



Australian Government
AusAID

Australia's Support to Peace Building

Sierra Leone

Engagement Plan



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Executive Summary

Origins and consequences of war

Decades of institutional failure and malevolent regional politics fuelled the war in Sierra Leone. Centralised power, the absence of accountability in a co-opted civil service, and endemic corruption were to bear dire consequences for an increasingly marginalised and alienated citizenship. Successive generations of young people bore the brunt; denied access to education and livelihood opportunities, many of those young people were to play an active role in the militias that fought the region's wars.

The failure to provide skills and jobs for Sierra Leone's large youth underclass undermined social cohesion and fed the proclaimed cause of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF). When the movement's leader, Foday Sankoh, claimed that "people with no qualifications have jobs, and people with qualifications have no jobs" it resonated with the mass of unemployed rural youth; for many, the war began as a protest at the rampant patronage responsible for job and resource allocation.

The war was ended not through political negotiation, but by offering RUF fighters a reintegration package based on skills training. However, these skills will mean little in the longer term without attention to the institutional inequities responsible for killing enterprise and initiative amongst young people.

Peace building frameworks

The Government of Sierra Leone's *Agenda for Change* and second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (*PRSP II*) acknowledge these challenges. Framed around 4 Strategic Priorities, *The Agenda for Change* prioritises pro-poor growth (focusing in youth employment through agriculture), and eradicating corrupt practice in government institutions.

The main international development agencies endorse *The Agenda for Change*; the UN, DFID, the EC and the World Bank have aligned their strategic frameworks to reflect the Agenda's priorities.

Positioning Australian support

Australian support will make a significant contribution to peace building if it is targeted directly in support of initiatives that address the *proximate threats to peace and stability*. There is broad consensus that these threats are:

- (i) Continued escalation of political violence in the period preceding the 2012 national elections
- (ii) Mass youth unemployment.

These are complex issues that require focused engagement. As AusAID will have limited representational presence in Freetown, support may best be provided through discrete (but visible) niche components of broader programmes managed by established donors. Direct support provided to Ministries and civil society coalitions is also possible, and options will also be presented.

Summary Recommendations

Mitigating political violence

There has been a significant upturn in political violence since 2008, and there is widespread concern that the trend will escalate between now and the national elections in 2012. The integrity of the electoral process will largely depend on the performance of the electoral support bodies, such as the National Election Commission (NEC) and the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), and civil society coalitions like the highly-regarded National Elections Watch (NEW¹). Mitigating the threat of electoral violence requires sustained support for these bodies to fulfil their respective roles during the pre-election period 2010-2012.

Recommendation (a): Strengthen electoral support bodies via Sierra Leone-MDTF

AusAID can make a “strong earmarked” contribution to strengthen electoral bodies and democratic institutions through the UN-administered Sierra Leone Multi-donor Trust Fund (SL-MDTF). The contribution would incur an administration fee (approximately 7-9% of contribution) payable to UNDP (the UN Lead Agency), in return for which UNDP would assume responsibility for grant management, monitoring, and evaluation and reporting. Given the complexity of the context, this should be regarded as a preferred option.

Recommendation (b): Direct financial support to electoral support bodies

AusAID could provide direct financial assistance to electoral support bodies, thereby avoiding the requirement to pay an administration fee, but this would be managerially demanding, and run contrary to the preference amongst international partners to channel support for electoral bodies through the SL-MDTF. This option is feasible, but is not preferred.

Recommendation (c): Support National Elections Watch via DFID

AusAID can support NEW via DFID’s electoral support programme. DFID has allocated £18m in support of the electoral process, of which £6m will fund civil society initiatives, such as NEW’s Strategic Plan for the 2010 Elections. DFID would welcome an AusAID contribution, and assures that AusAID funding would remain visible. Benefits of this option would include shared reporting and management facilities and, importantly, alignment with a pivotal donor if the elections become contentious, and civil society raises concerns about the integrity of the process. This scenario is highly likely, and it will be important that AusAID is not perceived as standing alone in support of independent civil society comment. Providing Australian assistance through DFID’s Electoral Support Programme would mitigate this problem.

Recommendation (d): Direct support to the National Election Watchdog (NEW)

AusAID can provide financial and technical assistance directly to NEW for development and implementation of its Strategic Plan, the estimated cost of which is US\$2m for period 2010 – 2013. This would require an engagement with NEW’s lead agency (Search for Common Ground) on the management and strategic direction of the process, a requirement that may become more demanding as the elections draw nearer. Given Australia’s limited representa-

¹ A coalition of 14 national and international Civil Society Organisations committed to promoting participation, and monitoring the conduct of political parties and the integrity of the electoral process

tion in Freetown, this may suggest the previous option is preferable, but AusAID should have no qualms about funding NEW through an agreement with Search for Common Ground.

Mitigating mass youth unemployment

Sierra Leone's population of 5 million is overwhelmingly young (an estimated 43% of the population is under the age of 15) and unemployed (an estimated 70% of young people are unemployed). The UN Secretary-General made a stark warning in his May 2009 report to the UN Security Council:

“... the recent (political) disturbances had the potential to evolve into a full-blown conflict: increasing regional divisions in the country, increasing identification of political parties with ethnic loyalties, (the) huge numbers of unemployed and underemployed youth with limited or no hope for a better future coupled with spiralling food prices (all) contribute to (a) climate in which political violence could have easily thrived.”

In a country with abundant land and water resources, and where more than 70% of the population reside in rural areas, the agriculture sector remains the most likely source of employment, income and food security for young people.

The National Sustainable Agriculture Development Plan (NSADP) is the central pillar of the PRSP II. The priority programme of the NSADP is the Smallholder Commercialisation Programme (SCP), identified as *“the programme with the greatest potential for positive impact on food security and wealth generation for vulnerable and youth populations”*.

The primary focus of the SCP is the formation of Farmer Based Organisations (FBOs) and Agricultural Business Centres (ABCs, formed from 3-5 FBOs), which will function as a collective gateway to commercialisation for their members. The plan is to establish 2,750 FBOs, (trained in agriculture and organisational and business management skills), and to organise them in to 650 ABCs.

Recommendation (e): Support Farmer Based Organisations and Agriculture Business Centres

The NSADP was submitted to the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GFASP), and a grant of US\$50m was approved on 22nd June 2010. Part of the grant will fund 1,000 FBOs and 300 ABCs, as will part of an EU grant of €10 million. The EU grant expires in 2011, with no further funding anticipated.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), the EC and the FAO recommend that Australian support should contribute to establishing and running the remaining balance of FBOs and ABCs, the costs of each unit over the 5-year period are estimated to be US\$14,000 and US\$50,000 respectively.

Recommendation (f): Financial and technical support to SCP Coordination Secretariat

Interviews with key respondents suggest that technical capacities with MAFFS are reasonably strong, but that the managerial capacities are too weak to coordinate the key players in the

agriculture sector. These capacities must be strengthened if ministries, departments, agencies and development partners are to collaborate effectively.

A proposed SCP Coordination Secretariat will ensure effective strategic and operational planning, coordination between and amongst programme components and funding sources, and overall monitoring and evaluation. The Secretariat will comprise a Coordinator and technical experts, each of whom will be contracted and placed within MAFFS.

MAFFS and FAO both recommend Australian support to the establishment and running of the SCP Coordination Secretariat. At a cost of US\$3.9m over the period 2010-2014, supporting the Secretariat through a “strong earmarked” to FAO (through the Sierra Leone-MDTF) would represent an affordable, visible and programmatically valuable funding opportunity for AusAID. The costs will support procurement of two 4WD vehicles, the cost of contracted staff, internal and overseas travel, operating expenses and office equipment.

The SCP and the Secretariat will also have substantive requirements for short and long-term technical expertise relating to commodity development, management information systems, M&E, training for livestock animal health officers, pathologists, entomologists, hydrologists, soil scientists, forestry experts and GIS mapping. There are numerous opportunities for AusAID to provide technical assistance sourced through the Australian Civilian Corps, and institutions such as the University of Queensland and the Australia Pacific Technical College.

Recommendation (g): Support rehabilitation of agriculture training centres

Throughout the 14 years of civil war, conflict flowed unimpeded across Sierra Leone’s border with Liberia; partly because the borders are porous and difficult to police, but mainly because militias were able to recruit from a vast pool of under-educated unemployed youth – a legacy of decades of government neglect of remote areas on both sides of the border. Extensive research² along the region’s borders reveal a network of remaining militia ensconced in remote forest locations.

Work is currently being done on the Liberian side of the border to engage so-called ‘hot spot’ populations through targeted education and vocational training programmes provided through rehabilitated Ministry of Agriculture Training Schools that had been destroyed during the war. Ideally, these initiatives should take place on both sides of a border that is viewed by many as the cradle of the region’s wars.

The experience in Liberia is proving extremely positive, and is drawing support from the Government and international partners including DfID, GTZ, the EC and the UN³. Replicating the initiative on the Sierra Leone side of the border (where people complain of a re-emergent pattern of Government neglect and skewed development), would have profound peace building impacts.

The SCP includes plans to ‘rehabilitate two agriculture training centres’, but does not specify where they are. Potentially, this is a unique opportunity for Australian assistance to support the consolidation of peace at national and sub-regional levels. MAFFS and FAO would

² The author can provide information on this research separately

³ A Concept Note that describes the work has already been shared with AusAID

undoubtedly welcome the support, and the report recommends that AusAID open a discussion with both parties to examine options⁴.

Drivers of conflict

Regional dynamics

The states of the Upper West African coastal region (Senegal to Cote d'Ivoire) have experienced a number of internal but interconnected armed conflicts since the 1980s. The most extensively destabilised part of the region comprises two countries of the Mano River Union (Sierra Leone and Liberia) and their immediate neighbours, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. It is important not to regard each conflict in isolation, but to recognise the extent to which regional political intrigues, and trans-border ethnic affiliations, have driven the violence. The Sierra Leone and Liberian conflicts, in particular, were closely interlinked.

Liberia was the eye of the storm. The Liberian civil war began with the incursion of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) from Cote d'Ivoire into Nimba County (NE Liberia) on 24th December 1989. The war evolved through three phases until August 2003, when Taylor, elected president in 1997 after a peace process, but weakened by a two pronged attack from dissident groups LURD (Liberians United for Restoration of Democracy) and MODEL (Movement for Democracy in Liberia), left the country for exile in Nigeria, to allow the formation of an interim government of national unity. A UN Mission force (UNMIL) deployed throughout Liberia in 2004.⁵ Disarmament of the various factions led to elections in 2005.

The war in Sierra Leone began with an incursion from Liberia by the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF) into eastern and southern Sierra Leone in 1991, and grew into a damaging full-scale civil war over the following decade. The violence not only involved the RUF and an opposed civilian militia (the Civil Defence Forces) but also factions within the national army. The RUF agreed to end its struggle in return for promises of skills training and reintegration in the Abuja Accords of late 2000. A large UN peacekeeping force (UNAMSIL) was deployed, and disarmament of the factions led to elections in 2002.

The wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia were greatly complicated by cross-border operations by armed factions over the thickly forested terrain separating Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Cote d'Ivoire. Fighters from Taylor's NPFL accompanied the RUF incursion into Sierra Leone. A militia force (United Liberation Movement of Liberia for Democracy - ULIMO) made up of Liberians opposed to the NPFL, some from the former Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), then helped to stem RUF advance, re-crossing the Liberian border to oppose Taylor's forces. Taylor later assisted a revitalised RUF to attack Freetown, the capital of Sierra Leone, in 1999, and the anti-Taylor militia LURD invaded Liberia from Sierra Leone and Guinea in 2000.

Guinea was drawn into the war in Sierra Leone in 1991 through a mutual defence pact. Units of Guinean army forces were significant assets in opposing the initial RUF incursion. A small group of dissidents attempted to start an uprising against the Guinean president, Lans-

⁴ During the week of the mission the Minister of Agriculture and his Technical Team were out of the country.

⁵ Currently, Mr Taylor faces an indictment of the Special Court for War Crimes in Sierra Leone, sitting in Den Haag, The Netherlands, for his alleged involvement in the Sierra Leone war.

na Conteh, in 1999-2000, apparently with support from Charles Taylor, but this was quickly crushed.

Côte d'Ivoire had connections with the wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone from an early date. The link traces back to 1987, when Charles Taylor and Foday Sankoh took part in a coup to replace Thomas Sankara with Blaise Compaoré in Burkina Faso. Compaoré's accession to power seems to have been with the approval of Côte d'Ivoire. Cadres from the incipient NPFL and RUF subsequently undertook training in Burkina Faso and established rear bases in western Côte d'Ivoire to support operations in NE Liberia and eastern Sierra Leone.

Pro and anti-Taylor forces later operated cross-border into the Liberian war, with some fighters becoming involved in militia activity in Côte d'Ivoire itself, following an army mutiny in 2002, as a result of which the country was divided between the northern mutineers and forces loyal to President Laurent Gbagbo. The Taylor-linked MPIO aligned itself with the northern army mutineers.

President Gbagbo responded by assisting MODEL, an anti-Taylor militia recruited mainly among Liberian ethnic Krahn from Grand Gedeh County who fled to western Côte d'Ivoire to avoid Taylor-sponsored anti-Krahn purges. Entering south-eastern Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire at the same time as LURD attacked Monrovia from the north-west, MODEL contributed to the military destabilization of the Taylor regime in 2003. As a result of this pressure Taylor agreed to step down from the presidency to facilitate a UN-sponsored peace initiative, and left the country for exile in Nigeria, from where he was later removed to face international charges in connection with the war in Sierra Leone.

Intra-elite competition

What caused West Africa's wars? A prime-motivating factor in each case appears to have been competition between elites. Wars need to be organised, and this implies leadership. The civil war in Liberia emerged from rivalries within a military-oriented group earlier involved in the overthrow of the settler-dominated True Whig regime of William Tolbert in 1980. In Sierra Leone, the rise of the RUF can be traced back to army factionalism associated with coup attempts against Siaka Stevens and the All Peoples Congress party in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In Côte d'Ivoire war sprang from factionalism and regional rivalries associated with a power vacuum following the death of the autocratic President, Félix Houphouët-Boigny.

Resources

Wars require resources. The struggle for political power is more intense where large resources are at stake. The conflict zone in coastal Upper West Africa is rich in forest and mineral resources, and these resources are both an incentive to mount and a means to sustain armed struggle. Statistical attempts to link war and resources run into problems, however, to separate correlation and cause. The argument that economic factors alone explain wars in the Upper West African region remains controversial, and hard to square with important facts. For example, the RUF struggle in Sierra Leone clearly had an initial political motivation, and it was only later that participants (as much on the government side as on the side of rebels) became involved in "blood diamonds". The following section summarises the RUF war.

History of the RUF war in Sierra Leone

The war in Sierra Leone emerged from the activities of a Libyan-supported coalition of radical students protesting against the All People's Congress (APC) one-party political system of President Siaka Stevens during the 1970s and '80s. The Sierra Leone Green Book sect split. A splinter went on to form the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) c. 1982. Some members of the group travelled to Benghazi in Libya where they received guerrilla and ideological training in the late 1980s, and then joined the faction of Charles Taylor fighting the war in Liberia. Taylor assisted the RUF to launch its guerrilla campaign in Sierra Leone from two points on the Liberian border (Bomaru in Kailahun District and Mano Waterside in Pujehun District) on March 23rd 1991.

The trajectory of the RUF war from 1991 to 2000 was less a factor of the movement's own strengths, than of the dubious decisions made by those seeking to deal with it. Atrocities by the Sierra Leone army in the earliest days of the war drove a number of civilians into the movement. After a military coup deposing the APC in April 1992 the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) tried to consolidate its power by achieving outright victory over the RUF, hiring a South African-based security consortium.⁶ The RUF was excluded from elections conceded by the NPRC, and the incoming civilian government re-organised a local civil defence militia into an offensive para-military force (the Civil Defence Force [CDF]) to dislodge the RUF from its forest bases. With its secure bases under attack the movement became seriously destabilised, and resorted to outrages against unarmed villagers in areas of CDF operation (including a spate of "random" amputations) that shocked the world.

Matters were then complicated by an army revolt, and the democratic government of President Kabbah was driven into exile in 1997, and replaced by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). The AFRC tried to gain some legitimacy by making peace with the RUF, inviting the movement into a power-sharing arrangement. A short period of brutal instability followed until Nigerian-led West African peacekeeping troops displaced the junta and restored the rightful government.

In 1998 the RUF (and junta survivors) invited (or accepted the offer of) a group of international entrepreneurs and military suppliers to re-train and re-equip its forces in return for diamonds and mineral concessions. The revived RUF took over the Kono diamond fields and swept on towards Freetown. The eastern part of the city was attacked, with large loss of life, on January 6th 1999. RUF and junta forces were repulsed by West African peace keeping troops, but the expense of peace keeping operations, and loss of life, convinced in-coming Nigerian president Olusegun Obasanjo that Nigeria should withdraw from Sierra Leone. The Lome peace accords were then negotiated with the RUF in July 1999, RUF leader Foday Sankoh released from jail and an interim government, with RUF ministerial representation, formed.

A UN force (UNAMSIL) began to deploy in April 2000, to replace the departing Nigerians. Poorly organised and briefed, UNAMSIL was widely distrusted, not least by the RUF, who

⁶ Precisely what the South Africans did in 1995-6 is a silence in the history of the war. But it is widely assumed that their dismissal by the Kabbah government on the advice of the IMF (on cost, rather than security considerations) allowed the RUF to survive and assume a more deadly form than hitherto (Porter 2003). They were replaced in 1998 by a British firm, also supplying security services to the mining sector in Sierra Leone.

seized large numbers of UN hostages, occasioning British intervention.⁷ This was intended to allow UNAMSIL to deploy more fully and to reorganise. The government arrested large numbers of RUF leaders in Freetown, after a demonstration and shooting at the house of Foday Sankoh on 8th May. A reorganized and redeployed UNAMSIL focussed on building the RUF's confidence in the peace process. The Pakistan and Bangladesh battalions in particular won over the majority of the RUF in the field, and disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes⁸, commenced from May 2001. The disarmament and registration stage was effectively completed within eight months, and President Kabbah declared the war at an end in February 2002.

Proximate threats to peace in Sierra Leone

The literature review and key informant consultations in Freetown suggest that the proximate threats to peace in Sierra Leone are political violence in the run-up to the 2012 elections, and pressures arising from the combination of mass youth unemployment and lack of education and employment opportunities. This section examines the key elements of both issues.

Politics, ethnicity and electoral violence

Political parties

There are three main political parties in Sierra Leone: the APC, SLPP, and PMDC, though only the first two have the potential to form a government.

The influence of the PMDC has been rapidly declining since the 2008 local council elections. It was officially registered on 19 January 2006, and has since been led by Charles Margai, who broke away from the SLPP. Margai, as PMDC presidential candidate, secured third place in the August 2007 elections, forcing a run-off. Most of his votes came from the Southern and Eastern Provinces, strongholds of the SLPP. In recent months, hundreds of people have abandoned the party, but it remains (marginally) relevant because it still maintains 10 seats in the 112-member Parliament.

The SLPP is the oldest political party in Sierra Leone. Established in 1951, the party led the country to independence 10 years later, and ruled until 1967, when it lost power to the APC – which, like the PMDC, started as a breakaway faction of the SLPP. The APC was launched on 11 September 1960, months before Sierra Leone gained independence. In March 1967, there was a crucial election that pitted the APC against the SLPP, and the results revealed the country to be largely divided along ethnic lines. Controversy marred the polls and, after a brief military intervention, the APC was given power by the military.

In 1978, the APC declared Sierra Leone a one-party state, and banned all opposition parties. A military coup in 1992 ended the APC's grip on power, and elections conducted in 1996 returned the SLPP to power. The 2002 elections, the first post-war polls, confirmed the SLPP in power for the immediate post-war period.

⁷ This intervention is seen as the decisive factor in persuading the RUF that it could not win the war, but (even in British circles) military action by Guinean forces against RUF units supporting rebels seeking to overthrow Lansana Conte's regime in Guinea, February-March 2000, is seen as at least as important a factor (Porter 2003).

⁸ Agreed in the Abuja cease-fire accord, 10th November 2000

While the two parties, in their rhetoric and manifestos, are almost identical, there are important differences between them in appeal and ideology. Though it has ruled Sierra Leone for far longer than the SLPP, the APC remains the insurgent party that was started by trade unionists and nominally educated workers and peasants in 1960. It still appeal to the urban working class and unemployed youth, unlike the SLPP, which sometimes, against its own electoral interests, patronises, or at best seems disconnected from, this category. In its rhetoric, the APC sounds anti-elite, but in reality, this is not the case.

They also differ in their attitudes towards chiefs and ‘traditional authority’. The SLPP – a party set up largely by sons of chiefs – clearly seems more comfortable working with chiefs than the APC does, though both aggressively court the support of traditional rulers. The APC no longer toys with socialism, a foundational pretence of the party: President Koroma has repeatedly vowed to rule Sierra Leone as “a business”, contrary to the APC’s early socialist rhetoric.

These differences imply one important assumption: large-scale political violence is more likely to be initiated by the APC, the party that draws heavily on the disenfranchised youth, rather than by the SLPP, with its (mainly) upper/middle class membership, and its aversion to unrest. But the recent incident in Tongo, in which both parties imported thugs to inflict violence, indicates that this assumption can no longer be taken for granted. Since the 2008 local council elections, younger firebrands in the SLPP have been in the ascendancy. Until the party gets a presidential candidate – set to be in March 2011 – it is reasonable to conclude that with John Benjamin as its Chairman, the stage is set for the manipulation of regional and ethnic differences, and violent confrontations between APC and SLPP in the period before the 2012 elections.

Ethnic and Regional Divisions

While political party loyalties in Sierra Leone have always been largely regional since the late 1960s – with the APC drawing support largely from the Northern Province and Western Area, and the SLPP from the Southern and Eastern Provinces – there were always grey areas, and politicians always had to appeal beyond their regional heartlands to secure and sustain power. Moreover, there were credible prospects of making breakthroughs, as was shown, for example, in Tejan Kabbah’s SLPP winning a substantial part of the Northern and Western Area votes. That may have been something of an anomaly, but even where – as in the case of Siaka Stevens’ APC in the late 1960s and 1970s – one of the two parties assumed power without substantial support from the rival party’s traditional base, once in power its ranks were swelled by defeated SLPP members, helping give a national colour to the APC in the 1970s and 1980s.

This has not been the case since the 2007 elections. As the results of the 2008 Local Council elections and, even more so, all the subsequent by-elections, have shown, politics in Sierra Leone are now firmly ‘tribalised’, with political alliances determined in all cases by ethnic or regional origin. There have been very few, if any, defections from the SLPP, which has lost power and has nothing concrete to offer its supporters, to the APC since the 2007. Obviously this bodes ill for national unity and the peaceful conduct of the 2012 elections: any last minute attempt to make inroads in regions that are not traditional support bases is likely to be accompanied by violence.

The elections of 2007 and their consequences have set a new context, suggesting a paradigm shift in trying to understand Sierra Leone’s political environment. The results of the 2007

election showed troubling voting patterns. The winning APC Presidential candidate polled over 80 per cent of the votes in the Northern half of the country, capturing 36 of the 39 Parliamentary seats, and winning every seat in the Temne and Limba areas (the APC's key ethnic supporters). The APC, however, won only 2 of the 53 seats in the entire Southern and Eastern Provinces (SLPP's traditional powerbase), and no seat at all in the Mende-dominated Southern Province.

For its part, the SLPP (the party in power from 1996 - 2007), which had won 18 seats in the Northern Province in 2002 – won only 3 seats there in 2007, and won no seat in the Western Area. Compounding this problem has been the APC's winner takes all strategy, expressed as reward politics: over 200 high- and mid-level officials perceived to belong to the SLPP, often mainly because they come from the 'wrong' region or belong to the 'wrong' ethnic group, have been purged since 2007. The consequences of such sackings in a country with few employment options, and where individuals are burdened by the demands of external families, are telling not only for the individuals concerned, but also the groups from which they are drawn.

After the only APC-held local council seat in Kenema District (an SLPP stronghold) was taken by the SLPP (in February 2009) in a by-election that was accompanied by violence, the Chairman of the Eastern Province branch of the SLPP – a former Ambassador – triumphantly declared at the SLPP mini-convention in Bo that month that the last "APC virus" had been wiped out in the district – an unsettling image that illustrates the importance attached to even minor polls. The same image, by the way, had been evoked several times by APC operatives after the party's overwhelming win in the northern half of the country. The outlook for the period preceding the 2012 elections is worrying.

The 2012 national elections

In 2012 Sierra Leone will conduct its third Presidential and Parliamentary elections since the end of the civil war in 2002. The period since the end of the war has witnessed elections for paramount chiefs and local councils in processes adjudged to be free of large-scale violence, the results of which were accepted nationally and internationally. The Presidential elections of 2007, however, proved controversial, resulting in political polarisation along ethnic and regional lines.

The tone of the 2012 elections (for presidential, parliamentary and local council positions) is already worrying, with violent clashes between supporters of the two main political parties, the ruling All Peoples Congress (APC, winner of the 2007 elections) and the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) widespread during 2009. Ethnic politics is booming, and a young population is increasingly urbanised and politicised, massively unemployed, and subject to pressures from widespread criminality and the burgeoning trade in illicit drugs.

Whilst these elements were present prior to the 2007 elections, they were mitigated by two important facts: first, the then President, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah did not contest those elections, choosing instead to leave a legacy of stable democratic institutions and a reconciled nation; second, the leverage of the international community (to which Kabbah was obviously beholden for the role it played in securing and guaranteeing his regime) was very strong. The first factor will not apply in 2012 (President Ernest Koroma will stand for re-election), and the second is, at least, questionable (the President has little reason to feel beholden to the international community).

Sierra Leone's peace remains fragile, its state institutions are weak, and its government is unsure of maintaining the alliances it has built (consequently, it reacts excessively to even minor threats of instability, further escalating divisions). This is no temporary aberration; in the decades since its independence, Sierra Leone has failed to forge a sustainable political settlement that enables political and economic interests to compete through state institutions in a routine, non-violent manner. Given these shortcomings, competing political interests resort to force or violence to gain primacy, and leadership succession becomes almost a life and death struggle.

As the international community's leverage (and presence) wanes, reliance on the capacities and integrity of the national institutions of democracy increases.

Electoral support bodies and civil institutions of democracy

The National Electoral Commission

The current NEC is a completely revamped organisation, the result of recommendations by South African Justice Johan Krieger, who helped conduct the 1994 elections that brought black-majority rule in his country. Krieger had investigated the rigged polls of the 2004 elections, and as a result recommended the complete dismantling and rebuilding of NEC, with new staff and new leadership. He recommended transformation of NEC into a fully functioning body capable of "attaining and maintaining the capacity to conduct the country's electoral undertakings fairly, competently, affordably, without outside assistance." The first step would be for the new NEC to "metamorphose from an appendage of the government service into a state-funded but independent electoral management body (EMB) employing its own core of electoral experts."⁹

Christiana Thorpe was sworn-in in May 2005 as the new Chair of NEC; she was a minister of education under the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) junta in the 1990s, after leaving the Catholic monastery. Four Electoral Commissioners, representing the four regions of the country, were also appointed. The NEC then moved to well-equipped new offices in the far east-end of Freetown.¹⁰ The NEC hired educated, competent staff. It presently has a staff of 135, including those manning regional offices.

But the NEC did not emerge unscathed from the 2007 elections. Thorpe took the controversial decision of invalidating polling results from 477 stations, handing the elections to the APC. Disagreeing with this decision, two commissioners – representing the Southern and Eastern Provinces (SLPP heartlands) – summarily resigned. Thorpe then fired a number of senior officials in NEC deemed to have been partial to the SLPP, including Dr. Hindowa Momoh, its Executive Secretary. While perhaps not completely unreasonable, these decisions did not enhance Thorpe's reputation as an even-handed player amongst the leaders and members of the SLPP, within which she is now deeply distrusted.

An issue likely to generate controversy will be the recruitment of polling agents. This is important, as electoral malpractice, particularly in rural areas where logistical challenges prevent parties from sending representatives to polling stations, is largely attributed to polling agents. The job of polling agents is temporary, and poorly paid. Experienced political opera-

⁹ The quotes are from Krieger's "Second Assessment Report" on the NEC, May 2005.

¹⁰ The former offices, in Central Freetown, were decrepit and neglected.

tives have a way of getting their partisan supporters recruited as polling agents, and thereby use them during the actual voting to tamper with the balloting.

Another contentious issue from 2007 was the manner in which polling results were announced by the NEC (via press releases and on its website) as they came in; the initial tallies came almost entirely from APC-dominated areas, creating the impression long before the vote-counting reached mid-way that the party had already won. This gave a lot of impetus to its youthful supporters, and created the impression that any result contrary to the apparently expected result would have created serious problems. Also, many of the announcements were fundamentally incorrect, most notably the false turnout figure of 2,042,601 which, in the final reckoning, was revised to 1,783,851, leading to accusations from the SLPP that the difference of 258,750 votes had been hastily omitted from the final count in order to give victory to Ernest Koroma and the APC.

The Political Parties Registration Commission

The PPRC was created by an Act of Parliament by then President Tejan Kabbah in order that “government does not use its powers to muzzle or even ban political parties simply because the Executive feels such parties pose a serious challenge.” A Chairman (who should be a retired High Court judge) heads the PPRC, supported by three Commissioners. Its principal function is to register and supervise the conduct of the political parties in accordance with the constitution and Political Parties Act 2002.

Potentially, the PPRC is an important body, as it certifies which political parties can contest the polls, and which ought to be disqualified. For example, it recently banned the putative Socialist Party of Sierra Leone on grounds that it is not registered; the party is small and insignificant, and does not have a presence anywhere outside of Freetown – conditions necessary for its registration.

The PPRC is currently without a Chairman, and the appointment, when it comes, will undoubtedly be contentious.

The Anti-Corruption Commission

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) was set up by an Act of Parliament in 2000 to “investigate all instances of alleged or suspected corruption...and to take such steps as may be necessary for the eradication or suppression of corrupt practices.” The Act defines corruption broadly to include “corrupt acquisition of wealth, soliciting or accepting advantage, using influence for contracts, corrupting public officer, soliciting or accepting advantage for public officer, misappropriation of donor funds or property, impeding foreign investment, corrupt transactions with agents.”

This rhetoric, however, has not been consistently matched by action. The first substantive head, Val Collier, a respected former civil servant, was sacked in 2006 and replaced by Joko-Smart, a law professor and close friend of former President Kabbah. The government accused Collier and his deputy Andy Felton (a British national and DFID consultant) of, among others, courtesy to the President and Parliament (which Collier allegedly described as full of rogues); of “travelling in and out of the country without the permission of the Government;”

of paying journalists to “write negative articles against the Government;” and of giving a French public relations firm \$50,000 “to write against the Sierra Leone Government.”¹¹

Felton resigned shortly after Collier was sacked. During his tumultuous time, Collier brought charges against a number of government ministers, an Appeals Court judge and several senior civil servants. Joko-Smart, on the other hand, focused almost exclusively on junior and mid-level officials, hardly a credible way of tackling corruption in a country where it has become reputedly endemic. In 2007, DFID issued a damning report on the lack of progress by the ACC, and withheld financial support.

When the APC came to power that year, it swiftly despatched Joko-Smart, and appointed the younger more vibrant Abdul Tejan Cole, a respected lawyer. Shortly after taking over, Tejan-Cole commissioned a Strategic Review of the ACC, which noted the following problems with the Commission:

1. Lack of capacity to thoroughly investigate cases and establish *prima-facie* evidence;
2. The Office of the nation’s Chief Prosecutor or Attorney General is held by a member of government as Minister of Justice, creating serious bottlenecks, often indeed obstacle to prosecution
3. Lack of cooperation from the public in providing relevant information relating to corrupt practices.

After this assessment, the ACC drafted an amendment to the 2000 Act which provided prosecutorial powers to the Commission, and it launched a new National Anti-Corruption Strategy (NACS 2008-2013). Tejan-Cole started, rather quietly at first, prosecuting important, but rather low-profile, officials, including the Ombudsman and a number of civil servants. Once it registered success here, the ACC moved on to bigger targets, and in late 2009, the ACC convicted the former Minister of Health, Sheku Tejan Koroma. Shortly after that, the Commission indicted the powerful former Minister of Fisheries, a very close protégé of President Koroma. This last indictment triggered a chain reaction in which Tejan-Cole was finally forced to resign.

Morlai Buya-Kamara, the Deputy Commissioner, is acting as Commissioner. He claims that the ACC is currently investigating 50 cases and is trying 12 more. The bulk of the funds for the operation of the ACC – about 70% - comes from the government of Sierra Leone, with the balance being provided by DFID, GTZ, Irish Aid, and the World Bank.

War as a crisis of rural youth

Positioning Youth

‘Youth’ is an especially complex category in upper West African coastal society. If peace building is to address youth exclusion, then age, gender and class aspects must be carefully distinguished.

Young people (especially males) become responsible for their own subsistence (at least in part) from as early as aged 10, but are rarely seen as experienced enough to be accepted as

¹¹ The allegations were contained in a memo sent to the British High Commissioner by the government in late 2005.

full adults until their 30s, especially in rural communities. A man married to only one wife was regarded, traditionally, in many rural communities as still only a “boy”. The poorest rural men, unable to found large families, might remain “youths” into old age.

Youth, mobility and class

The West African forest zone lacks beasts of burden (due to the threat of animal diseases such as trypanosomiasis) and human labour was (and remains) the historical “motor” of the economy. The region is still under-supplied with machines, and rural life continues to be based on backbreaking labour, most of it supplied by women and young men.

In the past a huge amount of this labour was supplied by domestic and farm slaves; Sierra Leone and Liberia were among the last countries in the region to legislate emancipation (1928 and 1930 respectively), meaning that slavery was still a living institution when the modern cash crop economy was first established. Old attitudes towards “dependent” young men still linger in rural areas.

At emancipation many young men formerly held as slaves moved to towns or mines looking for unskilled work. Others remained in the villages supplying farm labour at minimal rates, often for their former owners. Some of these rural labourers moved around the rural economy (finding work in alluvial diamond mining in Sierra Leone or rubber tapping in Liberia, for instance).

However, these migrant rural workers enjoyed only second-class citizenship. Persons living outside their chiefdom of birth in both Sierra Leone and Liberia are designated “strangers”, and live under the authority of a local landowner known as a “father” - i.e. patron. “Stranger” and “youth” are overlapping categories constitutive of an important rural underclass (about one third of the population of rural Sierra Leone belongs to the category “stranger”).

Youth and conflict

Whilst there may be disagreement over the underlying causes of the wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia, commentators agree that a large number of poorly educated, under-employed young people (especially young men) is a predisposing factor. Two views have come to dominate the debate. One interpretation attributes the wars to the work of an urban-based criminal underclass (Abdullah 1997, Mkandawire 2002), though why these groups should shift from crime to war in the first place, and why their armed struggles proved so enduring in Sierra Leone and Liberia, is not made clear. Other analysts suggest that war begins as an intra-elite political (or economic) project, but that as war becomes more general many young people join militia groups as a way to survive.

In Liberia, for instance, Boas & Hatloy (2008), Archibald, Mulbah & Kantelberg (2008) and Archibald (2006) found that fighters were indistinguishable in socio-economic background from the generality of rural youth; most fought not because they were young criminals, but because their livelihoods and their families were threatened. Humphreys & Weinstein (2004) provide similar results for Sierra Leone, where ex-combatants were mainly impoverished rural young people recruited when war spread into their area. The two major armed factions in the Sierra Leone war – the RUF and the CDF – accounted for about 85% of all combatants, and the majority of their fighters were typical (in socio-economic background) of the broader rural youth underclass.

Youth and gender

Gender adds a significant additional aspect to the subordinate positioning of youth in the Mano River conflict zone. As in much of Africa, women in Sierra Leone and Liberia carry out most of the work involved in making a home and rearing children, while also being heavily involved in the economy outside the home, contributing large amounts of farm labour as well as involvement in petty trade.

While most men become recognised as elders with time and enjoy enlarged social independence later in life, the progress of a rural women towards such independence is less certain. Some older women – through education, property or family connections – enjoy status and independence on a par with male elders. But the majority remain subordinates throughout their lives. In rural areas a woman is regarded as coming under the authority of a man so long as she remains married, and widows will be encouraged to remarry or attach themselves to the authority of a brother or other male relative.

In the customary system, a young woman before marriage belongs to her father or to the man who has pledged to marry her. At marriage she comes under the authority of her husband. On the death of the husband she may re-marry or return to the family house and come under the authority of a brother. Male elders jealously guard these rights and responsibilities, and will, for example, sue young men forming unauthorised liaisons with female partners for “woman damage”. Marriage is freer in the towns, but even so a woman who tries to live independently of any man will often be regarded as “loose”.

Where young men are often expected to make their own way in the world rural young women live a highly supervised life, under the authority of a male “care taker”. Increasingly, however, young women – especially from an underclass background – reject male supervision. This is reflected in the numbers of young women incorporated within militia forces in the Mano River conflict zone.¹²

In the post-conflict world circumstances and attitudes have continued to change. Female former fighters often explicitly reject the traditional ideology of women's subordination. Civilian young women may be less open about their condemnation of traditional values but – widowed or abandoned in wartime – may now prefer a risky independent life in towns over returning to a supposedly more secure customary rural setting in which female labour is heavily exploited and women's patterns of social networking are closely monitored.

Demographic pressures and opportunity deficits

West Africa's annual population growth rate (2.3%) is more than double the global average (1.1%). At this rate of growth the region's current population of 270 million will more than double by 2050, when it will reach a projected figure of 587 million¹³. Whilst these statistics are “amongst the highest in recorded history”¹⁴, those of the Mano River states are notably problematic.

¹² Some were captured (Coulter 2006) but others volunteered (Peters 2006).

¹³ United Nations Office for West Africa, Urbanisation and Insecurity in West Africa, (United Nations Office for West Africa, 2007), pp. 12-13

¹⁴ United Nations Office for West Africa, Youth Unemployment and Regional Insecurity in West Africa, (United Nations Office for West Africa, 2005), pp. 9-10, quoted in Sommers, M., West Africa's Youth Employment Challenge, The Case of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d'Ivoire, (UNIDO, 2007).

Of the four-country¹⁵ population of 36.3 million, an estimated 26 million, or three in every four people, are under the age of 30. In Sierra Leone, 43% of the population is under the age of 15 years. The proportion of those young people without proper work reaches 60% across the four countries, whilst in the historically volatile areas along the Sierra Leone - Liberia border, the figure is estimated to be as high as 88%.

Education enrolment figures for Sierra Leone make uncomfortable reading. The most recent figures indicate that of the secondary school age populations only 18% of potential female students, and 22% of potential male students are currently enrolled.¹⁶

The education and employment prospects of the region's young people will have a profound impact on the prospects for peace. Sierra Leone's President Ernest Bai Koroma recently stated, "*The plight of the young and unemployed represents a considerable threat to the country's security.*"

To have education and a job is to have a stake in society, and to have a means whereby a young person can measure their social worth. This maxim holds true in any society. Failure to provide skills and jobs for a large youth underclass undermined social cohesion and fed the wars in Upper West Africa. This was a central issue in the RUF war. When the movement's leader, Foday Sankoh, commented that "people with qualifications have no jobs, and people with no qualifications have jobs", it resonated most amongst the unemployed rural youth, for many of whom the war began as a protest at the rampant patronage responsible for job and resource allocation.

The war was ended not through political negotiation but by offering RUF fighters a reintegration package based on skills training. However, *these skills are unlikely to mean much in the longer term unless peace building frameworks pay attention to the institutional inequities responsible for killing enterprise and initiative amongst young people, particularly in relation to governance, education, training and secure tenure over agricultural plots.*

Peace-building frameworks

The Government of Sierra Leone's *Agenda for Change* and second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (*PRSP II*) acknowledge these challenges. Framed around 4 Strategic Priorities, *The Agenda for Change* prioritises pro-poor growth (focusing in youth employment through agriculture), and eradicating corrupt practice in government institutions.

The main international development agencies endorse *The Agenda for Change*; the UN, DFID, the EC and the World Bank have aligned their strategic frameworks to reflect the Agenda's priorities.

The Government of Sierra Leone's Agenda for Change and PRSPII

President Ernest Bai Koroma's *Agenda for Change* provides a strategic framework for social, economic and political renewal that is elaborated in the PRSPII, the overall objective of which is "*to reduce poverty significantly and improve the lives of the majority of Sierra Leoneans*".

¹⁵ Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire

¹⁶ Source: The World's Youth 2006 Data Sheet, Population Reference Bureau

oneans. ¹⁷ The strategy has:

Four strategic priorities:

1. Provision of a reliable power supply throughout the country
2. Promotion of pro-poor economic growth, with an emphasis on maximising the productivity and employment potentials of the agriculture, fishery and marine resources sectors
3. Development of a national transportation network
4. Effective delivery of basic social services, including the decentralisation of health and education service delivery functions

Five key principles:

1. Good governance
2. Macroeconomic stability
3. Private sector development
4. Responsible management of natural resources
5. Improved management of the private financial sector

Three major risks:

1. **Corruption**, which remains pervasive, constrains national development and underscores negative external perceptions of the country.
2. **Illicit drug trade**, which is becoming a major threat to stability and development across coastal West Africa.
3. **Youth unemployment**, which is acknowledged as the major development challenge, and possibly the most significant risk to peace and stability in Sierra Leone, and the sub-region.

In December 2008, the estimated total funding requirement for successful implementation of the Agenda for Change was US\$2.1 billion, of which Government and its international partners had committed US\$1.2 billion within the Medium term Expenditure Framework for 2009 - 2011. Of the international partners, the UN provides the major framework through which international support to the Agenda and the PRSP II is channeled.

The United Nations Joint Vision for Sierra Leone

The *Joint Vision for Sierra Leone* defines the UN's contribution to implementing the Government's Agenda for Change over the period 2009 - 2012 at a total cost of US\$349m, of which the UN requires US\$204m (59%) in new funding.

¹⁷ Government of Sierra Leone (2009), *Agenda For Change: Second Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2008-2012)*, p. i.

The **Priority of the Joint Vision** is: 'Consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone, that sees the establishment and maintenance of a constructive, peaceful, stable and democratic political climate, enabling delivery of free and fair elections in 2012, conducted and supervised by the NEC.' The Joint Vision has:

Four Programme Priorities:

1. Economic integration of rural areas
2. Economic and social integration of youth
3. Equitable access to health services
4. Accessible and credible public service

These 4 areas are sub-divided into a total of twenty-one programmes, each of which has specific objectives, outputs, activities and funding requirements. International partners are invited to make financial contributions to the programmes via the UN-established Multi-Donor Trust Fund (detailed below). Regarding potential Australian support, the most relevant programmes are:

- **Program 1: Democratic Elections and Political Dialogue**, which relates to the UN's overarching priority of political stability, in support of Chapter 8 (Democracy and Good Governance) of *The Agenda for Change*. The program includes support to electoral bodies and the national institutions of democracy. The UN Lead Agency for the program is UNDP.
- **Program 4: National Agricultural Response Programme**, which includes the *National Smallholder Commercialisation Programme (SCP)*. The SCP aims to stimulate food production, local businesses and markets, the rural economy and job creation, particularly for young people (UN Lead Agency: FAO).

Joint Multi-Donor Trust Fund for Sierra Leone

The overall aim of the Sierra Leone Multi-donor Trust Fund (SL-MDTF) is to enhance coherence and efficiency of UN programs and projects at the country level, whilst creating a joint funding window that corresponds to and supports the programmatic integration the UN seeks to accomplish under the Joint Vision.

The SL-MDTF is designed to be consistent with the Paris Declaration on Aid Efficiency, including national ownership, alignment with national priorities. It also responds to the Delivering as One Initiative and the Secretary General's efforts to improve the integration of UN political, development and humanitarian activities in the UN system through a network of integrated UN field offices.

Objectives of the MDTF

- Enhance the UN's capability to partner with the Government and development partners to support national development plans and priorities, including the PRSPII
- Support the Joint Vision through obtaining greater program cohesion, harmonisation and effectiveness

- Provide for a coherent and streamlined platform for the mobilization of additional donor resources (from resident and non-resident donors), fund allocation and reporting of the programmatic priorities of the Joint Vision;
- Fund and implement with special attention to transparency and accountability as well as to prompt delivery and efficient utilisation of resources.

Contributing to the MDTF

The MDTF receives contributions from bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors as well as from other financial institutions. Donors can contribute to the MDTF in the following ways:

- **‘Un-earmarked’ funds** that are placed in the MDTF, and which the Steering Committee (see below) allocates to programs based on an ongoing assessment of needs
- **‘Soft earmarked’ funds** that identify one of the twenty-one programs, after which the Steering Committee will allocate the funds to projects contained within the selected program
- **‘Strong earmarked’ funds** that identify the program and the agency and fund specific projects within the program, after which the Steering Committee will simply acknowledge the donation.

Governance arrangements

The MDTF has internal management and external decision-making arrangements:

- **Internal oversight:** Based on the information provided by UNDP’s MDTF Office in New York and the UN-SPU, the UN Country Team will regularly review the status of the MDTF and its contribution towards the implementation of the Joint Vision. In particular, the UNCT will ensure that a balanced approach is taken in raising and allocating funding to the various programs and projects under the Joint Vision. For non-earmarked contributions, the UNCT will make proposals to the Steering Committee for their allocation to programmes and projects.
- **Steering Committee:** All other programs and projects, irrespective of whether they are partly or fully funded by the MDTF, are approved by the Steering Committee. They fall under the same monitoring, evaluation and reporting arrangements as those governed by the Joint Vision. The Minister of Finance and the ERSG/ RC chair the Steering committee.

The other major peace building framework is provided jointly by DFID and the EC

The EC & DFID Joint Country Strategy

The *Joint Country Strategy* (JCS) for Sierra Leone was drafted by the GoSL, the EC and DFID, with inputs from in-country EU Member States. The JCS expressly supports the PRSP, and covers cooperation with the GoSL for the period 2008-2013 for the EC, and 2007-2012 for DFID. Although the JCS was prepared jointly, both the EC and DFID also retain separate delivery and business plans, and budgets.

DFID’s support for the period 2007-2012 is approximately UKL150m, and includes:

- Support to the national water and sanitation strategy (UKL32m)

- Support to healthcare services (UKL50m)
- Support to girls education / education (UKL 10m)
- Electoral support (UKL18m):
 - Strengthening institutions of democracy (NEC, PPRC) for which UKL6m will be provided *via* the UNDP-administered MDTF
 - Countering political violence, for which UKL6m will be programmed via DFID's Security and Justice programme
 - Support to civil society engagement with 2012 electoral process, for which UKL6m will be provided via a DfID-designed programme (currently being finalised)

EC support for the period 2008-2013 includes:

- Good governance and institutional support (€ 37m)
- Rehabilitation of priority infrastructure (€ 95m)
- General budget support (€ 90m)
- Agriculture, Trade, Regional Programmes (€ 20m)

The World Bank & African Development Bank's Joint Country Assistance Strategy

The *Joint Assistance Strategy (JAS)* was prepared by the African Development Bank Group (AfDB), the World Bank and the International Finance Corporation. It sets out the planned lending and non-lending support, and likely investments, for the period 2010 to 2013.

The JAS complements other partners' strategies for assisting Sierra Leone, notably the DfID/EC strategy and the UN Joint Vision, and is fully aligned with the Agenda for Change and the PRSII.

The JAS is organized around two pillars: growth and human development. The Growth Pillar provides financing for investments in agriculture, fisheries, energy, transport, and the financial sector. The Human Development Pillar focuses on investments to support decentralized delivery in health, education, and water supply, as well as dedicated support to primary education and reproductive and child health, to address child and maternal mortality.

Over the three-year period the JAS partners expect to mobilize approximately US\$300 million in support of Sierra Leone's development agenda.

Potential entry points for Australian peace building support

Government and international development partners coalesce around the 4 Strategic Priorities for peace building in Sierra Leone:

1. Provision of a reliable power supply throughout the country

2. Promotion of pro-poor economic growth with an emphasis on maximising the productivity and employment potentials of the agriculture, fishery and marine resources sectors
3. Development of a national transportation network
4. Effective delivery of basic social services, including the decentralisation of health and education service delivery functions

Positioning Australian support

Australian support will make a significant contribution to peace building if it is targeted directly in support of initiatives that address the *proximate threats to peace and stability*. There is broad consensus that these threats are:

- (iii) Continued escalation of political violence in the period preceding the 2012 national elections
- (iv) Mass youth unemployment.

These are complex issues that require focused engagement. As AusAID will have limited representational presence in Freetown, support may best be provided through discrete (but visible) niche components of broader programmes managed by established donors. Direct support provided to Ministries and civil society coalitions is also possible, and options will also be presented.

Mitigating the threat of political violence

There has been a significant upturn in political violence since 2008, and there is widespread concern that the trend will escalate between now and the national elections in 2012. The integrity of the electoral process will largely depend on the performance of the electoral support bodies, such as the National Election Commission (NEC) and the Political Parties Registration Commission (PPRC), and civil society coalitions like the highly regarded National Elections Watch (NEW18). Mitigating the threat of electoral violence requires sustained support for these bodies to fulfil their respective roles during the pre-election period 2010-2012.

This section summarises the key issues, and presents options and recommendations for AusAID support.

Role of electoral support bodies in mitigating the threat of political violence

UNDP is the Lead Agency for the Democratic Elections and Political Dialogue Program (P1) under the UN Joint Vision for Sierra Leone. The objective of the program is to provide support to the NEC in the implementation of the 2012 elections. The program also seeks to support the PPRC in its role to maintain dialogue among political parties, and carry out critical tasks in support of the elections. In addition, the program will also seek to strengthen CSOs to act as effective watch-dogs and promote civic and voter education. Overall the proposed program will help develop sustainable human and institutional capacities of the NEC and PPRC.

¹⁸ A coalition of 14 national and international Civil Society Organisations committed to promoting participation, and monitoring the conduct of political parties and the integrity of the electoral process

The UNDP-managed basket fund supported the 2007 presidential and parliamentary elections, and the 2008 local council elections. Both processes were well received, but a number of challenges remain. Since the elections, NEC has commendably conducted a number of local council and parliamentary by elections, but its capacity to conduct full-scale national elections remains weak and requires continued support from the international community. The challenges are compounded by limited Government financial resources, that underscore the need for continued international support for electoral bodies and democratic institutions.

Despite its difficulties, the PPRC performed well in the 2007 and 2008 elections. It carried out a number of high profile inter and intra-party mediation exercises, and through its District Code of Conduct Monitoring Committees provided critical forums for dialogue between the political parties. However, a series of bloody inter-party clashes in Freetown and the interior in mid-March 2009 was the worst spate of political violence in Sierra Leone since the end of the war in 2002, highlighting the need for an effective Commission to work alongside civil society to promote political tolerance.

The confrontations between party-affiliated youths resulted in scores of serious injuries, sexual assaults, the destruction of the opposition party headquarters in the capital, and the first postponement of a scheduled election in Sierra Leone's post-war period. The country's political situation is extremely fragile.

To enable the Commissions to respond appropriately, they require assistance to restructure, and to recruit and train new permanent staff. Funding is also necessary for the PPRC to run important 'in-between election programs' that are geared, amongst others, towards ensuring adherence to the Code of Conduct as well as minimising the adverse impact of the ethnic and regional divisions in the country, which are increasingly manifest as political intolerance.

The NEC and the PPRC, through their engagement with political parties, are also well placed to work with other stakeholders to improve the political representation of women, and strengthen weak political party structures. These issues require concerted support from the international community.

The estimated total requirement for the programme is US\$21m, of which US\$3m is secured, with pledges of support received from DFID, EC, Denmark, Japan, Irish Aid and Norway.

Recommendation (a): Strengthen electoral support bodies via Sierra Leone-MDTF

AusAID can make a "strong earmarked" contribution to strengthen electoral bodies and democratic institutions through the UN-administered Sierra Leone Multi-donor Trust Fund (SL-MDTF). The contribution would incur an administration fee (approximately 7-9% of contribution) payable to UNDP (the UN Lead Agency), in return for which UNDP would assume responsibility for grant management, monitoring, and evaluation and reporting. Given the complexity of the context, this should be regarded as a preferred option.

Recommendation (b): Direct financial support to electoral support bodies

AusAID could provide direct financial assistance to electoral support bodies, thereby avoiding the requirement to pay an administration fee, but this would be managerially demanding, and run contrary to the preference amongst international partners to channel support for electoral bodies through the SL-MDTF. This option is feasible, but is not preferred.

Role of civil society in mitigating the threat of political violence

National Elections Watch (NEW) is a civil society coalition comprising 14 local and international NGOs and CSOs with a common objective of supporting free and fair elections. NEW began operations during the 1997 Sierra Leone Presidential elections, and has continued to grow, playing an active, and widely-admired, role in supporting Sierra Leone's young democracy.

The NEW coalition is structured around a Lead Organisation, which, since its inception, has been the international NGO Search For Common Ground (SFCG). SFCG-SL is a long-established and respected organisation with a substantive track record of managing international-donor supported projects.

NEW is now established as a permanent group, with a decentralised structure that enables it to engage at grass roots level across the country, as it did during the 2007 national elections, and the 2008 local council elections, when it played a vital role in ensuring the integrity of polling procedures. NEW's strategic plan for the 2012 electoral process sets out a broader role, encompassing civic and voter education in support of the NEC and PPRC programs during the 2 years preceding the 2012 elections.

There is widespread consensus that the elections will be close and highly contentious. NEW's role can be pivotal in ensuring popular acceptance of the process. However, as with the 'formal' institutions of democracy, NEW requires long-term financial, strategic and operational support in order to fulfil its potential. Whilst NEW has received international support (from DFID, Irish Aid and GTZ), this has tended to be short-term, focussed on monitoring polling processes.

It is now important that Sierra Leone develops a permanent civil society capacity to engage with electoral processes in support of formal Commissions such as NEC and PPRC. NEW, if appropriately supported, can spearhead this process.

Recommendation (c): Support National Elections Watch *via* DFID

AusAID can support NEW *via* DFID's electoral support programme. DFID has allocated £18m in support of the electoral process, of which £6m will fund civil society initiatives, such as NEW's Strategic Plan for the 2010 Elections. DFID would welcome an AusAID contribution, and assures that AusAID funding would remain visible. Benefits of this option would include shared reporting and management facilities and, importantly, alignment with a pivotal donor if the elections become contentious, and civil society raises concerns about the integrity of the process. This scenario is highly likely, and it will be important that AusAID is not perceived as standing alone in support of independent civil society comment. Providing Australian assistance through DFID's Electoral Support Programme would mitigate this problem. This option would also be preferable if Australian representation in Freetown were to be co-located with DFID.

Recommendation (d): Direct support to the National Election Watchdog (NEW)

AusAID can provide financial and technical assistance directly to NEW for development and implementation of its Strategic Plan, the estimated cost of which is US\$2m for period 2010 – 2013. This would require an engagement with NEW's lead agency (Search for Common Ground) on the management and strategic direction of the process, a requirement that may

become more demanding as the elections draw nearer. Given Australia's limited representation in Freetown, this may suggest the previous option is preferable, but AusAID should have no qualms about funding NEW through an agreement with Search for Common Ground.

Mitigating mass youth unemployment

Sierra Leone's population of 5 million is overwhelmingly young (an estimated 43% of the population is under the age of 15) and unemployed (an estimated 70% of young people are unemployed). This demographic profile, when combined with the large education and employment deficits, provides a volatile mix. Political violence has increased steadily since 2008, and young people have been instrumental. The UN Secretary-General made a stark warning in his May 2009 report to the UN Security Council:

“... the recent (political) disturbances had the potential to evolve into a full-blown conflict: increasing regional divisions in the country, increasing identification of political parties with ethnic loyalties, (the) huge numbers of unemployed and underemployed youth with limited or no hope for a better future coupled with the spiralling food prices (all) contribute to (a) climate in which political violence could have easily thrived.”

There is no immediate solution; the levels of public and private sector investment required to create significant numbers of jobs remain distant prospects. In a country with abundant land and water resources, and where more than 70% of the population reside in rural areas, the agriculture sector remains the most likely source of employment, income and food security for young people.

Employment generation in agriculture

The National Sustainable Agriculture Development Plan (NSADP) is the central pillar of the PRSP II. The priority programme of the NSADP is the Smallholder Commercialisation Programme (SCP), identified as “*the programme with the greatest potential for positive impact on food security and wealth generation for vulnerable and youth populations*”.

The primary focus of the SCP is the formation of Farmer Based Organisations (FBOs) and Agricultural Business Centres (ABCs, formed from 3-5 FBOs), which will function as a collective gateway to commercialisation for their members. The plan is to establish 2,750 FBOs, (trained in agriculture and organisational and business management skills), and to organise them in to 650 ABCs. The SCP has the following

Key objectives:

- Increased agriculture sector growth from its current estimate of 4 percent to 7.7 percent per annum by 2015
- Increased incomes of farming households by 10 percent
- Increased Household Food Security by 25 percent

Key components:

- **Component 1:** Commercialisation of smallholder agriculture through increased productivity, value addition, post-harvest infrastructure, marketing and institutional

strengthening to build self-reliant farmer-based organisations (FBOs) and Agriculture Business Centres (ABCs). *Total cost US\$69.472m*

- **Component 2:** Develop small scale irrigation infrastructure to boost rice production, increase food security, create market surplus for smallholders, and employment and income opportunities for young people. *Total US\$48.61m*
- **Component 3:** Improved market access through the rehabilitation and maintenance of feeder roads. *Total US\$95m*
- **Component 4:** Increase smallholder access to rural financial services tailored to the specific needs of FBOs and Agriculture Business Centres (ABCs). *Total US\$26.52m*
- **Component 5:** Enhance equitable growth and development by reducing household vulnerability to shocks and disaster through increased food security and provision of social protection safety nets to vulnerable households. *Total US\$135.7m*
- **Component 6:** Effective strategic planning and implementation of the SCP, with efficient coordination of resources and implementing partners, and adequate monitoring and evaluation of progress and impacts. *Total US\$3.9m*

Component 1 spearheads the SCP, focusing on the formation of FBOs and ABCs. ABCs will be created by 3-5 FBOs grouping together to function as a collective gateway to commercialisation for its members. The ABCs will provide a range of technical, operational and marketing services to smallholders, and be a main entry point for MAFFS extension support. The commodity focus will depend on the predominant cropping system and economic activity of the membership, with the early emphasis on rice and other food crops, and also including livestock, honey processing and fish processing.

The component plans to establish 2,750 FBOs, (trained in agriculture and organisational and business management skills), and to organise them in to 650 ABCs. Thirteen District ABC networks will be established, with the view to promoting commodity chains, platforms of exchange and eventual apex bodies at the national level. The MAFFS extension services will support ABCs through improved technical performance and operational capacity (by hosting capacity building events and rehabilitating 2 extension training centres).

Recommendation (e): Support Farmer Based Organisations and Agriculture Business Centres

The NSADP was submitted to the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme (GFASP), and a grant of US\$50m was approved on 22nd June 2010. Part of the grant will fund 1,000 FBOs and 300 ABCs, as will part of an EU grant of €10 million. The EU grant expires in 2011, with no further funding anticipated.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security (MAFFS), the EC and the FAO all recommend that Australian support should contribute to establishing and running the remaining balance of FBOs and ABCs, the costs of each unit over the 5-year period are estimated to be US\$14,000 and US\$50,000 respectively.

Component 6 will be vital to the success of the SCP. Interviews with key respondents suggest that technical capacities with MAFFS are reasonably strong, but that the managerial ca-

pacities are too weak to coordinate the key players in the agriculture sector. These capacities must be strengthened if ministries, departments, agencies and development partners are to collaborate effectively.

Recommendation (f): Financial and technical support to SCP Coordination Secretariat

A proposed SCP Coordination Secretariat will ensure effective strategic and operational planning, coordination between and amongst programme components and funding sources, and overall monitoring and evaluation. The Secretariat will comprise a Coordinator and technical experts, each of whom will be contracted and placed within MAFFS.

MAFFS and FAO both recommend Australian support to the establishment and running of the SCP Coordination Secretariat. At a cost of US\$3.9m over the period 2010-2014, supporting the Secretariat through a “strong earmarked” to FAO (through the Sierra Leone-MDTF) would represent an affordable, visible and programmatically valuable funding opportunity for AusAID. The costs will support procurement of two 4WD vehicles, the cost of contracted staff, internal and overseas travel, operating expenses and office equipment.

The SCP and the Secretariat will also have substantive requirements for short and long-term technical expertise relating to commodity development, management information systems, M&E, training for livestock animal health officers, pathologists, entomologists, hydrologists, soil scientists, forestry experts and GIS mapping. There are numerous opportunities for AusAID to provide technical assistance sourced through the Australian Civilian Corps, and institutions such as the University of Queensland and the Australia Pacific Technical College.

Recommendation (g): Support rehabilitation of agriculture training centres

Throughout the 14 years of civil war, conflict flowed unimpeded across Sierra Leone’s border with Liberia; partly because the borders are porous and difficult to police, but mainly because militias were able to recruit from a vast pool of under-educated unemployed youth – a legacy of decades of government neglect of remote areas on both sides of the border. Extensive research¹⁹ along the region’s borders reveal a network of remaining militia ensconced in remote forest locations.

Work is currently being done on the Liberian side of the border to engage so-called ‘hot spot’ populations through targeted education and vocational training programmes provided through rehabilitated Ministry of Agriculture Training Schools that had been destroyed during the war. Ideally, these initiatives should take place on both sides of a border that is viewed by many as the cradle of the region’s wars.

The experience in Liberia is proving extremely positive, and is drawing support from the Government and international partners including DfID, GTZ, the EC and the UN²⁰. Replicating the initiative on the Sierra Leone side of the border (where people complain of a re-emergent pattern of Government neglect and skewed development), would have profound peace building impacts.

The SCP includes plans to ‘rehabilitate two agriculture training centres’, but does not specify where they are. Potentially, this is a unique opportunity for Australian assistance to support the consolidation of peace at national and sub-regional levels. MAFFS and FAO would un-

¹⁹ The author can provide information on this research separately

²⁰ A Concept Note that describes the work has already been shared with AusAID

doubtedly welcome the support, and the report recommends that AusAID open a discussion with both parties to examine options.

AusAID Sierra Leone Mission Respondents: 7 - 11 June 2010

Hour	Name	Organisation	Position	Phone	Location	Observation
Monday: 7 June 2010						
10h-11 :30 am	Amb. Jean-Pierre Reymondet-Commoy	European Union	Head of Delegation	+232-76-517-307 Email : jean-pierre.reymondet-commoy@ec.europa.eu	Leicester Peak, Freetown	
12h00-1h00	Axel Fastenau	German Technical Cooperation GTZ	Director, Regional Office Sierra Leone and Liberia	+232-78-200-333 Email : axel.fastenau@gtz.de	Main Office, Frazer Street, Freetown	
30h00-4 :30h	Samuel Harbor	UNDP	Deputy Country Director	+232-76-802-503 Email : samuel.harbor@undp.org	UNDP Building, Wilkinson Road, Freetown	
5h00-6h00	Andrew Keili	CEMMATS Group	Executive Director	+232-76-602-174 Email : akeili@cemmatssl.com	Main office, Freetown	

Hour	Name	Organisation	Position	Phone	Location	Observation
Tuesday : 8 June 2010						
10h00-12h00	Dr. Engilbert Egudmudsson	World Bank	Country Representative	Email: egudmundsson@worldbank.org		
12:30-1:30h00-	Ignosi Koroma, Mohamed S. Kebe & Jonathan Sharka	Ministry of Mineral Resources	Deputy Minister, Permanent Secretary, & Director of Mines respectively		Youyi Building	
2h00-3h00	Alfred Dixon	Sierra Leone Agricultural Research Institute, SLARI	Director General	+232-76-705-108 Email : adixon.slari@gmail.com	Office Tower Hill	
4h30-5h30	Abu Brima	Network Movement for Justice and Development	Executive Director	+232-76-645-314 Email : abrima@nmjd.org	Brooksfield	
7h00-8h00	Joseph Kamara	Sierra Leone Bar Association	President	+232-76-733-491 Email : kamaraj@un.org	Atlantic, Lumley	

Hour	Name	Organisation	Position	Phone	Location	Observation
Wednesday: 9 June 2010						
9h00-10h00						
9h00-10h00	Ambrose James	Search for Common Ground		+232-76-604-298 Email : ajames@sfcg.org	Bathurst Street office	
10h00-11h00	Binta Mansaray	Special Court for Sierra Leone	Court Registrar	+232-76-680-374 Email: mansarayb@un.org	Court premises, New England, Freetown	
11h00-12h30	Dominic O'Neil	DFID	Country Head	Email: d-oneill@dfid.gov.uk	DFID office	
1h00-2h00	Sam X	British High Commission			Mamba Point	
2h30-4h30	Michael von Schulenburg	UNIPSIL	Executive Representative of the Secretary General	Email: Schulenburg@un.org	UNIPSIL office	

Hour	Name	Organisation	Position	Phone	Location	Observation
Thursday : 10 June 2010						
9h00-10h00		Addax Biofuel			Office on Wilkinson Road	
11h00-12h00	Col. Hugh Blackman	International Military Assistance Training Team (IMATT)	Commander		Balmaya	
1h00-2h30	John Benjamin and Jacob Jusu Saffa	Sierra Leone Peoples Party	Chairman and Secretary General respectively	+232-33-222-246 Email: johnbenn29@yahoo.com Email: ijisaffa@yahoo.co.uk		
3h15 – 4h30	Anthony Koroma	Ministry of Youths and Sports	Director of Youths and Sports	+232-76-692-780	National Stadium	

Hour	Name	Organisation	Position	Phone	Location	Observation
Friday: 11 June 2010						
9h00-10h00	?	US Embassy	?			
10h00-11h30	Team Debrief					
12h00	Takeoff for airport					

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