

## **JOURNAL OF SIERRA LEONE STUDIES – VOLUME 1 –Edition 2**

### **Editorial Panel**

Abdul Bangura, Howard University, John Birchall. Ade Daramy, David Francis, University of Bradford, Lansana Gberie, Dave Harris, School of Oriental and African Studies University of London, Philip Misevich, St John's University, New York, John Trotman

### **Introduction**

In the second edition we have concentrated on the education system of Sierra Leone and in particular the institutions of higher education that formed such an essential part of the lives of many young Sierra Leoneans in the nineteenth and early twentieth century's.

The non-peer reviewed section is also included with a contribution from Simone Datzberger who is currently studying for her PhD at The London School of Economics and Political Studies.

### **Edition 3**

This is scheduled for publication on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013. We would like to focus on elections and especially those that took place in the early years of independence. Scholars working on the political development of Sierra Leone or related topics are encouraged to send manuscripts to me ([Birchall.john68@gmail.com](mailto:John.Birchall@gmail.com)) for consideration by 31<sup>st</sup> October 2012.

John Birchall

Editor

### **In this edition**

Rebuilding the Athens of West Africa: Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Sierra Leone - Jonas Abioseh Sylvanus Redwood-Sawyer (PhD), Associate Professor (Electrical and Electronic Engineering), University of Sierra Leone

S. B. Thomas Agricultural Academy, also known as Mabang College – Preserving a Sierra Leone Historic Monument - Melbourne Garber

Lumpen Youth, Civil War, and Conflict Resolution, Civil Society in Sierra Leone Before and During the War - Simone Datzberger, London School of Economics and Political Science.

### **Introduction**

For those of us who know Fourah Bay College this article by its current Vice Chancellor will contain much that is familiar. To others it will open a door on an institution that is both unique and treasured by all who have studied and worked there.

**Rebuilding the Athens of West Africa: Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in Sierra Leone**

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## **Introduction**

*'It was about the year 1815 that an institution under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society, was founded in Sierra Leone for the purpose of educating negro children who were from time to time rescued by the capture of slave ships. For this purpose a school house built on the national plan, and a chapel, was erected in a healthy position on Leicester Mountain, almost three miles from Freetown, where the Society had received a considerable grant of land.'* *'Fourah Bay College, History and Development'*

These were the opening sentences in an article published by the Durham University Journal of 16<sup>th</sup> December 1876 entitled *'The Fourah Bay College, Sierra Leone.'* The article stated that this act was accredited to the Rev Leopold Butscher who was described as one of the earliest missionaries of the CMS, *'a man of piety and indefatigable energy.'*

The pattern of education was a carbon copy of that practised in British Schools albeit with the exception *that some useful manual labour* was to constitute a half of each day. An interesting further narrative explained as follows:

*'Conducted in this manner, the Christian Institution as it was named became a great success; so much so that in 1816 the number who enjoyed its benefits had reached 200. The Institution was the only one of its kind in Africa. In the opinion of some it was a very doubtful speculation; but the success which it attained at such an early date was remarkable and a sufficient answer to those who had hesitated as to the advisability of attempting to educate an African.'*

After the death of Rev Butscher, the Institution experienced difficult times and in 1827 there was a significant restructuring leading to some of the boys being

transferred to schools in the nearby towns of the colony. This it is stated was therefore the beginning of the Fourah Bay College as an institution. The first Principal of the college Rev. C L F Haensel, was attributed to have relocated the college to Fourah Bay after acquiring land at Turners Peninsular named after Governor Turner the previous owner of the land. A landmark event also captured by the journal article was that of the affiliation of Fourah Bay College to the University of Durham on 16<sup>th</sup> May 1876 during the principal ship of Rev M Sunter, where it was established, that instruction will be exactly as was done in Durham to the extent that the article states :

*'The instruction will now be in exact conformity with that pursued at Durham, and the negroes of Western Africa will no longer be unable to avail themselves of a sound university education.'*

The article ended with the following:

*'And it will be no little credit to the University of Durham for history to have to record that she was the first to throw open to Africa the full privileges of a liberal education.'*

These developments were not entirely welcomed though by all and some interesting comments were made in the *London Times* which has been reported as being very opposed to the work of the CMS in Africa. It trivialised this landmark event by stating that it would not be much longer before the University of Durham was affiliated to the Zoo.

It is important to note that the era during which these developments occurred was also the official end of the slave trade and the misconception of the capacity and mental development of the African was still a subject of derision and denial in some quarters. The scholarship at Fourah Bay College was therefore very significant and provided a strong evidence of the potential of the African and rebuffed in factual terms some of the myths that had been forwarded to justify the inhumane slave trade, based on a lesser mental potential of the Black man.

The tenure of the African American Edward Jones (1840-1858) was very eventful and set the pace for significant reflection of the type of education provided by the CMS. He had very strong support from the Governor at the time Governor Fergusson who was reported to have wept when turning the sod for the new building for FBC while reminiscing that the same site had been the centre for slave trade some forty years before. It is also recorded that many of the rafters of the building were from the masts of condemned slave ships.

In his public lecture delivered at the 175<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of Fourah Bay College, in 2002, Emeritus Prof Eldred Jones, quoted from *The Church Missionary Intelligensia and Record* of 1876 as follows:

*'In the early years of the Society's effort for the good of Africa, it was necessary to muster all possible arguments to prove that the Negro was capable of being educated. Few believed that he had any real intellectual capacity, and there were some who doubted whether he could even be taught to read. At the present day, happily, there is no dispute upon the subject. A succession of African clergymen, merchants, and professional men – not a few of them the direct result of the Society's educational work at Sierra Leone- have arisen to bear living testimony in their own persons to the mental powers of the civilised and educated negro. We trust that Fourah Bay College with its now wider aims, may*

*play a yet nobler part to the development of Africa and that not only by sending forth Christian men with cultivated and well-balanced minds in the various fields of secular occupation, but as in years past, by providing an unfailing supply of godly and zealous ministers of the Gospel.’* (The Jubilee and Centenary Volume of Fourah Bay College, Freetown, Sierra Leone, ed. T J Thompson, Freetown. The Elsiemay Printing Works, 1930: 34)

In his book, Daniel Paracka Jr. segments the development of Fourah Bay College and its role as an institution of higher learning into three parts to coincide with historical periods, i.e. the Missionary education period 1787 – 1875; the Colonial Education period, 1876 – 1937 and the Development period: 1938 – 2001. The distinction of alumni and the impressive scholarship of its staff were revered and created a magnetic effect for attracting students and researchers for learning and scholarly work from Africa and beyond. During its support by the CMS, these attributes, coupled with the range of courses offered at FBC such as Hebrew, Latin, Greek, Arabic, History, Geography, Comparative Philology, Moral of Philosophy, Political economy, Logic, Mathematics, some branches of natural sciences, French and German endeared it to the accolade ‘The Athens of West Africa,’ as its activities mirrored to a large extent the character of the acropolis Athens and its central role in European scholarship and debate.

It is informative to list albeit with some degree of reverence, some of the names of scholars that helped to shape the history of academic excellence and leadership in the affairs of West Africa:

Student	Registration Number	Year of admission
Samuel Adjai Crowther	1	1827
George Crowley Nicol	18	1838
James Africanus Horton	118	1853
James Holy Johnson	125	1854
Edward Wilmot Blyden III	836	1945
T J Thompson	248	1889
J E Casely Hayford	205	1882
Israel Ransome-Kuti	470	1913
Lamina Sankoh (nee E N Jones)	491	1915
Milton Margai	491	1915

Henry Lightfoot-Boston	508	1917
Ms Lati Hyde-Forster	513	1918
Kenneth Onwuka Dike	731	1939
Robert Kweku Atta Gardiner	715	1937
Harry Sawyerr	632	1929
Eldred Dirosimi Jones	788	1944
Arthur Porter	760	1941
Cyril Foray	1307	1951
Vidal E Godwin	2021	1957
Akintola Wyse	3990	1965

Readers close to Sierra Leone and indeed African scholars will recognize many of the names listed. Some of these alumni became prolific writers and scholars, others returned to other regions in Africa especially Nigeria, The Gambia and Ghana (formerly the Gold Coast), to become leaders in their various professions especially in the field of education, religion, medicine and the civil service.

Paracka also listed a number of notable European staff who made significant contributions to scholarship at FBC, These include Leopold Butscher, Charles Haensel, Charles Reichardt, Sigismond Koelle, Frederick Schon (these three being distinguished linguists), John Hargreaves, Paul Hair and David Dalby.

The CMS regarded mastery of the African languages as central and instrumental to its evangelisation and very soon Fourah Bay College became an international hub for research in linguistics. Many scholarly publications were produced during the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and one of the most enduring was the Polyglotta Africana by the Reverend Sigismond Koelle published in 1854. This is a scholarly compilation of vocabularies of 120 African languages spoken in Freetown at the time and written between 1850 and 1852.

I was privileged to access a reference copy at the FBC Library, which was the 16<sup>th</sup> copy out of 200 reprints that were issued by the Federal Republic of Germany on behalf of the Sierra Leone Review at FBC in 1963. The historical introduction by Paul Hair at the time a Senior Lecturer in African History at the University of Khartoum and former Lecturer in History at FBC is quite interesting and was quoted by the Editor of the Sierra Language Review, David Dalby as the most detailed study then

published on the subject of Koelle and the Polyglotta Africana. This work remains a credit to FBC and Sierra Leone which was the home of the material for its production.

Freetown served as an attractive centre for the study of African languages as it had a rich diversity of over a hundred ethnic groups having constituted the home of liberated Africans during the abolition of the slave trade. The Bible was translated into many of these languages thereby promoting their diversity, richness and complexity. Koelle succeeded missionary scholars and linguists such as J F Schon, John Raban and Gustavus Nylander as well as the first African tutor who spoke Yoruba as his mother tongue, Samuel Adjai Crowther who later became the first Bishop of the Niger. The works of Schon and Crowther laid the foundation for the study of the three major languages of modern Nigeria, Yuroba, Ibo and Hausa. The literature records that during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, scholars from Freetown produced over 60 books in and on eight African languages with more than half of them written by students of FBC. Other literary works emerged such as Crowther's *Journal of an Expedition of the Niger and Tshadda Rivers* in 1855 and James Horton's *West African Countries and Peoples, British and Native*, the first edition published in 1868. It is of interest to note that James Horton who later became studied medicine at Edinburgh University was also a strong advocate of self determination of Africans as well as the establishment of a medical school for West Africa and the establishment of a West African University.

It is significant to note Horton's vision for the proposed university and how this vision largely resonates with the current curricula of the University of Sierra Leone.

The history of Fourah Bay College had much turbulence especially during the period when its academics agitated for a more liberal curriculum that will include the sciences and other disciplines with less emphasis on theology. However in spite of these challenges it gained the status of a university college in 1960 by a Royal Charter and became known as Fourah Bay College, University College of Sierra Leone. This status was reduced when in 1967 it was merged with Njala University College to form a federal University of Sierra Leone. By the University Act of 1972 it became a unitary institution which later included the College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences (1980) and the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) in 1988. By an Act of Parliament Sierra Leone allowing the establishment of public and private universities other than the University of Sierra Leone, there are now two public universities – the University of Sierra Leone and the Njala University as well as one private university in the north of the country, the University of Makeni (UNIMAK), owned by the Roman Catholic mission. There are also three polytechnics (The Milton Margai College of Education and Technology – MMCET, the Eastern Polytechnic and the Northern Polytechnic) and a fourth the Freetown Polytechnic, in the pipeline.

The scholarship and publications demonstrated during the 19<sup>th</sup> century at FBC continued during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was championed by researchers such as John Hargreaves' *The Life of Sir Samuel Lewis* (1958), Peter Kup's *History of Sierra Leone* (1961), A T Porter's *Creoldom* (1963), Paul Hair's edition of *The Polyglotta Africana* (1963), Eldred Jones' *Othello's Countrymen* (1965), John Clarke's *Sierra Leone in Maps* (1966) Harry Sawyerr's *The Springs of Mende Belief and Custom* (1968) and *God : Ancestor or Creator?* (1970), Leo Spitzer's *The Creole of Sierra Leone* (1974), Fyle and Jones eds. *The Krio-English Dictionary* (1980) and Cecil Magbailey Fyle's *History of Sierra Leone* (1981) and many others. There were also several journals and bulletins published during that period such as *The Sierra Leone Studies*, *The African Research Bulletin* and *The Sierra Leone Language Journal*.

Research and publication have not been as vibrant in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some blame this drought on the aftermath of the decade long civil war and the slow recovery process that may have hindered such scholarly endeavours. This post conflict trauma cannot be trivialised, especially when one considers that the world witnessed one of the most, if not the most gruesome wars in its history during that period. Others argue that the economic climate and the fight for survival by academics divert attention from such activities even though the idiom *publish or perish* are equally true in Africa as it is in Europe.

#### Secondary school education

The 6-3-3-4 system of education was introduced in 1993 following a number of educational reviews from 1970 to 1976 as well as several reports and commissions in the early 1990s. The system which was adopted in 1993 sought to address issues of needs that include:

- i. Increased access to basic education
- ii. Prioritisation of adult and non-formal education
- iii. Addressing the high rate of illiteracy
- iv. Emphasis on technical and vocational education
- v. Emphasis on special needs education and
- vi. Education of girls and women.

The system requires 6 years of primary school, three years of Junior Secondary School, three years of Senior Secondary School and four years of University education.

The system had been adopted by the West African Examinations Council (WAEC) which is the sub-regional examinations body comprising Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana, The Gambia and Liberia - founded in 1950. This body was established by law to determine the examinations required in the

public interest in the English speaking West African countries, to conduct the examinations required and to award certificates comparable to those of equivalent examining authorities internationally.

While it was heralded as a timely system to address many of the shortcomings of the previous grammar school structure of education its full potential was not realised due to the poor preparedness of the Government in providing adequate resources for its operation especially during the war years when it was introduced. Some of the factors that led to a review of the system were among others:

- i. Low pupils' performance;
- ii. High rate of drop-out from school;
- iii. Alarming increase in school girl pregnancy;
- iv. Non-functional technical and vocational curricula;
- v. Wide spread indiscipline in school;
- vi. Unconducive learning environment
- vii. Unavailability of the pre-requisites for meaningful technical and vocational education and practical for science subjects.

The results of a three year students performance comparison among member states is quite revealing (Table 1), and fully justifies the setting up of the Gbamanja Commission assigned to investigate and identify the reasons for the poor performance of pupils in the Basic Education Certificate Examinations and the West African Secondary School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE) in Sierra Leone.

A White Paper has been produced and several recommendations made with two critical ones being:

- i. Modification of the 6-3-3-4 system of Education to include a compulsory early childhood component and an extension by one year of the duration of the senior secondary school. The system now becomes 6-3-4-4.
- ii. Establishment of a Teaching Service Commission namely the Sierra Leone Teaching Service Commission with a review of the conditions of service of teachers as a priority action.

		Nigeria			Ghana			Sierra Leone			The Gambia		
Subjects		2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
Gen Maths	Number	472674	584024	726398							192	237	210
	%	41.92	46.75	57.27	31.3	25.2	26.1	3.62	4.22	3.47	3.07	3.31	2.64
Chemistry	Number	170670	194284	185949							100	97	115
	%	44.90	45.96	44.44	43.02	27.96	25.12	8.42	9.72	3.55	19.84	15.67	16.50
Physics	Number	218199	180797	200345							179	131	113
	%	58.05	43.19	48.26	49.45	42.82	56.75	10.46	7.14	9.71	42.22	24.81	19.93
Further Maths	Number	12552	9750	13293							67	54	81
	%	43.68	29.52	37.81	51.88	36.16	35.55	2.87	3.75	7.19	46.85	39.42	51.59
English Language	Number	375009	379831	446285							246	478	248
	%	32.48	30.32	35.02	32.3	27.8	49.4	11.20	16.57	7.44	3.89	6.52	3.07
Technical Drawing	Number	3062	3810	4664				N/A	N/A	N/A	13	98	84
	%	31.86	36.44	43.61	38.44	40.18	55.59				43.67	33.33	33.73

Table 1. Three year Comparative performance in A1-C6 grades by country for Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Ghana and The Gambia in the May/June Exams

The cessation of hostility officially declared in 2002, brought with it an education sector with devastated infrastructures and a huge loss of teachers and academics that had fled the war. Rehabilitation of the economy was therefore a huge challenge for the Government as well as persuading professionals to return

With funding of \$42m composed of funds from the International Development Agency of the World Bank (\$20m), the African Development Fund (\$20m) and the Sierra Leone Government (\$2m), the Sababu project was launched.

The Sababu project comprised the construction of schools and rehabilitation of school classrooms, the purchase and distribution of textbooks in association with Macmillan publishers and vocational skills training including teachers training in all the districts and chiefdoms.

The project also provides education for children affected by the war and provides basic education and vocational training skills for people affected by the decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone.

It also provides funds for capacity building for the ministry of education and the 6334 system.

The Sababu Project was born after a survey done by Government on the educational needs of the country after the war. It was discovered that more than 60% of the country's educational infrastructure were destroyed during the war.

Although this project has addressed many of the hitherto unmet demands for schools the question of teachers to man these schools is of concern. It is proposed that in addition to providing attractive conditions of service for teachers through the Teaching Service Commission Government must revive the discussion on national service for youths and expedite its implementation. This one year service by graduates targeting deprived areas would enable government to meet some of the shortages of teachers especially in the rural areas drawn from the youth corps attached to the national service scheme.

There are other bilateral funding commitments in this sector including DFID through for example the Development of Partnership in Higher Education (DePHE) programme, JICA, GTZ, USAID and several international and local non-governmental organisations. It is of interest to mention a charitable initiative launched by Prof Eldred Jones in partnership with some of his colleagues of the '50s, who were at the Corpus Christi College, UK, referred to as Knowledge Aid Sierra Leone with its counterpart in the UK (KAUK), aimed at introducing Information Technology through the use of the internet to selected schools in Freetown and with time the provinces. Funds were raised in the UK and Sierra Leone, through their personal efforts to buy computers and accessories to set up centres in Freetown which now provide such services under the oversight of a Management Board. The project

is also supported by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and technical support provided by the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering at FBC, both being members of the Management Board.

As part of its portfolio of activities aimed at resuscitating the education sector after the war the Government of Sierra Leone also instituted some deliberate policies one of which was free basic education. In an attempt at establishing instruments to assist the recovery process a number of Acts of Parliament were promulgated which have shaped the educational landscape in Sierra Leone. Some of these are:

- i. The Tertiary Education Commission Act
- ii. The Polytechnic Act
- iii. The National Commission for Technical Vocational and other Awards (NCTVA) Act
- iv. The Universities Act and the
- v. Local Government Act.

The last of the listed Acts sought to institute a mechanism of devolvement of a number of the functions of ministries to local councils.

Furthermore the Ministry of Education Science and Technology with personnel and Financial support from a number of development partners such as Irish Aid, JICA, UNESCO, WFP and most significantly the World Bank and UNICEF conducted a wide spread national consultation involving relevant line ministries as well as non-governmental organisations and quasi-governmental organisation such as WAEC, the Parliamentary sub-committee on Education, Local councils, etc to chart the future of education in Sierra Leone. This exercise covering the period 2007 to 2015 led to the production of the Education Sector Plan (ESP) which has roots in the National Education Master Plan 1997 – 2001, the 2006 Country Status Report and the 2004 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. Central to the Plan were institutional, human and infrastructural capacity building at all levels of the education sector and a target to achieve Universal Primary Education (UPE) by 2015, which also include post-primary education due to the post conflict recovery challenges.

Consequent on this road map, the MEST set up an Education Board which consults regularly as a ‘Think Tank’ to consider emerging issues such as public private partnership, alternative financing mechanisms for education, and an appraisal of the operations of the Ministry with a view to recommending strategies to improve its efficiency and management.

The key cost implications of the ESP using a base year of 2004 and some other macroeconomic assumptions are namely:-

- i. 5.5% of GDP to be spent on Education by 2015 as its economy improves;
- ii. 47.7% share of Recurrent costs on only primary education with a benchmark of 50%;

- iii. In the medium term (2007-2010) meeting a financing gap of US\$79.2M for achieving the UPE, i.e. recurrent and capital;
- iv. In the long term (2007-2015) meeting a financing gap of US\$28.4M per annum.
- v. A benchmark of 20% of domestically generated resources to be allocated to education.

The ESP has rolled out a priority of Basic education-vocational skills training-tertiary education and pre-schooling.

Analysis of the projections of the ESP can be summarised as follows:

Sector	Financing gap (2011-2015) US\$M	Comments
Universal Primary Education UPE	242.9	
Junior Secondary School	69.9	
Senior Secondary School	21.2	
Higher Education and Research	33.20	
Pre-school	3.17	
Total Financing gap	370.37M	

It can therefore be seen that a funding gap of approximately US\$400 for the period 2011 to 2015 will need to be met if the targets are to be achieved. This does not include Literacy, non-formal and polytechnic training costs.

The role that friends of the University can play is significant. Through a Memorandum of Understanding, the National Telecommunications Commission which is the Regulator for the telecommunications industry provided internet facilities for Fourah Bay College by installing and commissioning the Usl.com project on 17<sup>th</sup> May 2011 marking the World Telecommunications Day, as well as part of the 50<sup>th</sup> Independence Anniversary celebrations, with initially over 50 computers. Access to the internet is via a satellite dish installed at the Physics Department at FBC. There are plans to replicate this gesture in the other constituent colleges.

#### **Alternative funding and a martial plan for education**

On a number of occasions it has been made clear that Government cannot on its own fully fund tertiary institutions. The demands on Government's resources are increasing and access has become highly competitive. It is therefore imperative that institutions initiate innovative alternatives to meet their operational requirements in order to compliment Government's support to them. Undoubtedly

funding is pivotal to the existence of these institutions especially where quality has to be maintained at levels comparable to other more endowed international institutions.

In the recent past the University of Sierra Leone has faced immense challenges in maintaining quality of its products in the light of inadequate funding and a growing student population which constantly puts pressure on our resources. Some best practices are now highlighted that have been suggested to Government for consideration.

1. The Federal Republic of Nigeria through its amendment of 1999 of the Education Tax Decree levies a tax of 2%, charged on the assessable profit of a company registered in Nigeria payable to an Education Fund, administered by an Education Trust Fund (ETF) Board of Trustees.
2. Among other functions, the Board disburses the amount in the Fund to Federal, State and Local Government educational institutions, including primary and secondary schools, for any other related matter, but specifically for the following among others listed in the Act:-
  - a. works centres and prototype development;
  - b. staff development and conference attendance;
  - c. library systems at the different levels of education.
  - d. research equipment procurement and maintenance.
  - e. Higher Education Book Development Fund;
  - f. redressing any imbalance in enrolment tax mix as between the higher educational institutions
3. The total tax collected in any year is disbursed between the various levels of education in the proportion of 50% to the higher education sector, 30% to the primary education sector and 20% to the secondary education sector. Furthermore the distribution of the tax allocated to the higher education sector is in the proportion of 50% to the universities and 25% each to polytechnics and colleges of education.
4. In Ghana while recognizing similar difficulties in university funding, the National Union of Ghanaian Students proposed the establishment of a special education trust fund to address these issues.

5. Through an Act of Parliament in August 2000 the Ghana Education Trust Fund was established by raising an already established value added tax (or in our own context the Goods and Services Tax) to 12.5%, of which 2.5% was scheduled for the GET Fund account.
6. The aims were to provide financial resources to support educational institutions, providing assistance to needy and academically talented students, generate funds to support the student loan trust fund and scholarship scheme and to fund research and development in tertiary institutions. It is reported that by 2008 the GET fund should have represented 0.81% of Ghana's gross domestic product.
7. The GET Fund has been praised as the second major source of finance to the education sector, contributing 10% and 12.9% to government expenditure in 2006 and 2007 respectively [Atuahene, 2009]
8. For visitors to Ghana, it can be seen that this Fund has had a very visible impact on the development of infrastructure and research facilities in their tertiary institutions.
9. The Fund has also contributed immensely to the improvement of vocational and technical education in the country by financing the establishment of 20 resource centres and modern equipment to enhance practical skills training.
10. In 2004, for example, the GET Fund provided about 224 billion Cedis (US\$24,328,467) to finance the transformation and improvement of capacities in the universities and polytechnics through infrastructural development.
11. The Objectives of the GET Fund Act 581 are:
  - a. To provide financial resources to support all institutions in developing their infrastructural and academic facilities;
  - b. To provide additional sources of funds for gifted but needy students through the Ghana Scholarship Secretariat in the form of scholarship and grants;
  - c. To generate monies to support the student loan scheme for nationally accredited institutions; and
  - d. To offer grants to higher education through the National Council for Tertiary Education.

12. In its bid to improve on the immediacy of employment of its graduates from higher educational institutions the Nigerian Government enacted a decree in October 1971 establishing the Industrial Trust Fund (ITF). A spin-off of this creation was the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES) in 1993. This scheme targets skills training in Agriculture, Engineering, Technology, Environmental Science, Medical Sciences and Pure and Applied Sciences for the industrial sector.
  
13. As part of its responsibilities as a para-statal, the ITF provides Direct Training, Vocational and Apprentice Training, Research and Consultancy Service, Reimbursement of up to 60% Levy paid by employers of labour registered with it, and administers the Students Industrial Work Experience Scheme (SIWES). It also provides human resource development information and training technology service to industry and commerce, to enhance their manpower capacity and in-house training delivery effort.

The aims and objectives of the Reimbursement Scheme are to ensure

- (a) Training activities are spread to all levels of workers in organizations;
  - (b) Employers training programmes are relevant and effective;
  - (c) Training programmes are properly implemented and evaluated;
  - (d) Training activities, according to the needs of the employers and the economy as a whole, are encouraged.
- 
14. The introduction of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) as a one-stop tax presents an opportunity for Sierra Leone to consider similar tax levies as obtains in our sister countries in a bid to provide adequate funding for tertiary and further education for the nation through contribution by those who make use of our graduates. As can be seen in the case of Nigeria the tax is levied at assessable assets of companies and with the various imminent mining activities this exercise will harness tremendous revenue for Government for the education sector.

## **Recommendations for discussion**

1. Government should be encouraged to promulgate an Act for the establishment of a Public Education Trust Fund which will chart the various options and legislation for funding education in Sierra Leone. This should include Domestic revenue and External contributions.
2. A Marshall Plan for the Education sector should be initiated to raise the level of the educational institutions to a competitive level with its sister institutions in the sub region while the modalities of the Trust Funds are being determined. This strategy can be discussed by Government with its development partners and other partners, as one of its top priorities in the alignment of its policies for sustainable development.
3. The Domestic Revenue base of the Trust Fund will constitute income derived from taxation levied at among others:
  - a. The Petroleum and Mining industries
  - b. Lotteries
  - c. Sales of petroleum products
  - d. Endowments
4. In these cases there should be explicit stipulation in the Act to safeguard the preservation of assets so acquired against sales.
5. Government should also provide tax relief structures for such donations
6. In cases of companies providing industrial attachment or internships programmes for students, government should institute measures of tax rebates for all participating companies to encourage their participation in the student industrial attachment scheme.
7. A statutory body should be established also through an Act of Parliament to administer funds accrued through these efforts.
8. The External revenue base will constitute but not limited to the following:
  - a. Alumni contributions
  - b. Assistance and partnerships with Sierra Leoneans in the Diaspora
  - c. Endowment funds
  - d. NGOs
  - e. The private sector
9. Government to consider absorbing the indebtedness of the University to NRA so as to provide greater opportunities for the Administration to manage its finances towards its development targets to cope with the impacts of increasing student population and need for ICT infrastructure.

## **Conclusions**

I have attempted to provide a bird's eye view of the education sector in Sierra Leone from the period during which it proudly responded to the accolade ,'*The Athens of West Africa.*' It is evident that Sierra Leone has inherited a rich culture of education and has shared that culture in the region and beyond. Obviously with the many more endowed institutions that mushroomed over the years in the West African region, that accolade can no longer apply to Fourah Bay College alone. It however remains proud of the role it played in establishing the competence and intellect of the African and dispelling the myths that fuelled the injustices that were used as justification during the dark era of the slave trade. It will also be a reference point in scholarship for the history it has inherited.

I am confident that with a complete overhauling of the educational sector and a structured injection of funds and greater public private partnership initiatives there will be a massive brain gain to Sierra Leone and even though it may not be the Athens of the region it will be more competitive in the delivery of quality education to the region.

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**S. B. Thomas Agricultural Academy, also known as Mabang College  
– Preserving a Sierra Leone Historic Monument**

By Melbourne Garber

**Editor's Note**

*In this edition of The Journal of Sierra Leone Studies we have concentrated on education and this contribution may introduce readers to a little known institution.*

The Sierra Leone Monuments and Relics Commission currently has a list of 16 national monuments, the original list contained 32 separate items, including buildings, ruins, tombstones, and a deserted village site, remnant of stockades, steps, stones and bastions.

Some of the more well known sites are the Bunce Island Slave Castle; the Maroon Church located close to the historic cotton tree in the heart of Freetown, St. Charles Church in the village of Regent and the Old Fourah Bay College in Cline Town in the east end of the city.

On the banks of the Ribbi River in the Kholifa chiefdom, there is an example of significant architectural and historic significance called Mabang College that has remained hidden for a century. It is not even listed in the original or current list of historic monuments compiled by the Monuments and Relics Commission.

Mabang College came into existence as the result of the work of a pioneer of formal training in agriculture Samuel Benjamin Abuke Thomas, a Sierra Leonean businessman of Wellington on the outskirts of Freetown. He is said to have been one of the richest Africans of his time and a recluse. He died in 1901 and left over £50,000 (other accounts put it between £54,000 and £60,000) as an endowment to build an agricultural school.

The late Doyle Sumner, teacher, educationist and cabinet Minister quotes two relevant clauses of the Will.

Clause 10 stated *inter alia* that “the said investment...to be called ‘Samuel Benjamin Thomas Charity Trust’...shall be forever a permanent endowment for the agricultural development of the Colony... and the income accruing there from shall subject to the payment there from .....and be appropriated for the education and maintenance independently of their religious opinions of male natives of the Colony aforesaid of ability good character and sound constitution for such periods as my trustees shall think fit in the theories and practice of a liberal education and a sound Christian training, such education and maintenance to be furnished either within the Colony aforesaid or provided for and obtained in agricultural institutions in England or America or both.

Clause 13 of the Will contains elements such as the offering of land preferably a thousand acres “on the banks of the Ribbi River not far from the village of Songo in the Colony...” and the building “on the land given as aforesaid an agricultural Academy or college with the necessary appurtenances and outhouses inclusive of a chapel..... for the

education of male natives of the Colony aforesaid in the theory and practice of profitable farming and agriculture and to equip such college with all the necessary appliances and appoint thereto when completed professors and teachers at adequate salaries so as to secure in due course locally an institution as useful and efficient as any of the kind in England or America.”

As Sumner notes; the patriotism of Mr. Thomas, unique in the history of Sierra Leone was appreciated by his compatriots: “It was distinctive in that it set up a definitive goal of education different from the reigning bourgeois concept. While critics had vigorously condemned the pedantic tone of education in Sierra Leone, the result of their criticism was poor, because there was little practical example of their faith in industrial education. The idea around the provisions of the bequest [Samuel Benjamin Thomas Charity Trust] gathered itself past desultory utterances in favour of industrial education, and became the fulcrum of educational thought and subsequent change in educational policy.” [D.L. Sumner]

As is well known the curriculum of higher or college education in Sierra Leone was dominated by theology and the humanities. The social and pure sciences as well as agriculture were, comparatively speaking, new. The history of institutions concerned with the development of agricultural education, relative to Fourah Bay College, according to Dr. Edward R. Rhodes, is a short one, presumably because it took a long time for anyone to realise the need for formal teaching of the methods of modern farming in Sierra Leone. Agronomy Professor Russell T. Odell notes that, ‘while it was widely acknowledged that Sierra Leone was primarily an agricultural country, the emphasis on improving agriculture had not been commensurate with its importance in the economy’.

Prior to independence there was no agriculture degree programme in Sierra Leone. The Ministry of Education had trained a few Sierra Leoneans in a non-degree programme at the Njala Agriculture Experimental Station, but less than a dozen Sierra Leoneans had earned university degrees in agriculture and most of these had travelled to the United Kingdom to pursue their studies. It was against this rationale that S.B. Thomas fought to establish an institution designated to the teaching of agriculture and bequeathed to the country a college dedicated to agricultural education.

The foundation stone for the S. B. Thomas Agricultural Academy was laid by Governor Leslie Probyn on 28 January 1909 and was opened in 1912. Governor Probyn was very supportive of this college and according to the Encyclopaedia of Library and Information Science used his influence to obtain 1000 acres of land in Mabang for the college and approved the grant of 12 scholarships worth £50 annually for a 4-year course in agriculture. Three were given out each year. This was in all likelihood one of the first, if not the first Agricultural Institution in West Africa.

There is very little information about whether the building was ever used for its intended purpose or how long it functioned as an Agricultural College. With the departure of Governor Probyn, the government interest in the college waned. It was claimed that the land around Mabang was not very fertile; the surroundings unsanitary and potable water was not readily available. Thus it appears that it soon became a “white elephant” and this was compounded by the fact that the Agriculture Department of the government then focused its attention on starting an Experimental Agricultural Station at Njala along the

banks of the Taia River [Sumner]. Thus Mabang College became the forerunner of Njala Experimental Agricultural Station in 1912, Njala College founded in 1919, Njala University College, and now Njala University, founded in 1964. The original aim of Njala College was to train teachers for government schools, agriculture being a subject of special study. However, for the first five years after its establishment there was no agricultural instructor on staff. [Rhodes]

The next mention of Mabang College is a picture showing a Canadian military officer with members of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces cooking a meal near the college during the rebel war. The caption goes on to state that the college was burnt down during the rebel war.

Professor Eldred Jones notes that when he went to Fourah Bay College in 1945, the first year was spent at Mabang College. That coincidentally, was the last year Mabang College was used as a substitute for Fourah Bay College. At the end of that school year, they “packed up” the college and moved back to Mount Aureol.

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#### **Editor’s Note**

Eldred has told me of trips he made with his undergraduate students to Mabang College when he was a lecturer at Fourah Bay College. They would camp, read and discuss literature.

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**In Melbourne’s original article he moved into the present tense and his recent visit to Mabang. We felt it would be of interest to scholars if this ‘modern day account’ was published.**

Early the next morning, I set off to see Mabang College. After passing through my hometown of Waterloo, we took the unpaved road leading to Songo and then to Moyamba. The driver informed us that once we had crossed the Ribbi River Bridge, we would arrive in the village of Mabang.

While the bridge structure itself looked old but sturdy, the driving surface left a lot to be desired and was almost enough to make one consider not going any further with the trip. However a guide was on hand to precede us across the bridge, arranging the timber planks to ensure they were directly below the wheels. This did not necessarily ease the fears of traversing it and once we were safely across, I informed the guide that I wanted to go to Mabang College. He offered to accompany us and show us where the college was. He stated that some of the villagers had recently cleared the brush around the college and that they tried to do it regularly. It was apparent that they had an affinity for the college.

Prior to going on to the college, I asked the guide to take us to the local chief so I could go pay our respects, as is customary. Fortunately his home was on the way and when I met with him, I informed him that I was on the way to Mabang College and was hoping to subsequently raise people's awareness about it at home and abroad. He informed me also that the villagers were proud that this building was in their village and that they regularly cut the vegetation growing around it, but obviously there were costs involved whenever they had to do this.

The drive from the Ribbi River to the college took about 15 – 20 minutes, during which time we actually saw some of the villagers growing rice in some swampy land. Soon after we had passed the original train station at Mabang, the guide told us to stop as we had arrived at the college which was set back from the road. We would have missed it if that was not where we were going. We got out of the vehicle and walked a few meters into the clearing. As the guide had said, they had cleaned the brush around the building and to say I was awed by the size and grandness of the building would be an understatement.

It was more magnificent than I could have ever imagined. The main entrance was up a pair of stairs that then led into a 3-story reception area with an octagonal atrium. As glorious as it looked, it was readily apparent that the building had been burnt to the ground as there were no floors within it.

The building's exterior and interior walls are intact and the workmanship is spectacular. The foundation stone plaque is unblemished and walking around and within the building one is just amazed that this treasure is within our midst and just sitting there. The guide informed me that the building originally had 99 rooms though that is not recorded anywhere.

Amazed by the splendour and still in awe, we left the college and headed back to Freetown. At the bridge over the Ribbi River, the guide again preceded the vehicle over the bridge and I eventually returned to Freetown more determined than ever to do something about Mabang College.

In order for Sierra Leone and Sierra Leoneans to derive any benefit from the location of Mabang College, the road from Songo to Mabang needs to be upgraded and tarred. This is part of the infrastructural development that is necessary around the country and will benefit the people of this chiefdom. The bridge over the Ribbi River must also be overhauled and upgraded and the driving surface made safer.

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## **Non-Peer Reviewed**

### **Lumpen Youth, Civil War, and Conflict Resolution Civil Society in Sierra Leone Before and During the War**

By Simone Datzberger, London School of Economics and Political Science.

*'We were barefoot soldiers trying to negotiate the peace''.*  
*Mr. Ahmed Muckson Sesay, Director OPARD-SL*

## **Introduction**

Civil society as a concept has multiple dimensions and meanings. Civil society is simply more than a terminological fad, or as a World Bank document accurately read, studies should move away from "the civil society *for* Africa model to a civil society *in* Africa model"<sup>1</sup>. In recalling Lewis' accounts it is important to acknowledge that, "the concept of civil society contains within it the seeds of contradiction in being both unitary and divisive, and prescriptive and aspirational, but it nevertheless leads us to focus on changing structure and process" (Lewis, 2001, p. 12). In other words, as a concept it has to be first and foremost embedded in theory empirically to really hold the key to understanding and explaining the many transformative impacts a war has on a post conflict society. Only then can civil society be approached as an actor whose functions are to be assessed. Equally important, civil society is ambivalent by nature in that every society (and in human beings) is a conglomerate of the *good* and the *evil* – although to different degrees. Denying either would be sheer self-deceit for societies and individuals. Thus, seemingly contrary forces within societies and the very circumstances, in which they are embedded, prompt divergent impulses such as aggression (triggering conflict) and benevolence (nourishing peace). It is in this context that the following paper intends to discuss the root causes of the war in Sierra Leone, including the many attempts and the eventual success in resolving it. In Mac Ginty's words (2010, 361): 'Peace, like war, is human.'

Much has been written about the civil war in Sierra Leone and this sheds light on different aspects of, and reasons for, the war, its actors, and their motivations (Abdullah, 2004; Beah, 2007; Bergner, 2005; Farah, 2004; Gberie, 2005; Keen, 2005; Krijn, 2011; Olonisakin, 2008; Pham, 2006; Reno, 1998; Richards, 1995, 1996). The analysis below cannot provide an all-encompassing account on the origins of the conflict, which has been summarized in compelling books and articles by many others. Rather, this paper intends to better comprehend what role civil society played, and, what events and circumstances shaped the Sierra Leonean society as we know it today. In so doing it is not a coincidence that, particular attention will be paid to the emergence of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and how its formation and membership evolved from youth culture in rural and urban areas over decades. Sadly, still to this date one of the major challenges of the country is to improve the conditions for young people. In a briefing paper drafted by the United Nations Peace building Support Office (PBSO) for the United Nations Peace building Commission (PBC) Sierra Leone Configuration in February 2011, it was estimated that about 800,000 youth (60 percent) ranging from 15 to 35 years of age are either unemployed or underemployed.<sup>2</sup> Local Civil Society Organizations even talk about 70 percent.<sup>3</sup> Equally Sierra Leone's President, Ernest Bai Koroma, stated in a speech held in London on November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011 that with regard to the country's socioeconomic development, "For the youth, this was a job poorly done".<sup>4</sup> Strikingly, Sierra Leone is often presented

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<sup>1</sup> See World Bank Report No 06062007AFRSL, "The Civil Society Landscape in Sierra Leone, Understanding Context, Motives and Challenges", June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2007.

<sup>2</sup> All UN Peace building Commission Sierra Leone Configuration working papers and official documents can be accessed at: [http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/doc\\_sierraleone.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/doc_sierraleone.shtml)

<sup>3</sup> In several interviews with CSO's held in June–July 2011 in Freetown and also in many informal conversations with Sierra Leoneans it was referred to the number of 60-70% of unemployed youth.

<sup>4</sup> For more detailed information see: <http://www.worldpress.org/Africa/3837.cfm>,

as a success story or even a role model especially with regard to its United Nations peacekeeping and later peace building operations.<sup>5</sup> UNAMSIL's (United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone) eventual success, however, is not subject to debate. Instead the following sections explore comparisons between pre-war with post-war conditions for civil society (and the youth), and its characteristics therein.

The paper is divided into three distinct parts. Section one discusses why the accumulation of a century of grievances in combination with a number of tragic events transformed fragments of an emerging youth culture into a bloodthirsty rebellion. The second part focuses on how this war was fought between several different fractions, what role civil society played in it, and how the war changed the Sierra Leonean civilian sphere. The last section will then delineate why restoring peace in the country was postponed so many times and how the war formed and fed into the current civil society landscape of the country. Here, next to quantitative data, several (expert and other) interviews conducted in Sierra Leone from June – July 2011 are used as a qualitative source of information. Respecting some of their requests to keep anonymity, not all of their names are disclosed.

The conclusion then recapitulates and assesses the role and specifics of civil society before and during the war. The final analysis will briefly elaborate on five key variables, namely: actors, functions/agency, principles, patterns of interaction, and structure.

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<sup>5</sup> See for instance Sierra Leone Express Media article released on November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011, in which Sierra Leone is presented as a role model in comparison with other Peacekeeping missions in sub-Saharan Africa (<http://www.sierraexpressmedia.com/archives/32439>).

#### 4.1. *Lumpen* Youth Culture and the Emergence of the RUF

The horrendous atrocities committed during the war by the RUF (Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone) and other armed groups (most notably *sobel*s) go beyond extremes and challenges reason. A 25-year old man who lost both of his parents in the conflict and who is now an active member of a club in Freetown called Street Life Family (SLF) believes that the RUF acted the way they did “because they were selfish”. To affirm his statement a couple of other club members nodded their heads.<sup>6</sup> What seemed to be arbitrary (or selfish) and barbaric acts of violence were the dreadful result of rising corruption, exploitation of youth by a gerontocratic cultural system,<sup>7</sup> mismanagement of mineral resources, and neo-patrimonial manipulation of educational and employment opportunities. Undoubtedly the legacy of centuries of slave trading, foreign exploitation, and colonial administration challenged the genuine attempt to cultivate social cohesion, redistribute wealth, and develop local forms of governmental integrity after independence in 1961. All in all, there is consensus among scholars and practitioners that the misrule of the All People’s Congress (APC) regime from 1968 to 1992 ultimately bred the rage among socially excluded youth, and eventually led to the RUF guerilla rebellion and a brutal and protracted war (Richards, 1996; Abdullah & Muana, 1998; Olonisakin, 2008; Davis, 2010).

Sierra Leone inherited a multiparty system from the British over which its first leader, Sir Milton Margai of the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP), presided as prime minister. He was known for his good-governance principles and was appreciated widely among the population. The situation dramatically changed in 1964 when his half brother, Albert Margai, took power. Albert Margai’s rule was marked by patronage and a partial ethnicization of politics that favoured specific ethnic groups such as the Mende (dominating the Eastern and Southern part of the country) over others such as Temne and the Limba (from the Northern parts) (Keen 2005, pp. 14-15, Olonisakin 2008, pp. 10-11).

Shortly before independence, that is the 1930s and 40s, a rebellious youth culture began to evolve in Freetown often described as the lumpen or *rarray* boys. In their study “A Revolt of the Lumpenproletariat” (1998), Abdullah and Muana argued that a lumpen social movement became fertile soil for a lumpen revolution (later the RUF) almost 50 years later. Abdullah portrays these *rarray* boys as predominantly unlettered second-generation city residents, infamous for being in disgrace with local communities due to their anti-social behaviour such as marijuana smoking, petty theft, and violence. Their meeting points were usually in peri-urban spaces called *potes*. When the country’s political climate deteriorated again in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, it did not leave these youth groups and political discussions on the system unaffected. As Abdullah and Muana explained (1998, p. 174):

As a group they knew the outline of the history of the slave trade and the dehumanization of the African it entailed, and could make connections between the colonial past and neo-colonial present, generally espousing some form of pan-Africanism... Some of the *pote* types had read a little Frantz Fanon and Walter Rodney, bits of Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, swallowing undigested passages of Marx and Lenin from cheap or free volumes from the Soviet Progress Publishers.

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<sup>6</sup> Series of formal and informal interviews with SLF held in June-July 2011, Freetown

<sup>7</sup> Krijn (2011, see especially Chapter 1 and Chapter 8) convincingly concludes that one reason why young people joined the RUF or other factions was that they felt betrayed both by local rural elites and the state. One ex-RUF commander who was interviewed by Krijn stated, “The root cause [of the war] was that the elders ignored the youth, both in [the] educational field as well as in the social field. The RUF was a youth movement”. (Krijn 2011, p. 226).

In the years following APC leader, Siaka Stevens's rise to power in 1968, university students also became part of the *potes*. Their prestige among their ill-educated brothers increased when they initiated several demonstrations in 1977. These student protests, however, did not stop Siaka Stevens from declaring Sierra Leone a one-party state in 1978. His seventeen-year rule was plagued by injustice, widespread corruption, cuts in social welfare despite unthrifty spending (especially on the conference for the Organization of African Unity in 1980), and over-centralized power in Freetown. He fundamentally deepened the political, social, and infrastructural marginalization of rural areas. Railways were simply dismantled without developing rural roads, and local rural governments were abolished leaving traditional chiefs holding office at their pleasure (Davis, 2010, p. 60).

Steven's rule caused widespread resentment among youth and left deep scars in the political landscape and public sphere. Civil society initiatives and concerns were simply ignored, or, in Sesay's (1999) words, civil society became simply sheer subject to "suffocation". Also Pham (2006, pp. 144-145) pointed out how civil society was repressed and harassed by Stevens, in that he co-opted most potential rivals and weakening Sierra Leonean society's capacity for dialogue over political and economic differences. He referred to the example of the country's principal labour union, the Sierra Leone Labour Congress (SLLC), and described how Stevens constantly manipulated and sabotaged its members to ensure relative calm in the labour market.

The ongoing economic and social deterioration of the country throughout the 1980s gave rise to the formation of new radical youth groups (markedly leftist with slogans that were populists, socialist, and pan-Africanist) at Fourah Bay College (FBC) (Rashid, 2004, p. 69).

A significant youth movement at that time was called the Mass Awareness and Participation (MAP). MAP, according to Abdullah and Muana's accounts (1998, 2004) was a loose coalition of members from different university clubs who maintained tight links with the lumpen world of the *pote*. Soon anti-government posters and graffiti covered the campus and large parts of the city. With strong support from campus radicals, a young man called Alie Kabba was elected as MAP's student union president while he was away attending an annual Green Book celebration in Libya. To the dislike of the authorities rumours arose quickly that the Libyans sponsored MAP's leadership. In addition, some of FBC's students were accused of planning to encamp Libyan mercenaries in their rooms. Consequently, forty-one students were suspended from university in 1985. Neither the university nor the government formally investigated the charge. This prompted violent student protests. Alie Kabba and four other students were arrested but subsequently released and the matter was dropped by the administration. (Abdullah, 2004, p. 49; Abdullah & Muana, 1998, pp. 175-176; Rashid, 2004, pp. 80-81).

For Abdullah and Muana the expulsion of MAP from the college marked a turning point in youth-oriented opposition in Sierra Leone in that (1998, p. 176):

Henceforth, the baton passed to the lumpen youths and *pote*-affiliated organic intellectuals (some ex-students of FBC and the second campus of the national university at Njala) in numerous study groups and revolutionary cells scattered around the country.

It was at this point in time when prenatal RUF formations started to gain an ideological impetus from rural areas. Krijn (2011) draws attention to the fact that the Bunumbu Teachers College (a rural training college near the Liberian border that received continuous support from UNESCO throughout the 1970s and 1980s) also shaped the mindsets among soon to be RUF members. Despite the fact that some of Bunumbu's graduates voluntarily joined the RUF, its contribution to student radicalization in Sierra Leone has been neglected in several debates given that the RUF has been often described as a movement without any ideological content (Krijn 2011, p. 21).

In 1985, six years before the RUF launched its first attack, Siaka Stevens handed over presidency to his army commander, Major-General Joseph Momoh. Momoh's campaign promised to instil discipline in public life and improve the living conditions for Sierra Leoneans. In light of the preceding student and youth protests he tried to also solicit support from lumpen youth without any major success. All in all his governance proved to be no better (and perhaps even worse) than Siaka Stevens's rule. The economy and public services virtually collapsed, external debt climbed to 86 percent of GDP (compared to 17 percent of GDP in the 1970s). The 1989 structural adjustment program did not receive international financial support as the government failed to demonstrate its commitment to reform. In the hope of attracting corporate foreign investment, Momoh initiated two military operations in 1989 to evict illicit miners from the diamond mines (Davis, 2010, pp. 60-61).

As Reno (1998, p. 121) accurately points out, Momoh's military operations did not only further marginalize the semi-destitute illicit diamond miners but motivated many youth to join the RUF later on. The war was just waiting to happen.

While the country saw itself in the midst of an economic downturn, Allie Kabba and some other exiled radicals deepened their Libyan connections. Some of the expelled students were now in exile in Ghana, and they recruited youth from Sierra Leone for military and ideological training in Benghazi. Among them was Foday Sankoh, a former army corporal who was detained in 1971 for plotting against Siaka Stevens. Everyone who went to the military training in Libya between 1987 and 1988 became part of the very early formation of the RUF. It was in 1988 that Sankoh first met guerilla fighter and future Liberian President, Charles Taylor, in Libya. Taylor encouraged Sankoh to join the NPFL (National Patriotic Front of Liberia), which was initially founded as a pan-African movement. They made a deal that Sankoh would help Taylor to overthrow Samuel Doe's regime in Liberia, and in exchange Taylor would help the RUF to launch an armed struggle. It was in Taylor's interest to support the destabilization of the Sierra Leonean government because it supported the international community's peacekeeping efforts in Liberia (Abudullah, 2004, pp. 56-57; Krijn, 2011, p. 217; Richards, 1996, p. 2-4).

When the movement started to plan its first counter-insurgency a couple of its members considered it as too risky and ill designed. Consequently, some members, including Alie Kabba, dissociated themselves from the RUF. Alie Kabba later stated that this was the moment when the way opened for the "wrong kind individuals" to become part of the RUF (Abuallah & Muana, 1998, p. 177).

However, experts disagree as to whether the RUF lost its ideological base at this point in time. The Sierra Leonean scholar, Gberie (2005), argued that the RUF did not have the cadres, ideological orientation, or the political base to be transformed into a serious political organization. For him the movement was largely conceived as a mercenary enterprise that never evolved beyond "banditism". This was the very reason why its transformation into a political party after the war was doomed to failure.

In contrast, for Abullah and Muana (1998, 2004) as well as Bangura (2004) the RUF lost its ideological credibility as soon as the organic intellectuals withdrew from the project. In their view, the RUF started as an urban radical left-wing movement of students, but their lumpen followers soon became a "lumpen guerilla force" consisting of an uneducated underclass from the *potes*.

Krijn (2011) vehemently criticizes Abdullah's account and emphasises the fact that the majority of RUF members were from rural areas and not urban or peri-urban spaces. Strikingly, Karin's interviews disclose that the majority of the RUF were Mende speakers, and that most of the early RUF volunteers had their origins in the Kailahun and Pujehun Districts (2011, p. 241). Hence, for Krijn the RUF rebellion was both a symptom of, and an attempted answer to, the socioeconomic crisis of rural youth (2011, p. 11).

Richards (1996) and Krijn (2011) believe that the RUF had an, albeit simple-minded, ideology. Their principles were expressed in the movement's manifesto called "Footpaths to Democracy – Towards a new Sierra Leone". However, the authenticity of this document has been questioned many times. Rumour has it that the document was ghost-written by two Ghanaians who were employed by the independent, UK-based peace building organization, International Alert (Krijn, 2011, 127, footnote 57). The RUF would – so it was assumed – share with them their core concerns and aspirations to be written down in the manifesto. Despite the uncertainty about who actually wrote the document, the fact that the RUF had and made use of a manifesto indicates that the movement had, or at least wanted to follow, some sort of ideology. For example, reference is made to end forms of exploitation.<sup>8</sup>

In our simple and humble ways we say, "No more slave and no more master". It is these very exploitative measures instated by so-called central governments that create the conditions for resistance and civil uprising.

Likewise, the RUF repeatedly called for free education and medical care, collective farming, a people's court, and a system of promotion based on merits. Such an egalitarian (yet meritocratic) agenda inspired many young people to become part of the movement during its initial stages. Contrary to many portrayals of the RUF, Krijn found that a large part of the RUF cadre underwent some sort of education.

For Keen (2005, pp. 39-47), the RUF shows some indication of expressing an ideological position, which was in stark contrast with their actions, including horrendous atrocities against civilians, widespread abduction, forced recruitment, exploitation, sexual violence, and drug abuse. In this context, Fithen and Richards (2005, p. 123) find that "the RUF represents a paradox. It claimed to have ambitions for a more just society, and yet ended up a random and arbitrary killing machine". In an interview with the local CBO called OPARD-SL (Organization for Peace Reconciliation and Development - Sierra Leone), the director refers to a statement he repeatedly heard during its mediation efforts with rebels when they were asked why they committed such atrocities:<sup>9</sup> "War was even in the Bible, when there was a war innocent people had to die". Krijn further validates the controversies of violence and ideology by reasoning (2011, p. 219, footnote 9):

It is a heroic assumption to conclude that an ideology is a guarantee against atrocity or mass civilian deaths at the hands of insurgent or revolutionary movements. History shows us rather the opposite: the stronger the ideology, the more victims. The rural-autarkic ideology of the Khmer Rouge movement in Cambodia caused the deaths of more than one third of the population. Mao's Cultural Revolution cost millions of lives. The mother of all revolutions, the 1789 French Revolution (birth of French rationalism) was soaked in blood, and it soon started to 'eat its own men'. It is possible that the problem with the RUF, as with the movements mentioned here, might be not its lack of ideology (and intellectuals), but that the cadres were blinded by too much ideology.

It would by far go beyond the scope of this paper to engage in a more detailed discourse as to what extent the RUF was driven by too much ideological thinking, or whether one could seriously

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<sup>8</sup> A full version of *Footpaths to Democracy* is available at: <http://www.sierra-leone.org/AFRC-RUF/footpaths.html>.

<sup>9</sup> The interview was held on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011 in Mile 91. The rebels attacked Mile 91 a total of 19 times in the period from 1994 to 2000. The role of OPARD-SL in the peace process will be further discussed towards the end of section on civil war.

compare their guerrilla attacks with the French Revolution. Yet, it should be acknowledged here that their ideology will be perceived and understood as a set of aims and ideas for the future (even if expressed in a crude and bloodthirsty manner in an ill-formulated manifesto). The RUF's behaviour is understood to be driven by certain beliefs and principles even though they were in stark contrast to their actions. In this context, Keen (2005) stresses that feelings of shame and humiliation among marginalized youth were ultimately expressed in acts of horrific violence as a way of communicating grievances. He echoes the thinking of U.S. psychiatrist, James Gilligan. In his essay about the triage of "Shame, Guilt and Violence" published in 2003, Gilligan holds that feelings of disrespect including the lack of self-love can lead to irrational and non-justifiable behaviour. It is crucial to emphasize Gilligan insights, as the issue of respect was raised many times in the scope of several interviews and informal conversations with youth groups and clubs conducted in Freetown in June and July 2011.

In short, the RUF's ideology remains a highly disputed issue. The majority of authors agree that the rebellion's motives were rooted in decade long socio-economic grievances. Likewise, Stevens's political repression left no room for an inclusive political dialogue between the state, non-state actors, and the broader public. There was simply no outlet for civil society (in particular youth groups) to blow off steam.

Greed with regard to the country's resources (most notably diamonds) played only a secondary role in the RUF's nascent stage.<sup>10</sup> Although the RUF gained control over diamond mines and its revenues in due course to fund their violence and rebellion, diamonds did *not* cause, but rather perpetuated and protracted the war.

#### 4.2. Civil War

"You can go", the man repeated, waiving his hand this time. "Go, go, go!" I stood up slowly and turned my body toward the soccer field. "Wait!" the rebel hollered. I stood motionless as a couple of the boys grabbed guns from their backs and pointed them at me. I waited for the older rebel's order to shoot. Instead, he walked in front of me. "You must choose a punishment before you leave," he said. "Like what?" I mumbled. Tears I could no longer hold back streamed down my face. "Which hand do you want to lose first?"... "Please, please don't do this to me" I begged one of the boys... "If you are going to chop off my hands, please just kill me," I begged them. "We're not going to kill you," one boy replied. "We want you to go to the president and show him what we did to you. You won't be able to vote for him now. Ask the president to give you new hands..." It took three attempts to cut off my left hand... I sank to the ground as the boy wiped the blood off the machete and walked away. As my eyelids closed, I saw the rebel boys giving each other high-fives. I could hear them laughing. As my mind went dark, I remember asking myself: "What is a president?" (*Kamara 2008, pp. 39-41*).

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<sup>10</sup> The greed versus grievance debate was famously introduced by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler in a World Bank Policy Research Working Paper published in 2000 arguing that "Conflicts are more likely to be caused by economic opportunities than by grievance" (2000, p. 91). Many scholars including Keen 2005 and Zack-Williams 2010) criticize Collier vehemently for "dismissing the grievances of the masses against imperialist and domestic exploitation, corruption, and totalitarianism" (Zack-Williams, 2010, p. 22). Gberie, despite describing Sankoh as "nothing more than a functionary within a vast network of warlord economies that was controlled by Charles Taylor" finds an explanation for the root causes of the war in the nature of the state itself and "near-criminal" APC misrule (2005, pp. 152-155).

It is estimated that about 27,000 Sierra Leoneans have been disabled or have had one or more of their limbs amputated, about 50,000 people lost their lives (UNFPA estimates about 60,000<sup>11</sup>), and one million people were displaced during the 1991-2002 civil war.<sup>12</sup> In an interview with the Fifty/Fifty Group the director refers to a case when she had to take care of a four-month old baby whose legs were cut off by the rebels.<sup>13</sup> In other words, atrocities committed by the RUF and other armed groups had no limits.

The gruesome war in Sierra Leone was complex, involved different armed groups, and crossed the war-ravaged Liberian and Guinean borders. Kaplan famously described the zeitgeist of the situation in the mid-ninety-nineties as:

[A] microcosm of what is occurring, albeit in a more tempered and gradual manner, throughout West Africa and much of the underdeveloped world: the withering away of central governments, the rise of tribal and regional domains, the unchecked spread of disease, and the growing pervasiveness of war. (1994, p. 9)

On March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1991 about 100 guerilla fighters invaded Sierra Leone from Liberia at Bomaru, Kailahun District, thereby kicking off a civil war that would (with interruptions) progressively engulf the entire country. It is assumed that the majority (if not all) were NPFL (National Patriotic Front of Liberia) fighters, who would be permanently lent out to Sankoh's forces by Charles Taylor (Keen, 2005; Krijns, 2011).<sup>14</sup> Soon they gained control over eastern Sierra Leone aiming to overthrow the president, Major General Joseph Saidu Momoh of the APC. From the very beginning of the war the national forces of the SLA (Sierra Leone Army) lacked the capacity, resources, discipline, and attitude to successfully defeat the rebel movement. In order to assist the government, an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) force was deployed to defend against the RUF rebellion. However, it was slow to reach across the country (Olonisakin, 2008). By 1992 the RUF posed a serious threat to the diamond-mining areas in Kono. The situation further deteriorated, when - frustrated by poor payment, bad conditions, and lack of logistical support - a group of SLA junior military officers launched a successful military coup. President Momoh fled the country leaving the 25-year old Captain Valentine Strasser to become the world's youngest Head of State. He established the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) and remained in power for four years. Initially, the RUF were expected to form a coalition with the new government and many civilians hoped the rebellion would simply peter out (Keen, 2005, pp. 94-95). Exactly the opposite occurred. Strasser's rule repudiated the rebel movement so the RUF vowed to continue the war. The RUF saw itself weakened and dislodged from strongholds, except for an enclave in the Gola Forest. Before they could take over diamond areas and plan their next big offensive that was to take place in 1994-95, it was necessary to rebuild forest camps and raid army stores to train new teenage cadres and abductees (Richards, 1996; Fithen & Richards 2005, pp. 120-121). The NPRC deprived the RUF of its main source of recruits: the marginalized, unemployed youth, street children, and petty criminals. It is

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<sup>11</sup> See UNFPA (29.05.2006) <http://www.unfpa.org/public/cache/offonce/home/news/pid/174>,

<sup>12</sup> See IRIN News (24.10.2011): <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=94037>,

<sup>13</sup> The Fifty/Fifty Group is a local CSO - interview held on July 5th, 2011, in Freetown.

<sup>14</sup> Despite the general belief that the first attack was a joint RUF-NPFL effort, Krijns's interviews reveal that it was not the RUF that actually initiated the first attack. One of Krijns's informants from the ex-RUF cadre stated, "Before the war some Liberian rebels were trading with the Sierra Leonean army, because by that time Liberia was already in a war. But some of the Sierra Leonean guys cheated the rebels, so these rebels entered Sierra Leone and the conflict started. Of course the RUF all the way planned to attack Sierra Leone, but according to my information they wanted to wait a few months longer. But this incident speeded up the whole thing". (2011, pp. 62-63)

estimated that the NPRC was able to expand the army from a pre-war figure of 3,000 or 4,000 to between 15,000 and 20,000 by 1993 (Krijn, 2011, pp. 64-65).

In the case of the RUF, young volunteers from the more remote parts of Kailahun and Puhahun Districts were joining the rebels. However, as stories of atrocities spread, the movement quickly ran out of willing supporters and was forced to recruit mostly by capture (Fithen & Richards, 2005, p. 126). Many of the captives were the age of primary school children and easy to brainwash (mainly through a mix of drugs composed of cocaine, gunpowder, and marijuana) with RUF ideologies. According to the Global Child Soldier Report of 2008, after the war, about 6,774 children took part in a Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program. Statistics also revealed that 3,710 children had been with the RUF, 2,026 with the pro-government Civil Defence Forces (CDF), 471 with the Sierra Leone Army, 427 with the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), and 144 were with other factions or non-affiliated.<sup>15</sup> Not all of the former child-soldiers benefited from DDR programs and it is estimated that roughly 10,000 children had to fight in the war.

In the course of his rule, Strasser increasingly lost control over its own army. His recruits (as mentioned above) were not only ill-trained but their loyalty had to be questioned. It was later estimated that about 40 percent of Strasser's soldiers had either deserted or defected to the rebels. A number of presumed rebel attacks were actually committed by military units. Soon local press began to report about so-called "*sobels*" – soldiers by day, rebels by night (Pham, 2006, p. 94).

Due to SLA's collusion and ongoing RUF attacks traditional hunting militias started to defend their villages, families, and goods. In 1997, these militias formed the Civil Defence Force (CDF), mainly composed of the *kamajoisia* of the Mende group, *gbethis* and *kapras* of the Temne, and the *donsos* of the Kono (Hoffman 2007).

At first the *kamajoisia* clashed with NPRC on a number of occasions, but as the NPRC soldiers became more corrupt and less reliable, Strasser sought their support and deployed 500 Kamajoisia fighters on the war front in Kenema and Kailahun Districts in March 1994 (Gberie, 2005, p. 85). Later on, he recruited the mercenary firm, Executive Outcomes, to wage war against the rebels.

In the midst of continued attempts to counter the RUF insurgency, various political groups and civil society organizations (CSOs) pressured the NPRC to relinquish power to an elected civilian government at the beginning of 1996 (Pham, 2006, p. 113). At a conference held in Freetown in August 1995 it was hotly debated whether a peace settlement should come before elections or vice versa. Participants included the INEC (Interim National Electoral Commission), political leaders, and civil society representatives. The RUF was invited to the conference, but did not send a representative as they were against elections taking place without a peace settlement. Five months after the conference Brigadier-General Maada Bio replaced Strasser in a bloodless coup. Due to persistent demand for democratic elections Maada Bio had no choice but to hand over power to an elected government. These elections were to be held in March 1996 (Oloniasakin, 2008, pp. 17-19, 136).

The RUF's rage at the upcoming elections was expressed in intensified attacks on civilians, notoriously mutilating and amputating limbs without discrimination. The violence received scant media attention, especially the cutting off of people's hands in a gruesome response to SLPP's canvassing slogan: "The future is in your hands". Despite the RUF's atrocities, SLPP leader Ahmad Tjan Kabbah became the newly elected president (Pham, 2006, p. 115).

Eight months later, in November 1996, Kabbah engaged in peace talks with the RUF in Abidjan. Although he declared a ceasefire and the army stood down, the CDF (assisted by Executive

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<sup>15</sup> For more information about child soldiers see: <http://www.childsoldiersglobalreport.org/content/sierra-leone>, (last visit November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

Outcomes) continued to attack RUF bases during the negotiations. The RUF signed the Abidjan accords but because of the CDF's assaults, the leadership was unable to reach out to its field commanders who were scattered all around the county (Fithen & Richards, 2005, p. 120).

In short, the Abidjan Peace agreements were doomed to fail even at the time of signature. Even greater chaos and destruction was to come and no superior international assistance was in sight. Seven years later, the final report of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission stated:

The United Nations (UN) and the international community abandoned Sierra Leone in its greatest hour of need during the early 1990s. Lack of foresight by the UN and the international community resulted in the hastily prepared and ill-conceived Abidjan Peace Accord in 1996.<sup>16</sup>

Despite Kabbah's government turning around the economy from a negative growth rate of minus 6.4 percent to a positive rate of 6.0 percent in just one year (Gberie 2004, p. 144), these changes were not really recognized by the broader public. A locally conducted opinion poll six months after the election showed severe disappointment in his performance, citing indicators such as growing hardship and poverty (Reno 1999, p. 138). Kabbah refused to renew Executive Outcomes' contract beyond January 1997, mainly due to pressure by the IMF to better control government spending. It was a fatal decision as it led to another coup on May 25<sup>th</sup> 1997, known as "Bloody Sunday". This was not only the dreadful result of Sierra Leone's further deteriorating military situation, but it was also based on resurfacing tensions between the SLA and the *kamajoisia*. A small group of heavily armed soldiers in civilian clothing stormed Freetown and freed about 600 prisoners; some of them were the country's most notorious criminals. Among them was Major Johnny Paul Koroma, who had previously served as head of Strasser's security operations unit before becoming a *sobel*. Kabbah was forced into exile in Conakry. The Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service (SLBS) announced the formation of an Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) with Major Johnny Paul Koroma as its chairman. AFRC declared the rebel war to be over, presented itself as the new government and proclaimed the RUF leader, Foday Sankoh, who was in detention in Nigeria at the time, as the Vice Chairman of the Council. Sankoh became the deputy leader of the country and a joint AFRC/RUF leadership was ready to rule Sierra Leone (Gberie, 2004, pp. 143-153; Pham, 2006, pp. 122-123).

The junta was condemned in Sierra Leone and internationally. Locally, the vast majority of ordinary Sierra Leoneans expressed their opposition simply by staying at home, refusing to go to work even after repeated threats of dismissal by the AFRC/RUF. Likewise, members of the National Union of Sierra Leone Students (NUSS) started to plan a massive demonstration against the military junta, gaining widespread support from the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), the Sierra Leone Women's Forum (SLWF), and many other civic organizations. The anger among AFRC/RUF soldiers about civil protests was intense. In August 1997, just about everyone on the streets of Freetown was attacked with machetes, sticks, and live bullets (Gberie, 2004, pp. 153 - 157).

Only a few civil society associations and initiatives proved to be successful. The IRCSL (Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone) formed in early 1997 by the country's religious leaders played a significant behind-the scene role in facilitating communications between warring parties throughout the war and peace process (Pham 2006, pp. 147-148).

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<sup>16</sup> See section "Findings" paragraph 372. While in Freetown, it appeared to be extremely difficult to get hold of a hard copy of the TRC's final report (some local CSOs shared the same concern). Also the TRC's website is no longer active. The final report, however, can be accessed at: <http://www.sierra-leone.org/TRCDocuments.html>, (last visit December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011).

For Oloniasakin, the determination of “Sierra Leonean civil society mustered a will of steel [which was] perhaps one of the principal factors that endeared some key international actors, not least Tony Blair’s newly elected government in the UK, to Sierra Leone”<sup>17</sup> (2008, p. 22). The nationwide passive resistance resulted in the formation of the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy (MRD), an assembly of almost all the pressure groups, civil society organizations, and the local militia (*kamajoisia* and *kapra*). The latter formally constituted the MRD’s armed wing – the CDF (Gberie, 2004, pp. 153-154).

In several interviews with CSOs conducted in June-July 2011, it was mentioned that during the war society in Sierra Leone was united like never before as everyone shared a common objective - to establish peace. In a conversation about the concept of civil society, a representative from a large Sierra Leonean civil society umbrella organization made an interesting point:

Civil society is very fragmented. However, that is what makes civil society to be civil society and one has to accept that civil society is diverse and complex. You cannot have a united civil society unless you have a common enemy.<sup>18</sup>

In another interview it was pointed out that most of the formal civil society actors (i.e., official organizations, associations, and alliances) emerged during or immediately after the war. In other words, the civil society landscape exploded during and after the conflict. According to a Women’s organization one positive result of the war was certainly the emergence of local CSOs and human rights activists.

At a global level the disapproval of the junta was articulated in three Security Council statements in May, July, and August 1997. In addition, help was offered by the OAU in order to support ECOWAS’s efforts to restore President Kabbah. In September of the same year the UNSC adopted Resolution 1132, which imposed a total oil and arms embargo and authorized ECOWAS to ensure its implementation by using ECOMOG troops (Oloniasakin, 2008, p. 23, 136).

Sustained international, national, military, and civic pressure forced the AFRC/RUF to sign a new Peace Plan on October 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1997 during a meeting in Conakry. Its implementation, once again, was undermined by the legendary unpredictability of the junta (Gberie, 2004, pp. 161-163). In February and March of 1998, the Nigerian-led West African intervention force ECOMOG successfully managed to restore Kabbah’s presidency and drove the AFRC/RUF from power. Forced to go back to the bush, the ex-junta regained strongholds in Kailahun District and further strengthened its supply lines to Liberia (Fithen & Richards, 2005, p. 121).

Once the Kabbah government was reinstated it immediately declared a state of emergency. In addition, considerable media attention was given to the fact that Kabbah had contracted the British private armed force, Sandline International, to conquer the junta. Sandline’s involvement was harshly criticized as a violation of the UNSC sanctions and arms embargo. As a consequence, the British had to withdraw their High Commissioner from Sierra Leone. The affair was not only embarrassing for all parties involved, but it also initiated many debates (to this day) about the role of private security companies in regional conflicts in the absence of credible international military intervention (Pham, 2006, p. 134). In July of the same year the UN established an Observer Mission (UNOMSIL) and sent out seventy observers. The AFRC/RUF kept attacking regions in the north, east, and south and managed to win back the diamond-rich Koidu. Sankoh returned from detention in Nigeria to Sierra Leone but was sentenced to death for treason in October 1998. The ARFC/RUF’s armed response to

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<sup>17</sup> In July 1997, the AFRC-led government was officially suspended from all Commonwealth meetings.

<sup>18</sup> Interview held in Freetown, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

Sankoh's conviction was the infamous: Operation No Living Thing. On January 6<sup>th</sup>, 1999 the rebels launched a bloody assault in Freetown, killing an estimated 7,000 people and committing widespread atrocities. All UNOMISL personnel were evacuated and Kabbah's government was given no option but to cooperate with the ARFC/RUF.

### 4.3. Conflict Resolution

After the 1999 attacks, Kabbah's government was under pressure to negotiate with the rebels. On May 25<sup>th</sup>, 1999, Kabbah and Sankoh signed a ceasefire agreement in Lomé, Togo, leading to a power-sharing agreement in July of the same year. From the very beginning the Lomé negotiations were dominated by the rebel's strategic advantage. The Sierra Leonean government, as well as the international and regional actors were demoralized and just wanted an end to the war. As Zack-Williams brings it perfectly to the point (2010, p. 30):

Clearly, the Lomé chickens had come home to roost: by hurling a democratically elected government into negotiations with a bunch of armed thugs, the latter felt empowered to go to the whole hog.

International mediators from the UN, OAU, ECOWAS, the Commonwealth, the United Kingdom, and the U.S assisted in the talks. Civil society involvement was limited with the exception of the IRCSL whose role was recognized in Article VIII of the agreement. All other CSO's were granted an observer status (particularly the Sierra Leone's Women's Movement for Peace) but none of them were permitted to actively participate in or even raise any concerns during the negotiations. Undoubtedly, the final outcome was a triumph for the RUF and its fighters. In a nutshell

- The Sierra Leonean government acceded to the RUF's demand for blanket amnesty.
- Foday Sankoh was made chairman of the Strategic Mineral Resources Commission and the RUF obtained a further eight cabinet posts.
- The ex-junta, in return, promised to release abducted civilians, disarm and be reintegrated into the Sierra Leonean Armed Forces as well as to reconstitute itself into a political organization. (Olonisakin 2008, p. 138):

The RUF's immunity from prosecution caused a lot of criticism (within and outside the UN). The preamble of the agreement refers to the commitment and promotion of "full respect for human rights and humanitarian law", which, quite obviously stands in stark contrast with Article IX, paragraph 3 of the accord, that stipulates: <sup>19</sup>

To consolidate the peace and promote the cause of national reconciliation, the Government of Sierra Leone shall ensure that no official or judicial action is taken against any member of the RUF/SL, ex-AFRC, ex-SLA or CDF in respect of anything done by them in pursuit of their objectives as members of those organisations, since March 1991, up to the time of the signing of the present Agreement.

This controversy was perceived by many as lacking a strong international demand for retribution for human rights abuses (Zack-Williams, 2010, p. 29). It equally reflects the immense pressure

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<sup>19</sup> The full version of the Lomé Peace Accord can be downloaded from: <http://www.sierra-leone.org/lomeaccord.html>

exerted over Kabbah during the negotiations by all parties involved. Though, he symbolized his silent protest during the signing ceremony of the Lomé accords by bringing a child with him whose arm had been amputated by the RUF (Robertson, 2002, p. 467).

At about the time that the Lomé negotiations took place, the newly elected government of Nigeria pushed for a negotiated settlement of Nigeria's participation in ECOMOG in Sierra Leone due to rising costs and increasing unpopularity of Nigerian soldiers. Since the beginning of ECOMOG's deployment, Nigeria contributed 90 percent of the troops and had to bear most of the estimated US\$ 1 million *per day* costs (it's worth mentioning that at that time ECOMOG was deployed, 65.6 percent of all Nigerians were living on less than US\$ 1.25 a day<sup>20</sup>). Nigeria's persistent calls for receiving any kind of support from the U.S. or UN remained unfulfilled. In Oloniasakin's words (2008, p. 87):

Nigeria and ECOMOG were left to dominate the Sierra Leone scene for a long period with little or no attention from the international community. When the UN was eventually ready to engage more actively, these regional actors felt they were being dispossessed of their rightful role in a situation where they had for so long borne the costs.

Additionally, it was speculated that considering the corrupt nature of the Nigerian regime most of Nigeria's funds never reached the military forces in Sierra Leone (Pham, 2006, p. 135). Keen (2005) draws attention to the fact that some ECOMOG forces were involved in diamond smuggling (2005, p. 224). Thus, Nigeria's wish to bring its military support to an end was expected, but it also weakened Kabbah's position further. All the half-baked solutions and assistance from the regional and international arena, combined with the January 1999 attacks, signified an important wake-up call for the international community to finally take the situation in Sierra Leone more seriously (Zack-Williams, 2010, pp. 28-30).

The UN's response was officially outlined in the Lomé accords. In October 1999, the United Nations Mission to Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) was deployed with 6,000 troops; this was later raised to 17,500 making it one of the UN's largest and most expensive peacekeeping missions with a total expenditure of US\$ 2.8 billion.<sup>21</sup> It replaced UNOMSIL and led to ECOMOG's withdrawal in May 2000. From its very beginnings UNAMSIL faced several difficulties, as the RUF simply did not respect and actually ignored the Lomé agreements. On a couple of occasions UNAMSIL had to face embarrassments such as blue helmets being disarmed by the RUF as opposed to them disarming the rebels. Soon, the mission was dubbed "UNAMSILLY". In May 2000 the history of UNAMSIL reached its darkest hour when shortly after ECOMOG's withdrawal 500 peacekeepers were taken hostage by the RUF.

Yet ordinary Sierra Leoneans would not surrender. On May 6<sup>th</sup>, Freetown was geared for a large demonstration against Sankoh. Two days later, about 30,000 people protested in front of Sankoh's house, calling for the release of the UN peacekeepers. Although UNAMSIL troops were stationed at Sankoh's domicile they completely lost control over the situation when his bodyguards started to fire into the crowd. Twenty people were killed and dozens injured. Sankoh escaped but was seized and arrested on May 17<sup>th</sup> in Freetown (Oloniasakin, 2008, p. 60).

Immediately after the bloody demonstrations, the British deployed troops in Sierra Leone, ostensibly to evacuate British citizens. Supported by naval ships and air force planes, they eventually

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<sup>20</sup> This percentage is indicated in the UNDP's Human Development Report Nigeria 2008-2008, page 64, Table: 3.1 Incidence of Poverty by Sector and Zones from 1980 -2004, available at:

[http://www.ng.undp.org/documents/NHDR2009/NHDR\\_MAIN-REPORT\\_2008-2009.pdf](http://www.ng.undp.org/documents/NHDR2009/NHDR_MAIN-REPORT_2008-2009.pdf),

<sup>21</sup> See: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/facts.html>

successfully reinforced the UNAMSIL contingent. In early July, some of UNAMSIL's soldiers who were still held in hostage by the RUF were freed. Illegal checkpoints in the Occra hills were cleared by August 2000, and the strategic junction town of Masiaka was recaptured.

Events as they happened in rural towns like Masiaka are often overlooked. BBC correspondent, Mark Doyle said, "over the past decade of war [Masiaka] has changed hands between various armed factions countless times".<sup>22</sup> Masiaka serves to illustrate that without civil society involvement the conflict might have been protracted and lasted much longer. In the summer of 2011 a long interview was held near Masiaka with Mr. Ahmed Muckson Sesay, director of a local civil society organization called OPARD-SL (Organization for Peace Reconciliation and Development - Sierra Leone).<sup>23</sup> OPARD-SL was started as a voluntary organization in 1999 by local farmers to help promote peace. Between 1994 and 2000 the rebels attacked their town in total 19 times. Given that a few community members knew some of the rebels, OPARD-SL was able to initiate talks with the RUF. Later, the organization would also serve as a mediator among all warring parties. "We were barefoot soldiers trying to negotiate peace", said Mr. Muckson Sesay. His efforts were duly acknowledged in an official letter written by UNAMSIL's then Commanding Officer, Colonel Khusahl Thakur.<sup>24</sup>

*My dear Bro Muckson [handwritten] ... Your active mediation and indulgence reinvigorated and revitalized the sagging relationship between the RUF and UNAMSIL. This subsequently facilitated in strengthening the ties and retrieval of UN equipment captured by RUF in May 2000. As we bid adieu, I would pray to God Almighty to shower all the happiness, wellbeing and prosperity on you, your entire staff and the besieged residents of Sierra Leone. I am sure that you will exult in your endeavours and usher in the much needed peace to Sierra Leone.*

According to Mr. Muckson Sesay, OPARD-SL's efforts during and after the conflict were never really acknowledged in official peace ceremonies. The reminder of OPARD-SL's brave and year-long endeavours is UNAMSIL's letter in Muckson Sesay's office and a peace monument an hour and half's motorbike ride from Masiaka. In other words, although the conflict was eventually resolved through a massive international (British) intervention, one major aspect remains largely unnoticed, that is, pacifying Sierra Leone was initiated and constantly influenced by a series of civil society initiatives. Masiaka is just one out of many examples where ordinary Sierra Leonean's proved their courage and their commitment to peace. Likewise, as raised in interviews with EFSL (Evangelic Fellowship of Sierra Leone) and the Fifty/Fifty group, civil society also provided all kinds of relief, humanitarian aid, and assisted refugees in IDP camps. Some of these locally established organizations received external funding to ensure continued support. Interestingly, some of the CSOs interviewed feel that local ownership of the process was much greater during the war than it is now during the country's peace building phase.

In August 2000, the RUF announced that Issay Sesay would replace the imprisoned Foday Sankoh as its leader. Two months later, on November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2000, the Abuja Ceasefire Agreement was signed, reaffirming the commitments made at the Lomé Peace Agreement in July 1999. It welcomed the "emergence of a new leadership within the RUF".<sup>25</sup> The RUF, once again, had to agree to return all captured weapons and participate in a comprehensive DDR program. An arms destruction

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<sup>22</sup> See BBC article from August 7<sup>th</sup>, 2001: Sierra Leone road trip: Freetown to Masiaka, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/1478041.stm>

<sup>23</sup> More information on OPARD-SL can be found at: <http://www.opardsl.org/>,

<sup>24</sup> A copy of the letter was given to me during the interview.

<sup>25</sup> The full Abuja agreement can be accessed at: <http://www.sierra-leone.org/ceasefire1100.html>,

ceremony was held in Freetown on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2002. UNAMSIL concluded the disarmament process and the following day, the war was officially declared over.

## Conclusion

When dismantling the mosaic of how civil society was constructed prior to and during the war, one finds many shades of gray and colours that change over the time. Civil society was transformed, altered, and challenged in multiple ways. It was a fragment of civil society (the disillusioned youth led by a middle-aged Sankoh with Taylor's assistance) who triggered – *not* to be mistaken with caused - the war. Simultaneously, a large part of Sierra Leonean society courageously stood up to resolve it and/or provided relief. Civil society was repressed and harassed and became both the perpetrator and victim of the war. By drawing on the key-variables *actors, functions/agency, principles, patterns of interaction* and *structure*, the different roles and functions of civil society in Sierra Leone before and during the conflict shall be briefly recapitulated and assessed below.

### *Actors (micro, meso, and macro level)*

At the *micro level*, ordinary citizens from rural and urban areas, students, and lumpen youth fed into a guerilla rebellion without even taking part in it later on. The oppression, grievance, exploitation, corruption, and forlornness of a century, fuelled resistance against anyone who seemed to maintain the system. Yet the majority of early RUF members such as Ali Kabba were not determined to maim about 27,000 civilians, forcefully recruit 10,000 child soldiers, and kill thousands of innocent people. Can we explain the RUF's pattern of behaviour simply with the argument that the wrong kind of individuals gained greater influence over the time? Partly, but surely not entirely. Initially, not all RUF commanders encouraged their fighters to commit horrendous atrocities. Likewise, it became more and more difficult to differentiate rebels from *sobel*s and other warring parties. In very simple terms, the emergence of civilian rebellions like those of the RUF and the collusion with armed forces later on was also an accumulation of anger, resentment, and shame (Keen 2005) from centuries of oppression. In this respect, Krijn (2011) finds that most of the voluntary RUF recruits came from a rural underclass descending from client or previous slave families who despised "free-borns".

The vast majority of Sierra Leonean civil society, however, did not react to the century of oppression with violence. On the contrary, many single individuals played crucial roles in providing relief and promoting peace. The OPARD-SL is one example. Another prime example can be made by referring to the work of Mr. Ahmed Tejan Kabba - founder of a club called the Peacemakers (which was later re-named Street Life Family SLF) based in Freetown. SLF is not a political grassroots movement; rather it is an informal social support system for all of its members. Struggling with the consequences of the conflict and poverty himself, Mr. Kabba simply reached out to the youth of the community with the simple message "Together as one" (the slogan of the club). Organizations like SLF are no exception in Sierra Leone.<sup>26</sup>

From the *meso-level* emerged more formally recognized and organized community based or civil society organizations. Not only did (and still do) these organizations provide all kinds of relief, humanitarian, and developmental aid, some of them used their social capital (connections to rebels or armed forces) in a continuous mediation effort to resolve the conflict.

At the *macro level*, thousands gathered to demonstrate for peace and conflict resolution, but only a few formal organizations were actually able to observe the peace negotiations. Their participation in the talks was extremely limited with the ICRSL as only actor present during the Lomé talks.

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<sup>26</sup> Today the SLF has about 50 members (mainly young men) who support each other in several areas.

### *Functions / Agency*

SLANGO stressed that before the war started, civil society gave warning signs (e.g., alerted the government about grievances with regards health care, education, corruption, or malfunctioning justice systems). Nonetheless, Steven's and later Momoh's suppression and suffocation of civil society were basically a one-way street to a war waiting to happen. From a different perspective, one could argue that the formation of the RUF (in its nascent stages) was also a warning signal. The actions and behaviour of disgruntled and disillusioned youth from the *potes* and rural areas and/or seditious students on university campuses reflected their frustrations regarding the mismanagement of the country, if not entire region.

Later on during the war, CSO's were involved with communities, undertook counselling services, and had been hand-in-hand with the broader peace process by providing first hand information from the very local level. This was illustrated for instance in the case of OPARD-SL. As mentioned earlier, local CSOs, and CBOs played a crucial role in conflict meditation, in addition to their function of providing humanitarian assistance, support, and raising awareness.

### *Principles*

Better health care, access to education, good governance, containment of corruption – all of these issues were raised by rebels, non-rebels, and CSOs. In other words, civil society as a whole (put simply, its *evil* as *good* components) strove for social justice, albeit expressed through extremely divergent actions and verbalization. Not all of the rebels favoured an end to the war, contrary to the broader public.

Moreover, identifying Sierra Leonean organic cultural norms and values in the ongoing peace building process of the country is challenging, especially given the influence of so many external actors and interventions. Explaining Sierra Leonean cultural identity and its characteristics is a tricky undertaking. In an informal conversation, a local human rights activist uttered that Sierra Leone lost its identity and therefore its organic cultural norms and values as soon as the slave trade and later colonization overshadowed the history of the country. Yet, certain traditions, beliefs, and cultural practices persisted and can be seen in variations of neo-patrimonial systems, chieftaincies, and the retention and ongoing formation of secret societies. The belief in magic, gurus, and curses (as it was commonly practiced by the Civil Defence Force during the war) also marks Sierra Leonean cultural identity. In a video of the country's Fiftieth Independence Anniversary Celebrations at the National Stadium held in late April 2011, thousands of Sierra Leoneans marvelled at magicians who seemed to transform objects into animals and vice versa. In conversations with ordinary Sierra Leoneans (not affiliated with any CSO) many stories were told about leopard men, or soldiers who caught bullets with their teeth during the war. Despite widespread poverty one can simply not escape narratives that the supernatural is all around. On a long *poda poda* bus ride for instance, two Sierra Leoneans passionately discussed the difference between natural and artificial time – the latter (so it was suggested) being constructed by humans (and their minds) and the former being the only and real timeless truth.

### *Patterns of interaction*

For decades, liaisons between civic groups and the government were either suppressed or co-opted by a corrupt regime. Patterns of interaction between the government and external actors mainly emerged during the war, that is, civil society became a political actor in addition to its functions of providing relief and general aid. During the civil war, CSOs started to receive increased funding from the outside (bilaterally or in collaboration with INGOs or international organizations in general).

### *Structure*

Strikingly, as highlighted by many CSO's, more funds were available during the war than after. One organization even feels that the local ownership of the process in terms of agenda setting and project design and implementation was much greater during the conflict than it was ten years later. In an interview with a regional NGO network, the director believed that during the war civil society appeared to be more vibrant and active but became dormant later on. Then again, other organizations describe post-war civil society in Sierra Leone as lively but fragmented. Overall, many CSO's complain about decreasing funds and lack of ownership.

To conclude, civil society in Sierra Leone is definitely different today than it was before the war. Local civilian initiatives mushroomed and became more formalized, organized, structured, and recognized in Sierra Leone. Still, many challenges lie ahead such as widespread poverty, corruption, unemployed youth, urban migration flows, better integration, and education of chiefs - to name but a few. The process of peace building is not over. According to a staff member of a local CSO interviewed:

Sierra Leone needs to find now its own way of democracy. Each democratic country found a balance of equation – and so needs Sierra Leone.

Such a balance of equation can be only nurtured through attention and sensitivity towards peace building and development priorities deriving from the 'everyday' lives and realities of ordinary Sierra Leoneans (c.f. de Certau 1984, Roberts, 2011, Richmond and Mitchell 2012). Considering how decades of grievances shaped the youth culture that became the RUF movement, and by looking at the constantly growing number of youth clubs but also gangs in the current peace building process, one cannot avoid but listening and learning from everyday narratives, experiences, daily challenges, cultural values, and views. In this context, one director of a CSO also stated that Sierra Leoneans are "now working from being subjects to becoming citizens", especially among the younger generation. One fact is certain - people are tired of fighting even though certain resentments still persist ten years after the war. Lack of respect for youth was raised in numerous conversations with young men belonging to specific clubs, groups or gangs. The litmus test is still to find a solution for unemployed and disillusioned youth. In Katherine Boo's words (2012, p. 407): "I believe that better arguments, maybe even better policies, get formulated when we know more about ordinary lives."

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