Welcome to the Journal of Sierra Leone Studies. This is the first Journal dedicated solely to Sierra Leone to have been published for a long time.

We hope that it will be of use to academics, students and anyone with an interest in what for many is a rather 'special' country.

The Journal will not concentrate on one area of academic study and invites contributions from anyone researching and writing on Sierra Leone to send their articles to: **John Birchall** for consideration.

Prospective contributions should be between 3500-5000 words in length, though we will in special circumstances consider longer articles and authors can select whether they wish to be peer reviewed or not. Articles should not have appeared in any other published form before.

The Editorial Board reserves the right to suggest changes they consider are needed to the relevant author (s) and to not publish if such recommendations are ignored.

We are particularly interested to encourage students working on subjects specifically relating to Sierra Leone to submit their work.

Thank you so much for visiting The Journal and we hope that you (a) find it both interesting and of use to you and (b) that you will inform colleagues, friends and students of the existence of a Journal dedicated to the study of Sierra Leone.

An important development

We are pleased to announce that the Journal of Sierra Leone Studies is now officially affiliated with Makeni University, Sierra Leone.

This affiliation will enable the Editorial Board of the Journal to assist academics and students studying and working in Sierra Leone, to prepare articles for submission for consideration and possible inclusion in future editions of the Journal.

We are grateful to the Principal and his colleagues for granting us this status and allowing the Journal to be produced within a secure financial environment.

John Birchall

Editor, December 2019
Content

The first edition of Sierra Leone Studies

An introduction

In the early months of 1918, as human beings continued to slaughter each other in what would become known as The Great War, or the 'war to end all wars', a few officials and their Sierra Leonean friends, sat down in Freetown and discussed creating an official Government publication that focused on the people and their customs, beliefs and traditions etc., of Sierra Leone. Within a few months of its publication the Great War came to its end. The Colonial powers were verging on bankruptcy and one, Germany, would lose its Empire and see it distributed amongst the 'victors'.

The following is the content of the first edition.

June 1918 – the only paper copy of this edition is housed in The British Library, London. John has copies of both the Foreword and W Addison's article. He also has a copy of the Introduction. All are of interest to those who study Sierra Leone, or simply have an interest in its formative years. He will send copies to anyone who asks for them.

Foreword   Governor

The palm Tree and its use   - typed version below   W Addison

Notes on the Foulah People   Omah Jambouria

Notes on the Mende People – 1   Alimami Bokhari

The game of Warri   J de Hart

The industrial pursuits of the Yalunkas   Rev. W T Thomas

THE PALM NUT TREE (ELAEIS GUINEENSIS) AND ITS USES

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The palm nut tree has been, and is, the mainstay of Sierra Leone. If what one reads is absolutely reliable, other parts of the world are likely to compete with West Africa in this product, and unless more attention is paid to the condition of the palm nut tree here, "hard times" may come.

In the Colonial Journal of July, 1914, under the heading of "The Oil Palm," notice is drawn to the fact that in one province in Sumatra preparation has been made for planting 7,500 oil palms a year, and the following words occur:---

"The introduction of this African Palm into Asia has given very encouraging results. Its growth is satisfactory, and the yield and richness of the fruit are superior to those of Africa."

No vivid imagination is required to foresee in a few score years an energetic campaign in the East to capture the palm kernel and oil trade of the West. The principle followed by the interested people of the East will be one of careful attention to the oil palm, as opposed to the laissez-faire attitude of the people of the West. Further, America produces oil-bearing seeds, and it is possible that in parts of America the oil palm may be introduced and made to flourish as it does in parts of West Africa. It is quite common to hear the remark that there are vast

forests containing millions of untouched palm nut trees in Sierra Leone, where thousands of tons of fruit rot every year.

This is as it may be. I have not seen them and very much doubt the accuracy of the statement.

In certain areas, it is a regrettable fact that the oil palm is actually dying out.

Not many miles from Freetown, hundreds and hundreds of trees can be counted which have been felled to the ground for the purpose of obtaining the sap which is collected in numerous receptacles and finds a ready sale, particularly in Freetown. These trees are absolutely and recklessly destroyed. In other areas the trees are heavily "tapped" for the sap, which is generally collected in a gourd. Many "tap" holes may be counted in one tree. These trees are distorted and weakened so that they bear little or no fruit and die from ill treatment, if it is continued. Where the trees are cut down, the stumps become the breeding places of innumerable mosquitoes.

The sap is called "palm wine." Allowed to stand and ferment slightly, or, taken fresh, it is comparatively harmless and pleasant drink. When much fermented or mixed with trade spirits, it becomes a pernicious and deteriorating factor in the life of the people.

In other parts of the country, the bush has been razed to the ground for farming purposes so frequently that, what was once watered and fertile land, has gradually become practically waterless grass land. In these areas the palm nut trees are dying off every year because of want of moisture in the soil, and "grass field fires." During the dry months of the year views can be obtained of extensive blackened areas, with a solitary fire and thirst tortured palm nut tree here and there, and not a sign of young and vigorous plants growing up to take the place of the

older ones. If the "grass field fires" do not destroy the young plants, thirst does. In time, as the soil looses its fertility for any kind of crop, such areas will become gradually depopulated.

Without help, in favourable localities and conditions, the palm nut tree flourishes. When nature is assisted, the palm nut tree yields fruit abundantly, twenty-five bunches of fruit having been seen in one young cultivated tree. Roads, railways, education, improved methods of agriculture, afforestation and legislation, with facilities and fair treatment to the native trader, are needed to terminate the disastrous, wanton and unnecessary destruction of this valuable tree. Without these, it must gradually die out, and, where this occurs, the country will become, as it is in some parts, a useless desert.

In normal localities, the natives say that half the trees bear fruit every year. This may be so, but the fact remains that fewer bearing than non-bearing trees have been observed.

The reasons given by the natives to account for the presence of so many unfruitful trees are:-

   (a). Trees too old.

   (b). Trees too young.

   (c). "Male" trees.

   (d). Trees struck by lightning.

   (e). "Tapping" for palm wine.

   (f). Burning the bush when the farms are made.

   (g). Destruction of the trees by careless cutting of the fruit

(h). Trees destroyed by monkeys pulling out the young leaves to get at the succulent "cabbage," from which the young leaves spring.

(i). Damage done by beetles.

(j) Parasitical vegetation due to neglecting to clean the trees.

Taking an average of fruitful trees, it has been estimated that the average yield is five bunches per tree per annum.

In five bunches of an average size, the nuts after separation from the cob weighed 39lb. 12 1/2ozs.

After the oil was extracted by hand from the pericarp, the following were obtained : -

				lb.	Ozs.
(a).	Unbroken fibre of the pericarp		...	4	8
(b).	Broken fibre ...	...	...	4	3
(c).	Nuts (unbroken)	...	...	27	12 ½
(d).	Oil from pericarp	...	...	3	5
	Total	...	...	39	12 ½

After cracking, the nuts weighed : -

					lb.	ozs.
Shells	…	…	…	…	18	3 ½
Kernels	…	…	…	…	6	12
Powdered Shells and Kernels		…		…	2	13
		…	…			
Total						

It will be observed from the above figures that approximately half a ton of palm oil can be obtained by hand from the pericarp of the fruit yielding a ton of fresh kernels. This comparison cannot be applied to kernels, as exported, because they lose weight by drying and insect-borers, when kept in stock awaiting shipment. If no palm oil were consumed in the country, for every ton of kernels kept in stock and then exported, there could also be exported slightly over half a ton of palm oil.

The young fruit generally appears on the trees during the months of November and December, and is ripening during January, February and March. For this period, the "Porroh Society" forbids the picking of the fruit and places the "Porroh" on the palm bush to prevent the people picking the nuts until all the farms have been prepared for planting, and to allow the fruit to ripen thoroughly. April, May and June are the season for picking.

During the rainy months of July, August and September, a few bunches of ripe nuts are to be found here and there. Not much picking is done owing to the slippery state of the tree trunk caused by the action of the heavy rain, which renders climbing a very risky proceeding. The

yield of nuts per fruitful tree, per year, differs. Some years the yield is more abundant than others. It depends to a great extent on the duration of the rain. Further, the nuts ripen more quickly during a long than they do during a short dry season.

In West Africa the name "Palm oil" is given to the oil extracted from the pericarp of the nut. The pericarp of freshly picked, properly ripe nuts treated at once yields commercial "fine" oil. Over-ripe nuts yield commercial "medium" oil, and rotten nuts yield "hard" oil. Freshly picked, ripe nuts, thoroughly cleaned, and with great cleanliness observed in the process of extracting the oil from the pericarp of the nut, yield "edible" oil, the most valuable of the four grades of oil.

A kerosene tin holds slightly over 4 gallons of palm oil, weighing, approximately, from 37 to 39 lb. The weight depends upon the quality of the oil. 250 gallons of palm oil is the quantity generally accepted as equal in weight to one ton.

The common methods of adulteration of palm oil are to add :-

i.   Water.

ii.   Mud.

When mixed with commercial "hard" oil, the natives believe it is difficult to detect the mud.

METHOD OF EXTRACTING THE OIL FROM THE PERICARP OF THE NUT.

There are three processes :-

i.   A large hole in the ground is lined with stones or with mud. Banana leaves are placed inside the hole. The nuts are placed on the banana leaves. When the hole is full, hot water is poured in, and the hole is covered with banana leaves on the top of

which is placed a covering of earth. This cover keeps in the heat. After four or five days, the hole is uncovered, and the mass is pounded with long wooden pestles manipulated by several persons standing round the hole. After the mass has been thoroughly pounded, it is placed in a canoe, the depericarped nuts are taken out, and hot water is poured over the residue. As the oil rises to the surface it is taken off by a sort of skimmer and placed in receptacles ready for sale.

The fibrous substance of the pericarp is squeezed by hand and thrown away.

ii.   Another method of extracting the oil and similar to it, is to throw large heated stones into the mass of nuts. The nuts are pounded, water is poured in and the oil rising to the surface is collected and boiled, when it is ready for sale. When the oil cease s to appear, the hole is emptied and another quantity of nuts thrown in.

As a rule, methods i and ii are only applied to old nuts, and nuts with the pericarp in a state of decay. This oil is unfit for consumption.

iii.   The following process produces "fine" oil. The fruit is gathered when it is about ripe and placed in heaps until the nuts are easily extracted from the cone, when the latter is split up and the nuts and cone separated. The nuts are then "fanned," which process separates tiny pieces of cob, etc., from the nuts. When the nuts are clean, they are placed in a three-legged iron pot of a capacity of anything from a few pints to a few score gallons. A little water is added, and the contents of the pot are stirred with a long pole until the pot has been boiling for some time. As soon as the nuts look as if all the oil has been boiled out of the pericarp, they are taken from the pot

and thrown into a mortar where they are pounded with pestles until they are "depericarped." In the meantime, the oil has been removed from the pot. The mass of the fibre and nuts is now put back into the pot, water is added, and the whole mass is stirred until it has been thoroughly boiled, when the oil so extracted is skimmed off the surface of the water. The nuts and fibre are now placed in a net which looks like a miniature hammock erected on two uprights at one end, while the cross bar at the loose and is held between the two hands. As soon as the net is full, pressure is applied by twisting the net until not a drop of liquid is left in the mass inside, when the net is untwisted, and the mass thrown out on the ground. The nuts are separated from the fibre of the pericarp and the remainder of the oil washed off them. This is collected by skimming, and, with the oil and water caught from the net, is again boiled, the oil being skimmed off the water as it rises to the surface. In most cases a net is not used, pressure being applied by the hand. In this country, the men cut and carry the bunches of palm nuts. The women extract the oil, and men, women and children crack the nuts.

It is interesting to note that the system of extraction of the oil by hand from the pericarp of the nut is practically identical with the system of extraction by machinery, the only difference being that the latter is so much more powerful. It is a fact that machinery is bound to be a failure as a commercial proposition where the people can deal by hand with all the fruit obtainable in that area. Men will not walk long distances with bunches of nuts to a factory for a small sum, when to take the same weight in palm oil or kernels to the factory is less laborious and infinitely more profitable. In other words, any person would rather make one journey with a load of palm oil

for say ten shillings, than four journeys with an equally heavy load of palm nut fruit for the same amount. That is what it comes to if the cones of fruit are to be carried to the factory. The price offered for whole fruit is such that it would appear that the following conditions are necessary to make the extraction of palm oil by machinery a success:-

i. Large areas of productive palm nut trees.

ii. No "uncontrolled" inhabitants. In other words, a monopoly of land and people, which amounts to robbing them of their birth right.

DISPOSAL OF THE OIL.

The greater part of the oil extracted from the pericarp remains in the country, being utilized as an article of food and in the manufacture of native soap, etc., etc. The remainder is exported. A few examples may be of interest:-

AS AN ARTICLE OF FOOD.

"Palm oil chop" is a dish which has stood the test of years in the parts of West Africa where the oil palm is to be found, and its consumption, therefore, is enormous, as all true Africans love "Palm oil chop" once they become acquainted with it. Not only is it appreciated by the African, it has many European devotees.

NATIVE "PALM OIL CHOP."

Prepared by the native of the country "palm oil chop" dishes may be chased as follows: -

i. Palaver sauce.

ii. Awbeh atta.

iii. Alappa.

i. "Palaver sauce," so called, because of the number of items to be cooked together "making palaver" with one another as they are boiled. Time and care are necessary for the preparation of a nicely seasoned and palatable dish. Ground locusts (beans), or ogiri (prepared from bennisced), or both, with a portion of the best beef, dried fish, and capsicums, ground or whole, are first placed with water in the saucepan and allowed to boil until the flesh is nearly cooked. Edible oil is then added, and the whole is boiled until the oil has acquired the correct flavour. Next, egusi flour (ground egusi seed) and parboiled herbs, crushed onions and salt are added. The mixture is then stirred over a slow fire.[1]

ii. "Awbeh atta" appears to be an Aku word which means "pepper soup." Any internal portion or portions of an animal are used in this dish. It is prepared practically the same as palaver sauce, but boiled until the gravy becomes thick, and, as there are fewer items in it, it is a less expensive dish.

iii. "Alappa" is a quickly prepared palm oil dish consisting of fish fresh or dried, ground or whole capsicums, and palm oil boiled for about half an hour. This is the least expensive dish of the three.

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[1]About one pint of oil is required in this dish for a family of six.

At meal times, five or six persons may be seen sitting round a great basin filled with perfectly cooked rice covered with "palm oil chop," each person helping himself to a fair share of the meal which he eats by the handful, and a very palatable and attractive dish it is, when properly prepared and served.

From the above, a fairly accurate idea may be formed of the amount of palm oil used as an article of food. It is to the black man what lard, dripping, oil, etc., are to the white man.

EUROPEAN "PALM OIL CHOP."

One chicken.

One kipper (tinned kippers.)

One small saucer, level with groundnuts.

One large green and fresh capsicum.

Potatoes or vegetable coco, okro and onions.

Two tablespoons of edible palm oil.

Cut the chicken in pieces and fry with the onions. Strain off surplus lard. Add enough water to stew. Add potatoes. If coco is used, first parboil this vegetable. Stew slowly till about half an hour before serving, then add the groundnuts parched and crushed, pepper, okro, kipper broken up, and the palm oil.

When ready, add two hard-boiled eggs cut in two. Serve "palm oil chop" in one dish piping hot, and well-cooked rice in the other.

The above is an ample meal for two persons.

MANUFACTURE OF SOAP.

In the manufacture of "best" soap the oil is treated by the natives as follows: -

i.   Boiled.

ii.   Imported soda is then added.

iii.   The mixture left to cool.

iv.   Then sliced into cakes.

It is sold in cakes; the price being governed by the size.

In the manufacture of "native" soap, ashes are first obtained by burning, for preference:-

i.   The dried midrib of the leaf of the banana tree.

ii.   The dried trunk of the paw paw tree.

iii.   Cones of the palm nut tree after the fruit has been taken off.

The ashes are then placed in a funnel shaped basket and water is poured into the basket. After passing through the ashes, the water is ready to be used in the manufacture of soap. The oil is boiled for some time, then the "ash-water" is added and the mixture is allowed to continue to boil, being stirred the whole time until it begins to harden, when it is left to cool down. As soon as it is cold, the mass is placed on a board and any hard lumps crushed, after which it is made into balls and is ready for sale.

AS AN ILLUMINANT

Sand is placed in a receptacle. Palm oil is added. Locally made wick is erected in the middle and lighted, the receptacle being almost covered by a piece of tin, or other non-inflammable substance. The light is extinguished by blowing or by using the cover as an extinguisher. Sometimes the oil is placed in a lamp made of native pottery. An example of this lamp is to be seen in the Sierra Leone section of the Imperial Institute.

AS A PROTECTION AGAINST COLD AND RAIN

Men, women and children working in the fields in the rain oil their skins for warmth, and to keep the flesh from becoming sodden.

OTHER USES

i.   As a liniment for rheumatism.

ii.   As an emetic and an "antidote" in case of poisoning.

iii.   Mixed with an aromatic inflammable resin obtained from a tree corresponding to the Daniella thurifera, it is highly prized by women and girls as a toilet accessory for improving the colour, smoothness and texture of the skin

DISPOSAL OF THE NUTS

The nuts are cracked by hand between two stones, and it is a long and tedious process. A hand-driven nut-cracking machine will crack as many nuts in a few minutes as will take the average

human nutcracker the best part of two days to crack. After cracking, the kernels are separated from the shells and are ready for sale.

Practically the whole of the kernels is exported. A certain amount of the oil is extracted by roasting the kernels in an iron pot, also by pounding the kernels in a mortar, after which the pounded kernels are boiled in water, the oil being taken from the surface of the water. This oil is generally used as an article of food and for medicinal purposes. The quantity of kernels thus used in the country is so small that it cannot have any appreciable effect on the amount of kernels exported.

It might be said, of course, if nut cracking by hand is such a long and tedious process, why are the people so slow in taking advantage of the hand-driven nut-cracking machine?

There are many reasons. Where the population is sufficient to deal with the nuts obtained, there is no object in buying a fairly expensive machine, and, while it takes so much longer to crack the nuts by hand, the people are better employed doing this than doing nothing at all. Some people say, "why is it that the people cannot see that if they crack their nuts quickly, they have more time for agriculture?"

To take advantage of the hand nut-cracking machine of the present type, several families should co-operate. If they did, the strongest would want the biggest share of its use, and so on. The natives have not arrived at the stage of scientific and useful co-operation.

Further, even if the hand machine were largely taken up, agriculture would not be very much benefited [sic] thereby. The country cannot well carry many more people under the present

wasteful system of agriculture whereby one family requires about six times more ground to live upon than is really necessary.

Again, generally speaking, the children do not go to school. A man may possess two or three wives and several children. Then why should he buy a machine? Also, the best hand nut-cracking machine is not perfect by any means. The kernels and shells have to be separated by hand just the same. Spare parts are needed, there are mechanical defects which, if anything goes wrong, require more or less skilled attention, constant lubrication is necessary, and, is anybody going to undertake the repair of these machines, when they break down ?

These are only a few of the influences which militate against the hand-driven nutcracker.

It is generally accepted that:-

(a). To obtain one bushel of palm kernels, it is necessary to crack about four bushels of nuts.

(b). An expert native can crack about one bushel of nuts in a day.

(c). The weight of kernels contained in one "struck" Imperial bushel measure ranges from about 48 to 50 lb. according to the quality of the kernels and whether they are water borne or land borne kernels.

(d). The kernels contained in a "heaped" Imperial bushel measure weigh from about 66 to 68 lb. according to their condition as in (c).

(e). The quality of the kernel depends upon their age, freedom from shell, dirt, and the ravages of insect borers.

The manufacture in Europe of soaps, lubricants, foodstuffs, etc., from palm oil and kernels does not come within the scope of this paper.

The shells form excellent fuel. When fresh, they contain a certain amount of oil. They give a greater heat than coal, and in launches, with suitably constructed furnaces, they can be used as a substitute for wood

OTHER USES OF THE TREE.

The leaves of the tree are used for thatching and making hampers. The fibre from the leaves is used for making fishing lines and nets. The timber does not appear to be of much value.

In conclusion it is a fact that the Government has done a great deal to encourage the palm oil and kernel industry. The merchants and the people have reaped the benefit. Political officers introduced tins in sections to be put together in this country for sale to the natives where there existed a lack of suitable receptacles in which to carry the palm oil to the merchants. Political officers have been seen taking strings of carriers with these tins and large iron cauldrons to the natives in outlying parts of the Protectorate, and explaining to the people that the use of large cauldrons in extracting the oil from the pericarp of the nuts is a much more profitable and speedier method than using a small pot. They have also encouraged and superintended the cleaning and care of the trees and the planting of the young trees and have discouraged the tapping of the trees for palm wine.

If the suggestions in this paper can be carried into effect, there is every prospect that the palm nut tree will continue to be the mainstay of Sierra Leone.

W. ADDISON.

The is first article from the first edition

The palm tree and its uses - W Addison, District Officer, Shebro District. His article shows his considerable knowledge of palm and its uses. He had gained his knowledge whilst being a member of the West African Frontier Force and Commissioner in Northern Shebro, Karene and Shebro District

We are all in his debt

The work of **EF Sayers** deserves to be remembered he was the Editor of SLS at the beginning of world war two. He served as a District Officer in and was always prepared to assist academics working on the peoples of Sierra Leone.

An example of this appears in the following:
https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=RGtQDwAAQBAJ&dq=E+F+Sayers

The above link appears in: Peoples of Sierra Leone: Western Africa, Part 2 - By Merran McCulloch, Published in 1950. It was re-issued in 2017.

Another interesting read

 A residence at Sierra Leone. Described from a Journal kept on the spot and from letters written to friends at Homeby by a Lady, edited by the Hon. Mrs. Norton, London, John Murray, Albermarle Street, London – 1849.

http://www.sierra-leone.org/Books/A%20Residence%20at%20Sierra%20Leone.pdf

A true son of Sierra Leone

The Impact and Legacy of Sierra Leonean Linguist Momoh Taziff Koroma

By Konrad Tuchscherer, St. John's University, New York

Momoh Taziff Koroma. Photograph John Rice, 2013.

Momoh Taziff Koroma was born 19th April 1957 in the village of Baoma, Gallinas-Perri Chiefdom, in Pujehun District in Sierra Leone's Southern Province. He developed a passion for languages at an early age due perhaps to his own mixed heritage, being of both Mende and Vai descent, and to the polyglot nature of the area where he grew up, a crossroads region in southern Sierra Leone near the Liberian border where many languages are spoken. During his long and active career, Taziff made wide-ranging contributions to the study of Sierra Leone's languages and cultures, and to the development of language studies in Sierra Leone's schools.

While attending St. Paul's Secondary School in the town of Pujehun in 1973, Taziff met a young British scholar named Adam Jones, a VSO teacher who developed an interest in Sierra Leone history during his volunteer service. Taziff was Jones' interpreter and assistant in 1974-75 when he began collecting oral history, and again in 1977-78 when Jones returned to Sierra Leone for more research for his Ph.D. thesis. The two men covered an enormous territory on foot and by motorcycle in the southeastern half of Pujehun District. Jones would later draw on this research for his book, *From Slaves to Palm Kernels* (1983), an early history of the Gallinas (or Vai) region. Taziff's collaboration with Jones was an experience which he credited with launching his

scholarly career. Later, Taziff attended Njala University College, where he earned his BA in Linguistics, and where he later lectured. He also earned a Higher Teacher's Certificate (HTC) at Fourah Bay College and taught at a teachers' college in the Bo area where his passion for language and oral traditions inspired his students. After several years of teaching, he returned to Fourah Bay College where he earned an MA in Linguistics under A.K. Turay and Joko Sengova.

Throughout his professional life, Taziff engaged in linguistic consulting work in a wide range of projects, from economic development efforts requiring linguistic acumen to missionary groups needing Bible translation in national languages. His most important consulting work, though, was for the Ministry of Education's project to teach the national languages in Sierra Leone's schools. Taziff developed textbooks at different grade levels in Mende and Krio which included well-structured language exercises and his own original stories. These materials are still used in some Sierra Leonean schools today.

Taziff also worked with foreign scholars who relied on his help as a translator and cultural advisor, and his name is cited with gratitude in many Ph.D. dissertations and published academic books. These scholars include Tucker Childs who documents endangered and disappearing languages, Philip Misevich who draws on linguistic evidence for his research on the history of the Atlantic slave trade in Sierra Leone, Padraic Scanlan who explores the abolition of the slave trade in Sierra Leone, and Konrad Tuchscherer who studies the indigenous Mende writing system known as *Kikakui*.

Taziff was also involved in two documentary film projects on the African diaspora – Joseph Opala's *Family Across the Sea* (1990) and Opala and Cynthia Schmidt's *The Language You Cry In* (1997). Both films document the historical and family ties between Sierra Leoneans and the Gullah people of coastal South Carolina and Georgia in the US, whose ancestors were taken from Sierra Leone and neighboring areas of the West African "Rice Coast" to North America in the 18th century. While working on *The Language You Cry In*, Taziff helped the filmmakers locate a village in Sierra Leone where a local family preserved an ancient Mende song first recorded in a Gullah community in rural Georgia in the 1930s. Many predicted that finding that song in Sierra Leone 200 years after an enslaved Mende person took it to North America would be impossible, but Taziff's discovery that a word in the Georgia version of the song belonged to a particular Mende dialect helped narrow the search area in Sierra Leone.

Taziff's last film project was Marcus Rediker and Tony Buba's *Ghosts of Amistad*, for which he served as Associate Producer. The heroes of the Amistad Revolt, mostly Mendes and led by Joseph Cinqué (or "Sengbe Pieh") were put aboard a slave ship in what is now Pujehun District in 1839. They would later stage their celebrated revolt aboard a ship called *Amistad*

in Cuban waters. Taziff drew on a lifetime of experience doing oral history research in the Pujehun region to tap local knowledge to locate the site of Lomboko, the slave trade complex where the Amistad captives were held before being put aboard the slave ship. Scholars had been aware of Lomboko from historical sources for a long time, but no one had been able to

locate the actual site. *Ghosts of Amistad* received the American Historical Association's John E. O'Connor Prize for Best Documentary Film of 2015. Taziff also contributed to Henry Louis Gates Jr's *The African Americans: Many Rivers to Cross* (2013) which was broadcast widely on US television.

Taziff was one of his country's foremost linguists, but he was also a patriot; and he made use of his writing skills and cultural knowledge to help heal Sierra Leone's wounds after the rebel war through his work with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). He authored several reports, including "Manifesto 99," which recommended that the TRC employ indigenous modes of conflict resolution in its efforts to consolidate peace. The TRC disregarded his recommendations, though some independent projects later drew on indigenous beliefs and ceremonies for their own peacemaking efforts. Taziff also played a major role in drafting a summary of the TRC findings, which was absolutely necessary in his view if ordinary citizens were to understand the lessons of the rebel war. The Sierra Leone Government did not intend to compile a summary, but Taziff was able to find funds for that purpose by appealing to actress Angelina Jolie when she visited Sierra Leone after the war on behalf of the UN. He was so persuasive in his meeting with her that she provided the necessary funds from her own pocket.

In the final decade of his life, Taziff served as Senior Lecturer in Linguistics at Fourah Bay College, a position he held until his death. In 2008, he briefly taught ethics in linguistic documentation at the University of California, Santa Barbara with Professor Tucker Childs. In 2014 he co-authored *Krio Dictionary and Phrase Book* with Hanne-Ruth Thompson. Despite his failing health, he continued to conduct research, mentor students, and assist foreign scholars with their research and writing, including American author John Reed, whose novel in-progress includes dialogue in the Mende language among captives newly arrived in the low country region of South Carolina and Georgia.Taziff, affectionately known as "MTK" by his family and many friends, died 3rd May 2018. He is survived by his wife, Hawa, and daughters, Esther, Fatmata, Anita, Mary, and Lydia, and son, Matthew Taziff "Junior," and his mother, Fataba Kpaka Nya Koroma. He was buried in his home village of Baoma in Gallinas-Perri Chiefdom, Pujehun District.

Something contemporary

Help or Hindrance?

Investigating poverty alleviation efforts in Makeni, Sierra Leone - Hannah J. Lewis

A postgraduate student at University of Sheffield, United Kingdom, she researched whilst studying at the University of Makeni, Sierra Leone. Where she is currently teaching.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This study investigates the reasons for persistent poverty in Sierra Leone despite the vast amounts of foreign development aid which is invested in the country. The research is qualitative, and thus explores the assesses the challenges facing the poor and the attitudes of the poor towards local poverty alleviation strategies through semi-structured household interviews. These findings are cross-examined against interview data from key informants from several local development agencies. Multidimensional poverty is explored through evaluating health, education, income and livelihoods, access to potable water, and food security. The level to which local poverty alleviation strategies address the needs and desires of the poor is assessed and barriers to long-term development explored. The main findings are that despite efforts to address poverty across all dimensions, no long-lasting impacts of development can be seen, in fact, efforts may even be hindering rather than helping poverty alleviation. This was found to be because of two reasons: i) aid dependency, and ii) ineffectiveness of poverty

alleviation efforts. The relevance of dependency theory and bottom-up development are explored in light of these findings.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The eradication of poverty has become the leading goal of development in the 21st century (UN, 2015b). As a result, global poverty levels have fallen, predominantly in South-East Asia, however as of 2013, 767 million people still live in extreme poverty (World Bank). In Sierra Leone, this global mission has become a cornerstone of national policy (Government, 2013).

Despite reducing severe multidimensional poverty from 51.7% 2008 to 43.9% in 2013, Sierra Leone is still considered one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 179th of 188 in the Human Development Index (UN, 2016). The country also faces the challenges of a fragile state (g7plus website) ravished by civil war and disease. The positive trajectory since the 1991 – 2002 Civil War, has been derailed to a certain extent by the 2014-15 Ebola crisis which saw health systems struggling to cope, private investors pulling out of the country and a rise in unemployment (Government, 2015).

This study assesses the level of household poverty in Makeni, Sierra Leone and investigates the attitudes of local people towards development initiatives. To determine the effectiveness of current poverty alleviation strategies in Makeni at addressing the needs and desires of the people, this information will then be compared with development projects currently being implemented and local development practitioners' opinions regarding poverty in the area. The aim of the research is to explore the reasons for persistent poverty at a local level and to investigate current poverty alleviation strategies from the perspectives of development actors and beneficiaries.

This paper will begin by reviewing poverty as a key topic in development, before reviewing factors which may affect poverty alleviation in the local context of Sierra Leone. The research design, methods and analysis are then presented. Main findings are discussed and analysed in direct response to the research questions, highlighting the main themes which arose during analysis before final conclusions are drawn.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Defining Poverty

Debates concerning 'development' have raged since the League of Nations introduced the concept of countries at different 'stages' of development after the first World War (Rist, 2014). Since the 60s, diffusionist strategies attempting to develop the South through the adoption of Western values, policies and technologies have been repeatedly employed to no avail (Namkoong, 1999). As time progressed, industrialised countries remained at the top of the economic ladder, the situation in the South worsened, and the focus of development shifted from bridging the gap between the economies of the North and the South, to the moral duty of alleviating poverty (Rist, 2014).

Poverty is a social construct whose definition changes depending on context and the one formulating the definition. It is impossible to have the poor without the rich, but the international community seems to ignore this, framing poverty as a reality set apart from social relations and therefore something which can be eliminated with the right amount of effort. Rist (2014) writes of this moral objective to bring growth and development to those who are 'underdeveloped' (despite years of evidence to the contrary):

"How could the future be imagined without it? What conceivable policies could fail to call for it

(even if the moral duty is fulfilled in the very act of proclamation rather than in any actual

success)?"

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set out by the United Nations aimed to "eradicate extreme poverty and hunger" by 2015 as its first objective (UN, 2015a). The ambitious target of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty – that is, living on less than $1.25 a day – was achieved and is hailed as the major success of the MDG initiative (UN, 2015a) despite criticism (Bond, 2006; Clemens & Moss, 2005). However, the progress was unevenly distributed across the world. The success of China and India can be starkly contrasted with sub-Saharan Africa, which lags significantly behind despite efforts to the contrary (Clemens and Moss, 2005; Kwon and Kim, 2014). The extreme poverty rate in Eastern Asia was reduced from 61% in 1990 to 4% in 2015 whereas Sub-Saharan Africa failed to halve the rate of extreme poverty, going from 57% in 1990 to 41% in 2015 (UN, 2015a).

One challenge to the eradication of poverty is the lack of international consensus for how to define it. The MDGs were followed by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), whose top priority is to "end poverty and hunger, in all their forms and dimensions", recognising that the work to eradicate poverty was not complete (UN, 2015b). The SDGs expand on the first goal of the MDGs, eradicating income poverty, which was measured solely by the financial marker of living below $1.25/day, to eliminating poverty "in all its dimensions according to national definitions" (UN, 2015b). This is because $1.25/day poverty does not shed light on the deprivations of opportunities (or capabilities) faced by the poor (Sen, 1999). These include malnutrition, lack of access to health services, poor sanitation, a lack of electricity and other infrastructure, illiteracy and a lack of representation in decision-making arenas (Alkire and Sumner, 2013). Furthermore, poverty is affected by time – the longer a person is below the

poverty line, the more degraded the standard of living becomes – with people transitioning in and out of extreme poverty for differing periods of time. Any measure of the proportion of people below the poverty line at any one time is therefore limited by the inability to describe the proportion of the population in persistent or transient poverty (Layte and Whelan, 2003; Whelan, Layte and Maitre, 2004). A multidimensional measure of poverty has been advocated to compliment income-poverty measures, better represent the varied deprivations of the poor and avoid overlooking a significant proportion of the population who are not income-poor and yet are experiencing multidimensional poverty (Alkire and Sumner, 2013). Thus, a multidimensional approach is used in this study to capture as many of the challenges facing the poor as possible.

2.2 Poverty alleviation in the Sierra Leone Context

 Poverty reduction has been a high priority of national policy for Sierra Leone since the end of the civil war in 2002 (Government, 2005). To date, 3 Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

(PRSPs) have been released: PRSP I in 2005, the Agenda for Change (AFC) in 2008

(Government, 2008) and the Agenda for Prosperity (AFP) in 2013 (Government, 2013).
 The country, already facing the significant challenges of other African nations (Collier, 2007), was further impacted by the 1991 – 2002 civil war. The conflict is estimated to have killed 20, 000 people – thousands more were wounded – and displaced over 2 million people, with many skilled professionals leaving the country *en masse*, draining the country of its skilled workers (Government, 2005). In the wake of this tragedy, in 2005, Sierra Leone began to address decades of economic mismanagement and corruption and years of inadequate attention to the condition of the poor, all the while attempting to meet the target of the 8 MDGs in just ten years (Government, 2005). The first PRSP had limited success (Doe, S.

2010) and the Ebola crisis has significantly derailed the AFP (Government, 2013; 2015).
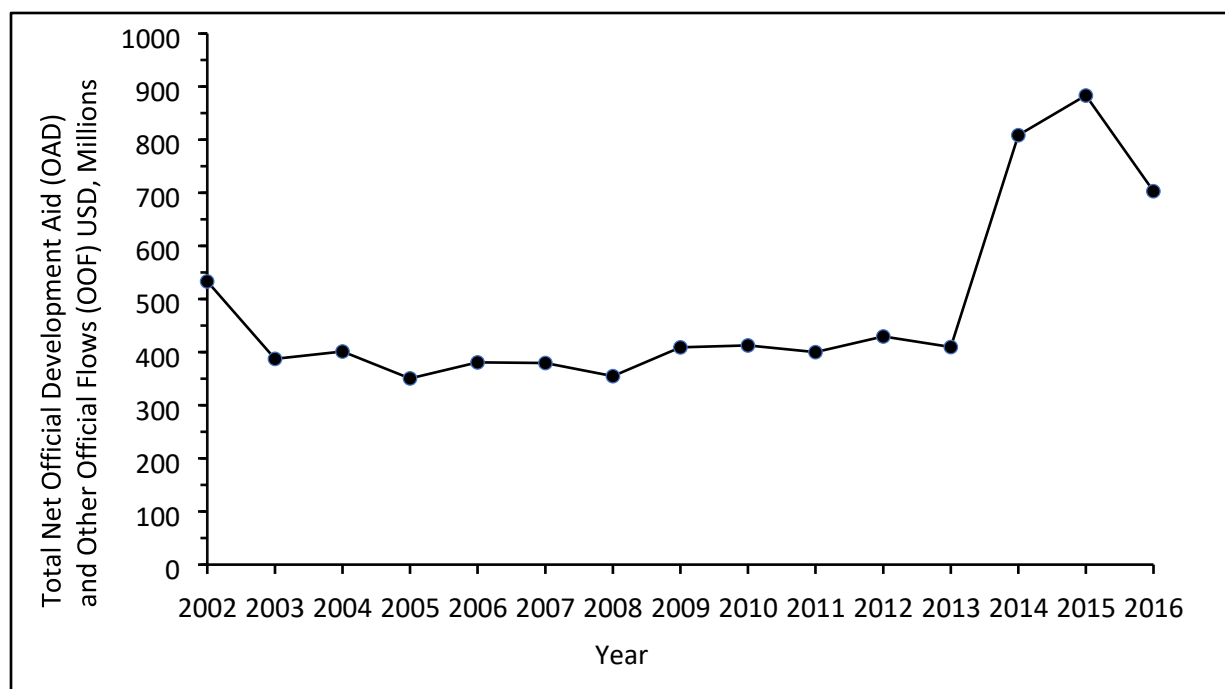
Figure 1: Sum of Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Other Official Flows (OOF) represents the net total disbursements in USD, millions, by the official sector to Sierra Leone since the end of the civil war in 2002. [Data retrieved from OECD] The large increase in 2014-2016 can be attributed to the Ebola epidemic.

Since the end of the civil war in 2002, Sierra Leone has received a net total of 7,245,240,000 USD in development funding (Figure 1), making it one of the largest beneficiaries of foreign aid as a share of GDP (Foday, Addison and Petrie, 2012); yet 52.3% of the population are still living on less than $1.90/day, and 77.5% of the population are multidimensionally poor (UN, 2016). This apparent dissonance begs the question of why this investment is not seeing greater development returns. The New Deal for the engagement of fragile states (PBSB, 2011) recognises that to achieve better value for money and long-term sustainable results, changes need to be made to the development strategies employed in fragile states.

Chapter 3: Research Design and Methods

3.1 Research Aim and Questions The aim of this research is to assess the lived experience of poverty in Makeni, Sierra Leone and identify the strengths and weaknesses of current local interventions which aim to reduce the level of poverty in the area.

By recording the perspectives of local development practitioners through key informant (KI) interviews and contrasting this with the experiences, attitudes and aspirations of local people collected through household interviews, it is hoped that an understanding of the reasons for persistent poverty at a local scale can be found.

To achieve this aim, the following research questions will be answered:

What factors contribute to household poverty in Makeni?

What poverty alleviation strategies are presently being implemented locally, and how do the poor perceive local development projects and what are their strengths and weaknesses?

3.2 Research Location

Figure 2: Map of Sierra Leone showing Bombali borders in red and Makeni's location within the district. *Retrieved from Google Maps.*

This study was undertaken in Makeni, Bombali district, Sierra Leone (Figure 2). Makeni city is spread across two chiefdoms, Bombali Sebora and Makari Gbanti (Figure 3). Household interviews were conducted in the rural villages of Makari and Kunshu, in Makari Gbanti chiefdom and in Pate Banna in Bombali Sebora. The villages were selected for their differing characteristics which were hoped to give a more well-rounded view of poverty in rural Sierra Leone: Makari, as a chiefdom headquarters located on the Lunsar-Makeni highway is a fairly large village, to the West of Makeni, with an important status in the surrounding area; Kunshu, found to the North of Makeni, located around the quieter Kamakwie-Makeni Road is a medium sized village; and Pate Banna is a medium sized village which was badly hit during the Ebola epidemic, with one small access road, located to the South-East of Makeni. Fieldwork was conducted in partnership with the University of Makeni (UNIMAK), a private institution committed to the political, economic, social and religious development of Sierra Leone

(UNIMAK website). Bombali is the district where poverty is most severe, with the highest level of inequality and the worst poverty gap (the poor in the district can only afford up to 77% of their basic needs) (Government, 2013). This pattern of increased incidence and severity of poverty in the rural parts of the country, such as Bombali, was noted in PRSP I (Government, 2005), and shows that though the level of poverty has fallen since 2005, regional disparities persist. This research should therefore show how poverty is being tackled in the most disadvantaged communities in Sierra Leone and shed light on what can be done to alleviate the persistent poverty of the district.
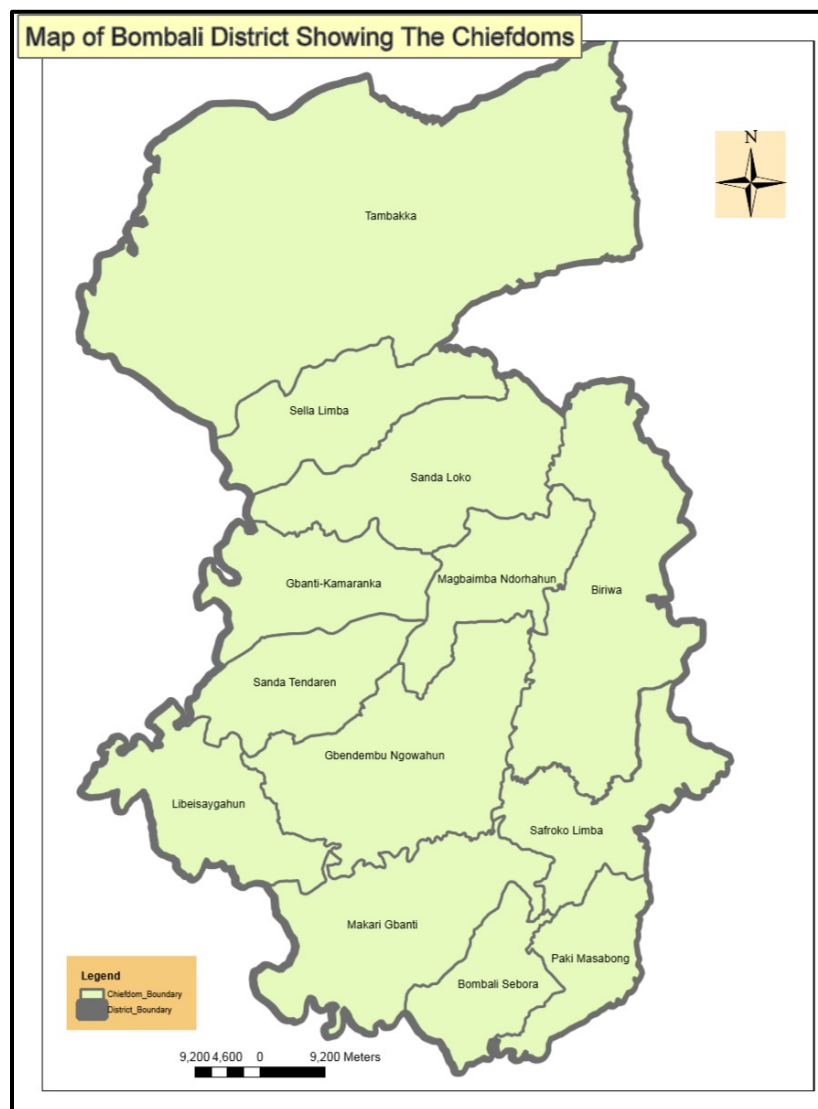

Figure 3: Map showing the chiefdoms of Bombali district. Sampled villages are found in Makari Gbanti and Bombali Sebora. *Figure courtesy of Bombali district council.*

3.3 Methodology

The qualitative methods used in this study were participant observation, KI interviews and semi-structured household interviews. This approach was most appropriate because of its ability to capture people's opinions and experiences. Qualitative methods allow for subjective perspectives to be recorded and a general picture to be formed from differing accounts (Mayoux, 2006). A qualitative approach to assessing poverty levels is still relatively novel, but the poor themselves tend to define poverty in multidimensional terms related to opportunities and standard of living, rather than the economic dimension favoured by quantitative approaches in the 1990s (Mayoux, 2006), thus a quantitative approach cannot fully capture the depth of poverty that they are experiencing (OPHI).

3.4 Participant observation

I was in the field for a total of 7 weeks, during which the first week was spent observing and orienting myself with the local context. This involved informal conversations with staff and students at Unimak, recording observations in a field diary, and familiarising myself with the context and local development actors. Over the course of the next 6 weeks, observations, informal conversations, photographs and personal reflections were recorded in parallel to interviews and data analysis.

Observations were used to compliment and provide more depth to data collected through interviews through the collection of non-verbal data, particularly emotional responses, further revealing attitudes towards various aspects of poverty (Kawulich, 2005). Observations were also used to cross-check data and identify inconsistencies in the accounts given by householders and key informants (KIs) (Kawulich, 2005). This is a strength of ethnographic research as it minimises the bias of the highly controlled interview process which may force certain responses from participants (van Donge, 2006). The researcher bias often highlighted as a limitation of participant observation was kept in mind throughout and minimised by recording accurate observations without interpretation in the initial stages of the research. I also attempted to be open-minded to new interpretations informed by new experiences and observations as the research unfolded (Kawulich, 2005). Observations in specific villages were short-term, which is not usual for in-depth ethnographic research, however, instead, I "hung out" and built relationships with local people in Makeni, gaining their trust and honest opinions over the 7 weeks (Kawulich, 2005).

3.5 Semi-structured interviews

The core of the research was undertaken through semi-structured interviews with KIs and heads of households. Twelve KIs were interviewed: 2 UNIMAK lecturers, 7 local development professionals involved in projects working directly with local communities, and chiefs from 2 villages. Interviews with development professionals were conducted in weeks 2-4 of the fieldwork so that the data collected could inform the questions posed to household heads (HHs). Interviews with the chiefs occurred at the same time as village interviews, and finally, the

interviews with the UNIMAK lecturers were undertaken in the final week of fieldwork, by which time some themes had begun to emerge and could further direct the questions asked. UNIMAK staff were more distanced from development projects and were therefore considered to have more objective views than the other KIs, whose answers could have been influenced by their own political agendas (Mercer, 2006). Development professionals represented a range of agencies focusing on health, education, livelihood support and financial support. I had identified the need to interview village chiefs and representatives from development agencies before I arrived in the field, however the sampling frame of possible participants was unknown and so KIs were identified mainly through a snowballing technique using members of my host organisation as a starting point due to their local expertise (Handcock and Gile, 2011; Heckathorn, 2011). By taking suggestions for contacts from several individuals or 'seeds' I avoided the possibility of biasing my sample to one person's network as (Willis, 2006), and I avoided this further by limiting my sample to one 'wave' of subjects (Heckathorn, 2011). I was introduced to members of each suggested organisations in person by a UNIMAK representative, and provided a formal letter of introduction from UNIMAK before an interview date was set up. This shows how important UNIMAK's local reputation as a highly respected institution in the area was in gaining the trust of gatekeepers – individuals with the authority to grant or withhold access to a research population (Crowhurst and Kennedy-Macfoy, 2013) – in these organisations. In addition to KI interviews, 50 household interviews were conducted; 10 householders participated in Makari, 10 in Pate Banna, and 30 in Kunshu. The villages were selected due to their locations and characteristics as mentioned in section 3.2, with the aim of capturing more varied experiences and minimising bias. Most projects were found to be implemented at the village level, so sampling multiple villages increased the chance of encountering people involved in different projects. Again, gatekeepers played an important role in accessing participants, this is further discussed in section 3.7. In each village, we approached either the headman or chief, to explain the research and ask for permission to go ahead with the research and to arrange interview dates. In Makari and Pate Banna, a village representative was appointed by each chief to facilitate the research, the implications of which are discussed in section 3.7. In contrast, the chief in Kunshu was very happy for us to begin interviews immediately (unaccompanied). This difference in chiefs' attitudes is the reason for the differing sample sizes in the three villages, because in Kunshu, we had the freedom to spend more time in the village. Stratified sampling was chosen in the villages because villages could be roughly divided into clusters of houses which tended to be of different building standards, for example, mudbrick walls/thatched roofs or concrete walls/corrugated metal roofs. To minimise bias which might arise from only interviewing one part of the village – and by extension only people living in certain conditions – care was taken to interview an equal proportion of households from each 'cluster'. Interview questions for both sets of interviews were adjusted to better fit the local context according to observations made during my first week in the field. Interviews were piloted to ensure that researcher and respondent had a shared understanding of the questions, and to ascertain whether this understanding was shared between respondents. Without this common interpretation of the question, it would be impossible to meaningfully

compare responses (Foddy, 1993). KIs were first asked to describe the mission and activities of their organisation as this was thought to be a comfortable topic would give a chance for participants to relax into the interview (Willis, 2006). This was followed by a discussion around the reasons for poverty in the Makeni area and barriers to development. As has already been mentioned, the questions directed at the UNIMAK lecturers included asking them about the main themes which were emerging from the data analysis in addition to the other topics covered by the rest of the KIs. Chiefs were asked questions about the poverty situation and development interventions on the village scale.

Household interviews were more structured due to the number of participants and the time constraints that come with that. Participants were first asked questions about their household, livelihoods, income, access to education, healthcare, water and food to get a basic understanding of the poverty situation of the household. Though these questions were more structured than in the KI interviews, the semi-structured method allowed room to prompt and ask for clarification or further detail. The second half of the interview was much more open-ended, focusing on their feelings about their situations, attitudes towards public services or development projects they may have been involved in, and their hopes and aspirations for the future. Again, more complicated and sensitive questions were left to the second half of the interview, giving a chance for the participant to feel comfortable sharing more personal details (Willis, 2006). Open questions were valuable because they allowed the participant to ascribe their own meanings to their actions and attitudes (Foddy, 1993), in this research, participants' reasoning for wanting to open a business, for example, could be completely different based on the situation and background of the respondent.   KI interviews were conducted in English. Household interviews were conducted in Temne or Krio and were translated by UNIMAK students. The high number of interviews conducted in Temne caused issues with translating one specific question about income. This was unanticipated because the pilot interviews were conducted in Krio and meant that this question needed to be refined during the interview process. An effort was made to build a good relationship with each translator so that they understood the importance of accuracy in relaying questions and answers and with the hope that the more invested the translator was in the research, the less likely they were to lose concentration.

The permission of KIs was sought to record interviews using a digital audio recorder in addition to note-taking, however, I was advised that people in the villages would be suspicious of being recorded, which is not unusual (Willis, 2006), and therefore the sole means of recording village responses was through note-taking. Working with a translator was helpful during the village interviews for this reason, as I had time to write the full responses while the next question was being translated. Using a recorder helped me capture fine detail, maintaining the 'voice' of the participant, and to concentrate more on engaging the participant fully during the interview and prompting for further detail (Willis, 2006).

All KI interviews were conducted in neutral office spaces, and most HHs chose to be interviewed outside their houses, which again was a neutral, non-threatening environment.

Participants decided the times for interviews. KIs were interviewed during typical office hours (though during Ramadan prayer times were taken into consideration when planning visits), and all HHs were interviewed in the early morning, as most left for their farms during the day and the main (often only) meal is eaten in the evening, making after-work interviews inconvenient.

3.6 Data Analysis

Interviews were transcribed or typed up from notes and recordings as soon as possible after the interview to retain as much detail as possible (Willis, 2006). A framework approach (Pope, Ziebland and Mays, 2000) was adopted to analyse the data, starting by repeatedly reading through the accumulating data during the collection process to familiarise myself with it, and drawing out key ideas and themes related to the core purpose of the study through a process known as open coding (Glaser, 2016). The data was then charted, mapped and interpreted. Each part of the data was indexed by comparing it to the rest to identify recurrent themes, nuances and patterns, with each 'piece' of the data (be it a phrase, behaviour, word, idea or other) able to be placed in multiple categories if appropriate to reflect all its possible dimensions. From the index of categories, key themes were identified, highlighted, and grouped together manually using a word processor. This approach follows grounded theory, having roots in the qualitative responses that people provided (Pope, Ziebland, and Mays, 2000). The core of the data analysis was undertaken by highlighting, annotating and visually charting transcripts, notes and photographs under key themes and grouped according to sub-themes.

3.7 Limitations

Some circumstances encountered in the field could be identified as limitations of the research, in the following section these will be discussed along with the measures taken to minimise their effect on the findings.

Firstly, as previously mentioned, the use of gatekeepers was necessary for recruiting participants both in development organisations and in the villages. In seeking KI interviews, the relationship of trust and respect between UNIMAK and development agencies was crucial to receiving permission to interview practitioners. UNIMAK's interests were closely aligned with my own and so their control over these situations did not change the interview process, in fact, they became an 'ally' for the research process and were willing to use their power to help in the case of any difficulties which might have arisen during the research process (Berg, 2009). In the villages, the chiefs were the main gatekeepers. Meeting them to explain the research and mitigate any concerns they had for the research was essential in gaining trust and permission to proceed. This reflects the literature which emphasises that the effects of power, trust and respect dynamics between gatekeepers, participants and researcher are crucial to consider (Crowhurst, 2013). In this case, the chiefs in Makari and Pate Banna stipulated unanticipated conditions for the research which had further implications. In these two villages, a chaperone was appointed as a guide. The risk here was that the chaperone would direct me to people with

a certain agenda, thereby biasing the sample. However, I was able to choose my participants freely and this did not seem to be a problem.

The second potential limitation was the presence of other people during interviews. In Makari and Pate Banna, where the chaperone accompanying us held a high social status in the village, this made it possible that people would answer questions in a certain way. However, children, spouses and other villagers who came to listen to and sometimes interrupt the interview were also challenging to navigate (Willis, 2006). This limitation was minimised in two ways. First, the nature of the questions were not particularly sensitive and did not contain questions which might have been difficult to answer in front of my chaperone. Secondly, if an answer was interrupted by another family member or by a neighbour, I repeated the question to the participant, emphasising the importance of their own words and thoughts in the answer.

Finally, the accuracy of information collected from household interviews depends in part upon the knowledge of HHs of the activities of other household members (Willis, 2006). Intimate detail of other household members' lives was not necessary for this research, though it should be noted that the respondents were sometimes unaware of the earnings of others in the household. Nevertheless, due to the presence of many family members in the interview space (as noted above), HHs were often able to cross-check information with their spouse or other family, for example, this commonly occurred to count how many children were attending school.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Sheffield before the research commenced. The guidelines set out were referred to and maintained throughout the research to mitigate potential harm and to ensure the protection and well-being of participants.

It was anticipated that circumstances relating to the Ebola epidemic and civil war could be related to poverty in the area and could cause distress during the interview. Consequently, I practiced sensitivity during interviews and versed myself in a distress protocol to be followed in case recalling these events brought back trauma for respondents (Haigh and Witham, 2015).

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to interviews. KIs were provided with an information sheet and consent form and time was taken during a preliminary meeting to discuss any queries or concerns relating to the study. Due to the high level of illiteracy in the villages, information about the study was delivered orally to householders in their preferred language (usually Temne), a chance was given for queries or concerns to be addressed and then oral consent was obtained from all participants. Anonymity was assured in all cases and pseudonyms given to protect identities. All KIs aware of and comfortable with their responses being related to their organisations, which could make them more identifiable, however as the nature of the questions posed to them are deemed less sensitive than household interview questions, it is estimated that they are unlikely to suffer any adverse effects due to this. (Laws, Harper and Marcus, 2003)

The time taken to participate in interviews was identified as having potential repercussions (Laws, Harper and Marcus, 2003). This is because the interviews could take participants away from work, social activities or tasks which could cause severe disruption, such as exclusion from a social network or loss of employment. This was mitigated through conducting interviews early in the morning before the beginning of the working day and through providing a clear idea of the time needed from each respondent and giving them the opportunity to refuse to participate or stop the interview at any point. It was decided not to recompense participants for taking part despite the academic debates, because payment was thought to lead to the commodification of responses. The decision also sought to reduce the perpetuation of wealth and power imbalances between respondents and researchers (Hammett and Sporton, 2012).

3.9 Positionality and reflexivity

As a white British female working in a developing country context, my positionality relative to participants was important to consider. Attempts to minimise my position as an 'outsider' to the culture were taken by using a local translator to shift my position to being viewed more on the 'inside' (Twyman, Morrison and Sporton, 1999). Reflecting upon my nationality in a country once colonised by the British was helpful to minimise the uneven powerdynamic and the expectations that I was bringing wealth and opportunities to the people. This reflexive approach helped me to consider emphasising the nature of the research as academic and being clear that I was not affiliated with any organisation likely to bring development projects or money to their villages. This honesty proved important in building trust with participants and avoiding raising expectations. In addition, the likelihood of people responding to the power dynamic by giving answers thought to please me (as the researcher), was reduced through emphasising the importance of the participants' own views before the interview began, and by moderating my behaviour and conversation to appear as engaged and non-threatening as possible (Laws, Harper and Marcus, 2003).

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

In this chapter, the results of the research are presented and discussed with reference to the research aim of discovering the reasons for persistent poverty in Makeni despite poverty alleviation efforts. First, I will report on the living and working conditions in the rural communities so that the challenges faced by people can be understood. I will then describe the current poverty alleviation strategies being implemented in the area and the extent to which they succeed or fail at addressing the challenges faced by the poor. Finally, I will expand upon the main themes that arose as answers to why poverty persists in the Makeni area: dependency and the ineffectiveness of projects.

4.1 Livelihoods

The NGOs and the UNIMAK representatives all identified subsistence farming and petty trading as the main livelihoods of the people in Makeni and the surrounding villages. The chiefs and headmen in Makari identified petty trade as the main livelihood, followed by 'stone cracking'

(quarrying) and then farming, whereas in Kunshu, the chief reported farming as the main livelihood followed by charcoal burning. The results from the household interviews in all three villages showed that farming is indeed the main livelihood, followed by petty trade (Table 1).

Table 1: Occupations of all household members in each village according to household interviews.

Occupation	Makari	Pate Banna	Kunshu	Total
Farming	3	29	81	**113**
Petty Trade	3	4	7	**14**
School	46	25	97	**168**
Stone Quarrying	3	-	-	**3**
Teaching	-	-	3	**3**
Other	1	-	2	**3**
School & Farming	2	13	12	**27**
Not in work/school*	24	7	34	**65**
Unknown*	13	12	-	**25**
Total	**95**	**90**	**236**	**421**

*Special note should be made that within the category of 'Not in school/work', children below school age are included. Participants were not always able to describe the activities of all household members, hence those described as 'Unknown'.

 The KIs' answers were generally supported by the household interview data, with the exception that no-one in Kunshu mentioned charcoal burning and in Makari equal number of farmers, petty traders and stone quarriers were recorded in the sample. The high incidence of farming suggests that the households sampled are among the poorest in Sierra Leone according to the AFP, which reported a poverty head count of 60.8% of agricultural households compared to 30.7% in households with other primary occupations in 2011 (Government, 2013). This tendency has not changed significantly since 2003/4, when it was reported that the incidence, intensity and severity of poverty was higher in farmer-headed households than any other occupation (Government, 2005).

From the data it seems that petty trading is much less common than KIs were reporting, however, most HHs who reported farming as their occupation also mentioned selling surplus crops later in the interview. This suggests that the importance of petty trade in supporting livelihoods is probably underrepresented in these figures, and that farming and petty trade are strongly linked in people's lives. Farming and stone quarrying were described negatively as hard work, while aspiring to run a business was common in women and mechanised farming or owning livestock was desired by farmers of both genders.

Figure 4: Stone quarrying in 3 generations of Makari residents. The process of breaking up the stones into marketable sizes was physical and dangerous, as stone chips flew every time the stone was struck, and feet were used to stabilise the stone, but no protective equipment was worn.

4.2 Factors Contributing to Household Poverty: According to key informants

4.2.1 Lack of education

The most common factor contributing to household poverty which was identified by KIs (excluding the headmen/chiefs) was a lack of education or knowledge. This knowledge included formal education and vocational skills. For example, Benjamin, a lecturer at UNIMAK, said that

the reason people were poor is because they poorly manage the resources available to them, such as fish in the rivers or plants which are of little value to locals but could be sold such as lemongrass. When asked why this was, he answered: "they are not utilising the resources well due to lack of knowledge. They don't know how to make these resources useful to them". On the other hand, others focused on formal education. John at MADAM (Mankind's Activities for Development) believed that people were poor because of "illiteracy… it limits people's options because they can't think beyond the immediate future" and because when people are illiterate, "they can't even think of formal employment". This is supported by the AFP (Government, 2013), which reported that 56% of adults had no formal educational background, while households with lower levels of education had a higher incidence of poverty. John went on to mention the lack of schools in isolated rural communities, which, considering these figures, would go some ways to explaining the high incidence of poverty in rural areas. In addition, Alhaji at TIPDO (*Tinap* [Krio for 'stand up'] for Peace and Development Organization) described the tendency for female children to be withdrawn from school for marriage and the fact that "there is a preference for male child education". Jennifer at SSLDF (Swiss Sierra Leone Development Foundation) hopes that the "new government will push youth skills", particularly to place a higher value on certain trades such as electricians and plumbers and to diversify the technical training available to avoid flooding the job market with one type of skilled worker. These results show that a lack of skills and knowledge in the rural population is due to several reasons, from availability of educational opportunities in the form of schools and vocational training centres, to values relating to gender. The lack of knowledge in the area makes it difficult for local people to capitalise on resources and opportunities which could raise household incomes.

4.2.2 Attitudes towards women and money

The culture or traditions of Sierra Leonean society were also cited as reasons for poverty in the region. The issues discussed under these terms could be split into two categories: attitudes towards women, and attitudes towards money.

Ibrahim at MEWODA (Menna Women's Development Associates) said, "there is a culture of keeping women behind" and Alhaji explained that there are "traditional practices and a belief system that deters development (of women)". The issues they described included Female Genital Mutilation, "forceful child marriage", "male chauvinism", domestic violence, a lack of say for women in decisions about income, the household and livelihood practices (particularly farming) and poor treatment of widows - that widows are still unlikely to inherit land and are forced to remarry the deceased husband's brother.

The second aspect of culture which was described as "holding Sierra Leoneans back" by KIs was their attitude towards money. Jennifer at SSLDF explained that "it is very difficult for Sierra Leoneans to save money" because "as soon as a person starts earning, their family expects something every month no matter what size the salary". She also described how "people are expected to give money if a relative dies, which is obviously very hard to plan for" and that

"men can have a wife and five girlfriends and the men dish out money to all of these women… if the money that was put into girlfriends was invested well, into their own business, for example, this economy would not be where it is". Ibrahim (MEWODA) agreed that the spending habits of individuals contributes to poverty. Speaking of inheritance money, he said: "with the money they will do nothing wise. They will just spend it all until nothing is left".

4.3 Factors Contributing to Household Poverty: According to household heads

4.3.1 Cost of Education

Education is clearly of high importance in all three villages as it was overwhelmingly reported that people's biggest hope or dream was for their children to be educated. One of the most common ways people thought their lives could be improved was through investing in education. This attitude can be seen clearly in this statement by a mother in Kunshu village: "if you are not educated today, you are nothing". However, this makes it doubly important that the cost of schooling is one of the biggest challenges facing households. When describing this challenge, a farmer in Pate Banna said: "the children have to stay at home until I can send them to school, it means that they do not start school on time because I have no money in September". September is in the rainy season, when farmers are planting and tending to crops. People's incomes fluctuate depending on the harvest and people reported that they struggle financially in the rainy season. Benjamin (UNIMAK) supported this, expressing that people take out high interest loans to keep them going through the rainy season, which they then must pay back at the harvest, preventing them from saving money again the next year. School fees are due in September, when farmers – most of the rural population (Government, 2013) – are at their poorest, and children cannot go to school until fees are paid in full. It is possible that despite the high number of children reported by HHs to be in school (Table 1), they may not be attending school all year round and there could be long absences if the family are struggling financially.

4.3.2 Food Security

Feeding the family was the other most cited challenge that households faced. A Kunshu businesswoman said: "We try hard to get money but can't save it because we must feed the family. It is hard to get money.", while another Kunshu resident angrily lifted her shirt to reveal her stomach and said: "I am so tired of not eating. I can't fill my stomach with so many children around. I'm always hungry". Most HHs reported eating only one meal per day (Table 2), and reports of hunger were widespread: "if there is no good harvest we go without food" [farmer, Pate Banna], "it is always one meal because we are managing.

Others go without." [farmer, Kunshu].

| **Table 2:** Number of meals eaten by each household per day in each village.

Number of meals per day	Makari	Pate Banna	Kunshu	All Villages
1 sometimes 0	2	-	-	2
1	6	2	26	34
1 sometimes 2	1	2	3	6
2	1	2	1	4
2 sometimes 1	-	4	-	4

4.4 Factors Contributing to Household Poverty: Comparing Perspectives

According to the KIs, the main factors contributing to household poverty are lack of education and attitudes towards women and money. On the other hand, in the household interviews, participants in all three villages consistently reported that the biggest challenges they faced were paying for their children's school fees and feeding their families. This shows that the shared priority of both development agencies and the rural poor is education, reflecting the fourth priority of the AFC (Government, 2008). The focus on education leading to poverty reduction is not new, indeed Buarque, Spolar, and Zhang, (2006) described education as "both an essential service, the lack of which characterizes poverty, and a key station on the way out of poverty", however caution should be advised in the amount of emphasis placed on the ability of formal education alone to raise poverty levels in this context. This is because there are high levels of unemployment and under-employment in Sierra Leone (Government, 2013), so the expectation that education will lead to employment and, in turn, alleviate poverty is not necessarily well-founded. This is especially important considering the proportion of resources which households spend on education, the expectation that there will be a significant return on this investment (to "relieve their situation"), could be inviting disillusionment unless there are increased avenues of employment down which young people with varying skills and expertise can be directed.

There was a disconnect between KIs and HHs on the challenges of gender and food security. There was no clear indication that society's attitudes towards women was a pressing issue for the people interviewed in the communities we visited. In fact, some landowners were women, despite KIs' assurances that this was rare. It should be noted that my translators were always male, and so the female heads of household who spoke to me may not have mentioned some of the issues they face in front of the translator. There was also no question in the household survey which directly addressed gender issues as it was designed to find out the main challenges for the whole household as opposed to certain individuals within it. Furthermore, KIs failed to recognise food security as a problem contributing to household poverty even though

households' incomes were directed overwhelmingly at "schooling and feeding". This suggests that the issue of food security is not being sufficiently prioritised in accordance with the poor's needs. On the other hand, many of the organisations I spoke to dealt in some way with livelihood support, aimed at increasing harvests, generating income or supporting families through the rainy season with loans, when food is scarcer, and incomes reduced (see section 4.5). It could be argued that these activities help to increase food security, directly through increasing yields, or indirectly by increasing the money available for families to spend on food.

KIs identified attitudes towards money as a contributor to household poverty. This became very clear in the household interviews when individuals were asked about their income. In all three villages, participants struggled with this question or refused to answer because it was "impossible to say" [Makari resident] how much they earned in a year, season, month, week or day. When this was investigated further it was found that they could not answer because incomes varied so greatly from day to day or between rainy season and dry season. In Kunshu, it was possible to spend more time exploring with individuals more than in the other villages due to the freedom we were given by the chief to interview people unescorted (see section 3.5). With this extra time, it was possible to discuss how much the people earned on a 'good day' compared to a 'bad day'. The figures given to me ranged from 'nothing' to Le15000 (approximately 1.70 USD [as of 18/08/18]) on a bad day and Le2000 (approximately 0.23 USD) to Le150000 (approximately 17.05 USD). These figures cannot be used as a way of estimating an average income for the participants because the frequency of good days vs bad days is unknown, however they do show that the people live without any certainty of when and how much they might earn. The only people who were salaried, and therefore able to provide a figure for their incomes per month or per year were teachers.

Furthermore, in Temne, the most common language in Bombali district, the closest direct translation to 'income' is the word for 'save'. Though the question was further clarified for everyone, it was interesting that everyone (except the teachers) answered that they were unable to save any money, and many described the difficulties of not having enough money. Despite KIs tending to emphasise the spending habits of the poor as a major issue, the greatest challenge to accumulating capital seems to be the unpredictability of finances. MEWODA even collect information on how participants spend money to ensure that income generated from being part of their schemes is used for purposes they see as important. The focus of development organisations should perhaps be diverted more into increasing the stability of incomes rather than how finances are used. The instability of income is largely due to the challenges and seasonality of subsistence farming. The diversification of livelihoods into non-agricultural income generating sources close to family farms could be a viable option for increasing incomes, as in the case of Taiwan (Chinn, 1979). Non-farm income generating activities which could be relied upon during the rainy season or in the case of failed harvests are likely to be welcomed, as it was discovered that many householders aspire to own businesses or livestock (section 4.1).

4.5 Current Poverty Alleviation Strategies

The organisations which were interviewed were not the only local development actors, however, their focuses were diverse and offer a good idea of the spread of development activities being implemented.

MEWODA is an organisation focusing on supporting the livelihoods of rural women, MADAM also aims to support rural livelihoods but also has a branch of the organisation which acts as a type of tertiary college, teaching vocational skills to vulnerable young people. CHAMPS (Child Health and Mortality Prevention Surveillance) is an international research programme aiming at improving child health and preventing child mortality in several low-income countries, including a Sierra Leonean pilot project in Bombali district and SNAP (Sustainable Nutrition and Agricultural Promotion) was a 5-year programme which ended in 2016 aimed at reducing malnutrition and promoting agricultural practices to increase the resilience of the rural poor. The SSLDF run a hospital and a school in Makeni, and a school sponsorship programme in Bombali district and Freetown. Finally, TIPDO is an organisation supporting community driven development through advocacy campaigns and livelihood support in the rural communities of Bombali district.

The most common development activities that the organisations and initiatives were implementing focused on improving health, with 5 out of 6 organisations mentioning some health-related activities. This is not surprising in the wake of the Ebola epidemic, with promoting resilience in the health sector becoming a national priority and the efficacy of delivering health services at the local level has been identified as an area for significant improvement (Government, 2015). Health-related activities described included promoting the use of health centres and healthcare professionals over traditional healers, promoting hand washing, providing nutritional guidance for pregnant women, training health professionals and in the SSLDF hospital, encouraging transparent information sharing with patients.

The second most common activity that organisations were engaging in was livelihood support. This included vocational training, for example, MADAM's entrepreneurship, agricultural, and budgeting training in deprived communities and supporting farming and small income generating activities, and MEWODA's female farming cooperatives and seed loans. The third type of intervention which the organisations were engaging in was education. Educational activities ranged from a school for Ebola-affected children and a school sponsorship programmes run by SSLDF; MADAM's vocational training centre for marginalised young people offering programmes covering hospitality and catering, automechanic, electrical and metal-work skills; and work in the communities advocating for women's rights, using health facilities and sending children to school, (TIPDO, CHAMPS).

Figure 5: MADAM's training and skills centre signs describing the services offered to students.

Benjamin (UNIMAK) described additional development projects that he had seen implemented. These included WASH programmes, grain storage facilities for farmers, providing farm tools and seeds, providing schools with materials, building schools and school sponsorships. He noted that he had seen a great number of short-term, external initiatives implemented in his lifetime. He went on to say "you would be hard pressed to find a village that has not been on the receiving end of one form of aid or another. I think every community has had help, even before Ebola". However, every single household head in Makari reported that there were no projects being implemented in their village, that there had been no help from anyone outside the village in many years. This could be because it is a chiefdom headquarters and therefore perceived as a wealthier community, or because the development of the past (which was evident by the slightly dilapidated grain stores and concrete 'dry-floors' as well as the people's surprisingly good knowledge of local and international development actors) was deemed to be 'enough' by the development actors in question. This knowledge of local development was evident in conversations: "can you ask World Hope to come back?" [local businesswoman], "MEWODA only work in certain villages, they used to come here but they haven't been for many years" [chief]. Either way, the people in Makari seemed to feel abandoned by external actors, and many people asked if we had contacts who could bring them help again. This disconnect between the perception of KIs that all villages are being provided with assistance from development agencies and the experiences of the people in Makari, who claim not to have received any such help in the last 10-15 years is important as it shows that there is an uneven distribution of aid at the local level. In Kunshu and Pate Banna, for example, several organisations were currently working in the communities, with several more having been present in recent years (particularly in Pate Banna, which was badly hit by the Ebola crisis). The experience of Makari residents of a) being overlooked by development organisations and b) their attitude that poverty alleviation can only come through aid, are indicative of the main themes of aid dependency and the ineffectiveness of projects which are discussed in more detail in sections 4.6.1 and 4.6.2.

4.6 Strengths and Weaknesses of Current Interventions

Firstly, the strengths of development are most obviously seen in the attitudes of people towards education and healthcare. As previously discussed in section 4.3.1, household interviews clearly demonstrated that the people place a high value on formal education and sending their children to school. There was a high proportion of children in school, and one repeated reason why people wanted their children educated was because they saw education as a gateway out of poverty:

"we send them to school so they can relieve our suffering" [Makari resident]

"I want them to be educated so that they can be people of substance in society and throughout Sierra Leone. Even to be president!" [Kunshu resident]

"If my children go to school and become leaders in society then I can be well presented in society and not have to wear these dirty clothes anymore" [Kunshu resident] These statements show the hopes that the people have in educating their children, demonstrating that the campaigns that organisations such as MEWODA and TIPDO are conducting to encourage families to prioritise their children's education are working. In fact, Ibrahim at MEWODA described this as one of their biggest successes: "most of them are understanding the importance of education and are sending their children to school". Jennifer reported a similar increase in school attendance in recent years: "I pass a bridge on my way to work … and it used to make me so sad because there were all these children working in the swamp, but now it makes me feel so happy, … because there are no children working there anymore - they're all in school instead". The levels of school attendance confirm the success of the post-Ebola strategy objective of restoring basic education services and encouraging re-enrolment across the country, even though the government have now desisted in paying school fees in government and government-assisted schools (Government, 2015). Everyone in Pate Banna and Kunshu reported that they attend the community health centres or the hospital when they needed healthcare. In Makari, all participants said they attended the community health centre (pictured in figure 6), however some reported that if they could afford the drugs they would go to "peddlers", some of whom are traditional healers. The use of traditional medicine was clear in Makari and Pate Banna, where cuts were covered in herbal pastes, which are the most common form of traditional medicine in Africa (WHO website). In Makari, people reported that the health centre sometimes referred them to traditional healers, but it is unclear whether

these traditional practitioners are officially endorsed or whether referrals are guided by traditional beliefs with the possibility of harming the patient. The use of regulated traditional healers to deliver health services, particularly in inaccessible local contexts, is part of the World Health Organisation's (WHO) strategy for traditional medicine (2013), and therefore the use of 'peddlers' and traditional medicine may not signify a lack of knowledge, though more study into this specific example would be needed to determine this. Nevertheless, the people were generally very forthcoming about being able to trust the health system in all villages: "the facility [health centre] is good because it treats people and then they get better. They can refer you if your illness is serious and call for help in an emergency" [mother, Kunshu], "the health centre is good, I delivered all my children there and they made me safe" [farmer, Kunshu]. Most people said that the cost of treatment depends on the illness but is fair, with many positively describing the free healthcare programme for mothers and children under 5.

Figure 6: The inside of a Peripheral Health Unit (PHU or health centre) run by the community in Makari. Despite cramped conditions and basic equipment, residents were glad to have access to basic healthcare close by. This room was mostly used for labouring women.

Since the intensive efforts during the Ebola epidemic, knowledge of basic hygiene practices such as hand washing has increased, though according to Aisha (CHAMPS), Ebola also created a lot of fear. For example, it is still very difficult for people to trust the emergency services phone

number '117', because it was used to report suspected Ebola cases. The widespread fear of hospitals and medical professionals which was caused by the epidemic (reported by Aisha and through informal conversations with local people) was not addressed in the national response strategy (Government, 2015), as can be seen from figure 7. Despite healthcare successes, there are certain services which are still shrouded by Ebola, and this may influence utilisation of healthcare which has not been recognised at the national level.
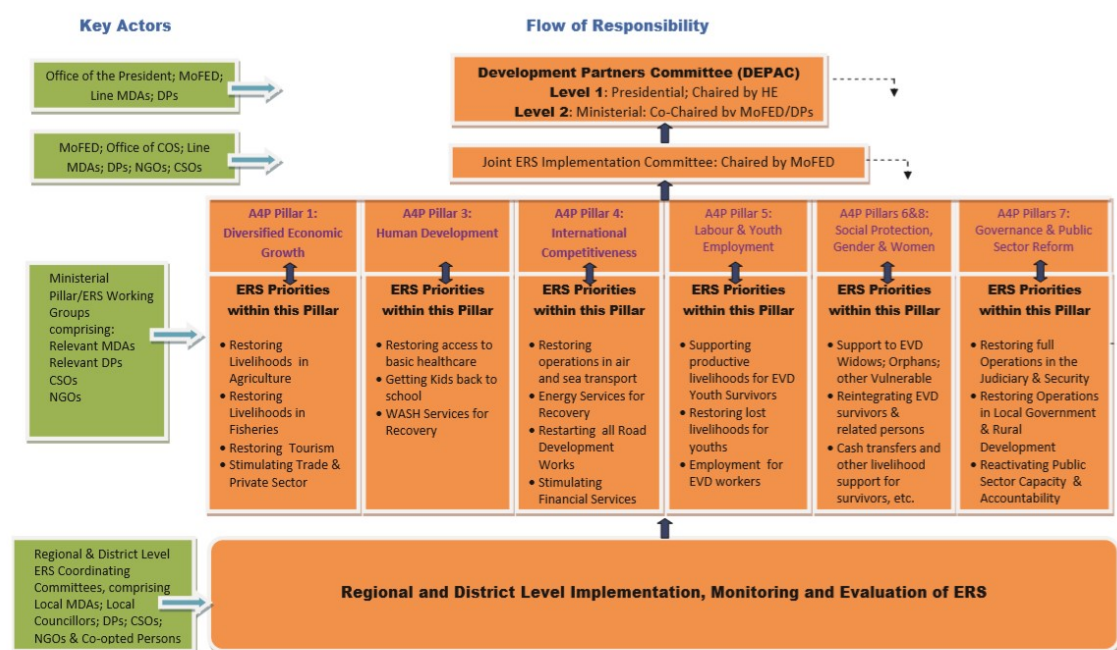

Figure 7: The national strategy for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the Ebola Response Strategy. Restoring the faith of the population in the health service through education programmes such as those run by CHAMPS and MEWODA is clearly absent. Taken from (Government, 2015). Finally, initiatives aimed at supporting livelihoods are improving the lives of some individuals, helping them to open small businesses, improve their food security and afford school fees. MEWODA was cited to have helped several women by providing seeds on loan, "they gave my daughter ground nuts, and I am pleased because I can see that when we harvest they will turn a profit even after we give the loan back" [farmer, Pate Banna]. This directly addresses many of the challenges, hopes and aspirations which people cited in the household interviews, from improving farming activities and engaging in business to being able to feed and educate their families. Addressing the priorities of the people is important as it increases ownership over their own development, this is evident in the case of participatory

rural appraisals (PRA), where the poor have more say in their development, ownership of projects increases (Chambers, 1994).

Extreme poverty was evident in every community visited, and several locals remarked, "you can see the poverty in their faces, it is obvious, you don't have to ask them about their lives to know that they have suffered". As discussed already, most people are living on one meal a day. One household reported that they have nothing to eat at all up to two days a week. Every village had multiple water pumps or wells, however, every village also reported that the water dries up at times during the dry season. Most people reported that they go to the swamp when this happens and drink unsafe water. Finally, housing ranged from dilapidated concrete structures with tin roofs to mud bricks and thatched roofs, most buildings were too small for the number of people living in them. In Kunshu, it was common for multiple households to be living in one small, mud-brick house. One man, standing on the front steps of a crumbling house approximately 6m wide said, "I am desperate, all I want is to have better shelter – we share this house with four other households". Of the development initiatives implemented in Bombali district in his lifetime, UNIMAK's Benjamin said, "(there has been) absolutely no long-lasting change from these projects, I have seen many projects but nothing that has impacted the communities for any extended period of time… the impacts are invisible". Unfortunately, the weaknesses of development projects in the region outweigh the strengths. Despite the amount of development funding poured into Sierra Leone, the impacts on people's lives have been minimal. This is reminiscent of the historical development narrative, where Southern nations, especially sub-Saharan Africa, lag behind the North despite development being on the international agenda for decades (Rist, 2014). KIs pointed towards issues within the development sector itself as reasons for the low impacts. It is to these reasons of aid dependency and ineffectiveness of projects, which emerged as key themes during analysis, that I now turn my attentions.

4.6.1 Dependency

The most obvious shortcoming of development initiatives in Sierra Leone was dependency on aid. In fact, not only was dependency cited as the reason for lack of long-term development impacts, but Daniel (UNIMAK) believes that "dependency itself is a driver of poverty" because people don't know how to do things for themselves anymore. In a country which has been affected by civil war, natural disasters and disease in the last 20 years, foreign aid has become a natural part of life for the people, from government officials to the poorest villagers.

This attitude was verified by John who explained that at MADAM, they provide a bus which picks up students in the rural communities and brings them to the vocational training centres. In return, they require a contribution from students towards the transportation, but "they [the students] expect everything for free because we are an NGO. They believe that organisations must have money, always, because that is their experience, and so they do not want to pay. I have to tell them, petrol costs money!" Jennifer (SSLDF) echoed this:

"the attitude towards overseas aid is dominating the economy and holding the people back. It is seen as a never-ending resource, so people never have to do anything for themselves". John had an idea of how this attitude came about: "even in the rural communities the expectations are high. Other interventions - maybe 10-15 years ago - they would patronise you, saying, 'I love you so much', 'I come to help you', this has created a mindset, rather than thinking they can do something themselves they wait for everything to be provided". This mindset is a consequence of past ignorance according to Chambers (1994), who describes the pre-1990s era of development as being superior and arrogant. He describes how researchers and outsiders in poor communities believed that they had superior knowledge to the poor they were researching. These attitudes, in turn, became selffulfilling: "treated as incapable, poor people behaved as incapable, reflecting the beliefs of the powerful and hiding their capabilities even from themselves" (Chambers, 1994). This recognition of the ways in which power-relations and pre-existing ideas influence and disempower the poor came about in the late 80s and early 90s and yet, this research shows that this problem has not gone away, and that greater action needs to be taken to mitigate the effects of uneven power-relations rooted in colonisation and the Western dominance of development (Rist, 2014), which are continuing to encourage dependency of developing peoples on 'outsiders' and NGOs.

Dependency theory has been around for a long time. Its origin lies in the early 70s with the Latin American Dependistas and was adopted by the Third-Worldists movement which aimed at supporting the liberation of developing nations from the industrialised West (Rist, 2014), particularly as pertaining to protectivist trade relations between developed and developing nations (Grosfoguel, 2000). Despite the popularity of this school of thought, which encouraged economic self-reliance in developing countries, few policies have attempted to implement it, except perhaps the failed Tanzanian Ujamaa experiment (Rist, 2014). When the economic situation of certain countries is conditioned by the development and expansion of another economy, those countries are said to be dependent (Santos, 1970). Dependecy theory largely focuses on developing countries' economic reliance on industrialised countries and recognises that the historical development of industrialised countries is distorted by the development of

these countries (Namkoong, 1999). Even though the debate regarding dependency has quietened in recent years, this research shows that the dependency of Sierra Leone economy upon aid is highly relevant to poverty alleviation at the local level. In this way, these findings support the 'moderates' as termed by Namkoong (1999) in that dependency is not an external factor relevant solely at the international level, but rather part of a system of complex interrelationships at the international level and within each country. It is this internal relationship which these findings are highlighting by showing the consequences of reliance at a national level on individuals at the local level. In contrast to the moderates, however, the findings here relate to social interactions and the capabilities of individuals to access development (Sen, A., 1999). These findings are important as the global economy has changed in recent years, and as a consequence a new relationship between Africa and China is emerging (Amadi, 2012) which is evident in Sierra Leone through the toll roads constructed with Chinese funds (Cham, 2017). This relationship has the potential to introduce a new dependency dynamic to Sierra Leone (and in other parts of Africa) (Amadi, 2012), demonstrating that dependency theory is not obsolete in practice.

One criticism of dependency theory described in Namkoong (1999) is its insistence that underdevelopment is due to external factors rather than domestic, however, here it can be seen that the myriad domestic factors contributing to household poverty have not been ignored but that in order to mobilise communities to own their development and see longlasting change in rural communities in Makeni, Sierra Leone, the historical power relations, or dependency, between aid donors (even if they are local NGOs) and communities must be addressed.

According to Clemens and Moss (1999), no amount of foreign aid would set Africa on a path of economic development like that of China, even if aid does marginally boost the economy, an excessive focus on aid is unhelpful. Benjamin's (UNIMAK) opinion of aid shows his aspirations for self-reliance: "I am against aid. It is a neo-colonial package". Indeed, one of the limitations of PRSP1 was that aid tended to be invested into projects preferred by donors rather than national priorities (Doe, 2010) and shows the lack of control that Sierra Leone has over its own development. However, according to Benjamin this dependency on aid is not entirely a consequence of Sierra Leone's colonial history, rather,

"dependency is intentionally designed by our political elite so that we have to follow them all the time, each government is intentionally depriving the people of knowledge so that they can do deplorable things and we will continue to dance for them".

In my conversations with local people, corruption was spoken about casually with reference to the highest government officials, business owners, and the average person walking down the street. As Benjamin (UNIMAK) put it: "corruption is endemic in this country, it is an everyday part of life… but I am part of the generation of Sierra Leoneans who understands we must move away from this rotten system and I know we will get there… people give me all sorts of evil names, but that is what Sierra Leone society is like if you stand for the truth". Indeed, the indicators that corruption is 'endemic' are everywhere (figure 8). Another UNIMAK lecturer, Daniel, said: "in Sierra Leone you can either be successful, or corrupt. It cannot be both. That goes for NGOs too". Benjamin echoed these sentiments: "If I am owning a local NGO, and am not corrupt, funding will not be given to me". Daniel and Benjamin both described how bribery is the only way to get things done in Sierra Leone, and the development sector is not immune.

| **Figure 8:** Anti-bribery warnings at Lungi International Airport, Freetown (top-left) and in Makeni (top-right). Billboard funded by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) (right).

This alleged corruption within the development sector could therefore be one of the reasons contributing to sub-standard projects which are unable to bring long-lasting development to beneficiaries despite the foreign aid invested in the country (figure 1). In Benjamin's opinion, dependency on foreign aid is a tool which corrupt leaders are using to their advantage but to the detriment of the people: "[foreign aid] is not doing well at any angle, yet our political elite want it because they are the ones who benefit – the aid will not trickle down to the masses, it ends up in their bank accounts". His statement suggests that trickle-down development,

already widely critiqued in terms of passing on economic growth at the national level to the poor (Akinci, 2017), is ineffective in Sierra Leone due to the siphoning of funds through corruption. Instead, according to these findings, it can be said that the dependency of the state trickles-down to the local level and influences the ability of development initiatives to alleviate poverty in the long-term.

The only way to move away from this dependency and encourage long-term development at the village level according to Benjamin (UNIMAK), is education: "not only an education, but an education which is fit for purpose. Give them an education which will change their mindset, realise their potential and be problem-solvers for themselves. What my society needs is practical, problem-solving thinkers who can help society". Jennifer (SSLDF) seemed to agree, "for this country to end poverty, I would focus on education. They need a *quality* [interviewee's emphasis] education where they aren't just sitting and listening, they need encouragement to be interactive and to be active learners". As can be seen, education is once again pointed to as the answer, though Benjamin and Jennifer allude to the need for an adjustment to the education system which encourages the next generation to move away from dependency upon others to mitigate the challenges of the poor themselves.

4.6.2 Ineffectiveness of projects

The ineffectiveness of projects to deliver long-lasting change also emerged as a reason for persistent poverty and a weakness of current development initiatives. This ineffectiveness was found to be due to a lack of consultation leading to poorly planned, short-term projects, and a lack of coordination between the hundreds of actors which deliver these projects independently.

Alhaji (TIPDO), described a project by an external NGO which had come to build water wells in many of the communities "but the wells stand there now, and no-one uses them. Some of the villagers think that there is witchcraft in the water because the water doesn't flow, others think it is too easy to poison the water" the problem seemed to be that organisations were "imposing projects on a community without consulting the community … The moment you develop a project in your office, excluding the community, you are setting that project up to fail … the reception [from the community] will be hostile". Daniel (UNIMAK) spoke of a similar project providing water wells in other villages where they had placed the wells in front of the chief's house. The children used the well, but the adults preferred to go to the river for their water, so they could discuss village news out of earshot of the most influential members of the community. These accounts show that several organisations are offering the same assistance, and all are proving ineffective because they are making the same mistakes. If agencies coordinated efforts, learned from each other and took the time to conduct participatory consultation with the communities, these wells could have had a real impact on people's lives. As Chambers points out (2014), paternalist relationships, where a stronger actor exerts their power to inflict change upon the weaker (such as between development agency and dependent

beneficiary which we have discussed above), can be offset by a respect for the desires of the poor, which can be achieved to a degree through participatory development.

Benjamin (UNIMAK) gave yet another story: "these communities don't even have zinc roofs, they live in thatched houses and sitting opposite is a well-constructed toilet building, nicely decorated with paints and bright colours, but the community don't use it, they see this as stranger development. They would prefer to go to the bush and use this open defecation because they have not been consulted, they don't understand it … that is why people need to design their own development". John at MADAM repeated this sentiment: "there are lots of programmes and hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on developing projects for livelihood support, education and so on, and then the people sit back because it was brought here, designed in offices which think for the people and prove difficult for the people to own it [the project]. Let them tell you how they think they can change their problems, let them think of their solutions". Evidently, the downfall of many projects is a lack of consultation an assumption of the priorities within the community. This is likely because considerable time and effort must be made for the priorities of the poor to be heard (Chambers, R., 2014). Aisha (CHAMPS) reinforced this: "the people should be part of the decision making, it doesn't always have to be bottom-up, but the purely top-down approach doesn't work because at the end of the day, if it's for them, they have to buy in". The lack of consultation could also be a result of corruption according to Benjamin, who described external donors thus: "they come and take flashy pictures [of the community in poverty] and after the donor money comes in, the people the money was meant for do not benefit … instead, the development workers end up with nice cars or building mansions for themselves". The implication here is that if the development actors are motivated by desires to benefit from aid themselves rather than alleviating poverty, then there is no wonder why they do not prioritise engaging with communities.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this final chapter, key findings will be discussed with reference to the research aim and questions identified in section 3.1.

What factors contribute to household poverty in Makeni?

The multidimensional nature of rural poverty in Sierra Leone was investigated in this study, with specific focus on livelihoods and income; access to health, education and clean water; and food security. It was discovered that incomes were unstable and unpredictable, changing between seasons and making capital accumulation difficult. This temporal change in income was linked by participants to the prevalence of subsistence farming as the main occupation of the adults in the household. Access to basic health and education was good, and attitudes towards the health system were mostly positive. All sites had access to potable water, however this was not available at all sites at the height of the dry season. Most households had access to one meal per day, though several participants reported hunger as a daily reality, and many noted that the availability of food is not guaranteed, particularly during the rainy season when

crops are planted. The main challenges facing households according to KIs was illiteracy, but villagers cited the cost of education as a major challenge to the household.

What poverty alleviation strategies are presently being implemented locally?

Poverty alleviation strategies in the Makeni area are addressing all the main indicators of multidimensional poverty mentioned above. Specifically, livelihood support (and by extension, increasing food security), financial support, formal and vocational education, and increasing utilisation of health services. Especial focus was given to supporting agricultural activities through cooperatives and the provision of tools, seeds and training, reflecting the importance of farming in the region.

How do the poor perceive local development projects and what are their strengths and weaknesses?

The strengths of these efforts are thus: Firstly, participants' attitudes towards health and education services are overwhelmingly positive, with education being valued more than almost anything else in all sites. Secondly, livelihood support is largely targeted at the priorities of the people: farming and small business. This support is valuable because it is diversifying livelihoods with the aim of increasing the stability of income throughout the year and increasing food security, both of which are major challenges to the rural poor.

The overwhelming weakness of poverty alleviation projects in the region is the lack of longterm development. The reason for this was twofold. Sierra Leone's dependency upon foreign aid at the national level has, over time, trickled down and infected the mindsets of the people at the local level. This has created a situation where people have been force-fed aid for so long that they do not know how to improve their lives without it. This was particularly obvious in Makari, where there were no projects currently being implemented, but people were desperate for development aid. The second reason for the "invisible" impacts of poverty alleviation efforts was the ineffectiveness of projects. This ineffectiveness resulted from a lack of coordination between actors and a lack of consultation with the community. The lack of coordination was clearly shown by the uneven distribution of aid between sites.

In conclusion, by recording the perspectives of both local development practitioners through KI interviews and contrasting this with the experiences, attitudes and aspirations of local people collected through semi-structured interviews with HHs, I have discovered that persistent poverty in the local context of Makeni despite efforts to alleviate it, can be attributed in part to the development sector itself. The dependency and ineffective implementation strategies are restricting the ability of the poor to take charge of their own development and perpetuating historical power imbalances due to a lack of engagement with the community. Furthermore, this study found that the way to move away from this dependency according to local experts – providing a quality education – would also align with the hopes of householders, who want nothing more than for their children to be educated and given the opportunity to move out of poverty. It is hoped that by recognising the challenges facing rural communities and the barriers

to poverty alleviation at the local level, decision makers can place a higher priority on the issues most important to the poor and bear in mind the need to place power over development back into the hands of the community to encourage self-reliance and long-lasting change.

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