

**SIERRA LEONE:  
A NEW ERA OF REFORM?**

Africa Report N°143 – 31 July 2008

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## SIERRA LEONE: A NEW ERA OF REFORM?

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sierra Leone has made much progress since the civil war ended in 2002, but a number of social and economic time bombs must still be defused if an enduring peace is to be built. The 2007 elections, in which Ernest Bai Koroma won the presidency and his All People's Congress (APC) wrested the parliament from the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), restored legitimacy to the electoral process. Koroma's reform agenda promises much but must overcome big challenges. The majority of the population lives in abject poverty, and an ever-growing army of unemployed, socially alienated youth is a perennial threat to security. Patronage networks and identity politics, though evolving, continue to constrain government decisions. The new government faces a fundamental political challenge in building public confidence in its agenda, while donor support to post-war reconstruction is gradually scaled down. It needs to do more than call for "attitudinal change" and a renewed "social contract" if it is to improve accountability and combat corruption. The UN Peacebuilding Commission can make a major contribution.

Voting patterns in the recent elections show that the APC's reform message was well received in urban areas, where both increasing individualism and interest in voluntary association are beginning to replace the old system of extended families and elite patronage networks. At the same time, continued improvements in security and struggles for access to development resources have also resulted in a resurgence of identity politics. This is visible in the return of the old divide between the northern-aligned APC and southern-aligned SLPP, as well as at a sub-regional level, in the concentration of electoral support for the breakaway People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) party in the country's second largest city, Bo, and southern coastal areas.

The new president has exacerbated regional political rivalries by dismissing numerous functionaries appointed by the previous administration and replacing them with APC-supporting northerners. Returnees from the sizeable overseas diaspora, a major source of

election campaign money, have contributed to the pressure on him to reward party faithful with government jobs. Koroma nevertheless has sought to fulfil his promise to run government "like a business concern". He has streamlined the ministerial system, put civil service reform back on the political agenda and required ministers to sign performance contracts whose targets they must meet to keep their jobs.

The president appears to be playing out a long-term strategy of reform in introducing new political discipline and accountability to the old system of patronage politics. His government's success in securing donor support for emergency electricity supplies for Freetown, the capital, was a political triumph, enabling him to speak with authority about the need for a new "social contract" in which the government supplies services and responsible citizens pay for them. However, rising food prices highlight the government's limited room for manoeuvre, and the Presidential Transition Team, underscored the continuing dependency on donors.

That dependency is part of the reason for the government's emphasis on "attitudinal change", as well as the uncertainty over the future of the Anti-Corruption Commission, which has been donor-funded. The attention the Koroma team is giving to communications strategy shows it is aware of the difficulties of moving to national ownership of the development process, but it will take more than skilful news management to satisfy popular demand for an escape from poverty. Donor-supported programs to provide young people with educational and employment opportunities may only have provided a temporary breathing space before the crisis of youth alienation reasserts itself. Recent research in both rural and urban areas indicates that the country's social fabric is stronger than had been thought, but a loss of faith in the post-war development process could still be catastrophic.

Building a lasting post-war political settlement requires a genuinely national project. One possibility is formulation of a fully consultative National Development

Plan to replace the recently expired Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Such a plan needs to enhance interaction between government and citizens and form the basis upon which future governments are held politically to account for meeting development targets.

Even in an aid-dependent country like Sierra Leone, donors' capacity to influence the government on politically sensitive matters has proven to be very limited. Some may be reluctant to support a nation-building project that goes beyond the technical aspects of poverty reduction and institutional capacity building. However, the new UN Peacebuilding Commission is well placed to mediate the transition from donor-driven post-war reconstruction to democracy-driven national development.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### To the Government of Sierra Leone:

1. Give meaning to the rhetoric about "attitudinal change" and "zero tolerance on corruption" through specific policies for improving public service delivery and increasing government transparency and accountability.
2. Consolidate policy on youth employment, private sector development, infrastructure rehabilitation, public sector reform and decentralisation into a National Development Plan and conduct extensive public consultations to determine local needs.
3. Ensure any future governmental audit is transparent, bipartisan and disseminated in a form that enhances public understanding of the operations, capacity and limitations of governmental ministries, departments and agencies.
4. Revive urgently discussion and consultation on the modalities of land tenure reform in the provinces.

5. Ensure the National Electoral Commission (NEC) remains politically independent, which may require bipartisan consultation over future staff appointments.
6. Honour public promises to separate the offices of justice minister and attorney general and to require senior officials to declare their private assets.

### To Donors:

7. Support the creation of a National Development Plan that replaces the recently expired Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and commit long-term funding to it.
8. Continue supporting specific projects in partnership with the government but ensure, where possible, that these are integrated within the National Development Plan.
9. Continue supporting the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), which has an important role in promoting governmental accountability.

### To the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC):

10. Support the Koroma government's efforts to forge political consensus and improve accountability, including by funding implementation of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) recommendations and countrywide consultations on a National Development Plan and land tenure reform.
11. Use the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) strategically to support public consultations, consensus building and policy development rather than simply plugging gaps in existing development funding.

**Dakar/Brussels, 31 July 2008**

## SIERRA LEONE: A NEW ERA OF REFORM?

### I. INTRODUCTION

The success of the All People's Congress (APC) in the presidential and parliamentary elections of August-September 2007 was the first time in Sierra Leone's history that an opposition party had won an election without prompting a constitutional crisis and military intervention. As such the elections were a landmark success, which helped restore legitimacy to the country's democratic process. APC leader Ernest Bai Koroma was sworn in as president in the national stadium on the day after the final results were announced, and police soon quelled the scattered outbreaks of violence against members and property of the defeated Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP).

The APC victory climaxed a remarkable turnaround in the fortunes of a party whose reputation had seemed irredeemably tarnished by association with the corrupt pre-war oligarchies led by Siaka Stevens and J.S. Momoh. "Attitudinal change" has become the watchword of the new administration, and President Ernest Bai Koroma has repeatedly stressed his commitment to improving service delivery, introducing performance monitoring for ministers and public sector employees and maintaining "zero tolerance" of corruption.

The new government still faces immense problems, especially widespread poverty and a massive, frustrated youth population concentrated in cities. Resources are not available for major increases in public spending, despite high donor support since the end of the civil war and concerted efforts to improve revenue collection. President Koroma is also under intense pressure to reward the predominantly northern constituency that voted him into office.

The fundamental political challenges facing the new government are to transform campaign slogans into practical policy and to build public confidence in a reform agenda, while dealing with pressure to provide government jobs for the party faithful. This report assesses its early progress in meeting these challenges, as well as the independent post-war social changes that may ultimately determine both its success or failure and Sierra Leone's future.

### II. THE 2007 ELECTIONS: NEW POLITICS

The APC victory came as an unpleasant shock to the SLPP, whose government under President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah had won credit, both domestically and internationally, for leading the country out of civil war. But as the UN Secretary-General observed, "there is a general perception that the Government's inability to deliver basic services or respond to the needs of the population is due to corruption and mismanagement of public resources, and this has become a source of tension".<sup>1</sup> However, popular dissatisfaction with the Kabbah government over service delivery and corruption was not the only force at work in the 2007 elections.

Continued post-war improvements in security and struggles for access to development resources have resulted in a resurgence of identity politics – the political mobilisation of groups according to their ethnic or regional identity – visible in the re-entrenchment of the old divide between the northern-aligned APC and southern-aligned SLPP. However, this division is by no means absolute; sub-regional groupings and other social factors blur a bipartite picture. Voting patterns also showed the APC's focus on reforms met with a strong response in urban areas, where increasing interest in voluntary associations is beginning to replace the old system of extended families and elite patronage networks.

#### A. RESTORING LEGITIMACY TO ELECTIONS

Whatever the flaws in the management of the recent elections, the APC victory from opposition has helped to reinstate the ballot box as both an instrument and symbol of political legitimacy. Kabbah's government had made significant behind-the-scenes progress since coming to power in 2002, but remarkably little of this translated into tangible improvements to the liveli-

<sup>1</sup>"First Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone [UNIOSIL]", UNSC S/2006/269, 28 April 2006, p. 3.

hoods of the populace.<sup>2</sup> By 2007 many Sierra Leoneans were disillusioned with the Kabbah administration and felt that the president had failed to deliver on post-war development promises.<sup>3</sup>

The elections fulfilled their core purpose, allowing the people to express dissatisfaction through the democratic process and produce a transfer of power. Their smooth running and, more importantly, the legitimacy the process therefore won at home and abroad was the work of a variety of actors. The National Electoral Commission (NEC), the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), international partners and the losing SLPP all played their part.

It is widely acknowledged in Sierra Leone and abroad that the successful elections were a testament to the efficiency of the police, headed by Inspector General Brima Acha Kamara, who deployed well-trained forces, anticipated potential outbreaks and used non-lethal crowd control methods, and to the determination and integrity of NEC Commissioner Christiana Thorpe. In a bold and controversial interpretation of the NEC's statutory powers, she invalidated the results of 477 polling stations that had returned more votes than they had registered voters. All but 51 of these were in SLPP southern strongholds, and subsequent analysis showed that if their votes had been included in the final tally after removing the "excess" percentages, Koroma's margin of victory over the SLPP's Solomon Berewa might have been barely 1 per cent instead of the official 9 per cent.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Kabbah can be given credit for rehabilitating the security services, improving public financial management and restoring elected local government since the 2002 elections. His administration was also very active in setting up commissions, secretariats, task forces and committees to formulate development policy and manage its implementation.

<sup>3</sup>The former president's pledge in 2002 that no Sierra Leonean would go to bed hungry by 2007 came back to haunt him as the country entered that year next to bottom on the UN Human Development Index. Moreover, a steady stream of rumours and media reports alleging bureaucratic embezzlement of development funds, conflicts of interest in the awarding of government contracts and connivance of the police and courts in allowing the offenders of these offences to escape justice passed without official comment. Many citizens, still experiencing bureaucratic rent-seeking on a daily basis, were in no mood to accept the Kabbah government's pleas for patience. Crisis Group Africa Report N°129, *Sierra Leone: The Election Opportunity*, 12 July 2007.

<sup>4</sup>The run-off result issued by the NEC on 17 September 2007 showed Koroma with 54.6 per cent (950,407 votes) and Berewa 45.4 per cent (789,651) of the 1,740,058 valid votes. The NEC released details for the 477 excluded polling stations at a press conference in Freetown on 29 November,

Disputes among NEC staff over these invalidations and other aspects of election management led to the resignation of one senior officer and the dismissal of two others after they walked out in protest from the press conference at which the final results were announced. All three were from the south.<sup>5</sup>

The commissioner's actions undoubtedly caused a breakdown of trust among senior NEC staff, and a prompt explanation of discrepancies in the reporting of run-off vote tallies would have helped defuse tensions. But these complaints carried little weight against the prima facie evidence of fraud in the reported above 100 per cent turnout. Those who witnessed the elections disagreed on whether the commissioner's personal qualities were the decisive factor in the success of the exercise, or whether they flourished as a result of the involvement of international agencies and behind-the-scenes donor interventions.<sup>6</sup> While almost all peacekeeping troops departed

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revealing that 198,058 "valid" votes and only 8,509 "excess" votes (ie, votes taking turnouts beyond the 100 per cent) had been counted at these polling stations. Of these "valid" votes, 169,054 were for Berewa and only 29,004 for Koroma. Had these votes been added to the final count, Koroma would have led with 979,471 votes to 958,705, a victory margin of just 1.1 per cent. However, since the overall turnout for the run-off was 68.1 per cent, it is highly likely many more than 8,509 votes were fraudulently cast at these stations. Since Berewa would not have won even if the "valid" votes from the 477 stations had been counted, the SLPP did not formally challenge the result. Even so, some SLPP members continue to harbour grievances against Commissioner Thorpe for denying Berewa a possibly considerable number of honest votes.<sup>5</sup> Crisis Group interview, Freetown, January 2008. The NEC announced vote tallies progressively, both in press releases and on its website. Some of its communiqués contained statistical errors and inconsistencies, notably the spurious turnout figure of 2,042,601 (the official turnout in the run-off was 1,783,851) that appeared shortly before the announcement of the final results. Its failure to explain this discrepancy prompted allegations in the pro-SLPP press that 258,750 votes (2,042,601 minus 1,783,851) had been hastily omitted from the final count to deny victory to Berewa. A more likely explanation is that arithmetical errors were left uncorrected as the commission came under intense public pressure to out results.

<sup>6</sup>A diplomatic source was keen to give most of the credit to Commissioner Thorpe, while another was inclined to dismiss this, pointing out that the NEC was heavily dependent on external support, and all aspects of election management were closely monitored by donors, UNIOSIL in particular. Ballot-box stuffing had been a major problem in the 2004 local government elections (Crisis Group Report, *The Election Opportunity*, op. cit.), and the view of an international election adviser who assisted the NEC on that occasion was that the commission, backed by donors, had made sure it was

in 2004, UNIOSIL continued to provide a significant capacity-building and peace-monitoring presence and flew in its chief elections adviser to assist the NEC. The army was still receiving in-country support from the British-led International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT), which rendered it amenable to close international monitoring.

UNIOSIL also played an important role in facilitating a united diplomatic front among major donors, especially during the run-off campaign, when sporadic outbreaks of civil disorder saw President Kabbah threaten on three occasions to suspend the election and declare a state of emergency. He reportedly asked China (an increasingly important investor and diplomatic player in post-war Sierra Leone) to support these threats but was rebuffed.<sup>7</sup> The same intensity of international interest and oversight is unlikely to be repeated in future elections.

Berewa, to his credit, conceded defeat as soon as the results were made public. That act, however, did not deter the pro-SLPP press from printing allegations that a UNIOSIL-led international conspiracy had used the NEC as an instrument of "regime change". The SLPP leadership also persisted with attempts to institute legal proceedings against Commissioner Thorpe for malpractice.<sup>8</sup> Inflammatory rhetoric has been aired on national radio to the effect that southern districts will "declare independence", and southerners will refuse to pay the local poll tax. However, senior SLPP figures insist the party has accepted the result, has concentrated already on the July 2008 local government elections and is setting its sights on the 2012 presidential campaign.<sup>9</sup>

Both leading parties have used the post-election violence in Kenya in December 2007-January 2008 to highlight their own good behaviour. SLPP leaders cite it to emphasise their supporters' restraint,<sup>10</sup> while APC leaders use it as an example of the chaos that might have ensued had Berewa won the presidency through ballot stuffing.<sup>11</sup>

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fully prepared to combat this problem in 2007. Crisis Group interviews, diplomats, Freetown, January-February 2008.

<sup>7</sup>Crisis Group interview, diplomat, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>8</sup>The High Court rejected the case in February 2008 on the grounds that it was a matter for the Supreme Court. Rumour has since circulated that the SLPP executive will drop the case as a reconciliation gesture, but no announcement has been made.

<sup>9</sup>Crisis Group interviews, Freetown, January-February 2008.

<sup>10</sup>Crisis Group interview, SLPP executive member, February 2008.

<sup>11</sup>Crisis Group interview, APC executive members, Freetown, January 2008.

## B. RESURGENCE OF IDENTITY POLITICS

Voting patterns in the 2007 elections suggest a reinforcement of old regional and ethnic divisions between supporters of the two main parties: the northern, Temne- and Limba-aligned APC and the southern, Mende-aligned SLPP. However, even though changes in the electoral system have encouraged this trend, the relative success of Charles Margai's party, the People's Movement for Democratic Change (PMDC) and an analysis of the motivations behind the few instances of electoral violence point to several important forces at work besides ethnic and regional antagonism.

In the 2002 elections, the SLPP had made significant inroads into the north, taking eighteen of 40 seats available in the districts of Port Loko, Kambia, Tonkolili, Bombali and Koinadugu. In 2007, it won only three of 39 seats in these districts. The APC took none of the 56 seats available in the southern and eastern districts of Moyamba, Bonthe, Bo, Pujehun, Kenema, Kono and Kailahun in 2002 and only two of 53 seats there in 2007. Koroma received more than 80 per cent of the 2007 presidential run-off vote in the APC's old northern strongholds, while Berewa polled almost as heavily in the historic SLPP strongholds of the south and east.<sup>12</sup>

While the APC undoubtedly benefited from disillusionment with the Kabbah administration, its support base also grew thanks to a resurgence of regionalism, a result of the improved security environment. With the decreased threat of retaliation for contrary political behaviour, constituents have felt freer to vote according to their perceived interests. All major political gains and economic resources in Sierra Leone, including international development funds, are accessed through the centre. Better security has thus prompted the revival of a politics in which sub-national, identity-based coalitions claim entitlements to scarce, centrally controlled resources.<sup>13</sup>

Changes in the electoral system have further revived regional loyalties. The 2002 elections were organised under a district block system (seats were allocated on the basis of the percentage of votes won by each party in each district), which virtually guaranteed central party organisations would control the nomination

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<sup>12</sup>Berewa won 81 per cent of the vote in Kailahun, 77 per cent in Pujehun, 75 per cent in Kenema, 67 per cent in Bo and 63 per cent in Moyamba.

<sup>13</sup>For a broader discussion of this phenomenon in the African context, see Harri Englund and Francis B. Nyamnjoh (eds.), *Rights and the Politics of Recognition in Africa* (London, 2004).

process. The 2004 local government elections revealed signs of a shift in the balance of power to the provinces, with party nominations becoming extremely competitive. In those elections 31 per cent of candidates stood as independents, many after losing disputed party nominations.<sup>14</sup> The 2007 elections marked the return of first-past-the-post constituency voting, which placed a further premium on candidates with strong local credentials.

The UN Secretary-General reported that the elections “exposed a deepening political schism and highlighted the increasing dominance of ethnicity and regionalism in the politics of Sierra Leone, which, if not addressed, could have a negative impact on peace-consolidation efforts in the country”.<sup>15</sup> This broad statement is partly true, and Ban Ki-moon is right to be concerned, but the results of the elections and events surrounding them reveal that this schism is more complex and nuanced than first appears.

The 2007 elections saw the growth of a considerable support base for the PMDC, led by the charismatic former SLPP insider Charles Margai. SLPP spokespersons were quick to dismiss him as an opportunist, who had claimed that party’s leadership after losing the SLPP contest to Berewa. He was indeed vulnerable to the charge, having previously resigned from the SLPP in 1996 after it chose Kabbah over him as its presidential candidate. However, as a leading lawyer, descendant of chiefs, son of Sierra Leone’s second prime minister and nephew of its first, Margai has always enjoyed a high profile regardless of office. Deserving as he may be of his reputation as a political maverick, he did display an inclination for reforms during his stint as local government minister in Kabbah’s first administration, especially in relation to chieftaincy.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> 31 per cent of candidates stood as independents, many after losing party nominations. Results are at [www.elections-sl.org](http://www.elections-sl.org).

<sup>15</sup> “Fifth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone”, UNSC S/2007/704, 4 December 2007, p. 8.

<sup>16</sup> The system of chieftdom administration has remained virtually unchanged since colonial times. Debate on reform has long been muted due to the overlapping of the chieftaincy institution with more modern, elite-level identity politics. Margai is a noted advocate of universal suffrage in paramount chieftaincy elections instead of the widely abused electoral college of chieftdom councillors and elders. A former top advisor to President Kabbah, interviewed in 1999, reported that Margai had sought support for this and other chieftaincy reforms in rural areas as local government minister but with little success. Sierra Leone NGO managers with close SLPP links, interviewed in 2005, reported that some

The PMDC won ten parliamentary seats in the SLPP’s southern heartland, suggesting that its support is not ethnically or regionally aligned but rather consists mainly of students and young professionals, largely though not exclusively southern but alienated by the social conservatism and political inertia of the SLPP government under Kabbah.<sup>17</sup> Margai endorsed Koroma for president in the run-off, a shrewd move that established the party as a “third force”, above the regional and ethnic alignments of its two bigger rivals. Some PMDC rank and file opposed the endorsement, complaining they had not been properly consulted, but it decreased the chance of the party’s rapid re-absorption into the SLPP. The PMDC was subsequently rewarded with four ministerial appointments in the Koroma administration (including that of a U.S.-trained scientist, born in the southern city of Bonthe, as minister of marine resources).

Outbreaks of election violence were more complex than a straightforward confrontation of ethnic or regional groups. Most were in cities (notably Freetown, Kenema and Koidu) between groups, mainly youths, who identified with their party affiliation rather than ethnicity or region of origin. The stoning of Koroma’s convoy in Segbwema, Bo district, led to an ugly confrontation and an arson attack on the local SLPP office.<sup>18</sup> Koroma stopped campaigning in the south, and further clashes between party activists in Kailahun district in the far south east prompted a temporary curfew.<sup>19</sup> But the rumoured remobilisation of the Mende-aligned Kamajor militia to prevent the APC from campaigning in the south never happened. Both

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who opposed his bid to win the SLPP leadership that year spread rumours that he planned to abolish chieftaincy if he became president. Crisis Group interviews, Freetown, 1999 and 2005. Since the elections, Margai has kept a low profile, claiming the party constitution forbids him from serving in the government and declining interviews with the local press and foreign researchers (including Crisis Group on this occasion). Rumours of his alienation from other members of the PMDC executive and lingering ambitions to return to the SLPP to make yet another bid for its leadership continue to circulate. Whether the PMDC can hold its electoral gains without a fully committed Margai remains to be seen. A former SLPP minister has already resigned from it, claiming his “mission” in joining, now accomplished, had been to thwart Berewa’s bid for the presidency. See “Emmanuel Grant quits PMDC”, *Awareness Times*, 18 February 2008.

<sup>17</sup> Crisis Group Report, *The Election Opportunity*, op. cit.

<sup>18</sup> “Violence clouds Sierra Leone runoff campaign”, Reuters, 30 August 2007, at [www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L30863815.htm](http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/L30863815.htm).

<sup>19</sup> “Sierra Leone police imposed curfew on eastern town due to new violence”, Voice of America, 31 August 2007, at [www.voanews.com/english/archive/2007-08/2007-08-31-voa2.cfm?CFID=234601247&CFTOKEN=81548300](http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2007-08/2007-08-31-voa2.cfm?CFID=234601247&CFTOKEN=81548300).

the APC and SLPP drew criticism for hiring prominent ex-combatants as bodyguards and “security advisers”, but most were from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and wartime military groups, not the ethnically-aligned militias of the former Civil Defence Force (CDF).<sup>20</sup>

Where explicitly identity-based violence did erupt during and after the elections, it was directed at particular minorities whose voting rights were questioned. Two examples illustrate it was not motivated by deep-rooted ethnic antagonisms. In the first, several Nigerian-owned businesses in Freetown were attacked after Koroma’s victory. Freetown traders attributed the attacks to rumours the authorities had illegally put the foreigners on the electoral register, allegedly promising protection from police and customs investigation in return for SLPP votes.<sup>21</sup>

In the second, the Fula (Peul, Fulani), an historic trading and cattle-herding diaspora with networks across West Africa, were targeted. While Fula have lived in the country for centuries, they are often considered “strangers” by settled, land-owning groups. Fula migrated from Guinea to Sierra Leone in large numbers in the 1960s and 1970s during the oppressive regime of Sekou Touré, many without formal naturalisation.<sup>22</sup> The community has since grown and prospered, and its leaders strongly backed the SLPP during the recent

elections. Fula groups and their property subsequently suffered sporadic attacks, allegedly perpetrated by vindictive APC supporters.

Beneath the party contest and any identity-oriented confrontation, the involvement of young people in election violence highlighted the pressing challenge of meeting the expectations of an increasingly youthful and urbanised population. According to UN Development Programme (UNDP) estimates, 56 per cent of registered voters were 32 and under.<sup>23</sup> None of the parties could afford to ignore the “youth question”.<sup>24</sup> The APC election manifesto acknowledged youth unemployment as a “time bomb”; the SLPP’s called it a “human development and security challenge”.<sup>25</sup> In other words, while regionalism and ethnicity were both important in 2007 and cannot be discounted as sources of future instability, overall the old standards of identity politics have begun to evolve.

### C. THE DECLINE OF PATRONAGE?

The forms of identity politics that interact most regularly with state politics in Sierra Leone are local. The leading parties have essentially been coalitions of individuals with strong private power bases in provincial districts and towns. Post-war social changes in cities and a growing lack of confidence in patrons’ loyalty to home areas were apparent in the 2007 elections and are visibly weakening the patronage system. But it is unclear whether the resurgence of associational life (through which broad groups organise on the basis of a common interest – livelihoods, leisure activity or residence – to increase their chances of survival) and renewed demands for governmental accountability are driving a fundamental change in the political system or merely prompting adjustments to the old patronage politics. Fears that not diverting state resources to private networks simply gives others the opportunity to do so still sustain clientelism.

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<sup>20</sup>The most prominent of these ex-combatants were Idrissa “Leather Boot” Kamara and Tom Nyuma. Kamara was originally a member of the predominantly northern-aligned Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) junta that seized power in May 1997. He served as an advisor to RUF leader Foday Sankoh and was an RUF-nominated deputy minister in the transitional government formed by Kabbah under the Lomé Accord of July 1999. Released from prison in 2006, he was Koroma’s personal bodyguard during the 2007 election campaign, after which he joined the Sierra Leone Police on a fast-track training program. Nyuma, from the south east, was a lieutenant-colonel in the pre-war regular army and a leading member of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) junta that ousted President Momoh in April 1992. As secretary of state east in the NPRC administration, he was in the forefront of early initiatives to organise civil defence against the RUF. Following deportation from the U.S. in July 2007, he organised security for SLPP candidates campaigning in the south east. According to rumours, this included reviving his wartime “ranger group” of loyal young strongmen. During the campaign, Idrissa Kamara and other members of Koroma’s entourage clashed with Nyuma and his group at a Bo hotel. Nyuma won the SLPP nomination for Kailahun District Council chairmanship in June 2008.

<sup>21</sup>Crisis Group interviews, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>22</sup>See Alusine Jalloh, *African Entrepreneurship: Muslim Fula Merchants in Sierra Leone* (Athens, Ohio, 1999).

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<sup>23</sup>“Youth vote expected to decide Sierra Leone’s future”, UNDP press release, 10 August 2007, at <http://content.undp.org/go/newsroom/2007/august/youth-vote-sierra-leone-20070810.en;jsessionid=axbWzt8vXD9>.

<sup>24</sup>The government considers “youth” to be the fifteen to 35 age group. It is a very fluid social category, incorporating several indices of social subordination (eg, not yet formally married or in charge of a household) only partially linked to age.

<sup>25</sup>See APC manifesto, Article 18.1, available at [www.apcpatysl.org/news/templates/manifesto.asp?articleid=61&zoneid=8](http://www.apcpatysl.org/news/templates/manifesto.asp?articleid=61&zoneid=8), and SLPP manifesto, Section IV (g), [www.slpp.ws/docs/MANIFESTO.doc](http://www.slpp.ws/docs/MANIFESTO.doc).

## 1. Cracks in the patronage system

A well-established system of patronage has traditionally characterised the political relationship between the central government and provincial towns. Every town and chiefdom has its local elite, typically consisting of chiefs and land-owning families, but also including retired civil servants and military personnel and wealthy “strangers” who have established themselves in the area. Historically, members of these elites would become patrons by sponsoring the education and adult initiation rites of local youth, thereby seeking to create loyal political followings.<sup>26</sup> Patrons would attempt to engage directly with the central government to obtain development resources for their area and jobs for their members. Even today, members of the public, not necessarily patrons, walk unchallenged into ministries confident that, with sufficient patience, they can obtain an audience with a minister or permanent secretary.

Analyses of politics in the early independence era emphasised that both leading parties were essentially coalitions of individuals with strong private power bases in provincial districts and towns. The APC began as a politically progressive, breakaway party of predominantly northern professionals, mining trade unionists and chiefs frustrated at the perceived ethnic insularity and social conservatism of an SLPP governing establishment dominated by elites from the more agriculturally prosperous south.<sup>27</sup> Subsequently, however, the two leading parties and those who identified with them became much more concerned with building

election-winning coalitions that could channel development resources back to impoverished localities. Ideologically driven politics was a luxury many rural poor could not afford; from their point of view, voting for a minority party would simply have eliminated their best chance of accessing state-controlled resources.<sup>28</sup>

These same concerns persist today in the provinces, but the patronage mentality is losing its hold more quickly in urban areas. The APC’s crushing victory in the capital district (Western Area) had every appearance of a mass vote for better governance and service delivery over the failed promises of patronage. In 2002 the SLPP won eight of sixteen seats available in the Western Area and Kabbah 55 per cent of the vote in the presidential election. In 2007, the APC captured all 21 seats contested there and Koroma 70 per cent of the presidential run-off vote. One reason for the APC’s success in Freetown was that it had long had an electoral advantage due to the capital’s historic trading hinterland in the north, from where many among its settled population also came.<sup>29</sup>

Another reason was the heavy influx of migrants from all parts of the country, youths prominent among them, seeking education and job opportunities since the end of hostilities. Those living in the city, including migrants, have been more exposed to the rise in new forms of associational life partly responsible for weakening patronage networks. Long-established groupings, notably church congregations, Islamic fraternities, rotary clubs, credit clubs and initiation societies (eg, Odelay and Ojeh<sup>30</sup>) have been prominent in the post-war revival.<sup>31</sup> However, the old system of community leadership and job brokerage centring on government-recognised “tribal headmen” is fast declining in favour of a broader range of associations with multi-ethnic memberships organised on the basis

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<sup>26</sup>These modalities were revived in the formation of local counter-insurgency militias early in the civil war. See Patrick Muana Caspar Fithen, “Diamonds and War in Sierra Leone: cultural strategies for commercial adaptation to endemic low-intensity conflict”, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1999; and Danny Hoffman, “The Meaning of a Militia: Understanding the Civil Defence Forces of Sierra Leone”, *African Affairs*, vol. 106, no. 425 (2007), pp. 639-662. While local elites are jealous of their privileges, they are often keen to co-opt new talent. For example, a senior manager of a donor-funded project in Freetown told Crisis Group that during his former work coordinating a successful relief NGO in his home district he was approached by his hometown’s “big-men” about him standing for parliament at the next election. He had declined their offer, but shortly afterward, he was invited by one of the major national parties to stand for their platform in future elections. Crisis Group interview, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>27</sup>See John Cartwright, *Politics in Sierra Leone, 1947-67* (Toronto, 1970); and Christopher Clapham, “The Politics of Failure: Clientelism, Political Instability and National Integration in Liberia and Sierra Leone”, in C. Clapham (ed.), *Private Patronage and Public Power: Political Clientelism and the Modern State* (London, 1982).

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<sup>28</sup>Taylor Brown, Richard Fanthorpe, Janet Gardener, Lansana Gberie and Mohammed Gibril Sesay, “Sierra Leone Drivers of Change”, the IDL Group, March 2006.

<sup>29</sup>Michael Banton, *West African City: a Study of Tribal Life in Freetown* (London, 1957).

<sup>30</sup>Odelay and Ojeh are secret societies brought to Sierra Leone by liberated slaves of Nigerian (Yoruba) origin who settled in the original Sierra Leone colony in the nineteenth century. They have spread to urban, mining and river/sea port areas throughout the country and count members from all major ethnic groups. While operating in some areas as elite social clubs, versions of these societies were also developed by under-employed urban youths for their own entertainment and political expression. See Richard Fanthorpe, “Sierra Leone: the influence of the secret societies, with special reference to female genital mutilation”, Writenet, August 2007.

<sup>31</sup>See Akintola Wyse, *The Krio of Sierra Leone: an Interpretive History* (London, 1989).

of livelihood (eg, cassette, bread and newspaper sellers' cooperatives), leisure interest (eg, sports and video clubs) and residence (eg, neighbourhood security and development cooperatives).<sup>32</sup>

Bo, Sierra Leone's second city, has experienced similar post-war social changes and in 2007 saw corresponding changes in voting patterns.<sup>33</sup> While it had long been regarded as the SLPP's leading stronghold, the PMDC won four of ten seats in and around the city and ran strongly even for those it lost in Bo district. In the provinces these social trends have not been so marked, but there, too, confidence in securing resources via well-connected patrons is being shaken.

## 2. The fear of the oligarchy

The great fear in the provinces is that, once in office, politicians and senior bureaucrats will renege on commitments to their home areas and organise themselves into self-serving oligarchies. This stems from memories of the one-party regime of Siaka Stevens, which co-opted every branch of government and in effect abandoned the rural populace to its fate.<sup>34</sup> A related fear is that a cabal representing narrow, sub-regional interests will take over the central government.

The Freetown press still raises the spectre of Ekutay, the association of Bombali district Limba-speakers that dominated J.S.Momoh's pre-war government, even though it disappeared from the political scene with Momoh.<sup>35</sup> The prominence of individuals from Kailahun district in the post-2002 Kabbah administration also prompted press talk of a "Kailahun Mafia", although there was never any evidence that this district, one of the last to get post-war development assistance on account of its distance from Freetown, enjoyed special favours.<sup>36</sup>

During the elections, fears of oligarchy centred, justifiably or not, on Berewa. He was vice-president in the Kabbah administration, which prioritised capacity building in the ministries, departments and agencies

(MDAs) of central government and creation of donor-supported development parastatals, commissions and agencies. Power over the appointment of directors in these new agencies added to presidential prerogatives to name senior grades in the civil service, national bank governors and the cabinet. As vice-president, Berewa, who gained a reputation among donors as a man who "gets things done", chaired all the steering committees of projects managed by these new agencies.

Early in his campaign for the presidency, Berewa became a noted patron of a powerful new group known to many as the "NGO elite": young Sierra Leone professionals, most with no formal political experience, who have risen to prominence as managers of post-war reconstruction. Public concerns about their lack of political accountability have been shared by some donors. For example, in making the case for a fast-track decentralisation program, the World Bank noted that the public sector workforce was "demoralised and de-skilled", while at the same time, "a shadow public service comprising of contract employees mostly financed by donors is responsible for much of economic and fiscal management, program design, implementation and monitoring".<sup>37</sup>

In the south in particular, fears of a return to oligarchy under a Berewa presidency were founded on distrust of the man himself. While a capable lawyer-administrator, he had not joined the party until after becoming vice-president. According to an SLPP insider, he had no reverence for the party establishment and differed from other leading figures in the Kabbah administration in not making regular contributions to party funds.<sup>38</sup> His humble origins in rural Bo district were held against him by southern land-owning and chieftaincy classes, many members of which also disapproved of his running mate, Momodu Koroma (no relation to the president), a rising young politician and Kabbah's last foreign minister, who was born in the north to a Temne father and Mende mother.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Freetown, January-February 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Fanthorpe, "Communities and Formal/Informal Systems of Justice", DFID consultancy report, Commonwealth Community Safety and Security Project, Sierra Leone, December 2001.

<sup>34</sup> Paul Richards, *Fighting for the Rainforest: War, Youth and Resources in Sierra Leone* (Oxford, 1996).

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, "APC, Ernest Koroma, & the rebirth of Ekutay", *Awareness Times*, 17 July 2007, at [http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article\\_20056027.shtml](http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article_20056027.shtml).

<sup>36</sup> For example, "The politics of inclusion for national concern", *Standard Times*, 29 October 2007, at [http://standardtimespress.net/cgi-bin/artman/publish/article\\_2267.shtml](http://standardtimespress.net/cgi-bin/artman/publish/article_2267.shtml).

<sup>37</sup> "Project appraisal document on a proposed grant in the amount of SDR 16.8 million (\$25.12 million) to the government of Sierra Leone for an institutional reform and capacity building project", World Bank Report no. 28315-SL, April 2004, p. 16. While the decentralisation program was designed in part to combat this trend, the funding structure of the new councils ensures that political power remains at the centre. See Richard Fanthorpe, "On the Limits of Liberal Peace: Chiefs and Democratic Decentralization in Sierra Leone", *African Affairs*, vol. 105, no. 418 (2006), pp. 27-49.

<sup>38</sup> Crisis Group interview, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>39</sup> A former SLPP National Women's Leader, a daughter and sister of paramount chiefs in Moyamba District, claimed in a

Berewa's unpopularity among southern elites worked to the advantage of the PMDC and, ultimately, Koroma's APC.<sup>40</sup> However, in some areas, loyalty to the SLPP appeared to remain the overriding factor for voters. The PMDC's success in Bo district, for example, was not repeated in Kenema, in spite of this district's long noted qualified allegiance to the SLPP. But the return of constituency politics also provided opportunities for tactical voting aimed at winning recognition for issues of special local concern. Of the PMDC's six gains outside Bo district, one was in a constituency containing Charles Margai's ancestral home in southern Moyamba district, and the remainder were along the south coast, in Bonthe and Pujehun districts.

Grievances against the SLPP government were especially widespread in Bonthe as a result of electoral boundary changes, lack of protection for the artisanal fishing sector against poaching by foreign industrial boats and the Special Court indictment of the wartime leaders of the pro-government CDF.<sup>41</sup> Bonthe was a CDF stronghold during the war, and many members of the now disbanded militia considered the arrests as a betrayal by Kabbah.<sup>42</sup> Margai, born in Bonthe town, defended one of the indicted CDF leaders in the Special Court. With Margai's endorsement, Koroma took 42 per cent of the Bonthe vote in the presidential run-off, 37 per cent in Moyamba and 32 per cent in Bo.

The 2007 elections showed many signs of evolution in post-war politics. Confidence in democracy was given a major boost, and regional and ethnic identity, though still strong influences for many, were subordinated to policy concerns, at least in urban areas. It remains to be seen, however, how much headway these new political forces will be able to make against the old system of patronage, whose durability lies as much in its capacity for mobilising resistance to centralised bureaucratic power as in reinforcing it.

The APC government now faces the double challenge of responding to new demands for accountability and reform, while dealing with the pressures of clientelism

that remain relevant in national politics. Improving government efficiency and service delivery and fighting corruption are the measures most likely to win immediate support in urban areas, where access to and dependence on public services are greatest. Reaching minimum standards in these would also facilitate revenue-generating activities in both the formal and informal sectors until the government can effectively tackle job creation. Power struggles between metropolitan and regional elites pose further obstacles for reform, as does inter-generational conflict. Some commentators argued that youth is the vanguard of democratic change, but violent clashes between SLPP and APC supporters during and after the elections, most recently in Bo township, showed that many youths are still drawn into the old ways of politics.

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2003 interview that Momodu Koroma's family background would be his undoing if he ever sought the party leadership.

<sup>40</sup> After winning a respectable 15 per cent in the first round, Margai declared PMDC support for Koroma in the run-off.

<sup>41</sup> Crisis Group interview, Freetown, February 2008. See also Richard Fanthorpe, "Chiefdom governance reform programme public workshops: an analysis of the facilitators' reports", DFID research report, September 2004, pp. 36-37.

<sup>42</sup> Interview, Bo District, November 2005, conducted by current Crisis Group analyst during previous research. All interviews in this report with no specific reference to Crisis Group are in this category.

### III. THE NEW APC GOVERNMENT: REFORM AND *REALPOLITIK*

A major issue facing the Koroma government is whether it can pursue reform without alienating its core political support. Persistent government inertia and social complaints have led many, including the new administration, to believe resolution of the country's governance and development problems lies not in fixing inefficient systems but in "attitudinal change" in government and society alike. In order to lead by example and lend credibility to its agenda, the government must meet new standards. It has made early progress, introducing private sector principles into its structures. But Koroma is under intense pressure to reward party supporters from the north with government jobs and has dismissed a series of competent, senior Kabbah appointees. Such obvious political and regional bias will make it very difficult to promote national unity.

#### A. EXECUTIVE POWER AND POPULISM

The encroachment of party political interests into the public sector became a major source of dissatisfaction with Kabbah's administration, and the same may well happen to its successor. To turn his rhetoric into tangible change while retaining his popularity, President Koroma must unite citizens from north and south. The new government has asked for judgment on its performance to be reserved for three years, but the early signs are mixed.

##### 1. Identifying the problem

The first strategic task has been to diagnose the sources of the problems its proposed reforms seek to overcome. The president has observed on a number of occasions since his election that Sierra Leone is blessed with rich mineral resources and vast agricultural potential and should not be poor. Donors tended to agree, many noting that, in theory at least, "all the systems are now in place" to ensure government efficiency and probity in maintaining the rule of law, collecting revenue and managing public services.<sup>43</sup>

Sierra Leone's first full Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP, for 2005 to 2007) incorporated a range of public sector financial management reforms, along with an existing program for reforming the civil service.

Its failure to reduce poverty visibly was a source of mounting frustration among citizens and donors alike and led Koroma and his advisers to believe that many of the governance and development problems were rooted in "culture" (social attitudes, moral dispositions and political practices), rather than systems and structures.

Reports of obstructive practices in government, whether motivated by personal or political interests, have indeed been widespread. Under the 1991 constitution, the cabinet secretary heads the civil service, but under the Kabbah administration this function was allocated to the secretary to the office of the president, a political appointee who gained notoriety among donors for obstructive "gate-keeping".<sup>44</sup> The most recent comprehensive review of government architecture was completed in March 2006, but its recommendations have not been implemented, because the steering committee on good governance did not endorse them before they went to the cabinet.<sup>45</sup>

The quality of governance in the public sector is well known to be below standard. Rigid adherence to procedural minutiae and withholding information are well-established techniques by which bureaucratic authority is converted into rents, and popular recognition of, and resentment towards, these practices is considerable.<sup>46</sup> President Koroma acknowledged these sentiments in his speech at the opening of parliament on 5 October 2007. He stated that he was "concerned about the tendency of some civil servants to use their offices to undertake private enterprise", and that "in the recent election we actually witnessed a situation where civil servants abandoned their offices to engage in partisan political campaigning".<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup>Interviews, international agency official, Freetown, November 2005.

<sup>45</sup>"Sierra Leone: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper - annual progress report", International Monetary Fund, September 2006, p. 38. The newly appointed Anti-Corruption Commissioner reported a similar problem: the auditor general had refused to release information to him on the grounds that distribution of financial reports was unlawful until the Public Accounts Committee had reviewed and sent them to parliament. Crisis Group interview, ACC commissioner, February 2008. A senior Sierra Leone adviser to UNDP described yet another case in point. UNDP supports the Sierra Leone government's Public Expenditure Tracking Survey, which is an exercise that has detected numerous unexplained cuts in the value of budgeted items at successive stages of disbursement. Reportedly, the finance ministry has yet to investigate these anomalies but expects UNDP to continue in its support for the monitoring process. Crisis Group interview, UNDP official, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>46</sup>Crisis Group interviews, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>47</sup>The full text of this speech is at [http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article\\_20056706.shtml](http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article_20056706.shtml).

<sup>43</sup>Crisis Group interviews, international agency official, Freetown, January-February 2008.

But the question remains as to what, precisely, can the new government do to combat these problems? Donor agencies mounted a long, and ultimately fruitless, campaign to persuade the Kabbah administration to reform the civil service and reduce the number of line ministries. A “Drivers of Change” study commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in 2005 reported that the civil service accounted for 30 per cent of the overall public sector salaries bill, which in turn accounted for one quarter of national expenditures.<sup>48</sup> Yet, the new Human Resources Management Office (HRMO) found in 2007 no records for nearly 60 per cent of civil servants (9,300 of 16,000). Evidence of payments to “ghost” workers (ie, salary payments to deceased, transferred or entirely fictional workers) was widespread. For example, salaries were credited to 236 names on the senior civil service list (grades 11-14), while a head-count revealed only 125 actually at their posts.<sup>49</sup>

The Koroma government’s approach has been to urge citizens to undertake critical self-appraisal of their moral conduct (“attitudinal change”) and to implement policies that specifically illustrate the virtues of public service, civic pride, state-society dialogue and the running of government according to private-sector disciplines. This carries considerable political risks, insofar as the government is inviting public scrutiny of its own efforts to meet new standards of governance and probity while under intense pressure to reward supporters with government jobs.

Heavy donor dependency further constrains the capacity for action. Though it might want to embark on populist policy initiatives to win voter favour, it is accountable to donor conditions of fiscal responsibility and good governance. However, donors are keen to facilitate greater domestic ownership over administrative and development policy, and this is an area in which there has been early progress.

## **2. Responding to the problem: running government “like a business concern”**

Koroma told foreign media during the run-off campaign that “we have to run this country like a business concern”.<sup>50</sup> Within days of his inauguration as presi-

dent, he had announced the formation of a 60-member Presidential Transition Team (PTT), whose main tasks were to “assess the current state of government institutions in terms of policy, programs and resources”, “take stock of the present situation in the machinery of government including assets, liabilities, measures and actions awaiting implementation” and “make recommendations on possible directions and follow-up action points”.<sup>51</sup> In an unprecedented step, outgoing ministers were asked to stay on and cooperate with the PTT pending the appointment of a new cabinet.

Pledges to introduce compulsory asset declarations for all public officials (including the president and ministers) and performance contracts for ministers and civil servants followed. President Koroma has also spoken publicly of the need to reaffirm the principle of the separation of powers between the presidential, parliamentary and judicial branches. Separation of the offices of attorney general and justice minister was announced in the president’s speech to the opening of parliament, and newly elected members of parliament were told that they would not be considered for cabinet appointments even if they followed constitutional rules and resigned their seats.<sup>52</sup>

The Koroma administration has also begun to implement reforms at the heart of government. So far, these have been modest and focused on streamlining the ministerial system: the parliamentary and political affairs ministry has been discontinued in the name of separation of powers; the interior ministry, which dealt with security, has been joined to the local government ministry; the ministries of youth and sports and development and economic planning have been absorbed by the ministries of education and finance, respectively; and transport has been removed from the information and communications portfolio to create a new ministry of transport and aviation.

A change of potentially deeper significance is the fulfilment of Koroma’s promise to introduce performance contracts for public employees. This, a senior staff member of a leading donor agency noted, is “entirely new to Sierra Leonean politics”.<sup>53</sup> Members of the cabinet have all signed one-year contracts, which set out performance targets they are to report on quarterly. An annual report, synthesising submissions

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<sup>48</sup> The rest of the public sector wage bill spreads across the security sector (police and army), education and health. For an assessment of the wage bill in 2005, see “Country Report”, IMF, no. 05/194, June 2005.

<sup>49</sup> Brown et al., *Sierra Leone Drivers of Change*, op. cit., Annex 4, “Civil Service Reform”.

<sup>50</sup> “S Leone presidential frontrunner declares war on graft”, Reuters, 14 September 2007.

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<sup>51</sup> “Statement by Hon. Samuel Sam-Sumana at presentation of Transitional Team 2007 Report”, office of the president, 12 December 2007, at [http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article\\_20057193.shtml](http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article_20057193.shtml).

<sup>52</sup> The full text is at [http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article\\_20056706.shtml](http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article_20056706.shtml).

<sup>53</sup> Crisis Group interview, Freetown, January 2008.

from ministers, is to form the basis for discussions at an annual presidential retreat.<sup>54</sup>

Civil servants and other public sector workers have also signed performance contracts. Until now, many public sector workers were employed as casual labour or on a “permanent” and pensionable basis guaranteed only by their original letters of appointment.<sup>55</sup> The HRMO has produced a comprehensive civil service pay and performance appraisal scheme and is coordinating its introduction with the Public Service Commission. Also providing assistance is the Public Sector Reform Unit (PSRU), formerly the Governance Reform Secretariat (GRS) in the presidential and public affairs ministry but now a strengthened body located in the presidential office.

The old GRS was created as a channel for DFID support of institutional reform and capacity building. Its problem, according to the current director of the PSRU, was that there was no reform “champion”, since Kabbah’s presidential affairs ministers tended to join his personal entourage. The PSRU reports directly to Koroma and has been given responsibility and capacity to coordinate all areas of public sector reform, including financial management and decentralisation. Donor representatives no longer sit on its steering committee.<sup>56</sup>

Given Sierra Leone’s recent history, these developments are a major signal that the Koroma administration is serious about public sector reform. But the prevailing clientelism and regional bias will be difficult to overcome.

### 3. Presidential appointments: southerners out, northerners in

While the new government has displayed clear intent to make good its reform promises, Koroma, as noted, is under intense pressure from supporters. The Kabbah cabinet included a few high-profile northerners, but many elite families from that region which supported the APC in the elections now look to the Koroma administration for better opportunities. Furthermore, the proliferation of post-war development parastatals has raised the expectations of the party faithful. Many members of the northern elite who went abroad during the 1980s and 1990s, including many with advanced educational qualifications, saw the APC victory as an opportunity to return.

The diaspora is a vital source of campaign funds for all three leading parties, which in turn gives leverage to elite returnees seeking government jobs. Crisis Group met one in the APC Freetown office. A doctorate holder and recent diplomat in New York, he had returned to help the party’s campaign, and his appointment as director of a leading parastatal had been confirmed that week.<sup>57</sup> Not all returnees are so well connected. Many come home with no job guarantee and some spend days in the waiting rooms of ministries and parastatal offices in the hope of an audience.<sup>58</sup> Even some diaspora newspapers are beginning to complain that returnees, subtly disparaged as *jus cams* (“the just arrived”) in Sierra Leonean Krio, have turned State House in Freetown into a “job centre”.<sup>59</sup>

Providing government jobs for party supporters requires vacancies. The early months of the Koroma presidency have seen the dismissal of large numbers of Kabbah appointees from the senior civil service and parastatal sector. The first high-profile dismissal was of the governor of the Central Bank, a deputy minister under Kabbah and a noted SLPP member, campaigner and fundraiser. Those of the commissioner of the National Revenue Authority (NRA)<sup>60</sup> and commissioner and deputy commissioner of the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) soon followed.<sup>61</sup> The purge has now included other

<sup>57</sup> Crisis Group interview, APC official, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>58</sup> Crisis Group met one such returnee on a flight to Sierra Leone and later in the waiting rooms of the foreign ministry in Freetown. He claimed to be the acting chair of the APC’s North America branch but his name is not on published lists of branch executive members.

<sup>59</sup> See, for example, “State house is not a job centre”, *The Globe*, 12 January 2008.

<sup>60</sup> The sacked NRA commissioner, a prominent Kailahun native and founder-member of the National Unity Party, was finance minister in the wartime government formed by the NPRC junta. He joined the SLPP after its 1996 election victory and was briefly minister of lands and housing in the first Kabbah administration. Crisis Group interviews, Freetown, January-February 2008.

<sup>61</sup> NaCSA is Sierra Leone’s leading post-war development parastatal and has attracted considerable World Bank, African Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank and other major donor funding. It operates mainly as a social fund, delivering support to projects and localities. The sacked commissioner, another SLPP insider, had narrowly failed to become Berewa’s running-mate and attracted considerable controversy in the campaign for allegedly turning NaCSA into a Berewa campaign vehicle. His successor, a Koroma appointee, has vowed that Commission offices will never again be used for party meetings nor serve as an “employment agency” for parties. Current APC supporters may be hoping otherwise.

<sup>54</sup> “Report on the first presidential retreat held at Bumbuna”, Sierra Leone State House press release, 15 January 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Crisis Group interview, Freetown, February 2008.

<sup>56</sup> Crisis Group interview, Freetown, February 2008.

senior-level officials<sup>62</sup> and extended to lesser Kabbah appointees, including the board of directors of all parastatals and a number of southern civil servants noted for close links to the SLPP.<sup>63</sup>

Public protests were muted, even in the south, though most of the dismissed were highly qualified and experienced professionals. Furthermore, since most parastatal managers are employed on one-year rolling contracts, and most civil servants lack tenure, the dismissals offered few grounds for legal challenge.<sup>64</sup> In spite of its avowed reform commitment, the Koroma administration has given little explanation beyond emphasising generally that heads of public institutions openly involved in party politics can expect to lose their jobs. Newspapers have been quick to fill the information gap, printing stories accusing sacked functionaries of active participation in SLPP rallies and, in some cases, their imminent arrest on corruption charges. So far, however, there have been no high-level corruption prosecutions. Many ex-ministers and functionaries have received severance pay.<sup>65</sup>

Donors commend the Koroma administration for restraint in dealing with ex-ministers and dismissed functionaries, but many citizens are more cynical. Everyone can see that positions vacated by SLPP supporters have largely been filled from the northern-aligned, APC-supporting elite. Even some APC supporters are beginning to identify a “Makeni Cabal” at the heart of the government, comprising individuals

who attended certain secondary schools in Makeni (the Northern Province administrative headquarters) and the neighbouring town, Magburaka.<sup>66</sup>

This kind of talk is very common in Sierra Leone politics, but the APC party executive made no attempt to deny charges of regional bias in presidential appointments. It argued that in exercising his appointment prerogative, Koroma looked for the best-qualified people. Those who obtained jobs through patronage had no right to expect secure tenure, and the new era of performance contracts means that any appointee who “fails to contribute” will not stay. Critics of the new government, they continued, were merely using “parochial lenses”.<sup>67</sup>

Koroma has fulfilled his pre-election promise to form a “government of inclusion”, by inviting leading members of the opposition to accompany him on state visits abroad. He has also appointed a former executive member of Tegloma (a U.S.-based Mende cultural association) as deputy education minister and retained the director of the Public Service Commission, another prominent southerner. Even so, the majority of his ministerial and parastatal appointees come from the north. Supporters contended this was justified, as the region gave him and the APC their strongest support, while in parts of the south he was forced to stop campaigning under threat of violence.<sup>68</sup> While these sentiments are understandable, the success of the president’s reform ambitions will ultimately depend on his government’s ability to unite all Sierra Leoneans, north and south, behind them.

## B. STRATEGIES AND CONSTRAINTS

The Koroma administration’s bold reform agenda has at its heart the goal of renewing the social contract between the state and the people. It aims to create better state-society dialogue by enhancing policy dissemination and engaging in public debate. But the government still has a long way to go to match practice to rhetoric. While avoiding opacity in its own affairs, it needs to revive a resource-starved, unreliable and often biased print media. Civil society, with NGO help, is

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<sup>62</sup> For example, the sacked national ombudsman had chaired the SLPP convention that elected Berewa as party leader; the sacked chairman of the telecommunications commission was a former spokesman for President Kabbah; the sacked finance director in the health ministry was also SLPP chairman, Eastern Province; the sacked managing director of the state lottery was also SLPP chairman, Western Area; and the departing commissioner of the Anti-Corruption Commission (who allegedly resigned before he could be dismissed) was a member of Kabbah’s private circle and a relative by marriage.

<sup>63</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Freetown, January-February 2008. A possible exception to this pattern is the recent dismissal of the managing director of the Commercial Bank. Freetown newspapers, quoting unnamed government sources, claimed he was fired for authorising an unsecured loan to a failing road project. “Why Kakay got the Boot”, *Peep!*, 20 February 2008.

<sup>64</sup> An exception was Koroma’s failure to honour his statutory obligation to consult parliament over dismissal of the Central Bank governor. SLPP opposition parliamentarians staged a walkout when the time came to approve his successor, but no further action was taken. “As parliament approves new bank governor, SLPP MPs walk out”, *The New Citizen*, 5 December 2007, at [www.christiantrede.com/webdesign/clients/newcitizen](http://www.christiantrede.com/webdesign/clients/newcitizen).

<sup>65</sup> Crisis Group interview, former government official, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>66</sup> A controversial newspaper editor claimed Koroma and leading members of his government all began as protégés of the late diamond magnate, Jamil Said Mohammed, from Sika Stevens’ inner circle. Crisis Group interviews, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>67</sup> Crisis Group interview, APC executive, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>68</sup> Crisis Group interview, APC executive, Freetown, January 2008.

getting stronger and has much to say; it is in the government's interest to listen.

The new government had an early and popular success in upgrading electricity in Freetown, which showed its commitment to service delivery. Unfortunately, questions about financial sustainability have undermined the project. This populist move also raised unrealistic expectations of what a government facing serious economic problems and with major constraints on its ability to manage them can and should do. Rapidly escalating basic food prices have highlighted a continuing dependence on food imports despite rich agricultural potential. Blaming the previous government for the slow start on these issues will only remain credible for so long. Over time, the pressures of the old party politics system may yet prove to be the greatest constraint on reform ambitions.

### 1. The need for a state-society engagement strategy

While the Koroma administration has said little in public about the recent dismissals, it has repeatedly emphasised the need for better dialogue with the populace. The Kabbah government initiated a National Communications Plan (NCP) with UNDP support in 2005. Its project document claimed the end of the civil war and international help on post-war reconstruction had raised "extremely high and unrealistic expectations among a citizenry long traumatised by violence and deepening poverty, in a state whose basic institutions had long been degraded, and which could no longer effectively deliver the basic social services". The NCP was to develop technical modalities for overcoming the "functional discrepancy" between government and national media, for improving the international image of Sierra Leone so as to attract private sector foreign investment and, above all, for ensuring government could "communicate some of the undeniable gains made since the war to the general populace [and] assure its citizenry that it has their interests at heart".<sup>69</sup>

The irony was that donors and NGOs engaged in post-war reconstruction were already spending considerable resources on public consultations and "sensitisation" campaigns. The government itself took a

leading role in the consultations on decentralisation, the PRSP and other national projects, but dialogue and participation were also routine elements of NGO project delivery at the local level.

Many donor projects have the explicit aim of building capacity among the populace for recognising and claiming justice on the basis of internationally sanctioned human and civil rights. Several international agencies consider that helping to build a new "civil society" capable of holding government to account is an entirely reasonable aim, given persistent rural poverty and the culpability of the national elite in the civil war. Their problem is to reconcile this with the interests of a national government whose sovereign prerogatives also have to be respected and whose own enhanced capacity is an essential goal of post-war reconstruction.

Getting the balance right between these potentially contradictory aims has often proved difficult. For example, the DFID-supported ENCISS (Enhancing Interaction and Interface between Civil Society and the State to improve poor people's lives) program was originally designed to strengthen civil society, but after the Kabbah government objected, it was watered down to "enhancing the interface and interaction between civil society and the state".<sup>70</sup> While it has had some success conducting public opinion surveys, producing databases on local development activity, hosting workshops and radio discussion programs and resolving local disputes between citizen groups, it has yet to develop a broader strategy for state-society engagement.<sup>71</sup>

The Koroma administration is sensitive to this. The information and communications minister said the government has a three-point plan for improving policy dissemination: all programs must be made known to the public; when the government makes mistakes, it should be the first to accept and correct them rather than trying to "hoodwink" the public; all major decisions announced by the president should be translated into fully realisable programs; and non-achievable aspirations should not be presented to the public.<sup>72</sup> He

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<sup>69</sup> Despite the government's best efforts, the document said, it had suffered "unending criticism ... in the media and elsewhere for every institutional shortcoming and unfulfilled hope, even when these can be more reasonably explained as the direct result of the war and decades of mismanagement by previous governments". "Strategic Communications Plan", October 2005.

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<sup>70</sup> [www.encyss-sl.org](http://www.encyss-sl.org).

<sup>71</sup> This is the conclusion of the latest (2007) annual review of ENCISS, which Crisis Group has seen. To take another example, the above-noted UNDP communications project was, according to the current UNDP communications and media relations specialist, "hijacked" by the Kabbah government to disseminate SLPP propaganda during the election campaign. The project was suspended by Koroma pending investigation of expenditures. Crisis Group interview, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>72</sup> Crisis Group interview, information and communications minister, Freetown, January 2008.

emphasised that communication should be two-way, not just a matter of “government telling the people what to do”. To that end, the ministry is holding weekly press conferences and seeking to revive the UNDP-supported NCP with a view to training journalists, broadcasters, civil society groups and other “media stakeholders”.

Like its predecessor, the new government is keen to improve the country’s image abroad. The minister emphasised that prospective tourists and investors need to see the “positive side”, rather than images of child soldiers and amputees. The government has recruited a new corps of press attachés for its embassies to help build this image. Many, like the minister himself, are former editors of Freetown newspapers.

Recent events, notably the lack of transparency over the dismissal of Kabbah-appointed parastatal managers, its long delay in publishing the Presidential Transition Team report<sup>73</sup> and the lack of consultation over local government boundary changes, suggest the Koroma government can do much more to meet its promises of improved communication. Indeed, the government’s summary closure of the SLPP’s Unity Radio station in Freetown, shortly before the 2008 local government election campaign began, left it open to the accusation that it was suppressing freedom of speech and political dialogue, not promoting it.<sup>74</sup> Koroma sought to make amends and display his political tolerance by personally presiding over the station’s relaunch on 12 June 2008.

Improving dialogue with the public is not a challenge for the government alone, however. The print media is widely perceived to be aggressive, usually manipulated by interest groups and “neither well informed nor investigative”.<sup>75</sup> Newspaper production is largely confined to Freetown, under small-scale private ownership. Daily circulation of the leading titles is on the order of 2,000-3,000 copies. The print media basically serves as a vehicle for the political talk of the urban elite, with online editions providing a similar service for the diaspora. Content tends to reflect the idiosyn-

crasies of the editor-proprietors, some of whom are noted for supporting particular parties and printing personal attacks on leading figures in rival parties. Yet, trenchant commentaries on leaked government documents also regularly appear, along with well-researched exposés of corrupt practices.

The print media’s fundamental problems are lack of resources and poor editorial quality control. Many journalists have not received professional training, and most newspapers simply lack the means to do effective investigative journalism.<sup>76</sup> Journalists are regularly suspected of having been paid to damage the reputation of their targets, which often means that, as several Crisis Group interlocutors noted, “nobody takes the press seriously when corruption cases are exposed”.<sup>77</sup> Some members of the political elite escape media scrutiny altogether, and others find, in poor editorial quality control, a pretext for dismissing all allegations as malicious gossip.<sup>78</sup> But for all their faults, newspapers are one of the few sources available to citizens for the stories behind events.<sup>79</sup>

Since many editor-proprietors already have close links with the political elite (or its factions), professionals in other sections of the media tend to view promotions of prominent journalists into government with cynicism. The Independent Media Commission (IMC) was created in 2000 as an autonomous body to “guarantee quality journalism” and “encourage professionalism”<sup>80</sup> by providing “a mechanism for the protection of the rights of the citizens and the journalists themselves”.<sup>81</sup> But like the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), it is dependent on the state for most of its funding and has to defend itself from accusations of pro-government bias.<sup>82</sup>

The vast majority of citizens rely on radio and word of mouth, not the press, for news and views on government and politics. Although the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service is seriously under-resourced and in administrative limbo as it awaits privatisation, there is a vibrant network of independent radio stations, many of which receive some donor money. As

<sup>73</sup> See section III.B below.

<sup>74</sup> The government claims Unity Radio did not take out a proper licence and built its antenna in the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service (SLBS) compound without permission and where it caused interference to other broadcasters. The SLPP insists all paperwork is in order and the Independent Media and National Telecommunications Commissions, not the government, are responsible for the issues. It formally complained to the UK, UN, African Union and Commonwealth.

<sup>75</sup> Crisis Group interview, Freetown, January 2008. For a description of the media sector, see Crisis Group Africa Report, *Sierra Leone: The Election Opportunity*, op. cit., 12 July 2007.

<sup>76</sup> Crisis Group interviews, journalists, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>77</sup> Crisis Group interviews, newspaper editor, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>78</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>79</sup> Many radio stations also record political discussion programs on cassettes and CDs and post the audio files on their website.

<sup>80</sup> “Media sector mapping in Sierra Leone”, Search for Common Ground/Talking Drum Studio Sierra Leone, 21 September 2005.

<sup>81</sup> IMC act 2000.

<sup>82</sup> Crisis Group email interview, journalist, January 2008.

a result of radio's wide coverage and capacity for facilitating direct audience feedback (assisted by the recent completion of nation-wide cellphone networks), it has emerged as the "voice" of civil society. The domestic market is flooded with cheap transistor radios and cell phones, and many people deep in the countryside now have access to, if not always direct ownership over, such items. Since the elections, several radio stations have hosted phone-in debates involving senior politicians and bureaucrats.

The full political effects of the recent expansion of modern mass communications have yet to become manifest. An ENCISS staffer observed, somewhat ruefully, that there is little organised civil society that is not donor driven.<sup>83</sup> A senior NGO manager involved in community radio said endemic poverty tends to stifle political imagination and capacity for action.<sup>84</sup> But a point these observations tend to overlook is that impoverished citizens have long considered the acquisition of political information and analysis a survival strategy. Farm shelters, family verandas, palm wine "corners", marketplaces, lorry parks and city pavements and bars are frequently sites of lively debate about social and political issues. If the government wants to avoid the communication breakdowns that contributed to the demise of its predecessor, it should engage directly in these debates through every available medium.

## 2. The price of populism

The government has already made one substantial concession to popular demand by upgrading Freetown's electricity, successfully appealing to the World Bank soon after the elections, in October 2007, to restructure its existing power and water project to release emergency funds.<sup>85</sup> The Kabbah administration's failure to ensure that the capital had a reliable electricity supply was a source of great public anger and shame. It became symbolic of Sierra Leone's pernicious underdevelopment in spite of the influx of donor money.<sup>86</sup> The Koroma administration's initiative won huge popular approval.

When Crisis Group interviewed youth groups in Freetown, the APC government's achievement in bringing "light" was always the first point mentioned.<sup>87</sup> Interviews with youth groups in the rural north revealed the general expectation that, once completed, the long-delayed Bumbuna hydroelectric project would soon deliver electricity to every province.<sup>88</sup> Yet, it will take more than isolated instances of government largesse to reestablish a proper system of service delivery. Within weeks of the start of the emergency electricity initiative, a newspaper printed a letter, purportedly from the World Bank, questioning the sustainability of a scheme that was costing Sierra Leone \$5 million per month. Reportedly, it would break even only if the tariff on consumers was doubled, and 250 workers were dismissed at the National Power Authority (NPA).<sup>89</sup>

The president subsequently issued a press statement, which included the following message:

[E]lectricity is not free. Ensuring power in the future depends on customers paying their bills. Without revenue, the system cannot be sustainable. This is another aspect of the change in attitudes for which I have called. Patriotic Sierra Leoneans who want this country to succeed need to know that to sustain progress in the provision of services, they will have to pay for them. This is the contract between the people and the state.<sup>90</sup>

Part of the problem is that many Freetown properties are occupied by tenants and sub-tenants, most lacking written leases. Identifying who is responsible for a bill would be difficult even if the NPA had resources to keep up-to-date records. It is also open to question

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2005, and the emergency World Bank loan (\$30 million), subsequently augmented by a further \$20 million from the UK, has provided a year's bridging arrangement until it comes on stream by the end of 2008. The SLPP government was a victim of unfortunate timing on the project's completion. "World Bank to finance power supply project in Sierra Leone", World Bank press release, 16 June 2005 and "Sierra Leone emergency power – meeting the challenge of turning on the lights", *ibid*, 19 October 2007; "UK boosts Sierra Leone energy sector", DFID press release, 28 January 2008, at [www.dfid.gov.uk/news/files/pressreleases/sierra-leone-energy-sector.asp](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/news/files/pressreleases/sierra-leone-energy-sector.asp).

<sup>87</sup> Crisis Group interviews, youth groups, Freetown, January-February 2008.

<sup>88</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Kamabai and Bumban, Bombali District, February 2008.

<sup>89</sup> "World Bank doubts: can 'Koroma electricity' be sustained?", *Peep!*, 13 February 2008.

<sup>90</sup> "Electricity supply", State House press release, February 2008, at [www.statehouse.gov.sl/test2/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=83&Itemid=2](http://www.statehouse.gov.sl/test2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=83&Itemid=2).

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<sup>83</sup> Crisis Group interview, ENCISS staffer. Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>84</sup> Crisis Group interview, NGO official, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>85</sup> "Sierra Leone Emergency Power-Meeting the Challenge of Turning on the Lights", World Bank, 19 October 2007.

<sup>86</sup> The urban market was flooded with cheap, imported generators ("Kabbah Tigers"), but many poorer residents could not afford them. New donor funding to complete the long-delayed Bumbuna hydroelectric project was approved in

how many current and prospective consumers of electricity can afford it. But the larger problem alluded to by the president is the persistence of a culture of clientelism, which leads people to regard electricity as their reward for voting the government in. Ordinary citizens can hardly be blamed for thinking this way after suffering years of taxation, legal and illegal, and seeing little in return except steadily eroding services and infrastructure. If it achieves nothing else, the emergency electricity initiative will set a useful precedent for negotiation of the state-society contract. This government can at least claim it has tried to deliver services.

Another economic problem to emerge in the early months of the Koroma presidency has been rapidly escalating prices for basic foodstuffs. The cost of a 50kg bag of imported rice nearly doubled in the second half of 2007; wheat flour, palm oil and other foodstuffs had similar increases. Domestic cereal harvests only meet about 67 per cent of consumption needs, leaving a gap that must be filled through commercial imports and food aid estimated at 175,000 tons.<sup>91</sup> Opposition spokespersons, led by a former World Bank economist, were quick to accuse the new government of mismanaging the economy. But it soon became obvious this was a global phenomenon, driven by rising oil prices, changing dietary demands in an increasingly affluent China and South Asia and a series of adverse weather events in grain-producing countries.<sup>92</sup>

The government's initial response was to announce food price ceilings and a ban on food exports. The subsequent seizure by customs of a large consignment of palm oil at the Guinea border became headline news,<sup>93</sup> but the government has limited powers to enforce these measures and has not pursued them with great vigour. Indeed, its flirtation with price controls has raised the spectre of Siaka Stevens' and JS Momoh's pre-war APC regimes, which kept artificially high exchange rates and low food prices as part of a strategy for facilitating elite accumulation. The eventual collapse of internal regime discipline and resulting explosion of parallel economic activity marked the beginning of the descent into civil war.<sup>94</sup>

The food crisis has exposed Sierra Leone to continuing economic fragility and dependence on food imports, despite its agricultural potential. Successive post-independence governments have heavily relied on import-export revenues and squeezed this sector as hard as they dared. The current crisis has underscored that food imports are still controlled by a handful of large, mostly Lebanese firms. Before reports of global increases in food prices made the issue moot, there was much speculation in Freetown that these traders had received preferential treatment under Kabbah and were withholding imports to wrest similar concessions from the new government.

The early months of the Koroma presidency illustrate the economic constraints facing any government in present day Sierra Leone, regardless of political agenda. Vice-President Samuel Sam-Sumana reportedly told expatriates in Washington DC in April 2008 that the APC inherited "a cash-strapped economy" and blamed the "rampant and wholesale fraud and corruption" perpetuated by officials in the previous government.<sup>95</sup> That explanation will only suffice for a limited time.

Wartime displacement and post-war improvements in mass communications are raising political awareness as well as economic expectations among the public. The emergency electricity supply initiative, despite its heavy reliance on donors, captured the public imagination. In contrast, the PRSP, with its highly technical approach to poverty reduction and broad strategic aims, never came close to achieving the same excitement in spite of considerable resources expended on public consultation and dissemination. If Koroma is serious about reinstating the contract between state and people, he could do worse than follow up the electricity initiative with a public debate on the state of the nation and constraints on spending. Rather than focus exclusively on the challenge of disseminating policy and awaiting feedback, the new government should engage in the debates over education, employment, rural development, legitimate authority and social justice that already exist at the grassroots.

But the old system of party politics may yet prove to be the greatest constraint on the new team's reform ambitions. The president has had little option but to reward the northern elite for its electoral support and backtrack on some early policy pledges. For example, four members of parliament were allowed to resign

<sup>91</sup> "Sierra Leone: WFP warning on food price increases", IRIN, 17 March 2008.

<sup>92</sup> See for example, "How to solve the global food crisis", BBC News, 28 April 2008, available at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south\\_asia/7365798.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/south_asia/7365798.stm).

<sup>93</sup> See for example, "APC in palm oil politics", *The Democrat*, Freetown, 21 January 2008; and "Controversy over palm oil ban", *Premier News*, Freetown, 28 January 2008.

<sup>94</sup> William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, 1999), pp. 113-145.

<sup>95</sup> "'We inherited a cash-strapped economy': VP tells DC Town meeting", *Cokorioko*, 10 April 2008, at [http://cocorioko.net/app/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=783&Itemid=38](http://cocorioko.net/app/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=783&Itemid=38).

their seats and take up ministerial positions, including the still-to-be separated offices of justice minister and attorney general. Koroma has also been making excuses for delaying the promised asset declaration exercise: allegedly because the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has not yet put the bureaucratic modalities in place, and these modalities require parliamentary approval. Crisis Group has obtained copies of asset declaration forms produced by the ACC already in 2005, however, suggesting that the delay is political rather than administrative.<sup>96</sup>

Koroma's first priority, understandably, has been to build an effective governing coalition within the institutional parameters his administration inherited. But the parameters will have to change eventually if reforms are to take root. A veteran Sierra Leone bureaucrat and political observer, sympathetic to the new administration, echoed the views of the APC executive in identifying public sector performance contracts as a key instrument for disciplining political appointees. In his view, the Koroma team is playing a long game in reforming the governmental system, in effect seeking to transform patronage politics from within.<sup>97</sup> It remains to be seen whether it will have sufficient time, energy and political support to complete this transformation.

#### IV. RENEWING THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION

Effective anti-corruption action is a further key to successful reengagement between government and populace. In 2007, Sierra Leone was 159th of 180 countries on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, and in the bottom ten among African countries.<sup>98</sup> A study on perceptions of corruption produced for the Governance Reform Secretariat (GRS) in 2004 found that 67 per cent of service users and 20 per cent of service managers reported having to pay bribes to obtain public services, while 42 per cent of officials "owned up to irregularities in the management of their institution's budget, including misappropriation [of public funds]", and a similar percentage reported that buying jobs was common in their institutions.<sup>99</sup> The Koroma administration has addressed neither the ACC's lack of resources nor the scandal over the rumoured contents of the Presidential Transition Team's final report. Its "attitudinal change" program is widely criticised. The bottom line is that the fight against corruption still lacks direction and focus.

##### A. A NEW ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY

The ACC was established by act of parliament in 2000 to promote governmental accountability. However, its poor record in securing high-level convictions has disappointed ordinary citizens and suggests it is toothless. Its failures are an indictment of the law enforcement and justice system as a whole, but the commission remains a political barometre of the government's commitment to greater probity in public life. Whether it can combine the roles of a standards-and-procedures-monitoring agency, moral watchdog and law enforcement agency remains to be seen, but donors and government need to ensure it is not starved of funds just when it is beginning to fulfil its purpose.

The ACC is responsible for investigating alleged corruption, advising government departments and agencies on relevant changes in their procedures and practices, educating the public and enlisting its support in the fight against corruption. The first National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS) was published in 2005, with a focus on root causes and public perceptions,

<sup>96</sup> Copies of the forms were obtained in Freetown, 2005.

<sup>97</sup> Crisis Group interview, Freetown, February 2008.

<sup>98</sup> Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index 2007, at [www.infoplease.com/world/statistics/2007-transparency-international-corruption-perceptions.html](http://www.infoplease.com/world/statistics/2007-transparency-international-corruption-perceptions.html).

<sup>99</sup> "Governance and Corruption Study", Conflict Management and Development Associates (CMDA) and Sierra Leone Governance Reform Secretariat, Freetown, April 2004.

priority areas for tackling corruption and policy recommendations for reducing the risk in different sectors of government.<sup>100</sup> The ACC is the product of DFID's post-war partnership with the government and until recently had a succession of British-born Sierra Leonean deputy commissioners and consultants. Even so, it has experienced many difficulties in securing convictions, especially in high-level cases.

Part of the problem has been that the act which created the ACC left prosecution decisions to the attorney general. That official's frequent failure to act on its reports and the facility with which the politically well-connected had their convictions overturned on appeal fuelled suspicion that the governing elite was primarily interested in protecting its own, despite the many conditions related to the government's anti-corruption performance on external loans and grants.

At UK prompting, two expatriate judges were brought in to assist the attorney general review cases, with the power to outvote him in the event of disagreement. This produced no significant increase in high-level prosecutions, however. A review of DFID support to the ACC, published in January 2007, was highly critical of the commission's performance, claiming it had developed an "inward focus" and was failing to survey public perceptions of corruption, engage with government departments and agencies or reduce real or perceived corruption levels. It recommended DFID cease supporting the ACC and integrate its anti-corruption efforts into programs for law, justice sector and civil service reform and decentralisation.<sup>101</sup> DFID's current view is that the ACC must become Sierra Leone-owned: revising the NACS, revisiting the 2000 act, acquiring an oversight team and hiring qualified staff would all help the country make its case for further donor funding.<sup>102</sup>

A revision of the NACS has now been completed. It emphasises the following types of current corruption: a) bribery of public officials to obtain benefits, obtaining services (eg, prompt delivery) associated with a benefit, preventing others from sharing in a benefit and avoiding sanctions or punitive actions; b) use of bureaucratic power for illegal seizure of public and private assets; c) embezzlement of public funds by

false accounting; and d) preferential treatment of members of family and social networks in legal cases, the issuance of government licenses and permits, and the award of government contracts to private firms.<sup>103</sup>

The revised NACS also incorporates renewed emphasis on preventing corruption, with the addition of a "national integrity system" to identify particular institutions as "pillars of integrity", whose standards should set an example in public life. It likewise seeks to look beyond investigation to "measures that will encourage public willingness to expose tendencies for corruption and clearly defined triggers for investigation".<sup>104</sup> It recommends that the ACC have full powers to initiate prosecutions and the 2000 act be revised to take better account of economic crimes, private sector corruption and sanctions to enforce ACC recommendations.<sup>105</sup> The new ACC commissioner, a young and well-respected lawyer, has already drafted an Anti-Corruption Act that takes these recommendations into account. He told Crisis Group the ACC received no funds for this, but he called in favours from friends in the legal profession to complete it. The draft is awaiting ministerial review and parliamentary approval.<sup>106</sup>

Even so, it is not yet clear whether the "national integrity system" is anything more than a recapitulation of the duties and functions of the state institutions (executive, legislative and judicial) as established by the constitution. Furthermore, some of the monitoring and accountability procedures highlighted in the NACS are already being implemented under the PRSP program. But at least the NACS emphasises that improving public culture must begin with government.

## B. THE PRESIDENTIAL TRANSITION TEAM REPORT

The Presidential Transition Team (PTT) raised important issues about the current governmental system that are worthy of public debate: the recurrent gross mismanagement but also the problem of managing a successful transition away from overwhelming donor dependency. It was originally mandated to report to government within six weeks of its inception in September 2007. The vice-president received a preliminary report within that period, along with a request for

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<sup>100</sup> "National Anti-Corruption Strategy", Government of Sierra Leone, February 2005.

<sup>101</sup> "Annual review of DFID support to the Anti-Corruption Commission phase 2 in Sierra Leone", DFID report, January 2007, at [www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/anti-corruption-sierra-leone.pdf](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/anti-corruption-sierra-leone.pdf).

<sup>102</sup> Crisis Group interview, DFID official, Freetown, January 2008.

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<sup>103</sup> "National Anti-Corruption Strategy 2008-2013", Government of Sierra Leone, May 2008.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Crisis Group interview, Abdul Tejan Cole, Freetown, February 2008.

an extension “due to the fact that much of the information was still outstanding, as many government departments had extremely poor levels of record keeping”.<sup>107</sup> A final document – an 85-page executive summary and several thousand pages of technical data – was submitted to the president in December 2007. However, by delaying its public release until early July 2008, the government missed the opportunity to use it as a tool to spur public debate on management and accountability.

The preliminary report was widely circulated in Freetown by private email and extracts published in the local press. The exact contents of the final report remained unknown until Vice-President Sam-Sumana finally released the full version to a group of Freetown journalists on 3 July 2008. A copy was, nevertheless, leaked beforehand to a BBC journalist who published a piece claiming the “confidential presidential audit” had revealed in full detail how Koroma had inherited a “bankrupt nation riddled with corruption”.<sup>108</sup>

In the first half of 2008, there were repeated calls in the national media for publication of the final report, and rumours abounded that the PTT unearthed evidence sufficient for the arrest and conviction of senior figures from the Kabbah administration. No arrests have been made, however, even after the report’s publication. The government gave as its reason for withholding the full text that it did not want to start a public witch hunt against members of the former administration. Crisis Group was told in early 2008 the final report had already been passed to the ACC for review, and the government did not wish to pre-empt its decision about legal proceedings by releasing it at that time. The ACC commissioner, however, told Crisis Group he had not received it, but stressed that the ACC has its own investigative capacity and is not dependent on evidence obtained by the PTT.

Sierra Leone professionals suggested the government had been reluctant to publish the PTT report because its findings and recommendations might set unwelcome precedents for eventual public judgment on its own performance. The SLPP leadership dismissed the whole exercise as a political charade and a pretext for replacing hard-working civil servants and parastatal managers with APC supporters.<sup>109</sup> The timing of the

report’s final release, two days before polling stations opened for local government elections on 5 July 2008, suggested that the APC government was trying to extract as much party-political capital from the PTT exercise as possible. On releasing the report, Vice-President Sam-Sumana spoke of a “general absence of leadership direction in [the] SLPP” and “systemic inadequacies in the management of most of the ministries, agencies and commissions set up by the previous government”.<sup>110</sup>

Crisis Group obtained a copy of the preliminary version of the report,<sup>111</sup> which differed from the final version in not highlighting instances of possible corruption.<sup>112</sup> The final version fulfilled the original terms of reference while presenting an overview of government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs), though one little different in content and tone from any number of management and functional reviews produced by donor agencies in recent years. Those similarities were hardly surprising, since the PTT included academics, journalists, public sector workers and NGO managers with considerable experience in post-war reconstruction.

The basic message of both texts was that the MDAs are heavily dependent on donors but remain desperately short of operating funds. Many struggle to fill approved posts, and some occupy buildings lacking working lifts and properly maintained toilets. They noted, for example, that the last foreign minister often travelled abroad alone on government business in order to save money. They stated that the Sierra Leone Police (SLP), a target for donor support, had become detached from its supervisory ministry, and the ministry itself had been starved of direct donor support for three years. The defence ministry and the armed forces, like the SLP, were approved to manage their own finances but had been able to access only 20 per cent of their budgetary allowance for 2007.

Even relatively functioning ministries were said to be facing problems of organisational coherence as a result of donor dependency. In one case, donor demands for strict financial management protocols were being construed by ministry staff as questioning their integrity. In another case, donor insistence on direct managerial control over projects had led to national and international staff developing “greater allegiance to

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<sup>107</sup> “Statement by Hon. Samuel Sam-Sumana at presentation of Transitional Team 2007 Report”, office of the president, 12 December 2007, at [http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article\\_20057193.shtml](http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article_20057193.shtml).

<sup>108</sup> “S Leone ‘riddled with corruption’”, BBC News, 14 November 2007, at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7092861.stm>.

<sup>109</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Freetown, January 2008.

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<sup>110</sup> Mohamed Mossaquoi, “SLPP lacked leadership direction – APC report”, *Concord Times*, 4 July 2008.

<sup>111</sup> “Presidential Transition Team Draft Report”, Republic of Sierra Leone, October 2007.

<sup>112</sup> The final version of the report claimed there was “almost zero productivity” at lower levels of the ministry.

the desires of the donor agency, which is not always in consonance with the desires of the ministry and the aspirations of the nation”.<sup>113</sup> Few specific instances of corruption were alleged but the report noted many problems over revenue collection and payments to private contractors and recommended further investigation.

The PTT report raised important issues about the current governmental system that deserve public debate, not least the problem of managing a successful move away from overwhelming donor dependency. Unfortunately, the political furore over the rumoured contents of the unpublished final report has pushed these issues into the background. The PTT exercise was originally advertised as a manifestation of President Koroma’s determination to run government “like a business concern”, and the final report was presented to him in a formal public ceremony at which the vice-president repeated the PTT’s observation that “political tolerance [must] be made part of our Sierra Leonean constitutional doctrine in order to strengthen and sustain our democratic process. The processes of mediation, reconciliation, discussion, consultation, and bipartisanship should provide the bedrock for a peaceful and orderly transfer of power”.<sup>114</sup> Such actions and statements are inconsistent, however, with treating the PTT exercise as an “internal matter” for the government.

Even now that the final report has at last been released, an opportunity has been missed to use this wholly Sierra Leone initiative as the basis for renewed debate on public management and accountability. The late release failed to attract public attention to the issues it addressed. Reform intentions appear to have been overtaken by the old political ways: governmental opacity, private information networks, the trading of allegations between rival party supporters and a public left to feed on scraps of rumour and speculation.

### C. ATTITUDINAL CHANGE

In his inaugural address, President Koroma reminded the nation that:

[C]orruption is not only a matter for the leaders and heads of government institutions; it is equally a matter for everybody. A critical examination of the way of life indicates that corruption lies in our attitudes, and unless we change our attitudes we shall never be able to create the peaceful, progressive

and prosperous country we dream about and wish to build.<sup>115</sup>

While this message was undoubtedly sincere, translating it into practical policy is an entirely different matter.

The information and communications ministry has been hosting workshops on “attitudinal and behavioural change”, inviting delegates from the NGO sector, business associations, academia, the police, journalism and religious organisations. Crisis Group attended one early in 2008. Ministerial staff chairing the workshop emphasised that the government wanted to hear ideas, not set rigid guidelines. Predictably, a wide range of views was expressed. For example, there was talk about reviving symbols of national identity, the need for “law enforcement committees” to stop juvenile prostitution and prevent people from urinating in public, greater discipline in schools and broader civic education, government ministers to set an example and declare their assets, the media to improve its performance and improvements in labour laws and public sector salaries, as well as discussion of whether human beings are innately corrupt.

It had been announced at the outset that delegates at the workshops should organise into sub-committees with responsibility for exploring issues of citizenship and public affairs, family and community relations, media, politics and governance, the private sector and education and youth affairs. The exercise is expected to lead to a project document and an application for funding, and even at the early stage delegates made pitches for their organisations’ involvement in project implementation. Shortly after it began, the first of a series of national consultative meetings on “attitudinal and behavioural change” was held at a Freetown conference centre.

It remains to be seen whether this campaign will catch on with the public. It has been met with a fair amount of cynicism in the Freetown press, especially pro-SLPP papers, one of which noted, with obvious relish, the similarities between Koroma’s dictum of “attitudinal change” and former President Momoh’s ill-fated campaign of “constructive nationalism”.<sup>116</sup> Another article bluntly stated that “‘attitudinal change’ must

<sup>113</sup> “Presidential Transition Team Draft Report”, Republic of Sierra Leone, October 2007.

<sup>114</sup> “Statement by Hon. Samuel Sam-Sumana”, op. cit.

<sup>115</sup> President Ernest Bai Koroma, inaugural speech, Freetown, 15 November 2007.

<sup>116</sup> “Koroma’s attitudinal change and Momoh’s constructive nationalism: the president should look in the mirror!”, *Awareness Times*, 19 February 2008, at [http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article\\_20057721.shtml](http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article_20057721.shtml).

first start with changing the attitude that a job with government is a licence to steal from the people".<sup>117</sup>

It has not yet been decided whether the new project will focus on rediscovering symbols of national unity, improving law enforcement or civic education or some combination of the three. But irrespective of the main emphasis, if citizens are to listen seriously to the government's advice and genuinely engage with the project, the Koroma administration must demonstrate it can lead by example. Furthermore, development project modalities have become so commonplace in post-war Sierra Leone that nobody seems to have stopped to consider whether these are appropriate for an initiative of this kind, whether the organisations invited to participate in the "attitudinal change" program are merely seeking funding for work they are already doing or whether parliament is not the best place for debating these issues.

The ACC's struggle to retain funding, the political furor over the rumoured contents of the PTT's final report and the questionable practicality of the "attitudinal change" program would all seem to suggest that the fight against corruption lacks direction and focus. Furthermore, the above-noted focus group discussions with young people revealed that "corruption" is a term used to cover all manner of social and political problems.

The fundamental challenge remains to develop strategies to combat corruption in all its manifestations, and there is no need to limit such strategies to building capacity in anti-corruption agencies. For example, executive and bureaucratic corruption is clearly a major public concern in a poor country, where the state is the largest employer and medium of wealth generation. Focus group discussions carried out by Crisis Group among grassroots, youth-orientated organisations in the Freetown area<sup>118</sup> yielded much more guarded responses on corruption issues than were aired by the student focus group.

Respondents were keen to emphasise that cooperative organisation had enabled them to improve livelihood opportunities and social security. Their primary concern on corruption was that the police and courts should be less amenable to bribery and so give them greater protection from debt defaulters, criminal gangs and sellers of pirated music recordings. With lower expectations than their student compatriots of government jobs and access to state-controlled resources,

they looked to the state to protect their individual revenue-generating activities. Measures to assist small businesses and general economic diversification might thus have a greater impact against bureaucratic corruption than any number of new law enforcement agencies, civic education programs and moral improvement campaigns.

The broader lessons emerging from the Koroma administration's renewed attempts to combat corruption are the same as those from the reforms of the public sector: the need for greater Sierra Leone ownership of post-war reconstruction and development policy; the need for greater consistency and transparency in all aspects of governmental decision making; and the need for better dialogue between government and public, with the aim of improving governmental accountability as well as managing popular expectations. The latter is perhaps the most urgent due to the social changes under way. It is essential that the government engage with society and monitor these trends as they evolve in order to adapt and prioritise its reform agenda.

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<sup>117</sup> "'Attitude change' means accelerating control of people over resources", *Peep!*, 8 April 2008, at [www.peepsierraleone.com/news/templates/article.asp?articleid=252&zoneid=7](http://www.peepsierraleone.com/news/templates/article.asp?articleid=252&zoneid=7).

<sup>118</sup> Crisis Group interviews, January-February 2008.

## V. POST-WAR SOCIAL CHANGE: THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The burgeoning youth population and urbanisation are at the forefront of post-war social changes. The end of the war and the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and other armed groups has not alleviated the youth crisis: 42 per cent of the population is under fifteen; 34 per cent is between fifteen and 35.<sup>119</sup> If young people remain poor and socially alienated, they may feel they have nothing to lose and embrace violent attempts to destabilise the country.

More promising is the durability of social and moral principles, which have been an important factor in the rapid post-war recovery. Moral pressure on wealthier families to support youth and rural poor persists despite the weakening of old patronage systems. In urban areas especially, social changes are occurring among youth, who rely on cooperative associations and credit clubs to facilitate survival. Donor aid and peacebuilding interventions, many targeting skills training and civic education, have provided youth with unprecedented means for non-violent political mobilisation. A recent World Bank study of youth employment reported that the post-war period has seen “a remarkable upsurge in self-organised social activism amongst young people”.<sup>120</sup> But if post-war democracy fails to meet expectations, no amount of civic education and human rights sensitisation will prevent a return to patronage networks and violent political mobilisation along ethnic or regional lines.

### A. THE CRISIS OF YOUTH

In its final report, the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was unequivocal in describing how the “greed, corruption and nepotism” of the political elite deprived the nation of its dignity, undermined the rule of law and reduced the people to a state of poverty. Youth in particular “lost all sense of hope in the future”. Fighting forces were largely composed of “the young, the disgruntled, the unemployed and the poor ... easy prey for unscrupulous forces who exploited their disenchantment to wreak vengeance against the ruling elite”. The report noted how fighters often switched sides or formed new units and suggested this reflected the incessant search of socially

alienated youth for a “vehicle on which to purvey their notions of empowerment as civil militiamen”.<sup>121</sup>

The injustices that preoccupy youth do not stop at the governing elite in Freetown. Early post-war relief targeted rural areas previously under militia control, where civilians as well as ex-combatants frequently made it clear to NGO staff they did not trust chiefs and village elders to manage aid fairly. A repeated claim was that customary institutions regulated by chiefs – unpaid labour for local public works, polygyny, bridewealth (a gift required of a man to a woman’s family to seal a marriage pact) and bride service (a husband’s continuing obligations towards his wife’s kin) – were used to exploit the labour of young people and block their social advancement.<sup>122</sup>

Some commentators have gone on to argue that the civil war was as much a rural rebellion against chiefs and customary law as a fight over resources and sovereign territory, coming close in the process to recapitulating Robert Kaplan’s vision of a West Africa in which social fabric is unravelling and youth has become “loose molecules in a very unstable social fluid”.<sup>123</sup> This emphasises the gravity of the social problems Sierra Leone continues to face in the post-war era, particularly how to help youth realise their social and economic aspirations.

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<sup>121</sup> “The final report of the Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Sierra Leone”, vol. 2 (2004), paragraphs 95-7, at <http://trcsierraleone.org/drwebsite/publish/v2c2.shtml>.

<sup>122</sup> See Steven Archibald and Paul Richards, “Converts to Human Rights? Popular Debate about War and Justice in Rural Central Sierra Leone”, *Africa*, vol. 72, no. 3 (2002); Richard Fanthorpe, “Chieftom Governance Reform Programme Public Workshops: An Analysis of the Facilitators’ Reports”, DFID research report, September 2004; and Krijn Peters, “Footpaths to Reintegration: Armed Conflict, Youth and the Rural Crisis in Sierra Leone”, Ph.D. thesis, Wageningen University, 2006.

<sup>123</sup> Robert Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy: How Scarcity, Crime, Overpopulation, Tribalism, and Disease Are Rapidly Destroying the Social Fabric of our Planet”, *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994, emphasised overpopulation, ecological collapse and ancient “tribal” antagonisms as root causes of this putative societal crisis. Other arguments emphasised the poisonous legacy of colonial regimes, exacerbated by a corrupt modern elite that abandoned rural populations and organised a patrimonial “shadow state” to further its own interests. Paul Richards, “Controversy over Recent West African Wars: an Agrarian Question?”, occasional paper, Centre of West African Studies, University of Copenhagen, January 2004 and “To Fight or to Farm: Agrarian Dimensions of the Mano River Conflicts (Liberia and Sierra Leone)”, *African Affairs*, vol. 104, no. 417 (2005).

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<sup>119</sup> 2004 official census figures. See “Statistics Sierra Leone”, official website, [www.statistics.sl](http://www.statistics.sl).

<sup>120</sup> “Improving opportunities for sustainable youth employment in Sierra Leone”, World Bank draft report, 28 June 2007.

In the short term, post-war reconstruction has substantially increased youth jobs and training programs. In both urban and rural areas, most young people with jobs tend to work in the informal sector; many are self-employed. Consequently, reliable statistics on youth employment are difficult both to access and assess.<sup>124</sup> Broader interventions, notably community resettlement and reintegration, food security and infrastructure rehabilitation, have also targeted youth development but have had mixed results.<sup>125</sup> A recent World Bank-sponsored study of youth employment programs concluded that most were short term and supply driven, focusing disproportionately on training, with limited private sector involvement.<sup>126</sup> Furthermore, reconstruction efforts have been declining rapidly in both scale and intensity and may no longer provide as many opportunities for youth. If the more pessimistic assessments of Sierra Leone's social fabric are accurate, post-war aid may only have bought some time.

## B. URBANISATION

According to official statistics, the population of the Western Area almost doubled between 1985 and 2004; some observers consider that the actual population is much higher than the one million recorded in the 2004 census. Large numbers of rural people took refuge in the Freetown area during the war, and few have left. Youth has been prominent in this influx. While 66 per cent of the population still lives in rural areas, the census found 53 per cent of those between

twenty and 24 and 58 per cent between 25 and 29 in urban areas, mainly Freetown.

The youth and sports minister in the Kabbah administration, interviewed in 2005, argued that inter-generational tensions were relaxing substantially in rural areas following the exodus of the "unemployed element" to cities. But that administration was concerned about the potential threat to social and economic stability represented by the capital's rapid growth and launched several drives to stop street traders from blocking traffic and remove unauthorised housing developments from private and government-owned land. Such schemes have not proved effective in other African countries.<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, the SLPP government's assault on urban congestion and illegal house construction only made it more unpopular. The new government has pursued a more relaxed policy; a Freetown commercial driver interviewed by Crisis Group was only half joking when he recalled how street traders had stampeded into the city centre to reclaim their old patches on the day Koroma's election was announced.

It may seem self-evident that youth attracted to the hustle and bustle of city life is eager to throw off the yoke of custom. The early findings of research on post-war Freetown suggest that its rapid growth is not driving social change as rapidly as one might imagine. Other social networks persist, despite city-dwelling extended families disappearing and the old patronage system collapsing, in part because *bras* (patrons, literally "older brothers") can no longer afford to give clients jobs or assist them with school fees, marriage costs, children's naming ceremonies and family funeral expenses.<sup>128</sup>

A recent study of out-migration from an impoverished rural area in central Sierra Leone (Kholifa Mabang and Konike) found that young migrants in Freetown often sleep in street traders' kiosks or share tiny houses with as many as 30 others. However, it also found that many new arrivals kept in regular contact with their home area; 23 per cent claimed to have received

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<sup>124</sup> In urban areas youth employment in the informal sector is mostly in carpentry, trading of secondhand goods (mainly clothing and electronics) and petty trading, foreign currency exchange, tailoring, sand and diamond mining, stone breaking, driving, auto repair, blacksmithing, block laying and music. The main employment opportunities for young females are in petty trading, tie-dyeing, catering, hairdressing and soap making. The main occupations in rural areas are farming and petty trading. See "Consultations with youth in Sierra Leone", World Bank, at [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2007/Resources/1489782-1137012196309/2112807-1150737906527/Draft\\_Consultations\\_with\\_youth\\_in\\_Sierra\\_Leone.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDR2007/Resources/1489782-1137012196309/2112807-1150737906527/Draft_Consultations_with_youth_in_Sierra_Leone.pdf).

<sup>125</sup> In an era of "rights-based" interventions, aid agencies seek to involve beneficiaries in managing aid and monitoring and evaluating projects, to build "social capital" and rights awareness. For every village cooperative and community-based organisation (CBO) directly involved in a project, several others may have formed, hoping to attract support. Ex-combatants, many still detached from home communities, have also been active in this post-war explosion of cooperative associations.

<sup>126</sup> "Improving opportunities for sustainable youth employment in Sierra Leone", op. cit., pp. 87-101.

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<sup>127</sup> Interview, Freetown, 2005. The minister also, however, said he was considering schemes, notably agri-business training centres, to attract youth back to rural areas. A recent UN consultancy study on West African youth employment made the same point, that "while much of the region's warfare has roots in rural youth frustrations, many of the most restive youth today are now in cities and are unlikely ever to leave". Marc Sommers, "West Africa's youth employment challenge: the case of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire", UN Industrial Development Organisation, 26 November 2007.

<sup>128</sup> Crisis Group interview, activist, Freetown, January 2008.

help from family members in meeting travel costs, 60 per cent claimed to be sending remittances more than twice a year, and only 38 per cent intended to stay indefinitely.<sup>129</sup>

Longer-established migrants still use time-honoured organisational strategies, notably cooperative associations and credit clubs, to facilitate survival.<sup>130</sup> Some cooperative associations in Freetown are adapting to changing circumstances. For example, the Cassette Sellers' Association has an executive to manage recording and distribution contracts with artists, and most rank and file are, in effect, licensed retailers. But most self-organised cooperatives are likely to remain orientated towards survival rather than business unless the economy improves. Rising food prices and an incipient water crisis may eventually force some back to rural areas, whatever their preferences. In the meantime, the capital's burgeoning youth population wants not further technical and "life skills" training but opportunities to make money.

Even if the old system is weakening, patronage as a moral concept continues to influence the political outlook of urban youth. For it, the governing elite is not corrupt because it embezzles state money, but because it refuses to share its wealth. Every neighbourhood in Freetown has its quota of underemployed "area boys", who watch comings and goings with keen interest and regard wealthy neighbours who retreat behind steel gates and walls topped with broken glass to deter trespass with anger. In response, some members of the elite treat their poorer, less-educated compatriots

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<sup>129</sup> Sinead Murray, "Where have all the young men gone? Rural youth migration and livelihoods in Kholifa Mabang and Konike", report for Concern Worldwide, Sierra Leone, October 2006.

<sup>130</sup> For example, Concern Family Nation Building, one of the youth groups interviewed by Crisis Group, described how they had formed themselves in 2003 as a resource pooling cooperative capable of meeting members' essential social expenses (eg, medical charges and funeral costs). The Sweissy Jewellers Organisation, a large and politically high-profile street traders' cooperative, had similar pre-war origins among a group of unemployed youths who regularly congregated outside a city centre jeweller's shop. Crisis Group interviews, Freetown, January-February 2008. An earlier study of a motorcycle taxi cooperative (Bike Riders Association) in Bo found that the main reason given by the group for starting their organisation was the withdrawal of patrons who had become interested only in "fighting for their own pockets". The riders rented time on motorcycles still mostly owned by members of the town elite. Many riders lacked driving licences and were forced to rely on these owners to keep local traffic police at bay. Brown et al., "Sierra Leone Drivers of Change", op. cit., Annex 6: "Assessing Post-War Civil Society Initiative: the Bike Riders Association".

with open condescension, hoping to intimidate them into subservience. Others respond to moral pressure. Two interlocutors from senior Sierra Leone NGO and aid agency staff described how they had tried to help unemployed youths in their neighbourhoods. One claimed he was always giving them small jobs around his compound, acts of charity that saved his life during the rebel attack on Freetown in January 1999.<sup>131</sup>

Post-war reconstruction in rural areas has also benefited from enduring basic moral principles. The same migration study noted that while the significant loss of youth to the cities was acutely felt, it also focused those who stayed on maintaining a common sense of community: "Many of those that remain argue that they feel a greater sense of responsibility towards the village, suggesting that if they leave it will not survive, and many criticised migrants' weak sense of responsibility".<sup>132</sup> A subsequent assessment of this area found that local people, all poor farmers, were as concerned about the post-war out-migration of wealthier villagers as of able-bodied youths. These wealthier villagers (known locally as *ayullahs*) used to serve as local patrons, lending seeds and food to poorer families in times of hardship and hiring labour for cash. But again, those who remained met the setbacks with a renewed determination to ensure survival by collective action.

In common with other rural areas in the country, this area saw a post-war resurgence of associational life: reciprocal labour companies, *osusu* (rotating credit) associations and sports and social clubs. The imperative of community survival overrode petty status concerns. For example, elderly landowners whose children had left the village had little choice but to give landless youths access to land for farming if they wanted to use their labour.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Street youths were recruited in secret by the rebels (mainly ex-soldiers) as they advanced on the capital and ordered to kill their unsuspecting wealthy neighbours. Since he had previously shown them kindness, these youths forewarned him of the attack and he was able to escape. Crisis Group interviews, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>132</sup> Sinead Murray, "Where have all the young men gone?", op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>133</sup> To take another example, widowed women were successfully claiming access to land in their late husbands' villages despite the fact that such claims are not normally recognised in customary law. The women were making a broader moral case for the recognition of their previous contributions as labourers and child bearers to the local community. Richard Fanthorpe, "BRACE institutional survey", report for Concern Worldwide, June 2007.

These trends suggest Sierra Leone's social and moral fabric is more robust than some claim. Indeed, the durability of this fabric may have been as important in the rapid post-war recovery as international aid and security interventions. But there is no cause for complacency. Notions of community and cooperative endeavour have a high profile in situations, rural and urban, where survival is at stake. Part of the glue that holds society together is the hope that if better jobs and opportunities are not available now, they will be in the future.

Poverty also breeds pragmatism, especially in rural areas, where state services are minimal and taxation disconnected from any tangible citizenship entitlements. No amount of civic education and human rights sensitisation will prevent people there from returning to patronage networks if post-war democracy fails to deliver resources. The prospects are somewhat different in the rapidly growing urban areas, where the old family-based patronage networks are already collapsing under the weight of demand. It still remains to be seen whether these changes will foster the development of larger civil society organisations capable of holding governments to account or a return of the early independence era's exclusionary, party-based patronage networks.

A loss of public confidence in the post-war development process could still be catastrophic. As the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report noted, many young citizens with no hope left in the future became as ready to embrace the brutal, distorted populism of the RUF as civil defence forces in the service of the old patrons. Many now say that if another war comes, it will not be fought in rural areas like the last one but between elites at the centre.<sup>134</sup> If young people remain poor and socially alienated, they may still feel they have nothing to lose by throwing in their lot with yet another coup, initiated or at least backed by the military claiming to be acting in the interests of the people.

Even so, ideas about common humanity and the obligation to share are culturally deep-seated in Sierra Leone and can be harnessed as readily to democracy as to the old system of patronage politics. Many young people have no memories of the one-party state. Their experience over the last ten years of foreign intervention and post-war reconstruction is that popular judgement on the performance of governments is expressed, both ideally and in practice,

through the ballot box.<sup>135</sup> Here lies the greatest hope for the future – as long as elections are free and fair.

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<sup>134</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Freetown, January 2008.

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<sup>135</sup> Crisis Group interview, Freetown, January 2008.

## VI. POLICY OPTIONS

In a speech marking the 47th anniversary of independence, President Koroma emphasised once again the importance of reinstating the “social contract” between government and governed.<sup>136</sup> But it will take more than rhetoric to transform donor-driven post-war reconstruction into a true nation-building project, and little will be achieved in the long run if the government tries to deliver services it cannot afford to a public that cannot pay for them. There are still opportunities to develop such a nation-building project, however, and ways for donors to support them. Producing a comprehensive national program will require extensive public consultation, including thorough assessment and prioritisation of local needs. While the donors who funded post-war reconstruction may prefer to support social development and good governance as program objectives rather than another phase of political consensus and nation-building projects, the UN’s Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) offers a new mechanism for providing support to Sierra Leone.

### A. A NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Nation-building, unlike the technical modalities of post-war reconstruction and development programming, is an overtly political project. In his keynote address at the presidential retreat in Bumbuna in January 2008, President Koroma seemed to echo Kabbah government’s concerns when he observed that “the people are looking for miracles” in post-war reconstruction.<sup>137</sup> But the lesson from the SLPP’s electoral defeat was that supervising donor projects and fulfilling good governance conditionalities on loans is not enough to maintain popular support. The new government needs to redouble efforts to build political consensus on the way forward for post-war development.

Having inherited a cash-strapped economy, it must be open with voters about the constraints in implementing its vision for change. By such openness, it can build political consensus for the required policy prioritisation and compromises. Having already lost one consensus-building opportunity by publishing the full PTT report so late in the day, the Koroma team may not be able to afford to lose another.

The president took a positive step in using the Bumbuna retreat as a policy brainstorming session, where ministers

were asked to identify the development targets to be included in their performance contracts. But the accountability of ministers to the president is only one element of the social contract Koroma seems to have in mind. The policy priorities outlined in the Bumbuna communiqué – improving energy and water supply and transport infrastructure, increasing job opportunities for youth and facilitating growth in agriculture, mining, fisheries and tourism – have also appeared in the PRSP, the Interim PRSP before that and the National Recovery Strategy before that. Most post-war reconstruction initiatives addressing these priorities have been implemented as projects tailored to the donor funding available. Making government accountable to the public for implementing these policy priorities requires more than a 3,000-word communiqué; it requires a comprehensive National Development Plan (NDP).

NDPs are not a new idea in Sierra Leone; they were a feature of government policy throughout the 1970s, and civil activist pressure on the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) military junta yielded two national consultative conferences in the Bintumani Hotel in 1995-1996. UNDP supported a nationwide consultative exercise in 1998 designed to “assist the government of Sierra Leone to define, own and lead the development process”.<sup>138</sup> The war hampered this exercise, and none of its recommendations were implemented when peace arrived. The Sierra Leone Vision 2025 project, also supported by UNDP, similarly aimed to produce a “national consensus on where the country ought to be in the year 2025 and to formulate a comprehensive, consistent national strategy to help create the future”.<sup>139</sup> But it brought little in the way of feasible recommendations.<sup>140</sup>

The PRSP has now taken over from these earlier initiatives but remains far more a strategic framework for donor funding than a politically accountable policy document. In 2006, UNIOSIL supported public consultations for development of a Peace Consolidation Strategy (PCS), designed to complement it. This sought to “prioritise those aspects of Sierra Leone’s national development plans that are pertinent to addressing current external and internal threats to stability which, albeit greatly reduced, are still extant”. The phrase “attitudinal change” made an early appearance in the PCS launch document, but it was never clear

<sup>136</sup> Transcript, at [www.statehouse.gov.sl/test2/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=167&Itemid=2](http://www.statehouse.gov.sl/test2/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=167&Itemid=2).

<sup>137</sup> “Report on the first presidential retreat”, op. cit.

<sup>138</sup> “Nationwide Consultative Process (October-December 1998)”, Government of Sierra Leone, UNDP, Freetown, January 1999.

<sup>139</sup> “National long-term perspective studies for Sierra Leone – vision 2025”, UNDP project document, 2000.

<sup>140</sup> “Sierra Leone vision 2025: ‘Sweet-Salome’”, development planning ministry, August 2003.

how PCS interventions would differ from existing ones.<sup>141</sup> The finance and economic development ministry is recruiting staff to prepare a Strategic National Development Plan for 2008-2018, but it is uncertain if this is to form the basis of a political program or be merely another technical document.

A politically accountable NDP requires at least a detailed costing and timeframe for all planned activities. It is one thing for the president to declare at Bumbuna that the government intends to leave Sierra Leone with “urban and rural electrification” and “well-constructed intra- and inter-city road networks” by the end of its five-year mandate, quite another for the public to be asked to judge a government on the basis of its progress in implementing a comprehensively structured NDP. While the information and communications minister is undoubtedly correct to insist that “the government cannot provide jobs for every Sierra Leonean”, it can and should involve all its citizens in planning to give everyone the best chance of finding productive work for themselves.<sup>142</sup>

Extensive public consultation, including thorough assessment and prioritisation of local development needs, is a prerequisite. Though the government might not be obliged to accept grassroots opinion on priorities, it should at least be required to explain its decisions. Politicians and bureaucrats whose careers and livelihoods depend on a particular party remaining in power may be reluctant to expose themselves to such democratic scrutiny, but the point of the exercise is to create a national forum where government accounts for its actions.

## B. THE ROLE OF THE UN PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION

Sierra Leone has received extensive donor funding for post-war reconstruction since the formal declaration of peace in 2002.<sup>143</sup> Nor has there been lack of effort

by donors to coordinate aid, at both the diplomatic and operational levels.<sup>144</sup> The government has committed itself to the disciplines of the Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), Millennium Development Goals and an Improved Accountability and Governance Pact (IGAP) with the four leading development partners providing direct budgetary support.<sup>145</sup>

According to a diplomat, the UN missions from 2000 onwards helped complete a “triangle” whose other corners have been the government and the UK and which has been particularly effective in coordinating reconstruction. A close bilateral relationship can make a donor government a stakeholder in the success of a program, but a strong third party makes for a better negotiating structure, with avenues for persuasion, compromise and withdrawal on all sides.<sup>146</sup> Yet even in an aid-dependent country, donors’ capacity to influence the government on politically sensitive matters is limited. The delays in civil service reform are a case in point; another is the lack of progress in implementing the constitutional, legal and political reforms recommended in the final TRC report.<sup>147</sup>

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cent of ODA; support channelled through UN agencies and NGOs was 13 and 24 per cent respectively. “Development Assistance to Sierra Leone, 2004-2005”, Republic of Sierra Leone, Development Assistance Coordination Office, Freetown (no date). Sierra Leone was the leading African recipient of ODA per capita from the UK, the ex-colonial power. House of Commons Hansard Written Answers for 13 June 2005, at [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo050613/text/50613w01.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200506/cmhansrd/vo050613/text/50613w01.htm). In 2004, it was fifth in Sub-Saharan Africa as an ODA recipient per capita. “Human Development Report 2006 (Beyond Scarcity: Power Poverty and the Global Water Crisis)”, UNDP, at <http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/>.

<sup>144</sup> Notable initiatives include the multi-donor trust fund that financed disarmament and demobilisation, the National Recovery Strategy coordinated by NaCSA and UN-OCHA, the international consultative group coordinating donor support to the PRSP and the recent domestic monitoring of the 2005 Paris Declaration on aid harmonisation and effectiveness.

<sup>145</sup> DFID has also been encouraging the government to develop a comprehensive Aid Policy Framework.

<sup>146</sup> Crisis Group interview, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>147</sup> Crisis Group interview, UNAMSIL, Freetown, January 2008. Another example is the government task force on reform of the chieftaincy system, set up in 2006 as part of a package of DFID/EU support for the “Sierra Leone decentralisation capacity building project”, DFID/EU concept note, at [www.dfidweb.dfid.gov.uk/prismdocs/AFRICA\\_DIVISION/057542094n1.doc](http://www.dfidweb.dfid.gov.uk/prismdocs/AFRICA_DIVISION/057542094n1.doc). It failed to produce a report in nine months and has been suspended since the 2007 election campaign. Crisis Group interview, decentralisation secretariat, Freetown, January 2008.

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<sup>141</sup> “Harnessing hope: catalyzing efforts for accountability, participation, and reconciliation in Sierra Leone. A Peace Consolidation Strategy (PCS)”, UNIOSIL, 6 September 2006, at [www.uniosil.org/documents/PCS.pdf](http://www.uniosil.org/documents/PCS.pdf).

<sup>142</sup> Crisis Group interview, information and communications minister, January 2008.

<sup>143</sup> In 2005 alone, Sierra Leone received Official Development Assistance (ODA) amounting to \$336 million; loans and grants were 46 per cent of national revenue, and 20 per cent of the assistance was direct budgetary support from DFID, the European Commission, the World Bank and the African Development Bank. IMF balance of payments support was a further 6 per cent. Direct support to projects within sector ministries and departments was a further 37 per

Donors would have difficulty persuading a reluctant government to embark on a fully consultative NDP, even if themselves convinced that shifting the focus of support from the technicalities of poverty reduction and institutional capacity building to the more political project of nation-building was a good idea. The capacity to exert united diplomatic pressure on the government may decline further with UNIOSIL's impending departure, especially as the UK appears reluctant to deepen the bilateral relationship further.<sup>148</sup>

The UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), which made Sierra Leone one of two initial focus countries, offers a new mechanism for dialogue between the government and the donor community. Created by concurrent General Assembly and Security Council resolutions in 2005, its purpose is to facilitate "integrated strategies" for post-conflict peacebuilding and development and bring together "all the relevant actors", both international and domestic, to marshal support for these strategies.<sup>149</sup> The resolutions also set up a multi-year Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), for "ensuring the immediate release of resources needed to launch peacebuilding activities". The emphasis is on supporting "efforts by the country to build and strengthen capacities which promote coexistence and the peaceful resolution of conflict", and "critical interventions designed to respond to imminent threats to the peacebuilding process".<sup>150</sup>

The initial work of the PBC in Sierra Leone attracted controversy, because funding was announced and initial monies released a few months before the start of the 2007 election campaign and in advance of any formal agreement over a Strategic Peacebuilding Framework (SPBF). As an NGO study noted, "there was a common perception [in Sierra Leone] that 'quick impact' interventions were meant to win electoral support for the ruling Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) – a perception magnified by the fact that the Vice-President, a presidential contender, co-chairs the PBF Steering Committee".<sup>151</sup>

Furthermore, fast-tracking \$35 million in PBF funding led to a disproportionate focus on the money rather than political dialogue over the SBPF. The Kabbah government identified four priority areas for funding – youth empowerment and employment; democracy and good governance; justice and security; and capacity building of public administration – all of which reflected priorities already in the PRSP and other strategy documents. The PBF's added value to peacebuilding was unclear, beyond plugging funding gaps in existing programs. As the PBC acknowledged after its first mission to Freetown, there was "generally limited awareness among all partners in Sierra Leone about the work of the Peacebuilding Commission as separate from the Peacebuilding Fund".<sup>152</sup>

Since the elections, a Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework (as the SPBF is now known in Sierra Leone) has been agreed. It recapitulates the original priority plan of the Kabbah government in relation to PBF disbursement, with added chapters on the energy sector and sub-regional dimensions of peacebuilding.<sup>153</sup> To a large degree, therefore, the new framework appears once again to make a virtue out of a fait accompli.

With UNIOSIL leaving, the PBC is best placed to take over as a key diplomatic broker between the government and its development partners, while at the same time exploring opportunities for realising a sustainable post-war political settlement in the country. It could, for example, help President Koroma define and implement the new social contract that he appears to have in mind, which would stand above the narrow interests of any single government or political party. This more political focus would also ensure that the PBF maintains an identity distinct from mainstream development funding.

There are several possibilities for developing the work of the PBC/PBF in this direction. One, raised in the above-noted NGO report, would be dedicated funding for implementing TRC recommendations.<sup>154</sup> Another would be for the PBC to fund district and chiefdom-level consultations on governance and social development issues in support of the elaboration of a National Development Plan. A third would be for the PBC to tackle land tenure reform in the provinces.

<sup>148</sup> Crisis Group interview, Freetown, January 2008.

<sup>149</sup> UN General Assembly Resolution 60/180, A/RES/60/180, 30 December 2005; and UN Security Council Resolution 1645, S/RES/1645, 20 December 2005.

<sup>150</sup> "Terms of Reference for the Peacebuilding Fund", UN Peacebuilding Fund, A/60/984/, 22 August 2006, at [www.unpbf.org/documents/PBF-Terms-of-Reference-22-August-2006.pdf](http://www.unpbf.org/documents/PBF-Terms-of-Reference-22-August-2006.pdf).

<sup>151</sup> "Consolidating the peace? Views from Sierra Leone and Burundi on the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission", Action Aid, Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD) and Care International, June 2007. See also Crisis Group Report, *The Election Opportunity*, op. cit.

<sup>152</sup> "Report of the Peacebuilding Commission Mission to Sierra Leone 19-25 March 2007", A/61/901-S/2007/269, 14 May 2007, at <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N07/342/28/PDF/NO734228/.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>153</sup> "Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework", UN Peacebuilding Commission, PBC/2/SLE/1, 3 December 2007.

<sup>154</sup> "Consolidating the peace?" op. cit.

Under present legislation, provincial land is under customary tenure and cannot be legally acquired by “non-natives”. While a sizeable informal market has developed in recent generations, especially near the larger towns, the tenure system is a barrier to commercial investment. However, the challenge goes far beyond administrative and legal modernisation. Land is one of the few assets poor citizens have, and many are vehemently opposed to relinquishing rights to it. Sellers often come under pressure from extended family members to divide proceeds of land sales. Disputes within families over the right of individual members to sell also lead to frequent court challenges of buyers’ ownership rights. The Law Reform Commission drew up a fairly modest package of land tenure reform proposals in 2004.<sup>155</sup> These never went to parliament, allegedly because the lands minister objected to an additional proposal that an independent commission administer state-owned land.<sup>156</sup>

Given the emphasis in the PRSP on revival of large-scale commercial agriculture, the changing demand brought about by rising world food prices and the growing army of urban and rural youths in desperate search of adequately compensated jobs, further attention to land reform in the provinces is urgently needed. Koroma acknowledged as much in the *Bumbuna communiqué*, and the PBC is well placed to begin the politically sensitive and likely protracted task of building public consensus.

All these possible areas for support would fit the PBC’s mandate to advise on the development of “integrated strategies” for peacebuilding, development and reconstruction in countries emerging from violent conflict. Furthermore, if the PBF is to be a catalyst for longer-term development funding as well as a fast-track source of money for “early stability” initiatives (which Sierra Leone arguably no longer needs), it also must support fact-finding, consultation, analysis and information exchange involving all stakeholders in the post-war political settlement.

However, when UNIOSIL leaves in September 2008, Sierra Leone will have gone through at least three generations of UN presence and several mechanisms of coordination between the government and the donors, which indicates both the fragility of the state and its dependency on international funding. It will be no easy matter for the PBC to find a coherent link between

donor-driven post-war reconstruction and nation-building that is also politically acceptable to both domestic and international stakeholders. Furthermore, the PBC model, being relatively new, still has to pass the test of implementation.

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<sup>155</sup> These included the rights of provincial landowners to use land as security for loans and of government to compulsorily purchase land in the provinces for the public good. “Annual Report 2004”, Sierra Leone Law Reform Commission, pp. 9-10.

<sup>156</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior civil servant, February 2008.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Sierra Leone's progress towards peace, security and economic development has been the subject of close international scrutiny ever since the military interventions that began with ECOMOG, the military monitoring group of the Economic Community of West African States, in 1997. A number of possible security threats, old and new, have been identified since that time: the persistence of militia command structures in the countryside, Special Court indictments, endemic youth unemployment, the persistence of unreformed chieftaincy structures and the reappearance of the north-south political divide. The failure of these threats to materialise is a testament to citizens' determination to put conflict behind them.

However, the political landscape continues to change. Old patronage systems are crumbling, especially in

urban areas, and the full political consequences of this have yet to be felt. At the other end of the development spectrum, UNIOSIL's mandate ends in September 2008. While international agencies will take up some of the slack in supporting national elections, it is unlikely the NEC will enjoy the same level of on-the-ground support as in 2007.

There is no basis for assuming Sierra Leone will see a repeat of the election crises recently witnessed in Togo, Kenya and Zimbabwe, but 2012 may prove a bigger test for its fledgling democracy than 2007 was. Intellectuals often lament their country's apparent inability to produce charismatic leaders strong enough to rally popular support and initiate change, but the opportunity for democracy-driven renewal is there; ultimately it is up to the people of Sierra Leone, collectively, to take it.

**Dakar/Brussels, 31 July 2008**

## APPENDIX A

### MAP OF SIERRA LEONE



## APPENDIX B

### GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

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<b>ACC</b>	Anti-Corruption Commission, government body established in 2000 to investigate corruption, advise on necessary changes and educate the public
<b>APC</b>	All People's Congress, President Ernest Bai Koroma's political party
<b>CDF</b>	Civil Defence Force, ethnically aligned pro-government militias active during the 1991-2002 civil war
<b>DFID</b>	Department for International Development, UK government development agency
<b>ENCISS</b>	Enhancing Interaction and Interface between Civil Society and the State to improve poor people's lives, DFID-supported program to enhance relations between government and populace
<b>ECOMOG</b>	The Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group, the multilateral armed force established by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
<b>GRS</b>	Governance Reform Secretariat, government body tasked with improving efficiency in the public sector now replaced by the Public Sector Reform Unit
<b>IMATT</b>	International Military Advisory and Training Team, 115-strong British-led team established in 2002 to train and support the Sierra Leone armed forces
<b>IMC</b>	Independent Media Commission, autonomous body created in 2000 to raise the standards of journalism in Sierra Leone
<b>MDAs</b>	ministries, departments and agencies
<b>NACS</b>	National Anti-Corruption Strategy, government initiative
<b>NaCSA</b>	National Commission for Social Action, Sierra Leone's leading post-war development parastatal
<b>NCP</b>	National Communications Plan, UNDP-supported government initiative begun in 2005 to boost national media and improve the country's international image
<b>NDP</b>	National Development Plan, proposed initiative to coordinate development projects
<b>NEC</b>	National Electoral Commission, tasked with organising and overseeing elections
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NPA</b>	National Power Authority, Sierra Leone government body which manages and maintains the electricity supply
<b>NRA</b>	National Revenue Authority, the government tax-collecting body
<b>PBC</b>	Peacebuilding Commission, advisory body established in December 2005 by the UN to help countries in post-conflict peacebuilding, reconstruction and development
<b>PBF</b>	Peacebuilding Fund, standing trust fund for post-conflict peacebuilding
<b>PCS</b>	Peace Consolidation Strategy, UNIOSIL-supported 2006 initiative to complement the PRSP
<b>PMDC</b>	People's Movement for Democratic Change, breakaway party from the SLPP led by Charles Margai
<b>PRSP</b>	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, framework for funding and implementing development

projects in the period 2005-2007

<b>PSRU</b>	Public Sector Reform Unit, Sierra Leone government body, formerly the Governance Reform Secretariat (GRS), tasked with improving efficiency in the public sector
<b>PTT</b>	Presidential Transition Team, 60-member group established in September 2007 by President Koroma to assess government institutions
<b>RUF</b>	Revolutionary United Front, rebel group that fought to topple the government during the 1991-2002 civil war
<b>SLAJ</b>	Sierra Leone Association of Journalists, body representing and regulating national press
<b>SLP</b>	Sierra Leone Police
<b>SLPP</b>	Sierra Leone People's Party, former President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah's political party
<b>SPBF</b>	Strategic Peacebuilding Framework, detailing how money from the Peacebuilding Fund is to be disbursed, now known as the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework
<b>TRC</b>	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>UNIOSIL</b>	United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone, political mission which began its mandate on 1 January 2006