

CHAPTER 2

POST-CONFLICT LANDSCAPES

Post-conflict landscapes provide a different set of challenges when it comes to building peace and managing new conflicts stemming from the presence of peacekeepers and transitional justice programmes. This chapter looks at the backgrounds of the Sierra Leone and Liberia conflicts and focuses on the specific challenges of building civil society capacity and managing Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Special Court politics. Looking at the Arms for Development (AFD) programme, it examines whether this very practical programme attempting to address the joint need to build community development capacity and get rid of guns is actually working. Liberia is a few steps behind Sierra Leone in its movement towards peace, so the lessons learned from Sierra Leone are especially applicable as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Special Court come onto the radar in Monrovia, and an AFD programme is considered now that disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) has been completed.



Liberia Timeline¹²

Early Days	
1847	Constitution modelled on that of the USA drawn up.
1847 July	Liberia becomes independent.
1917	Liberia declares war on Germany, giving the Allies a base in West Africa.
1926	Firestone Tire and Rubber Company opens rubber plantation on land granted by government. Rubber production becomes backbone of economy.
1936	Forced-labour practices abolished.
1943	William Tubman elected president.
1944	Government declares war on the Axis powers.

1951 May	Women and indigenous property owners vote in the presidential election for the first time.
1958	Racial discrimination outlawed.
1971	Tubman dies and is succeeded by William Tolbert Jr.
1974	Government accepts aid from the Soviet Union for the first time.
1978	Liberia signs trade agreement with the European Economic Community.
1979	More than 40 people are killed in riots following a proposed increase in the price of rice.
Instability	
1980	Master Sergeant Samuel Doe stages military coup. Tolbert and 13 of his aides are publicly executed. A People's Redemption Council headed by Doe suspends constitution and assumes full powers.
1984	Doe's regime allows return of political parties following pressure from the United States and other creditors.
1985	Doe wins presidential election.
Taylor's uprising	
1989	National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor begins an uprising against the government.
1990	Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sends peacekeeping force. Doe is executed by a splinter group of the NPFL.
1991	ECOWAS and the NPFL agree to disarm and set up an Interim Government of National Unity.
1992	The NPFL launches an all-out assault on West African peacekeepers in Monrovia, the latter respond by bombing NPFL positions outside the capital and pushing the NPFL back into the countryside.
Tentative ceasefire	
1993	The warring factions draw up a plan for a National Transitional Government and a cease-fire, but this fails to materialise and fighting resumes.
1994	The warring factions agree on a timetable for disarmament and the setting up of a joint Council of State.
1995	Peace agreement signed.
1996 April	Factional fighting resumes and spreads to Monrovia.
1996 August	West African peacekeepers initiate disarmament programme, clear land mines and reopen roads, allowing refugees to return.
1997 July	Presidential and legislative elections held. Charles Taylor wins a landslide and his National Patriotic Party wins a majority of seats in the National Assembly. International observers declare the elections free and fair.

Border fighting	
1999 January	Ghana and Nigeria accuse Liberia of supporting Revolutionary United Front rebels in Sierra Leone. Britain and the US threaten to suspend aid to Liberia.
1999 April	Rebel forces thought to have come from Guinea attack town of Voinjama. Fighting displaces more than 25,000 people.
1999 September	Guinea accuses Liberian forces of entering its territory and attacking border villages.
2000 September	Liberian forces launch "massive offensive" against rebels in the north. Liberia accuses Guinean troops of shelling border villages.
2001 February	Liberian government says Sierra Leonean rebel leader Sam Bockarie, also known as Mosquito, has left the country.
2001 May	UN Security Council re-imposes arms embargo to punish Taylor for trading weapons for diamonds from rebels in Sierra Leone.
2002 January	More than 50,000 Liberians and Sierra Leonean refugees flee fighting. In February Taylor declares a state of emergency.
2002 September	President Taylor lifts an eight-month state of emergency and a ban on political rallies, citing a reduced threat from rebels.
Rebel offensives	
2003 March	Rebels open several battlefronts and advance to within 10km of Monrovia. Tens of thousands of people displaced by fighting.
2003 June	Talks in Ghana aimed at ending rebellion overshadowed by indictment accusing President Taylor of war crimes over his alleged backing of rebels in Sierra Leone.
2003 July	Fighting intensifies; rebels battle for control of Monrovia. Several hundred people are killed. West African regional group ECOWAS agrees to provide peacekeepers.
2003 August	Nigerian peacekeepers arrive. Charles Taylor leaves Liberia after handing power to his deputy Moses Blah. US troops arrive. Interim government, rebels sign peace accord in Ghana. Gyude Bryant chosen to head interim administration from October.
2003 September/ October	US forces pull out. UN launches major peacekeeping mission, deploying thousands of troops.
2003 October	Gyude Bryant sworn in as head of state.
2003 December	UN peacekeepers begin to disarm former combatants, deploying in rebel territory outside Monrovia.
2004 February	International donors pledge more than \$500m in reconstruction aid.

2004 March	UN Security Council votes to freeze assets of Charles Taylor.
2004 October	Riots in Monrovia leave 16 people dead; UN says former combatants were behind violence.
2004 November	UN announces successful disarmament of over 100,000 former combatants and the disarmament and demobilisation phase of DDR comes to a close.

Liberia: The Lone Star Forever

Liberia was founded in 1822 as a haven for freed slaves from the United States. The new 'Americo-Liberian' class of former slaves was joined by 'Congos,' slaves from other parts of Africa on ships intercepted on the high seas and brought to Liberia to be freed. The Americo-Liberians and the Congos created an oligarchic system that alienated most of the population that traced its ancestry back for many hundreds of years. This history is still cited today as the root of societal division, even though it is not the descendants of these 'foreigners' but rather the Mandingo ethnic group that is the cause of much current tension. Clinton Layweh, the Early Warning Project Officer for WANEP Liberia, explained:

The root causes of violence and small arms proliferation here are land, judicial reform, and ethnic division. There is a lot of corruption because of the influence of the rich. Politics is tribalised. Americo-Liberians ruled for 100 years, excluding 16 other ethnic groups. You could only join by becoming like them, being co-opted into their system.

In 1989, Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) began an uprising against Samuel Doe's government. Doe's capture and execution in 1990 was only the start of a civil war that lasted formally until 2003. Layweh's narrative of these events includes a reference to the Mandingo, who trace their ancestry to Guinea and value their 'separate' lineage:

In 1980, the army overthrew that [Americo-Liberian] hegemony. Inexperienced, uneducated people took power. In 1985, Samuel Doe "ethnicised" the security forces by only considering the Kra group that he came from. He also excluded others from jobs and economic empowerment. In 1989, we had Taylor. From 1989 to 1990 Doe saw things going badly and wanted to recruit more to

fight on his side. So, the Mandingo were recruited. Taylor and the NPFL fought against this alliance. Mandingos are seen as “not from here.” They can be found everywhere – in Ghana, Mali, Guinea, etc. During elections, they come in and more Mandingo follow – they vote for whom they favour and then go away again. I come from Nigeria, and I remember when these people came for chieftaincy elections, they just took over.

The ethnic and political tensions that fuelled the 14-year civil war are now cause for concern as the country seeks to build peace in a tense environment. On October 28, 2004, riots broke out in Monrovia. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported:

Religious riots between Christians and Muslims erupted in the Liberian capital Monrovia on Thursday night and continued on Friday morning until UN peacekeeping troops restored order and the government imposed an indefinite curfew. Officials at the city’s main John F Kennedy hospital were not immediately able to give casualty figures, but ambulances raced across the city all day carrying the wounded. Reuters reported that at least four people had been killed.

Residents said the trouble began on Thursday night over a land dispute in the eastern suburb of Paynesville and quickly escalated after a car was set on fire and burned down a nearby mosque. Muslim crowds subsequently burned down three churches and on Friday morning, Christian youths armed with sticks, knives and broken bottles burned down the Muslim Congress High School in central Monrovia, the only Islamic high school in the city. They also tried unsuccessfully to burn down the two main mosques in central Monrovia. Some shops were looted.

The rioters were prevented from torching the city centre mosques by Nigerian peacekeepers who patrolled the city in white armoured cars while UN helicopter gunships clattered overhead. Ghanaian and Irish troops were also involved in helping to restore order. Gyude Bryant, the chairman of Liberia’s transitional government, said in a radio broadcast on Friday morning that he was imposing an indefinite curfew and everybody should stay at home. The streets subsequently emptied. UN officials reported hearing gunfire at one point near the former German Embassy in the eastern suburbs, which now serves as the headquarters of the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL).

Residents in Kakata, a town 50 km northeast of Monrovia, told IRIN by telephone rioting between Christians and Muslims also took place there, but UN peacekeepers soon restored order. UN officials said gunfire was also reported during similar disturbances in Liberia's second city Buchanan, 120 km southeast of Liberia, and Ganta, on the northern frontier with Guinea.

Residents in Paynesville said the trouble began when a group of former fighters of the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebel group beat up a man who objected to them building a house on his land. These men were from the Mandingo ethnic group. The injured man's family and neighbours subsequently set up a manhunt for all Mandingos in the area that led to the burning of the mosque. Jacques Klein, the UN Secretary General's Special Representative in Liberia, said in a radio broadcast that the 15,000 UN peacekeepers in the country would respond with "maximum force" to any attempts to disturb the peace.

"I have given orders to UNMIL formed police units and military troops to deploy to all affected areas and to react with maximum force to any activities of violence against innocent civilians and property," Klein said in a broadcast on UNMIL Radio.

He warned that further instability could easily dissuade donors from disbursing US\$450 million pledged earlier this year towards Liberia's reconstruction and could disrupt preparations for fresh elections in October 2005. A seven-month programme to disarm and demobilise Liberia's three armed factions is due to end on Sunday and an official campaign to repatriate over 300,000 refugees from other West African countries got under way earlier this month.

But Klein warned: "Already some of the donors are beginning to question if Liberians are really ready to put violence behind them and work for peace, reconciliation and reconstruction."

There is widespread resentment against Mandingos in many parts of Liberia. They formed the backbone of LURD, Liberia's largest rebel movement, during the latter stages of the country's 14-year civil war, which ended in August 2003.¹³

Although generally reported in the media as a religious conflict, civil society representatives described the problem as one of ex-combatants and other

violent youth simply looking for an outlet to loot and burn. Maxim Kumeh from WANEP Liberia said:

Christian and Muslim violence (or what people call Christian and Muslim violence) is not actually religious. Youth violence has many outlets. When Liberia recently lost a football match to Senegal the youth rioted, threw stones, and burned homes. It’s about changing people’s mindset, their approach to life and their feelings about violence in general. They will find stones to throw or gasoline to burn even if the guns are not there, so nothing can change until the violent mentality goes away.¹⁴

Whether based in religious, ethnic, or generational tension, the violent outburst was a reminder that despite a peace process and the ending of disarmament and demobilisation, Monrovia was still unstable enough towards the end of 2004 to warrant a curfew. The positive side of the riots was that they provided a window into the kinds of weapons available on the spot. Although guns were present, they were few in number. Pipes, homemade petrol bombs, and other improvised weapons were primarily used, indicating that while Monrovia was not “weapons free” as UNMIL had stated, it was certainly not awash in guns, either. The greater disturbance was the open display of hostility from youth, which touched more on the failures of demobilisation and reintegration than anything else.

Sierra Leone Timeline¹⁵

Early Days	
1787	British abolitionists and philanthropists establish a settlement in Freetown for repatriated and rescued slaves.
1808	Freetown settlement becomes a crown colony.
1896	Britain sets up a protectorate over the Freetown hinterland.
1954	Sir Milton Margai, leader of the Sierra Leone People’s Party, is appointed chief minister.
One-party rule	
1961	Sierra Leone becomes independent.
1967	Military coup deposes Premier Siaka Stevens’ government.
1968	Siaka Stevens returns to power at the head of a civilian government following another military coup.

1971	Sierra Leone is declared a republic and Stevens becomes executive president.
1978	New constitution proclaims Sierra Leone a one-party state with the All People's Congress as the sole legal party.
1985	Major-General Joseph Saidu Momoh becomes president following Stevens's retirement.
1987	Momoh declares state of economic emergency.
War and coups	
1991	Start of civil war. Former army corporal Foday Sankoh and his Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels begin campaign against President Momoh, capturing towns on border with Liberia and taking control of Kailahun.
1991 September	New constitution providing for a multiparty system adopted.
1992	President Joseph Momoh ousted in military coup led by Captain Valentine Strasser and the NPRC. Under international pressure, Strasser announces plans for the first multiparty elections since 1967.
1996 January	Strasser ousted in military coup led by his defence minister, Brigadier Julius Maada Bio.
1996	Ahmad Tejan Kabbah elected president in February, signs peace accord with Sankoh's rebels in November.
1997	Peace deal unravels. President Kabbah deposed in May by coalition of army officers led by Major-General Paul Koroma and members of the RUF; Koroma suspends the constitution, bans demonstrations and abolishes political parties; Kabbah flees to Guinea to mobilise international support.
1997 July	The Commonwealth suspends Sierra Leone.
1997 October	The United Nations Security Council imposes sanctions against Sierra Leone, barring the supply of arms and petroleum products. A British mercenary company, Sandline International, nonetheless supplies 'logistical support', including rifles, to Kabbah allies.
1998 February	The Nigerian-led West African intervention force ECOMOG storms Freetown and drives rebels out.
1998 March	Kabbah makes a triumphant return to Freetown amid scenes of public rejoicing.
1999 January	Rebels backing RUF leader Foday Sankoh seize parts of Freetown from ECOMOG. After weeks of bitter fighting they are driven out, leaving behind 5,000 dead and a devastated city.

UN intervention	
1999 May	A ceasefire is greeted with cautious optimism in Freetown. In hospitals and amputee camps, victims of rebel atrocities express hope that eight years of civil war may soon be over.
1999 July	Six weeks of talks in the Togolese capital, Lomé, result in a peace agreement, under which the rebels receive posts in government and assurances they will not be prosecuted for war crimes.
1999 November/ December	UN troops arrive to police the peace agreement – but one rebel leader, Sam Bokarie, says they are not welcome. Meanwhile, ECOMOG troops are attacked outside Freetown.
2000 April/May	UN forces come under attack in the east of the country. First 50, then several hundred UN troops are abducted.
2000 May	Rebels close in on Freetown; 800 British paratroopers sent to Freetown to evacuate British citizens and to help secure the airport for UN peacekeepers; rebel leader Foday Sankoh captured.
2000 August	Eleven British soldiers taken hostage by a renegade militia group called the West Side Boys.
Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration	
2000 September	British forces mount successful operation to rescue remaining UK hostages.
2001 January	Government postpones presidential and parliamentary elections – set for February and March – for six months because of continuing insecurity, which it said made it impossible to conduct free and fair elections nationwide.
2001 March	UN troops for the first time begin to deploy peacefully in rebel-held territory.
2001 May	Disarmament of rebels begins, and the British-trained Sierra Leone army starts deploying in rebel-held areas.
2002 January	War declared over. UN mission says disarmament of 45,000 fighters complete. The UN and the Government of Sierra Leone sign the agreement that establishes a Special Court to try war crimes.
2002 May	Kabbah wins a landslide victory in elections. His Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) secures a majority in parliament.
2002 July	British troops leave Sierra Leone after their two-year mission to help end the civil war.
2003 July	Rebel leader Foday Sankoh dies of natural causes in prison while waiting to be tried for war crimes.
2003 August	President Kabbah tells the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that he had no say over operations of pro-government militias during the war.

2004 February	Disarmament and rehabilitation of more than 70,000 civil war combatants officially completed.
War crimes trials	
2004 March	UN-backed war crimes tribunal (Special Court for Sierra Leone) opens courthouse to try those people “who bear the greatest responsibility for war crimes” committed after 30 November 1996.
2004 May	First local elections in more than three decades.
2004 June	War crimes trials begin.
2004 September	UN hands over control of security in capital to local forces.

Sierra Leone: Arms for Development

Since the close of Sierra Leone’s DDR programme, the Arms for Development extension of the Community Arms Collection and Destruction (CACD) programme has come to dominate the post-conflict landscape, particularly from the donor and international community perspective. Local conditions are also greatly affected by the “gun-free” culture espoused by AFD; in a country where private gun ownership of any kind is now illegal, foreign corporate interests are being exempted from the law to secure large investments. Understanding the background and goals of the AFD programme unlocks the door to the successes, failures, and tensions of reconstructing and rehabilitating a war-traumatised population of farmers and miners.

The UN’s DDR programme, run by UNAMSIL, succeeded in disarming over 70,000 ex-combatants by its close in January 2002. Following DDR, the Community Arms Collection and Destruction programme was aimed at collecting arms such as hunting rifles, pistols, and other guns from communities that were not necessarily owned or used by fighters during the war. That programme was managed by the Sierra Leone Police (SLP) with UNAMSIL, and covered the entire country in three phases (Phase I targeted the western area, covering the Port Loko and Kambia districts in the northern region and Moyamba in the south, Phase II covered Bombali, Koinadugu and Tonkolili districts in the north and Bonthe in the south, and Phase III covered Pujehun, Kenema, Kailahun and Kono in the eastern region).¹⁶ By its close, the programme had retrieved approximately 9,660 weapons and 17,000 rounds of ammunition. At the end of the amnesty period in 2002, it became illegal to possess arms.

The UNDP's AFD programme is a joint initiative of UNDP and the Government of Sierra Leone, in partnership with the Sierra Leone Police, the DDR/Community Development section of UNAMSIL, the German Technical Cooperation International Services (GTZ), the Sierra Leone Action Network on Small Arms (SLANSA), and grass root communities. The AFD programme is a cost shared initiative partially funded by Canada, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. AFD began with pilot projects in 2003 in four chiefdoms. As a continuation of promoting arms-free communities, AFD has been celebrated as finally implementing a programme that makes a direct link between concrete local development and arms-free communities.

The programme has five phases: phase I, public awareness, consists of preparatory activities whereby sensitisation is done at the district level. Phase II is capacity building and mobilisation. A Project Management Committee (PMC) is formed from community members and representatives, and a coordinating unit of that committee is chosen, to be comprised of one chief, one elder, one woman, one youth, and a respected community member. The third phase is arms collection, and the fourth phase is certification. The fifth phase is the development phase, where communities begin implementing a project with the money they have been given as a reward for being certified arms-free. During all phases, capacity building and mobilisation are ongoing in preparation for the development project. The goal is to prepare the PMC to gain awareness of the arms collection process, and then later on the implementation process of the project in the community. This latter process includes training on accountability and transparency.

A District Assistant at the AFD programme described the details of the process in an interview:

Around Kukuna, we have started the fourth phase this week, the certification process. The first part has the police come in, who make reports. The head of firearms licensing testifies that the chiefdom is arms free, and then there is a formal certification ceremony. After the certification ceremony, it moves to phase five, which is development projects.

Interestingly, AFD and UNDP do not in any way, shape or form impose on the community. It is a democratic process within the community to decide how the development money is spent. For example, in Bramaia Chiefdom, we have moved from section to section asking them to identify projects. It is based on focus group discussions. The chief, youth, and women all report to us with a project proposal. After the sectional consultations, we arrange a time to do a consultation at the chiefdom

levels with all representatives present. Then we do a final analysis of which projects will be implemented, taking into account the amount available for the chiefdom. Here, we use participatory appraisal tools to select the final project. It is the community who takes the lead. UNDP is just there as a facilitator to make sure things are done in a correct way.

Q: Does the community take a vote?

No, we use participatory appraisal tools. We want to discourage the idea of voting. If you say I will vote for project A or project B, then if one project wins, those who voted differently will not give their full participation. We want everyone to participate, to ensure that everyone is satisfied. The project needs to be sustainable, and must be owned by every community member. We use the tools to justify why the project is selected. In our training modules, these are things that we encourage the PMC to pay special attention to. We are confident that it works.

Kambia is the leading district. We had four chiefdoms where pilots were carried out, but right now we are the only district that is moving towards the development phase. No other district has reached where we have reached.

If you look at the number of weapons collected, in Bramaia they are getting close to 200 weapons collected. As long as they have their hunting materials, they don't need guns. I've been in Kambia for four consecutive years. Nobody has ever told me about licensing a weapon. Eventually some of them will have to license guns, but now they are happy and they want development in their area, the civil war has caused some destruction. Because of that, they are giving this top priority. They say they will wait for licensing of guns, but give them up for now, as long as development is taking place in the community.

Q: Are the weapons being collected primarily hunting weapons?

We have some G3s and AK-47s, pistols and revolvers, but many of them are hunting weapons. People do not own sophisticated weapons to a great extent here. But we just had a war, and everything is being surrendered. The effort people are making is important to get rid of small arms and light weapons in the community.

I have no doubt that it will contribute to an arms-free culture. Remember, this is a programme that is being run by civilians themselves, not by the

police or the military or anyone else. We have volunteers managing the drop-in centres, where guns are being stored. And it is these volunteers that are collecting the guns surrendered willingly, and they take care of them before they can be stored at the Kambia police station. They want a culture of a weapons-free environment.

The goals of the AFD programme are, by nature, more nuanced and far-reaching than conventional weapons collection or disarmament programmes. The education and capacity building of communities is a primary part of the activity of collecting weapons. While some of the weapons collected are in unserviceable condition and most were likely only used for hunting, it is not quotas of serviceable weapons but cultural change that drives AFD; the weapons collection provides a reason for community participation and a way for community members to “earn” their development money and decide how to spend it through their own actions rather than sitting by while outside agencies impose foreign solutions to local problems. In this way, the programme is highly successful.

During the certification exercise in Kambia in October, the police conducted limited cordon-and-search activities to certify an area arms-free at the request of the Paramount Chief. They split into groups of two or three and went door-to-door in the villages, and people invariably welcomed them. The officers gave a small speech about how the war is over and now we must live without guns because they are destructive; people nodded and invited them in to look around for weapons. During an entire week of searching – under mattresses, in roof thatching, inside closets and trunks – not one gun was found. It was noted by several of the officers that serviceable weapons may also have been hidden in the bush in anticipation of such an exercise, but there was no evidence to prove or disprove this theory.

Challenges reported by AFD itself have been limited to the practicalities of politics, road conditions, and inflation. The second quarter report of 2004 complained of just such practical delays. In March 2004, the Local Government Act came into force, leading to decentralisation of authority to district level (a welcome change for those outside of Freetown). District Council elections were successfully conducted simultaneously in 12 districts on May 22, followed shortly after on June 22 by the District Council Chairman elections. In parallel to these ballot votes, a new administrative wing emerged to support the District Councils. The abolition of the post of District Officers appointed by the central government officially put an end to the former system. Consequently, the smooth implementation of AFD project activities at the field level was overshadowed through May and June

by political campaigns, elections, and the swearing in of District Councils by the President.

The second major challenge was the high level of inflation in Sierra Leone. As an example, the price of a bag of cement increased since last year from Le 14,000 (Leones) to Le 22,000, and the price of a bag of rice of 50 kg increased from Le 35,000 to Le 60,000. These fluctuations have implications on the cost of implementation of the development projects and result in additional burden to the already overstretched household budget for the community in Sierra Leone. The report concluded:

Finally, the early start of the rainy season took everyone by surprise. The condition of the roads is rapidly deteriorating and some areas are hardly accessible. Moreover, communities are now concentrating on crops and have less time for other community work. It was therefore necessary to accelerate the pace for the community arms collection in Kambia district, hoping to complete the exercise before the heavy rains set in. On the other hand, initiation of activities in other districts was rescheduled allowing a gap that shall be invested in capacity building of PMCs.¹⁷

Aside from these setbacks, the main concern is whether AFD will be as successful in more volatile areas such as Kailahun. In communities currently engaged in conflict with mining companies over issues like relocation and armed private security, it remains unclear whether an arms-free campaign will be welcome. On the border with Liberia, which also remains volatile, the collection of a few rusty hunting rifles may not mean much in moving towards the elimination of all weapons from people's lives. The biggest complaint in Kambia was that local hunters and farmers had been promised replacements for their guns; traps and nets to deal with animals who get into valuable crops. In Daru, the Paramount Chief reported that he had been hearing regular shelling from somewhere nearby and did not feel secure. He indicated that a good solution would be to allow the Paramount Chief to be in charge of at least three or four weapons per chiefdom to deal with threats.

At an even broader level, the question becomes whether, with the other serious problems facing communities, AFD is like trying to plug up a leaky dam that is about to collapse completely at any given moment. In recognition of, in particular, cross-border issues, UNDP initiated cross-border dialogue between Sierra Leonean and Guinean communities in Kambia. They reported that:

The outcome of this initiative was beyond our best expectations. While the invitation from the Paramount Chief in Sierra Leone was received with reservation in Guinea, Guinean communities along with local authorities were well represented. The issue of the flow of small arms across the border was used as an entry point for discussion but it developed towards examining broader border concerns. Thus, the meeting, which was a first in several decades, succeeded in engaging both sides in fighting the spread of small arms, appeased tensions between the communities and opened the way for further talks on economic and social co-operation. It is intended that such activities will be undertaken by the forthcoming border strengthening initiative in Sierra Leone.¹⁸

In conjunction with this initiative, a special meeting was organised to assess the need for border strengthening and the interest of key players in developing a comprehensive and integrated approach. From the meeting, an ad-hoc Working Group was formed to develop a concept paper and a road map for the next six months. The goals of a Cross-Border Project are to coordinate state actions to mitigate threats from border insecurity while developing a truly comprehensive national programme in collaboration with all stakeholders, including civil society. The pilot project requires a sum of USD 160,000 to develop and test a comprehensive strategy to strengthen national borders, while involving all key governmental departments and civil society. The Border Strengthening Programme initiative in Sierra Leone links with the AFD at the national level and is intended to work closely with the forthcoming Mano River Union (MRU) Control of Small Arms project hosted by the MRU Secretariat and funded by UNDP (with a budget of USD 400,000).

The UNDP technical committee believes Sierra Leone's border territories today are exposed to illicit mining activities; threats from the influx of small arms; smuggling and illegal trade; ill-defined borders; 'mercenaries/dissidents'; cross border raids; poaching and piracy; drug and human trafficking, terrorism; and transnational organised crimes. In light of these challenges, according to the UNDP, if funding can be allocated for local-level communication and empowerment across borders, the demand for guns may start to wane from the grassroots level with or without the 'carrot' of a specific development grant. The reverse theory holds, however, that strong cross-border ties actually increase both legal and illegal traffic.

Building Civil Society

While the presence of the UN missions, UNAMSIL and UNMIL, was meant to have a capacity building effect on civil society, the great divide

between local and national NGOs and the international staff of the UN and international NGOs (INGOs) means that skills transfer has not lived up to expectations on either side. An interview with a UNDP official in Monrovia who holds significant responsibility with regard to funding and building capacity in local and national NGOs reveals more about this problem. When asked about the role of Liberian civil society, she said:

Civil society is incapacitated and very young. It is also purely reactionary; after last year everyone became building experts without a strategy or expertise. Civil society needs technical assistance. They need very basic training in what to do as an NGO, how to lobby at the national, regional, and donor levels. I am very stingy about funding, because I will not fund anyone who is not up to par in their technical capacity. Doing so would be like throwing money away. Local, UNDP, national, and international organisations are competing for the same funding. Local NGOs are bitter and angry, but it's about capacity and focus.¹⁹

There are almost, one might argue, too many NGOs in Sierra Leone and Liberia right now – or at least in their capital cities. They are competing for a limited amount of resources, and they are out of their league when doing so with large international organisations like Oxfam or Mercy Corps. For the sheer number of organisations, there is not much variety in terms of their focus areas. The post-conflict scenario can be approached like any other market for services; there is a glut of small, uncoordinated feeding schemes, but no drug rehabilitation centres. There are many peace building groups, but almost none with a focus on small arms. As civil society evolves, the organisations that manage to get funding and survive will be the ones that find areas of work where no services are available now.

In Liberia, despite the recent conclusion of the DDR process and the exposure of everyone in the society to every type of light weapon available on the world market, there is no broad-based support for the small arms advocacy work. The Liberian Action Network on Small Arms (LANSA), has just begun with support from IANSA (the international umbrella network). However, LANSA needs a platform and does not have one yet. It is working on getting the ECOWAS Moratorium changed to a convention, but few at the political decision-making level were involved in the effort.

Josephine Hutton, the Oxfam Country Programme Manager in Liberia, and the Oxfam Protection Advisor, Aine Bhreathnach, said that there was fear around starting a small arms campaign because the war had just ended:

Civil society is nervous about small arms and light weapons because DDR is just ending and it only became illegal to own a gun on the first of November. Communities hide people who have weapons, and we don't have any information about community perceptions. We need more research on arms use, ownership, and reasons why people don't want to give them up. There is certainly no donor coordination on this issue right now, and there needs to be.²⁰

There is a real need to start giving local NGOs a voice. The approach cited above, of refusing to fund smaller organisations until they get technical capacity, risks leaving them without any purpose other than constant training. Hutton mentioned that “Jacques Klein [the UNMIL Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG)] will hardly ever contact national NGOs for briefings on issues. We need to try and push them to the forefront, especially on issues where they are in the field and know what is happening more than we do.”²¹

Looking at Sierra Leone, which has had more time to recover from war, the delicate relationship between international NGOs, UNAMSIL, and donors created a vacuum for local organisations that they are still trying to overcome. With a few well-funded national networks such as Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD) that dominate the voice of civil society, it seems that franchising is the norm. The Network on Collaborative Peacebuilding (NCP-SL) was in crisis at the end of 2004, ostensibly for a number of reasons, but it is no coincidence that the difference between NCP-SL and the better-organised NMJD is the inclusion in the former of many smaller, independent groups all struggling to operate in the same ideological space.

The TRC and the Special Court in Sierra Leone

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission report was released at the end of 2004, but its investigations overlapped with investigations of the Special Court, which has the power to prosecute. One of the reasons both of these processes became controversial and politically charged is the lack of civil society capacity to participate in promoting civic education and functional literacy for the populations who are most in need of understanding the outcomes.

The international community created and funded a Special Court for Sierra Leone to prosecute those who “bear the greatest responsibility” for war crimes and atrocities committed since 1991. Legally, the parties in the

conflict had agreed to abide by international law: Article 21 of the 1996 Abidjan Accord states that “The parties undertake to respect the principles and rules of international humanitarian law.” The establishment of ad hoc International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in 1993 and for Rwanda (ICTR) a year later created a significant precedent. The subsequent adoption of the Rome Statute for the permanent International Criminal Court (ICC) made it difficult to ignore Sierra Leone’s situation as the war came to a close.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1315 (14 August 2000) authorised the creation of a Special Court. The Special Court, unlike the ICTY and ICTR, is an innovative model in the sense that it applies both Sierra Leone’s penal law and international law. Unlike its predecessors, it is not a UN institution operating independently from the domestic courts. Rather, with its location in downtown Freetown and its heavy-hitting budget, it is meant to evoke justice in a permanent way for Sierra Leoneans who suffered during the war. However, for many, it is doing just the opposite, and the biggest factor in this discontent is Chief Sam Hinga Norman. Hinga Norman was the leader of the Kamajors and Deputy Defence Minister under Kabbah. He was indicted on 7 March 2003 on eight counts of crimes against humanity, violations of Article 3 common to the Geneva Conventions and of Additional Protocol II, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law. He is currently awaiting trial at the Special Court’s detention centre in Freetown. His indictment states:

The CDF [Civil Defence Force] was an organised armed force comprising various tribally-based traditional hunters. The Kamajors were comprised mainly of persons from the Mende tribe resident in the South and East of Sierra Leone, and were the predominant group within the CDF. Other groups playing a less dominant role were the Gbethis and the Kapras, both comprising mainly of Temnes from the north; the Tamaboros, comprising mainly of Korankos also from the north; and the Donsos, comprising mainly of Konos from the east. At all times relevant to this Indictment, **SAMUEL HINGA NORMAN** was the National Coordinator of the CDF. As such he was the principal force in establishing, organising, supporting, providing logistical support, and promoting the CDF. He was also the leader and Commander of the Kamajors and as such had *de jure* and *de facto* command and control over the activities and operations of the Kamajors.²²

The indictment cites serious and gruesome crimes such as shooting, hacking to death, and burning to death ‘collaborators’ or those seen as collaborators

with the RUF; human sacrifice; and cannibalism. Nonetheless, Hinga Norman is revered not only by his followers, who feel that he has been singled out unfairly, but also by a fair number of Sierra Leoneans who respect the way he fought the rebels. A former youth activist and founder of a Freetown NGO said:

Hinga Norman is a huge factor. It is serious. A lot of people justify that he fought a cause that was supported by the majority of Sierra Leoneans. By the time when the government itself was almost out, the Kamajors still fought to the finish. So, even though the Kamajors also had their excesses like any other group of people, one thing is clear is that they actually stood against the RUF and the AFRC, otherwise the government would have been weak. Everything that was done by Hinga Norman, I am convinced, I know, that it was an instruction from the government. There was not a single decision taken by Hinga Norman that was not coming from a cabinet meeting. Because it was when the rebels were advancing, this was the group of people that could fight the rebels. It was decided in the government; he was a government minister. He was tough with the rebels. We all of course are aware that the Special Court is here to work against the culture of impunity. But one thing is clear. Hinga Norman did not do anything by himself. It is selective justice. They seem to be distancing themselves now because they know the implications of it all. But there was not a single action taken by Hinga Norman that was not discussed by the government.

The manner in which he was captured and ill-treated, was also what makes Sierra Leoneans upset. People say, "Somebody should not cry for you throughout the night." That's the situation with Hinga Norman. He's being used now as a scapegoat. Somebody has to be held accountable. The Special Court, there is nothing like, how do you call this kind of punishment, capital punishment. But this will still raise the blood of people from the South, at least.²³

A human rights worker in Bo explained that people do not understand the process or the Court itself:

Community meetings have been held in all the chiefdom headquarter towns in the South. But outside of English and Krio [languages], there is no reach. These people bore the brunt of the war and the Special Court promised them justice. But they are not even hearing about it. Overall, the Special Court is not appreciated in this part of the

country. Our traditional way of doing things ties in with the TRC, where recommendations are made that people be compensated. The Special Court is not in line with this. The Special Court is a big question mark in the South and East. Some of those Kamajors are just waiting for a spark; they are just waiting for a leader. They will go and get Hinga Norman out, or if he dies, they will start killing.²⁴

With very little civil society reach into the areas most at risk of politically motivated violence, and with those areas located on porous borders where weapons are easily available, it seems that the Special Court has created a potentially huge source of demand for small arms. The view that the Kamajors would be ready to fight if instigated was widespread in the Bo area. There was frequent reference to “false testimony against the Kamajors” and, importantly, an understanding of the problem as an ethnic one; an anti-Mende crusade when other leaders or participants of different ethnicities were not being tried. A radio broadcaster in Bo said:

The CDF Kamajor leader is Mende; he is trapped. But the other leaders against the RUF are not dragged into court. People are frustrated and disgruntled. Court news only comes through the radio, so there is no area for making an input. We hope that the Special Court ends the conflict, but there is also negative thinking: the Special Court has to be handled with care or else things will grow out of proportion. There was no ethnic element to our war, but the Court could transform it into ethnic conflict, and that is much more dangerous than what was happening before.²⁵

The Arms for Development Programme is not present in the areas most affected by this conflict, and has not announced plans to be there in the next year. With a lack of other civil society resources to reach fully into the areas that require intervention, it is unclear how the Hinga Norman situation will unfold.