

PERPETRATING POWER

SMALL ARMS IN POST-CONFLICT
SIERRA LEONE AND LIBERIA

TAYA WEISS

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GLOSSARY AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council, a militia split from the Sierra Leone Army that staged a coup in 1997 and allied with the RUF.
APC	All People's Congress, Sierra Leone political party
CBO	Community-based organisation
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration
De Beers	The largest diamond mining and selling company in the world.
ECOMOG	The ECOWAS Cease-fire Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	The Economic Community of West African States
EO	Executive Outcomes, a South African private military company, dissolved in 1999 under South Africa's anti-mercenary laws.
Juju	An object used as a fetish, a charm, or an amulet in West Africa, and the supernatural power ascribed to such an object. The Kamajors in Sierra Leone believed that the use of juju, including following strict behavioural codes, kept them safe from attack by their enemies.
Kamajors	Mende hunter-warriors who fought the RUF in Sierra Leone under the leadership of Sam Hinga Norman.
KPCS	Kimberley Process Certification Scheme. A process for stopping the flow of rough diamonds from conflict areas. Came into effect globally on 1 January 2003.
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
NaCSA	National Committee for Social Action, Sierra Leone
NACWAC	National Commission for War Affected Children, Sierra Leone
NCDDR	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration

NCRRR	National Commission for Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, and Reintegration, Sierra Leone
NCP-SL	Network on Collaborative Peacebuilding Sierra Leone, a civil society umbrella organisation sustained by WANEP regional funding. After near-collapse in 2004, it hired a consultant and revised the constitution to resuscitate its leadership in October 2004.
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPFL	The National Patriotic Front of Liberia, the group led by Charles Taylor that overthrew Samuel K. Doe in 1990.
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council, Sierra Leone. Young army officers led by Valentine Strasser staged a coup in 1992 and overthrew President Momoh's government, extending an offer of peace to the RUF. The RUF refused.
RUF	Revolutionary United Front, Sierra Leone rebel group led by Foday Sankoh and main perpetrator of the civil war in Sierra Leone.
RUFP	The Revolutionary United Front Party, the transformation of the Sierra Leonean rebel group to political party, formed after disarmament and demobilisation.
SCSL	Special Court for Sierra Leone
RSLAF	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party, political party of President Ahmed Tejan Kabbah.
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMIL	United Nations Missions in Liberia
WANEP	West African Network for Peacebuilding, a regional peace network with offices in Ghana, Liberia, and an affiliate in Sierra Leone (see NCP-SL).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Resources such as diamonds, rubber, and timber have sustained civil war in the Mano River Basin and provided buying power to purchase the estimated eight to ten million small arms circulating in West Africa. Despite (and in some cases, because of) the presence of United Nations missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia, political, criminal, and violent factions have continued participating in the international weapons trade. Recently concluded disarmament and demobilisation in both places have not made a significant dent in the functioning of illicit gun markets. On the contrary, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes have created their own weapons markets across borders because prices for handing over a weapon vary from country to country.”

State-centred solutions to illicit arms proliferation do not work when the state in question cannot fund traditional security operations. Borders are porous, and though they should be closed or better monitored, that is not a short- or medium-term option. Instead, this monograph looks at the factors behind the demand for weapons in Sierra Leone and Liberia, focusing on the buyer side of the market to determine whether proliferation can be stemmed, or at least slowed down, through more creative measures. Increasing funding for education that reduces the number of illiterate and at-risk young people; creating youth agricultural empowerment initiatives; continuing demobilisation for ex-combatants beyond cantonment sites; encouraging civic education for adults; and building infrastructure to connect border communities to legal markets in urban centres are all measures that will impact deeply on the way Sierra Leone and Liberia continue to emerge from the destruction of war and rebuild infrastructure for a better future.

INTRODUCTION: IMAGINARY BORDERS

“The borders are free. Customs are so weak, if you give them a lot of money, they will not mind. They will let you take anything through.”
-NGO worker, Koidu, Sierra Leone

“We have no power here, and we are far from our families. We spend the night here at our post trying to keep ourselves entertained somehow and hoping that our wives will still talk to us when we go home.”
-Sierra Leone Police officer working week-long shifts at a border post.

“How will we be protected? I see people passing with ammunition from Liberia. How properly was disarmament done?”
-Villager living on Liberia-Sierra Leone border.

The Policy of Demand

Illegal gun markets follow patterns of trade that are determined by diverse factors: globalisation, historical trade routes that cross colonially-imposed boundaries, and the basic economic laws of supply and demand. Since the arrival of small and arms and light weapons (SALW) on the international policy-making radar in July 2001 (the year of the first UN Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects), policies aimed at reducing proliferation have focused almost exclusively on regulating and controlling the supply side of the market. Largely, this is because the world's supply of guns comes from a finite network of manufacturers, distributors, and dealers, some of them located in countries with the legal and criminal justice system capacity to enforce regulations once they are made. It is much more difficult to control or regulate consumers.

The ability to make and implement effective policy, however, lies in understanding and acknowledging both sides of the market. Addressing demand requires different, broader, often more long-term and creative strategies. Local conditions influence gun markets the same way they influence consumption of other goods; however, there are some underlying consistencies that cross

geographical and cultural boundaries. Factors fuelling demand include availability of weapons, economies on the margins, and lack of education and development. In post-conflict states, regional political dynamics and the relative success or failure of disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) play a significant role in the evolution of illicit weapons trafficking and ownership patterns.

The Mano River Union sub-region of West Africa provides an important case study of how demand-based measures should be incorporated into small arms policy. The borders between Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire have always been so porous that the movement of people and goods from one nation to another is virtually unchecked. This has created a situation where the flourishing of trade is not limited to illicit goods such as diamonds and small arms, but also extends to agricultural and other commodities necessary for sustaining the livelihoods of people living in border towns and villages. Many such areas are simply better connected to capital cities in neighbouring countries than they are to markets in their own. Poor infrastructure, lack of roads, and general alienation from central government and nation-building creates a cost burden not only in terms of security, but also economically as palm wine and other products on the borders are bought and sold in foreign currency. The legitimate business and kinship ties that bind people on either side of the un-patrolled borders then function, often secondarily, as conduits for illicit goods. Because these ties go beyond the criminal element, monitoring and policing them is a Sisyphean task.

Rather than focusing arms reduction policies solely on policing and border control, the international community and national governments should direct funding and support towards infrastructure development on the borders. In Sierra Leone, for example, focus should be on building and maintaining roads linking farming and mining communities with each other, Freetown, and other major urban centres like Bo, Kenema, and Kono. Markets should be designed specifically to create incentives for people farming and producing commodities like palm wine to transport and sell their goods within Sierra Leone, rather than in neighbouring countries.

Ministries of youth can play a crucial collaborative role in organising opportunities for unemployed youth many of whom, in Sierra Leone and Liberia, fought in the recently-ended civil wars and went through the DDR process but still have no way of making a living. Programmes should be established to set up youth co-operative farms and associated businesses that will benefit from renewed infrastructure and market incentives. Such measures will, in addition to giving hope and direction to the demographic that fuelled

militias, further increase food security, eliminating the need for many low-level participants in arms trafficking to bolster family income through illegal activity. Only through political empowerment, infrastructure development, and economic alternatives will the flow of illegal small arms and light weapons be stemmed in the Mano River Union countries.

Imagining the State

How important is a strong or even functioning state to achieving acceptable levels of human security in a region? The “state failure” theory asserts that:

The rise and fall of nation-states is not new, but in a modern era when national states constitute the building blocks of legitimate world order the violent disintegration and palpable weakness of selected African, Asian, Oceanic, and Latin American states threaten the very foundation of that system... Desirable international norms such as stability and predictability thus become difficult to achieve when so many of the globe’s newer nation-states waver precariously between weakness and failure, with some truly failing, or even collapsing.¹

The term “violent disintegration” implies that there was something to disintegrate in the first place. Much of the population of Africa, on maps neatly divided into nation-states with clear borders, lives outside the influence of a central government. Borders all over the continent are both porous and un-patrolled because of geographical remoteness, limited resources to hire, train, and equip border police, and because people who live on borders often disregard them to pursue social and economic opportunities unconstrained by government or international security concerns. In other words, the Sierra Leonean farmer who lives closer to Conakry than Freetown cares less about border regulations than about selling his goods to an available market.

In his extensive study of Somalia, Peter D. Little approaches the state failure model this way:

If a state were a required component, then the Somali economy could not exist, and nor could those of several other African countries, where the formal government has virtually collapsed... While it is common today to hear of the collapsed African state, invoking images of political girders and structures falling into an abyss, the applicability of the phrase to Somalia since 1979 can be questioned. This is even more so in the context of the country’s borderlands where official controls

have always been weak. For instance, can we really speak of a failed state, if it is questionable whether a meaningful state ever existed?²

Little illuminates the distinction between a collapsed central government and a collapsed state. Economies of trade and the power brokers that they produce can be far more influential in determining the politics and relative peace or security of an area than whether there is a functioning central entity recognised by the United Nations.

Carolyn Nordstrom focuses on the anthropological rather than economic aspects of war and peace relative to state primacy. She concludes that much of the hand-wringing over the necessity of a strong state is a myth based on the assumption that only a handful of elites can bring order to chaos:

Diplomacy and military science would have it that peace is brokered at the formal level, among those responsible for running countries and wars. This view perpetuates notions about the primacy of the state. In this popular lore-cum-wisdom, the masses are not sufficiently sophisticated to either run wars or realise peace. The “masses” – undifferentiated and unpredictable – are prone to unrestrained eruptions of violence (riots and vigilante lynchings) and to stunned inertia in the face of threat (troops protecting cowering civilians)...It is the job of the visionaries and the gifted to fashion society in such a way as to keep the beast as tamed as possible...If people can be convinced of this scenario, they can be convinced that the state, and those who rule in its stead, are essential to the survival of the human race.³

There is of course validity to the ordering of the world in terms of states. While the example of Somalia and other “borderlands” such as Northern Kenya show that economies (licit and illicit) can thrive in the absence of state government, no one is in a rush to dismantle existing borders and see what happens. Rather, the way we prioritise and conceptualise state power and authority informs whether we tailor policies to the way things are, or the way we would like them to be. Small arms and light weapons are easy to transport and distribute, and the reality in the Mano River Basin is that state borders will not be a hindrance to the economy of guns for the next ten to twenty years, at least. Nordstrom’s field notes include this philosophy from an unnamed interviewee:

If you are exposed to violence, you become violent. It is a learned response. And this is a fact of life, not a fact solely of war. The war

may come to a formal end, but all those people who have learned violence – learned to solve their problems, and conflicts, and confusions with violence – will continue to use it. They will be more violent with their families, with their friends, in their work. They will see violence as the appropriate response to any political contest. So is the war really over? Is the violence of war gone suddenly with declarations of peace? No, violence lives in the belly of the person and ruins society, unless peace is taught to the violent. And peace must be taught just like violence is, by subjecting people to it, by showing them peaceful ways to respond to life and living, to daily needs and necessities, to political and personal challenges.⁴

In this more locally-based conception of peace, demand is the ultimate factor behind war. Peace deals are made at the state level, between leaders of political movements, but this may have a more limited effect on the flow of illicit weapons in a region than is often celebrated. In the case of West Africa, peace deals and the disarmament processes that eventually follow have become market indicators rather than cut-off points in the sale and transport of small arms and light weapons. Particularly in this context, focusing on how those market indicators work and where they point is crucial to building effective small arms policy.

Regional and National Policy Context

West Africa is notorious for political instability and an almost unmitigated flow of small arms and light weapons from Eastern Europe and across nearly non-existent borders. In 1998 the ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States) *Moratorium on Importation, Exportation, and Manufacture of Light Weapons in West Africa* represented an important step towards addressing small arms proliferation in the region. It was adopted and signed in Abuja on 31 October 1998 by the ECOWAS Heads of State and Government and renewed for a further three years on 9 July 2001. The Moratorium allows for states to apply for exemptions to meet national security needs or international peacekeeping requirements, but otherwise was intended as a true moratorium.

PCASED, the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (known by its French acronym) predates the Moratorium, as it was originally intended to support the implementation of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Mission on the Proliferation of Light Weapons in the Sahel-Sahara sub-region. However, following the adoption of the

Moratorium, the ECOWAS Heads of States and Governments requested that PCASED become the central pillar in its implementation. Over the five-year period PCASED was expected to support the implementation of the moratorium in nine priority areas:

- Establishing a culture of peace;
- Training programmes for military, security, and police forces;
- Enhancing weapons controls at border posts;
- Establishing a database and regional arms register;
- Collecting and destroying surplus weapons;
- Facilitating dialogue with producer suppliers;
- Reviewing and harmonising national legislation and administrative procedures;
- Mobilising resources for PCASED objectives and activities; and
- Enlarging membership of the Moratorium.⁵

PCASED is currently being phased out and replaced with the ECOWAS Small Arms Programme (ECOSAP), with the creation of a Small Arms Unit at ECOWAS headquarters. Plans are also underway to transform the moratorium into a legally binding instrument.

The Organisation of African Unity (OAU) met in Bamako, Mali two years later in 2000 to develop an African Common Position on SALW, in anticipation of the 2001 UN Conference.⁶ Using the 1998 ECOWAS Moratorium and the 2000 Nairobi Declaration, among other African regional initiatives, as a starting point, the Bamako Declaration put demand reduction strategies on the policy map. While carefully reaffirming the values of sovereignty, non-interference, and the right to individual and collective self-defence, the signatories emphasised that “the problem of the illicit proliferation, circulation and trafficking of small arms and light weapons... sustains conflicts...promotes a culture of violence...has adverse effects on security and development...and is both one of supply and demand.” It goes a step further in suggesting that the problem should be dealt with not only by controlling suppliers, but also through:

the promotion of measures aimed at restoring peace, security and confidence among and between Member States, the promotion of structures and processes to strengthen democracy, the observance of human rights, and economic recovery and growth, the promotion of conflict prevention measures, and the promotion of solutions that include both...supply and demand aspects.⁷

Despite the political importance of these policy measures and the attention they have drawn to the problem of small arms in West Africa, the moratorium has been flouted openly, as have sanctions against Liberia. The civil wars in Sierra Leone and Liberia have resulted in increased arms flows and an environment where disarmament has to be achieved before non-proliferation can be addressed. Lisa Misol, a Human Rights Watch researcher, testified before the United States Congressional Human Rights Caucus in May 2004, identifying several specific ways in which small arms policy has been failing in West Africa. She testified:

Contributing factors include lax arms export controls in supplier countries, regional allies who provide cover and sometimes financing, and transnational arms traffickers motivated by profit. Another key factor is the ability to pay of embargoed buyers, who use misappropriated funds or trade valuable commodities such as diamonds or timber concessions for arms.

Let me cite an example drawing from Human Rights Watch's research. In mid-2003, while conflict raged in Liberia, the government of Guinea imported mortar rounds and other ammunition from Iran. These were declared on cargo documents as "detergent" and "technical equipment." From Guinea, the weapons cargo was forwarded to allied rebels inside Liberia who had just made two offensives on the capital, Monrovia. The rebels, of Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), used those weapons to fire indiscriminately on civilian areas of Monrovia in what was known locally as "World War III." Scores of civilians were killed and hundreds wounded when the mortar rounds landed in makeshift camps for displaced people and other populated areas. One of the tragedies of this case was that it was child soldiers – children as young as 11 years old – who fired many of the mortars.⁸

Written policy is no substitute for political will; and political will is often ineffective in "failing states."⁹ In an environment of few laws, fewer borders, and no enforceable regional policy, demand factors and local approaches are both practical and necessary.

Factors behind Demand

The monograph “Guns in the Borderlands” published by the Institute for Security Studies in 2004, was the result of fieldwork conducted in Kenya to test hypotheses about factors behind the demand for small arms and light weapons. While West Africa represents a different political, economic, and geographical challenge, many of the factors identified in that research are relevant and applicable across these divides.

Identity-based conflict

A majority of Africa’s population can be classified as children or youth. The percentage of African countries’ population under 14 years old ranges from 35 to 49 per cent.¹⁰ The success or failure of child and youth development can destabilise nations and entire regions. States have a responsibility to provide their underage citizens with education, health care, and safe shelter, rights enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. They often fail to prioritise youth involvement in positive activities that promote peace building and conflict resolution, leaving a lack of safe space for the most vulnerable – and in many cases the largest – section of the population. Youth are then open to recruitment in activities that facilitate the worst kinds of marginal economies: those that buy and sell guns and conflict.

In peacetime, citizenship is defined according to a narrow set of criteria; historically, this has included only men, or men of a certain age who were property owners, or men of a certain race or economic background. Citizenship in most modern states, while often more inclusive, still defines youth and women as special ‘sub-categories’. Youth and women’s leagues of political parties keep these groups out of the mainstream with a focus on fringe rights. In times of conflict, however, both gender and age prerequisites are often re-formulated to fit conscription needs.

Easy-to-use weapons allow power brokers to assemble and train these troops from a seemingly never-ending pool of poor, disenfranchised, and uneducated young people, including refugees, orphans, and internally displaced people. As a group like any other element of society, children and youth develop strategies for survival and find resources wherever they can. When conflict decimates schools, health care systems, and other support networks for children, the only options left involve violence. One participant at a “Shrinking Small Arms” seminar said, “Our children look at guns as

power. It is difficult to focus on guns, because in the minds of youth, the gun is the way to instant money, an opportunity for them where there is no other opportunity.”¹¹

Social status and ethnicity are also used to promote involvement in conflict. ‘Ethnic clashing’ is a term associated with large-scale violence, but it is not innate divisions between groups that push them to take up arms. Ethnicity is just another dividing line used by those in power to perpetuate conflicts for political or economic gain. The rise of civil tension usually stems from economic, social, and political grievances with no other outlet. Extreme poverty, competition for resources, political power brokering, and other factors make disenfranchised groups (whether ethnicity-based, age-based, or other) easy prey for those seeking to build their own militias, crime syndicates, or gun-running empires.

Availability

Availability drives demand for weapons. Because they are sturdy, durable, and reusable, small arms are extremely difficult to get rid of. Once they are present in a country they tend to stay there, either fuelling crime or flowing over national boundaries to serve the needs of neighbouring conflicts. One of the purposes of demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) programmes is to confiscate and take small arms out of circulation following a conflict period, but arms caches are rarely effectively destroyed in the wake of fragile peace agreements. In unstable regions with bleak economic forecasts, former combatants have little hope of finding a job in civilian life. The option of keeping a gun and seeking mercenary work is more enticing than turning over their only chance at earning a livelihood. The mere presence of weapons in situations where the balance of power is already delicate frequently plunges post-conflict states back into complex emergencies before significant development and reconstruction gains can be realised.

Poverty, unequal access to resources, large youth populations with limited access to education or jobs, and other socio-political factors contribute to instability, but it is the presence of guns that enables conflict to escalate into the type of violence that is beyond state control or mediation. Guns create another self-perpetuating cycle: an internal arms race. The more people accept that weapons are necessary for survival and economic advancement, the more insecurity spreads and drives further demand. Small arms proliferation hinders development and conflict resolution efforts, creates

space for war economies to grow and become entrenched, and contributes to a growing number of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Economies on the margins

Although Sierra Leone and Liberia are both incredibly resource-rich countries, the abuse and misappropriation of those resources for the personal gain of warlords and private military commanders has fuelled conflict that otherwise might have exhausted itself for lack of funding much sooner. The mining and marketing of diamonds from conflict areas not only enriched combatants, it also provided an easy conduit for small arms trafficking and facilitated deals with terrorist groups like Al Qaeda who are always looking for non-traceable liquid assets. Diamonds, which are small, easily smuggled, and extremely valuable, have financed the most marginal leaders and groups not only in West Africa but also globally as part of a network of financial and military deals that occur on the borders of legal transport systems and economies from Iran to Libya to Afghanistan to the United States.

In a contrastingly local view of this network, people living below the poverty line on the borders between Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia are often forced to sell what few goods they trade illegally across those borders because of the lack of infrastructure connecting them to commercial hubs that function in their own national currency. As such, it is a small step from palm wine, tobacco or produce to guns or diamonds, deals in which even the smallest cut of the reward might be enough to feed a family for several months.

Lack of education and development

The role of donors and governments in managing peace building efforts in low-level, sustained conflicts is closely related to economic factors, but presents a different challenge. Both education and development in the broadest sense of both terms form the foundations of frameworks laid out by local peace organisations for addressing conflict and building lasting peace. Education for both adults and children can change cultural perceptions, create opportunities for growth and changing economies, and produce more active, informed citizens.

Development can change the entire face of a community and its relationship to guns and conflict. Done poorly and without knowledge of local

pressure points, it can wreak havoc and create fighting among competing groups. Development on a large scale creates infrastructure with which communication and education can thrive. Guns thrive in the borderlands because they are cut off from the rest of the nation. People living in remote areas have little sense of their membership in the state. Without the benefits of government, the laws become meaningless. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Arms for Development Programme (AFD) has taken the connection between guns and development to its logical conclusion, extending community arms collection programmes to villages throughout Sierra Leone. Communities that are certified arms free receive block grants for a development project. Although the weapons collected through AFD have been primarily hunting rifles and other sometimes unserviceable pieces that would never make it into a formal disarmament programme, the effort is considered a success if only for the training and community planning emphasis that provides experience and purpose to the communities involved.

CHAPTER 1

METHODOLOGY

Objectives of the Research

In 2003 I travelled to Kenya to carry out a study of demand and availability on that country's borders, the results of which were published in an ISS monograph titled "Guns in the Borderlands: Reducing the Demand for Small Arms." That project looked at local-level efforts to build peace and reduce demand for illicit guns in areas where government control was weak and international standards exercised little to no influence. The historical, geographic, and economic factors in the Mano River Basin provide a different backdrop from the constant low-level conflicts in East Africa, but there are factors driving demand that exist across those boundaries.

The Institute for Security Studies sponsored research in Sierra Leone and Liberia to identify factors influencing the demand for weapons in post-conflict contexts and efforts currently in progress at a local, regional or international level to reduce such demand. The specific goals were:

1. To identify trends that drive the demand for weapons and responses that could be implemented from a policy level to reduce this demand and limit the availability of weapons in the region.
2. To find resilient factors behind demand across boundaries of geography and culture.

Key Terms

Interviewing buyers, potential buyers, and sellers in a situation where a war very recently ended requires tact and flexibility. Many discussions were framed in terms of "peacebuilding" and the "sustainability or fragility of peace" instead of on the "demand for guns" or "small arms" to avoid misunderstandings and to prevent the misconception that those involved in the research were either affiliated with military intelligence of some kind or were interested in acquiring arms for their own use. The terms below are

used to conceptualise the research but not always to implement focus groups and interviews in the field.

Demand. Refers broadly to the ‘buyer’ side of the gun market (as opposed to manufacturers and suppliers). Buyers include individuals, militias, gangs, armies, and crime syndicates. Demand factors influencing buyers include state failure to provide security, civil conflict, systemic violence, and availability of guns. As long as demand goes unchecked, no amount of control over supply can adequately address proliferation.

Supply. Refers broadly to the ‘seller’ side of the gun market. Supply-side stakeholders include manufacturers, distributors, dealers, strategic network builders, and an array of both large and small-scale black market gunrunners. Most national and international bodies act to stem proliferation by regulating, licensing, and monitoring suppliers.

Demand-reduction measures. Any project, policy, or activity with a focus on buyers or potential buyers, with the specific aim to prevent gun acquisition or use. This includes, for example, the promotion of peaceful conflict resolution, youth education and alternatives to violence, and positive environmental and resource management.

Supply-side measures. Regulating guns by targeting manufacturers and dealers and regulating the transfer of SALW shipments through mechanisms like end-user certificates.

Research Framework and Methods

Seeking to understand and identify factors behind the demand for small arms and light weapons opens conceptual doors to different ways of understanding both international and local gun markets. It would be foolish to suggest that policy approaches aimed solely at reducing demand are enough to close borders to illegal weapons shipments. However, a balanced approach that builds local capacity to reduce demand while employing resources at the national and international level to regulate suppliers can be effective.

This research attempts to describe the demand side of the market in a post-conflict environment, specifically making reference to disarmament programmes and their effect on local and regional markets for illicit weapons. Some literature on Sierra Leone and Liberia has been derived from a United Nations (UN) mission-based perspective; I spent only one part of

the fieldwork (in Kambia) travelling with UN staff and otherwise made my own arrangements to access interviewees and focus groups through local and national non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other contacts.

The research was carried out in October and November 2004 in Sierra Leone and Liberia. In Sierra Leone, I visited the following cities and their surrounding areas: Freetown, Kambia, Koidu, Kenema, Daru, and Bo. A field trip to Liberia was limited to one week in Monrovia; the security situation at the time did not allow for travel to the provinces. Because of the sensitivities in the post-conflict context of both Sierra Leone and Liberia, interviews and focus groups were loosely structured to allow for different ways of approaching questions about gun ownership, conflict, and the sustainability of peace. Questions also varied for different interview subjects: a discussion with a police officer was not framed the same way as a youth focus group in the Freetown slums. The following are questions that remained common to most interview subjects:

- Now that the war is over, what is the biggest challenge to sustaining peace?
- Can peace be sustained once the UN mission has pulled out?
- Was DDR successful? Why or why not?
- Are there guns still present in your community even after DDR and/or CACD?
- (If yes), who in the community is keeping weapons?
- (If yes), why do they feel the need to keep weapons now that the war is over?

Interviews were conducted one-on-one with government and UN officials, corporate representatives, police officers, soldiers, and NGO staff. Focus groups were conducted with youth in both urban and rural environments and in small communities where practicality prevented individual private discussions. Youth focus groups were convened with the assistance of local NGOs conducting social work and research on an ongoing basis with the youth and community. Rather than attempting to randomise the selection of participants or organisations, local partnerships were formed on an ad hoc, ongoing basis to facilitate maximum exposure and time spent in each location. The National Movement for Justice and Development, through

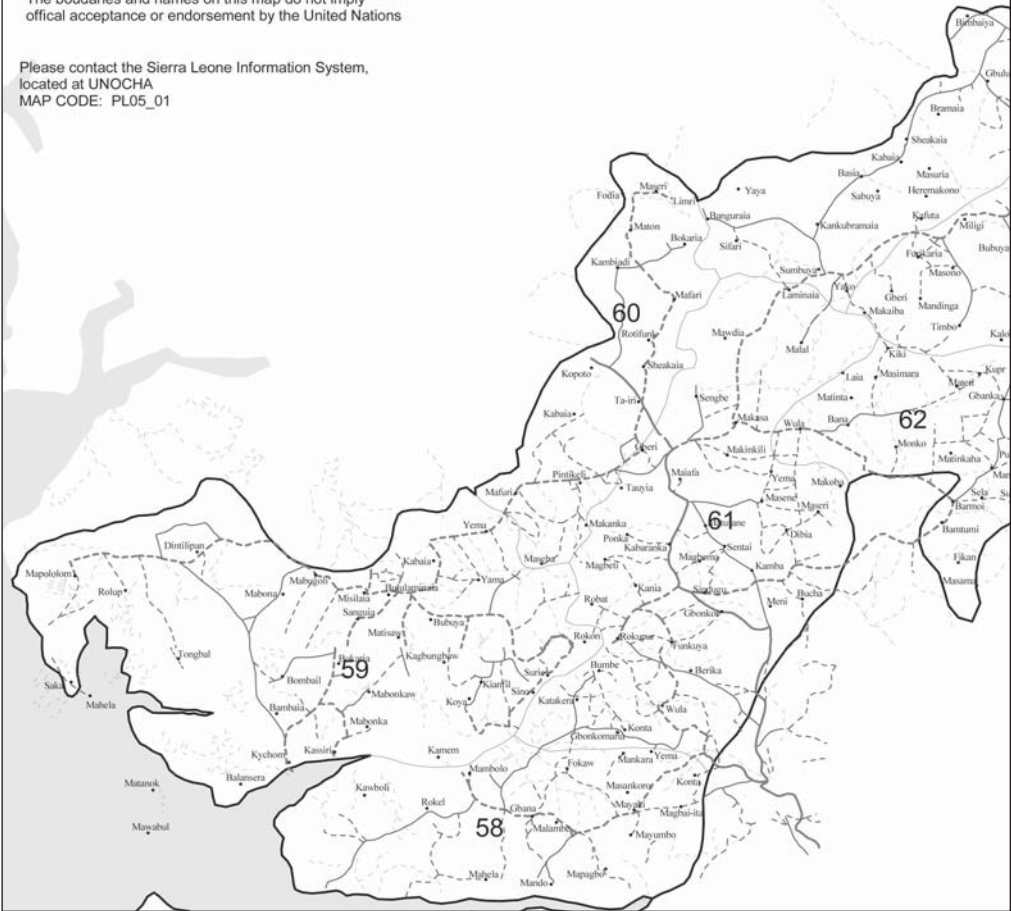
Kambia District Map (where AFD field research was done)

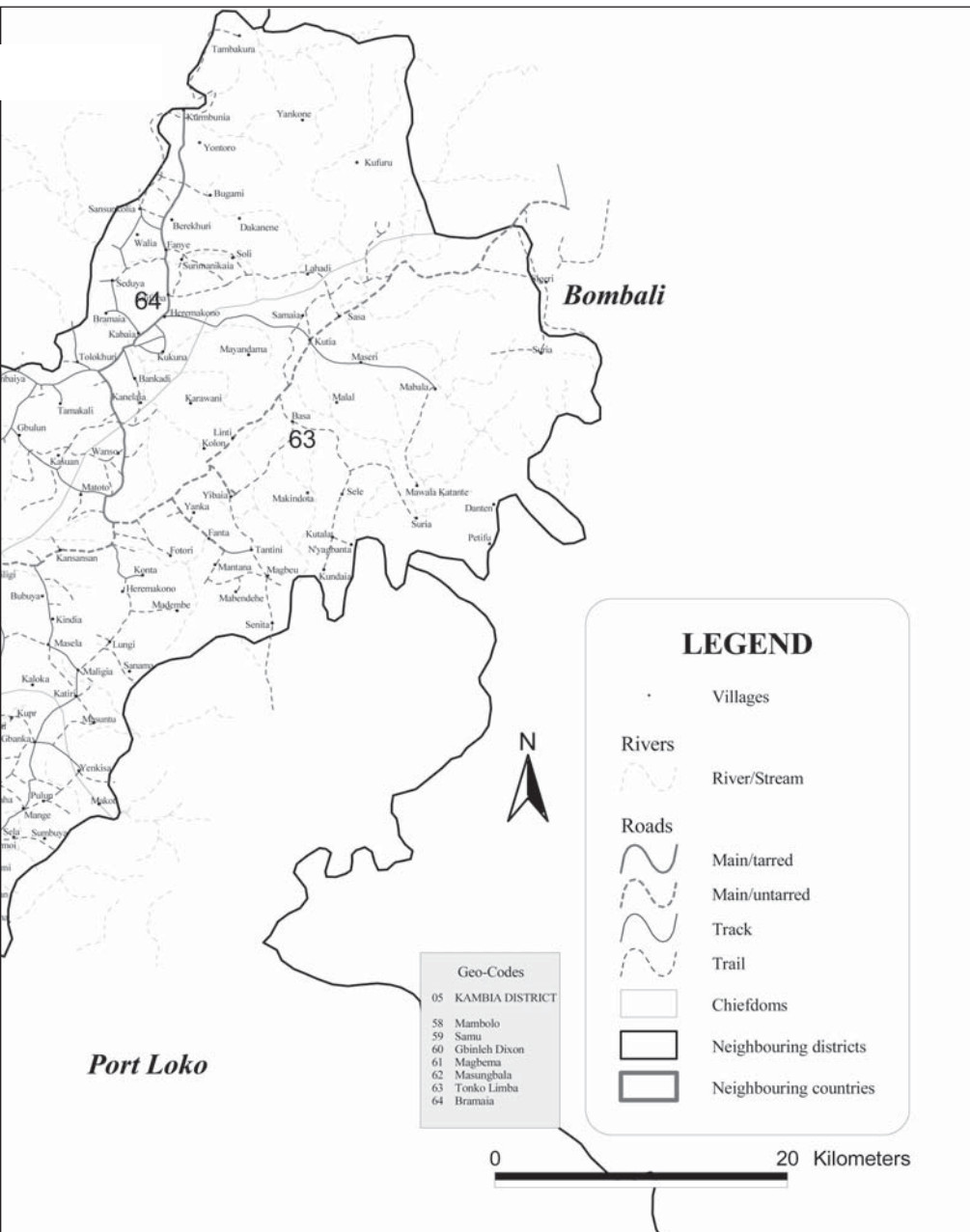


August 2002

The boundaries and names on this map do not imply official acceptance or endorsement by the United Nations

Please contact the Sierra Leone Information System, located at UNOCHA, MAP CODE: PL05_01





their head office in Freetown, staff in Koidu, and director in Kenema, were extremely helpful in locating community-based organisations, youth groups, and peace building programmes.

My time in Kambia was unique to other fieldwork locations because I travelled as an observer with the UNDP Arms for Development Programme. I was driven in a UN vehicle by a UN Civilian Police Officer and several representatives from the Sierra Leone Police Firearms Division in Freetown. The police conducted cordon-and-search operations in numerous villages, specifically with the purpose of certifying the area in question arms free so that development money could be released to the community. I observed and spoke with police teams as they went door-to-door, and entered many village homes to see how the search operations were conducted. A more detailed account of the operation, which was highly successful (no illegal weapons were found), is in Chapter Two, and a brief discussion of the Arms for Development Programme as it relates to DDR is in Chapter Five.

Sierra Leone, although it is far more peaceful than it was several years ago, still presents huge hurdles to travel and fieldwork, including both roads and bureaucracy that were at times impassable. Government and NGOs in Freetown have different goals and interpretations of problems than those in the provinces, a point which provincial interviewees never hesitated to make clear ("This isn't Freetown!"). It was precisely for that reason that every effort was made to visit a representative number of people, groups, and organisations in various parts of the country. Although some factors behind demand remain consistent at the conceptual level, not only between provinces in Sierra Leone, but also across the larger divide between West and East Africa, it became clear that the challenges facing different parts of Sierra Leone must be understood in their individual contexts.

Because of the sensitive nature of some of the discussions, some names of interviewees, even relatively high profile ones, have been withheld. Recorded interviews and notes will be kept for verification purposes.

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.

CHAPTER 3

“THE YOUTH PROBLEM”

“People say that we’re a problem, but they don’t know our problems. My uncle raped me when I was 12 and I joined the rebels because I thought it would be better having sex with strangers instead of people in my family. Now the war is over, we have put down our guns, and I am working as a prostitute because I can’t get another job. No one really cares about us.”

-Young prostitute in Freetown

“I think we cannot keep having the international community saying, ‘The youth is a problem,’ but then you pump money into another area.”

-Dennis Bright, Minister of Youth

An Entrenched Social and Economic Status Quo

Pujehun District lies in the south of Sierra Leone. It borders the Atlantic Ocean in the southwest, Liberia to the southeast, Kenema district to the northeast, Bo to the north and Bonthe to the west. It occupies a total space of 4,105 square kilometres and has twelve chiefdoms. The main ethnic groups are Mende, Vai, Temne and Sherbro. Main economic activities include diamond mining, fishing, and coffee and cocoa plantations. The district is predominantly Muslim.

A forthcoming report from an NGO called Rehabilitation and Development Agency in Sierra Leone (RADA-SL) contains the results of a survey on the prevalence and effects of child labour in three sections of the Soro Gbema Chiefdom in Pujehun. The sections assessed included Massaquoi II, Mano River and Kemokai, all of which are at-risk areas for child abuse and exploitation because of proximity to the Liberian border and isolation from the formal economy. The survey was carried out in September 2004 in ten of the eleven villages in the Kemokai section, and in the army garrison at the outskirts of Jendema. A total of 543 questionnaires were administered, with 543 different respondents of varying genders and ages.

RADA-SL Survey Areas and Respondents ²⁶										
Name of survey area/village	No. of questionnaires	Age								
		10-24			25-34			35-55		
		M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
Jendema	245	35	80	115	27	60	87	13	30	43
Malema	73	13	22	35	10	16	26	5	7	12
Gohn	52	9	15	24	7	12	19	4	5	9
Malema Junction	12	3	4	7	1	2	3	1	1	2
Kalia 1	22	5	6	11	3	4	7	2	2	4
Kalia 2	20	5	5	10	3	3	6	2	2	4
Kabila	6	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	1	2
Malomei	23	5	6	11	4	4	8	2	2	4
Melimei	23	6	5	11	4	4	8	2	2	4
Bombohun	32	5	10	15	4	8	12	2	3	5
Military Garrison	35	5	1	6	18	2	20	9	–	9
Grand Total	543	92	155	247	82	116	198	43	55	98

During the war, the District Recovery Committee report estimates that 4,200 people fled from Soro Gbema chiefdom into Liberia. Many spontaneously returned, with others assisted by UNHCR.²⁷ Even after the disarmament process, there is a heavy presence of small arms and light weapons in border towns, and the area is affected by instability on the Liberian side. Namibian UN peacekeeping troops and Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebels are present on the Liberian side of the Mano River Bridge. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) recruitment for Sierra Leone was heavy in this area. Today, apart from farming, people in Kemokai section depend heavily on cross-border trade. According to RADA-SL's report, children are used to transport illegal goods, including drugs:

Due to the level of poverty, high rate of illiteracy and the lack of adequate educational facilities for children coupled with the proximity of an international border and the Atlantic Ocean, which connects to the rest of the world, there is a great potential for child trafficking in the area.²⁸

Up to 70 per cent of young girls between 10 and 15 years of age admitted to having unprotected sexual intercourse with multiple partners. Less than five per cent had even heard of family planning or safe sex. They cited LURD rebels and UN peacekeepers across the Mano River Bridge as frequent customers who trade cash or looted property in return for sex. A common LURD slogan was repeated several times: "I fired for it, you lie down for it." Boys in the same age bracket are primarily used as mules to transport illicit goods across the border between Liberia and Sierra Leone, although they are also sometimes sexually exploited. Both boys and girls are trafficked to Liberia, Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire to be sold as prostitutes, drug pushers, house help, farmers, baby sitters, factory workers, and cleaners.

A twelve-year old girl named Adama told the survey team that her uncle had sold her to traffickers who took her to Monrovia without her consent. Her father died during the civil war and her mother was not told about the decision. She said, "I have been baby sitting and at the same time exploited sexually by my madam's husband for two years." She ran away and returned home in 2003 when Monrovia came under rebel attack. Her story is not unusual.²⁹

The purpose of RADA-SL's study is to motivate funding for a project to strengthen primary education and establish school-based child advocacy and awareness raising campaigns. However, the conditions that are the focus of the study's concern have wider implications; in a country where the youth have been both feared and demonised for their role as fighters in the civil war, "the youth problem" is the most widely recognised threat to the sustainability of peace. At-risk children and youth are used not only to fight wars, but also to traffic in weapons, drugs, and other dangerous contraband. A Sierra Leone Police Local Unit Commander in Freetown has focused community policing on forging positive partnerships with the youth in his area:

Small arms and light weapons are still in our midst post-DDR. Anyone who says otherwise is a liar. Maybe there are not enough to destabilise the country, but there are enough to go out and commit armed robbery. SLP needs to step up our strategy. Some ex-combatants still have arms and an agenda. They are not used to a conventional way of making a life. Ex-combatants have reintegrated so well that it's hard to track them, but when we see AK-47s in crime, we know it must be by people who know how to use them. If the economy improves quickly, that would be the best deterrent to people using firearms.

For a long time, we considered youth to be drug abusers, behind crime – they were stigmatised. They were left out in the cold. Now

we are reaching out to 120 youth organisations and social clubs, with fifty to a hundred people each, in our Division communities. We have formed an umbrella youth organisation with [UN] Civil Affairs and Dennis Bright [Minister of Youth]. Security and development are bedfellows. The partnership between the SLP and the youth is meant to emphasise that. With UNAMSIL leaving, there are not enough police to be available at every corner of society. We need to work with the community and the youth to provide security. This relationship building will lead to education on things like domestic violence and firearms use and misuse.

When asked what types of activities or programmes should be prioritised to build security and sustain peace, he said:

There are slum areas in our division, with factories all around. They are difficult to work with and penetrate the community, where there is a culture of poverty. This needs bigger intervention, for drug use and building values of employment. Teaching civic education in schools is important. We must help the youth to learn the constitution, to give people a stake in the future as politicians, police officers, or civil servants.³⁰

Kono's Chief Administrator, Mrs. Alice Torto, asserted that the biggest security threat in Kono (famous for the diamond mining that drew rebels to take over and hold the area during the civil war) is "unemployed youth."³¹ Libraries and resource centres are at the top of the District's security agenda, to keep youth busy. In Koidu town, there is a nightclub called Richmond's where Mrs. Torto says "they smoke cannabis and have no place to sleep, so they stay there." Visits to Richmond's confirmed this account, with girls as young as 13 working as prostitutes at the bar. Some said their relatives had been killed in the war; several said they had been raped and drugged by rebels and could not get married anyway; others gave the typical story about how prostitution was the best way to earn a living. Business, however, did not seem booming in Koidu on one particular Thursday night, when after dancing with each other for over an hour and failing to attract customers, the girls sat down at a table in the corner and fell asleep with their heads in their hands.

Defining Youth

The question becomes not whether there is a "youth problem" (clearly there are many, from unemployment to prostitution to HIV/AIDS) but whether this

Liberia Demographics ³²	
Population:	3,390,635 (July 2004 est.)
Age structure:	0-14 years: 43.4% (male 742,508; female 730,677) 15-64 years: 52.9% (male 875,951; female 918,570) 65 years and over: 3.6% (male 61,867; female 61,062) (2004 est.)
Median age:	total: 18.1 years male: 17.7 years female: 18.4 years (2004 est.)

Sierra Leone Demographics ³³	
Population:	5,883,889 (July 2004 est.)
Age structure:	0-14 years: 44.8% (male 1,291,621; female 1,343,827) 15-64 years: 52% (male 1,458,610; female 1,599,109) 65 years and over: 3.2% (male 91,232; female 99,490) (2004 est.)
Median age:	total: 17.5 years male: 17.2 years female: 17.8 years (2004 est.)

amorphous catch-all phrase can actually be narrowed down to a specific security threat now that the war is over. Although one could easily argue that youth pose a threat to stability based on existing fear of their participation and even leadership in the recently-ended civil war, doing so would undermine the complexity of a situation that goes beyond demographics to encompass a shifting set of social and economic mores, desires, and relationships.

“Youth” can be broadly defined as anyone between the ages of 15 and 35, and occasionally people over 35 who are not married or financially independent. Data from most Sub-Saharan African countries suggest that over half of the population is under the age of 18, and continent-wide it is estimated that half the population is under the age of 15.³⁴ In *Young Africa*, Nicolas Argenti addresses the changing definitions of youth and culture, pointing out that we should question conceptions of youth that have changed dramatically from pre-colonial times to the post-modern, globalised world. While there is a huge diversity of cultures and traditions that vary from region to region, some factors remain constant. In most rural societies, young men and women were (and often still are) subject to the control of male elders. The definition of youth that stretches into the mid-thirties age range and beyond reflects the fact that:

Men were not classified as ‘children’ as a result of their biological age, but rather because they had not achieved the level of economic

importance that would permit them to acquire wives, build their own compounds, and become economically viable agents. Childhood thus refers to a position in a social hierarchy more than it does to biological age... The category 'youth' is therefore a moveable feast, a category used by different interest groups to define ever-shifting groups of people.³⁵

One participant in a youth focus group in Sierra Leone defined youth as "between the ages of 15 and 35, but if you are older, even if you have nothing, you are still a youth. If you are living very well, and you have money, even if you are young, we start calling you 'pa' and you leave the group." As several theorists have noted, the youth population can no longer be categorised as a marginal sub-group of society. However, donors and governments continue, at their own peril, to plan programmes and solicit funding without a mainstream approach to politically empowering and including youth. Young people are frequently denied agency as pawns or victims of more 'legitimate' power structures:

The phenomenon of children participating in violent conflicts has generally been viewed as a by-product of clashes between real conflict stakeholders (governments and armed insurgents, for example), much in the same way as happy, healthy, educated children are seen as a collateral benefit of peaceful, functional and prosperous states.³⁶

While youth are clearly vulnerable in ways that adults are not, they continue to become empowered by access to information and resources that change their expectations based on a more global view of political, participation, consumerism, and power. Dennis Bright, Minister of Youth in Sierra Leone, challenged his colleagues:

Just go and do a small study on the nicknames [of ex-combatant youth]. Then you know how connected they are. Some of them are Beckham, others are Ronaldo, others are Rambo, others are Tupac, others are Notorious B.I.G. in a very remote corner of a village. To me, this is an indicator that these people know more than you think. They are not desperately rural and backward young people anymore.³⁷

This new connectedness is often portrayed as threatening, and it is. Information has the power to mobilise change, and when the status quo still reflects child labour, abuse, and trafficking, the idea that children will find ways to fight for their own rights (or be co-opted by external forces

with promises of empowerment) can be scary. Argenti summarises the two extremes of youth portrayal:

While African governments may tentatively sing the praises of youth as the ‘promise of the future,’ they equally often fear them as the source of today’s instability. Two stereotypes have thus simultaneously emerged, one portraying youth as ‘heroes,’ the other as ‘villains.’

In terms of policy development, these stereotypes are reflected in a split-personality donor and government approach that tends to hype the threat of violent youth when it comes to the criminal justice system or politically repressive measures, and yet under-fund or ignore solutions that would positively empower young people to use their power for economic or social advancement. There is a general failure to recognise that the same power and ingenuity used to fight wars can and should be harnessed to prevent them.

Children, Youth, and Small Arms

By the United Nations definition, small arms include revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine guns, assault rifles, and light machine guns. Light weapons include heavy machine guns, hand-held under barrel and mounted grenade launchers, portable anti-aircraft guns, portable anti-tank guns, recoilless rifles (sometimes mounted), portable launchers of anti-aircraft missile systems (sometimes mounted) and mortars of calibres less than 100mm; ammunition and explosives includes cartridges from small arms, shells and missiles for light weapons, mobile containers with missiles or shells for single action anti-aircraft and anti-tank systems, anti-personnel and anti-tank hand grenades, landmines and explosives.³⁸ All of these are light, durable, and technically operable by children. Fieldwork by the ISS in 2002 in Sierra Leone demonstrated children’s training and familiarity with small arms and light weapons gained due to association with the RUF, CDF, or the Sierra Leone Army.

Because of the way both warfare and demographics have changed during the 20th and early 21st centuries, children and youth are increasingly becoming both perpetrators and victims of instability, whether manifested as crime or civil war, or some combination of the two. The major “threat” cited so often in Sierra Leone and Liberia is less focused on youth as soldiers and more on the possibility of a growing criminal element like Kono’s prostitutes and Freetown’s drug pushers.

Weapons Expertise among Child Combatants in Sierra Leone		
Weapon	Children Trained (out of 48 interviewed)	Percentage of Sample
Pistol	17	28.2
Sub machine gun	10	20.8
AK47 and other assault rifles	36	75.0
Light machine gun	4	0.8
Heavy machine gun	3	0.6
Rocket-propelled grenade launcher (RPG)	8	16.6
Mortar	1	0.02
Flame thrower	2	0.04

Source: *Institute for Security Studies, field research conducted in Sierra Leone, January 2002.*

Small arms policy, particularly in post-conflict contexts like Sierra Leone and Liberia, needs to shift to a longer-term approach that avoids a 'damage-control' mentality to guns and crime and begins to acknowledge the constructive political force that young people can bring to the table if given the opportunities to do so. Small arms proliferation in West Africa, particularly the Mano River Union countries, relies on an economy that excludes the majority of youth from legitimate employment. However, it has been repeatedly shown that given the option to pursue non-violent livelihoods, young people will do so.

In mid-2004 while disarmament was ongoing, UNMIL reported that it had received reports from people living near the frontier in Liberia that guns used in Liberia's civil war were being traded in neighbouring countries for consumer goods such as bicycles and motorbikes.³⁹ This piece of information, though it only garnered three lines in the middle of a larger story, was corroborated by several respondents during the fieldwork in Monrovia and Daru (on the Sierra Leone-Liberia border). Many of the young men trading AK variants for motorbikes, in particular, hoped to use the bikes to start small businesses and earn money transporting people and goods locally near their homes. Argenti argues:

Given the chance, young people do not vent their frustration in the form of anarchic violence. On the contrary, all the evidence suggests that young people only become involved in warfare or other forms of violence as a rational choice in a zero option political and economic climate.⁴⁰

Corroborating this point of view, a former youth activist and founder of a youth network in Freetown articulated the way Foday Sankoh's 'revolution' was initially welcomed in 1991 because of the desperate, "zero option political and economic climate" in Sierra Leone. Only after excessive brutality and the later amputation campaign did the popular tide begin to turn.

On Youth, Corruption, and Violence: An Interview
8 November 2004

We need to look at what happened in the war. All the things that happened in the past are still happening today. One of the outstanding reasons as to why the war took place was as a result of institutionalisation of corruption. Corruption became institutionalised under the APC [All People's Congress]. There was therefore a culture of apathy among the young people who felt that there was no kind of way forward for them. This was a period in which you had to belong to a particular tribe or you couldn't be in the military. There was a class system.

At that time, a lot of the young people who took up arms were purely agitating for an end to corruption. That is why the first set of people who formed opposition was from the colleges, educated. In 1977, the students were the first set of people to lead demonstrations for meaningful change. But then it became one of the bloodiest things ever. APC clamped down very hard on the opposition and a lot of students from the university left.

We had a decline in social conditions, and it is very natural that when you experience corruption, people will naturally agitate and demand a change. I remember after the reign of Siaka Stevens and then Momoh, during the era of Momoh, that was actually when things started going so bad. That was a period in which very close to two, three months the capital city was without electricity. For college students, most of the lectures and the classrooms became political. When I was in Bo school, even before the rebels attacked, we would say if there is a war we will join them. You know, I used to agitate. I was at that time, ready for change. This plan shows how desperate Sierra Leoneans were for change. When in 1991 Foday Sankoh made his first broadcast saying that they were going to attack Sierra Leone, it was welcome.

Despite the fact that many children and youth participated in the armed conflict in both Sierra Leone and Liberia (and continue to be a potentially

destabilising force in Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea), it also became clear through focus groups and interviews with youth groups that, as Argenti highlights, they have "rather conventional aspirations for their future lives." He continues:

They would like an education and a useful job. Like young people across the world, they rebel against their elders, ignore advice, and enjoy taking risks. In addition to poverty and the collapse of the state, the advent of the AIDS pandemic has shortened time horizons, narrowed expectations, and heightened risks. But, given the option, most young people would prefer a future of security and domesticity. It is striking how little research there is in this area.⁴¹

A focus group with male youth between the ages of 15 and 34 in Beh, a Freetown slum, revealed that participants' concerns were indeed along conventional lines. When asked about the state of peace in Sierra Leone, complaints ranged from the structure of shacks during the rainy season to the poor state of the economy, touching on politics only as it related to the day-to-day issues that determine quality of life. One participant said, "We have no education here, no schools, no medical care. There is no medicine if we get sick." Another added, "My wife, when she was pregnant, the rain overflows the house, and I have no way to get water out of the house, she is now sick with pneumonia. We live right on the sea, and there is no support for this community. The kids are not in school." Sewerage is also a problem: "There are no toilet facilities; we live with the smell, with only two or three toilets for everyone." When asked whose responsibility it is to provide health, water, and medical care, political party feuding was cited as the main problem:

We have two counsellors but there is no support from the government, because they are not from the ruling party; they are APC. They don't have any support because it is even a great problem, because they are not ruling party. The mayor of here is APC. So all those counsellors under the APC, they are marginalised and pushed into the corner and people don't have respect for them because they cannot deliver and provide support. We blame the ruling party for pushing down our counsellors.

The intersection of quality of life, youth image, and politics was filtered through the lens of justice and peace. One member of the group articulated a common opinion:

As for me, I believe that the peace is not concrete. The peace is really fragile. Because the entire country is blessed with minerals, given by

the Almighty. But it is only enjoyed by the privileged few. As for we down here, we are isolated. I hope you can walk around and see our shanty houses, and see our environment. We have no good medical facilities or living conditions. We have cholera, HIV/AIDS, all these diseases. I believe where there is peace, there must be justice. There is no justice in this land. Because if you are not fortunate to be elite, you will not reap the benefits of this country. This road, Lightfoot Boston Street, that road was constructed just to mock us. When they constructed that road, the water started to enter our houses during the rainy season. Our houses flood, the entire environment floods and we have no place to go. Our grandfathers, our fathers, they are here. And now we ourselves have our own children, we are living in this place. So if you are asking about the peace, I will tell you that the peace is not concrete because there is no justice in the land.

The identification of basic amenities and a decent standard of living as being central to the idea of a lasting peace corroborates similar views expressed in urban slums in and around Nairobi. In the Kenyan slum of Kasarani, a youth worker emphasised a broader view of peace, one shared by the young men in the same age group in Beh in a different region of the continent:

In peace building we ask when do we have peace? Is peace only the absence of war? Peace is very broad. When I am hungry, I am not at peace with myself. When I don't have shelter I am not at peace with myself. When there is insecurity outside even when I have a shelter and I am scared someone might come to kill me I am not at peace with myself... Before we started rubbish collection if you can remember, every now and then in our area we would find aborted children dumped everywhere. Here you are caring about humanity and you see a child who has been thrown away because there is a lot of garbage heaps. Imagine a dog just rotting outside your door? After we cleared these garbage heaps we do not even find a dog that has been thrown away in our neighbourhood. At least we have catered for peace within our environment.⁴²

The difference between Kenya and Sierra Leone and Liberia in West Africa is that civil society is far less developed and equipped at the grassroots level to solve problems in the latter countries. Governments do not fare much better, operating on budgets that are only made viable by large amounts of donor support. In Sierra Leone, GDP per capita reached USD 142 in 2000. About 82 per cent of the population lived below the poverty line, and with a Gini Index of 66 in the same year, it had one of the most skewed income

distributions in the world. Since 1996, Sierra Leone has been ranked among the lowest in the UNDP Human Development Index, and is ranked bottom in the 2004 Index. Within this context, government priorities do not allow funding for programmes that are either outside donor agendas or beyond what can be categorised as meeting basic needs.

The way forward is in creatively linking funding for projects involving youth, poverty alleviation, and peace building. Education and 'cultural change' are the two areas where this seems most possible. A WANEP programme officer in Monrovia put it this way:

What we need most is education reform. We need to pay teachers and dedicate money to schools. We will change perceptions and culture, and then when someone does violence the alarm will be sounded. We have a failed, lost generation that allowed themselves to be used. Now they say, "I don't need to go to school to become a minister: I just need to hold a gun." We need to stop them from seeking that short cut.⁴³

Sierra Leone's Minister of Youth Dennis Bright is an anomaly: a man with an NGO background in a national-level government position. In an extensive interview, he articulated the need for more support and communication between donors, Ministries, and civil society organisations. He also explained how the sustainability of peace in Sierra Leone might be dependent on whether he can get generators, deep-freezers and satellite television to the youth in remote corners of the country. He contends that youth are part of a new global awareness, tuned in to movies and messages from other parts of Africa and the West. While they retain some ties to traditional ways of doing things, they want the comforts and amenities available in urban areas. They want to watch football with their friends, with a cold drink in their hand, rather than be relegated to a rural area where they have no power, both literally and figuratively.

This view of things suggests that environmental factors are more important than demographics. Instead of looking at youth as a demographic demand driver, the focus should be on the environment in which that demographic is living and growing up. A multi-sectoral approach to changing the negative environment that fed the rise of the RUF would focus not only on reintegrating the youth who fought in the war, but also creating opportunities for the next generation of leaders. This may not seem like a radical idea at first glance, but implementing it does require a paradigm shift in the way funding is distributed. Donors concerned about securing the peace in Sierra Leone need to draw a link between educating and creating jobs for young people, and the political future of the country.

Dennis Bright on Youth and Small Arms: An Interview
15 October 2004, Freetown

Q: What is the situation with small arms in Sierra Leone after disarmament?

A lot of the small arms are finding their way back into Liberia; I say back into Liberia because I'm sure some of them came from there and were used in our war. They are finding their way back into Liberia to be used in the disarmament process. During the propagation of the conflict, there was hardly any border in terms of small arms, because small arms flowed freely in and around this country, across the borders, in many different ways. So the problem is, you don't know what proportion of the residue of small arms would reach Liberia and feature in their disarmament programme, and what would actually be left here, if any. There is an initiative going on now known as Arms for Development; they are trying to collect these arms by linking them with development projects in communities. I understand they are doing very well getting some of these arms.

But then, the question is especially in the capital cities; like in every capital city. Like in Johannesburg, or anywhere, there are certain people who need arms to survive, and these are criminals. It is very difficult up until now to tell how much of that is left within our cities. Very difficult to tell. Because quite recently we have been hearing about armed robbery, in Freetown specifically. People are working on that, specifically the police and security forces. We are taking these things very seriously coming from war. Is it the residue of old arms, or new arms coming in? Only the police may be able to tell. But I think we have to be realistic. In every urban setting in Africa, every modern African city, even in these countries where you don't have war, you have a certain quantity of arms being used for criminal purposes. What we want to know is, have we come down to that level, or do we still have large caches of arms stowed away somewhere? I don't think so. I think the disarmament and post-disarmament efforts like AFD, as well as the DDR process in Liberia, would have considerably reduced the quantity of arms in Sierra Leone. At least, this is what I hope.

Q: As someone who is working on youth issues, do you view proactive measures to empower the youth and employ them as directly related to the demand for guns?

The youth during the war have been circulating and going around the country. They are now exposed to certain things in the urban settings

that they are not likely to have when they go back to rural settings. Basic among these is electricity, running water, health facilities, but especially recreation. That is, to go and hear music, and dance, and video, and that sort of thing. They are very much – the youth can be considered as modern African youth, many of them. And that is why they stay in the city where they can be as close as possible to modern trends that affect people in other big African cities. Now, I am certain that because they are all crowded here in the cities that they are living under desperate circumstances. And they will be very willing to move out of the city if a minimum of these comforts are assured.

I can challenge anybody that if my ministry is credited with the personnel that we need and with the funds that we need, we have enough initiatives to be able to turn the situation around and to get young people really engaged. We have the ideas. If you go to the research and capacity building unit that we have, we have been discussing these things. The problem is that a ministry cannot be seen to be implementing projects, because that died long ago when it was considered that ministries are not capable. So, NGOs might. But some of them lack ideas and they don't have the national spread that the ministry has. Today, if there is a programme for agriculture which is multi-sectoral, including the Ministry of Youth and Sports, to mobilise the young people, the Ministry of Agriculture, because of their technical expertise in the field, the Ministry of Local Government and Lands for the availability of land and articulation with the traditional authorities – if we have that kind of multi-sectoral approach with donors, there is already a project concept for us not to build state farms, but to create farming settlements for young people with basic inputs of shelter for them, and recreation for them. And a basic honorarium for them during the period of working, and the possibility for them to own the acres of land that they actually cultivate, for themselves.

You can integrate into that activity other activities related to agriculture, which might include transportation, road construction, building of shelter, because they have to be there, recreation, and sports. If you have a complex like that, you will have people rushing there, because that will give them hope. We have made that design, but it is not easy to sell such things because people have their own set thinking.

So, this problem of the youth is not insoluble. But the very first thing we have to do is to first of all sit down and accept that it is really a problem. And rather than wait until it explodes in our faces, we should

be more proactive rather than reactive. Everyone – all stakeholders. I'll give you an example. When we had the ex-combatants when war was there and we wanted to end the war, the young people who carried it out were considered as a specific group. And there was a specific programme called DDR which was worked out like a programme, and it was successful. I think you can extract from the youth today a good percentage of the most disadvantaged, and target them into a programme of that sort, with activities that are time bound with opportunities for evaluation just like we did for the DDR. I have tried to convince some people for that.

Q: The problem with DDR is that job training focused on only one thing; how many mechanics can you have in one city? Is agriculture more sustainable?

You are quite right. Agriculture and enterprise are what is sustainable. Those are the two major areas that we have to concentrate on. Agriculture is not just planting or crop cultivation alone. It is raising pigs and chickens. But then, you need people to buy and sell, and then you can integrate enterprise. If you have a buyers' co-operative, and you give them money they are able to buy in bulk, or they are able to have a small bank, to be purchasing at the harvest and selling to hotels or to the markets. Young people can have things to do.

This is even true in the urban setting; you can bring in business initiatives. Integrate some training into it. But all this now is really in a state of concepts. We don't have a major programme here, but we are working together with DFID and UNDP and a few others. What actually we are doing is pilot projects, small things, but with the success of those things we can learn lessons. In the course of next year, we will be able to come up with a massive programme for engagement of young people. This is the hope. But all this depends on whether all parties involved agree to consider the youth problem as THE problem.

Q: Is there a sense within the government that the Ministry of Youth is closely linked to what the Ministry of Defence and the Police are trying to do?

I really wonder whether my colleagues see that link. I really wonder. I really hope that they do, but I think if they did, they would be here by now.

Q: Some people say that the war was about disenfranchised youth, trying to make a statement and trying to be heard (among other things, of course). Do you agree?

You find that after the war, since everything was demolished, that all the factors now in the immediate aftermath of the war are very busy setting themselves up again, and they are not really looking at the interrelatedness of their activities. Agriculture will quickly want to set itself up, defence is doing its own thing. Education is doing its own thing. But they ignore the linkages.

Q: Do you fear that with the UN mission on its way out, that if those bridges are not built or acknowledged, things could fall apart?

For me, I am working very much on a major intervention on behalf of the youth problem. And that will have to be early next year...this would be deliberate, to wake up my colleagues and the international community as well. Because I think we cannot keep having the international community saying, "the youth is a problem," but then you pump money into another area. "Oh, the youth is a problem," but when you want to pump money into health, because according to your policies health education and agriculture are necessary, you just pop it there, without working on how best to solve the youth problem. So, it is up to them too, who have this money, who are bringing in all this money, to demand more from the people who are giving all this to health and education. I want to see how the youth problem is being addressed within that framework. It is for them to require that.

We believe that the money we are spending will be wasted if this problem is not addressed, because there will be a security problem. I think they have got to see that. But even among ourselves, as government, we need to be aware of the serious nature of what we are doing. When you are trapped in the political logic, it is not a very easy thing for a government to do, because it is seen as stepping out of line as it were. But I do believe that the president and I have a kind of respect, that I can afford that and do that. I want to make a major statement, and you may hear about it, but the international community needs to come up with a definite solution to the youth question and a commitment. That may give hope to hundreds of thousands of young people, if they see that someone is actually stepping out for them.

Then we can sit down and prioritise. Agriculture: now there is talk about food security, and agriculture, but it doesn't seem to be working

in the direction necessary of solving the youth problem. It is business as it used to be, agriculture as it used to be. We tried it with the FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture. But what we find out is that they have not absorbed the fact that this is a specific group initiative, which is youth. They carry on what they used to be doing, without working with us. We have many options. We can strengthen the youth component within each ministry, but then I think in addition we can create a bureau, a special bureau under this Ministry for a youth agricultural programme. And that bureau should be responsible for mobilisation, linking up with all these units that will have been created within the ministries, to meet regularly and work directly with the international donors so that they say, well, this is what we want to do. Ministry of Local Government and Lands, Ministry of Agriculture: we have identified 12,000 acres of viable land, and we want to develop it. So, you can tell the donors that we need five hundred units of housing for these people. They will go and build it themselves, and that is where they start earning money; the carpenters, the masons, these types. From the very beginning of those houses, you begin to give a chance. Before they actually start distributing the land among them, then you would have done something. But if we are not doing that, in that directly, identifiable way to the young people, then it is like no one is looking at them.

Q: Culturally, are there obstacles to that kind of project? Is motivating them tied to the idea that they can be independent or exercise ownership over their own activities? The culture of the city is attractive, and going back to rural elites, the patrimonial system, is no longer viable for youth who have been fighters and independent. What do you think?

There is this resistance, there is something like a generational tension between older and young people. The young people think that they are in such a condition today, and the older people must have been responsible somehow for their present predicament. And in their real lives, they have been witness to injustice perpetrated by some of the authorities; but there is a catch here. One has to be very careful in the analysis. You might be tempted to just move on to a conclusion, and thinking and wondering whether it is the traditional institution itself which is the problem, or the individuals as personalities who have eroded the traditions. I am saying this because I have the idea that these people may not be against the traditional institutions themselves: many of them are very proud to belong or to have connections. And many of them still do regard the good chiefs and still think that they are very useful and important.

You see, when these things work out very well there is a difference between the Western system of justice, when someone accuses you, you are found guilty, jailed, okay, you serve your sentence, and make sure that the person you had a problem with, nobody cares after. The system doesn't care whether you meet again. It is oblivious to the larger whole, the person who returns to the same community or society. It deepens the cut, the gorge between two individuals, two families, and institutionalises enmity because it has satisfied itself with a judgment and nothing beyond. That's the end of it; an acceptance is passed. There is a certain punishment and then justice is done. Traditional justice continues even after judgment has been passed, right or wrong has been given. These people still operate within the traditional system, under the traditional umbrella of the chieftaincy. And it can even go beyond trying to make amends and getting them to actually continue to live together again. After the judgment, to sit down again and make sure they talk.

Q: Is there some process that needs to happen, is happening, or will happen with regard to reintegration now that disarmament is finished?

This is the reason why people were calling for the role of the traditional authorities in the reintegration process. Because they confirm, they legitimise, they complete the reintegration process. They give it the final license, if you see the point I'm making. Because don't underestimate the ancestral traditional full powers and authority in the psyche of the individual. There is an area there which is definitely not quantifiable that one needs to consider. It would be a catastrophic analysis, if anything like that exists, to say, well the youth is angry, so traditional society is over or is no longer justifiable. Only to find out later, that the same people want to be chiefs themselves. Because there is something in it. The role of the chief is to keep the community and the clan together.

Q: Many of the youth living in Freetown outside those traditional structures are living in poverty. How will this impact on the sustainability of peace in Sierra Leone in the next ten to twenty years?

If they are here now, some of them are learning to live the ways of the world. If they don't want to go back to their homes, for most of them it's not because they don't want to go home – it's just because home does not provide some of the basic things they want. They wouldn't mind to go home if they have a good football field and if they can watch Manchester United and Arsenal. And you can do that. Only yesterday I

went to a town, and I gave the youths a satellite dish, and a television, and a generator. Getting their youth centre in place, because they want a youth entertainment centre, and those things are going to be the hub of activities. They will have snakes and ladders and other competitions later. I took the same things to Kailahun, I took the same things to other places. Because I believe that they are already connected. Whether we like it or not, we cannot disconnect them anymore. It is not possible, and it would be criminal to do so.

Now if a guy knows that if he goes, let's say, to his native Kamakwe, he is living here [Freetown], not having anything to eat, not having anything, if he knows that there is a scheme that he can benefit from, since he comes from Kamakwe, where he can go there and have two or three acres to himself, where he is supported along with other youths with machinery here and there to develop it, and he puts in some hours of work. And at the same time, when he is not working on the soil, he is learning something, a trade, as part of the package. And that over a period, whatever the harvests are, let's say for three years, any time there is a harvest, part of that money is kept for him in a bank. The other part is given to him for additional pocket money. The other part goes to the administration of this place. Then, after working, he can go to the youth centre, drink cold water, and then with his friends go watch the football, they can argue about it, then go to bed at night and wake up fresh in the morning. That guy is not staying here; he is rolling up there. It's so simple, I tell people; but they feel it's so complicated. They feel the youth problem is so complicated, it needs a big construct. They will bring a big expert tomorrow to come and build a construct for me. And this is not what they need. These people, they need something to attract them *now*.

How do they link up with traditional authorities? Many of the chiefs now, they are becoming more and more educated, you see. You will see a chief who is a degree holder, a graduate. It is no longer the old man, illiterate man, no. The whole thing is changing. You can see a very enlightened official. These are people who know better than to dominate young people. They know that it is no longer possible. But to preserve the authority of their order, they know that they have to negotiate a new relationship. We feel that the way civil society is operating now, civil society organisations, with the blessing of the state, can negotiate that new rapport between young people and chiefs. This is the reason we are supporting the strengthening of relations between civil society and the state.

There is a whole programme lodged at DFID [UK Department for International Development] now. It has not started yet but it is going to start soon. Civil society is coming to help, to negotiate a new kind of relationship between the subjects and the chiefs within the new democratic setting. I see the young people problem first of all, as an economic problem. That is the most immediate. In terms of their reinsertion into society, I think when they have the economic wherewithal, things will work out. But if they are hungry, then they are angry, they don't have a place to sleep, and they won't make it in the city. There are never going to be enough jobs in the city. I mean, even if you have a factory. They are opening factories, how many people are you going to employ? But they can produce food, vegetables, palm oil is being exported from this country. You can lead them into soap, you can develop industries. The potential is there, with youth focused initiatives.

Q: What are the biggest challenges to implementing your ideas?

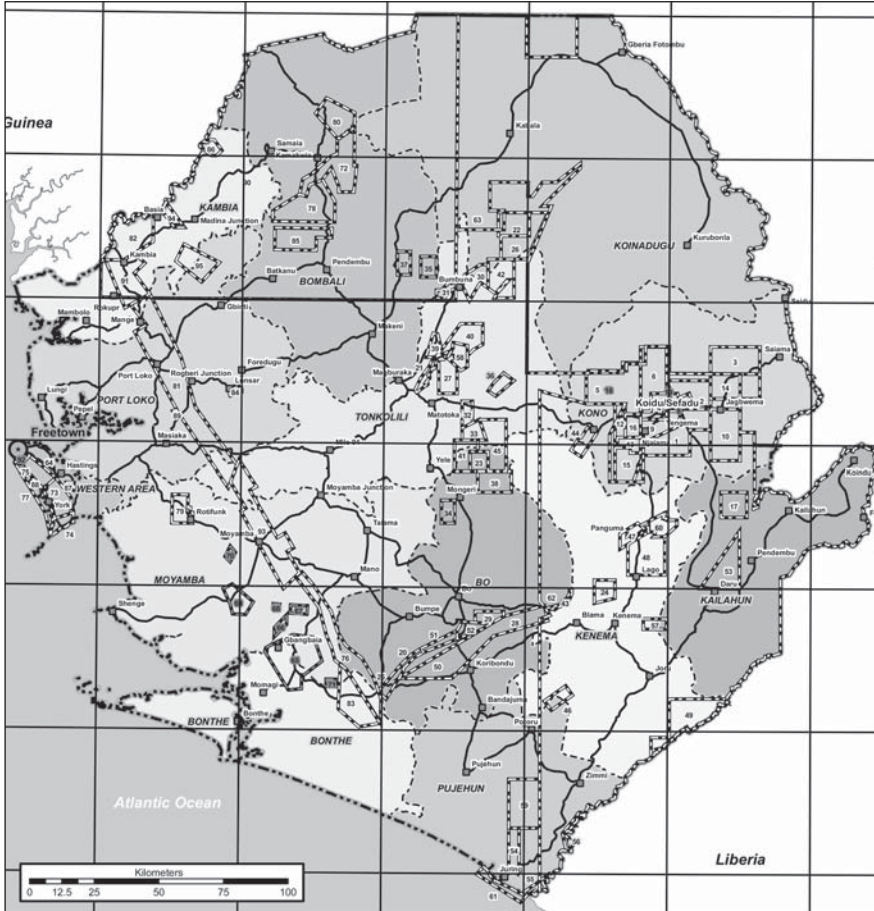
The biggest challenge is for people to listen, both locally as well as internationally. The second one is for people to actually accept that the youth problem is an emergency and has to be treated as such, and not as a diluted cross-cutting issue that disappears into sectoral concerns. That is the second major challenge. The third challenge is to avoid heavy bureaucratic, over-conceptualisation of things. Rather be radical and common-sensical. Bring them a generator. Bring them a satellite dish. And put it there, and see if they are not going to troop down there. Somebody told me, [doubtfully] "well, it will begin to create needs." But these people already have needs, that's why they are here. I have been criticised, condemned by some people: "Why do you take the satellite dish to the village?" But they are already connected.

I worked in the NGO community before, because of my work with youth I was given this job at the political policy-making level. So when I explain to some of my colleagues, they don't understand some of these issues. If I decide to take things to remote areas near Kailahun, it's not because I'm crazy, but I make sure I take it there together with a generator, together with a deep freezer. These people have been used to drinking ice cold water here, and ice cream. During the course of the war, some of them on either side had to move to capital cities, to Kenema, to some of the big towns. Now some of them find their way back to where they were. And I asked my colleagues, just go there and do a small study on the nicknames. You know? Then you know how

connected they are. Some of them are Beckham, others are Ronaldo, others are Rambo, others are Tupac, others are Notorious B.I.G. in a VERY remote corner of a village. To me, this is an indicator that these people know more than you think. They are not desperately rural and backward young people anymore. For me, it is not a problem, it is an opportunity to make things move fast enough for them. Because they can catch it very quickly.

In government, I think it's an advantage to be bringing these ideas to keep people aware and to know that there is this kind of thinking in existence. If not, it would be coming across to them as some opposition thinking, or some radical civil society kind of thinking. But if within the house they hear this on a daily basis, maybe it's an advantage for the government and for policy making.

MAP: Sierra Leone Mining Rights



CHAPTER 4 DIAMONDS

"I am scared, but the government doesn't care. They only care about their own money."

-Koidu resident living in an area to be evacuated
for kimberlite blasting

"What they are interested in is these diamonds. When there is war, these things are available. So these people, other companies, may incite violence so they can get access. Conflict between mining companies could cause another war because Koidu Holdings is acting to restrict other investment."

-NGO worker, Kono District

"There has been a total of 21 million dollars of investment here since 1997. We employ over five hundred people at an average salary 300 per cent higher than the industry standard in Sierra Leone. Estimating ten people per household, we support at least 5,000 people in this region. Local women cater for the mine, and we use local labour on civil projects. The expectations of people in Kono are above what we can provide; we are a young mine. But we manage it on a daily basis and we've come a long way since day one."

-Representative of Koidu Holdings, Ltd.

From Blood to Development

In 2000, Partnership Africa Canada published a report called "The Heart of the Matter" alleging that diamonds were central to the civil war in Sierra Leone and that "a highly criminalised war economy had developed a momentum of its own."⁴⁴ In 2002 Greg Campbell published his book, *Blood Diamonds*, which sought to trace illegal diamond trading networks from the alluvial pits of Kono to the dealers in Monrovia, al Qaeda operatives in Afghanistan, and all the way to De Beers in London. The term "blood diamonds" has become part of the popular lexicon, leading to radical shifts in the oversight of diamond sales and marketing in the last five years. The

Sierra Leone Diamond Export Data												
2002 Export Data				2003 Export Data				2004 Export Data				
Month Amount	Export (USD)	Carats	Price/Carat (USD)	Month Amount	Export (USD)	Carats	Price/Carat (USD)	Month Amount	Export (USD)	Carats	Price/Carat (USD)	
Jan/02	1,436,570	20,891	68.77	Jan/03	4,612,174	37,853	121.84	Jan/04	6,732,551	55,347	121.64	
Feb/02	1,782,849	16,989	104.94	Feb/03	7,087,005	40,612	174.51	Feb/04	9,956,715	67,192	148.18	
Mar/02	1,590,820	13,281	119.78	Mar/03	4,827,357	29,566	163.27	Mar/04	12,186,650	61,730	197.41	
Apr/02	3,772,768	25,762	146.45	Apr/03	7,363,137	45,259	162.69	Apr/04	12,219,747	72,589	168.34	
May/02	3,241,944	29,781	108.86	May/03	5,526,897	41,334	133.71	May/04	9,824,063	49,712	197.61	
June/02	4,196,749	29,660	141.49	June/03	7,673,862	56,612	135.55	June/04	17,371,974	89,560	193.97	
July/02	4,920,889	37,480	131.29	July/03	5,417,475	37,191	145.67	July/04	12,925,172	59,194	218.35	
Aug/02	4,311,833	32,250	133.70	Aug/03	7,527,192	49,182	153.05	Aug/04	9,689,861	50,172	193.13	
Sept/02	5,265,133	49,460	106.45	Sept/03	6,828,932	50,068	136.39	Sept/04	9,897,734	51,781	191.14	
Oct/02	3,770,189	29,450	128.02	Oct/03	6,789,034	44,032	154.18	Oct/04	9,588,852	46,014	208.38	
Nov/02	3,753,079	33,687	111.41	Nov/03	5,868,077	35,121	167.08	Nov/04	9,215,901	51,310	179.61	
Dec/02	3,689,308	33,169	111.23	Dec/03	6,465,402	39,903	162.03	Dec/04	7,052,411	37,152	189.82	
Total	41,732,130	351,859	118.60	Total	75,969,751	506,723	149.92	Total	126,652,634	691,757	183.09	
Value to DACDF (USD)	312,991			Value to DACDF (USD)	521,409			Value to DACDF		N/A		

Source: Diamond Industry Annual Review, Sierra Leone 2004. The Diamonds and Human Security Project

new catch-phrase is “Development Diamonds,” referring to an ideal industry that is transparent and productive, putting money back into communities where mineral wealth originates. Illegal mining, smuggling, child labour, environmental damage, and corruption still plague the diamond industry in Sierra Leone, but there is at least rhetorical progress in acknowledging that communities need to benefit from mining.

The Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), initiated in May 2000 by the South African government and coming into international effect on 1 January 2003, has provided a framework to halt the flow of conflict diamonds. More than fifty diamond producing, trading and polishing countries are members. Member countries agree to certify that rough diamonds being exported are conflict-free, and to refuse importation without a certificate. Sierra Leone is beginning to see an increase in export data as more diamonds enter the legal system rather than being smuggled across the border to be sold in Guinea or Liberia. In 2001, the government implemented the Diamond Area Community Development Fund (DACDF) to put export revenue back into the community and give locals a bigger stake in the legal diamond trade. In some areas this led to reported corruption by chiefs who syphoned the money into their own pockets instead of implementing development projects. Nevertheless, the idea is a step in the right direction.

Private Security: A New Old Threat

Now that the civil war in Sierra Leone is over, the dynamics of diamonds in relation to peace and conflict has changed dramatically. With disarmament and community arms collection having operated relatively successfully throughout the country, the new threat to communities and to the nation is no longer diamonds illegally mined by rebels, but rather a familiar force in new guise; former mercenaries who manage security for multinational mining investments. With the advent of peace, millions of dollars of investment has poured into re-opening old mining areas and exploring new ones. Communities, who have been encouraged to give up their weapons for an arms-free Sierra Leone, are faced with security forces, many of whom played a role in the civil war, armed and patrolling around mining areas.

Conflicts over land, evacuation and resettlement for kimberlite blasting, and corporate policies have led to community protests and sometimes harsh security responses. The government has come down unequivocally on the side of the companies, citing the obvious need for investment in the country. As the government is a stakeholder in mining operations (taking up to forty

per cent of profits in tax and fees), communities feel they have no fair forum to redress grievances. In the absence of a mediating presence, a nascent arms race is evolving between private security companies and communities who feel insecure in the absence of government advocacy on their behalf. The two case studies in this chapter profile how these dynamics threaten the long-term peace in Sierra Leone.

Koidu Holdings

In 1995, Valentine Strasser invited the South African private security force, Executive Outcomes (EO), to help fight off a rebel advancement towards Freetown. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels were less than 20 miles from the capital, although their hold on the rest of the country outside of the main diamond mining areas was intermittent. Executive Outcomes was run by Eeben Barlow, formerly of the 32nd Battalion of the South African Special Forces, which was active in South Africa's destabilisation policy against its neighbours in the 1980s. Barlow left EO in 1997 but maintained close links with Sierra Leone, Sandline International, and DiamondWorks, holding shares in the latter. Executive Outcome's initial operation involved defending Freetown in collaboration with Nigerian and Ghanaian troops. In May 1995 this successful operation led to an RUF retreat. Despite the victory, Executive Outcome's operations in Sierra Leone were highly controversial and many Sierra Leoneans still harbour resentment for "the South Africans" who gained mining concessions in exchange for their military services.

In December 1995, EO expanded their operations into rural Sierra Leone, re-taking the diamond mining areas by the end of 1995 and gaining a government concession in Kono under the name Branch Energy. They provided the security enabling internal refugees to return home and started to co-operate with the Kamajors, whom they helped to become a powerful fighting and political force through provision of training and logistical support for the militia under the command of Sam Hinga Norman. In early January 1996, EO retook the Sierra Rutile mine, although the plant was looted by an Sierra Leone Army (SLA) contingent led by Johnny Paul Koroma.

Branch Energy began initial work on the mine in Koidu, Kono in 1996. During the coup in 1997, when Kabbah fled to Guinea and Koroma took power, expatriates were evacuated from the mine but a small security team stayed behind. There were 84 armed local guards and 15 armed expatriates; the 1995 lease had stipulated that the mine could have an armed security force. That team spent eight months enduring RUF control and looking after



The remains of the burned earth-moving equipment belonging to Branch Energy from their mid-1990's activities are still at the original site, now known as Koidu Holdings Limited.

what assets they could. They finally escaped from their 'house arrest' and when they left, the machines were burned, the plant was destroyed, and according to current company representatives, Branch Energy lost fifteen million dollars of its investment.

In 2002 when the SLPP was re-elected, DiamondWorks (the parent company of Branch Energy) decided to look at re-investing. After an initial assessment, they formed a joint venture with the Steinmetz Diamond Group, and the joint venture became Koidu Holdings in January 2004. Operations began before then, on 1 March 2003, with the de-watering of the kimberlite body. The mine began producing in mid-November 2003. USD 21 million in new investments have gone into Koidu Holdings, excluding the 1997 loss. In addition to its two kimberlite mines in Koidu, Koidu Holdings has three other exploration properties, and in June 2004 was awarded a fourth 89 square kilometre property at Tongo Field in an open tender.

Koidu Holdings trains, equips, and maintains a security force according to their original government lease, but the laws against private gun ownership now "make this difficult" according to company representatives.⁴⁵ They struck

a compromise; the government now provides 23 armed Sierra Leone Police to guard mining interests. This is a deterrent and immediate reaction force in case of emergency. One additional contingent with an armed response vehicle is on call from Tankoro Police Station, in addition to 24 officers from the Public Support Unit. The private security team (which is unarmed according to the law) works closely with the police, patrolling with them. A different private security company, Gray Security (parent company: Gray4 Securicor), does access and daily loss control. Other mining companies are supposedly negotiating similar deals with the SLP in co-ordination with their own unarmed teams. The agreement extends to Freetown, where exporting takes place.

The Network Movement for Justice and Development (NMJD) and its Campaign for Just Mining are fighting the presence of Koidu Holdings in Kono, citing unjust practices, relocation (or lack thereof) of people living in areas affected by kimberlite blasting, and inadequate implementation of the Environmental Impact Assessment. The NMJD's National Coordinator in Freetown wrote the following summary of events in 2004 as part of a media packet distributed to interested parties.

We Need Protection! "Democracy" in Sierra Leone and "Kimberlite Diamond Mining" are Two Poles Apart

It's been a difficult time for us here. The Kimberlite Mining Project of the South African and Canadian backed Koidu Holdings (S.A.) Limited (KHL) is here to tear our country apart, devastate our environment, set us (authorities and civil society) at loggerheads, undermine community livelihoods and leave us in abject poverty and disarray.

KHL has succeeded in gaining the total support of our political leadership, compromised our local leaders (Paramount Chiefs) and put us on the defensive. At the moment, we are not allowed to air any show in the only television station (SLBS-TV) and all government owned radio stations in the country or anything that has to do with our campaign, "we have been sternly warned" one of the SLBS workers complained. Prior to this, a few months ago two SLBS reporters were unceremoniously suspended indefinitely for interviewing one of the Campaigners as we were about to undertake an activity in Kono, the diamond district where the Kimberlite mining is taking place.

A few weeks ago, a "27 Minutes" independent documentary show on diamond mining in Kono that featured the kimberlite mining was

stopped halfway and never allowed again to be showed on SLBS-TV. "I enquired and was told that the Director General instructed the Station Manager to stop it immediately until it is previewed again. However, since then they have refused to allow it to be played," reported the author.

A little over a week ago, I was told in no uncertain terms by the Vice President in his office how desperate the government is to do all that is possible to make sure KHL stays and continues to operate the way they are doing. He spent three quarters of the one hour forty-five minutes meeting to intimidate me, impress upon me the government's strong disapproval of our present position on KHL operations and their desire to allow nothing that will stand in the way of KHL to the extent that he even said that we need not compare our standards with that of other mining nations. "We need to lower our standards so that we can attract investors in the mining sector," he warned....

In a situation like this we would like to intensify the campaign, build up more support base, strengthen the networks and get more engaged at various levels across the country with a lot of publicity by both print and electronic means. We also need letters sent to various people especially President Kabba, Vice President Solomon Berewa, Mines and Miners Minister Swaray Deen, the World Bank Country Manager, UNDP country Representative, British High Commissioner, American Ambassador, UNAMSIL Head of Mission (SRSG) and The Speaker of Parliament as well as the Attorney General and Minister of Justice.

-Abu Brima, National Coordinator, NMJD

The main point of contention over Koidu Holdings is the relocation of a specific community to a new housing area safe from the blasting process. The community has complained that some new houses, which have been built, are below standard, and have refused to relocate. The company acknowledges that Phase I of the relocation should have been completed in December 2004 but fell far behind schedule, but qualified their own role in the delay by pointing out that community and civil society representatives are refusing to cooperate in the process. A KHL representative said, "The expectations of people in Kono are above what we can provide. They approve one house design, and then when we build it they don't like it and we have to go back to the drawing board."⁴⁶ The Diamond Industry Annual Review, a newsletter of Partnership Africa Canada and NMJD, reported recently that Koidu Holdings, knowing the status of the concession, did not



One of the homes near the Koidu Holdings blast site in Tankoro. Residents are given notice before blasting, which occurs once or twice a week.

budget for a big relocation, and because of this only 15 houses had been built by mid-2004, leading to community outrage.

In the most interesting twist during 2004, NMJD wrote a letter to World Bank President James Wolfensohn claiming that KHL did not have adequate public consultation on its Environmental Impact Assessment. The World Bank Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), which is responsible for granting insurance to investors in developing countries, refused to grant political risk insurance to the Koidu Kimberlite Project, ostensibly because of the political climate of agitation promoted and sustained by the Campaign for Just Mining. This development concerned the government; afraid of losing investment, it developed a public relations campaign in support of the company. The company's agreement with the government stipulates that up to 40 per cent of Koidu Holdings profits ultimately go to the state. This breaks down into corporation tax (USD 200,000 per year), annual surface rent of USD 25 per acre, and royalties totalling five per cent of diamond sales and four per cent of precious metal sales. With this much money in play, the real questions about how it is eventually spent have only just begun.

A visit to the relocation site revealed very few houses, well-spaced apart, built with cinderblock and tin roofs. There were two distinct designs, one



A community leader and NGO worker look at one of the new houses, as yet uninhabited, at the relocation site.

with a back door and porch that the community members preferred and one without, which had been discontinued after only a few were completed. Several families appeared to be living in some of the houses, which were serviced by a freshwater well and separate latrine facilities. This new but incomplete “neighbourhood” looked better-appointed than some of the dilapidated homes occupied near the blast site, many of which were built illegally when local residents “no doubt sensed a potential compensation scheme.”⁴⁷ Nonetheless, the community does deserve the more open forum it has requested in which to discuss, with the government’s support, its needs and expectations for relocation.

With the national media, government, company executives, and civil society equally engaged in a battle of words, propaganda, and activism towards various ends, the bottom line appears to be a combination of factors fuelling the conflict.

The company, rather than the unmitigated force of evil portrayed by the campaign, is out of touch with the community and has botched its few attempts at public relations by using intimidating language and employing the Vice President to quell protest. The more the government and the company try to silence protest, the more it fans the flames of radical conspiracies and spurs

a perceived need for civil action. This may be the first test of a new democracy; allowing dissent in open forums and engaging in negotiation rather than intimidation. While the battle remains one of words for the moment, the situation at Sierra Rutile (discussed below) demonstrates that it may not remain that way. Communities who feel vulnerable and at-risk after disarmament have a strong incentive to retain weapons or acquire new ones “just in case.”

Koidu Holdings’ relationship with the Sierra Leone Police is possibly the one area that they have not been assailed for in the media. Operating in a security environment where public security forces are understaffed and under funded and there are tens of millions of dollars in investment at stake is a challenge. ‘Contracting’ the Sierra Leone Police to do the armed security work in a country where there is no private legal gun ownership seems like the only legal way to look after corporate interests while obeying the law. However, it does present a clear conflict of interest for the SLP. The SLP, vested with power of arrest, seizure, and detention, are sworn to use their powers to protect and serve communities. When protests against the mine start to get loud, the police are under pressure to remove protesters for the convenience of mine management, and have sometimes jailed non-violent advocates for anti-mine campaigns without justifiable grounds.⁴⁸

Sierra Rutile

Sierra Leone has one of the world’s largest deposits of rutile, a titanium ore used as paint pigment and welding rod coatings. Sierra Rutile Limited, owned by a consortium of US and European investors and managed by South Africans (many of them former mercenaries), began commercial mining operations near Bonthe in early 1979. Sierra Rutile was then the largest non-petroleum U.S. investment in West Africa. The export of 88,000 tons realised USD 75 million for the country in 1990. The company and the government of Sierra Leone concluded a new agreement on the terms of the company’s concession in Sierra Leone in 1990. Rutile and bauxite mining operations were suspended when rebels invaded the mining sites in 1995. In 2003 OPIC agreed to a USD 25 million guarantee to Sierra Rutile to assist with the re-start of operations.⁴⁹

The Sierra Rutile Agreement (Ratification) Act of 2002 “confirms an agreement made for an on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone of the one part and by Sierra Rutile Limited of the other part.”⁵⁰ Number 11.6q, the sub-heading Security under “General Provisions,” reads as follows:

(q) SECURITY

- (1) The Government and the Company recognise that an effective security regime is important to ensure the safety of the Company's assets and personnel.
- (2) In order to achieve an effective security regime, the Company may create and maintain a security force to provide a deterrent, defence and reaction capability to incidents.
- (3) The Company may import such arms and ammunition that are appropriate to such a security force subject only to the prior approval of the Government and the security force may carry and use such arms and ammunition for the purpose of carrying out its functions.

This article permits *carte blanche* a private company to arm and operate its own private militia outside the laws applicable to those living in the community where the company operates. Reports of armed private 'soldiers' abusing the authority of their guns by beating farmers, raping and harassing women, and generally choosing force over communication or negotiation with local residents have led to a three-way standoff between Sierra Rutile, the government, and community members in Moyamba. Unlike the situation in Koidu, open threats of re-armament from a community organiser leave the possibility open that hostilities could escalate into an armed conflict.

Interview with Leslie Mboka, Executive Director, Community Advocacy and Development Project (CADEP), Bonthe, Sierra Leone. 9 November 2004

One contentious issue where we want the government to intervene, is Sierra Rutile having its own private army. Sierra Leone is a country emerging from war. We think the government should solely be responsible for security matter, not leaving it in the hands of private business people and multi-national corporations. These guys are not accountable to the communities, not even to government. They take orders from their corporate managers. They will tell them, "Go and attack such and such a community," and they will go. They follow directives. They do a lot of things: beating women, farmers, and that kind of thing. We want the government to make sure these people are disarmed.

As I speak to you, they have not done anything about it. The guys are still armed, with AK-47s, with G3s, with all these rifles. As a way of

intimidating and denying communities from agitating for what they really want.

Q: How do you respond to the view that the SLP and security forces are stretched too thin, that they don't have the capacity to take care of the huge investments of private companies?

That is absolute nonsense. There is already government presence in that place. They have armed security. They have special security. They are getting complaints from even the government security that these guys are marginalizing them. They don't confer with them. There is a lot of tension between government forces and the private army. This is a security risk, so the idea that there is no capacity in that particular place is a lie. The government is refusing to disarm these people.

Q: Are they importing their own arms and ammunition according to your sources?

The Sierra Rutile agreement of 2002 gave that company the right to import its own arms and ammunition, and to maintain its own private armed security, and we believe that is wrong. Sierra Rutile are bringing items at will. They don't even allow advocacy groups because they don't want people to report on their activity. But what we are sure of is that they are importing arms and ammunition. They have a whole corporate arsenal at my site. I'm telling you. It is very distressing. The communities are lobbying the government, they have raised protest, but the government is doing nothing about it. And it is for the government to disarm that corporate entity. Otherwise, we will forcefully disarm them or we will find a way to re-arm ourselves. Because we have been subjected to a lot of humiliation. They enter our house and they start beating women.

Q: What about avenues of justice that are supposed to be there to address these issues, like reporting to the police or going to court?

Recently, one of the mercenaries was briefly detained and the matter is now in court. They went to a lady and they disgraced her, grabbed her. The police arrested them. I saw one of the guys in town, and I don't know what the outcome is. Pretty soon, they will probably throw the matter out of court, and we have nowhere to seek redress for such issues.

Q: If you took the route of arming yourselves, do you feel that there is an easy supply available?

Well, it's not going to be an easy thing. From what we know, they will come with their big guns and kill all of us. We have told the government, disarm these people. They have refused. If they don't do that, we have to do something about it. The communities will take action. Collective action will be taken to reverse the trend.

Q: How long are you willing to wait and try to negotiate?

We are trying to dialogue with the government on everything from land to guns. One of the issues we start with them is the issue of Rutile still bearing arms in a post-conflict situation. We will take a collective community decision.

Q: Are there still guns in your area other than the ones owned and used by the private security company on the mine?

Yes, yes of course. AK-47s, G3s, that kind of thing. We have these local rifles for bush meat and that kind of thing. Community members gave some of their arms, so we are outgunned by the private company. There is nowhere in this country that you are going to buy a gun just like that, not after disarmament. That is why we are concerned.

Q: You were a facilitator for the DDR process. How successful was it?

My personal opinion is that it cannot be successful because we have people who are non-government security bearing arms. This is ridiculous. Government must get serious about this issue. We are resisting what we call corporate re-colonisation. We have taken it for so long. Sierra Rutile, those guns were only there because of the war, to secure their personnel and assets. Now the war is over, they don't need them anymore. They need to disarm like everybody else. Government, they talk about investment and that kind of thing. But you cannot make the communities as sacrificial lambs. The farmers can survive without the companies; they don't want to be subjected to that kind of intimidation. People are still traumatised from the war situation. People are still traumatised. They need some solace, some comfort. People are tired of seeing guns. You must see how serious the situation is. These people are all over the place. They dress in full military gear. Those uniforms were impounded, but they lobbied the government and the government said okay, give it to them. That is the only private security in this country using military outfits. We don't understand.

Q: Do you know who is responsible for training and managing the security force?

They are South Africans, the Executive Outcomes. Sometimes we call them Gray Security, sometimes Southern Cross, but they are all still the same people from Executive Outcomes. They are still around. And these guys are just waiting for instructions from their bosses. These communities will resist, even if it means fighting.

Q: Is there any way for peaceful co-existence between the mining company and the community?

Yes, but they are merely a guest. They are coming here according to their mandate. They should respect the customs, the traditions, of the host communities. And they are not doing that.

Q: If relationships were built in a more respectful way, this would not be an opposition to mining all together, right?

These guys need to live up to corporate responsibilities. Mining is okay, but not like this.

Q: Koidu Holdings has private security, but those guys are unarmed and they are working with SLP. SLP forwards some personnel to patrol the mining area, and they are armed if necessary, but they patrol with one member per group of an unarmed security force. Do you believe that that is a conflict of interest as well, or is it a better option for Sierra Rutile?

That is a better option. There is no way the government should allow for the creation of a private army.

Q: If the same people who are there now disarmed and worked with the SLP, would that be acceptable?

That would be completely acceptable. The corporate tactics of intimidation, beating community farmers, evicting farmers from their land, we don't like that. They can't do those things if they don't have their own private armed force. But because they have their private army, they do all of those things, and there is nowhere for us to seek redress. So we are reduced to thinking about re-arming ourselves. The communities are strongly against Sierra Rutile bearing its own arms. What emerged from the recent workshop was that they want to see

these people completely disarmed. There should be no firearm in that place. Government should be in total control of national security. There should be no room for any private army.

Q: Are you still negotiating with the government? Are you optimistic?

We are still negotiating. But preparations continue in case it does not work.

Q: There is no firearms law on the books right now that allows private gun ownership. If they created such a law for licensing firearms and allowed private security companies to license those weapons through a legal system, would you still be opposed to the private security at Sierra Rutile carrying weapons if it was done in a legal, more transparent way?

We would still be opposed to that. The reason is simple. We are emerging from a war situation. We don't want the proliferation of small arms. With guns, we cannot see the stability of this country. It is only when this country is free from arms, completely. People carry guns for personal reasons, some for criminal intent, things like that. The only thing we want to see is government in control of national security. This is a very volatile region. There is a war in Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, tomorrow we will hear something from Guinea, we need total disarmament. We are strongly opposed to anything less. The company management has fallen out with the indigenes. The only way they can impose their will now is to carry their own arms. Governments should be in total control. Any other armed group de-legitimises the state.

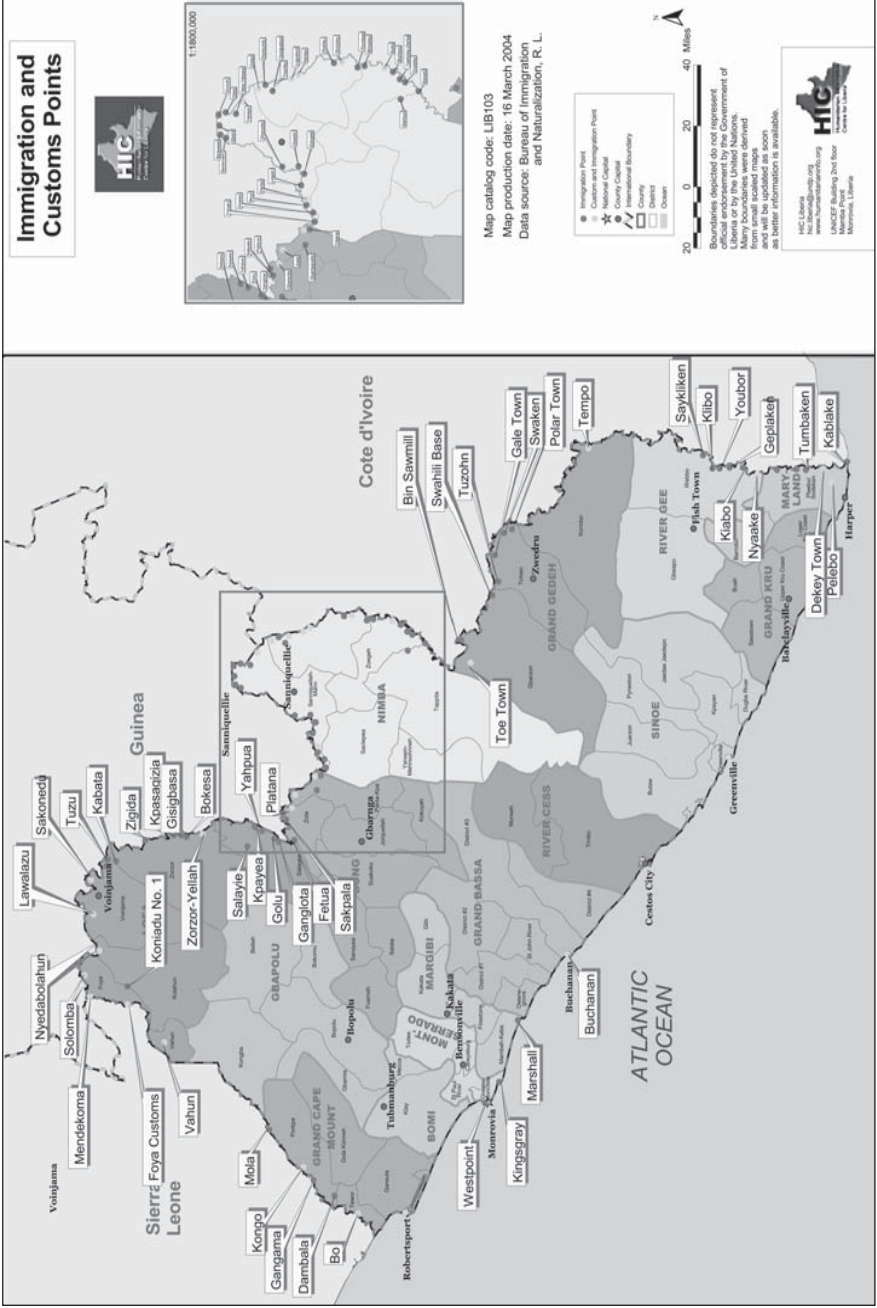
Q: Is UNAMSIL leaving going to make this worse?

It is going to create a huge security gap. We see the departure of UNAMSIL as very premature. The sub region is so volatile. If you look at conflict in Africa, West Africa is the most volatile area. Rebels in Sierra Leone, rebels in Liberia, rebels in Ivory Coast. For the sub region to be stable, UNAMSIL should stay. We are very apprehensive about the Sierra Rutile issue because the borders are porous, and the activities in other countries are well documented. Mercenaries are dangerous elements. There is a lot of criminal activity simply for the purpose of getting concessions, getting to the resources. So we have every reason to be apprehensive. Government is desperate for cash, so it doesn't want to listen to the voices of civil society. But we will continue to remind them, not only for ourselves but for their own security.

Diamonds are no longer a threat to security only in the sense that they may be directly traded for small arms. Their legitimate mining and the distribution of legal profits are creating the next generation of potentially lethal tensions. In other resource-rich environments such as countries with oil (Nigeria, for example) the presence and practices of multinational corporations have been enough to create civil unrest. In a country still raw from war, poor governance and control of corporate mining has the potential to destabilise fragile communities that have only recently been disarmed. The availability of small arms is a cross-cutting factor behind demand; in these two case studies, it may be availability combined with the visibility of privately affiliated armed security that could unravel the weak beginnings of a culture of peace in Sierra Leone.

The role of mining in economic recovery is crucial. In the past, the government has failed at sustaining efforts to regulate the industry, and during the civil war diamonds were the economic fuel for violence that destroyed the entire infrastructure of the country. The relationship between government, communities, and corporate interests must be developed and monitored to ensure the sustainability of peace. Mining companies must be held accountable for their security policies and practices; communities who have been through a disarmament process should not be subjected to open displays of weapons by private security firms or by the Sierra Leone Police who are contracted to corporate interests. On the other hand, communities need government encouragement to forge sustainable relationships with companies to ensure that through dialogue and negotiation they can secure the kind of infrastructure that corporate money will bring in much more efficiently than local government.

Liberia Border Points



CHAPTER 5

DISARMAMENT AND ILLEGAL TRADE

The Peace Process and Disarmament in Liberia

On 18 August 2003, a Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was signed in Accra, Ghana, ending more than ten years of recurring civil war in Liberia. A National Transitional Government in Liberia (NTGL) was formed, and the signatories planned for a Disarmament, Demobilisation, Rehabilitation, and Reintegration (DDRR) programme. On 19 September, the United Nations (UN) Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1509 (2003) to deploy a peace mission to Liberia. It decided that UNMIL would consist of up to 15,000 United Nations military personnel, including up to 250 military observers and 160 staff officers, and up to 1,115 civilian police officers, including units to assist in the maintenance of law and order throughout Liberia, and the appropriate civilian component. The mandate of the mission was established for a period of 12 months (later extended). The Council requested the Secretary-General to transfer authority to UNMIL on 1 October from forces led by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which it commended for its rapid and professional deployment.

The disarmament statistics from UNMIL, officially concluded on 31 October 2004 (excluding “mop-up operations” which continued into November), are staggering: over 100,000 ex-combatants have been disarmed. And yet, border regions were the last to be reached, and UNMIL internal intelligence shows that there are still substantial small arms caches in the country as well as some larger, Taylor-era weapons that have not been recovered. As the country heads for potential elections in October 2005, the implications of disarmament failures will become a primary security concern. Additionally, clear evidence of 2001 and 2002 Chinese AK variants having been trafficked into Liberia despite an arms embargo introduce the spectre of outside complicity in continued political demand.⁵¹

The statistics show that the original UN estimates of 38,000 combatants to be disarmed was far surpassed, with a total of over 102,000 participants in the DDRR process. Of these, 11,221 were children and 22,020 were women, and neither group was required to present a weapon or ammunition

Qualifications for Entry into the DDDR Programme				
	Description	Qualifying number of people	Remarks	
Approved Weapons	Rifle/pistol	1	Serviceable weapons only (unserviceable = parts missing and cannot be made functional)	
	RPG launcher	1	---	
	Light/Medium/Heavy Machine gun	2	Belt fed weapons only	
	60 mm Mortar	2	Tube, base plate, and stand	
	81 mm Mortar	3	Tube, base plate, and stand	
	106/120/155 Mortar/ Howitzer	6	---	
	Anti-aircraft guns	4	---	
	Descriptions	Qualifying number of people	Number of munitions required	Remarks
Approved Ammunition	Grenades	1	2	---
	RPG (Rocket and Grenade)	1	1	Together or no entry (not to be handed in as separate items)
	Mortar Bomb (120, 60, 81 mm)			
	Smoke grenades	1	4	---
	Ammunition	1	150	Single or linked

Source: UNMIL Military Observers (MILOBS)

to gain admittance. Charles Achodo, the DDDR Programme and Policy Advisor at the UN Development Programme (UNDP), indicated that the eligibility requirements were looser than they had been in Sierra Leone after complaints about a lack of child and gender sensitivity. He said, "the larger numbers may be because we allowed more women and children into the programme, or it may just be that more males took advantage of the criteria (specifically, only 150 rounds of ammunition per fighter) to disarm more easily for the 'RR' benefits like training."⁵² Whatever the case, Liberia's ratio of disarmed ex-combatants to weapons collected was noticeably high.

The Comprehensive Peace Agreement outlined that DDDR was to target the three main warring parties: former government of Liberia forces and other paramilitary groups, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), and Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL). There were 11 separate cantonment sites managed by UNMIL personnel: Buchanan, Ganta, Gbarnga, Harper, Kakata, Schefflin Barracks, Tappita, Tubmanburg, VOA, Voinjama, and Zwedru. In order to qualify for the programme, applicants had to present a serviceable weapon or ammunition which met the required entry criteria, be an under-18 year-old child associated with the fighting forces (CAFF), or be a woman associated with the fighting forces (WAFF).

Liberia DDDR Statistics⁵³

Total Ex-Combatants Processed		
ADULTS	M	68,952
	F	22,020
CHILDREN	M	8,704
	F	2,517
TOTAL		102,193

Total Ex-Combatants Processed by Faction	
AFL	12,246
LURD	33,485
MODEL	13,149
Ex-GoL (incl. paramilitary)	15,589
Other	27,724
TOTAL	102,193

Total Ammunition Collected	
Small Arms Ammunition (SAA)	7,129,198
RPG Rockets	8,703
60/81mm Mortars	12,287
82mm Mortars	15
Hand Grenades	10,410
Surface-to-Air Missiles	12
Miscellaneous	1,103
TOTAL Ammunition (excluding SAA)	32,530

Total Weapons Collected	
Rifles/Sub-Machine Guns	20,458
Machine Guns	690
Pistols	641
RPG Launchers	1,829
Mortars	178
Miscellaneous	4,008
TOTAL	27,804

Prior to the start of the DDDR process, there were no concrete estimates of how many weapons were present in the country. The UN Panel of Experts reports in 2002 and 2003 indicated that there were six known flights containing shipments of arms from Yugoslavia between June and August 2002. This information was used to estimate what percentage of this shipment was being brought in during disarmament. Included were 5,000 automatic rifles (7.52x39mm) with consecutive serial numbers ranging from 795163 to 800163. As of the last available information in November 2004, virtually at the end of the disarmament process, a total of 3,175 M70 AB2 rifles had been collected, representing 63.5 per cent of the original 5,000. Of 200 RB M57 missile launchers, 184 were turned in, for an impressive-sounding 92 per cent.

Chinese AK-47 Norinco 56/2 models also began appearing in large numbers: 1,027 were collected in the first two phases of disarmament. The serial numbers were as follows:

Serial number range	Number of recovered weapons in range
3701100 to 3709952	114
3710024 to 3717892	100
3718166 to 3719968	31
9011697 to 9029950	113
35015878 to 35087304	87
3522276 to 3788522	670
3700132 to 3732010 (all in Zwedru)	100

The brand-new condition of some of the Norincos (still wrapped in plastic) and the serial numbers indicated a clear breach of the arms embargo, and is



In this photograph⁵⁴ of a weapon handed in during the DDR process in Liberia, the markings clearly show it to be a 2002 M70 from one of six shipments from Yugoslavia during that year. The information from the Panel of Experts report was used to gauge what percentage of the small arms shipped into the country were being collected through disarmament.

a reminder that the Yugoslavia shipments were the tip of the iceberg in terms of weapons presence in Liberia. Although an estimated 80 per cent of the Yugoslavian weapons were collected, there are many caches still assumed to be hidden. The demand for small arms and lights weapons of all varieties was still present as disarmament was ongoing and as it concluded, and supplier networks are not scarce in West Africa. Further skewing the DDRR estimates, many ex-combatants and commanders were probably aware that the Yugoslavia shipments were known to the UN, and therefore may have decided to turn in those weapons in first. Those that were not recovered in Liberia may turn up eventually during the Côte d'Ivoire disarmament process, which will provide useful information about the extent of cross-border trafficking.

As one UNMIL official pointed out, however, the initial phases of DDRR were not necessarily only defined by the need to take every gun out of circulation.

	Items on board	Weight	Date of Landing in Liberia
Flight 1	1000 automatic rifles 7.62x39mm 498960 cartridges 7.62x39mm M57 2000 hand grenades M75	21 tonnes	1 June 2002
Flight 2	1000 automatic rifles 7.62x39mm 1260000 cartridges 7.62x39mm M57 2496 hand grenades M75	40 tonnes	7 June 2002
Flight 3	1500 automatic rifles 7.62x39mm 1165500 cartridges 7.62x39mm M57	40 tonnes	29 June 2002
Flight 4	120000 ammunition 7.62mm for M84 11250 ammunition 9mm NATO 75000 ammunition 7.65mm 100 missile launcher RB M57 4500 mines for RB M57 60 automatic pistols M84, 7.65mm 20 Pistol CZ 99, 9 mm 10 Black Arrow long range rifles M93, 12.7mm 5 machine guns M84, 7.65mm	33 tonnes	5 July 2002
Flight 5	100 missile launchers RB M57 1000 mines for RB M57 50 machine guns M84, 7.62mm 1500 automatic rifles 7.62x39mm 17 Pistol CZ 99, 9mm 92400 ammunition 7.62x54mm 52680 ammunition 7.62x39mm 6000 ammunition 7.65mm 9 hunting rifles	38 tonnes	23 August 2002
Flight 6	153 missile launchers 1000 mines for RB M57 10 Automatic pistols M84, 7.65mm 5200 ammunition for Black Arrow long range rifle M93, 12.7mm 18300 ammunition 7.62x54mm 999180 ammunition 7.62x39mm 2 sets of rubber pipelines 3 propellers 1 rotor head	38.5 tonnes	25 August 2002

List of weapons shipments from Yugoslavia to Liberia from June to August 2002 as found in the UN Expert Panel Report on Liberia (October 2002)

The demobilisation phase and building a cultural shift to signal the end of the war was as important. Unfortunately, demobilisation was woefully inadequate to address the needs of ex-combatants, a group which includes many more children and females than the group in Sierra Leone. Some policy makers argue optimistically that the reintegration phase is yet to come, and that is where ex-combatants are meant to be supplied with vocational training, educational opportunities, and guidance in building lives within their communities again. However, budget predictions appear to render this hope misguided. As of April 2005, there remained a USD 39.5 million shortfall that leaves 42,000 ex-combatants excluded from assistance.⁵⁵

That is only a minor improvement on the shortfall of USD 44.2 million and 47,000 excluded ex-combatants predicted in December 2004. For 42,000 ex-

combatants at large in Liberia, demobilisation may be their only exposure to assistance before the elections scheduled for October 2005.

Demobilisation and Reintegration

The demobilisation phase at the 11 cantonment sites in Liberia lasted for only five days, a period during which ex-combatants were supposed to gain the skills and insights to transform from fighters or the equivalent of indentured servants to civilians ready to assume the duties of life in peacetime. Participants joined trainers for pre-discharge orientation activities in the areas of:

- Personal Development and Career Counselling,
- Trauma Healing,
- Civic Education, and
- Conflict Resolution and Peace Building.

Women were also supposed to be provided with reproductive health and sexually based gender violence (SBGV) counselling. One of the trainers for FIND (the Foundation for International Dignity) worked with ex-combatants at Tubmanberg for six months and then at Voinjama as a supervisor for another three months. He described a four-day process, since the first day was dedicated to logistics:⁵⁶

Demobilisation Schedule ⁵⁷		
Day:	Topic:	Goal:
1	Conflict Resolution and Peace Building	To understand conflict and how to resolve and cope with it
2	Personal Development and Career Counselling	To start a process of redefining one's life through the development of a healthy self-image and self perception
3	Civic Education	To understand our basic responsibilities to our nation and fellow citizens
4	Trauma and its Healing Processes	To understand the effects of trauma, how it is able to destabilise a normal person and ways to cope with it

FIND is contracted by the Liberia Community Infrastructure Programme (which is, in turn, funded by USAID) to do conflict resolution and reconciliation. Two trainers there admitted that “four days is a drop in the bucket.” In almost a year of working with ex-combatants, they believe strongly that the lack of adequate counselling is an issue that will, if not fuel demand for guns through the possibility of prolonged or renewed conflict, at least fail to put a damper on it:

The structure of the training is participatory and informal. We do role plays, especially to narrow down ethnic tension. We need to get the ex-combatants back to their communities before another outbreak of violence like the one in Monrovia on 28 October. We want them to extend similar messages to their communities like the ones they receive in our training. There is a lot of work to be done, especially among youth. The energy fuelling this war is not the guns; it is the people who physically engage in armed conflict. We need to rebuild the education system, tear down and rebuild their values. We say to these guys at the camp: “If a Big Man gives you a gun and says, kill this person, will you do it? If it is a woman or child? Will that Big Man ever ask you to kill his son or himself? No. He will always be using you to kill people just like you.” When they start to think about

it, some of them cry. We send them away like that sometimes, having opened another wound of what they have done but with no time to close it properly.⁵⁸

There are other ongoing projects to address the need for general “demobilisation” (as it is widely called in Liberia) not just of ex-combatants but also within communities that must prepare to re-absorb former fighters into their homes, villages, businesses, churches, and mosques. Civil society is not optimistic about the reintegration and rehabilitation (“RR”) phase of DDRR, and although at least one UNDP official responsible for civil society funding has openly acknowledged that she is “stingy” because of a lack of technical capacity in the sector, it may fall to these under funded groups to pick up 42,000 ex-combatants where “RR” leaves them.

A programme officer at the Centre for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE) that is also the acting secretariat for the Liberian Action Network on Small Arms (LANSA), points out the deficiencies and dangers of inadequate demobilisation and reintegration:

Demobilisation was not done properly. There is not enough trauma counselling, and only five days in the camps. Post-1996, there were problems when Taylor was elected. DDR wasn’t done properly then and they became part of continued conflict. In the recent conflict and rioting, people were caught with AKs. Monrovia is overpopulated. The best way to secure yourself is to keep some arms with you. The security sector cannot defend you. National security has no capacity. Mob violence is there; in seconds, conflict can erupt. Guns are dangerous when ex-combatants are being reintegrated without proper demobilisation.⁵⁹

In this view, reintegration is compromised by a steady flow of ex-combatants returning to their homes without a sense of a peaceful future. However, there are problems with civil society taking on the burden of filling this gap. WANEP Liberia has 26 members and focuses on early warning, conflict prevention, and peace education that targets youth – currently 300 students – with peer mediation and 75 teachers. The students are between 10 and 18 years old and live in violence-prone communities, including refugee camps. WANEP is one of Liberia’s well-established NGOs, partly because it is connected to the regional network based in Accra. Children are taken to peace camps for ten weeks while their parents are educated on the Rights of the Child. After the violence on 28 October, WANEP claimed that there were no burning of mosques or churches in any of the communities where they work.

WANEP is also at the forefront of an early warning programme that is meant to fit in with an ECOWAS database to coordinate early warning across the region in one central location. The database will ideally allow information to flow up from the ground level and inform policy decisions. WANEP trains analysts and monitors and has been successful particularly in involving women, whose grassroots efforts were a well-known influence on the peace agreement. These activities are undoubtedly helping to complement demobilisation and reintegration, but there are some drawbacks. According to a WANEP representative, the religious dimensions of conflict are not well provided for in the almost exclusively Christian character of civil society organisations:

There are few Muslim organisations other than at the inter-religious council level. At the functional level there are no Muslims. With the early warning monitors we train we try to be religiously balanced, but 99 per cent of the peace practitioners are Christians. If there was religious violence here today, we would have a difficult time navigating as peace builders. This is probably a large structural problem or issue, at the donor level. Christian groups are interested in funding peace work specifically, and maybe Muslim groups internationally are afraid to get involved.⁶⁰

The CEDE officer's view is that "We need civil society to get involved, to deglorify small arms for young people. Peace building programmes will help them appreciate civil life and reduce violence. Awareness programmes can also educate communities about the dangers of arms." However, without oversight, coordination, technical capacity, and representative staff and opportunities, civil society may not be the right substitute for an under funded reintegration programme. Edward Mulbah of the Peace Building Resource Centre, agrees:

Civil society in Liberia is disjointed and uncoordinated. There are too many networks, and things get territorial instead of focusing on how much work there is to be done. Another problem is that a lot of INGOs are not pairing with NNGOs or local organisations so when they leave there will be a gap in their projects.⁶¹

On the other hand, according to Mulbah, UNMIL will eventually move out, possibly leaving behind tens of thousands of young people who have not been properly reintegrated into their communities. It is civil society that will be left picking up the pieces:

DDRR has left out many who are not going to give in their guns. Civil society will become responsible for what happens to these people. The UN needs to build the capacity of national structures. We feel that non-essential staff is wasting resources. The Ministry of Youth and Sport is under-capacitated. They need to learn the importance of family and communities. Some regret now that they burned down schools, clinics, and communities. There is a gap in follow-up support psychologically.

If the “RR” follow-up to disarmament and demobilisation does not reach tens of thousands of ex-combatants, then empowering civil society to deal with the ramifications over the long term should be a priority for donors.

In Sierra Leone, reintegration is still very much an issue, particularly in the context of unemployed youth. Although the DDR process there was widely hailed as a success, problems like drug addiction and a lack of psychological support have left some communities burdened with crime and potential instability because of youth populations that are unemployed and instil fear even in political leaders who cite them as the biggest risk to the sustainability of peace. Civil society is under-equipped and financed to deal with this burden and the Ministry of Youth and Sport in the post-war context is relegated to onlooker status when it comes to questions of security. With UNAMSIL pulling out, Sierra Leone has yet to face the challenge of maintaining peace without international re-enforcement. Creating a climate of political inclusion through reintegration and an active civil society and local government structures can diffuse the threat of a rekindled conflict. Providing education and job opportunities for youth is likely to anchor them within their communities, helping to remove the pull of mercenary work or easy recruitment into armed groups both within their own country and in neighbouring ones. Sierra Leone’s slow devolution of power from Freetown to local governments, where a quota of the representatives must be youth, is an excellent first step in this direction.

Women peacebuilders can stop war, but not fix reintegration
Lindora K. Howard, Programme Assistant, WIPNET/WANEP Liberia
11 November 2004

We had the “Never Again” campaign, never again talking about war, drugs, rape, and guns. UNMIL coordinated it. On December 7th, 2003, violence broke out again. Women moved in to calm the situation with water and biscuits, and the boys listened. The women were recognised. We followed up by talking to the ex-combatants to incorporate them in

DDRR. Under contract from UNMIL, this job is over in June. The second contract is for more sensitisation. Ex-combatants are afraid to disarm – they have guns in hiding because communities may not help or accept them when it comes time to reintegrate. When the women were talking to the boys who were hiding guns, they listened to the women and then escorted them safely from the camp even as everyone else was hiding.

Communities also may be helping to hide arms, so they need to be sensitised. We talk to the boys, get them to tell their friends who are hiding guns. Five days in cantonment sites is too short. Girls who were sex slaves, in five days, they are discharged; it is not enough time to demobilise them. Those youth who carried guns are disarmed, but back in the community they are feared. They haven't changed. How can we be with them?

Women ex-combatants often have their guns stolen by men who then go to disarm, and they are left with nothing. There is a special programme needed to work with women ex-combatants. Women are not united, they have different groups and leaders. They need coordination. WIPNET met with UNMIL DDR to promote recommendations; women need to benefit even if they were sex slaves or wives and not combatants. UNMIL provided short-term rice but nothing long term or concrete, and WIPNET did not follow up.

Women at WIPNET are always in the field, moving. They are energetic responders to conflict as well as peace builders. Our peace outreach project encourages women to get up and join in the peace efforts. Women walk miles and miles to talk to ex-combatants. With sitting actions, rural women are ready to make history by sitting in even once a week. Monday and Thursday is the schedule all over the country at IDP camp sites and other key places. We will do this until the war is over!

We train rural and IDP women to be early warning monitors so that as they are resettled they will grow the network for early warning. Also, we give them self-esteem and leadership training; moving beyond the home and what men call us to the environment as a whole and even the country. These things will be better taken care of if women are involved. Future programmes for women in communities will focus on agriculture and promoting critical thinking about what gaps exist in communities, and planning projects around those needs.

In the IDP camps, food security is the biggest problem. Women prostitute for food or money to buy food.

Is there a religious dimension to the violence? No, it's the youth who are just waiting for an opportunity to join violence or create havoc. Religion is now being used to cover or explain general violence; but how is this being exposed or dealt with at the grassroots? WIPNET community people are responsive to peace outreach. Ex-combatants are mostly the ones doing the violence, and communities respond violently. Peace outreach is diffusing the community response and preventing violence from spreading. We are promoting peaceful ways of conflict resolution.

The bulk of the women are illiterate. We meet and brainstorm early at the office and then move out for peace campaigns or sit-ins. Sit-ins usually take place from 7:30am to 12:30pm. Women were part of the internally displaced populations, moving from place to place: they will move from their homes, then there is more fighting and they have to move again. These people have been walking all over this country until they landed in Monrovia, and then when Monrovia became tense, they said, "we have nowhere else to go." So the sit-ins began, and they locked the men into a room to sign a peace agreement while people were dying. They said, "enough is enough". The grassroots women feel they are part of something, a group that is being heard even though many are illiterate. They are recognised and heard by warlords, ex-combatants, politicians, and at the highest levels. The white [WIPNET] T-shirts gain them entrance as peace builders.

DDR Cross-border Markets

"The DDR markets are an issue of concern. When they offered more in Côte d'Ivoire, people wanted to move across to disarm there. In Liberia, commanders are confiscating arms and selling them in Guinea for USD 700 rather than allowing USD 300 here. Commanders don't know how many guns are out there. There is a need for mapping and research."

– Centre for Democratic Empowerment (CEDE),
Small Arms Programme Officer, 12 November 2004

Failure to demobilise and reintegrate ex-combatants is a graver problem than failing to disarm them. A total of 102,193 ex-combatants participated in the DDR process in Liberia, but only 27,804 weapons were turned in. Significantly, of the 4,008 "miscellaneous" weapons, at least three quarters of them were shotguns; this represents more than 10 per cent of the total arms turned in. Obviously, it is questionable whether shotguns were ever

actually used as weapons of war by ex-combatants. Larger weapons, such as the ones used in fighting in Monrovia in 2003, were recovered from faction leaders. UNMIL's discovery in 2003 of large weapons caches in the Executive Mansion, Moses Blah's residence, and in the bush in Voinjama and near the Sierra Leonean border lend credence to the assumption that there are other, similar caches that have not been found. When Charles Taylor left the country he may have deliberately left some large weapons behind in case of an eventual return or for use by his supporters.

The disarmament process began with a heavy focus in and around Monrovia. By the time cantonment sites were being set up further afield, the rainy season had begun and even those who wanted to participate often had a difficult time with transport. So, the areas with the most weapons and the highest probability of hiding large caches were the last and least adequately reached by the process. What happens to weapons that are not turned in? In Côte d'Ivoire, which shares a porous border with Liberia, the DDR process had been scheduled for 15 October 2004 but was derailed. Fighters there were originally offered USD 900 for turning in their weapons, as opposed to the USD 300 paid in Liberia. This overlap may have significantly impacted on Liberia's success at collecting arms, and fuelled a frantic trading market for young men who wanted to acquire weapons to take across the border. As fighting in Côte d'Ivoire escalated, some of them took the weapons to fight, but others are simply waiting for the DDR process to begin so they can claim their financial reward. Although only Ivorian fighters are eligible for the process there, those that cannot enter the programme will sell their weapons to an Ivorian for a tidy profit.

DDR processes create instant demand across borders by setting prices differently. Informal accounts hold that the ebb and flow of conflict has sometimes been instigated or held back by faction commanders to influence the timing or planning of disarmament. It is unclear whether manipulation happens to that extent, but there is no more straightforward example of the way even peacekeeping operations can fuel the movement of arms and the enrichment of those with the means to broker deals. At a workshop in Ghana in August, 2004 titled "Identifying Lessons from DDR Experiences in Africa," the following lessons were observed and recorded:

DDR is a way to make money. For example, it has been suggested anecdotally that some former combatants in West Africa have gone through demobilisation centres multiple times, qualifying for reintegration benefits each time. This illustrates the need for more accurate and better shared databases of those who have registered

for DDR, and for the tracking of former combatants to ensure that they do not exploit the system either within their own country or, as has been suggested, by moving across borders, for example from Liberia to Côte d'Ivoire, where the cash benefit will be greater...in areas such as West Africa where the region has been militarised by armed groups selling their labour, there is a need for a sub-regional approach to DDR that includes coordination with other UN efforts in the region.⁶²

By increasing coordination between programmes in neighbouring areas and recognising the importance of demobilisation, reintegration, and reconciliation to the actual disarmament process, DDR processes can avoid becoming part of the markets they are trying to dismantle.

CONCLUSION: THE SUSTAINABILITY OF PEACE

Differing Views of Success

To determine whether peace is sustainable (or even desirable), a definition is required. The general United Nations (UN) use of the term “peace” adopted by UN missions tends to be limited, meaning largely “the absence of war” or sometimes “the absence of the weapons of war.” For civil society, peace begins to take on other characteristics. The Network on Collaborative Peacebuilding Sierra Leone (NCP-SL) re-defined its vision in 2004 as “An enlightened society free from injustice and violent conflicts, enabling all to participate in good governance for sustainable peace, security, and development.”⁶³ During a discussion among at least 60 members representing every province, several attempts to shorten the vision statement by narrowing the definition of peace failed in an overwhelming popular vote. Urban, slum-dwelling youth insist that “peace is justice, and justice is peace,” with justice referring largely to the availability of jobs, housing, and medical care. Liberia’s peace has not yet survived an election, putting it in a highly fragile category. In Sierra Leone, popular discourse can be summarised with three views:

The Pessimist

An NGO worker in Kono:

“If they don’t start addressing this issue of mining and governance, there is going to be another war. Maybe even in the next year.”

A community worker in Kenema:

“The war is over because we don’t hear any guns, but the war is still happening on the table. People are hungry. This kind of economic insecurity does not allow for peace.”

The Pragmatist

A youth activist:

“It is possible to keep the peace. There are some strings attached. This is something that is very clear. First of all, the disarmament process went well. But then, peace does not merely mean the absence of war. Or rather, arms being gone. A host of other factors have to be put in place for peace to be sustained. We have social factors. And then there is still a kind of dissatisfaction amongst people.”

The Optimist

A Community Arms Collection trainer in Kambia:

“Let me tell you one thing. The lessons we have learned as Sierra Leoneans in terms of weapons and in terms of war, those lessons are lessons that we will never forget. I want to give anybody who says this country will not be stable in the next five years, I say NO! It's a big no. Things will keep on improving. Go around the country, leave Kambia District. Go to the bushes, go to the small towns, and see how people are improving their lives. Come back in the next five years, and you will see.

“2001, Kambia: Houses everywhere, business everywhere. In the next two to three years, this will come back. This is the trend that is happening everywhere. Go to Port Loko. Go to Makeni. Go to Kono. These were areas that were covered by rebels, under their control. You will be surprised. These areas were being occupied. Today everybody is happy. People are making huts in the bushes, doing agricultural activities, and business is coming back.”

As Carolyn Nordstrom's street philosopher put it:

Is the violence of war gone suddenly with declarations of peace? No, violence lives in the belly of the person and ruins society, unless peace is taught to the violent. And peace must be taught just like violence is, by subjecting people to it, by showing them peaceful ways to respond to life and living, to daily needs and necessities, to political and personal challenges.⁶⁴

Post-war politics, when focused exclusively on building state power and perpetuating the myth that strong state security will lead to human security, can open new markets for small arms and unbalance the delicate process of peace building. Demobilisation and reintegration in their broadest forms reduce the demand for small arms and create environments where people

can be 'subjected' to peace. In the Mano River Basin particularly, a history of repressive power structures played a role in the advent of war. Corruption of the deepest kind was widely credited with the initial welcoming of rebellion in Sierra Leone, and Charles Taylor's regime in Liberia made continuing conflict possible across the border while he looted his own country's natural resources. The rest of world, particularly the United States, is starting to recognise that Africa's "troubled regions" are a security threat. In choosing how to be a part of the solution, funding should be directed in creative ways that keep aid out of corrupt pockets and encourage a more grassroots, participatory approach to peace building.

Focus on Demand

Factors fuelling demand in the "borderlands" of Kenya, identified by an ISS research project in 2003, included the following: identity-based conflict, availability, economies on the margins, and a lack of education and development. Although Kenya's geography, culture, and security situations differ greatly from those in Sierra Leone and Liberia, many commonalities can be found in the demand drivers behind the constant influx of illegal firearms in both regions.

Identity-based conflict incorporates youth and child soldiers as well as the newer threat of Hinga Norman's followers perceiving that the Sierra Leone Special Court has an anti-Mende bias. Availability is an issue because of the extensive trading capability of countries with little security infrastructure and seemingly unlimited mineral resources. Sierra Leone and Liberia are functional and increasingly established bases in the worldwide arms trade. While the resources are plentiful in the Mano River Basin, the economy of Sierra Leone is still nearly 70 per cent donor funded. Such large economies operating on the fringes of their own interior wealth are prone to the importation of small arms. Because of these budgetary woes, police are under funded, corporations must defend their own investments in whatever ways they can, and war-traumatised communities are faced with what they perceive to be yet another kind of militia (corporate security) operating in their environment. Finally, a lack of education and development in both East and West Africa contributes to the demand for small arms. Roads linking border communities with more central markets are nearly nonexistent in both places, a situation that creates cross-border and illegal trade instead of fostering a greater national economy. Education for adults promotes literacy and civic involvement, and for children creates the next generation of leaders. The lack of education allows an environment where ethnic tensions

are easily roused among adults and young people are more likely to be conscripted than to work for peace and prosperity.

Expecting state-centred solutions alone to curb illicit arms proliferation does not work when the state in question cannot fund traditional security operations. In Sierra Leone and Liberia, where the economies have been devastated by years of civil conflict, donors play as large a role in shaping policy as the government. Borders are porous, and though they should be closed or better monitored to reduce the flow of illicit goods, that is not a short- or medium-term option. The following measures are ways that small arms proliferation can be approached from the demand side:

- 1. Increase funding for education that reduces the number of illiterate and at-risk young people.** As the RADA-SL study shows, a large population of at-risk young people creates not only the risk of a large recruitment pool like the one that provided youth armies for the RUF and other factions in the Sierra Leone war; it also devalues the generation that holds the most potential for building a more peaceful society. Forced labour and sexual abuse are extremely common challenges facing children and youth in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Government funding should not be limited to “special initiatives” seen as “soft” to address these problems from a humanitarian perspective. Rather, as Minister Dennis Bright suggested, Ministries should cooperate across traditional lines to plan and fund projects that recognise the security and state-building benefits to better education, health, and food security for children.
- 2. Create youth agricultural empowerment initiatives.** Food security is still a big problem in the Mano River Basin, and a majority of young people are unemployed. It would be naïve to assume that youth ex-combatants who have been travelling all over the country adopting nicknames like “Notorious B.I.G.” and “Tupac” want to return to a traditional social system where they will be subject to the whims of Big Men and will lose their autonomy and connectedness. However, the opportunity to farm in an environment where they can make money and participate in developing their own infrastructure might lure some of the unemployed away from the overcrowded slums in capital cities. Empowerment initiatives should include funding for recreation and sports facilities in rural areas. The future of peace and security (or at least the success of youth employment plans) could come down to whether ice cream and Arsenal is accessible outside of Freetown and Monrovia. By creating alternatives to trading in arms and working as fighters, a culture of peace will at least have the chance to take root.

- 3. Continue demobilisation for ex-combatants beyond cantonment sites and encourage civic and peace education for all adults as part of a reintegration process.** A four-day curriculum is simply not enough time to cover career building, trauma recovery, and “how to be a civilian” for ex-fighters. The dearth of counselling and drug rehabilitation in Sierra Leone and Liberia needs to be addressed through civil society initiatives that build the capacity and resources to reach ex-combatants in their own communities even after reintegration has begun. It is not enough to focus only on those who fought in the war or were associated with the fighting forces. Communities who will now be re-absorbing traumatised and unemployed youth and former soldiers also need to understand the processes that are in place for building peace. Truth and reconciliation and Special Courts require a lot of civic education to make them work. Adult literacy drives can be part of civic education, encouraging adults to become more active participants in their own political empowerment. ‘Ethnic’ tensions are less likely to escalate among literate people. Education for both adults and children can change cultural perceptions, create opportunities for growth and changing economies, and produce more active, informed citizens.
- 4. Share responsibility at local and national level for small arms concerns between government departments and NGOs.** The Ministry of Defence cannot hold sole responsibility for security, dialogue and joint projects. The creation of multi-sectoral task forces between ministries of defence, agriculture, youth, justice and interior can lead to creative mainstreaming of small arms reduction. Activities should include sports and recreation, economic stimulus, and infrastructure growth. An example of this would be a ministry of youth and sport working with a ministry of education to combine peace education curricula with a nationwide peace-themed sporting tournament. Many theories characterise war in the Mano River Basin as fuelled by dangerous youth. There are few initiatives focused on harnessing youth power for positive development. This is one area in which multi-sectoral planning and execution will be crucial for the next generation of peace.
- 5. Build infrastructure to connect border communities to legal markets in urban centres.** As one UN worker said near the border of Sierra Leone and Guinea, “If only one area of improvement could receive funding for an entire year, the money should go to building roads.” Near international borders, farmers and those who trade in palm wine, livestock, cigarettes, even salt and soap are often better able to sell their goods in a neighbouring country than in their own. This leads to an exodus of possible trade in the country where they live, and also

encourages a culture of illegal cross-border activity that is very easily extended to guns, ammunition, and diamonds. Investing in infrastructure makes all other things possible. Roads encourage commerce; they allow even limited security personnel to travel to border areas and conduct inspections and investigations; and they bring investment that opens up forgotten backwaters to development and participation in nation-building. Smugglers operate better in environments where their activities can be easily hidden. The more open and developed the borderlands become, the easier it will be to monitor illicit trade and encourage the kind of business that helps to build peace.

- 6. Manage private security interests with community development.** While foreign investment is a lifeline for the development of countries like Sierra Leone that are resource-rich but capital-poor, the way large corporate investments interact with local communities is very important for the future of sustainable peace. The delicate relationships between mining interests, local government, national government, and communities have to be carefully managed. With disarmament and community arms collection being advertised as the “arms free” way of the future, armed security forces patrolling with unconcealed weapons should be avoided. Government should balance the need for investment with the responsibility to represent and give voice to valid community concerns, and independent mediators should be appointed when necessary during sensitive negotiations.

Questions for Further Research

After the long and brutal civil wars that seem finally to be coming to an end in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the work of rebuilding a society from the ground up is the biggest challenge. However, this rehabilitation process also offers opportunities. The direction of future research should follow trends in the way mining companies are integrating (or not) into the communities where they operate; look at how civil society and the media evolve in relationship to government; and follow the money trail of diamonds and other mineral resources to see how much of it finds its way back into community development.

Larger questions raised by this research include:

1. How can DDR processes avoid creating new gun markets?

2. In the absence of state control, can borders be monitored at the local level through peace building and civil cooperation?
3. How do young people conceptualise and resolve conflict, and how do their ambitions and fears fit with the building of post-war national identities and economies?
4. Is there an empirical connection between the neglect of children's rights and the likelihood of civil conflict fuelled by young soldiers? If so, what specific measures make conflict less likely through early intervention?

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- 2 PD Little, *Somalia: Economy without State*. Oxford: James Currey, 2003, p14.
- 3 C Nordstrom, *Shadows of War: Violence, power, and international profiteering in the twenty-first century*. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2004, p 178.
- 4 *Ibid.* p 179.
- 5 ECOWAS Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Programme for Coordination and Assistance for Security and Development (PCASED), March 1999.
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It is estimated that between eight and ten million small arms are circulating in West Africa; the real number is probably higher. Civil war in the Mano River Basin, where resources such as diamonds, rubber, and timber create buying power for political factions of all persuasions, has sustained the international flow of weapons to the region. With United Nations missions in both Sierra Leone and Liberia and the accompanying disarmament and demobilisation in both places having come to an end, markets for small arms and light weapons in West Africa are still open for business.

Disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration processes have created their own weapons markets across borders as prices for handing over a weapon vary from country to country. State-centred solutions to illicit arms proliferation do not work when the state in question cannot fund traditional security operations. Borders are porous, and though they should be closed or better monitored, that is not a short- or medium-term option. Instead, this monograph looks at the factors behind the demand for weapons in Sierra Leone and Liberia, focusing on the buyer side of the market to determine whether proliferation can be stemmed, or at least slowed down, through more creative measures.

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