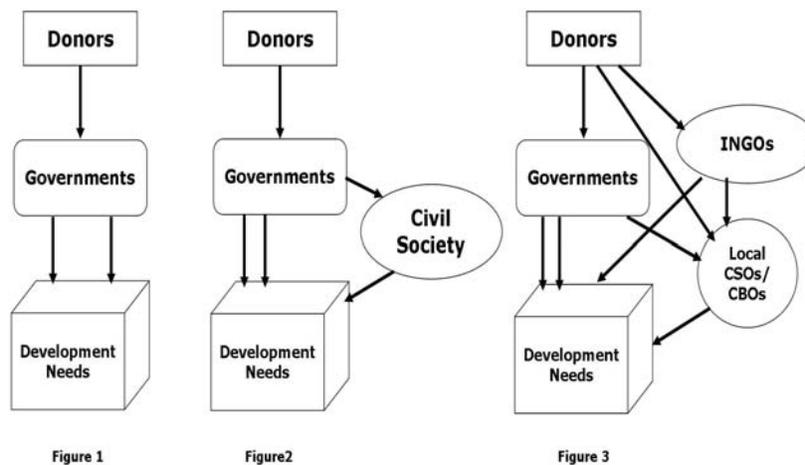


Figure 2: Changing Trend in Donor-Civil Society Relations

By the 1980's (*diagram 2*), it was clear that dependence on governments was not producing the desired results of sustainable economic growth. As a result some donors such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) though still channeling resources through governments to build the latter's capacity, started allocating a substantial amount specifically for civil society activities. But most of this funding was through international non-governmental organization. In *diagram 3*, with the rise in

profile of civil society, the funding relationship underwent even more drastic changes. By the end of the Cold War, as a result of the reasons discussed earlier in this dissertation, a sizable amount of aid was then directly channeled through INGOs and local civil society. The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in England estimates that between 10-15 percent of all aid to developing countries (over \$6 billion) is now allocated through INGOs (ODI, 2005). As such it is not surprising that groups such as World Vision, Save the Children, Christian Children's Fund, to name just a few, as a unit now channel more aid to developing countries than the United Nations combined (UN, 2005).

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the relevance of theory to understanding the impact of donor policies on local civil society groups in societies emerging from conflict. Explaining and understanding the role of civil society and donors in peacebuilding requires multi-lensed analysis mainly because the field of conflict analysis and resolution is multidisciplinary and complex at best. It is in this vein therefore that in formulating a theoretical conception for studying this topic I have relied on the theories of structuration and social capital respectively. These two theories account for the duality of structure and agency and the factors that shape interactions between the various actors in post-conflict settings. While the former emphasizes the duality of agency and actor Social Capital theory helps us understand how and why these relationships play out the way they do. This is important to our understanding of civil society organizations as they adapt to their constantly changing environment to address new challenges.

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Chapter 4

Methodology

This dissertation is analytical rather than descriptive. With this in mind my approach made use of four major primary and secondary elements – literature review; semi-structured interviews of key civil society leaders in Sierra Leone and donor representatives; a survey (questionnaire) aimed at local civil society organizations; and two focus group events in the country’s two key regional divisions: Freetown in the Western area and the resource-rich Kenema in the Eastern province). Two sets of civil society organizations were interviewed: **a)** those that are engaged in ‘hard’ issues (conflict resolution, human rights, anti-corruption, good governance) and; **b)** those that are engaged in ‘soft’ issues such as service delivery.

Method 1: Literature review

There is a considerable amount of literature on global civil society, a sizeable proportion of which has been generated over the last three decades. In this case a logical starting point therefore was to do an analysis of the existing literature. I made a thorough review of the historical and contemporary literature on both global civil society and its linkages to the rapidly changing global aid system. In addition to the scholarly literature, the

review included organization documents (reports, meeting notes, project proposals) of both donors and local civil society groups. While most of the scholarly literature has emanated from the West, Scholars from the Developing World are making very notable contributions. The review was therefore done with an eye on situating the phenomenon within the African context where it sometimes carries a slightly different connotation.

Method 2: Questionnaire-based Interviews

I conducted interviews in Sierra Leone. Content analysis of the interviews and secondary data was a key method of data collection and analysis. For the interviews I targeted three sets of actors: key policy/decision-makers of CSOs (thought leaders); donors and the target beneficiaries. Sometimes these three tend to have two completely different world views about the causes and consequences of donor policies on local civil society. In some of the larger local organizations, I targeted both the top management as well as the general staff using a combination of open-ended and contingency questions drawn from the questionnaire. In the Community based organizations I interviewed the leadership as well as representative cross-sections of the general membership.

Method 3: Questionnaire

In order to build a comprehensive profile (composition, motivations, and operations) of organizations that are engaged in these two sets of activities, I distributed a set of questionnaires containing some 30 questions to respondents. A total of 50 civil society groups in three of the four provinces of the country (North, East and West) participated in

the survey. These represented all the key sectors that CSOs are usually engaged in (advocacy, human rights, peacebuilding, lobbying, media, development etc). In the end I received responses from 47 organizations in Freetown (28); Kenema (12) and Kabala (7). In Freetown 24 of the 47 surveyed were engaged in Conflict Resolution/ Human Rights work. In Kenema it was 6 out of 12 organizations; whilst in Kabala it was 4 out of 7. The selected groups varied in size, scope, operation and organization. Most of the selected organizations from Kenema are community based membership organizations. On the other hand most of the Freetown-based groups are governed by boards or trustees and are thus much more formal and tended to be national in scope. Kabala presented a mixture of local CBOs and groups with national programs. One even had its office located in Freetown but with all of its operations in Kabala.

Such a wide focus captured the full range of contexts, organizational forms of Sierra Leone civil society and the sectors and themes that they represent. Out of this selected number I looked at origin, patterns and sources of funding, geographical areas of operations, etc. By focusing on Conflict Resolution groups the population sample provides a modicum of insight into a sample of the country's civil society groups and does allow some comparisons of the groups that donors tend to favor as opposed to others and to build an analysis of the ramifications of that interaction on peacebuilding in post-conflict societies.

Geographical coverage:

For the questionnaire I focused on three main districts: Koinadugu district in the Northern Province; Kenema District in the Eastern province; and Freetown in the Western Area. These areas were chosen deliberately for two main reasons. Freetown is not only the administrative capital but also the intellectual capital of Sierra Leone. It is home to the largest concentration of civil society groups in the country as well as to the main donors. Every credible national organization has to have an office in Freetown. Logistically, Freetown was also a safer bet. Due to the fact that it was one of the few places where one could have access to the internet, reliable phone service and electricity (though infrequent). The city therefore became a natural choice for a large national meeting.

Method 4: Focus Group meetings

I organized two focus group meetings: one in Kenema in the Eastern province and another in Freetown, capital of Sierra Leone.

The meetings were partly necessitated by practical considerations. The vast majority of the selected groups were



Figure 3: Map of Sierra Leone

Community Based Organizations (CBOs) operating with little or no budget. Many had no bank accounts, no office space and no paid staff. Focus group meetings enabled me to get their responses to the questionnaire in one location.

As mentioned elsewhere Kenema was chosen partly because it was one of the most heavily affected regions during the civil war. Furthermore as a diamond mining area, Kenema district was heavily contested by the various factions—government troops, rebels of the revolutionary United Front, the West African peacekeeping force known by its acronym ECOMOG and the various civil militias. Due to its diamond mining wealth and its strategic location (linking diamondiferous rebel-held East and government-controlled South) Kenema was one of the first districts to be attacked at the outset of the war (see map). The town changed hands several times during the conflict. It ended up becoming the main base of the pro-government civil militia—the *Kamajors*. In post-Sierra Leone Kenema is also important for another reason. It is the bastion of opposition to the current government in power. This is unlike Kabala, which is a stronghold of the APC government, which has ruled the country for the better part of the country's independence. Targeting two regions diametrically opposed politically offered me the opportunity to gauge how civil society's attitude to a government in power shapes their perception about aid effectiveness. This is critical because government is critical in mediating the role between donors and civil society.

Choice of Freetown

The choice of Freetown is perhaps more obvious than that of Kenema. As the administrative capital of Sierra Leone it is home to the seat of government and plays hosts to the administrative head offices of almost all those CSOs that can afford it. The plethora of groups available offered me wider options in micro-targeting those groups that I believed had the most to offer in terms of the questions for which I was seeking answers. Freetown is also much more mixed: politically, socially, and economically. Logistically it was also much easier. It had access to the internet and reliable telephone service. While the Kenema focus group event was only open to CSOs resident in Kenema district, the Freetown event attracted groups from Kenema (East), Kabala (North), Bo (South) and Freetown itself (West).

In drawing up the program and selecting participants for the focus group I took the following into cognizance:

- *Type of participants:* (focused on a mixture of key staff and general membership, gender, issues dealt with and geographical scope)
- *Level of structure:* (whether group was CSO or CBO, large and small)
- *Size of group:* (wanted to have no more than 25 participants so as to maintain focus)
- *Number of groups:* (divide up groups for small group discussions to generate more ideas)
- *Time/ duration:* (kept it at no more than two hours)

- Location : I chose a venue that was easily accessible as most participants lacked private means of transportation. Most importantly I chose a venue that was ‘neutral’ (please see my discussion on page 8 on the divisions within the local civil society scene).

Taking all of these variables into cognizance is a delicate process because of the polarized nature of the country’s civil society scene. Some of this is caused by the fierce competition for scarce resources or competition for prestige and personality. Some of the divisions were also along political lines, with some groups deemed to be more politically sympathetic to the ruling party than others. There is also tension between individual organizations and networks and between urban-based and rural-based. The latter was of the opinion that a lot of the programs are monopolized by the former who had little or no regard for the work of those in the provinces.

Personal experience:

I also relied a lot on my personal experience as an active member of the Sierra Leone civil society arena before, during and after the war. I started my professional career as founder of a youth-serving agency prior to the outbreak of the 1991 civil war. Having lived in the country throughout the turbulent 1990s I was exposed to various aspects of the donor civil society interaction in fragile societies. My numerous travels overseas during this time, both to advocate and fundraise, were particularly instructive.

Furthermore having worked with International Non-Governmental Organizations in the United States and Europe, which participates not only in service delivery and advocacy but also as donors to developing countries such as Sierra Leone, I have been fortunate to operate on both sides of the donor-civil society spectrum. I had the opportunity to liaise directly with officials from USAID and the World Bank in Washington DC and the European Union in Brussels. In my last job I worked directly on 'proposal development' which involved identifying local partners, conducting a community's needs assessment, understanding the requirements of the prospective donors and writing and submitting a proposal to the potential donor for funding. The experience gained here has been invaluable for this research. Familiarity with some of the issues as well as some of the key players prior to the research proved to be helpful in more ways than one. It was due to these connections that I was able to secure interviews, documentation and the needed trust. People I had worked with accepted interviews and facilitated access to others.

Steps in conducting the research:

My data collection plan and analysis proceeded in four cumulative steps: identification of the participants for interview and establishing a rapport with the potential interviewees; identifying a suitable time to spend out in the field gathering data; going into the field to gather data; and finally analyzing the data. As the diagram below illustrates, it is by no means a linear process. I constantly went back and forth as new themes emerged. Particularly essential in all these phases was the need to establish general guidelines for

data selection, examples of relevant sources, ways to categorize and prioritize types of actors whose views are to be consulted, and logistics of data collection.

⇒ identify participants ⇒ identify suitable time frame ⇒ collect data ⇒ analyze/
interpret data

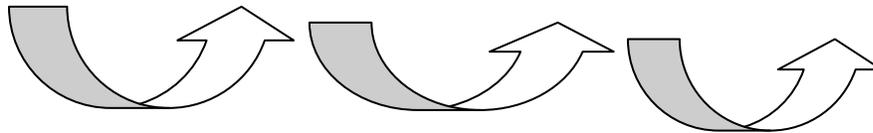


Figure 4 Research frame

After obtaining approval of the proposal (including questionnaire) from both my committee and the George Mason Human Subject Review Board I put together a carefully selected team of 5 volunteers to assist me in distributing the questionnaires. The volunteers were made up of 3 undergraduate students drawn from the Peace Studies and Sociology programs at Fourah Bay College and Njala University College respectively. All three students were resident in Freetown. The other two were an NGO worker based in Kabala and a CBO leader based in Kenema. Because these were persons resident in the communities, they were conversant with the issues and knew the key actors well. As the first responses came in I quickly realized that some of the terms such as ‘civil society organizations’ and ‘community Based Organizations’ caused confusion. Within the Sierra Leone context well established organizations with 10 or more staff tended to refer to themselves as NGOs. The term ‘civil society groups’ were either used to refer to networks or to semi-formal groups whose main role was coordination and activism. Thirdly, some organizations, especially the community based ones needed help in filling

out the forms as some of the terms used were new to them. I therefore had to factor in the manpower required to administer the questionnaires to several groups.

Three towns (Kenema, Kabala, Freetown) and one village (Salema) were targeted, each selected because of its demographic, economic, educational, post-conflict or political significance in Sierra Leone. In all they furnished a population sample of 500 persons for this study. In a small and tightly woven community such as Freetown, personal recommendations proved to be extremely useful. It helped that a lot of the CSO leaders were also my peers or former colleagues either at the University of Sierra Leone or in the country's civil society community. After each interview I was referred to more people who were considered to be interested in the topic and who might give me some more ideas.

Time Frame: The data collection was conducted between July 2008 and March 2009. I made a field visit in December 2008 to embark on data gathering. By the time I got there the ground work had already been laid by the five volunteers referenced earlier. The six weeks that I spent out there in Sierra Leone enabled me to gather the necessary data.

Ethical considerations:

Ethical dilemmas are inescapable in social science research. This is even more so when working in a post-conflict society where the scars of the war runs deep and participants are still traumatized by

Questions for Agreement with Study participants

- What is the purpose of study?
- How much time and effort will be involved?
- What kind of data collection is involved (interviewing, observation, photos etc)
- Is participation voluntary?
- Who will design and steer the study?
- Will material from participants be treated confidentially?
- Will participant's anonymity be maintained?
- Who will produce descriptive and explanatory products?
- Will participants produce interim and final products?
- What benefits will accrue to participants-both informants and researchers?

(Adapted from Qualitative Data Analysis by Michael B. Miles & A. Micheal Huberman 1994)

recent events. In a situation therefore where suspicion and anger still runs deep, one had to thread with caution and sensitivity. An observation by Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (1999) with regards ethical considerations in social science research is worth noting here. Ethical issues according to the authors emanate from several sources:

“The research problem itself (e.g. violence); the setting in which the research takes place (fragile societies where people are already traumatized); the procedures required by the research design (exposure of participants to conditions that may have negative effects on them such as asking them to recant traumatic experiences like rape); the method of data collection (covert participant observation); the kinds of persons serving as subjects (war amputees) and the type of data collected (personal information)”. Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias (1999)

In view of the above therefore I employed the following safeguards:

- 1) The research objective and data collection method was thoroughly shared with participants
- 2) I obtained written permission from the participants to proceed with the studies as articulated,
- 3) Participant were informed well in advance of all data collection methods
- 4) Participants were made to understand that, upon request, all materials will be made available to them during and after the research
- 5) I obtained all required forms and followed all procedures outlined by the Human Subject Review board to ensure participant’s safety and confidentiality.

Throughout the process the participant’s privacy and safety was paramount as I was fully aware that the topic under investigation is quite capable of opening up old wounds in a fragile setting.

Data analysis procedures:

Merriam (1988) and Marshall and Rossman (1989) recommends that data gathering and data analysis should proceed simultaneously in a qualitative research. I took this advice to heart. Field and field notes and diary entries were regularly reviewed.

Once data was collected my task was to:

- Identify themes or patterns
- organize them into coherent categories

For this I turned to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). This qualitative data analysis program proved extremely useful in helping me analyze the data. First I created a code book (using the heading samples below) into which I input all the information. I then used the data in the code book (consisting of some 48 variables) to run some preliminary tests. With an eye on the research question and hypotheses, I explored the findings to see the points of convergence or disagreement.

Verification and external validation:

In ensuring validation three key strategies have been employed:

- ◆ Member checking—a core group of local specialists (most of them NGO leaders) have acted as a check throughout the analysis process. An ongoing dialogue regarding my interpretations of the interviewee's reality and meanings has ensured the true value of the data.

- ◆ Expert examination—expert/s on donor relationship with civil society was consulted to provide a second opinion on the research process and some of the key findings.

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Chapter 5

Context and Historical Background: Civil Society and the Sierra Leone Civil War

This chapter traces the origin and evolution of the Sierra Leone civil war and its impact on local civil society. The chapter will examine the early forms of civil society in the period *before, during* and *after* the civil war. It analyses the impact of the war on civil society and vice-versa. To contextualize the impact the chapter utilizes a set of pertinent questions: Who are these groups? How are they formed? Whom do they represent? What makes some groups ‘fundable’ but not others? To be able to effectively answer these questions would require taking a few steps back into recent history in order to trace the origin and metamorphosis of such civic groups. It is within this context that one can truly understand how they were impacted by and in turn impacted the social context within which the civil war as well as the peace process took place.

The early precursors to modern civil society in Sierra Leone

The idea of civil society is nothing new in Sierra Leone. Voluntary civic institutions, whether organized on the basis of age (*Poro* societies); gender (Ladies’ Clubs); ethnicity (Fula Progressive Union); profession (Labor Congress); religion (Muslim Youth League)

or recreation (*Dancing Compin*); are as old as the country itself. Throughout Sierra Leone's modern history, non-political civic interaction—in its various forms—has played key roles in bringing people together to pursue the common good. The country's unique history—as the chosen settlement for freed slaves from Europe, North America and other parts of Africa—led to the creation of a dynamic inter-cultural civic activism that has been instrumental in shaping public opinion from the bottom up. There were two particularly strong agencies that shaped individual behavior and molded public opinion.

The family: Prior to colonialism the traditional family system was the basis of social organization. Even though it was the smallest social unit, it was also one of the most influential. It exerted the greatest influence on molding individual conduct and in regulating social behavior. The family performed essential economic, social and political functions. Often families grouped together in clans for cooperation in various aspects of social life such as farming or war. As Fisk (1982) correctly noted “The unit adopted a collective approach to the production and distribution of food, clothing and shelter. As a civil society agency the traditional extended family system (which ranged from 10 to 100 individuals) acted as the pipeline that connected the individual to the wider society and vice versa (Fisk, 1982).

Secret Societies: While the family shaped the individual, organized social groups emerged that molded group behavior. The most powerful of these institutions were the

secret societies- so-called on the basis that they swore their members to secrecy. Though these were often groups segregated on the basis of sex, they were open to all adults in the community. The *Sande* or *Bondo* were strictly for women while the *Poros*, *Wonde* or *Gbangbani* were exclusively for men. Others however, such as the *Humoi* was open to both sexes (Abraham 1978). In many communities these groups combined the functions of local governance, law enforcement, religion, education and service delivery. When boys were initiated into the *Poros* society they received training in cultural norms, acrobatics, hunting, music, dance, drama and the art of warfare. The process was comprehensive (family, agricultural, cultural, military) and lasted several years with particular emphasis on mental toughness and moral sanctity. The *Bondo* or *Sande* taught girls beauty culture, singing, dancing, drama, and child rearing. Life in the secret society was a complete rite de passage from childhood to responsible citizenship in a world of adults. As graduates imbibed the civic responsibility they owed to their community, they ensured the conservation, extension and transmission of all the culturally accepted values and ideals to succeeding generations (Watkins 1943, Minikin 1973).

The arrival of European missionaries in the mid-17th century drastically affected the character and composition of civic life, most especially the family and secret societies. In their zest to bring “light to the Dark Continent” the missionaries, spurred on by the British colonial office, made it a duty to wipe out or curtail any aspect of the African culture that they found incomprehensible or incompatible with Christianity. This was to set them on a collision course with the African traditional family (with its

polygamous practices) and secret societies, whose secret meetings and masked parades, were deemed as heathen and a threat to law and order.

Civil Society in the colonial era (1808-1961)

The imposition of colonial rule was a major turning point in the history of Sierra Leone. The system not only brought a new kind of governance which set out to replace the traditional African system of governance, it also introduced new social, economic and cultural activities with wide ranging ramifications. The rapid changes brought about by colonialism: (western education, urbanization, market economy etc.) led to the creation of new forms of political, religious, recreational and occupational associations that played a role in assisting the evolution of public opinion. As various ethnic groups relocated to urban areas in search of better economic prospects, they created heterogeneous communities and new forms of social organization. The newly-formed voluntary groups performed wide-ranging functions, from welcoming and looking after persons newly arrived from the countryside to undertaking social activities such as sports and dances on festive days.

This era was marked by a constant hostility between the colonial system and African traditional civic groups and organizations. They were driven by the fear that civic groups could be instrumental in mobilizing the natives. Lacking information about what transpired at secret society meetings and out of genuine fear about organized 'native' rebellion, the colonial authorities made a concerted and sustained effort to outlaw these societies. Such fears though exaggerated, were not entirely unfounded. When the British

attempted to introduce a poll tax in 1894 to help pay for the cost of running the colony, it provoked an armed uprising across much of the south and parts of the north. The Poro was used to coordinate the uprising, with Poro leaders using palm fronds and drums to send signals to various communities about British troop movement (Fanthorpe 2007). The intensity of the rebellion and the organizational skills of its leaders took the British by complete surprise (Abraham 1978). After they quelled the rebellion in November 1898, they intensified their anti-secret society campaign, firmly convinced of its menace to law and order. Prominent secret society leaders such as Kpana Lewis and Bai Bureh were deposed and exiled to the Gold Coast (now Ghana).

During this period, as a result of British crackdown, secret societies lost their place of prominence. They went from being the de facto government to becoming the modern day version of civil society. They fiercely opposed the restrictions on their freedom of association, gathering and speech. As a result their fierce opposition to what they deemed as an attack on their local institutions of governance they drew the ire of the British colonial administration who proceeded to ban them. Almost overnight *secret societies* went from being institutions around which the social, cultural, artistic, religious and recreational life of the community evolved to pariahs.

As the influence of the secret societies waned they were succeeded by a new social class. Colonialism introduced an educational system which produced a hitherto non-existing group—local educated elites. Even though the European missionary school system was designed primarily to produce low-level clerical officials to assist the British

administer the interior (Marah, 2006) few managed to get high levels of education not envisaged by the British. Though small in number, this highly trained Sierra Leoneans became hugely influential. Many had gained advanced qualifications overseas in fields such as medicine and law. They linked up with other professionals across the country and succeeded in mobilizing the masses to demand an end to colonial rule. It was from such protests that the seeds of the independence movement were sown in the 1950s and '60s.

The introduction of the colonial system also led to the emergence of the creoles—descendants of freed slaves resettled in Freetown from various parts of the world. As the first beneficiaries of western education this new social class and ethnic group became hugely influential in the late 18th and 19th century. Their literacy gave them leverage with the British. In the absence of close relationship between Europeans and the educated elites and illiterate masses in the provinces, they became the intermediary and supplied much of the social leadership in this period. As Deveneaux (1976) put it “they propagated the habit of congregating in public and mixing with others purely for recreational and social purposes”.

During the colonial period Freetown was home to a vibrant and highly critical anti-colonial press, owned and managed almost exclusively by Sierra Leoneans. Several papers were launched by educated creoles who had benefited from education in the mission schools. In 1863 the *Methodist Herald* and *West African Educational Times* was launched by a Reverend May. This was followed by the *Independent* (1873), *West African Reporter* (1875), *Watchman and West African Record* (1875) *Sierra Leone*

Weekly News (1884). The latter flourished well into the 20th century (Deveaneux 1976). The press became the most popular and effective tool of expression and reached high remarkable standards in the 19th century. These papers were unrelenting in their criticism of colonial rule. No one, no matter their political or social standing, was spared. For example, William Drape, who established the first independent paper in March 1855, launched a series of attacks on the British governor, accusing him of highhandedness and incompetence. The articles set off a series of protests against the governor in London and Sierra Leone. The colonial authorities became alarmed and passed a law limiting press freedom. In spite of this, or perhaps because of it, the press continued its critical stance against the colonial government in the process forcing the colonial office to constantly employ censorship as a retaliatory weapon (Deveaneux 1976).

Women played key roles in shaping public opinion during this era. They formed social clubs, often referred to as *Ladies' Clubs* and *Women's Institutes*. The churches were instrumental in the formation of the latter. Members were divided into literate and illiterate groups, and held separate meetings. "Literate" activities consisted of sewing and crochet work, European-style and "native" cooking. These arts were taught at the "illiterate" meeting, while the nonliterate women sometimes taught the literate group native methods of dyeing, spinning, basketry, and traditional songs and dances (Little 1955).

In addition to the above there were various other forms of voluntary associations. These seemingly apolitical civic associations were encouraged by the colonial authorities

because they were largely deemed to be innocent. With time however these ‘innocent’ organizations proved anything but as they became crucial to giving voice to the population. Kenneth Little (1957) identified five different types of voluntary associations:

- Tribal unions
- Friendly societies,
- Occupational/ professional Associations,
- Entertainment groups
- Recreational Associations.

The *tribal unions* catered to the needs of members of the same tribe, especially in the urban areas. Their aim was to provide members with mutual aid, including support, while out of work, sympathy and financial assistance in the case of illness, and the responsibility for the funeral and the repatriation of the family of the deceased in the case of death. Like the tribal unions, the activities of the *friendly societies* were mostly confined to mutual aid and benefit (funeral assistance, charity and financial management). The key difference is that they were inter-tribal and were often held together by membership of the same religious faith. They provided counseling to members and often intervened in domestic quarrels and to reconcile husband and wife. The *occupational and professional associations* were concerned with the status and remunerations of their members as workers. Such groups include modern crafts such as goldsmiths, tinkers, gunsmiths, tailors and barbers. By the end of the Second World War in 1945 Sierra Leone had an active trade union movement whose membership in June 1952 was estimated at 16,595 (Hargreaves 1955). The entertainment and recreational

associations were concerned with dancing and musical forms of entertainment. Even though the membership was located in the urban areas, these associations retained much of their traditional character. The *dancing compin*, were the most prominent. These were usually a group of men and women concerned with the performance of “plays” of traditional music and dancing and with the raising of money for mutual benefit (Little 1957).

Civil society in the independence era (post-1961)

The granting of independence in 1961 had huge implications for the growth and evolution of local civil society. The elites in the professional bodies who had acted as the vanguards of the independence movement, suddenly found themselves at the helm of the new country’s political affairs. In a complete reversal of role, the country’s key civil society leaders quickly morphed into the new ruling elites. Having until recently being harsh critics of colonial rule, the new political class were wary of civic groups and therefore sought to control them through legislation, registration, and various other measures which could enable them to know what was going on in these organizations (Makumbe, 1998).

This era witnessed the slow rise of professional bodies, then known as pressure groups, onto the national scene. Unlike the secret societies before them whose operations were largely confined to the village and chiefdom levels, these professional groups had a more national outlook with country-wide memberships. They adopted nomenclature to reflect their national character and ambitions: The Sierra Leone Bar Association, Sierra

Leone Labor Congress (SLLC), the Academic Staff of the University of Sierra Leone and the National Union of Sierra Leone Students (NUSS). They wasted no time in pressing the government of the day for necessary reforms to the way the country was governed. For example as early as 1964, three years after independence, these groups vehemently opposed Prime Minister Sir Albert Margai's proposal to make Sierra Leone a one party state (CIVICUS, 2006). Groups such as the General workers Union, Artisans and Allied Worker's Union, Railway Workers Union, Articled Seamen's Union organized series of strikes against the government over low wages and workplace industrial relations (Luke 1985).

But like the informal groups that they succeeded, these associations were also exclusive to their members and tended to operate independently of one another. The Sierra Leone Teacher's Union for example, advocated only for the interests of teachers on issues such as teacher salary, workload, conditions of service, etc. While both the NUSS and SLLC adopted highly critical stance against the government of the All People's Congress (APC) between 1968-1985 they failed to transcend their partisan differences to form a united front thereby enabling the regime to institute a one party state and ban all forms of alternative political expressions. As such from independence right up to the end of the 1980s Sierra Leone civil society remained weak and fragmented and had minimal impact on issues of national concern. (CIVICUS, 2006).

Civil society also suffered immensely from political interference at this time.

Like the British colonial regime, successive national leaders feared the implications of mass participation in national politics. They were afraid of the changes which countrywide political involvement might imply, since these would have threatened their own privileged position. They coped with this fear by discouraging participation in national-level politics. (Minikin, 1973) .

The onus fell on university students and a few vocal newspapers such as the *Tablet* and *For di People* to carry out opposition to the regime. In 1985 the government dealt a major blow to the student movement and to civil society activities in general when some of the leaders at Fourah Bay College were expelled (Jusu-Sheriff, 2004).

In spite of these shortcomings however, these earlier attempts at creating a space outside of the political systems were by no means a total failure. For example the National Union of Sierra Leone Students remained a potent pressure group for successive governments throughout the 1970s and 1980's. In 1982 a nationwide NUSS-organized strike almost toppled the Sierra Leone government. If anything these earlier efforts laid the foundation for the refined strategies that later groups adopted in their dealings with the government, especially in the period during and after the civil war.

The origin and evolution of the civil war and its impact on civil society

The Sierra Leone civil war started in March 1991 when a small group of Libyan-trained former Sierra Leonean university students with support from Liberian mercenaries loyal to warlord Charles Taylor (later President Taylor) invaded the south-eastern Sierra Leone

from Liberia. The invading group calling itself the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) commenced its attacks on the diamond rich eastern region. The war pitted the rebels against the government of Sierra Leone, led by a well meaning but largely ineffective former head of the army Major General Joseph Momoh. The Sierra Leone national army, numbering less than 3,000 were poorly trained, poorly armed and badly led. Such gross deficiencies were to have serious repercussions for the course of the war. In June 1991, three months into the insurgency, evidences emerged that the military was loosing the war against the rebels (*Africa Confidential* 1998). After a series of stunning defeats, the demoralized and ill-disciplined troops quickly disintegrated with some of the members joining the rebellion or became ‘sobels’—soldiers by day and rebels by night. The government, increasingly worried about the threat the rebel RUF presented to internal security and about the disloyalty of its own troops turned to Britain, Sierra Leone’s former colonial master for help. Britain refused to either intervene directly or to provide logistical training for the army. This was to prove catastrophic.

Having failed to secure external support through bilateral means with Britain, the government and indeed the rebels turned to other sources of outside help. The government first secured the help of Nigeria, through bilateral defence agreement. When this proved to be insufficient they hired a group of former British army Ghurkhas, who despite coming with a fearsome reputation, failed to live up to expectations. The 50-strong Gurkha force departed soon afterwards only to be replaced by yet another mercenary force—the South Africa private security force, Executive Outcomes. They

were more successful than the Gurkhas as they succeeded in pushing the rebels deep into the countryside. But such success came with a heavy price tag for the country. In addition to being granted a diamond mining concessions, the group also received a monthly fee of US\$1.8 million (Zack-williams 1999).

Causes of the war

Poor governance and mismanagement was partially responsible for fueling the conflict. Close observers of the country's political scene say the conflict was inevitable as it brought into sharp focus the serious political failings that had confronted the nation since independence (Laggah, Alie in Adedeji 1999). The war exposed the shallow and superficial governance structures left behind by the British colonial rulers, who played off one group against the other. This 'divide and rule' tactics was perfected by the post-independence political elites who displayed zero tolerance towards dissenting voices and embarked on massive corruption.

There were economic factors as well. By the end of 1985, the nations economy was faltering, with the prices of basic commodities rising sharply. According to Simillie and Gberie (2001) diamonds, the country's main export, were at the heart of the conflict. With the help of neighboring countries such as Liberia and to some extent Guinea, the rebels used the proceeds from their diamond mining activities to sustain the armed campaign. Smuggled diamonds from Sierra Leone were packaged as Liberian diamonds and sold in the international diamond market in

Antwerp, New Delhi and New York. In their ground breaking report *The Heart of the Matter* the authors argued rather forcefully that:

‘only the economic opportunity presented by the breakdown of law and order could sustain violence at levels that have plagued Sierra Leone since 1991...it is ironic that enormous profits have been made from diamonds throughout the conflict, but the only effect on the citizens of the country where they are mined has been terror, murder, dismemberment and poverty’

Social factors such as grinding poverty and massive youth unemployment and lawlessness created the perfect environment for the involvement of youth in the conflict. The youth who make up more than 60% of the country’s population have been perennially unemployed and underemployed. As a disgruntled class, Abdullah points out, “they have often either initiated or facilitated incidences of a conflict nature, with the aim of redressing what they often perceive as imbalance and injustice during times of violent demonstrations, coup d’états, and political campaigns” (Abdullah, 1999).

The rebellion was violent with civilians becoming the main targets. As already stated the conflict became renowned for the mass amputation of victims. In its 2002 country summary report the New York-based *International Rescue Committee* summarized the atrocities:

The rebels used civilians as shields to advance through the country, and as they did, families were tortured and/ or murdered, thousands of men, women and

children had their arms or legs amputated and women and young girls were raped or sodomized. Anyone who refused to cooperate was killed...”

One question that has occupied the minds of many is that why did the war dragged on for more than ten years, despite signs of war fatigue and international attempts to end it. In a discussion on the prolongation of the civil conflict Gershoni (1997) discusses several reasons why the war did not end earlier. According to the author four main reasons account for why the war carried on for so long. One is the evolving military stalemate which derived from the inability of one of the protagonists to achieve a clear-cut military victory. The second was the availability of funding from the sale of natural resources. Charles Taylor, the then president of Liberia who organized the rebellion obtained some US\$ 8-9 million from the sale of diamonds, bauxite and timber (Lowenkopf 1995). A third factor was the proliferation of military factions. As the war dragged on groups fragmented and realigned due to personality conflicts or in a bid to gain military or strategic advantage. Fourthly the military leaders’ politico-military ambitions helped prolong the war. According to the author the leaders “fought for their own ambitions and had no moral or ideological incentive to compromise”. Uninterested in any kind of resolution that would not bring them to power the rebel leader, Foday Sankoh acted to thwart elections thereby impeding negotiations. Finally the ineffectiveness of the international community (mainly United States, United Kingdom, United Nations, Organization of African Union) all played a big part in prolonging the war. Despite their public announcements and unanimity in wanting the war to end these

largely failed to back their policy with action. The United States did not want any direct involvement, partly due to its bitter experiences in Somalia a decade earlier. The United Nations was cash-strapped and had no army of its own. The onus was thus on the United Kingdom, former colonial power to prop up the West African peacekeeping force ECOMOG to bring peace.

Post war environment

Sierra Leone's civil war (1991-2002) formally ended with a negotiated settlement between the government and rebels of the Revolutionary United Front in January 2002. The eleven years of conflict left heavy physical and mental scars on the country's population and infrastructure. Although the country is past the immediate post-conflict stage, Sierra Leone still faces immense challenges. There is an acute shortage of basic amenities such as electricity, water and sanitation. (World Bank 2007). Because of the terrible atrocities committed in the war, the country's peace process followed the familiar pattern of the tension between 'human right' and the 'peace' camp. The process to end the war pitted the 'resolution community', whose main aim was to end the war at all cost, including granting amnesty to the perpetrators, against the 'rights community' who wanted justice and accountability explicitly made a part and parcel of the peace process. It is important to add that in this case both camps were agreed on the need for accountability for war crimes. The disagreement was over when it is the most appropriate time to prosecute offenders? Should it be before, during or after the peace agreement is signed? The resolution community led by the United Nations and International Non-

Governmental Organizations such as wanted the question answered after the parties had committed themselves to the peace deal. The right community led by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch-to name just two-advocated for justice to be written into the peace deal and accorded a prominent place in the post-accord period. The latter was vehemently opposed to the idea of granting a blanket amnesty to the rebels. This strong objection prompted the United Nations to include a clause in the first and subsequent peace deals stating that even though the organization supports the peace process, it does not recognize the blanket amnesty clause contained therein. The pressure prompted the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to clarify that signing the deal does not give amnesty to anyone for humans rights abuses. The secretary General's statement was a compromise position that appeared to support the view that the war should be stopped first and then accountability can be addressed later. Shortly after this clarification the UN Secretary General set up a Special Court to try the ring leaders. Even though there were disagreements over who the court should try, for what crimes covering what periods, this development was indeed a step in the right direction in bringing closure to the brutal civil war.

Impact of the war on civil society

Sierra Leone emerged from an 11-year debilitating civil war (1991-2002) physically and emotionally devastated and almost totally dependent on foreign aid. Whereas more than

\$155 million (34%) of the country's total cumulative revenue in 1971 came from foreign aid of one kind or the other (Roberts 1975), by the end of the civil war in 2002 more than 80% of Sierra Leone's GDP was obtained through foreign aid. The European Union and Britain alone disbursed around \$800 million to shore up the country's post-war elected government (Bineh 2002). Under such dire conditions and heavy dependency CSOs faced a number of limitations and constraints in post-war Sierra Leone.

What then was the impact of this war and its immediate aftermath on the country's civil society? The Sierra Leone civil war was a major turning point for "local civil society". The effect of the war on local civil society was very concrete. The brutal war galvanized civil society into a national organized entity. Various groups in Freetown in particular, but also in the provinces began demanding a more substantive role on issues of national interest. Civil society not only demanded a voice in the peace agreement between the government and the rebels but also acted as an arbiter to ensure that parties adhered to the agreements they have signed to end the war. This was manifested in May 2000 when various civil society groups demonstrated outside the residence of the RUF leader to demand the release of 500 peacekeepers abducted by the RUF (CIVICUS 2006).

But developing a national outlook required civil society groups to first transcend member specific goals. The instability forced various inter-denominational religious groups, women's and youth groups and other professional bodies to transcend their traditional issue-specific interests to engage the state. Where-as various groups had hitherto mainly looked after their own partisan interests (Sierra Leone Teacher's Union;

Sierra Leone Labour Congress etc), civil society leaders soon realized that their collective interests are best served only when they act as one. As the government proved incapable or unwilling to provide security and basic social services, various civil society groups coalesced under umbrella groups to organize pro-democracy activities, demonstrations and peace rallies that resulted in widening the space for civil society participants in governance and democratization (Naim 2007). The National Coordinating Committee for Peace (NCCP), a group consisting of over sixty groups (Jusu-Sheriff 2004).

The war also led to the proliferation of civil society groups. As the space or 'public sphere' expanded so did the number of groups engaged in a wide range of activities from advocacy, monitoring, conflict analysis and resolution, to investigating and reporting human rights abuses. Many of these groups that traditionally had little if anything to do with conflict management such as the Inter-religious Council of Sierra Leone, the Sierra Leone Teachers Union, and the Sierra Leone Labor Congress became increasingly involved in conflict management and peacebuilding. They were joined by newly-formed groups such as the Sierra Leone's Women's Movement for Peace (SLWMP), and federated groups such as the National Co-ordinated Committee for Peace (NCCP), formed in early 1995 by sixty civil society groups.

These groups became notable not only for their sheer number but as they professionalized also for the quality of their work. The January 1999 crisis was a turning point in the rise to prominence of local NGOs. But in spite of this and despite threats to their lives and properties, local civil society groups, especially NGOs, continued their

work. This changed the opinion of government who then came to see local CSOs as partners in development.

The frequent changes in governments in the course of the war also affected civil society. During the eleven year war there were no fewer than five different governments ranging from one party to military junta to one that was democratically elected.

The war created a class system within civil society groups. The networking and collaboration skills that CSOs developed during the war have endured to a very large extent. There are CSO networks, umbrella organizations and issue-specific alliances of all types, both in urban and rural areas. Today these various networks and coalitions act as platforms for communication, coordination, cross-fertilization of ideas and oversight.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have traced the beginning and evolution of Sierra Leone's civil society from the pre-colonial period to the modern era. I have argued that Sierra Leone had a meaningful and vibrant civil society prior to colonialism. This trend continued till well after independence. I have also pointed out that the country's civil society was largely affected by the conflict. Rather ironically the war ushered in democracy which in turn opened up the space for civic participation. This was helped by donor funding and technical support. As civil society gained credence, it also suffered from frequent political interference as well as its own shortcomings. Despite these challenges however

the country's civil society has endured and is now a major player in the country's peacebuilding process.

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Quantitative Data Analysis

This section covers the qualitative data analysis using Content Analysis. By this method I have done the following:

1. Combed through responses to see what themes emerge
2. Explored how the emergent themes relate to one another
3. Analyzed both the latent emphases/ implicit, as well as surface level/overt emphases.

I highlight the common themes and major findings that emerged from considering my hypotheses and research questions. I have used mainly the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) not only for graphing for statistical computation but also for the storage and organization of the data. To contextualize the findings and establish linkages among the various sources of data (questionnaire, interviews, observations, field notes, web-contents) I have devoted large sections of each chapter to analyzing patterns and relationships between and across various key variables from these sources. The following chapters (6-8) follow a similar format. Each is devoted to one core hypothesis, followed by detailed analysis and a discussion of the major findings. Each chapter concludes by interpreting the findings in their fit or lack thereof with the hypothesis. Chapter 9 is the conclusion and the recommendation piece which weaves all the key elements together. As the final chapter it provides practical recommendations on how to engage various actors in post-conflict peacebuilding as well as areas for future research.

Chapter 6

Data Analysis- Findings 1

Chapter summary

This chapter provides the first of three qualitative analysis components. It focuses on how government concern shapes civil society-donor relations. This concern has led to accusations of ‘donor bias’ against local groups engaged in hot-button issues as opposed to those organizations that are not. The key finding in this chapter is that donor bias is widely perceived in SL, and in fact exists. However, it is more a functional bias than a substantive one. That is, donors -- who drive the fund distribution process -- prefer to fund groups with whom they can easily communicate and with whom they share a common outlook. This means bias in favor of CSO's that are international, urban-centered, and have professional experts schooled in the ways of modern government bureaucracies.

Hypothesis 1: In Post-Conflict peacebuilding civil society groups that are engaged in contentious ‘hot button’ issues (human rights investigations, anti-corruption, war-victims advocacy) face more constraints and encounter ‘funding bias’ far more than development-oriented groups engaged in non-controversial issues.

The perception persists among the CSO community that ‘donor biases,--in one form or another,--do exist in Sierra Leone. Groups based in the provinces believed that donors favored Freetown-based groups over them. Within this sub-category those in the rural areas felt those in the urban areas received more support than they did. Furthermore some regional CSOs believed that politics can also influence donor bias. Organizations that are in regions favored by the government received more support than those that are

out of the favored areas of the local power wielders. But within these various sub-categories the charges about donor bias against 'hot-button' CSOs as opposed to non-hot-button CSOs was the most prevalent.

The most critical division about donor is not so much about where a group is based but rather what sector it is engaged in. During and after armed conflict, partly out of a fear of charges of politicization and partisanship, external donors appear to reluctant to fund groups that have an uneasy relationship with the government based on the nature of their work than those engaged in less contentious issues. Such decisions are systematic and deliberate while others are spontaneous and adhoc based on a host of other factors such as personnel in charge and the prevailing political climate. This is partly because the Government of Sierra Leone, as is the case in most post-conflict countries, is often sensitive to charges of human rights abuses, corruption and mismanagement. As Kew points out:

In theory donors are generally supportive of the roles played by civil society which includes balancing the power of the state, checking its abuses, hounding corruption, and organizing and supporting political opposition. Yet in practice they must temper such support with concerns that they not be accused of meddling in the internal affairs of the country by the host government. Groups are encouraged to promote reform, but not to upset the social-political order.(Kew 2005)

It is such cautious approach that has led to charges that donors deliberately avoid difficult political and advocacy issues so as not to antagonize host governments. Indeed a 2005 World Bank report on the same theme came to a similar conclusion: that donors often channel CSOs towards "service delivery and away from those controversial issues"

that government regards less favorably. Such an approach, the report concludes, makes it difficult for civil society groups to reassert public interests in the governing arena (World Bank, 2005d).

Research questions

To test this hypothesis I framed the following questions. What type of civil society groups (hot-button vs. development) do donors tend to support? How much does concern for the perception of government play a role? To begin to answer these questions I needed to first find out which sector is currently attracting the most funding and why.

Key sectors of civil society in post-conflict Sierra Leone

Civil society work in post-conflict Sierra Leone is largely divided into two key sectors: development (which encompasses education, agriculture, health and service delivery) on the one hand; and democracy, good governance, anti-corruption, human rights advocacy and peacebuilding on the other. While many organizations and networks operated in one of these two divisions, in reality their work often straddled the two areas. This was also true for donor support which tended to fall in one or both of these two categories. The targeted groups in my survey included these two broad categories as well as all the key sub-sectors in which civil society groups are currently engaged. I brought together an equal number of local CSOs engaged in both development and the hot-button areas mentioned earlier.

When asked in which sectors their organizations are engaged 53.2 percent of the respondents listed their work as exclusively in the development domain. Another 23.4 percent see their work as strictly in conflict resolution, human rights and anti-corruption fields. It must be stated however that these classifications are not necessarily exclusive of one another as groups tend to incorporate elements of both sectors depending on the needs of the donor and the changing circumstances on the ground. For example 21.3 percent engage in some kind of 'hybrid' operations. These are often groups that specifically link peacebuilding with development.

From the response one could see that the majority of organizations work in the development sector. This is perhaps not surprising as the war ended more than six years ago which has led to the shifting of focus from emergency response, to long term developmental needs. According to the post-conflict literature Sierra Leone has navigated both the transitional phases and is now in the post-conflict sustainable development phase³.

When asked which sector receives the most support and why 53 percent of respondents believed that the development sector in general is favored over the other areas outlined above. Only 23.4 percent believed that the latter are getting more support. While this is not an insignificant number, it supports the general perception among respondents that the latter are often engaged in high-profiled activities that generate lots

³ According to the postconflict peacebuilding literature the sustainable development phase typically ranges from four to ten years, but the affected country will continue to address conflict related consequences in its development programming for decades afterwards.

more attention, both locally and internationally than does the former. Respondents pointed to the fact that donor funding is often spent disproportionately and that the sector with the greatest need does not always attract the most resources. Fifty percent of the organizations surveyed believe that there is too little donor support, while 20 percent believe there is too much and 30 percent said they don't know. Of this amount 53 percent believes much of it is allocated to the development sector at the expense of conflict resolution, human rights and good governance campaign groups. So while majority believed that the development sectors gets the biggest share they disagreed on whether that is because it is where the greatest needs are or because of donor bias. I will deal with this more in the later sections of this chapter.

There is a seeming lack of communication which has only helped to fuel the feeling of bias. Because many of the NGOs have very few channels of figuring out the mode and quantity of distribution of funding from overseas, the perception persists among local groups that CSOs engaged in sensitive and controversial issues are often deliberately by-passed by donors in favor of less controversial groups. Miscommunication apart, a 2006 report by EURODAD came to a similar conclusion:

Donors funded a total of 265 different projects at an average of approximately US\$1 million per project. But the vast majority of this (31 projects costing US\$22.2 million) went to the Ministry of Health and the National HIV/AIDS Secretariat alone (EURODAD 2006).

When asked why donors support some groups and sectors over others, a mere 25.5 percent stated that is where they (the donors) perceive the most community need. Compare this to 36.2 percent who believe that it is the need for highly visible projects

that drive donor support. In other words some CSOs believed that some of the reasons for donor support are also self-serving through such practices as providing jobs for their citizens as consultants and procuring goods from their home country. The ability to visit project sites at periodic intervals is one of the conditions often woven into funding agreement. In this vein 23.4 percent believed that a donors inability to visit (or visit as frequently as they would like) puts groups that are inaccessible at a disadvantage. This is particularly true for organizations based in the provinces.

When asked about the key motivating factors for donor support 70.2 percent believed that the donors are genuinely interested in helping the country recover from the civil war. Only 17 percent believed that it is purely for self-serving political reasons. While 10.6 percent believed that it is a combination of the two that really drives the process.

Civil society groups engaged in 'Hot button' issues

Compared to most countries in a similar situation (Zimbabwe, Eritrea, The Gambia etc.) Sierra Leoneans enjoy far more fundamental freedoms than citizens of the listed countries. This does not mean however that the government has not been concerned with goings on in the civil society sector. One question that I put out to hot button issue groups is that if their sub field is unattractive: government crackdown coupled with acute funding shortage, why are they still engaged in tackling those 'hard' issues that only seems to attract unwarranted attention? The general consensus among the respondents

was that the underlying causes of the conflict have not been addressed, plus it is a job that somebody has to do⁴. In their estimation while the peace process has endured, the general feeling is that some of the socio-economic factors that caused the war are still present. As if to validate their point, and perhaps more worryingly, ‘pockets of violence’ have emerged that have the capacity to undermine the current status quo but for which civil society is perfectly placed to play a meaningful role in diffusing. Then there is the pressing need of providing for and caring for the victims of the conflict: amputees, rape victims, street children, to name a few. Since the government lacked the resources, some groups needed to provide for the physical and emotional needs of these affected groups. Handicap International, Peacelinks, FAWE, Children Associated with the War (CAW), are examples of local organizations that catered to such groups. As one NGO leader put it, peacebuilding is a process and not an event. It is this constant need to meet new challenges and refocus their message that helps explain why such groups endure and have continued to demonstrate their relevance in spite of severe challenges.

Indeed respondents demonstrated a remarkable array of knowledge as to the causes of the war and ways to remedy the status quo. Among the most commonly cited reasons are:

- Political intolerance, undiluted tribalism and social exclusion.
- Corruption and lack of oversight. It is both vertical and horizontal as a result of lack of information flow. Donor practices also encourage this. Since they provide the funds, local initiative is undermined.
- Poverty is by degree. Poverty means groups don’t have much choice
- Poor service delivery

⁴ Group interview, January 2009

- Social exclusion and continued marginalization of women/ youth, two key segments of the population
- Porous border—few security personnel and know-how to effectively guard the border. The border between Guinea and Sierra Leone is a cause for concern.
- Failure of the government to implement the recommendation of the TRC
- No clearly defined role of chiefs who extort from their subjects⁵.

Of the 23.4 percent CSOs that are engaged in hot-button issues, many are advocacy groups that operate at the national level. Their strong advocacy roles is well documented and has been credited with helping to mainstream peacebuilding and human rights. As discussed elsewhere the vast majority of these groups came about after the civil war, with the primary goal of promoting peace among various constituencies. Some of these are faith-based who have embarked on assuming greater responsibility for the consolidation of peace on the basis that their constituencies are far more extensive than all the political parties put together⁶.

These CSOs see their conflict resolution role as preventing, managing and resolving conflicts in collaboration with other actors. Due to some of the changes brought about by decentralization, a process that has been well supported by donors, a rule of thumb has developed where community-based conflicts are addressed at the community level and conflicts with nation-wide implications are addressed at the national level. For example conflicts between cattle herders and sedentary farmers in the Koinadugu and Bombali districts in northern Sierra Leone are often mediated by local authorities (police,

⁵ Group Interview, Freetown, Sierra Leone, January 2009

⁶ Discussion with the head of CARITAS in Freetown, Sierra Leone

chiefs, parliamentarians from the region) as well as civil society groups. Often CSOs play a facilitating role by bringing together all the main stakeholders. In other cases in collaboration with local government agencies, they work directly with the affected parties to address the root causes of the issues. In short community-based CSOs play a key role in the life cycle of every conflict. CSOs have made some impact in their work. It is partly as a result of such impact that they have attracted more scrutiny from the government.

Analysis

More than seven years after the official end of the war positive peace⁷ has so far eluded Sierra Leone with the country ranked in the UN Development Index Report as the least developed in the world. The country, according to a recent International Crisis Group report is still circumscribed by extreme poverty, weak governance and petty corruption. The United Nations estimates unemployment among the youth to be at more than 65 percent. In this context it is perhaps not surprising that various “zones of violence” still exist and pose a serious threat to the fragile peace process. Both at the community level and at national levels, violence whether politically motivated (such as between the political parties) or economically driven, (such as between mining companies and locals) have periodically led to the outbreak of deadly violence resulting in death and destruction of properties. No doubt some of the mentioned conflicts have been exacerbated by the civil war and its impact on the population.

⁷ Galtung describes positive peace as not just the absence of violence. Peace does not mean the total absence of any conflict. It means the absence of violence in all forms and the unfolding of conflict in a constructive way

Civil society groups that are operational in post-war Sierra Leone are distinctly different from their preceding peers in the sense that they now face more government scrutiny and fewer funding avenues. In spite of this challenge however the continuing socio-economic challenges in Sierra Leone continue to dictate the existence of hot-button organizations. A lot of the organizations and networks that formed after the war are engaged in addressing these “zones of violence”. Examples include the National Elections Watch (NEW), which deals mainly with elections-related violence. At this point however no national umbrella organization exists around peacebuilding or conflict resolution specifically. Instead groups of networks congregate to tackle various aspects of peacebuilding. As such it is understandable the work of many of these CSOs is interwoven in their development work. They have also learned that the relevance of their work is not only determined by the mandate of their organizations but also by the niche of the donors. The Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD) has a ‘peace and support program’ with a project “**Leh wi push pis**” [Let us push peace]. The project works with local community to promote access to justice, through working with community people as paralegals⁸.

For hot-button CSOs, it is the sensitive nature of their work that sets them on a collision course with the government of Sierra Leone. Government is central to the relationship that evolves between donors and civil society actors. The former plays a multifaceted role as arbiter, regulator, disbursing, donor and recipient. They set the

⁸ NMJD 2007 Organization brochure, Freetown Sierra Leone

regulatory framework within which both donor and CSOs operate. But government's role is at best ambiguous partly driven by the desire for better control over the CSO sector. During the war, the Sierra Leone government, like most other actors had to fight for its survival. Between the outbreak of the war in 1991 to its conclusion in 2000 Sierra Leone had five different governments, ranging from a one-party plutocracy, to two military dictatorships to a democratically-elected government. Such instability meant government was weak and had no time or political will to consolidate its grip on power or the ability to regulate the civil society sector. As the war receded however government has been slowly able to reassert its authority over certain key sectors of society, including that of civil society. When asked why aid is not effective, about 52.2 percent believed there is too much government influence and interference. This is far greater than the 17.4 percent who blame the unwillingness of donors to modify their foreign perceptions as a key factor for aid ineffectiveness. In the same vein only 6.4 percent blame aid ineffectiveness on donors lack of understanding of the social context. So clearly government has featured quite heavily on the discussions as they shape the discourse between civil society and donors.

In other more subtle ways, politics and donor aid is intertwined. Often after war the government is weak and lacks the capacity to implement some of its core policies. As donors attempt to build the capacity of the government to make it more responsive to the needs of the people, they concurrently support the growth of indigenous civil society to bridge the gap between them and the former. Also opposition members who fall out of

power often either set up a consultancy or go into the civil society sector or both. In fact the civil society sector has become the favorite launching pad on which many aspiring politicians kick-started their political career. Those waiting to go into or have just been dislodged from power often bide their time in the CSO world.

Supporting evidence for guiding hypothesis

The purpose for developing the hypothesis outlined at the beginning of this chapter is to look for evidence that supports or refutes it. I had originally assumed in the formation of this hypothesis that there would be some degree of bias towards hard issues CSOs simply because government criticism of the sector has increased in recent years and donors are worried about an over-vocal civil society sector that will be at constant tension with the government. From the evidence that emerged from this research however this largely seems to hold true. But the evidence also suggests that the same constraints also provide opportunities that enable groups to do well. There are several reasons for this as outlined below.

The factors could be summarized as follows:

Unequal power relations: The aid sector operates in a highly hierarchical framework with vastly unequal power relations among the various actors. Donors are at the top of this pyramid and are hence the most powerful and get to dictate the policies and agenda of the country's development process. They alone determine how much they give, when and how to give it and to whom. Below the donors, in this hierarchy, is the Government of

Sierra Leone. As hosts they, at least in theory, provide the regulatory framework within which both donors and civil society actors operate. Further down is the INGOs, below them is the NGOs, followed by the CBOs and other community groups. With such a vastly unequal power network, donors are too powerful and have a plethora of options at their disposal to be deterred by host governments in post-conflict settings, especially as these are often weak and themselves dependent on donor support.

Plethora of options: Secondly, there are a plethora of options now available to both donors and civil society to enable them to bypass government regulations. USAID for example, provides all of its funds to INGOs only. Well established organizations such as *Save the Children, World Vision, International Committee of the Red Cross* to name just a few all benefit from this arrangement which puts them in direct contact with their constituencies. Furthermore INGOs are so well established and so well funded that government censorship will have little impact on their work. These groups source their support from other branches around the world and have developed the expertise to anonymously solicit information without putting the lives of the participants in danger. The Sierra Leone Red Cross Society's programs in the southern province link development with peacebuilding. Its Community Animation and Peace Support (CAPS) project 'interventions' includes: Conflict transformation; WATSAN/ Hygiene promotion; Peace Education; Micro enterprise development; Food security; Skills Training; Advocacy. In this way groups can circumnavigate the government restrictions.

Uncoordinated and contradictory aid sector: Thirdly the whole aid sector in post-conflict Sierra Leone is too fragmented and shortsighted for any coherent and targeted response to evolve by design. True some progress has been made at harmonization and coordination among donors and between the latter and civil society. The setting up of the Development Aid Coordinating Office (DACO) by the Government of Sierra Leone and key donors is a case in point at efforts to streamline the aid process and to give more voice to civil society organizations. In spite of this however donor engagement with CSOs is often ad-hoc. There are only two channels in the entire aid chain in which CSOs can influence donor behavior. Also the local CSO scene is rife with contradictions and fierce competition for scarce resources, which makes coordination very difficult.

Some have thrived in spite of government crackdown: Finally some key organizations working in the ‘hot-button’ areas have continued to thrive irrespective of, or perhaps because of government crackdown and unfavorable funding conditions. The Network Movement for Justice and Development, the local Chapter of Amnesty International, CARITAS, to name just a few. Some of these are too large, have much more experience and have a wider international and national constituency to be deterred by government crackdown. For example groups such as CARITAS and NMJD have more clout and influence than smaller civil society groups.

Furthermore some subregional peacebuilding groups have done fairly well. The Mano River Women’s Network for Peace, The West Africa Network for Peace, The Mano River Youth movement, not only survived but thrived with Sierra Leone acting as

the secretariat for some of the most prominent. From discussions with various actors it became clear that there were several reasons for this. While the war ended in Sierra Leone, there was the feeling that the West Africa subregion in general was still very much susceptible to violence. Secondly, West Africa has almost always been unstable either from military coups, strikes or civil wars, thus the need for peace groups to organize and remain vigilant. Furthermore the 1990s saw a new group of West African young people receive advanced training or post-graduate degrees in peacebuilding and conflict resolution or some other related field. The vanguards of the subregional peace movement were all products of prominent universities such as Columbia University in New York; University of Bradford in the UK; Joan Kroc Institute in Indiana; Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution and Eastern Mennonite University in Virginia respectively, returned home or took up jobs in places where they could contribute directly to the sub-regional peace process. This is not to state however that government lack power and can easily acquiesce to donors. There are several examples on the African continent of governments dictating donor activities and programs much to their own benefit. Examples include Zimbabwe, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Key findings

Findings # 1: Donor bias does exist but its more functional than substantive.

Donor funding is a very dynamic process that adapts to changing needs, circumstances and demands. Donors have to make strategic choices due to circumstances within and beyond their control. Donor organizations, like the civil society groups they fund are also

organic in nature. They metamorphose and fine-tune their responses as the circumstances on the ground evolve. They add and drop partners, increase or decrease funding not only based on the performance or lack thereof of a funded group, but based on funding availabilities, changing needs on the ground and at headquarters, and the enthusiasm and passion a specific country director might have for a particular sector. In short both donors and civil society groups make pragmatic choices to enable them stay in business. Rather interestingly the same reasons why a donor country manifests interest in an organization or sector is very similar to the same reason why a particular donor country opts to support one country or region over the other.

- **Historical and cultural ties:** On the donor side, interest in an individual state is influenced by considerations of an historical (e.g. post-colonial), commercial, geo-political, security or cultural/linguistic nature. These differing interests determine the strength and the nature of interest of a donor in a developing country. Ultimately, aid policy cannot be distinguished from foreign policy. (Stephen Browne, world Bank).
- **Geopolitical objectives:** a country's perceived security and economic needs is critical to which country it supports.
- **Foreign policy objectives:** Each donor country has its own foreign policy interests. These interests are often influenced by domestic policies and politics and by the behavior and foreign policy interest of other countries.

- **Domestic politics:** the humanitarian behavior of donor governments is also influenced by domestic politics which overlaps with foreign policies.
- **Media pressure:** The media often plays a key role in initiating mass public support.

Findings #2: Small group of CSOs (irrespective of issues addressed) set the agenda for the rest of the sector

A small group of elite organizations drive the donor-civil society funding process. Even though donor funding to CSOs in fragile societies such as Sierra Leone tend to be substantial just after the war, they tend to slowly dwindle as the urgent needs dissipates. Often the largest share of such funding tends to go to a small number of elite urban-based groups. These groups often have urbane leadership, and its structure and modus operandi (bank account, board etc) are decipherable to the donor. This small group of organizations often has the following characteristics, irrespective of the sector they are engaged in.

- I. **Organization makeup:** donor community is often attracted to groups whose organizational structure is decipherable. If they can understand the structure of an organization then it gives them a better sense of where they are and where they are coming from. An organization with an office space, paid staff, bank account, a board and periodic audits will meet the initial criteria of partnership and funding.

- II. **Leadership structure and style:** An organization's leadership is critical to steering fund its way. Western educated leaders, especially those with overseas experience are attractive to donors partly because of their knowledge of the language of the donor funding exchange.
- III. **History and Experience with donors:** The length of time that a group/s has been in existence matters. The general perception is that with length of time comes valuable experience. Furthermore with time an organization is bound to leave a paper or another form of reference trail that is verifiable. Attracting funding from donors is an art form. It is determined by personal contact, accessibility, and timeliness. Major international conferences are a perfect venue for such contacts.
- IV. **Location:** The nature of relationship that evolves between donors and civil society is sometimes determined by location. For donors proximity and ease of access makes a big difference. In fragile societies, there are issues with security as well as poor infrastructure that personnel have to deal with. Where an organization is situated or operates from determines who they can access, how much resource they can harness and the nature of work they can do.

Whilst working on an international development program in Washington DC. I was involved in writing a \$13 million project proposal for civil society in Sierra Leone. When the proposal was turned in, we received feedback that indicated the funding committee was quite pleased with the proposal. They made several recommendations on how we can improve on it for the second round. One of such recommendations that stood

out for me was the suggestion that we work with another group rather than the one we had chosen as a partner for a particular component of the proposal. We did some research on the recommended groups and were surprised at the similarities between the two. They were both founded at about the same time; both were founded by DC-Area based INGOs; both had similar structures; both were engaged in the same enterprise (micro-credit). The only difference between them (at least from our perspective) was that one was based in the provinces and the other in the city. We stuck with our partner and instead provided justification on why we think they are the better fit. Needless to state we did not get the grant. Behind this story lies the general perception that if a group is well established and credible enough then it should have an office in the city. In a highly centralized system it is easy to see why urban located groups tend to be favored and also how donors perpetuate centralization.

Donors have a preference for networks over individual CSO groups. For donors there are several advantages accruing from funding networks over individual organizations. Firstly it is easier to fund across sectors; secondly it is easier to fund programs where groups are in disparate regions of the country; also it streamlines the process as donors deals with one member rather than having to deal with them individually; finally it is cheaper to administer as it involves less personnel and time intensive. Perhaps because of all these advantages it is not surprising that networking has become very popular and is now the norm. On average groups belong to three networks. There are CSO networks, umbrella organizations and issue-specific alliances of all types,

both in urban and rural areas. Today these various networks and coalitions (which are by no means exhaustive) act as platforms for communication, coordination, cross-fertilization of ideas and oversight. Though no single organization or network exists that is explicitly dedicated to conflict analysis and resolution in post-war Sierra Leone, several groups have ‘federated’ to tackle various aspects of potential or actual sources of violent conflict in the country.

Conclusion

At the heart of this chapter is one critical question: Does donor bias exist? To put it another way, why do donors fund those that they do? Why does it matter? In the following section I have analyzed the common themes and major findings that emerged from considering my basic questions: Does ‘donor bias’ exist? What is the nature of such bias? If so which type of organizations do they generally support and why? A common theme that runs through the responses seems to confirm that indeed donor bias does exist. The responses however do not explain why it persists. On the basis of the dilemmas outlined above it is not difficult to see why the charges of ‘funding bias’ persists. While there is evidence to suggest that donors do take into cognizance the growing influence of the government in setting the course of the aid sector, government concerns alone does not seem to be enough to radically shape the course of donor engagement with civil society. It seems the real reasons emanate from the unequal power relations in the aid

sector in general to the lack of coordination among the various actors; to the fact that some CSOs engaged in hot-button issues have continued to thrive in spite of, or perhaps because of government crackdown and dwindling funding sources. In post-conflict societies where there are too few resources chasing too many needs there is a need for prudent use of scarce resources. As pointed out here the reasons why donors favor one area over others are as complex as the context in which both donors and CSOs work⁹. In conclusion, based on the evidence highlighted here it is safe to conclude that the nature of donor bias that does exist is due to a combination of a host of internal and external factors that explains why donors fund one sector over another during a certain period in the post-conflict development phase.

⁹ Group interview, Freetown, January 2009

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Chapter 7

Data Analysis: Findings 2

Chapter summary

Sierra Leone civil society has had to operate in a very challenging climate since the end of the civil war in 2002. External funding, a major lifeline of local CSOs is becoming harder to access. To make matters worse the Government of Sierra Leone has enacted series of policies aimed at curtailing the activities of the civil society sector in general and those engaged in ‘hot-button issues’ in particular. The chapter focuses on one specific aspect of the donor-civil society continuum: how do we account for CSO proliferation when funding accessible to local CSOs is gradually been cut back? The main conclusion is that we need to look beyond donor-civil society interaction to the ‘local’ context to fully understand other aspects of the complexities of post-conflict peacebuilding.

Hypothesis 2: How local civil society groups cope with funding shortage in a difficult post-conflict peacebuilding environment is determined by the local context.

Until 2002, in the immediate aftermath of the civil war, Sierra Leone was considered an “aid orphan”. With an average of US\$ 61 per capita in Official Development Assistance (ODA), Sierra Leone ranks relatively high when compared to its neighbors. In 2005 it was the fourth largest recipient of ODA, just behind Djibouti, Eritrea and Liberia, but well ahead of perennially unstable countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria and Zimbabwe (Figure 1) (OECD/ DAC 2005). By the end of the civil war in 2002 the country was almost

totally aid dependent as more than 80% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was provided by international donors from countries such as the United Kingdom, United States, Sweden, Netherlands, Japan, and a host of private and philanthropic groups. According to recent report by EURODAD in 2006, ‘donors funded a total of 265 different projects at an average of approximately US\$1 million per project’. Nearly one-fifth of this aid (amounting to US\$63 million in 2006) was channeled through NGOs.

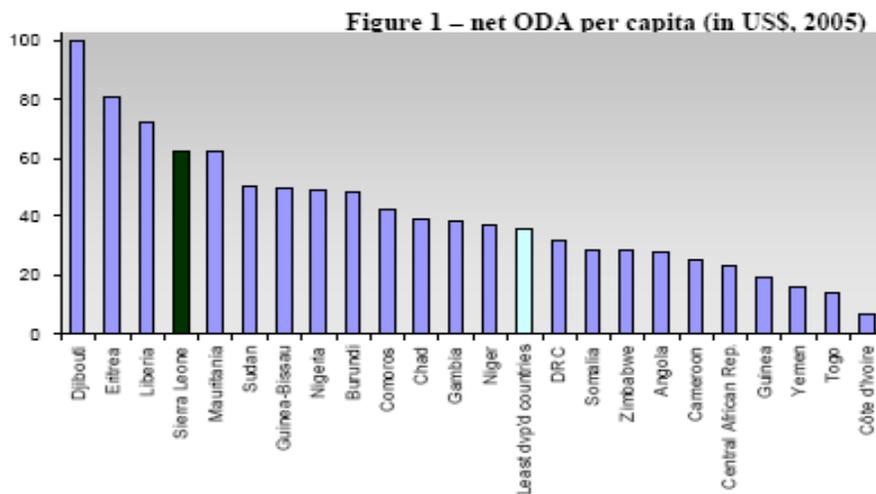


Figure 5 – Net ODA per Capita

But this impressive funding figure has declined sharply as the country has entered the development phase. Many of the donors have left the country and those who remain have scaled back their funding very sharply. Bilateral aid (government to government) has gradually decreased. In 2005, bilateral aid was US\$ 74 million, down from US\$ 219 million in 2003. USAID disbursements decreased to US\$ 9.4 million in 2006, from US\$ 21 million in 2005 (DACO, 2005). Funding that is channeled through NGOs declined from 24 percent in 2004 to 15 percent in 2006. Today the country relies mainly on the

UK and US for bilateral aid, and on the European Commission and World Bank for multilateral aid.

Table 2 – Donor Support Channels to Sierra Leone: 2005-2006

Channel	2005	2006
Project support	37%	44%
Budget Support	20%	22%
NGOs	24%	15%
UN Agencies	13%	6%
Balance of Payment Support	6%	5%
Total	100%	100%

Source: (MODEP/DACO)

The reasons for the decrease in aid could be attributed to several factors. Three of these , which often play out in combination, are particularly important for the purpose of this dissertation:

- After the emergency/ transition phase ...the needs would have been greatly reduced
- The revenue base and the economic capacity of the government would have increased from sources such as export of raw materials and taxes.
- Furthermore it may also reflect sensitivity of the aid sector in general to charges of creating aid orphans.

There are three other structural problems as well that are worth mentioning for the purpose of this dissertation. One is that even though 15-24 percent is channeled to the NGO sector a sizeable portion of this money is concentrated in the hands of few organizations: mostly INGOs and a few well-established national organizations. It is perhaps not surprising that groups believe too little of funds is coming into the country. Secondly the allocation of the funding is undertaken disproportionately often depending on what the donor and policy makers consider being priority.

In addition to the above challenges is the relationship between government and the local CSOs. The government of Sierra Leone has enacted a series of policies aimed at curtailing the civil society sector. The government's new NGO policy aims to streamline the NGO sector. To ensure adherence to this regulation the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) has created a special NGO unit at the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning (MODEP). The Unit is tasked with collating information on NGOs by sectors, activities and areas of operations and most importantly monitoring funds disbursed by donors to NGOs for the implementation of programs. The Unit conducts annual registration of all NGOs and deletes the names from the official register of those who fail to renew their licenses.

The Sierra Leone government's desires to regulate the CSO, especially with regards to the huge amount of funds it attracts. The Ministry of Development and Economic Planning, the government agency responsible for the CSO sector, relies mainly on its regulatory tools to streamline the sector. They established the Anti-Corruption

Commission (ACC) in 2000 to investigate cases of misappropriation of funds meant for public use. The prosecutorial powers of the ACC have steadily increased over the years, expanding the scope of what constitutes a public body/ public official to include all crimes dealing with public funds, extending the dragnet from 9 to 27 offences. The new Act makes all CSOs public officials liable for crimes committed. The ACC announces visits to NGOs, makes recommendations on how to streamline (reform) their system. But in spite of being in existence for nearly ten years not a single CSO leader has been convicted (ACC brochure, 2007).

Yet funding scarcity and government crackdown has not prevented the exponential growth of civil society groups in post-war Sierra Leone. Ever since the war ended in 2002 CSOs of various kinds (NGOs, CBOS,) in every part of the country in all sectors have continued to grow at unprecedented rate, in some communities virtually replacing the government as the key service provider. According to the government registration office on average of 100 new organizations apply for registration each year. In 2006 a total of 68 new organizations were approved by the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning (better known as MoDep). (MoDEP brochure, 2006). This impressive growth in the number of civil society organizations and the range of their concerns and interests then raises an interesting question. If as portrayed in the post-conflict peacebuilding literature and development policy circles funding is the main catalyst for the growth of these social groups (Van Rooy 1999; Paffenholz and Rachler,

2007), why are local CSOs multiplying at such a rapid rate just at the time when external funding is drying up and government regulations tightening?

The sharp rise in the number of CSOs is not just a phenomenon restricted to Sierra Leone. Evidence in other parts of the continent suggests that CSO proliferation is the norm in large parts of Africa, and indeed around the world. As the continent's crisis has deepened and its problems have multiplied, so the number of foreign and local CSOs, has risen. There were a few hundred in the 1960s. There are thought to be well over 25,000 today with an estimated \$4bn spent annually on recruiting some 100,000 expatriates (Holman 2005).

Research question:

To test this hypothesis I framed the following questions: How are local civil society groups able to sustain their operations and in some cases even thrive when funding is scarce and government is gradually enacting stricter regulations to curtail their activities. If funding is not the main catalyst that spurs growth what else is responsible for this rapid growth?

Sierra Leone has witnessed an exponential growth in civil society groups over the last ten years. While civil society itself is nothing new in the country, the changes noticeable in the last fifteen years is unprecedented with the war acting as a major catalyst spurring both growth and evolution. The groups that are the focus of this research came about in roughly three distinct phases: pre-war, war and post-war organizations.

The outbreak of the war in neighboring Liberia and its attendant consequences on Sierra Leone was the main catalyst for the formation of the pre-war groups. The influx of Liberian refugees into the country's urban areas and the threat of the war spilling over into Sierra Leone alarmed the country's populace. As funding for helping these affected populations became available, advocacy and service-providing groups sprang up to provide basic services. Though small in number such groups were to act as the vanguard for the formation of larger groups at the outbreak of the civil war in March of 1990.

The war period (1990-2000) witnessed a sharp spike in the growth specifically of local CSOs engaged in conflict resolution. As the war spread so did opposition to it from a groundswell of civil society actors. CSOs of all kinds engaged in service delivery to war victims, advocacy, and the provision of psycho-social support to child victims of war. While most of these groups were founded by professionals a few of them were founded by the affected groups themselves. As the clout of these groups grew they formed umbrella associations and national networks to advocate for broader issues that engaged a much wider national and international constituency. Most of the pre-occupations of such groups during this era centered on how to end the war and what the role of civil society should be.

The post-war years (2001-present) saw not only the consolidation of conflict resolution groups but the establishment of new, mainly development-oriented groups. International groups that pulled out were quickly replaced by local actors whose goal was

to consolidate the peace and foster economic development. The growth was spurred by the large amount of funding.

To understand why civic groups thrive in challenging post-conflict settings one needs to look at their internal dynamics as well as other external variables that directly and indirectly impact such dynamics. Funding cuts have forced civil society groups to become adept at not only diversifying their sources of funding but also at exploring entrepreneurial avenues to raise fund independently to supplement income from traditional sources. These employ creative and sometimes lucrative self-financing enterprises. It is these factors together with a host of external variables that are responsible for the seeming resilience of local CSOs.

1. Diversifying sources of funding

Groups have mastered the art of diversifying their sources of funding. Local CSOs have learnt to diversify their sources of income to reduce dependency on one source. It is therefore not uncommon for local civil society to generate domestic sources of funding either to meet their growing needs or to support areas of their operations donors are increasingly unwilling to pay for, such as administrative costs. The most common forms of fundraising included the following:

- Research 'fees' and generous donations.
- Overseas conferences and speaking engagements
- Investment and bank loans
- Funds from membership subscription:

- Soliciting donations from the private sector
- Leveraging funding from newly established local government councils
- Growing and selling agriculture produce from farming and fishing
- Developing a sound business plan:
- Generating income from skills training center (hair dressing, tailoring, soap making) etc where students pay token fees
- Organize micro-finance and community welfare scheme
- Provide consultancy to other NGOs at a lower rate
- Organize fundraising events (discos, carnivals, dramas, outing, film shows etc)¹⁰

These fund-raising sources have been covered in detail in Chapter 6. For reiteration purposes suffice it to say that most CSOs receive funding from a combination of these sources. As each organization is in different phases of development, their financial needs and fund-raising capabilities vary considerably. Peace-links a child-combatant rehabilitation community-based organization that I founded and directed in war-torn Sierra Leone in the 1990s generated more than 30 percent of its operational costs from proceeds from its music project in the mid-1990s.

2. Growing Professionalism

Another key factor could be attributed to the growing professionalism and expertise of the local CSOs. No doubt donations from abroad to local CSOs to address a variety of issues, has contributed to strengthening and professionalizing these groups, many of whom have established strong ties to international partners and various agencies. Capacity building of local personnel/ staff in various project disciplines has increased and

¹⁰ Civil society group interview, Freetown, Sierra Leone, January 2009

has no doubt played a key part in this professionalization. When asked what role they would prefer for donors to play 46.7 percent chose capacity building and skills transfer. This is way above the 17.8 percent who preferred only the funds as the main contributions that donors can make to enhance their work. 31.1 percent preferred personal meetings. The choice by the majority of respondents indicates they have come to realize the importance of skills transfer as an important means of sustainability. In fact some pointed out that even though donor funding is critical, training is more durable and is better for the long-term health of their organizations. With skills in areas such as project writing, monitoring and evaluation, communication and the like, they are able to improve their work for the long term where as money enables them to work for the short term¹¹.

Respondents also pointed out that capacity building of locals has also yielded dividends in other areas. This is indicated by the fact that the UN peacekeeping missions in Liberia, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to name just three now has sizeable Sierra Leonean expatriates. Many of these staff members started out as NGO workers, then joined the UN as local staff and as the war ended were transferred as expatriates to other UN missions in the African subregion.

This transfer of skills and knowledge can partly account for why there is a low level of mortality among local NGOS. Donors provide not just funding but also equipment such as computers. Donor funding has helped with structuring of organization and strengthening their internal mechanisms. For example gender mainstreaming,

¹¹ Civil society group interview, Freetown, Sierra Leone, December 2008

periodic audits, board of directors are now common features of many local groups. Many respondents stated that they would prefer more technical support and donors to provide monitoring and evaluation of the project implementation. But they also expressed their frustration with the manner in which the process is often handled. They pointed out that even though skills transfer is highly desirable and donors generally want high caliber professionals, they are not willing to pay for such training. Some CSO leaders pointed out that capacity building funds are always an after-thought as donors are increasingly unwilling to pay for administrative costs.

3. Operating within their means and budget

A. Advocacy through extensive use of community radio

Groups have learnt to operate within their financial means. They utilize resources that are easily accessible. For example, community radios are a relatively new phenomenon in Sierra Leone, but a cheap way for groups to reach their intended targets in the shortest amount of time. The community radio stations are post-war creations. Today each of the 12 districts has its own community radio station receiving various forms of support from local and international sources, including Search for Common Ground (SFCG) and Radio Netherlands. But even though most of the stations were set up with outside funding, training and support, ownership is turned over to the locals as soon as they become operational (www.sfcg.org). For local CSOs community radios present a cheaper option to undertake their tasks without necessarily compromising the quality of their work. Whether engaged in peacebuilding or development work, community radio acts as a

medium that gives people a voice in a society emerging from war. Participants told me of a more recent incident in which the radios played an a timely conflict resolution role. In the December 2008 Pujehun bye-elections, which is the southern-most district in the country and the bastion of the opposition, both the *Kiss FM* in Bo and the *Radio Waanje* were instrumental in relaying timely information about the proceedings to the general population. Before the December 10 elections, rumors were rife in the country about the tension in the district; about the mysterious appearance of unknown persons; about the large presence of armed security personnel etc. Because of all these the potential for violence was great. As it happened the elections passed off peacefully without any incident. In several phone calls to the district both before, during and after the elections almost all respondents quoted from the community radio.

Community radios also help local CSO groups cut costs in other ways.

Organizations no longer have to travel to Freetown some hundreds of miles away to discuss issues pertaining in their community. Development programs such as micro-community development schemes, the promotion of cultural values, sensitization on civic responsibility, human rights abuses and reporting are all perfectly suited for the medium of communication provided by the radio. Peace and reconciliation programs and other activities such as workshops, seminars/ conferences can all be planned using the radio, whose services are often free of charge. Because they are based in the localities they play indispensable conflict mitigation roles. This often involves awareness raising programs using participatory approach with input from every sector of the community.

B. Personnel hire

The creativity of local groups to operate modestly is reflected in their personnel hire policy. Some groups have resorted to employing semi-paid staff supplemented by a large number of volunteers. Volunteers are not necessarily lowly skilled workers. Some are locals between jobs, others are professionals from overseas who are in the country on research, work experience, or just on holidays and want to get work experience in a different culture. They could also be spouses of professionals working in the country for international institutions such as the World Bank or the various UN agencies. Others have resorted to what I call *pay-as-funded-basis*. By this practice staff members work and get paid when the funding becomes available. The volunteers can get some perks such as overseas travel for conferences or speaking tours. For some it can also provide a useful stepping stone to more lucrative employment with more established agencies such as the United Nations, World Bank and other INGOs. In this vein it is therefore a sensible career choice for people in between jobs.

C. Personnel policy and Resource pooling

The creativity of local groups to operate modestly is reflected in their personnel policy as well. At the most grassroots of levels there are no paid staff. Members donate their time, energy and other resources to advance the group's cause. This practice change drastically the higher up an organization is in the donor chain. Some of the semi-formal groups are staffed almost entirely by semi-paid staff supported by a large cadre of volunteers. The

staff is paid on an *as-we-are-funded-basis*. Volunteers, who in some cases are the driving force, are not necessarily lowly skilled workers. Some are locals between jobs, others are professionals from overseas who are in the country on research, or just want to gain work experience in a different culture. They could also be spouses of professionals working in the country for international institutions such as the World Bank or the various UN agencies. The volunteers are incentivized by the prospect of travel, speaking tours, or in very informal local CSOs, prestige. For some it can also provide a useful stepping stone to a lucrative employment with established agencies such as the United Nations, World Bank and other INGOs.

Local groups also engage in *resource pooling* to enable them operate on low budget. Though not always the most convenient arrangement, it is most often borne out of necessity. It is not uncommon for some organizations to share an office space, computer, telephone and other office equipment. Under this arrangement groups either pool resources to rent an office space or a larger and more successful organization sub-let a section of its facility. The basis of such arrangements is often common membership in a network or personal connections between founders or founding members. This creative and cost-effective strategy enables groups to meet both government and donor 'physical office space' requirement which is often a prerequisite for funding.

D. Careful choice of geographical area of operation

For local CSOs most operations are still local. More than 60% of respondents say they operate in geographical areas where their office is located. Again this makes perfect strategic operational sense. It is a cheaper alternative where money is in short supply. Of course the downside to this is that there is a glut of groups established and operating in Freetown and its environs than anywhere else in the country. This is in spite of a government regulation that NGOs should operate in no less than “a chiefdom” while CBOs should focus on small community problems.

E. Extensive networking and collaboration

Another creative survival mechanism adopted by local civil society could be seen in the area of networking. There are CSO networks, umbrella organizations and issue-specific alliances of all types in the local CSO sector. My research indicates that on average groups belong to at least three networks or alliances. Forming partnerships with others fosters experience sharing, facilitates technical assistance, financial support, and training. Networking provides the forum for local actors to learn, share and in the process become agents of positive change. Networking and collaboration is vital for communication, coordination, sustainability, transparency and cross-fertilization of new ideas and skills. It also helps prevent the duplication of efforts and the maximum use of limited resources, time and energy. In this vein it is perhaps not surprising that donors have a preference for networks over individual CSO groups. For donors there are several advantages accruing

from funding networks over individual organizations. Firstly it is easier to fund across sectors; secondly it is easier to fund programs where groups are in disparate regions of the country; also it streamlines the process as donors deals with one member rather than having to deal with each organization individually. Finally, group projects are relatively cheaper to administer as it involves less personnel and is thus less time intensive.

The above discussion is not to imply that networking and collaboration is a smooth process. Coordination has its own challenges partly because of the intense competition for scarce resources and the low technical skills of some of the local CSOs. First of all it is a time-consuming process for the organizations involved. It takes time to set up group bank accounts, and the mechanisms to disburse and account for funds. Furthermore, even in the networks, hierarchy exists. The top-tier organizations still have more influence than smaller groups. Numerous respondents expressed their frustration with some of the labyrinth of rules they have had to go through to access the benefits from networks. So certainly some of this can lead to unhealthy competition amongst the CSOs and other networks. The fallouts can be devastating as it leads to even more suspicion and acrimony among members. Some chose to remain in networks even when they know that it is not in the best interest of either their organization or most importantly, the interest of their constituents.

1. Growing sense of empowerment of marginalized groups (women and youth)

The empowerment of certain hitherto-marginalized sectors in the community has also played a part in the mushrooming of local CSOs. Women, youth, amputees, handicapped etc, all have organizations and networks that caters specifically to their needs and aspirations. For large constituencies such as women and youth who can be further divided into sub-categories such as location (rural-urban), age (young and old) educated and uneducated, profession (eg. University Women's Association and market women). Faced with several years of discrimination and perceived neglect these groups have galvanized to add their voice to the national debate. They provide psychosocial services, skills training, income generation to families and communities that improves the welfare of the most vulnerable: women and children and youth. In totality these constitute the largest groups in Sierra Leone.

Rise in the number and clout of civic minded groups might also indicate people's apathy towards government. It reflects a lack of faith in the ability of government to meet their basic needs. Most of this apathetic feeling emanates from the war. A poorly executed war undermines people's confidence in their government in much the same way as a badly managed peace can alienate people from making their voices heard in national rebuilding. As people's faith in the government dissipates they turn to other means of association to address their basic needs. Particularly interesting in this discussion is the attitude of provincial groups. Groups in the provinces often felt left out of the donor support mechanisms with the large chunk of the funding going to the Freetown-based

organizations. They believed that it is partly because of their geographical location as well as the highly politicized process involved in funding. Government response to groups depends on its relationship (or lack thereof) with the centre of power. Groups from the Eastern province, which is the bastion of the opposition felt very strongly about the lack of support from the government and more so about how easily donors subscribed to such a process.

2. Lax accountability and lack of strong oversight

Government of Sierra Leone has made some strides in making local CSOs more accountable to the constituencies they represent. It has designed series of policies to bring more transparency to the CSO world. For example the 2007 NGO Policy was designed partly to control the “brief-casing” phenomenon. This is a reference to groups that are organizations in name only. They are sometimes fully registered with the relevant authorities but have no official physical address and are often led by someone with knowledge of the donor-CSO world. The Government Policy gives some rights as well as responsibilities to CSOs. For example it is the responsibility of the CSO to ensure that government is kept informed of its activities through annual reports and unofficial visits.

But the government as the enforcer of laws has a perception problem. Amongst the CSOs I spoke with there is the perception that as one put it “accountability goes upward and not downwards”¹². In the case of government no one asks them for a report, so they don’t have the same incentive to upkeep their information the same way that

¹² Local anti-corruption representative,

CSOs/NGOs do. As one participant told me: “Both CSOs and governments are often accountable first and foremost to the donors (financial) and the people (moral) only afterwards. They are not making the requisite effort. A lot of the locally- driven ideas are not taken into consideration because people do not have a say. For most of the agreements that government has with donors, civil society is not involved”¹³.

3. Changes in governance structure

After the war Sierra Leone embarked on a major decentralization process aimed at “bringing the government closer to the people”. Several institutions were created including NACSA, NASSIT, DACO, the Office of the Ombudsman; and several National Commissions: Human rights, decentralization etc. local councils were created Such structure provides sources of funding for local groups as well as a platform to engage the power brokers. This encourages individuals and other constituencies to bond into stakeholder groups to press for changes that benefit their groups. People realize their best bargaining chips are as groups rather than as individuals.

The Sierra Leone government has had a very complex relationship with civil society. As stated in earlier chapters of this dissertation, the former has been wary of organized civic movement. So they have embarked on various mechanisms to control civil society. But since governments differ considerably, especially in a fluid situation such as was Sierra Leone during the civil war, it is important to add that there was no

¹³ Group interview, Freetown, Sierra Leone, January 2009

single coherent government policy towards civil society. Expediency, tribalism, and donor policies have all played a role in shaping the relationship that has evolved between the former and civil society.

4. Role of International Non-Governmental Organizations

INGO's are a major source of funding in post-conflict Sierra Leone and as such a major source of CSO proliferation. According to DACO (2006) in 2006 they provided US\$34.8m (or 26% of total aid flows) for various operations in Sierra Leone. Because every INGO works with local partners, they represent a major source of funding for local CSOs. Out of necessity or convenience, INGOs either create and fund one or several groups or 'adopt' groups that are already established and operational in their thematic or geographical area of interest. The 'partnership' as the relationship is often referred to can be one off or much longer lasting depending on the nature of the project. By creating new ones, they add to the growing list, by supporting existing ones they sustain groups that would have long folded up.

5. Lack of coordination presents local groups with a menu of options

Lack of Donor coordination actually benefits CSOs in more ways than one. The presence of many donors provides CSOs with options. There are several pro-civil society funding agencies in both the private and governmental sector. Because of this lack of coordination CSOs have learnt to design programs that appeal to many donors at the same time, thereby increasing their chances of being funded. It is not unusual therefore for groups to

blend advocacy with service delivery to maximize their chances. While some donors realize the need for weaving conflict resolution into development work (service delivery) and support it wholeheartedly, others don't and therefore prefer to adopt their own strategy.

6. Creation of 'Mother' NGOs

The creation of 'mother' NGOs, often by donors, also helps in the proliferation of local CSOs. Mother NGOs are usually well-funded NGOs with strong international connections that grow so large they outsource a large chunk of their task to others to carry out thereby sustaining or reinvigorating old groups and creating new ones. Donors have often been accused of setting up parallel structures.

7. External influences:

a. Sub-Regional peacebuilding networks

Networking at the subregional level also accounts for the proliferation of CSOs. The West Africa Civil Society Forum, West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET) are examples of groups that have thrived. These tend to be better funded and are well known locally and internationally. Because of this capacity, they can afford to set up national offices or local chapters in various countries in which they work. They therefore have longer lifespan and enjoy better rapport than other national organizations. Many of these groups have not only outlived the subregion's civil wars, they have also thrived. Today Sierra Leone acts

as the secretariat for networks such as MARWOPNET and the West Africa Youth Movement.

8. Availability of donor funding overseas

Increasingly local civil society groups have been able to access increased amount of direct assistance from official development and private sources. The European Union has over US\$80 million it provides to southern CSOs (Hudock 1999). Without doubt the information and communication revolution has played a part with the internet and email acting as the main vehicle. Almost all groups interviewed said they use both means on a regular basis. embassy information bulletins are important sources of information. Email is the main method of communication.

Key finding

Smart lending has created smart recipients: Funders have learned smart ways to make their support more effective. They are now relatively better coordinated and ask more questions in a bid to eliminate less genuine groups and curtail government influence. With this development local civil society groups have also evolved, thereby becoming smart recipients in the process. Internal and external pressures of varying kinds (most especially the unpredictability of donor funding) force CSOs to become creative, flexible and adaptable to a constantly changing post-conflict environment. For example the research finds that the most successful CSOs are those that linked their peacebuilding work with that of development. As already mentioned in elsewhere, in their dealings with

other actors, funding is just one consideration amongst many for local civil society groups

It is this adaptability and lessons learned that is at the heart of why mortality rate among local CSOs is so low. Ann Huddock (1999) points out that the goal of organizational survival is met through self-serving behavior. Clearly local civil society groups value capacity development and the sharing of experience. It is no surprise that when asked what is the best way that donors can support their activities 51.1% preferred capacity building, compared to 34 % for proper coordination or the fostering of transparency. They realize that by ‘learning how to fish’ they are able to not only sustain their activities and programs but to also develop the much needed capacity to source support from multiple sources in the near future. The exchange of information and intelligence between local CSOs and their northern counterparts is critical to their long term success. Through support from various external agencies local civil society has been able to build what Naidoo, the CIVICUS Secretary General referred to as “strong cross-border alliances for increased mutual dependency and increased social capital”.

Conclusion

The chapter has analyzed why local CSOs in Sierra Leone have continued to proliferate at an exponential rate at a time when donor funding is being drastically reduced in post-war Sierra Leone. The chapter points out that to understand this phenomenon one has to

look beyond resource capture and needs argument as postulated in dependency theory into the modus operandi of these organizations. To maximize their survival in the face of severe challenges these groups have been able to survive as donors withdraw funding and government tightens policies and regulation aimed at curtailing their activities.

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Chapter 8

Data Analysis: Findings 3

Chapter summary

This chapter examines whether local civil society organizations that diversify their sources of funding are more independent of donor control than groups that do not diversify. The chapter finds out that it is not just the number of donors that determine independence but rather variables such as quality and amount of funding. It concludes that money is just one criteria out of several calculations utilized by local organizations seeking funding and other means of support to sustain their work.

Hypothesis 3: Civil Society organizations that diversify their sources of funding have better control over the direction and quality of their programs than groups that are dependent on a single major source of funding.

Dwindling financial support for local CSOs coupled with a desire to be autonomous can trigger changes in seeking alternative sources of funding. This phenomenon was more aptly put by Hudock (1999) when she argued that CSOs that receive all of their funds from one donor tend to carry out donors programs with the groups “to which the donors have assigned highest priority” thereby making them

“essentially contractors and little more than extensions of the donor agencies” (Hudock 1999). It is this desire for independence that triggers CSO search for alternative sources of funding. Local CSOs have learned not to depend on one source of funding. Local civil society organizations have embarked on generating domestic sources of funding either through membership fees, voluntary contributions or other fundraising events to help meet their administrative needs. This is not only out of convenience but out of necessity as donors are often unwilling to pay for non-programmatic costs.

Research Question:

To test this hypothesis I framed the following question: In their desire to achieve “financial sustainability” what funding agencies do CSOs prefer when diversifying their sources of funding?

A good starting point for answering such a question is to look at why CSOs strive to diversify their sources of funding in the first place. Partly as a result of this desire for independence it is not surprising that seeking funding from ‘multiple sources’ are growing in importance.

Analysis

When asked on the sources of funding 44.7 percent of respondents reported soliciting funding from internal or in-country sources. This included gifts, pledges and membership

dues. This source of funding is particularly true for CBOs and smaller NGOs based in the provinces. Peace-links a child-combatant rehabilitation community-based organization that I founded and directed in war-torn Sierra Leone in the 1990s generated more than 60 percent of its operational costs from proceeds from its music project in the mid-1990s. These membership-type organizations are often managed by members on behalf of members and regularly embark on self-help projects. They combine individual benefits with collective gains (Huddock 1999).

Some of the more common forms of soliciting internal fund include the following:

- Research ‘fees’
- As ‘implementing partners’ of INGOs
- Attending overseas conferences and engaging in speaking tours
- Investment and bank loans
- Membership subscription
- Private sector donations
- Funding from newly established local government councils
- Selling agricultural produce from farming and fishing activities
- Developing a sound business plan by having a percentage of the overall budget as overhead costs
- Generating income from fee-paying skills training center: (hair dressing, tailoring, soap making)
- Micro-finance and community welfare schemes
- Skills for hire: Providing consultancy to other NGOs at lower rate so as to attract business while strengthening local capacity
- Organize fundraising events (discos, carnivals, dramas, outing, film shows etc)¹⁴

¹⁴ Group interview, December 2008, Freetown, Sierra Leone

The above fundraising mechanisms points out to the creativity of local groups to meet their needs in a harsh funding climate. It provides groups with flexible sources of funding. The 'research fee' concept is an innovative mechanism that requires some explaining. The Children Associated with the War, the leading organization on all issues dealing with ex-child combatants in the country is the pioneer in this field. The organization has established a research center where scholars and researchers from various institutions around the world visit to conduct research on various aspects of the psychosocial rehabilitation of war-affected children. Apart from the University of Sierra Leone researchers from as far away as Bradford University, University of Alberta (Canada), University of Rhode Island (USA); London School of Economics (UK); Centre for Human Rights (University of Pretoria-South Africa); University of Ibadan (Nigeria); University of Chicago (USA) have all been guests at the center.

While the use of this small research facility is free in theory, in practice a tacit understanding develops whereby researchers are expected to pay a 'token of appreciation'. Such 'appreciation gifts', usually paid out after the researcher returns home, could be in the form of a small amount of money or goods such as computers or training materials for the center's numerous beneficiaries. The latter is even more valuable in terms of meeting their basic needs. In a discussion with the Director of the center he told me how profitable such a gesture has been in sustaining the operations of the organization. Upon my visit the center the Director took me on a conducted tour to see the buzz of activities that were going on. He pointed out the various items that have

been donated by the various researchers that have been hosted over the years from some of the universities highlighted earlier. The items included several laptops, desktops, sewing machines and hair-braiding equipments. He was seemingly very pleased with how far he has been able to sustain their organization's programs with little or no funding from the government. For an organization that formerly employed more than 100 paid staff at the height of the war, they now rely mostly on volunteers to undertake their programs. They are however happy that they are reinventing themselves.

Flexibility apart, soliciting funding from local sources is also appealing for other reasons. Quite apart from the time and resources it takes it can also impact the internal composition and modus operandi of local CSOs. This means that the larger and more varied the sources of support the more they influence the inner workings of an organization. Such impact could range from gender mainstreaming down to more minute issues such as who the signatories to the bank account should be. In some cases donors determined exact number of staff and specific activities (organizational streamlining)¹⁵. In short new programs and partners can considerably shape and organizations modus operandi.

Then there is the question of time, or rather the length of time it takes to access pledged funds. It takes a while to disburse funds once it has been approved. For 44.7 percent of the groups surveyed it took between 1-3 months. For 19.1 percent it took between 4-6 months. It must be pointed out however that the more well established an

¹⁵ Group interview, December 2008, Kenema, Sierra Leone

organization is the quicker it received the funds. So most of the groups in this category are NGOs headquartered in Freetown but with operations across the country. 14.9 percent said it takes them on average 6-12 months to access the funds and for 12.18 percent the waiting period was over 12 months. In the life cycle of a small organization this often felt “like an eternity”¹⁶.

Drawbacks and Constraints in funding diversity

Internally, for the organizations involved, it can lead to staff burn-out. This is mainly because it takes time, energy and more resources to organize and source resources from numerous sources. This was exactly the case in South Africa where a research conducted by the International Peace Academy in New York titled *The Infrastructure of Peace* (2002) found that local organizations with the most diverse funding sources also tended to have high staff turnout.

From the above one can deduce that multiplying ones sources of funding holds several advantages and is therefore the most sensible survival strategy adopted by local CSOs. But as is often the case such a strategy has another side. In spite of the growing importance of generating funding from domestic sources however, local CSOs are under no illusion that this source alone is the long term solution. Whilst they have emphasized the utilization of local resources, they are adequately aware that such a noble venture will be insufficient in meeting the needs of their various constituencies. Faced with limited opportunities internally they resort to soliciting funding from external sources. Some 70

¹⁶ Kenema, Sierra Leone, December 2008

percent of groups surveyed received funding from an average of 5 sources from different countries and continents. About 27.7 percent of surveyed groups solicit funding purely from external sources while an equal percentage receive, or at least solicit funding from a combination of internal and external sources.

I must hasten to add that those that solicit funding only from external donors often tend to be well established national organizations resident in the capital Freetown. These act as local 'implementing partners' for INGOs, often do so for a fee or for equipments. Some percentage of the project fees will go towards meeting their implementation costs such as office maintenance and staff salary. The duration is usually fixed depending on how long the project last for. It can range from 6 months to several years. These local organizations act as the conduit through which funds are channeled to communities. Such contacts and connections give them leverage in being able to solicit funding from overseas even on their own.

A lot of planning goes into approaching a donor, whether internal or external. Contrary to the literature in organizational development in post-conflict peacebuilding it is a highly calculated move designed to maximize benefits. The would-be CSO applicant first has to assess their chances of success before applying. They embark on what one described as "a cost-benefit analysis"¹⁷ before embarking of such a venture. Indeed it is not always a straightforward process. What strategy the organization chooses, according to Huddock (1999) depends on three key factors:

¹⁷ Group interview, Freetown, January 2008

- The importance of the resource sought to the organization seeking it.
- Level of discretion that the holder of the resource has over its allocation and use
- The existence of alternative sources for acquiring the resource, or of an appropriate source for it. Do those who control the resource have a monopoly?

In addition one can add that what fundraising strategies a local CSO chooses depends on a host of factors: ranging from the type of organization, its location, charisma of leadership and to the existing socio-political climate. For example membership organizations tend to extract resources from its members through so-called membership-fees. Peace-Links in Kenema generates more than 90 percent of its operational funds from membership fees and the sale of goods and services.

In a desire to strike the right kind of balance between internal and external sources respondents reported changes in sources of funding. When asked how much changes they have experienced in funding sources 48.9 percent reported having experienced changes in funding sources over the last few years while 51.1 percent have not experienced any changes. The interesting thing however is that those who reported changes the most were those resident in the capital Freetown and with access to modern means of telecommunications such as the internet and email facilities.

Without doubt the advancement in telecommunications has played a part in extending the reach of local CSOs to external funders. More than 91.5 percent of groups interviewed say they contact donors through email, fax or telephone. Again it was higher

for those in Freetown, the capital than for those in the provinces. Newspapers ads and embassy bulletins, which were popular means by which CSOs found out information about donors has now almost been virtually displaced by these new means of communication. The use of communication is now so prevalent that it is unfathomable groups will successfully operate without them.

But whether local or external sources, there are serious implications for diversifying sources of funding. Firstly as the organization professionalizes the organizational structure is impacted in unforeseen ways. This is especially true as it relates to the role of the most powerful actors such as the founder. There are three type of founders: 1) external founder who may or not be involved in running the daily affairs of the organization.; 2) Local founder who is still very much involved with daily operations of the program and who may be still be a member of staff or board; 3) founder who has moved on but is still involved to provide advise every once in a while. They may become a 'resource person' or may even help to fund some activities of the organization. Some of the smaller organizations are afflicted by 'founder's syndrome'. It is a term that refers to the phenomenon whereby by virtue of being the founder or originator of a program, he or she has absolute authority on all matters concerning the program. On the whole the impression is that the founder's involvement has had a positive impact. Founder's can also have different kinds of involvement. For the larger NGOs that were founded externally but led locally, founder's involvement is limited as long as the structures are in place; board, bank account, periodic audits etc.

Also both CBOs and NGOs have constitutions or bye laws to govern their operations. But interestingly they gave two different reasons why they adopted them. For the former, it is an absolute pre-requisite while for the latter it is a pre-requisite for normal operations, it is an essential governing tool. The fact that these are largely volunteer groups might help to explain the need for inclusiveness. For groups made up of former combatants and other war victims, the need for acceptance is extremely important for the group's cohesion. Everyone has a role to play hence the plethora of office positions. Donor role is also dependent on the area of operations of the funding. If the donor has expertise they are more likely to be deeply involved. If they don't such as in traditional methods of conflict resolution, they leave that up to the organization and periodically use consultants.

Supporting evidence for guiding hypothesis

When I started out I was under the conviction that groups that streamline their funding sources are a much healthier organization than those with multiple sources of income. Amongst the reasons for coming to such an earlier conclusion were the issues of trust and confidence. One major donor means a regular source of funding for a local CSO. This is critical due to the volatility of the aid sector. But based on the evidence available this does not seem to be the case. This is partly because, as already stated elsewhere, soliciting funding from multiple sources is time, personnel and finance intensive.

Donor-civil society relations have evolved to the extent that civil society groups have devised creative ways to maximize their welfare. Groups now “look at the entire package”, as they choose between funding agencies¹⁸. So what are these criteria that CSOs set in receiving funding from donors?

- Donors that share similar aims and objectives
- Donors with straightforward/ less reporting burden.
- Donors with the capacity to engage the government and other powerful actors
- Donors that disbursed funding and other forms of support quicker
- Donors that in addition to funding also provided technical support
- Donors with clout as receiving funding from such groups are a mark of prestige, especially for CBOs¹⁹. This is often perceived as an indication of how far they have come as an organization²⁰.

So as we can see from the above list soliciting donor funding is not as haphazard as it sometimes appears to be. Instead it is a very systematic and calculated move designed to maximize the welfare and the applicant and intended beneficiaries. Partly because of the time and money involved in pursuing a donor, local actors utilize a targeted approach that maximizes their chances of actually getting the funding. Project writing is the main way through which local CSOs source external funding. But as many organizations pointed out it is a very technical and time-consuming process. Like donor

¹⁸ Group interview, Freetown, December 2008

¹⁹ *ibid*

²⁰ *ibid*

reporting there is no standardized format for project writing. Many lack the capacity to write the proposals themselves so have to outsource to qualified people to do, often for a token fee. But even with the help of professionals, it is often not an exact science.

And in doing this while the ultimate objective is to receive funding, they also much prefer groups that establishes meaningful relationships and not just provide financial support. As stated in the various means of fundraising programs, some organizations still preferred receiving support from the traditional external donors, such as USAID, DFID, the World Bank, African Development Bank, to name a few. It is the reasons given for a choice of particular donors that is far more illuminating. Often when we think of donors we think money. While this may not be far from the truth in post-conflict settings, it is just one out of several variables in why a group applies for funding to one donor and not the other. Among the reasons given is that more traditional donors such as the World Bank, DFID and USAID not only have larger resource pools, they also have more expertise and much desired transferable skills such as project management, monitoring and evaluation. In addition some opted for donors that will provide regular contact and is easy to access. The traditional donors are very familiar with the inner workings of both small and large local NGOs and CSOs. In addition to funding they provide technical support as well.

CBOs, who generally have fewer funding opportunities than NGOs tend to choose their donors more carefully. They tend to go in search of organizations that provide not only the funds but also the requisite training and skills on how to manage the funds and

account for them. They see this form of funds and knowledge transfer arrangement as capacity building. For these groups also accessing funding from the ‘big players’²¹, as one described them is a social marker on how far an organization has come. It confers some degree of legitimacy and provides a quick path to being taken seriously by other competitors and other potential donors. So this is not only about bragging rights but a very realistic survival mechanism. A large donor is likely to fund an organization that has already received funding from a well established source than one that has not. Finally it is also perceived as a survival mechanism. For organizations that feel vulnerable, they are often aware of the clout that comes with funding from a key donor such as DFID or USAID.

Findings

Findings # 1: Groups that have a steady and regular source of support do not necessarily have better control over their programmatic operations than groups with multiple sources of funding.

Groups with multiple sources of funding automatically take on more compliance burden, which in turn is more time consuming, and more labor intensive. This is not helped by the fact that there is no standard donor reporting mechanism. A donor required report can range anything from one page to more than 40 pages every three months. Simply put the more donors the heavier the reporting and other administrative compliance burden on the receiving organization. When one considers the fact that on average local organizations have a combined total of 5 paid staff, it is easy to see why

²¹ Group interview, Kenema, December 2008

this would become a huge burden. On average respondents said they spent more than 10 hours a week engaged in fundraising issues of one kind or another: researching new donors, writing project proposals or donor reports and or hosting donor representatives. For small organization this is a huge time commitment which leaves little time for CSOs to actually engage in meeting the practical needs of the constituencies they are supposed to be serving. Because each donor has different reporting requirements, the task is made the more difficult when CSOs have multiple funders. As Huddock (1999) rightly put it the greater the number of organizations with which a Southern NGO must interact in order to obtain essential resources, the higher the transaction costs. The key therefore is not whether a not a CSO has one key support source or multiple sources, but rather how they strike a balance between the various competing interests which includes both local and international funders and their actual obligations to the constituencies they serve.

As crucial as funding is, it is just one out of several variables that determine CSO preference for a particular funder over another. The competition for resources is fierce. But such constrain does not necessarily imply a haphazard search for funding sources. Instead because of the time and resources involved, local organizations are very systematic and calculated in searching for funds. Partly because of the time and money involved in pursuing a donor, a process that can take anywhere from a month to several months, local actors utilize a targeted approach that maximizes their chances of actually getting the funding. And in doing this while the ultimate objective is to receive funding,

they also much prefer groups that establishes meaningful relationships and not just provide financial support.

Accepting funding from a particular set of donor is not just a financial decision but one that is shaped by several other factors. Many seemed to prefer capacity building training and institutional support over money. Among the reasons given was that money changes the dynamics between groups and individuals. The salary of expatriate staff and project representatives easily deplete the funds. For CSOs money is not just the main determinant in which funding they receive and which ones they don't. As stated already local CSOs tend to look at the entire 'package'. Without doubt funding is a critical life-line for organizations, whether local, national or international. Without continuous means of support groups often have to face some stark choices.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the relationship between funding and CSO independence, or lack thereof. In this relationship we see that donors empower as well as constrain in equal measure. I have argued that CSO independence has little if anything to do with diversifying its sources of income. Instead it has more to do with a host of factors ranging from the maturity of the group to its location. I have also pointed to the agency of such groups. Their search for funding is a calculated move designed to maximize their welfare and not just a haphazard guess game.

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Chapter 9

Conclusions and Recommendations

To understand local civil society's meteoric rise one needs to understand not only the course of the Sierra Leone civil war but also the funding of the peace. Both local CSOs and the international donor community are intricately intertwined. One key reason for the exponential growth in the profile of civil society across the globe could be attributed to the financial support from both traditional and non-traditional donors. By the end of the 1990s donors had come to view civil society as a means for bringing about radical social, political, and economic improvements in the developing world. As such a growing percentage of development assistance provided by major bilateral and multilateral donors was channeled through International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) and local civil society groups.

For local civil society the local context matters. Whether working in the development sector (education, agriculture, health, and service delivery) or peacebuilding and good governance sector (democracy, anti-corruption, human rights advocacy) local civil society shape and are in turn shaped by the evolving socio-political systems, economy, history and varying geography of the local context. As by-products of their social settings these groups interact with micro processes with the aim of

maximizing their welfare, changing attitudes, behavior and social perceptions between groups and facilitating social exchanges mainly at the grassroots, but sometimes at the national levels. Thus the strategies and relationships (both vertical and horizontal) that they develop provide a barometer with which to measure a post-conflict country's general well being.

For the purpose of this dissertation I have used civil society organizations as the generic term for all voluntary non-political and non-business social entities that come together to advance the common good. The term 'local civil society' as used here, is a reference to those indigenous non-governmental entities that are founded, staffed and managed locally. Such groups have several core characteristics that distinguishes them from Sierra Leone-based INGOs or donor-founded but locally driven NGOs. One is that they have a much stronger connection with their founding member/s and thus tend to suffer from the so-called Founder's Syndrome. Also they are driven by a sense of 'permanency' unlike their international counterparts whose country operations are almost entirely funding dependent. Despite being 'local' they have external –though truncated– connections in part facilitated by the advances in technology. Like the wider civil society, such groups are not a monolithic unit as they come in all sizes, structures and capabilities. Furthermore the vast majority of them are by-products of the country's 1991-2002 civil war. Because such groups do not operate in a vacuum, one thus needs to pay attention to both the local and global context within which they operate.

Developing a vibrant local civil society is complex and fraught with challenges. This is partly because civil society, whether local or national, is at best an imperfect arena racked with contradictions. As by-products of the society, the same tensions and disagreements prevalent in the wider society also afflicts local civil society. In this vein therefore it is safe to conclude that even a strong and vibrant local civil society is not the panacea to the country's post conflict challenges. A concerted people-centered effort involving an enlightened donor sector, willing government and a selfless and pragmatic civil society is what it will take to bring about meaningful and sustainable change in one of the world's most intractable peacebuilding environments.

An analysis of the Sierra Leone case seems to suggest that the following six general conclusions can be made about the impact of donor policies on local civil society on post-conflict peacebuilding in Sierra Leone: 1) local CSOs engaged in contentious issues face far more constraints than other groups; 2) Local civil society organizations are much more than just channels of assistance; 3) CSO exponential rise has not necessarily translated into more leverage in areas critical to post-conflict peacebuilding such as good governance and anti corruption; 4) Agency of local civil society groups depends on local context; 6) Perceived donor bias has implications that goes beyond the exchange of goods and services; 5) donors are not employing the full range of leverage at their disposal. Each of these findings is elaborated on in the following sections of this chapter.

Key findings

- A. Local civil society groups engaged in contentious ('hot-button') issues face far more scrutiny and constraints to their work than groups in non-contentious issues

Local CSOs engaged in 'hot button' political and advocacy issues involving human rights, anti corruption, and democratic reforms, face far more scrutiny from the authorities and constraints to their work than their peers working on less contentious issues. As the Government of Sierra Leone has grown in confidence and gained more sources of income of its own (mainly from mining rights and taxation) it has attempted to claw back some of the powers it lost during the war with a series of laws supposedly aimed to regulate the civil society and donor sector. In doing so however the government has focused lots of its energy on organizations that are critical and that work in sensitive sectors. As the space or 'public sphere' expanded so did the number of groups engaged in a wide range of activities from advocacy, monitoring, conflict analysis and resolution, to investigating and reporting human rights abuses. It is these groups that have been at the receiving end of government regulations.

- B. Civil Society Organizations are not simply a means to convey emergency help or development assistance.

Even in developed societies they are a crucial part of the operation of democracy, calling attention to problems, shifting agendas, supporting political parties and election processes, as well as delivering charitable assistance, undertaking research and education, supporting the arts. Thus Donors need to ensure that winding down support for CSO's after a conflict does not force them out of existence; rather winding down should be done slowly enough that CSO's have time to diversify their income and become

institutionalized through memberships or activities that allow them to become self-sustaining.

C. Local CSO's exponential rise and influence has not had a corresponding effect in the sectors critical to peace consolidation and good governance

In the broadest sense this dissertation finds that, while local civil society influence is prominent in some sectors, it is sadly lacking in some of the most critical sectors essential to post-conflict peacebuilding. In spite of paucity in funding and growing government regulations, local civil society actors in post-conflict Sierra Leone have multiplied exponentially. In spite of this notable contribution however, evidence from this research shows that even though local civil society groups have now taken on a character of its own, their impact are still limited in influencing government policies on issues of good governance, anti-corruption and stemming human rights abuses. Civil society division, lack of proper training, government crackdown, shortage of funding, and the absence of the requisite donor pressure all contribute to limit civil society influence in the aforementioned sectors, which are so critical to post-conflict peacebuilding.

D. Nature of agency of local civil society groups depends on local context

For local civil society the local context matters. Whether working in the development sector (education, agriculture, health, and service delivery) or peacebuilding and good governance sector (democracy, anti-corruption, human rights advocacy) local civil

society shape and are in turn shaped by the evolving socio-political systems, economy, history and varying geography of the local context. As by-products of their social settings these groups interact with micro processes with the aim of maximizing their welfare, changing attitudes, behavior and social perceptions between groups and facilitating social exchanges mainly at the grassroots, but sometimes at the national levels. Thus the strategies and relationships (both vertical and horizontal) that they develop provide a barometer with which to measure a post-conflict country's general well being. The findings inform us on the agency of local CSOs. Often these groups are depicted as reactive rather than proactive agents of change. Evidence shows civil society has taken on a character of its own. They have learnt to adapt well due to the nature of the challenges they face. In a bid to remain relevant some groups refine their core missions through reorganizing and streamlining their systems and structures. Some develop a niche and form stronger partnerships with others. Civil society organizations do make conscious choices as they interact with one another and with their environment. Thus as these community groups adapt to their post-conflict environment they change the nature and behavior of other groups around them. This constant metamorphosis enables actors and agencies to position themselves to address new demands and tackle sometimes unforeseen challenges from the base upwards.

E. Donor 'bias' tilts the local balance of power in favor of more professional groups

Donors tend to be biased toward larger, urban, professionally-staffed CSOs, thus grassroots organizations get less support than the size of their constituency might

warrant. Such a practice contravenes one of their (donors) key goals, which is to effect social change that enhances the 'peripheries' of power. Because of this practice a small number of influential local development and peacebuilding organizations now drive the donor-funding process. These are often elite urban-based groups with urbane leadership, and its structure and modus operandi (bank account, board etc) are decipherable to the donor. As such it is not surprising that formal groups get the most support compared to informal groups. By failing to fully engage *informal* or *non-traditional groups*, donors have inadvertently created a tiered system that disadvantages the most marginalized in the community. This reinforces societal marginalization of the most vulnerable.

Like US government organizations, who are mandated by law to reserve a portion of their outside contracts for 'small businesses' to encourage start-ups and innovation rather than rely on a few large contractors, donor organizations should consider setting aside a portion of their support specifically for grass-roots, rural, indigenous CSO's to encourage their formation and strengthen local civil society. This will create a vibrant civil society so essential to reviving social institutions in fragile societies. Indeed transformation involves interaction between micro-processes such as in the family and local communities, on the one hand and macro processes in the public institutions of governance, on the other.

F. Donors are hesitant to employ the full range of leverages against government

While donors are rightly concerned to rebuild and strengthen government institutions following conflict, donors should strongly speak out against governments restricting CSO activities. While it is right that governments take over many roles that CSO's fulfill in an immediate post-conflict setting, such as delivery of humanitarian aid, education, peacekeeping, justice, health care, infrastructure, there are other roles *for which CSO's must remain active indefinitely*, including monitoring of government actions, expression of public concerns to government, self-help for communities and needs under-served by government, and media/business/professional organizations to facilitate spread of best practices and business formation. Donors should make it clear that as governments strengthen, the roles of CSO's will change, but the *need for CSO's* remains undiminished, indeed, grows stronger with growth and increased complexity of the economy and society. Thus the balance between aid to governments and aid to the civil society sector needs to remain balanced so that both can flourish. The growing power and influence of government coupled with a desire by donors to accommodate their concerns shapes civil society-donor relations. Donors thus have leverage that they can use to get government to become more open and acceptance of civil society groups as partners in development rather than as a threat.

Recommendations

Grant local ownership over process and product

Local civil society organizations should be treated as much more than ‘implementing partners’. External support of any kind by itself does not necessarily guarantee positive societal transformation. The driving force for sustainable transformation should be internal with external agents acting as facilitators and stimulators of positive change. Such a process, where it fully incorporates the aims and aspirations of the affected communities, is critical to assisting societies successfully navigate economic and political uncertainties and to lay solid foundations for durable peace. The key is to build on indigenous knowledge and local good practices as a key conflict mitigation strategy. It requires introducing local actors to new concepts and models about their peacebuilding role. The beneficiaries will acquire the necessary skills to undertake advocacy activities for peace and reconciliation at the community and national levels. They will mainstream peace-building work in their activities using local knowledge and traditions.

Rebuild social relations as a crucial element of peacebuilding

Investing in peace is not simply a matter of rebuilding infrastructure, rehabilitating and resettling refugees/ internally-displaced persons and combatants, trying perpetrators or undertaking macroeconomic development. All of these are noble goals and are critical to the overall peacebuilding process. For such a process to be successful and sustainable

however, it also involves rebuilding the social relations that may have been fractured due to the conflict. Healing the wounds of war lays solid foundations for peace.

Integrate state-society relationship

Civil society in Sierra Leone tends to operate in opposition to the state. The donors have played a role in encouraging such adversarial relationship. Integrating the state-society relationship is important for rebuilding society. This is mainly because the fortunes of both state and non-state actors are intertwined. Thus mending, building and clarifying relationships not only among people but also between people and institutions are critical to addressing a post-conflict country's developmental needs.

Create special project funding pool for the most marginalized groups

Local civil society (groups staffed, managed and operated locally), is made up of formal as well as *informal* or *non-traditional groups*. Due to weak capacity, language barriers, inadequate funding, and high transaction costs, the latter— which consists of some of the most marginalized in the community— often fall outside of the radar screen of donors and other external agencies. As such it is not surprising that professional NGOs are more fundable than informal groups. This reinforces societal marginalization of the most vulnerable. If external support of any kind is to be effective then informal networks' engagement is critical.

Invest in human and social capital through tailored capacity building programs

Post-conflict programs are designed to address communities and governance constitutional capacity building needs. It involves fostering change and transforming key actors across a broad spectrum of the society. Such targeted capacity building requires investing in the human and social capital of marginalized individuals and groups in order to enable them to develop the capacities needed to thrive and to play various roles in developing and renewing their communities. For such efforts to be successful however, it requires a participatory approach in which beneficiaries feel a high degree of ownership both over the process as well as the outcome.

Establish long-run sustainability

Developing a vibrant civil society in fragile and post-conflict societies is a massive undertaking. Organizations are often weak and inexperienced, and the competition for resources is fierce. The private sector generally pays relatively high wages thereby attracting some of the best people. The government does not make it easy for CSOs to operate and is sometimes hostile. But these difficulties are not insurmountable. Civic minded donors adopt a multi-faceted and multi-dimensional approach to work in post-conflict societies. The organization recognizes the inter-connectedness between peacebuilding and development and between people and the institutions that govern them. In this vein the over-arching approach is people-centered where local actors are viewed as

key resources and not just as ‘beneficiaries’ or recipients. This builds trust and ensures sustainability.

Incorporate moral and financial Transparency

More transparency is required in the aid sector in general. This includes not just financial but also moral accountability. The donor world still operates as a secret exclusive club. It is not surprising therefore that the call for reform has been loud which culminated in the formation by some non-profits of a new Publish What You Fund (PWYF) campaign to “*encourage donors to reveal timely and accessible information about how they are spending their money*”.

Areas for future research

This section sets out areas for further research based on the findings presented in this dissertation, and as summarized in this section. These further issues could yield interesting and important results with regard to civil society and donor interaction in post-conflict peacebuilding.

Firstly, it would be interesting to find out systematically how civil society funding compares with the rest of the country’s funding sectors that have been largely excluded from this research. Funding local actors, as part of post-conflict peacebuilding, is a complex undertaking that involves strengthening government institutions, private sector, as well as civil society. This dissertation does not grapple with all the nuances of the

country's aid architecture in its entirety. Support to government institutions and the private sector for development and institutional capacity building are not my concern here. Instead I focus very specifically on local civil society initiatives engaged in peacebuilding.

Secondly the role of international Non-governmental organizations in the civil society-donor debate is important for future research. The dissertation also does not address in an explicit manner the important role of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) in post-conflict Sierra Leone. World renowned organizations such as Save the Children, World Vision, Catholic Relief Services (CRS), International Committee of the Red Cross, etc. are some of the established organizations that have played an immense role in transforming the conflict management and development landscape of Sierra Leone. They are mentioned here mainly in their capacity as donors or as external linkages to their local implementing partners. Their work alone would certainly require a separate research project.

Thirdly there is a key question that would need to be answered: how does CSO formed prior to the war fare when compared with the rest of the local CSOs that are by-products of the civil war? Answers to this question might offer an extension to the research as I am mostly interested in the conflict and post-conflict phase (1991-present) CSOs. Here I focused on those local civil society groups that are by-products of the civil war. In the case of aid effectiveness in fragile societies, in which organizations shape and are in turn shaped by the prevailing instability the task of assessing an impact over a

much longer stretch of time is twice as difficult but very important. This is because, as Cassen (1987) argues, program and project aid take effect over “different periods of time”.

Also, it would be an interesting extension of the study to look at the phenomenon as it plays out in the rest of the country. This research does not cover civil society in the entire country. To do justice to the breadth and scope of civil society ventures in Sierra Leone would require a separate research. Instead I have focused on those regions that best illuminate the phenomenon: Western Area (seat of government with its large concentration of CSOs); Kenema District in the Eastern Province (the region where the war started and therefore hardest hit but also with a high concentration of CBOs and the bastion of the government opposition); and Koinadugu District in the Northern Province (region least affected by the conflict and is pro-government).

Lastly, there is room for a more detailed picture of the growing influence of non-western donors such as China, Brazil and India. The role of China in particular and the response of the traditional donors to combat its power in Africa will have serious repercussions for the donors-civil society relations in post-conflict peacebuilding in Africa in particular. Since the study did not yield enough data on how Chinese funding decisions are made, this would be another option for further research.

APPENDIX: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH STUDY: Assessing the Impact of Donor Policies and Behavior on Local Civil Society in Post-conflict Sierra Leone

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to complete my PhD dissertation in Conflict Analysis and Resolution at the Institute for Conflict Analysis & Resolution at George Mason University. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete the survey either by interview or email. It should take about 45 minutes to complete the survey.

RISKS

"There are no foreseeable risks for participating in this research."

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in 'Assessing the Impact of Donor Policies and Behavior on Local Civil Society in Post-conflict Sierra Leone'.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in the closed-ended study will be confidential. For coded identifiable data, (1) your name will not be included on the surveys and other collected data; (2) a code will be placed on the survey and other collected data; (3) through the use of an identification key, the researcher will be able to link your survey to your identity; and (4) only the researcher will have access to the identification key. The data obtained from the open-ended portion may be quoted in the dissertation and footnoted.

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the survey at any time and for any reason. There are no costs to you or any other party.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Vandy Kanyako, PhD Candidate, at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. I may be reached at phone: 571-438-7739 or email: vkanyako@gmu.edu for questions or to report a research-related problem. My faculty advisor is Dr. Andrea Bartoli and he can be reached at 917-583-3993. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Subject Protections at 703-993-4121 if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this form and agree to participate in this study.

Name

Date of Signature

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Vandy Kanyako graduated from Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone in 1998 with a Bachelor of Arts in History. He received his Masters in International Relations from the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands in 2002 and a Masters in Peace Studies from the Kroc Institute, University of Notre Dame in 2003. He has worked for various non-profit organizations and civil society networks in Africa, Europe and the United States. From 2004 and 2005 he served as the Director of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) in New York which eventually brought together 1000 participants representing governments, the United Nations and civil society at the United Nations Headquarters in July 2005 to explore the role of civil society in the prevention of armed conflict. Vandy is the founder and former Executive Director of Peacelinks-Sierra Leone, a local NGO that used a combination of traditional and mainstream techniques in the rehabilitation and reintegration of ex-combatants in Sierra Leone. In 2001 he was awarded the Hague Appeal for Peace Prize in Athens, Greece, for his conflict mitigation work. More recently he has worked for World Learning International Development and consulted for the National Democratic Institute (NDI), both in Washington DC. During the 2009-2010 academic year he taught conflict resolution techniques and practice (CONF 300) in the Conflict Analysis and Resolution (CAR) undergraduate program at George Mason University.