



## THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN PEACEBUILDING

Case Study – Sierra Leone

October 2011



## **The Role of Education in Peacebuilding: Case Study – Sierra Leone**

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## ACRONYMS

AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
APC	All People's Congress
CDF	Civil Defence Forces
CREPS	Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools
DDR	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EFA	Education for All
EO	Executive Outcomes
ESP	Education Sector Plan
IDP	internally Displaced People
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRC	International Rescue Committee
MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
ODA	Official Development Assistance
PBC	United Nations Peacebuilding Commission
PBF	United Nations Peacebuilding Fund
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education Training
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNIOSIL	United Nations Integrated Office for Sierra Leone
UNIPSIL	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
UPE	Universal Primary Education
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research paper explores the role of education in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, with a particular focus on the work and role of UNICEF. It is based on a desk review, which was followed by a three-week fieldwork visit to Sierra Leone in May 2011. The paper is one of three country case studies carried out in 2011 as part of a broader UNICEF research programme on the role of education in peacebuilding in post-conflict settings. The objectives of this phase of the research were to 1) locate peacebuilding initiatives supported through education programming within broader approaches being undertaken in the case study countries; 2) document country-specific education interventions where education has played an important role in contributing to peace or where it has missed the opportunity to do so; 3) provide guidance on education interventions contributing to peacebuilding based on models and approaches used by UNICEF and its partners to initiate, promote and implement education initiatives in support of peacebuilding; and 4) identify strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for UNICEF-supported education programming as it relates to peacebuilding.

During the fieldwork in Sierra Leone, interviews were held with a wide range of national and international stakeholders, including UN representatives, national government officials, INGO and NGO representatives and UNICEF staff members. Two one-day stakeholder consultation meetings on the role of education in peacebuilding were also held: the first with UN, national government and INGO representatives, and the second with national civil society organizations working in education in Sierra Leone. One week of the fieldwork was also spent visiting the main teacher training colleges across the country to explore the particular role of teachers in relation to education and peacebuilding in the country.

The war in Sierra Leone began in 1991 when members of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) attacked towns near the Liberian border. The RUF claimed its mission was to overthrow the one-party regime of the All People's Congress (APC), which had been in power since 1968, and bring democracy. After several failed peace negotiations, the Lomé Peace Accord was signed on 7 July 1999, which led to the partial cessation of hostilities; the demobilization of armed actors; the transformation of the RUF into a political party; the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission; the establishment of a commission to manage the country's national resources; and a pardon for all ex-combatants. Finally, with the assistance of both UN peacekeepers and British military troops, a fragile peace was established, and on 18 January 2002, the war was officially declared as having ended.

The war, however, had taken a heavy toll. Between 50,000 and 75,000 people were killed as a result of the conflict and more than half the country's population was displaced, either internally or externally. The 2010 Human Development Report of the United Nations Population Fund (UNDP) estimates that average income was reduced by 50 per cent after 11 years of war, and has not recovered. The conflict in Sierra Leone is internationally renowned for the mass abduction and use of child soldiers, drug use among combatants, and the widespread use of rape and sexual violence. Similarly, amputation, as a weapon of war, left thousands

without limbs. However, while the amputees represented the most visible victims of the conflict, the psychological scars of the 10-year conflict were more widespread and deeper.

Education was not exempt from this destruction. It is estimated that up to 70 per cent of the school-age population had limited or no access to education during the war, leaving a legacy of a lost generation of non-schoolgoers. During the conflict, hundreds of schools were severely damaged or destroyed. Initially, the destruction of educational institutions was concentrated outside of Freetown, but as the conflict entered Freetown its urban schools were also targeted. The World Bank estimated that by 2001, only 13 per cent of Sierra Leone's schools were usable, 35 per cent required total reconstruction and more than half required refurbishment. Thousands of teachers and children were killed, maimed or displaced and many more were either forcibly or voluntarily recruited into the ranks of the different warring parties.

As with many conflicts around the world, the drivers of the conflict in Sierra Leone are complex and contested. Competing understandings clash over whether the conflict was rooted in the greed and avarice of political leaders, genuine political grievances rooted in historical and geographical structural inequalities or a mixture of both, and these interpretations have important policy implications for international actors engaged in humanitarian and international development activities in Sierra Leone. The research paper demonstrates that the policy recipes of the international community, informed by research on the drivers of the conflict in Sierra Leone, have emphasized the 'greed' over 'grievance' aspects, albeit with differences of emphasis between agencies. That is to say that the RUF rebels were perceived as driven by criminal and resource acquisition intent rather than as the armed expression of the need to redistribute resources in the country.

The repercussions of this approach have been hugely important for local, national and international policy framing in Sierra Leone in the post-conflict environment. Security, democracy and markets were seen as the remedy to healing the post-conflict situation and prioritized in terms of resources, energy and emphasis. Redistribution and addressing the massive geographical and social inequalities – a legacy of both the colonial and post-colonial regimes – was relegated to a subordinate priority. Successive UN missions appear to have embraced this security-first approach, with peacekeeping and stabilization more evident in policies than transformatory peacebuilding. As a result, the international community has contributed to the restoration of power of the old order, albeit in a more democratic form, and sidestepped the need for more widespread social transformation. This reflects a narrow conceptualization of peacebuilding that appears dominant within the international policy debates on post-conflict intervention, which reduces the term to a mode of stabilization, and often pacification, and avoids notions of transformation. In Galtung's terms, this reflects a dominance of the notion of 'negative peace' over a 'positive peace' that would transform the underlying structural drivers of conflict. In Sierra Leone, these were clearly massive urban/rural geographical inequalities: the hegemony of Freetown and the Western Areas over the rest of the country; huge social inequalities and lack of social mobility, and a system of patronage rooted in local networks. A very



different peace is likely to have emerged if those issues were prioritized in the post-conflict period.

As a result of the prioritization of security, democracy and markets, education appears as a marginal component in the overall picture of post-conflict reconstruction. This is lamentable, as education appears to be both at the heart of the core problems of Sierra Leone society and one of its potential solutions. The historical analysis presented in the research paper demonstrates how British colonialism produced a highly elitist and geographically uneven education system, which was reproduced by post-colonial national elites after independence. Higher education and educational provision for elites was prioritized, and the high proportion of current educational spending on higher education reflects a continuation of this, despite policy documents that profess to prioritizing basic education. Demands for a more equitable education system were clearly at the heart of the drivers of the conflict and returnees in the post-conflict environment similarly had high regard for the role of education. Importantly, the education system itself was devastated during the conflict and badly in need of prioritization and reconstruction.

Fortunately, despite the education sector being marginal to the overall UN and international community post-conflict peacebuilding thinking in Sierra Leone, this did not mean that funding for education through the UN family and via bilateral donors did not happen across all phases of conflict and post-conflict intervention. Furthermore, educational reconstruction and interventions have had important effects. However, the sector has not received the attention it merits. Despite this, UNICEF, Plan Sierra Leone, Save the Children, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and a range other agencies have worked hard to reinforce the importance of educational interventions and reconstruction with the national Ministry of Education, with some notable successes. While often running parallel – rather than embedded in UN and international peacebuilding strategy – interventions have been important in bolstering the likelihood of a sustained peace.

**During the war in Sierra Leone (1991–2001)**, organizations such as UNICEF were engaged in important attempts at providing schooling for those displaced by the conflict and ensuring that emergency education provision was available that addressed both psychosocial and educational needs. Within this humanitarian intervention period, educational provision was not prioritized by the majority of international actors; nevertheless, there were important innovations and attempts to provide temporary respite for children, deal with the psychosocial and traumatic effects of the conflict and ensure a protective environment within which children could develop coping strategies. School-in-a-Box initiatives and RAPID-ED programmes sought both to provide children with temporary respite from the war and to address aspects of the trauma that they were experiencing. The intensity of the conflict meant that some areas were harder to reach than others, and it was recognized that these types of interventions reached only a fraction of the target population. This was also a result of the fact that many agencies saw educational interventions as a secondary priority to other humanitarian concerns of the time. While the international debate on role of education during armed conflict appears to have moved forward in the past 10 years, interviews suggest that the relative

importance of educational interventions during conflict remains a contested issue, both within UNICEF and among other agencies. More research and advocacy appears necessary in this area.

**In the immediate post-war (2001–2007)** period, there was a great surge of interest and appreciation of the importance of education in Sierra Leone, and government and international agencies struggled to cope with the upsurge in demand. Access increased markedly. Concern in this period focused around the reconstruction of the country's education infrastructure – both schools and teachers; the reintegration into society of both ex-combatant youth and returnees, through educational access either via formal schooling or Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET); and accelerated learning programmes to assist in allowing students to catch up on lost education.

**Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools (CREPS)** was an important educational intervention with a programme rationale that providing an accelerated learning programme for children that missed out on their education during the war would help children move on in their lives and improve their situation. It also had a psychosocial and trauma component. CREPS was also linked to the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process, but coverage went well beyond child soldiers. The programme was well funded and well organized. Part of the rationale for terminating it was that it was in danger of developing a parallel system and that its high costs could be better used to strengthen the formal public primary education programme and assist more students. There was also concern that large amounts of resources had been spent on teacher training and these teachers should now be integrated into the state system. These issues do not undermine the importance of the CREPS approach, but more so emphasize the importance of timing, knowing when to stop certain projects so they do not create unintended outcomes and problems in the broader education system. Similarly, it also forces UNICEF and others to think about how their short-term reactive interventions to the effects of the war on education are related to the long-term recovery of the national education system, and of the dangers of unintentional outcomes of necessary interventions.

The **DDR process** represents a key component of the UN and international response to the conflict in Sierra Leone, and there were a range of important lessons learned from the process itemized in the report. In terms of the specific education lessons, it is clear that in the skills training, great care should be taken to think through the market openings of skills and to think creatively about training. Similarly, there were serious questions about both the quality and the length of training necessary for graduates to emerge successfully. Failure of this component could lead aspirations turning to anger, with important security ramifications. However, this was not just a technical problem; it was also a political-economic one of whether general conditions facilitated and assisted in self-employment opportunities. The evidence for this remains patchy.

**School building and reconstruction programmes**, particularly the SABABU project, were vital in getting the education system functioning again in the post-war environment. In terms of the programme rationale, the reconstruction of schools

was a clear sign to the population of state presence. There is a general recognition of the success and importance of these initiatives and equally admissions of some of the weaknesses, linked to poor workmanship in the construction of buildings, corruption within the system, and lack of planning and foresight in terms of short-course teacher training and the future integration of teachers into the state education system. Similarly, resource constraints reduced the scope of projects such as SABABU and project timelines were extended due to non-compliance.

**In the medium term (2007–date)**, and in response to the success of the expansion of the education system – particularly basic education, there has been a shift of emphasis towards working on issues related to the quality of education, sparked by recognition that educational achievement was weak. The talk is of a shift from hardware to software, and also a shifting emphasis on upstream work addressing the lack of capacity within the Ministry of Education. In this period, one gets the sense from the different interviewees that educational strategy is much less about reconstruction and concerns with the legacies of the war, and much more about broader discourses related to the general relationship between education and international development. The policy of system strengthening reflects a broader state-building agenda that seeks to better coordinate international education interventions in line with national priorities developed around the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) 1 and 2 and in line with the Paris Declaration.

However, there remain serious challenges regarding the education system in relation to geographical coverage, equity, quality, corruption and unevenness, which all have important consequences for peacebuilding. While the Education Sector Plan is comprehensive in its scope and sophisticated in content, it remains seriously underfunded, which leads to ad-hoc prioritization of certain areas over others. Higher education continues to receive a disproportionate amount of resources vis-à-vis other sectors. Similarly, while education funding has hovered around the 20 per cent mark – both its distribution among sectors and issues of inefficiency related to corruption and poor management mean that the system is not optimizing its resources in the most equitable manner. Sierra Leone's high level of dependency on external funding, and the relatively few agencies active in the education sector in the country, has made UNICEF a very important actor in the sector. While working more collaboratively with the state is an important objective, UNICEF and others might want to also use their influence to challenge the relative priorities of the Government of Sierra Leone in terms of actual spending and to promote a more equitable model of education spending. Similarly, UNICEF needs to reflect on the implications of its broad role in the education sector in Sierra Leone and its own narrower mandate on basic education and whether there might be tensions therein. The research paper argues for an intermediary approach to education planning in the medium term in post-conflict situations such as Sierra Leone, which continues to address the educational manifestations of the drivers of conflict such as ethnic, class and geographical inequalities: a peacebuilding development strategy for education.

**Teachers and teacher training as a cross-cutting issue.** With respect to teachers, the education system has faced a number of challenges in the post-war

period, and most of these remain today, albeit less severe – 10 years after the official ending of the war:

- lack of women teachers;
- lack of qualified teachers;
- uneven geographical distribution of qualified teachers – from the Western area compared with the rest of the country and between urban and rural areas;
- high teacher attrition
- poor salaries that regularly arrive late
- a problematic appointment system, which leaves many teachers without salaries for long periods of time; and
- large amounts of ghost teachers resulting from false accounting and corruption.

Many of the broader problems of the education system – low-quality education, high teacher-pupil ratios (particularly in rural and remote areas), widespread corruption (albeit small-scale) and high geographical unevenness in educational access, quality and retention – all appear to be linked to the fact that teachers are poorly paid, have no incentive to work in rural areas, have low motivation and leave the profession early. Many find ways of subsidizing their salaries by either charging for private lessons outside school hours, imposing fees on children or forcing children to work on their land. There are also a range of issues related to the abuse of power by teachers – including violence and sexual abuse – which have led to rising concerns about the country's educational situation. A new 'Code of Conduct' for teachers is currently being implemented by the Government of Sierra Leone, with strong support from the Sierra Leone Teachers Union and UNICEF. A parallel issue to be addressed is the issue of teachers' pay and remuneration. This requires both national and international commitment and effort.

A great deal of effort and resources have been put into teacher training in Sierra Leone, but it has often been too scattered and sporadic and has lacked long-term strategic thinking on the relationship between the short-term demands of the conflict and post-conflict period and the long-term needs of the national system. Teachers were trained by different agencies for RAPID-ED, CREPS, SABABU and a range of other initiatives, but often with little planning as to their long-term future. From a peacebuilding perspective, the three-year distance education programme aimed at unqualified and untrained teachers working in remote areas has been an important catalyst and exception to this critique. In reducing the number of unqualified teachers in Sierra Leone, particularly in remote and rural areas, the project has been sustainable, modestly funded and well integrated within the national system – with teachers receiving the same certificate as their in-service counterparts. A detailed study of the history, development and quality of this programme would be useful and potentially beneficial to other countries facing similar problems. There remain issues and questions related to UNICEF's promotion of the one-year distance programme to ensure its durability and integration within the system.

From a peacebuilding perspective, the role of teachers in shaping the minds and ideas of young people is central and much more needs to be done to ensure that issues related to teachers and teacher training are better integrated into the overall logic of educational interventions in conflict and post-conflict environments. This

issue also merits further research and investigation to inform international policymaking.

## **Conclusions**

The case study of the role of education in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone raises a number of important issues more generally on the role of education in peacebuilding. Firstly, it clearly demonstrates the role of education in contributing to the drivers of conflict. An inequitable, elitist and ultimately collapsing system sowed the seeds of discontent among large swathes of the population. Secondly, the massive demand for education after the end of the war demonstrates the high value attached by Sierra Leoneans to the potential of education. Thirdly, the international community and the United Nations model of security-first post-conflict peacebuilding clearly see education as a marginal component of agenda. As a result, the vast majority of resources have been spent on security and democracy promotion to the detriment of the social sectors. Despite this lack of commitment to education, the education system has made important moves forward since the end of the conflict. Similarly, educational interventions during the conflict, in the immediate aftermath and throughout the medium term have played an important role in peacebuilding.

This marginalization of education is partly a result of the dominant understandings of both the drivers of conflict in Sierra Leone and the hegemonic understanding of peacebuilding. The peacebuilding definition that emerges from this is a minimalist one, which is much closer to Galtung's notion of 'Negative Peace' (the cessation of violence) than the transformatory potential that the concept might have. Education has the potential to play a much greater role in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and elsewhere, but it requires that the current model of peacebuilding be challenged and modified into a more sustainable model. That model should emphasize both the short-term stabilization needs and the long-term transformations necessary for sustainable peacebuilding, as well as balance security concerns with investments in mechanisms that can address underlying structural inequalities that underpin conflicts. Education has a great deal to contribute to ensuring that countries don't return to war, but its potential remains unfulfilled.

If the education sector is to play a more prominent role in peacebuilding in conflict-affected states, then agencies working in the sector need to assess the implications of this shift and reflect on the effects this will likely have on the organization's mandate, ethos and operational activities and priorities. Similarly, agencies will need to develop a coherent capacity-building strategy that can provide staff with the skills to successfully implement this new peacebuilding agenda.

## **Recommendations**

### **For development partners in Sierra Leone and the broader education community**

#### ***Recommendation 1***

*Agencies involved in education in Sierra Leone and other countries need to find ways to influence current peacebuilding strategies in order to carve out a better location for education therein. This requires being present both in decision-making spaces in Sierra Leone, but also in New York and other centres of power where peacebuilding policy is developed.*

**Recommendation 2**

*Agencies involved in Sierra Leone and other countries need to develop the capacity to adopt a peacebuilding lens to policy and programming development in the education sector. This will require capacity-building interventions across agencies from the headquarter level to field offices to develop a coherent peacebuilding approach in conflict-affected states.*

**Recommendation 3**

*The research found that development partners working in education had a well-developed strategy both during a conflict and in the immediate aftermath; however, in the medium term, there seemed to be little evidence of conflict-sensitive programming. Development partners working in education and peacebuilding need to develop a strategy for the role of education in the medium-term period after a conflict. We suggest a link between conflict analysis and development strategy – a peacebuilding development strategy for education*

**Recommendation 4**

*There is a need for a better set of terminology to describe the different ways in which education contributes to peacebuilding, rooted in the language of peacebuilding but with a particular educational angle.*

**Recommendation 5**

*More thought and planning needs to be placed on the long-term integration of immediate post-conflict educational interventions, particularly, although not exclusively, in relation to the issue of teacher training.*

**Recommendation 6**

*If an equitable, efficient and quality education system is to be developed in Sierra Leone, urgent attention must be given to an increase in teachers' salary and incentives for teachers to relocate to rural areas.*

**For UNICEF at both headquarter and country levels**

**Recommendation 7**

*UNICEF Sierra Leone needs to reflect on the implications of its shift to upstream work and the tensions between broad engagement in the sector and its narrower mandate in education. While the organization currently seems to be managing this tension, a coherent strategy is necessary in the long term.*

**Recommendation 8**

*UNICEF in general, and UNICEF Sierra Leone in particular, need to reflect on the implications of embracing a peacebuilding approach to education, and have an internal debate on the pros and cons for the organization of moving in this direction.*

### **Recommendation 9**

*UNICEF should lobby the government of Sierra Leone to divert more resources towards the most marginalized areas of education and challenge the shift towards elitism within the education system, which runs counter to long-term sustainable peacebuilding.*

### **Recommendation 10**

*UNICEF education should engage, lobby and advocate for a greater role for education within the UN Joint Vision for Sierra Leone in order to promote a more sustainable peacebuilding approach.*

### **Recommendation 11**

*UNICEF should conduct analysis, evaluation and research on its engagements with teacher-training innovations in Sierra Leone.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This research paper seeks to explore the role of education in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, with a particular focus on the work and role of UNICEF. It is based on an initial desk review prepared in the early part of 2011, followed by a three-week fieldwork visit to Sierra Leone in May 2011 conducted by a research team, led by the main author. It is the first of three case studies carried out in 2011 as part of a broader UNICEF research programme on the role of education in peacebuilding in post-conflict settings.<sup>1</sup>

The objectives of this phase of the research are to:

- Locate peacebuilding initiatives supported through education programming within broader approaches being undertaken in the case study countries;
- Document country-specific education interventions where education has played an important role in contributing to peace or where it has missed the opportunity to do so;
- Provide guidance on education interventions contributing to peacebuilding based on models and approaches used by UNICEF and its partners to initiate, promote and implement education initiatives in support of peacebuilding;
- Identify strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for UNICEF-supported education programming as it relates to peacebuilding.

Deriving from those broad objectives, the guiding research questions for this paper are:

1. What are the strengths, weaknesses and gaps of the education system's contribution to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone within a changing and volatile political context?
2. How does the post-conflict political environment within a country affect the 'success' or 'failure' of education programmes for peacebuilding?

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<sup>1</sup> The case studies were preceded by a comprehensive literature review on the relationship between education and peacebuilding in conflict-affected states and the development of a critical research methodology paper that sought to develop a political economy and conflict analysis approach to carrying out research on education in conflict-affected states (Smith et al., 2011).

3. What is the practical and pragmatic recommendation for UNICEF's niche (within both the UN and broader context) in education programming that contributes to peacebuilding?

In order to meet these objectives and answer the research questions, the intention of the country case study was to develop a 'thick description' to understand the nature, extent, efficacy and potential of education and peacebuilding initiatives, with a particular focus on UNICEF's role therein.

During the fieldwork in Sierra Leone, interviews were held with a wide range of national and international stakeholders, including UN representatives, government officials, national and international NGO representatives and UNICEF staff members. Interviews were complemented by two one-day stakeholder consultation meetings on the role of education in peacebuilding; the first with UN, national government and international NGO representatives, and the second with national civil-society organizations working in education in Sierra Leone. One week of the fieldwork was also spent visiting the main teacher-training colleges across the country to explore the particular role of teachers in relation to education and peacebuilding.

**FIGURE 1: MAP OF SIERRA LEONE**



The report is structured as follows: In the first sections, we seek to explore the role of education in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone in relation to historical and political economy factors and to the relative role and relationship between internal and external factors and actors in the pre- and post-conflict environment. This will allow us to locate educational interventions and the education system itself in Sierra Leone within an appropriately grounded local, national and international political, social and economic context, as well as provide a chronology of the relationship between educational interventions and conflict and post-conflict environment in Sierra Leone. In Section 2, we outline the history of the conflict in Sierra Leone and



the debates regarding the catalysts or drivers of the conflict, as well as the effect of these analyses on the policy of international organizations. In Section 3, we then turn to the education system and its relationship to the conflict, both in terms of its role in producing some of the conditions under which conflict emerged and the ways in which the education system was affected by the conflict. In Section 4, we explore the role of UN and international intervention in the conflict and the ongoing development of the UN Peacebuilding Fund in Sierra Leone and the UN joint vision, reflecting continuously on where education fits into this peacebuilding vision. In Section 5, we explore the way in which education programming and policy have developed during different phases of the conflict and post-conflict period. In Section 6, we turn to explore the issue of teachers and teacher training in more detail, as one key issue in relation to education's role in peacebuilding that spans the period under analysis. In Section 7, we return to the four research objectives and answer them consecutively, including offering recommendations. Finally, we conclude with a critical reflection on the complex and contradictory nature of the relationship between education and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, UNICEF's role therein, and suggest some areas for future research and investigation.

## **2. INSIGHTS INTO THE HISTORY OF SIERRA LEONE: A POLITICAL ECONOMY BACKGROUND TO THE CONFLICT**

### **2.1. Chronology of the conflict**

The war in Sierra Leone began in 1991 when members of the RUF attacked towns in Kailahun District, near the Liberian border. The RUF claimed its mission was to overthrow the one-party regime of the APC, which had been in power since 1968, and bring democracy. Some commentators found no coherent cause behind the RUF (Keen 2005), while others (Richards 1996) saw its rise as a response by youth (especially rural youth) to the general failure of Sierra Leonean society to offer them access to opportunity and social mobility in a society riven with inequalities, patronage and deprivation.

Initially, the RUF were pitted against the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and soon after the Civil Defence Forces (CDF) – known as the 'kamajors', the latter emerging as a civilian response to the perceived failure of the SLA to mount a robust challenge to the RUF. As the conflict developed, the SLA grew from 3,000 ill-equipped and poorly trained soldiers to 14,000, drawing on the recruitment of local youth. These ill-equipped, poorly trained and underpaid soldiers often appeared to have little loyalty to the state and became known as 'sobels' – soldiers by day and rebels by night, contributing to the general insecurity felt by the mass of the population, rather than protecting them (Keen 2005, Davies 2010). Similarly, the CDF grew from a set of loosely linked anti-RUF paramilitaries to a fighting force of more than 20,000 members.

The RUF's progress was halted in 1995 when the Government of Sierra Leone hired Executive Outcomes, a South African private security company, to repel the rebels. As a result, in 1996 the Abidjan Peace Agreement was signed. In the wake of the Abidjan agreement, elections were held in 1996. The disputed elections, boycotted by the RUF, brought President Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's

Party (SLPP) to power in an increasingly insecure environment, fuelled at least in part by the ongoing expansion of the CDF, trained by Executive Outcomes EO and funded by the Kabbah government.

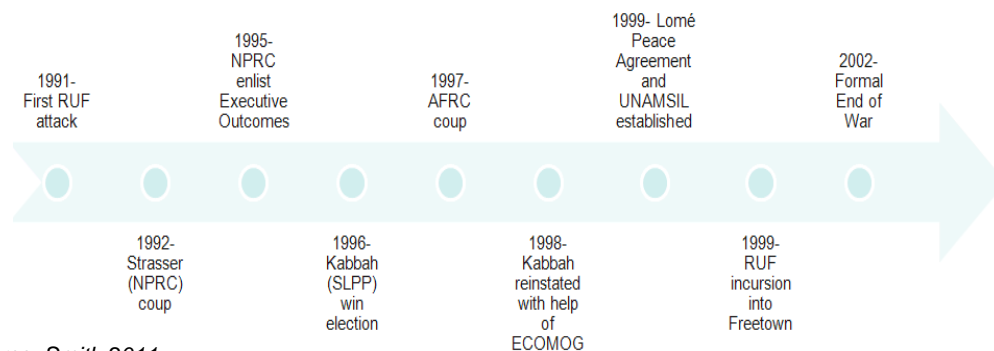
In 1997, the RUF and a section of the SLA army – the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), led a coup against the incumbent President Kabbah, who subsequently fled into exile, and formed a military government (Keen 2005, Human Rights Watch 2002). In 1998, the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) multilateral armed forces, the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), intervened, retaking the capital city, Freetown, and reinstating the Kabbah government. In 1999, the international community intervened in response to the planned withdrawal of ECOMOG troops. Military intervention by the United Kingdom tilted the military balance in the Government's favour and was an important factor in inducing the RUF into final peace negotiations with the Government.

Negotiations led to the Lomé Peace Accord, signed on 7 July 1999, which included agreement on the cessation of hostilities and demobilization of armed actors; the transformation of the RUF into a political party; the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission; the establishment of a commission to manage the country's national resources; and a pardon for all ex-combatants from the RUF, AFRC, SLA and CDF. The agreement also included a clause on education:

*A provision that the "the Government shall provide free compulsory education for the first nine years of schooling (Basic Education) and shall endeavour to provide free schooling for a further three years" (Government of the Republic of Sierra Leone and the Revolution United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL 1999).*

Despite the agreement, trust and compliance on both sides was weak and the RUF did not fully cease hostilities. As a result, Foday Sankoh, the RUF's leader, was arrested in 2000.<sup>2</sup> On 18 January 2002, the war was officially declared over. While a fragile peace remained intact, there was no longer a power-sharing agreement and the RUF eventually withered away.

**FIGURE 2: CHRONOLOGY OF THE CONFLICT IN SIERRA LEONE**



Source: Smith 2011

<sup>2</sup> He died from a stroke in July 2003, while awaiting trial.

While peace has persisted, the war took a heavy toll. Between 50,000 and 75,000 people were killed as a result of the conflict and more than half of the country's population was displaced, either internally or externally (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 2004). The UNDP Human Development Report (2010) estimates that average income was reduced by 50 per cent after 11 years of war, and has not recovered. The conflict in Sierra Leone is internationally renowned for the mass abduction and use of child soldiers, drug use among combatants, and the widespread use of rape and sexual violence. Similarly, amputation, as a weapon of war, left thousands without limbs. However, while the amputees represented the most visible victims of the conflict, the psychological scars of the 10-year conflict were more widespread and deeper. The Government requested that the UN establish the Special Court for Sierra Leone to prosecute those responsible for gross human right violations during the conflict, which it did in 2002. All sides in the conflict have been implicated in gross human rights violations (see Human Rights Watch and Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Sierra Leone).

The Sierra Leone conflict became one of several African conflicts that were later termed 'new wars' or 'dirty wars'. These types of conflict, which emerged after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, were internal civil wars fought out brutally with small arms and low-tech weaponry (Gberia 2005), and which undermined the optimistic predictions of many political commentators that the end of the Cold War would usher in a new era of peace and prosperity.

## **2.2. The drivers of conflict in Sierra Leone**

As with many conflicts around the world, the drivers of the conflict in Sierra Leone are complex and contested. In this section, drawing on debates in academic literature, we will assess the competing claims regarding whether the conflict was rooted in the greed and avarice of political leaders or in genuine political grievances rooted in historical and geographical structural inequalities – or a mixture of both. We will reflect on the policy implications of these different interpretations for international actors engaged in humanitarian and international development activities in Sierra Leone.

### **2.2.1. Resource war: greed vs. grievance?**

The Sierra Leone conflict became categorized as a resource war (Reno 1998, Kaldor 1999, Collier 2000, Collier et al. 2003) and as a war for diamonds, with Charles Taylor – warlord and later President of Liberia – exchanging weapons for diamonds with the rebel RUF. Taylor's role would later lead him to trial at the ongoing UN Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague, Netherlands (Davies 2010). This 'resource war' understanding of the conflict fed into a theory of civil wars emergent at that time and highly influential with the World Bank and Western governments. The theory posited that many conflicts were no longer driven by 'grievances', but were more often driven by the 'greed' of belligerent actors (Collier 2000, Collier et al. 2003). This approach to the conflict had important policy implications, which bypassed solutions that addressed the grievances existent in societies, labelled the rebels as criminals, and saw military and political defeat of the rebels as the solution to the conflict, rather than a comprehensive restructuring of state-society relations.

This approach, while important in illuminating certain aspects of the Sierra Leone conflict – and in explaining the economic factors that allowed the RUF to resource its fighting – was seemingly blind to the economic motivations of other actors in the conflict, both internal and external, and to the massive inequalities in resources and access to opportunities that divided the population. While the RUF was demonized as utilizing the illegal diamond trade to finance its activities, there is also widespread evidence that many parties in the conflict – including the ECOMOG troops and the foreign security firms (Executive Outcomes and later Sandline International) were all funded, at least in part, in relation to the diamond resources in the country (Richards 1996). Similarly, Western intervention in the country cannot be reduced purely to humanitarian motives, and there were clear intentions to prioritize the protection of foreign civilians and Western corporate interests during the intervention. A more nuanced analysis of the relationship between conflict and resources might lead us to reflect on these motivations.

### **2.2.2. Marginalized injustice: Colonial and post-colonial inequalities?**

The theory that the RUF was purely motivated by greed fails to recognize the genuine grievances felt by much of the Sierra Leonean population, which had been marginalized by decades of colonial rule and post-colonial mismanagement, corruption and patronage. While it is clear that the RUF's brutal tactics quickly lost its support, there is also strong evidence that its initial impulse to action reflected the aspirations of broad swathes of the population (Richards 1996). This is important because the discrediting of the RUF and the denial of the existence of genuine 'grievances' as drivers of the conflict in Sierra Leone has meant that redistribution and social justice have not been as central to post-conflict reconstruction policies as they might have been, a point we will return to later.

The RUF was a rebel guerrilla movement led by an urban educated but disaffected youth who connected with a mass of dispossessed and uneducated youth who saw little hope inside an authoritarian, highly unequal and exclusionary state (Keen 2005) riddled with bad governance, corruption, denial of human rights and political and economic exclusion (Curran and Woodhouse, 2007). The RUF's initial membership consisted of about 20–30 quite highly educated dissidents, described as 'excluded intellectuals' for whom education's promise failed to open up opportunities in Freetown, where patronage opened more doors than educational qualifications (Richards 1996). They were inspired by a combination of radical pan-Africanism, nationalism and aspects of the then Libyan leader Gaddafi's 'little green book' (Abdullah 1998).

This 'excluded educated elite' (Ibid.) drew in youth living on the margins of society, especially young men:

*[t]he insurgency was waged mainly by rural youths who cited lack of education and jobs, unjust land tenure systems that left them landless, abuses by traditional chiefs and exploitative marriage laws, as major grievances" (Richards 1996).*

These injustices and inequalities were rooted in both the geography and the history of Sierra Leone; they continue to shape the landscape and merit further analysis. As a centre for the slave trade from the arrival of the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, and to subsequent forays from the Dutch and British, what is now known as Sierra Leone has a long history of having its human and natural resources exploited by external actors. During British colonial rule, Freetown and what is now known as the Western area of Sierra Leone were a British colony starting in 1792, settled first by freed Creole ex-slaves brought from England and white traders and later freed slaves from around Africa that were captured by the British navy after the British had banned slavery in 1807. The rest of what is now known as Sierra Leone became a protectorate in 1896 and was ruled indirectly through deals with local chieftains. The divide between a more infrastructural and economically developed Western area and less developed Northern, Southern and Eastern areas, which began during that period, remains prevalent to the present day: health, wealth and educational indicators continue to mirror this uneven geography, demonstrating the long-standing legacy of colonialism in Sierra Leone (UNDP 2010).

When Sierra Leone gained independence from Britain in 1961, two political parties emerged to dominate the landscape: the SLPP, which had its political base in the south of the country, and the APC, with its support base in the Western and Northern areas. Milton Margai of the SLPP became the country's first President and, following his death, the Pac's Siaka Stevens was elected in 1967. Under Stevens' rule, a one-party state was developed and the country quickly slipped into decline, as individual enrichment, corruption, cronyism and political patronage dominated state/society relations. Stevens was succeeded by Joseph Momoh in 1985, but with little change in policy:

*The 1970s and 1980s witnessed the rapid decline in the efficacy of political and economic relations in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone's problems revolved around political instability and repression during the All People's Congress (APC) regime, blatant misuse of political power for individual enrichment, gradual decline of total output, neglect of agriculture, increase in unemployment, deterioration and neglect of education, increase in food imports, mounting foreign debts, increasing inability to finance recurrent expenditure, and neglect of infrastructural development (Conteh-Morgan 2006).*

As noted above, education was not exempt from this decline:

*the pre-war political regimes, particularly that of the now-deceased Siaka Stevens, who ruled the country from 1968 to 1985, placed little or no emphasis on education. Universal education was not mandatory, and almost no emphasis was placed on the education of girls. The Ministry of Education, similar to all of Sierra Leone's ministries and government agencies, at the time was riddled with corruption. By the late 1970s, schools, particularly those in rural areas, saw even the most basic school supplies, such as text books, exam notebooks, pens, pencils, and even chalk, diverted to government stores to be sold to the public for a profit.*

*One headmaster at the time referred to it as a double tax on education* (Amman and O'Donnell 2011).

While these structural legacies of colonialism and post-colonial mismanagement, corruption and patronage underpinned the grievances that led to war, it was the economic crisis of the 1980s and the resultant International Monetary Fund (IMF) structural adjustment policies that laid the contingent foundations for an upsurge in unrest, with massive increases in fuel and basic food costs combined with cuts in health and education:

*The intermediate (short-term) causes of state collapse in Sierra Leone lay in the drastic cuts in social services and state employment as key components in consolidating armed opposition. The World Bank negotiations recommended reducing state employment by one third. The country was already reeling under the severe effects of de facto layoffs related to the near collapse of state services. This situation resulted in more frequent protests by students and teachers in particular. As the economic decline in agricultural and diamond revenues continued, the World Bank/IMF policies adopted by the Momoh regime ...had adverse impacts upon the people, measures that included an 84.6% reduction in spending for subsidies, the primary one being rice. In addition, virtually all expenditures on socially oriented subsidies were cut. Such austerity measures in 1989/1990 caused petrol to rise 300% and the price of rice (the staple diet of the country) to rise by 180% (Conteh-Morgan 2006).*

The impacts of the cuts, led the education system to virtually collapse by the end of the 1980s. The education budget was cut by 50 per cent, leaving teachers unpaid and making them leave their jobs. Education subsidies were removed and unemployment skyrocketed. With children and youth out of school and on the streets, unemployment rising to 70 per cent and industries closing down, it was little wonder that many saw armed rebellion as one possible route to future improvement (Conteh-Morgan 2006). When in 1991 the RUF launched its first attacks, it found a society already collapsing under the strain of economic crisis, corruption and misrule, and a mass of potential recruits.

### **2.2.3. Section conclusion**

The debates outlined above regarding the drivers of the conflict in Sierra Leone have hugely important consequences for current local, national and international policy-framing in Sierra Leone. Relegating the RUF to a criminal band undermines the need to prioritize redressing the huge geographical and social inequalities that exist, and justifies policies that seek to return Sierra Leone – to a lesser or greater degree – to its pre-war socio-economic and political status. In contrast, by recognizing that there were legitimate reasons why rebellion occurred – even if that is tempered with a recognition that the RUF quickly descended into barbarism and a loss of direction – then the policy priorities would be driven by an attempt to redress those geographical and social inequalities and to build a different Sierra Leone firmly rooted in a more equitable redistribution of resources. It is this latter approach that could be termed a robust and long-term transformatory peacebuilding agenda, but as we shall see in the next section, it is the former that

appears to have largely become dominant among the main national and international policy-makers – to greater or lesser degree – who have influenced Sierra Leone’s post-conflict reconstruction, and which threatens to reproduce the conditions that led to the outbreak of the war in 1991.

### **2.3. The Post-War Settlement and its Challenges: A Security-First Approach to Peacebuilding and the Liberal Peace Thesis**

Post-war reconstruction has been a huge challenge for all involved, with the country devastated by 11 years of war and the resultant human, financial and psychosocial damage. At the end of the war, Sierra Leone was at the foot of the UNDP’s Human Development Index, with social services destroyed, large amounts of the population displaced and infrastructure shattered (World Bank 2007). This post-war period is seen as a great success by many commentators, not least because peace (as in the absence of major outbreaks of political violence) has been maintained, elections have been held, and much infrastructure has been rebuilt (Republic of Sierra Leone 2008). In light of the discrediting and collapse of the RUF as a political force in Sierra Leone after the war, the APC and SLPP have presided over the post-war political landscape and remained the dominant political forces in the country. In May 2002, President Kabbah, of the SLPP, was re-elected to a five-year term. In 2007, in the second post-war elections, President Ernest Bai Koroma of the APC was subsequently elected and remains in power. The next elections are scheduled for 2012.

What should be noted is a shared understanding, by both national and international actors, of the primordial importance of security for development in the early post-conflict environment in Sierra Leone, and the interrelationship therein between security and development. Interview data suggest that both the national Government and the international community active in Sierra Leone saw security as the a priori objective upon which all other processes have been constructed in country. One senior representative of a major bilateral donor noted that:

*The security sector starts off early and gets more profile partly because it’s more high risk, partly because there are gunmen... the emphasis is different. I think in Sierra Leone in particular we were talking about getting the social sector, the ministries sorted out later, that’s for sure (Interview with bilateral donor representative).*

A representative of the UK’s Department for International Development (DFID)—the biggest single donor in Sierra Leone – noted that in the immediate post-war period the agency placed

*... a big emphasis on particularly the military, on the kind of security side but also justice and Magistrate’s Courts and so on and prisons. There was an element in there of education and training as there still is with the army, and basic human rights awareness, literacy, that kind of stuff, but by and large the two things have been rather separate (interview with DFID representative).*

While this emphasis on security does not necessarily preclude a focus on redressing the huge geographical and social inequalities, poverty reduction and

improving social services, it does, however, emphasize the chronological order of the importance of security versus social reforms: moving from conflict to security to development. Security, then, is perceived as the foundation upon which development can occur. For DFID, Sierra Leone's largest and most influential donor, security appears to denote a type of 'negative peace', i.e., the cessation of violence, rather than any transformative process, at least in the early post-war period. Thus, DFID has concentrated on training the SLA and the Sierra Leone police, as well as on reforming the prison system. This 'security first' approach envisages a second phase where security then leads to broader development goals:

*'Security first' denotes the idea that before one can sustainably engage in development, a basic level of security must be established. A secure environment will ensure that development efforts are less likely to be disrupted or diverted by conflict, and that stability will attract investors who would otherwise be dissuaded by volatility. In this way, security is a precondition of development (Denney 2011)*

In line with other post-Cold War international interventions, the security-first agenda has led to the implementation of what Paris (2004) calls the 'liberal peace thesis' in Sierra Leone, which prioritizes the introduction of liberal democracy and market forces as key drivers of stability once security has been achieved.

According to Castaneda (2009), this approach can be conceptualized as 'trickle-down peace', whereby you first aim to obtain a 'negative peace', then democracy, and these two factors will then encourage foreign direct investment, which will then lead to economic growth. However, just as trickle-down economics failed to reach many of the most vulnerable sections of the population in the 1980s, and provided a catalyst to the conflict in Sierra Leone, so it is not clear that 'trickle-down peace' will be a sufficiently robust development model to address the marginalized majority in Sierra Leone, and may itself "contain the seeds of continuing insecurity" (Duffield 1998).

Denney (2011) suggests that rather than security and development occurring symbiotically in Sierra Leone, it increasingly appears that security has not been followed by development, but rather there is an uneasy co-existence of security and misery. This minimalist security agenda, followed by the liberal peace thesis, frames much of the international discourse on Sierra Leone and its reported post-war success, and can help us to understand why investment in social services such as health, education and welfare in UN peacebuilding programmes lag behind those of security and democracy promotion. DFID has only in 2010 begun focusing on the importance of education and will now commit £30 million pounds during the coming three years (interview with DFID representative).

The question then for UNICEF and other development partners seeking to promote the role of education in Sierra Leone and elsewhere in post-conflict peacebuilding is to enter into the debate inside the UN and the international community on the core priorities of peacebuilding missions, the sustainability of the current dominant model (security first), the chronology of interventions and priorities, and the



potentially more sustainable peacebuilding processes that might emerge if there was a better balance, both in resources and effort, placed on the social sectors to seek to transform the inequities of access and opportunity that often provide the underlying drivers of conflict. At least in the case of Sierra Leone, it seems that UNICEF was not at the heart of these 'peacebuilding' policy discussions, and while as we shall see that UNICEF and education have played an important role in the conflict humanitarian intervention period and the post-conflict reconstruction period, those interventions appear to run parallel, rather than being fully integrated into the UN mission.

If we judge success in post-conflict reconstruction on the basis of the absence of a return to violence and the establishment of democracy and free markets, then Sierra Leone is rightly seen as a good case of post-conflict reconstruction. However, if we measure success on the basis of addressing the causes of conflict, restoring justice and addressing inequalities, then perhaps the minimalist security agenda needs to be challenged with a more equity-focused approach, which fits in well with the current UNICEF focus on equity. The country remains geographically divided, with urban rural inequalities vividly apparent. Youth unemployment remains rampant, and social indicators – despite improvements since the end of hostilities – remain among the worst in the world. More effort needs to be made in promoting a sustainable peacebuilding model that provides a better balance between the promotion of negative and positive peace (Galtung 1976), and in utilizing education's role as a potential vehicle for social mobility and the reduction of gender, socio-economic, ethnic, religious and geographic inequalities.

### 3. BACKGROUND TO THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Sierra Leone's educational history is firmly rooted in its colonial past. The first examples of Western-style education in sub-Saharan Africa were found in Sierra Leone, with the first school for boys founded in 1845 and the first school for girls in 1849. The first tertiary institution in sub-Saharan Africa, Fourah Bay College, was founded in Freetown in 1827 (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) 2010). This educational legacy was highly elitist and accessible only to a small minority of the population. Even after 1896, when the rest of what is now called Sierra Leone became a protectorate, the colonial administration was disproportionately concerned with the colony (Freetown) rather than the protectorate (the rest of the country), driving tensions, including in educational access, between the capital region and the 'up-country' regions (Ibid.). In this already unequal situation of educational access, girls were considerably less likely to be enrolled in school than boys throughout the country.

In 1936, more than 50 per cent of children in the colony of Freetown attended school, while less than 3 per cent of those in the protectorate did. By 1954, the percentage of children in school in the protectorate increased only to 8 per cent, while in Freetown approximately 85 per cent of children attended school (Hillard 1957). The Krio-speaking population in Freetown – freed slaves and their descendants – were privileged in educational opportunities and access to jobs (provided to the educated) from the colonial period onward. Regional disparities in access were still present immediately after the conflict, with Freetown's Western region having a 75 per cent enrolment, the Southern region enrolling 48 per cent, the Eastern region 35 per cent and the Northern region only 25 per cent (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 2000). As Kingsley notes:

*The modern education system's development was quite uneven in Sierra Leone. It first developed in and has remained largely confined to, urban centres. Rural areas, where the vast majority of Sierra Leoneans live, were left largely unaffected by the modern education system. This imbalance can be traced to the historical pattern of educational development during British rule. ... The imbalance between higher education, on the one hand, and secondary and primary schools, on the other, is one of the enduring legacies of British rule. ... Under British rule, education was designed to provide clerks and lower level governmental functionaries with a general liberal education. A ticket to a government job was to be had through education. This led to an increase in higher education. However, early education, especially primary education, languished, particularly in the rural areas. Independence further exacerbated the bias towards higher education as the urban middle and upper classes who had benefitted from the previous system became the political leaders. They and their cohorts benefitted heavily from the state-subsidised higher education. The education system thus continues to serve the poor badly and favour the urban over the rural areas. Despite nearly 30 years of formal independence, the educational system of Sierra Leone has not changed as is the case in other African countries, notably Nigeria and Ghana (Kingsley 1993).*

What we can learn from this historical legacy – beyond the obvious importance of colonialism in shaping education structures throughout the past few centuries – is education’s pivotal role in regulating social mobility, and that its uneven and elitist nature clearly served as one of the drivers of the conflict when it broke out in 1991, as we shall see in the next section. By the late 1980s, the education system had deteriorated to such an extent that only approximately 400,000 children were enrolled in primary school – approximately 55 per cent of the relevant student cohort (MEYS 2010; Republic of Sierra Leone 2001). In many rural areas, schooling had all but collapsed due to the austerity measures imposed during the structural adjustment period and the lack of priority placed on education by the Government. Education, rather than a vehicle for developing social cohesion, equity and opportunity, had itself become a key driver of the coming conflict.

### 3.1. Educational drivers of the conflict

The role of education as a driver of Sierra Leone’s conflict has been widely recognized in literature. There is a body of research that takes youth as its starting point, arguing that “the war in Sierra Leone is [was] a tussle for the hearts and minds of young people” (Richards 1995). Youth exclusion was a core cause of conflict for Richards (1995). Others highlighted the stalled aspirations of semi-educated and unemployed young people who had left the education system due to its cost, poor quality or collapse. Keen (2005) notes that “anger at a collapsing education system has powerfully fed into the conflict.” The war offered an opportunity to reverse entrenched power structures and gave these young people (particularly men) something to do (Keen 2005; Richards 1995). Both the SLA and the RUF promised young recruits that they would send them to school (Keen 2005), and the RUF established bush schools (Wright 1997).

Keen (2005), Richards (1995) and Rashid (2004) all highlight young people’s anger at educational (and other forms of) exclusion, as well as their great desire to access education and the opportunities it promised. There was a “strong sense of delusion” (Wright 1997) among learners who left school to be confronted with no job prospects, no access to land, and stalled prospects for economic and social advancement, particularly in rural areas (Richards 1995). Interestingly, the call for free education remained ‘one of the few explicit demands’ by the RUF leadership (Wright 1997), which began to target the highly educated as well as educational institutions as the war began. RUF’s foundational documents, prepared in 1989, make reference to education as a core contributory factor in the country’s demise and critique its elitist and colonial nature:

*There is a need for a complete overhauling of the present educational system. The prevailing system is a major contributing factor to our current state of industrial and technological backwardness. The educational system was initially a colonial imposition, which did not take into consideration the aspirations and needs of our people. The sole intention was to train passive and obedient Africans to man the colonial state structure. What was expected of any serious-minded African ruling class was to radically alter the inherited educational system immediately after the attainment of independence. In our country, the ruling class simply continued from where*

*the British colonialist left. Now it has become a common dictum of the APC ruling class that education is a privilege and not a right.* (Basic Document of the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL): The Second Liberation of Africa, prepared in 1989)

Similarly, the RUF posited a reformed education system as a central solution to the country's marginalization:

*The way to end exploitation and oppression, economic and social injustice, ignorance, backwardness and superstition is to make education available to all – both the young and old, male and female, and also the disabled. We need to create a new educational system that is more purposeful, dynamic and relevant, which will take into consideration the demands of the present scientific and technological world and value of research, critical thinking and creativity.* (Basic Document of the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF/SL): The Second Liberation of Africa, prepared in 1989)

From these insights we can see how both the failure and possibility of education are crucial for understanding the drivers of conflict in Sierra Leone. Disappointment with education –in terms of quality, access and outcomes, and its geographical unevenness and elitism –as well as the aspiration that improved education could be a key conduit for Sierra Leone's future development, further reiterate the central importance that Sierra Leonean's placed on education. Yet despite the perceived impulse to improve the education system, it was the system itself that further deteriorated as the war developed, as we shall see in the next section.

### **3.2. Impacts of the conflict on education**

*The decade-long war destroyed the infrastructure of the country's education system; the quality of teaching and of the learning environment reached the lowest levels in the world* (World Bank and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) 2006).

Education was dramatically affected by the civil war, particularly in the country's rural areas, where it was almost entirely halted. While statistics in Sierra Leone are often unreliable, it is estimated that up to 70 per cent of the school-aged population had limited or no access to education during the war (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 2004), leaving a legacy of a lost generation of non-schoolgoers. During the conflict, hundreds of schools were severely damaged or destroyed (MEST 2007). In Freetown, it was estimated that 70 per cent of schools were destroyed (Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children 2004). Initially, the destruction of educational institutions was concentrated outside of Freetown, but as the conflict entered Freetown its urban schools were also targeted. Njala University was the target of violence and destruction. Other higher education institutions in Makeni, Port Loko and elsewhere were also closed throughout the conflict (Alghali et al. 2005), with many occupied by the rebels, and then later ECOMOG soldiers, with damaging effects (Wright 1997; interviews with teacher trainers from Freetown, Kenema, Makeni and Port Loko 2011). The World Bank estimated that by 2001, only 13 per cent of Sierra Leone's schools were

usable, 35 per cent required total reconstruction and more than half required refurbishment (World Bank 2007).

Thousands of teachers and children were killed, maimed or displaced and many more were either forcibly or voluntarily recruited into the ranks of the different warring parties (Wright 1997). A report commissioned by Plan Sierra Leone (Gupta 2000) exploring the effects of the war on children in a displaced camp noted that:

*... virtually all of the children interviewed had seen or heard violence during the January invasion in Freetown. Eighty-nine per cent of the children reported that they saw someone being injured or killed by guns or heard people screaming for help during the fighting. The majority of participants saw their own or other people's houses being burned down, dead bodies or body parts, and they heard gunfire bombing or shelling. More than two thirds of the sample witnessed someone being burned to death or tortured, and 58 per cent saw someone being raped or sexually assaulted during the fighting (Gupta 2000).*

The combined effects of 10 years of war, the psychosocial trauma of victims and perpetrators, the destruction of educational infrastructure and materials, and the displacement of both students and teachers meant that the reconstruction of the education system was a monumental task, a point we will return to in Section 6.

#### **4. UN-INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION AND THE PEACEBUILDING FUND**

The Abidjan Peace Accord of 1996 called for a UN peacekeeping force, which was never deployed. For many commentators, this was perceived as a key contributing factor to the collapse of the agreement. Despite this initial unwillingness of the international community to intervene in the Sierra Leone conflict, in June 1998 the Security Council established the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) for an initial period of six months. Activities included monitoring and advising efforts to disarm combatants, and efforts to restructure security forces and document ongoing atrocities and human rights abuses committed against civilians. These efforts were carried out by unarmed teams under the protection of ECOMOG (United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) 2011). Violence in late 1998 and early 1999 in Freetown led to the evacuation of all UNOMSIL personnel and to the closure of all UN offices, including UNICEF – which relocated to Liberia, leaving only a skeleton staff in Freetown.

Following the Lomé agreement in 1999, UN peacekeepers were deployed under the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). UNAMSIL was allowed a maximum of 6,000 personnel and had a mandate to assist the Government and the parties carry out the provisions of the Lomé Peace Accord (Ibid.). The peacekeeping force expanded to become the largest in UN history at the time (Davies 2001). The mission was eventually described as “the most successful United Nations peace keeping operation in recent times” (Permanent Mission of the Republic of Sierra Leone to the United Nations 2006, as quoted in Iro 2009).

The peacekeeping mission, however, initially faced serious problems. In 2000, the RUF took approximately 500 peacekeepers hostage and used their weapons to advance on Freetown. British soldiers had to intervene to stop them (Davies 2010). Its mandate, size and resources were strengthened in 2000 and 2001 and “[w]ith the support of UK forces, the UNAMSIL operation was able to reassert its authority on the ground” (Curran and Woodhouse 2007). In 2001, the Security Council authorized an increase to 17,500 military personnel and expanded the operations of UNAMSIL (UNIPSIL, 2011).

UNAMSIL’s robust mandate “...set the operation within both a security-building and a peacebuilding framework” (Ibid.). This offers evidence of the UN’s increasing engagement with peacebuilding concepts at the time. Peacekeepers engaged in local development focused activities (i.e., building roads and schools and distributing food), which was well received by local communities (Ibid., UNAMSIL 2009). The main activities of the UNAMSIL mission included the DDR of ex-combatants (through which 75,000 ex-combatants were demobilized). UNAMSIL played a central role in support of the 2002 elections (in which Kabbah was re-elected). It has also supported security sector reform (which involved re-training the army and police forces), supported the establishment of the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, and assisted in the return of more than half a million refugees and internally displaced people (UNIPSIL 2011).

UNAMSIL completed its mandate in December 2005 and was succeeded by a new UN mission, the United Nations Integrated Office for Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), established by the Security Council “to help consolidate peace in the country” (UNAMSIL 2009). UNIOSIL employed almost 300 people in Sierra Leone, including 82 international staff, 192 local staff and 24 UN volunteers (Iro 2009).

UNIOSIL was mandated to assist the Government of Sierra Leone in a number of peacebuilding measures, including:

- building the capacity of state institutions to further address further the root causes of the conflict;
- providing basic services; and
- accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals through poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth, including through the creation of an enabling framework for private investment and systematic efforts to reduce HIV/AIDS (Curran and Woodhouse 2007).

The resolution that established UNIOSIL also includes support for (Iro 2009):

- human rights;
- assisting elections;
- good governance;
- rule of law;
- security sector reform;
- promoting a culture of peace, dialogue and participation in critical national issues through public information campaigns; and

- developing initiatives to promote the well-being of young people, women and children.

The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) was also launched in 2005, and in 2006 it officially put Sierra Leone on its agenda as one of its first two pilot countries (along with Burundi). In 2006, the PBC and the Government of Sierra Leone defined key areas for peacebuilding activities. These included:

- Youth empowerment and employment
- Democracy and good governance
- Justice and security
- Capacity building of public administration

Iro (2009) notes that these activities were chosen because they were seen to be critical to avoid the relapse into conflict in Sierra Leone, and for us it is noticeable that both education and health are absent from the priorities. These same areas guide the 2007 Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework (or Compact), which took more than a year to design and which officially articulates the PBC strategy in the country. The new Government of President Koroma, elected peacefully in 2007, lobbied to have the energy sector added as a fifth area for peacebuilding activities, and this has now been included in the Compact (Ibid.) The PBC declared Sierra Leone eligible to receive assistance in October 2006. In March 2007, the Secretary-General offered Sierra Leone a PBF country envelope of \$35 million. The last project approved (of a total of 23) by the PBF (in December 2009) brought the total of funds committed to \$34,799,101.52 (United Nations Peacebuilding Fund 2008).

None of the initial projects were explicitly education-focused, which is illustrative of the marginalization of education in peacekeeping and peacebuilding programmes within the UN family. One approved project, led by UNDP and the International Labour Organization, addressed youth empowerment and employment, and had a skills-training component. Another project, which was led by the World Food Programme, initially focused solely on school feeding; after it was amended to include basic education, UNICEF became a partner. The general consensus of interviewees, however, is that education has been at the margins of both the UN Peacebuilding Fund and the UN Family Joint Vision for Sierra Leone (2009), which later sought to unify all UN activity.

Despite education's absence, early PBF projects were seen as very important to ensuring the successful 2007 elections, which saw an opposition party peacefully take power (Iro 2009). In 2008, UNIOSIL was replaced by the Security Council-created UNIPSIL, which is currently led by the Secretary-General's Executive Representative in Sierra Leone, Michael von der Schulenburg. UNIPSIL maintains approximately 70 staff and is responsible for "providing political advice to foster peace and political consolidation, offering support and training to the national peace and security forces, and building the capacity of democratic institutions in furtherance of good governance and the promotion and protection of human rights" (UNIPSIL 2011).

In 2009, UNIPSIL published the Joint Vision for Sierra Leone of the United Nations Family, which provides the basis for all UN support and programming within Sierra Leone and runs in its initial phase until 2012. Since it is designed as “a fully integrated peacebuilding mission, as called for by the UN Security Council,” most UN organizations and agencies are party to the Joint Vision in Sierra Leone: FAO, ILO, IOM, OHCHR, UNAIDS, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNIFEM, UNDP, UNODC, UNOPS, WFP, WHO and UNIPSIL. The World Bank and the African Development Bank also associate themselves with the Joint Vision (UNIPSIL 2009). The Joint Vision is organized under the “overall priority of furthering the consolidation of peace” in Sierra Leone and includes four programmatic priorities:

- the economic integration of rural areas;
- the economic and social integration of youth;
- equitable access to health services; and
- accessible and credible public services (Ibid.).

Six ‘cross-cutting issues’ underlie programming within the Joint Vision:

- capacity building;
- the Millennium Development Goals;
- human rights protection;
- gender equality;
- poverty reduction; and
- subregional cooperation (Ibid.).

The Joint Vision is written to support the Government of Sierra Leone’s Agenda for Change (2008), which is its PRSP 2. The Joint Vision is delivered through 21 programmes, implemented by UN agencies and national partners. Education was notably absent from the first agreement of the Joint Vision, despite schoolchildren being the focus of the cover of the programme booklet. Basic education was later included in Programme 8, linking it with school feeding and the World Food Programme, but education’s status as an afterthought in the UN vision is a pertinent reminder of education’s marginalization in UN peacebuilding thinking.

It is important to note that with the PRSP 2 is due to expire in 2012, and a new PRSP development process is underway. The Government of Sierra Leone sees it as very much in a development phase and has indicated that the new PRSP will most likely not include peace consolidation as a main theme. The Joint Vision initial phase also ends in 2012. The UN has also run the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which began in 2002 and is still operational.

Exploring the history of UN engagement in Sierra Leone (see the chronology of different UN missions in Table 1, below), one can see that with UNOMSIL, engagement in the conflict started modestly, and then expanded greatly in terms of both financial and human resources during the peacekeeping and DDR phase, before being markedly reduced with UNIOSIL and later UNIPSIL. Similarly, one can see a shift from a focus on peacekeeping, security and the promotion of democracy to a shift towards a broader peacebuilding approach, albeit in a



resource-constrained environment, and with an ongoing focus on the primacy of security issues.

**TABLE 1: UN MISSIONS IN SIERRA LEONE DURING AND SINCE THE CONFLICT**

Year	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12
UNOM SIL															
UNAM SIL															
UNIOS IL															
UNIPSI L															

One senior UN representative summed up quite succinctly the security-first agenda and the transition process from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and from security to democracy and development:

*I think increasingly we see peacebuilding as a process of normalization. The war is an abnormal state. The war breaks institutions, the war breaks national identity. It's fragmentary, it's divisive. Peacekeepers come in and basically stop the fighting, or endorse an agreement where the fighting has had a pause or a stop...and the peacebuilding really is development with a political understanding. I mean what we're saying is that we have a political mission that's run by DPA; clearly DPA's focus is the running and the implementation of institutions that run to democracy and elections. However, that is an element and that follows the security sector reform, it follows the demobilization, it follows the disarmament, all of which are important parts that allow you to get to the point where you can have elections and they can be free and fair. But I think the bigger thing, and what comes out in this document through the 21 programmes is that you have to provide a peace dividend. There's no point in having an electoral system that allows you to get to a government if the people at the village level haven't noticed any real difference in their social conditions... We have to move in the short term to make sure that the difference between war and peace is extremely obvious to every man, woman and child and that peace is clearly better than war. And the peace dividend is really what the agencies deliver (interview with UN representative).*

These comments confirm earlier findings presented in Section 3.3 on the security-first agenda and the liberal peace thesis that frame UN intervention in post-conflict contexts, and result only in a marginalized and late role for education in peacebuilding. Even the latter comments of the UN representative, despite talking of public services as fundamentally important, still frames them through a security lens, which justifies investment in social sectors as a 'peace dividend' to ensure that people do not return to war. In that sense, improved 'education', as an example of a social programme, is seen as a gift bestowed upon the population, rather than a vehicle to address underlying drivers of conflict, or as an agent of

social transformation – a very narrow and restricted conceptualization of education's potential and varied roles in contributing to peacebuilding, as we shall see in the next section.

However, despite education being presented as a very marginal activity in UN peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, this does not mean that funding for education through the UN family and via bilateral donors did not occur across all phases of conflict and post-conflict intervention. It also does not mean that education is not seen as an important factor more generally in processes of international development in Sierra Leone, or that it doesn't play an important role in peacebuilding, as we shall see in the next section. What it does mean is that the hegemonic approach to post-conflict intervention, as it currently stands, appears to see education as lying at the periphery of its priorities, and chronologically coming after the 'core' business of stabilization and security, building democracy and establishing markets:

*I think the reality is that UNICEF has managed to do a lot of very good work in the education sector in spite of a very weak ministry and without the broader peacebuilding architecture ... But I think that architecture had been extremely good in so many other areas but I think education is one of the areas where the linkage is going to be difficult to make the case. And we're the most advanced so you try Somalia, you try Sudan, you try Congo and I think the case will be even more difficult (interview with UN official).*

The question of why that is the case in Sierra Leone is also an interesting and important one, particularly in light of the fact that, as stated above, the collapsed and poor education system was seen as a key driver of the conflict, education was a central demand for the RUF and that, as we shall see below, there was a massive demand for education in the aftermath of the war as people returned from exile and displacement. Some reasons offered by interviewees included the general attitude that education was still seen, even inside UNICEF itself, as a non-priority area during the conflict and therefore necessarily relegated in importance to the provision of basic necessities and social protection. In the immediate aftermath of the conflict, education was seen as a secondary priority in relation to security and democracy promotion, although the reconstruction of schools and the education component of DDR were emphasized. Other interviewees from outside UNICEF suggested that because UNICEF has its own funding base, it has less interest in fighting for access to resources and lobbying for education within UN structures, particularly peacebuilding structures. One UNICEF staff member supported this argument partially by saying that the effort necessary in trying to gain resources from the Peacebuilding Fund was not commensurate with the rewards, and therefore they had opted out of some processes. Other sources suggested that UNICEF structures in New York headquarters were resistant to fully engaging with the UN family on these issues.

In some interviews with both UN and UNICEF representatives, there was a sense that education's role in peacebuilding hadn't really been given much thought, and was understood much more in relation to development and a broader human rights approach. For others, there was a sense that educational investment was a

process that took a long time to bear fruition and thus had less appeal when the objective was to deliver quick and efficient 'peace dividend' results in a resource-constrained and strategic environment. Certainly, further research into education's marginalization in official peacebuilding discourse and practice seems warranted, as does a more systematic approach by education advocates to lobby the UN on the positive and diverse role that education might play in peacebuilding. As it stands at the moment in Sierra Leone there is a sense that applying for more resources via the UN Peacebuilding Fund and engaging more forcefully with the broader UN peacebuilding strategy and architecture would be a waste of energy for UNICEF, while by not engaging it effectively guarantees education's ongoing marginalization in the peacebuilding process – a chicken and egg situation that appears difficult to overcome.

## 5. CHRONOLOGY OF EDUCATION PROGRAMMING AND POLICY

Education programming in Sierra Leone can be separated into three fairly distinct phases: the armed conflict (1992–2001); the aftermath of the conflict (2001–2007) and the medium term (2007–present).<sup>3</sup> In this selective analysis, we are focusing particularly on the work of UNICEF in education; however, as will become clear, since 2000, donor, agency and national state coordination has become much more systematic and organized through the framework of PRSPs<sup>1</sup> and <sup>2</sup> and national education plans, involving broad consultation among stakeholders. As we shall see, UNICEF has been at the centre of this process as the lead education agency with a close relationship with the MEYS.

### 5.1. During the armed conflict (1992-2001)

During the war, organizations such as UNICEF were engaged in attempts at providing schooling for those displaced by the conflict and ensuring that emergency education provision was available that addressed both psychosocial and educational needs. Within this humanitarian intervention period, educational provision was not prioritized by the majority of international actors. Nevertheless, from those organizations committed to the importance of educational delivery to war-affected communities, there were some important innovations and attempts to provide temporary respite for children, deal with the psychosocial and traumatic effects of the conflict, and ensure a protective environment within which children could develop coping strategies (interview with Plan Sierra Leone; interviews with UNICEF staff members).

During the first years of the conflict, this was a tale of two contrasting realities. Freetown remained largely free of the conflict, while the rest of the country descended into chaos and violence. Attempts to support education 'up-country' by international development agencies were severely hampered by the ongoing crisis, with many initiatives abandoned (interviews with UNICEF staff members 2011).

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<sup>3</sup> The dates are indicative rather than definitive, with some overlap between periods and activities, but they do coincide with two consecutive papers, PRSPs<sup>1</sup> and PRSP 2, which have shaped the post-war development agenda.

In 1998, UNICEF and the Ministry of Education set up a non-formal education programme targeting schoolchildren, especially girls, but the insecure situation led to the programme being withdrawn (UIE 2000). Aid agencies and NGOs regrouped in Freetown and relief efforts in education were focused on addressing the needs of the rising number of internally displaced people (IDP) in the Freetown area who were fleeing the conflict. IDP camps in Freetown and other urban conurbations were targeted for programmes drawing on non-formal education techniques. IDP camps included the national football stadium, Kisy, Hastings and Waterloo, each with several thousand people who had arrived from the conflict zones (interviews with UNICEF staff).

From 1999 onward, a new programme – RAPID-ED was implemented by Plan International with support from UNICEF, UNESCO (UEI) and other agencies (UIE 2000; interviews with UNICEF staff 2011). This was a six-month educational programme that focused centrally on addressing the traumatic effects of the conflict on young people. Rooted in a prior analysis of the traumatic effects that the war was having on children (Gupta 2000), the programme sought to provide children with “basic literacy, numeracy and trauma-healing, pending the restoration of normal schooling” (Ibid). For those Sierra Leoneans displaced to neighbouring countries, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) provided basic education access in conjunction with UNICEF in these countries (interviews with UNHCR representatives 2011). In areas where schools had been destroyed, School-in-a-Box type interventions were carried out by a range of different organizations, delivered during breaks in the fighting (interviews with UNICEF 2011).

While interviewees commented on the importance of these interventions to addressing both the trauma of conflict on young peoples’ lives and also the importance of bringing some normalcy and stability to their lives, it was also recognized that these education interventions were inadequate to the scale of the task, and did not prevent a generation of children missing out on schooling. In interviews with a range of different organizations, issues were raised in relation to the problems of coordinating relief efforts, the duplication of work by different agencies, and the absence of a clear vision of the relationship between early conflict intervention and long-term post-conflict reconstruction of the education system. Many interviewees commented on the inadequacy of the education response to the immense challenges that the population was faced with during that period, and the failure of the international community to act until the later stages of the conflict. For many, education interventions were far too sporadic and scattered (interviews with Plan Sierra Leone, UNICEF staff and UNHCR). When in 1999 the war came to Freetown, the entire education system collapsed in a barbarous attack on the city, and UN and other international agencies evacuated and relocated to bordering countries. UNICEF itself moved to Liberia, leaving an emergency skeleton staff in Freetown until the international community returned in 2000.

Thinking through the programme rationale of educational interventions, one can clearly see that service delivery of education in the midst of conflict seeks to do a range of things: firstly, it seeks to provide a sense of normalcy for students, a place that can give them a brief respite from the daily traumas of war, and where

provision of School-in-a-Box kits allows for schooling to proceed despite the absence of infrastructure. Keeping the education system working is a signal of hope that things can return to normality. As one ex-minister noted (2011):

*After the rebel invasion of Freetown, in 1997, nothing worked, bank, offices, everything shut down. What could we use to start to reflect normalcy in this society? We gave passes from the Ministry of Education to head teachers to go and open the schools. These passes were to allow children to go through checkpoints, military checkpoints... As the children went to school the rest of the country felt comfortable enough to open the other businesses.*

Secondly, the RAPID-ED programme, beyond bringing some sense of normalcy and providing a space for education to take place, was also aimed at addressing the psychosocial needs of students, helping them to overcome the trauma of war. These interventions often appear not to seek to substitute for the absence of schooling, but more so to provide a safe haven, a space of protection through which children can go through a process of psychosocial assistance. Importantly, this took place in IDP camps composed of populations displaced from their communities during the war, creating 'child-friendly spaces' in camps that are often antithetical to child well-being.

Clearly, there remains an ongoing debate within the international community on the relative priority of educational interventions during the conflict period – in relation to the provision of food, shelter and health care – yet this need not be a zero-sum debate. As highlighted above, keeping schools and education working during conflict have important psychological effects on people's perceptions about the war. While in Sierra Leone this was not as well developed as in Nepal with the Schools as Zones of Peace initiatives, this work was perceived as important. Similarly, providing child-friendly spaces in IDP camps and elsewhere where young people have the chance to reflect on their situation, to play and to feel safe and secure, may in the long term have important repercussions for their own post-conflict recovery. More systematic evaluation of these and other types of interventions would be useful to bolster the case for educational intervention.

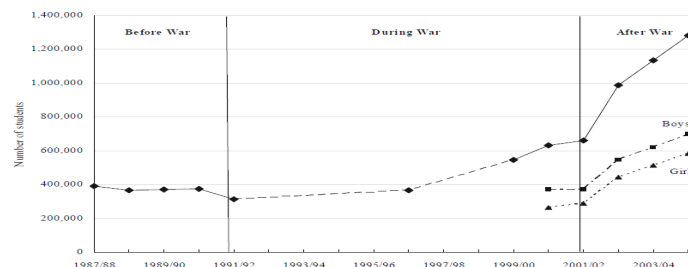
## **5.2. In the immediate aftermath of the conflict (2001-2007)**

In the immediate post-war period, as noted in several interviews, there was a great surge of interest and appreciation of the importance of education, and government and international agencies struggled to cope with the upsurge in demand. Concern during this period focused on the reconstruction of the country's education infrastructure – both schools and teachers; the reintegration into society of both ex-combatant youth and returnees through educational access, either via formal schooling or TVET; and accelerated learning programmes to assist in allowing students to catch up on lost education.

Many have described educational change since the conflict in Sierra Leone as a remarkable recovery (World Bank 2007). There was an enormous demand for access to education as post-war normality returned to the country, with many seeing education as the route to a more prosperous future (interviews with UNICEF staff 2011). Primary and secondary enrolment rates more than doubled

between 2000 and 2007 (MEYS 2010) (see Figure 3 below). The World Bank (2007) notes that “[t]he ingredient that has most contributed to the revitalization and rapid recovery of the Sierra Leonean education system is the government’s commitment to it.” In the immediate post-conflict environment, the educational sector was perceived to be the most corrupt in the country, which makes the achievements all the more impressive. Furthermore, despite the enormous increase in numbers of students in primary school, the pass rate of students taking the NPSE remained stable between 2000 and 2005, revealing “an optimistic picture of the learning outcomes of primary school students” (Ibid.). Finally, the World Bank in 2007 noted that early accomplishments in decentralization were an important element of impressive progress in the educational sector.

**FIGURE 3: PRIMARY SCHOOL ENROLMENT TRENDS, 1987/88–2004/05**



Source: World Bank and MEST, 2006: 19

At the general national level, the education policy framework was initially grounded in Sierra Leone’s first PRSP, A National Programme for Food Security, Job Creation and Good Governance, which ran from 2002 to 2007. While security and political processes were prioritized, educational reconstruction was also in the agenda as part of Pillar Three – Human Development (the other pillars being Promoting Good Governance, Peace and Security; and Promoting Pro-Poor Sustainable Growth):

*Pillar Three supports human development. After food security, the priorities of the poor are access to education, health and water, as the route out of extreme poverty. Education sector objectives are basic education for all, and manpower development in key sectors. The New education policy focuses on three areas: access to basic education, especially for girls, providing school feeding, and qualitative improvement (books, materials and teacher education); tertiary training to meet human resources for poverty reduction programmes; and HIV/AIDS prevention education. Special-needs education for disabled and vulnerable children is a further objective (Government of Sierra Leone).*

During this period, a range of programmes were initiated. Some of the most important are briefly detailed below:

CREPS– UNICEF, Plan International and the MEST began CREPS in 2000, and the Norwegian Refugee Council became an implementing partner in 2002. CREPS condensed six years of primary education into three years, and was aimed at targeting the generation of youth that had missed out on their education due to the

conflict. This accelerated learning programme was modelled on a Liberian project that was already in operation, but also incorporated aspects of the earlier RAPID-ED programme (mentioned above) and linked educational activities with psychosocial and trauma interventions. CREPS was seen by interviewees as an important and valuable educational intervention, well suited to a period when so many children and youth needed to catch up on their missed education (interview with Plan Sierra Leone; interviews with UNICEF staff 2011). CREPS sought to target demobilized youth, and refugee returnees from Liberia and Guinea and youth who had missed out on primary education, particularly girls.

In a succinct evaluation of CREPS for the NRC, Johannesen (2005) noted that the programme, while not without its problems, was seen as being very effective and valued. Classes generally took place in normal primary schools in the afternoons when the regular intake had finished. Unqualified and untrained teachers were recruited from among the local population, and underwent a two-week training course. They would then have one day per month of in-service training and be allocated a supervisor who would act as mentor and observe them regularly. The majority of the teachers would later enrol in the Distance Education Programme (DEP), which was a three-year, part time teaching education programme leading to the Higher Teaching Certificate, which is the official teaching qualification in Sierra Leone.

CREPS was well funded and organized, with good collaboration between a range of agencies and the Ministry of Education. UNICEF ended its involvement in 2005, determining that the majority of target children and youth had either already benefited from CREPS or were unlikely to return to education and because the programme now risked offering a parallel system to the educational system (Johanssen 2005 and interviews with UNICEF staff). Essentially, the idea that CREPS was developing a parallel system was based on the fact that more resources were invested in CREPS relative to the normal primary education funding, and secondly, that some parents and children were opting for CREPS rather than attending a full primary cycle, presumably because of both time and quality issues. IBIS continued to deliver CREPS in remote areas, although the current project cycle will end in 2012. IBIS will be making a decision in early 2012 on the future of the project.

CREPS is an important educational intervention with a programme rationale that providing an accelerated learning programme for children who missed out on their education during the war would help children move on with their lives and improve their situation. It was also linked to the DDR process, outlined below, which added a security dimension to the role of CREPS: If students were in school, they would have less incentive to return to war (interviews with UNICEF staff and Plan Sierra Leone). Thirdly, it also retained a psychosocial and trauma element, which sought to address the particular needs of children and youth affected, in different ways, by the legacies of the conflict.

The programme was well funded and well organized, with regular monitoring of teachers. Part of the rationale for closing the programme was that it was in danger of developing a parallel system and that its high costs could be better used to

strengthen the normal public primary education programme and assist more students (Johannesen 2005; interview with Plan Sierra Leone; interviews with UNICEF staff 2011). This also included concern that large amounts of resources had been spent on teacher training and that these teachers should now be integrated into the state system. These issues do not undermine the importance of the CREPS approach, but more so emphasize the importance of timing and knowing when to stop certain projects so they do not create unintended outcomes and problems in the broader education system. Similarly, it also forces UNICEF and others to think about how their short-term responsive interventions to the effects of the war on education are related to the long-term recovery of the national education system, and of the dangers of unintentional outcomes of necessary interventions.

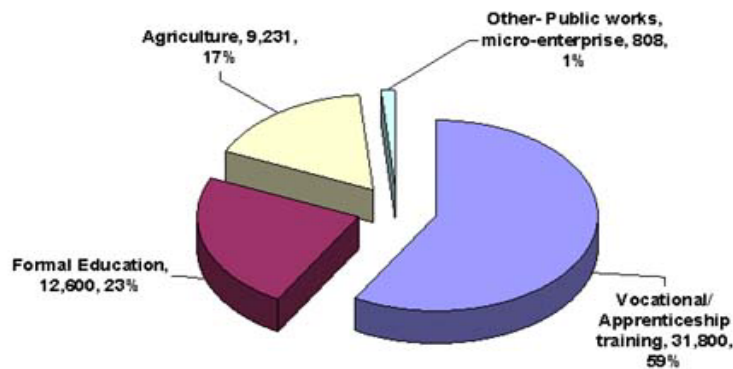
### ***5.2.1. Demobilization, disarmament and rehabilitation programmes during three periods from 1998 to 2002***

It is estimated that more than 72, 000 people have undertaken DDR programmes since 1998, and this was a central task of the UN mission. While the vast majority were adults (65,645), some 6,845 were children and 4,751 were women. Education featured prominently in all of the DDR programmes, with 59 per cent undertaking skills training and 24 per cent entering/re-entering formal education (see Figure 4 below). The educational component of these programmes, while valued by interviewees, was often seen as insufficient and inadequate to the needs of the ex-combatants. Six months of skills training was perceived as being too short to provide an adequate basis for productive employment (Smith 2011). A wide range of initiatives were set up that targeted the rehabilitation and return of child soldiers. The National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration noted that of the 6,845 children demobilized, 189 demobilized in 1998; 1982 were demobilized between 1999 and 2000; and finally, from May 2001 to January 2002, 4,674 were demobilized. There was also a sense that women ex-combatants were often absent from official statistics (MacKenzie 2009). In response, UNICEF set up a complementary programme of DDR for female ex-combatants –The Girls Left Behind programme – and the IRC set up a similar programme known as Reintegration of War-Affected Children and Adolescents Project (USAID 2005; Betancourt et al. 2008; Coulter 2009).

#### ***FIGURE 4: EX-COMBATANTS IN DDR***



**Ex-combatants that benefitted from Reintegration Support.**



Source: UN DDR Resource Centre, <[www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=60#approach](http://www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=60#approach)>.

**TABLE 2: DDR BENEFICIARIES**

Target beneficiary group	Original estimated population	Actual numbers	Percentage
Revolutionary United Front	15,000	24,352	162%
Civil Defence Forces	15,000	37,377	249%
AFRC/ex-SLA	13,000	8,527	66%
Other paramilitary groups	2,000	2,234	112%
<b>Programme total</b>	<b>45,000</b>	<b>72,490</b>	<b>161%</b>

The process of reintegration also entailed work by UNICEF and other agencies of tracing children who had been separated from their families during the war – both child soldiers and non-combatants – and strategies to return them to both their families and their communities. These processes involved a range of educational processes to encourage communities to welcome back those who had taken up arms against them – whether coerced or willingly (interviews with UNICEF staff and international NGO representatives).

Interview and documentary data suggest that there were a wide range of lessons learned from the experience of DDR that need to be taken into account in future planning. These include: separate care centres for boys and girls should be established; the centres should be located far from the sites holding demobilized adults; traditional healing and faith-based interventions were useful in assisting recovery and reintegration; basic literacy and mathematics should be taught alongside skills-based training; there should be careful reflection on the types of skills promoted in skills training to avoid saturation in the market; skills training

should be longer than six months and of a high quality to give the ex-combatants a chance; skills training was not just positive for the recipients, but also gave the local community a sense that the returnees might contribute to society; and there should be adequate follow-up of participants after the completion of the programme.

Reflecting on the educational interventions linked to the DDR, it is clear that they have strong security rationales, with the underpinning programme rationale that demobilized soldiers, through either vocational or formal education, could reconstruct their lives and thus not return to the path of war. These educational interventions also have social rationales, which are linked to issues of dealing with trauma and psychosocial issues. They also had economic underpinnings, and including assistance in setting up small enterprises, particularly motorbike taxis and carpentry enterprises, with the underlying presumption that working ex-combatants won't be tempted to return to war. As noted by Smith (2011), the danger with these types of interventions in Sierra Leone is that they might raise expectations of employment that they are later unable to deliver. Despite these reservations, it is clear that the educational and skills training components play a vital role in assisting ex-combatants in the complex process of transition from war to recovery.

### **5.2.2. School building and reconstruction programmes**

Between 2003 and 2007, the Rehabilitation of Basic Education Project, known as the SABUBU project, was set up by the World Bank and the African Development Bank using US\$42 million to assist the Government of Sierra Leone in re-establishing education services (30 per cent of schools nationwide) to achieve basic operational levels and build the capacity of the MEST to plan, manage and deliver educational services. Teacher training was also a component. In interviews with Sierra Leone informants on the issue of post-conflict educational reconstruction, SABABU is normally the first programme mentioned, and it is held in high esteem. There are a range of conflicting assessments of the efficacy of the SABABU project, and clearly there have been a range of problems associated with the project. The project had a range of components, including school-building reconstruction and refurbishment, teacher training, textbook provision and capacity building within the Ministry of Education. The final project evaluation (Republic of Sierra Leone/African Development Bank 2010) recognized that the ambitions of the project were scaled down from their original intentions. The African Development Bank contribution was scaled down from reconstructing and refurbishing primary schools (from 185 to 98), Community Education Centres and Vocational Training Colleges (from 40 to 8) and Teachers Housing (from 113 to 8). Project completion was also delayed by 33 months (Ibid.).

**TABLE 3: SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES SUPPORTED BY ADF FUNDS**

Number and type of building	At appraisal	Revised by Ministry	Actual	Output
Primary schools	185	98	98	-87
JSS schools	40	54	54	+14
CECs and VTCs	40	8	8	-32
Teachers' housing	113	–	12	-101

*Source: Republic of Sierra Leone/African Development Bank 2010:4)*

Jabbi (2007) further notes that the project was faced with a range of problems linked to corruption, the selling of textbooks that were meant to be distributed for free, and poor workmanship from contractors tasked with the construction of the educational infrastructure.

The Islamic Development Bank, the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa, the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative and UNICEF were all also involved in a range of other school building and restoration initiatives. In interviews with a range of international NGO and bilateral donor staff, issues were raised concerning the widespread corruption that remained in the country that diverted valuable resources away from those who most needed it and slowed down progress in the sector.

From the interviews, it was clear that there were important lessons to be learned in terms of the project management of school building programmes, both in relation to transparency and measures to prevent corruption and to ensure the quality of building.

School construction and refurbishment projects were clearly a core priority of the education system with such widespread devastation during the war. In terms of the programme rationale, the reconstruction of schools was a clear sign to the population of state presence: a signal that the state was present to deliver social services needed by the population, and also a sign that normality was returning. It was also a visible peace dividend. However, one ex-government official challenged that, and stated that often the people didn't realize that the Government was involved, and that the logos and symbols of the different international organizations involved in the project meant that the state was often unable to build its legitimacy through these types of interventions, as the presumption was that these initiatives were taking place despite the state, rather than because of it. This issue of the branding by development partners of projects throughout Sierra Leone is an important one in relation to building state legitimacy, and outside of Freetown there is a pervasive landscape of billboards attributing projects to different organizations. Perhaps a balance needs to be drawn between self-publicity by development partners and the strategic strengthening of the state on these issues.

### **5.2.3. Refugee return programmes**

UNICEF worked with UNHCR to support returnee refugees, including by providing education. There were a wide range of programmes initiated to re-settle refugees. In the education sector, calls were sent out via Sierra Leonean embassies, the Sierra Leonean Teachers Union and many others to encourage teachers to return to the country and resume their work. Backdated salary was provided for many of the returnees. UNHCR assisted the repatriation and reintegration assistance provided for 272,000 Sierra Leonean refugees who returned to Sierra Leone from Guinea and Liberia between 2000 and 2004 (Sperl and De Vriese 2005).

### 5.3. In the medium term (2007-present)

In this latest period, and in response to the success of the expansion of the education system – particularly basic education, there has been a shift of emphasis towards working on issues related to the quality of education, sparked by recognition that educational achievement was weak. The talk is of a shift from hardware to software, and there is also a shifting emphasis on upstream work addressing the lack of capacity within the Ministry of Education. During this period, one gets the sense from the different interviewees that educational strategy is much less about reconstruction and concerns with the legacies of the war, and much more about broader discourses related to the general relationship between education and international development.

In 2007, the Education Sector Plan (ESP) (2007–2015) was launched, which also allowed for Sierra Leone to gain access to FTI funding (see Box 2 below). The plan was developed with strong support from UNICEF and is a very sophisticated and well-developed plan that addresses the main issues affecting the education sector and the obstacles to its ongoing development.

In a comprehensive review, it notes a range of challenges facing the sector as it emerges from conflict.

#### **Challenges facing the education system in Sierra Leone**

##### **Staffing**

- Brain drain at higher education level.
- Preponderance of untrained and unqualified teachers, especially at the primary level.
- Teachers for scarce subject areas such as mathematics, French, science, technical and vocational subjects.
- Meeting the needs of expanding enrolment rates.
- Meeting the quality needs of the system.
- Providing trained personnel for preschools, distance education and skills training.

##### **Access**

- Planning for a 30 per cent increase in primary school-age children accessing school by 2015.
- Planning for increases in enrolment at all levels and a projected 2.9 million school-age population by 2015.

##### **Finances**

- Meeting the cost of post-war reconstruction.
- Meeting the cost of an expanding education system.
- Meeting skills training needs and the provision of a literate and skilled middle-level manpower.
- Meeting the cost of all 'free schooling' programmes and their consequences.

##### **Gender issues**

- Providing girl-friendly environments in our educational institutions.
- Addressing the gross disparities in male-female enrolment rates at the post-primary level.
- Need for concrete programmes to address gender-based violence within schools.
- Obtaining more female role models.

#### **Geographic parity issues**

- Obtaining an equitable distribution of educational institutions.
- Obtaining an improved distribution of qualified teachers.
- Obtaining more even distribution of enrolment rates.
- Obtaining more even distribution of entry and pass rates.

#### **Health and nutrition issues**

- Poor water, sanitation and toilet facilities.
- Frequent absences from school because of illnesses such as malaria and dysentery.
- Danger and potential effect of HIV and AIDS on education.

#### **Providing for those with special needs**

- Adapt and build facilities
- Training teachers for special needs students
- Provide special needs equipment and materials

#### **Monitoring and evaluation for accountability**

- A number of unsatisfactorily equipped District Education Offices and de-motivated inspectors.
- Quality of inspectors.
- Coordination between central and local government.

#### **General issues**

- Certainty and security of teaching and learning materials supplies for schools.
- Combating corruption and malpractices in the governance, planning and management of education.

***ESP (2007–2015), Government of Sierra Leone, 2007***

Emanating from these issues, the core strategies of the ESP are:

- building up infrastructure and an adequate qualified teaching force to cope with the present and future requirements for universal primary education.
- reviewing the curriculum and making it more relevant to the needs of individuals, communities and the nation as a whole.
- developing a policy to address, among other things, the gender issues which negatively impact on the education sector, such as gender inequality and gender-based violence.
- directly tackling the problem of out-of-school children with targeted responses that break down the barriers preventing children from going to school, and thereby reach those disadvantaged children who have

special needs, come from underserved rural areas or live in extreme poverty.

- supporting post-primary education as a linchpin for the education sector and society as a whole –since post-primary education produces skilled personnel and technicians such as administrators, qualified teachers and female role models essential for the healthy development of the nation.
- making increased provisions for literacy and skills training, including the establishment of a book policy.
- increasing the capacity of education actors at all levels – national, district and school – and promoting the decentralization process.
- improving data collection and analysis for monitoring, planning and accountability purposes through the recently established Education Management Information System.
- improving on quality, mobilizing and making effective use of resources, including the promotion of public-private partnerships and cost recovery, at the tertiary level.

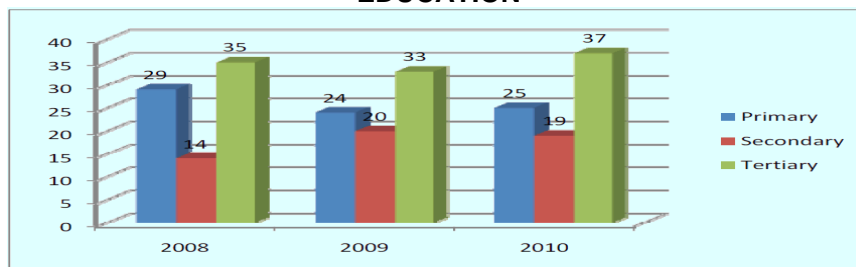
Despite these positive signs, the education system remains seriously underfunded with a shortfall of US\$254 million for the nine-year ESP, which threatens its longevity and heightens the likelihood that some issues will be prioritized at the expense of others. Despite the initial euphoria of securing FTI funding, this actually amounted to only US\$13.9 million, which is less than 5 per cent of the total funding gap for the sector. Furthermore, there has been a great deal of difficulty in gaining access to the funds and tensions are ongoing (Boak 2010; Smith 2011).

Interviews conducted and documents reviewed for this research reveal a wide range of serious challenges to the sector. At least 30 per cent of school-age children remain out of school. At primary level, enrolment disparities between boys and girls have almost disappeared, but at secondary level, more boys continue to enrol than girls, particularly in the Northern Eastern regions, where secondary fees have been dropped for girls in an effort to encourage enrolment. This fee waiver for girls entering JSS was extended to the entire country in 2008, in addition to the children still out of school (25–30 per cent, according to the World Bank, at least 30 per cent according to the MEYS (2010) quoted above, the gross completion rate in primary education in 2004/05 was 65 per cent, in the same year JSS gross completion was only 31 per cent (World Bank 2007).

Since the Education for All (EFA) goal for Sierra Leone stipulates universal basic education, the challenge to achieving EFA in Sierra Leone is particularly great. The challenge increases even more given the imperative for quality universal education. Classroom conditions remain poor, learning materials are insufficient in quantity and quality, and many teachers remain under-qualified. Primary schooling “is still not completely free because many schools impose a variety of charges on their students,” (Ibid.), increasing barriers to schooling for the most vulnerable children. The number of students sitting national level examinations has increased, but performance, especially at secondary level, remains weak. Large disparities exist in terms of access and performance; these are based on gender, area of residence

and household wealth (Ibid.). MEYS policy acknowledges that “unequal access to education threatens our hard-won security” (2010). Similarly, the quality of education is geographically highly uneven and mirrors the urban/rural divides of other social indicators. Despite the written commitment to prioritizing basic education within government policy, there seems to be strong support for the retention of large amounts of resources for tertiary education, reflecting the reproduction of colonial and post-colonial elitism discussed (see *Table 1 below and Section 4*). Furthermore, the lack of reliable statistics in the education sector continues to provide an obstacle to efficient planning and management. Finally, capacity development with the education sector is clearly a major concern for many development partners, with many posts unfilled, and many others filled with under-qualified and inexperienced personnel.

**TABLE 4: EDUCATION BUDGETS REMAIN SKEWED TOWARDS TERTIARY EDUCATION**



Source: Boak 2010.

The ESP itself also reflects perhaps an ongoing dilemma/tension within the Government of Sierra Leone as to whether it needs to continue to focus on a conflict-sensitive approach or whether it is time to move on to a more ‘business as usual’ mode. In the opening executive summary, the ESP notes the main challenges for education as being:

*the need for continued healing and rehabilitation as the nation recovers from the effects of war; the need to prevent the occurrence of further conflict by fostering a conducive environment that prizes the values of peace, democracy, equality and tolerance; the need to produce a qualified and relevant workforce to spearhead the country’s development; and the need to cater to a steadily increasing population as peace flourishes and the economy grows (Government of Sierra Leone 2007).*

The ESP is clear, however, that “Sierra Leone’s education system is in transition from post-conflict recovery to sustainable development” (2007). The question that arises from this is whether ‘sustainable development’ in the education sector in Sierra Leone should prioritize some of the drivers of conflict: addressing geographical educational inequalities, youth unemployment and skills rather than merely replicating a menu of educational reforms repeated and rolled out across low-income countries that prioritize growth before equity. That is, should there be a conflict-sensitive model of sustainable educational development and might the normal global menu ultimately increase the chances of a return to conflict?

In reference to the ESP, the plan itself is not necessarily moving away from a conflict-sensitive approach to education, as potentially there are many issues included that attempt to redress the balance of social and geographical inequities that underpinned the outbreak of war. The challenge is in the prioritization of which issues, particularly in an environment where optimistic budgets remain unachieved. This is particularly important, as we have already noted that there is a huge financial shortfall in the proposed plan; as a result, prioritization will inevitably result. The evidence of whether the Government is going to follow a peacebuilding approach will be seen in the careful monitoring of the implementation, practice and distribution of resources, not in the policy document itself – as the evidence on the proportion of funding actually going to higher education clearly demonstrates.

#### **5.4. UNICEF's current educational interventions**

Kwasi Fosu and Mwabu (2010) note in a background report for the Human Development Report 2010 that between 1990 and 2007, Sierra Leone received 34.1 per cent of GNI from official development assistance (ODA), with the average ODA percentage in Africa in 2007 being 4.3 per cent. Thus we can see how dependent Sierra Leone is on the resources coming from outside, and the inevitable influence that comes with this in terms of policy-making and setting priorities. Despite this, many development partners and UNICEF representatives denied their power and influence over policy-making in Sierra Leone. For many of the informants, there was a sense that education had not been given priority by donors, and this often left UNICEF assuming a lot of responsibility. One bilateral donor representative noted that:

*With UNICEF– they're obviously the lead – in education here. The difficulty is in education there aren't many people so UNICEF has been carrying the can for a very long time. They give an awful lot of support to the Ministry both in terms of helping to arrange meetings and take minutes, consultancies, funding this and that...*

Despite the lack of support from the donor community, with UNICEF as the lead partner in education, and in a shifting aid environment where donor coordination and state building are prioritized (DFID 2010), one can, however, clearly see UNICEF's imprint on government policy and strategy in education in Sierra Leone, and much of the thinking in the ESP (2007–2015) outlined above that addresses equity issues can be seen as rooted in UNICEF's rights-based approach to education (UNICEF 2007).

UNICEF staff conceptualizes their educational interventions as operating at three core components: community participation initiatives; Institutional support and coordination; and support for MEYS.

- 1) The community participation initiatives include promoting school management committees, health clubs, mothers' clubs, national budget monitoring, support for decentralization, and a mentoring programme focused on teenage pregnancy.
- 2) The institutional support initiatives include support for teachers' training that reaches all teacher training colleges in the country (upgrading lecturers' knowledge, providing basic materials, supporting classes on child-centred



teaching methods, supporting a distance education programme for trainee teachers and developing an emerging issues unit – includes human rights, civic and democracy (peace education included here), health and environment (HIV and AIDS, climate change, hygiene, etc.) and gender).

- 3) The coordination and support for MEYS includes capacity building, evaluation, information capture (to support measuring results and planning), assistance with curriculum revision (the curriculum is due to be revised this year), policy simulation and assistance with documentation necessary for the Fast Track Initiative educational funding.

In discussions with UNICEF staff, it is clear that the primary focus is on strengthening the capacity of the Ministry of Education, with great concern regarding system strengthening and 'upstream work'. This 'upstream' work is seen as crucial for the long-term sustainability of educational improvements. This policy of system strengthening reflects a broader state-building agenda that seeks to better coordinate international education interventions in line with national priorities developed around the PRSP1 and PRSP2. However, with few donors on the ground in Freetown, there is a clear perception that UNICEF is leading rather than following, and perhaps that its mandate is insufficiently broad to fully guide sectoral development. It is also a broader manifestation of the difficulties of building partnerships with governments where capacity and resources are severely challenged.

What is clear from discussions with UNICEF education staff is that peacebuilding, rooted in a strategic analysis of the drivers of conflict, is not at the centre of their educational thinking and policymaking. UNICEF Sierra Leone educational interventions appear to be driven by broader and perhaps more generalized 'education and development' best practice, gathered through UNICEF experience throughout many decades and rooted in a human rights approach to education that has at its centre a strong equity approach. This equity approach is important in that most conflicts are driven by injustices and inequalities, which a strong equity focus normally would address.

However, while UNICEF interviewees suggest that peacebuilding is prevalent across everything that is done in education, this appears true only in a quite generalized and abstract way – in that a good-quality, equitable education system can contribute to peacebuilding, as outlined above. Interventions rooted in a concerted conflict-analysis approach, centred on peacebuilding, would alter quite substantially what UNICEF does in the education terrain. This may shift UNICEF strategic priorities, and perhaps lead it to being more forceful with the Government of Sierra Leone in driving through an equity agenda that addressed and prioritized the ongoing inequalities prevalent in the country, a point we will return to in the later section.

One of the core areas of work that UNICEF has been involved in throughout the period of the report is the issue of teachers and training. From RAPID-ED to CREPS, SABABU and the wide range of distance and college-based teacher training programmes, UNICEF has been a central player in training teachers and influencing their practice. For that reason, the next section will explore issues related to teachers and teacher training in more depth.

## 6. CORE ISSUES FOR TEACHERS AND TEACHER TRAINING

*Without teachers there can be no learning. The adequate provision of motivated and qualified teachers is the cornerstone of a successful UPE [universal primary education] programme and a thriving education system. (Republic of Sierra Leone 2007).*

There are a range of issues relating to teachers that merit special attention in the case of Sierra Leone and the contribution that education can make to peacebuilding. The first thing to say is that teachers were not immune to the conflict in Sierra Leone, finding themselves both targets, victims and – on occasion – perpetrators of the violence, with thousands displaced both internally and in neighbouring countries. When peace returned to Sierra Leone, the education system had been decimated and the task of reconstruction was daunting. In interviews across the country, harrowing stories were told of the effects of the war on teachers, teacher trainers and educational institutions (interviews with teachers and teacher trainers 2011).

All of the teacher training institutes visited outside of Freetown were badly damaged during the war, and/or occupied by the warring parties. Informants recounted how they fled their villages and their campuses – often with nothing more than their certificates – to Freetown after initial RUF rebel attacks. Yet there is also an untold story of resilience and courage, a story of how teacher training courses were reconstituted in Freetown, using school premises out of hours and calling trainees to return from exile in Guinea, Liberia and elsewhere (interviews with teacher trainers in Port Loko Teacher Training College; Northern Polytechnic, Makeni; Eastern Polytechnic, Kenema). Apart from the collapse of the entire education system during and after the invasion by the RUF into Freetown from June 1999 until May 2000, teacher training continued throughout the conflict, with students continuing to take final exams. Interviews in Freetown Teachers College revealed how the teacher trainers collectively pieced together the curriculum and re-developed the teaching materials after the college was completely destroyed in 1999, a practice recounted by all of the different teacher training institutes that were visited. These and other stories reflect the enormous personal sacrifices and efforts that many teachers, teacher trainers and administrators have invested in ensuring the continuation of the education system in Sierra Leone. A feat all the more remarkable in an environment where salaries are very low, always arrive late and often don't arrive at all, and working conditions are always difficult and challenging. It is perhaps this enthusiasm and resilience that represents the biggest and most important resource that the education system has.

With respect to teachers, the education system faced a number of challenges in the post-war period, and most of these remain today – 10 years after the official ending of the war. The ESP 2007–2015 (see Box 1 below) notes a range of challenges, with some of the core issues being the need to encourage more people, particularly women, to train to become teachers; employ more female teachers (only 30 per cent of primary teachers and 20 per cent of secondary teachers are

women, with these averages deteriorating as one moves outside the Western area and into rural locations versus urban conurbations); re-train and qualify more teachers (more than 40 per cent of primary teachers are unqualified, 10 per cent of secondary teachers – again, with similar worsening of averages as you move away from the Western area); improve teaching resources, reduce teacher attrition (few teachers remain for more than four years); improve terms and conditions and delays in payment of salaries (many teachers are spending 70 per cent of their salaries just to get to work; salaries arrive late; and many teachers are awaiting official appointment and work without a state salary). One overarching issue related to this is the phenomena of ghost teachers, whereby payroll evidence of working teachers far exceeds the actual number of teachers. This relates to both problems of accounting and documentation – several teacher surveys have been carried out, but have not been accepted as reliable, due to corruption and collusion across the system of reporting. As a result of this phenomena, few new appointments are made and a stalemate results. A renewed attempt at documenting the number of teachers is currently underway, and is being supported by UNICEF.

**Box 1: Key challenges for teachers (Excerpts from the ESP 2007–2015)**

**Access to teacher training institutions:** Teachers are essential for delivering education services and for improving student learning outcomes. To be able to meet the expansion needs, secondary-school completers should be encouraged to access these institutions. Females pursuing the teacher training courses must be automatically offered grant-in-aid awards and may have admission criteria slightly less than that of the male candidates. Special effort should be made to enrol more women for teacher training courses in mathematics, the sciences, and technical and vocational subjects.

**Employ more female teachers:** MEST records show that approximately 30 per cent of primary and 20 per cent of secondary schoolteachers are female. Although these national figures are a little misleading – they conceal large regional variations; for example, the share of female primary teachers ranging from 49 per cent in the Western area to 25 per cent in the Southern region – the fact still remains that Sierra Leone has a lower share of female teachers in primary schools when compared with 20 other countries in Africa.

**Need for qualified teaching staff:** Throughout the years, there has been a colossal increase in enrolment at all levels. Despite this, the production of teachers by the teacher training institutions has not kept pace with this increase. The consequence has been a high percentage of unqualified teachers and high pupil to teacher ratios. Approximately 40 per cent of primary schoolteachers and 10 per cent of secondary teachers are unqualified. The lack of qualified staff is even worse in rural areas. The trained teacher situation is even worse in TVET institutions at school level. According to a recent survey, only 28 per cent of teachers and administrators in the TVET sector have professional training. As stated in the Country Status Report, “considering that many of those who are classified as professional teachers may not be teaching TVET subjects but support subjects

such as English, the percent of staff qualified to teach TVET subjects is even lower.”

**Provision of teachers’ resource facilities:** With the expectations of meeting an expanded schooling system, the teachers must also be equipped with teaching and learning materials, which more often than not are scarce. Unavailability of sufficient infrastructure such as lecture rooms, laboratories, workshops and libraries in teacher training institutions, polytechnics and universities are also serious problems. The establishment of well-equipped teaching resource centres in each inspectorial district for a variety of purposes and with access to information and communication technologies would help drastically.

**Curbing teacher attrition:** A significant percentage of the products of teacher training institutions finds employment outside the classroom. Most who do end up in the classroom stay in the teaching profession for less than four years. Many who leave claim that they move on to jobs that offer better conditions of service. Matters are further compounded by the observation that many teachers from rural areas do not return to their villages upon graduating, but tend to stay in the urban areas where their training institutions are based, hence depriving rural areas of trained and qualified teachers.

**Teaching Service Commission:** There is a need to establish a Teaching Service Commission for overall responsibility for all human-resource management functions, which can serve as the sole employing authority. The presence of a Teaching Service Commission will contribute immensely in the addressing of teacher issues.

**Enhancing teacher status:** As the need for teachers increase, so does the need to improve their conditions of service. A re-visitation of the present conditions of service of teachers would also help, given that 70 per cent or more of the salaries of a number of teachers is consumed by travelling to the workplace and back. Timely payment of salaries on a regular basis, providing teacher housing, some form of transportation and incentives for teaching in rural areas, will all serve as motivating factors that will positively influence the retention of trained teachers in the classroom. Making it easier for teachers to get loans and ensuring that more teachers are considered for annual national awards would also contribute to reversing the present negative perception of the teaching profession

**Providing basic logistics to monitoring staff:** Teachers, like the schools and the teaching/learning environment, are all supposed to be monitored by staff of the Inspectorate Directorate of MEST. The inspectors claim not to be provided with the resources, materials and equipment needed for them to do their jobs properly. The consequence is that the inspectors and other officers of the directorate cannot effectively carry out their functions. In as much as there is an appeal for the provision of the essential logistics for the inspectors, it should also be noted that the criteria for appointment into that directorate should be revisited if there must be efficiency in the conduct of the duties of that office.

*(Government of Sierra Leone 2007)*

Many of the broader problems of the education system: low-quality education, high teacher-pupil ratios (particularly in rural and remote areas), widespread corruption (albeit on a small scale), high geographical unevenness in educational access, quality and retention all appear to be linked to the fact that teachers are poorly paid, have no incentive to work in rural areas, have low motivation, leave the profession early or find ways to subsidize their salaries by charging for private lessons outside school hours, imposing fees on children or forcing children to work on their land. There are also a range of issues related to abuse of power by teachers – both through violence and sexual abuse – which have led to rising concerns about the situation of education in the country (Ibis, Concern, Plan, and Catholic Relief Services 2011).

The poor terms and conditions of service of Sierra Leonean teachers has been a point of national and international interest and concern (see Bennell 2004, Action Aid 2005). Average teachers' salaries are approximately US\$50 dollars per month. Despite the Government's recognition of the issue, detailed in the ESP, it has argued that IMF conditionalities linked to loans has prevented it from both increasing remuneration and improving the recruitment of teachers. Furthermore, during the fieldwork, I encountered many teachers, and many more stories about teachers, who were awaiting official appointment but had been working without an official salary for up to four years.

IMF-imposed ceilings on public sector pay are linked to concerns regarding macroeconomic stability and fears of inflation (Action Aid 2005). This situation partly reflects Sierra Leone's weak financial position – necessitating large amounts of donor support to fund core services (including education and health), but also the competing priorities of the international community in Sierra Leone, which have placed strong emphasis on investments in governance and security, and less emphasis on the core public services of health and education sectors. As mentioned earlier, the funding gap for the 2007–2015 ESP is US\$254 million; a failure to attract this kind of funding has meant that core issues such as teachers' terms and conditions have not been addressed. Yet the introduction of a decent living wage for teachers – combined with subsidies for teaching in rural areas – may well be a solid macroeconomic investment in the long term if one thinks about the potential long-term effects this might have on teacher retention, motivation and education quality, as well as in overcoming geographical inequalities and reducing corruption – all of which could play an important role in peace-building.

Beyond this core economic issue, which clearly remains unfinished business, there have been a range of important national and international interventions related to the issue of enhancing the quality of teachers and teaching: improving teacher training and innovations therein (full-time teacher training, improving distance teacher training, improving in-service teacher training) and introducing a new 'Code of Conduct for Teachers and other Education Personnel in Sierra Leone'. UNICEF has been at the centre of all of these initiatives, as the lead education partner in the sector. UNICEF staff have been promoting pedagogical reform by training teachers in child-centred pedagogies, aimed at serving and trainee teachers – qualified and unqualified.

### **6.1. Distance-education teacher training programmes**

The Distance Education Programme started in 2002 as an initiative of the Freetown Teachers College and its director, Sahr Sorrie. Its target was to address the huge amount of unqualified teachers who were working in schools across the country, and particularly in rural and remote areas. Assisted initially by the Commonwealth for Learning, the course is run out of the different regional teacher colleges across the country. Plan Sierra Leone and UNICEF were involved from the onset, both in assisting with the development of the project and in funding participants. The programme takes place during school holidays and breaks and lasts for three years, leading to the successful trainees receiving the same Higher Teaching Certificate and fully qualified teacher status.

The programme allows teachers to continue their work while studying, and the location of the training meant that trainees would not have to travel too far to receive the inputs. While the initial programme of modules focused only on the compulsory subjects, UNICEF has introduced training in child-centred pedagogy and, more recently, emerging issues – which covers sensitization for teachers and training methods for dealing with issues such as health, human rights, citizenship, peace education, etc. Apart from providing inputs during the school breaks, tutors also observe trainees in their classrooms each semester.

The Distance Education Programme has been an important catalyst in reducing the number of unqualified teachers in Sierra Leone, and has proven to be highly successful.

While UNICEF has supported the three-year programme, it has also initiated a one-year Distance Learning Programme, in response to the pressing need of training more unqualified teachers. In interviews with a range of stakeholders, there did seem to be some tension concerning this new initiative – that it might be counterproductive and that its short duration was insufficient to train a teacher. However, many of those interviewed saw the one-year programme more as a stepping stone to the three-year programme rather than an endpoint in itself, particularly due to the status attached to the Higher Teaching Certificate, and the greater potential remuneration.

### **6.2. Section conclusion**

From a peacebuilding perspective, the role of teachers in shaping the minds and ideas of young people is central. A good teacher can make a real difference in children's lives, transforming their horizons and their aspirations. A concern for quality education necessitates a concern for the development of quality and qualified teachers. The even provision of qualified teachers across a country can play an important role in reducing unequal educational access and achievement. A balanced gender representation of teachers similarly sends a strong message to girls that they are equal and have rights. The opposites of all of these factors can equally undermine the education system and contribute to conflict.

The centrality and importance of focusing on teachers appears to have been given insufficient attention and priority in Sierra Leone, particularly in the immediate post-

conflict period. It appears that many unqualified teachers were trained for short periods of time or for particular projects, but a long-term and coordinated plan for the teaching force has been lacking. Poor salaries that tardily and irregularly paid and a lack of incentives to work in rural areas has exacerbated this crisis, weakening the potential for teacher retention and increasing the urban-rural divide. These core structural issues need to be addressed, as a priority, if the education system is to move towards a more equitable footing and address the massive geographical inequalities that exist in both access and quality of education.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

### **7.1. Locate peacebuilding initiatives supported through education programming within broader approaches being undertaken in the case study countries**

In this paper we have shown that in order to locate peacebuilding initiatives supported through education programming within broader approaches to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, we need first to understand how the international community has diagnosed the causes of the country's conflict and its overall remedy, and how this relates to national political forces. We then proceed to examine where education fits therein, and provide a potential critique and a suggestion of how education's role in peacebuilding might be strengthened.

What the paper has shown is that policy recipes of the international community, outlined above, drawn from debates on the drivers of the conflict in Sierra Leone have emphasized the 'greed' over 'grievance' aspects, albeit with differences of emphasis between agencies. That is to say that the RUF rebels were perceived as driven by criminal and resource acquisition intent rather than as the armed expression of the need to redistribute resources in the country. The repercussions of this approach have been hugely important for local, national and international policy framing in Sierra Leone in the post-conflict environment. Security, democracy and markets were seen as the remedy to healing the post-conflict situation and were prioritized in terms of resources, energy and emphasis. Redistribution and addressing the massive geographical and social inequalities – legacies of both the colonial and post-colonial regimes – were relegated to a subordinate priority.

The successive UN missions appear to have embraced this security-first approach, with peacekeeping and stabilization more evident in policies than transformatory peacebuilding. As a result, the international community has contributed to the restoration of power of the old order – albeit in a more democratic form – and sidestepped the need for more widespread social transformation. This reflects a narrow conceptualization of peacebuilding that appears dominant within the international policy debates on post-conflict intervention, which reduces the term to a mode of stabilization, and often pacification, and avoids notions of transformation. In Galtung's terms, this reflects a dominance of the notion of 'negative peace' over a 'positive peace' that would transform the underlying structural drivers of conflict. In Sierra Leone, these were clearly massive urban/rural geographical inequalities; the hegemony of Freetown and the Western areas over the rest of the country;

huge social inequalities and lack of social mobility; and a system of patronage rooted in local networks.

As a result of the prioritization of security, democracy and markets, education appears as a marginal component in the overall picture of reconstruction, which is lamentable, as education appears to be at the heart of both the core problems of Sierra Leone society and one of its potential solutions. The historical analysis demonstrates how British colonialism produced a highly elitist and geographically uneven education system, which was reproduced by post-colonial national elites and remained. Higher education and educational provision for elites was prioritized and the current educational proportion of spending on higher education reflects a continuation of this, despite policy documents that profess to prioritizing basic education. Demands for a more equitable education system were clearly at the heart of the drivers of the conflict, and returnees in the post-conflict environment similarly had high regard for the role of education. Importantly, the education system itself was devastated during the conflict, as a result of being targeted by rebel forces, and emerged out of the conflict badly in need of prioritization and reconstruction.

Fortunately, despite education being presented as a marginal activity in UN peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, this did not mean that funding for education through the UN family and via bilateral donors, did not happen across all phases of conflict and post-conflict intervention, and educational reconstruction and interventions have had important effects. However, the sector has not received the attention it merits. Despite this, UNICEF, Plan Sierra Leone, Save the Children, the International Red Cross and a range of other agencies have worked hard to reinforce the importance of educational interventions and reconstruction with the national Ministry of Education, with notable successes.

While often running parallel – rather than embedded in UN and international peacebuilding strategy – interventions have been important in bolstering the likelihood of a sustained peace. The role of education in the DDR process was pivotal in giving a second chance to former combatants. Similarly, the Sababu School Reconstruction Programme and other school-building programmes helped to build the legitimacy of the state and signify to remote populations the return of both normality and the state. The CREPS programme likewise played an important role in attempting to redress the educational losses of the war years for a generation of youth. Coverage and quality of these programmes could, however, have been much broader if more attention had been paid to the sector. Similarly, in the medium term, there continues to be a great deal of work being done by UNICEF and others alongside the Ministry of Education to build up a working national education system – that has the capacity to deliver quality education across the country – with ongoing pedagogical and curriculum reforms, to monitor effectively, to provide quality teachers – both male and female, and to deliver public education more equitably and evenly. All of these issues are works in progress and suffer from the fact – recognized by most development partner informants – that education has to date not received the necessary prioritization. DFID's recent allocation of £30 million for education in Sierra Leone is a reflection of this recognition.



## **7.2. Document country-specific education interventions where education has played an important role in contributing to peace or where it has missed the opportunity to do so**

### **During the conflict**

As the paper has shown, organizations such as UNICEF were engaged during the war in Sierra Leone in important attempts at providing schooling for those displaced by the conflict and ensuring that emergency education provision was available which addressed both psychosocial and educational needs. Within this humanitarian intervention period, educational provision was not prioritized by the majority of international actors; nevertheless, there were important innovations and attempts to provide temporary respite for children, deal with the psychosocial and traumatic effects of the conflict, and ensure a protective environment within which children could develop coping strategies (interviews with Plan Sierra Leone and UNICEF staff members). School-in-a-Box initiatives and RAPID-ED programmes sought both to provide children with temporary respite from the war and to address aspects of the trauma that they were experiencing.

The intensity of the conflict meant that some areas were harder to reach than others, and it was recognized that these types of interventions reached only a fraction of the target population. This was also a result of the fact that many agencies saw educational interventions as a secondary priority to other humanitarian concerns of the time. While the international debate on this issue appears to have moved forward in the past 10 years, interviews suggest that the relative importance of educational interventions during conflict remains a contested issue, both within UNICEF and among other agencies. More research and advocacy appears necessary in this area.

### **Immediate post-conflict period**

In the immediate post-war period, as noted in several interviews, there was a great surge of interest and appreciation of the importance of education, and government and international agencies struggled to cope with the upsurge in demand. Concern during this period focused around the reconstruction of the country's education infrastructure – both schools and teachers; the reintegration into society of both ex-combatant youth and returnees through educational access either via formal schooling or TVET; and accelerated learning programmes to assist in allowing students to catch up on lost education.

**CREPS** was an important educational intervention with a programme rationale that providing an accelerated learning programme for children who missed out on their education during the war would help them move on in their lives and improve their situation. It also had a psychosocial and trauma component, and was well funded and well organized. The programme was also linked to the DDR process, but coverage went well beyond child soldiers. Part of the rationale for closing the programme was that it was in danger of developing a parallel system and that its high costs could be better used to strengthen the normal public primary education programme and assist more students. This also included concern that large amounts of resources had been spent on teacher training and these teachers

should now be integrated into the state system. These issues do not undermine the importance of the CREPS approach, but more so emphasize the importance of timing, knowing when to stop certain projects so they do not create unintended outcomes and problems in the broader education system. Similarly, it also forces UNICEF and others to think about how their short-term responsive interventions to the effects of the war on education are related to the long-term recovery of the national education system, and of the dangers of unintentional outcomes of necessary interventions.

The **DDR process** represents a key component of the UN and international response to the conflict in Sierra Leone, and there were a range of important lessons learned from the process itemized in the report. In terms of the specific education lessons, it is clear that in the skills training, great care should be taken to think through the market openings of skills and to think creatively about training. Similarly, there were serious questions about both the quality and the length of training necessary for graduates to emerge successfully. Failure of this component could lead aspirations turning to anger, with important security ramifications. However, this was not just a technical problem; it was also a political-economic one of whether general conditions facilitated and assisted in self-employment opportunities. The evidence for this remains patchy.

**School building and reconstruction programmes**, particularly the SABABU project, were vital in getting the education system functioning again in the post-war environment. In terms of the programme rationale, the reconstruction of schools was a clear sign to the population of state presence. There is a general recognition of the success and importance of these initiatives and equally admissions of some of the weaknesses, linked to poor workmanship in the construction of buildings, corruption within the system, and lack of planning and foresight in terms of short-course teacher training and the future integration of teachers into the state education system. Similarly, resource constraints reduced the scope of projects such as SABABU and project timelines were extended due to non-compliance.

### **Medium term**

In this latest period, and in response to the success of the expansion of the education system, particularly basic education, there has been a shift of emphasis towards working on issues related to the quality of education, sparked by recognition that educational achievement was weak. The talk is of a shift from hardware to software, and also a shifting emphasis on upstream work addressing the lack of capacity within the Ministry of Education. In this period, one gets the sense from the different interviewees that educational strategy is much less about reconstruction and concerns with the legacies of the war, and much more about broader discourses related to the general relationship between education and international development. The policy of system strengthening reflects a broader state-building agenda that seeks to better coordinate international education interventions in line with national priorities developed around the PRSP1 and 2 and in line with the Paris Declaration.

There remain serious challenges for the education system in relation to geographical coverage, equity, quality, corruption and unevenness, which all have important consequences for peacebuilding. While the ESP is comprehensive in its

scope and sophisticated in content, it remains seriously underfunded, which leads to ad-hoc prioritization of certain areas over others. Higher education continues to receive a disproportionate amount of resources vis-à-vis other sectors. Similarly, while education funding has hovered around the 20 per cent mark, both its distribution among sectors and issues of inefficiency related to corruption and poor management mean that the system is not optimizing its resources in the most equitable manner.

While working more collaboratively with the state is an important objective, UNICEF and others might want to also use their influence to challenge the relative priorities of the Government in terms of actual spending and to promote a more equitable model of education spending.

### **Teachers and teacher training as a cross-cutting issue**

With respect to teachers, the education system faced a number of challenges in the post-war period, and most of these remain today, albeit less severe – 10 years after the official ending of the war:

- lack of women teachers;
- lack of qualified teachers;
- uneven geographical distribution of qualified teachers: (from the Western area compared with the rest of the country and between urban and rural areas);
- high teacher attrition;
- poor salaries that regularly arrive late;
- a problematic appointment system, which leaves many teachers without salaries for long periods of time; and
- high numbers of ghost teachers resulting from false accounting and corruption.

Many of the broader problems of the education system – low-quality education, high teacher-pupil ratios (particularly in rural and remote areas), widespread corruption (albeit small scale), high geographical unevenness in educational access, quality and retention – all appear to be linked to the fact that teachers are poorly paid, have no incentive to work in rural areas, have low motivation, leave the profession early or find ways of subsidizing their salaries by charging for private lessons outside school hours, imposing fees on children or forcing children to work on their land. There are also a range of issues related to abuse of power by teachers – both through violence and sexual abuse – which have led to rising concerns about the situation of education in the country (Ibis, Concern, Plan, and Catholic Relief Services 2011). A core issue to be addressed, therefore, is the issue of teachers' pay and remuneration. This requires both national and international commitment and effort.

A great deal of effort and resources have been put into teacher training in Sierra Leone, but it has often been too scattered and sporadic and has lacked long-term strategic thinking of the relationship between the short-term demands of the conflict and post-conflict period and the long-term needs of the national system. Teachers were trained by different agencies for RAPID-ED, CREPS, SABABU and a range of other initiatives, but often with little long-term planning as to their future. From a

peacebuilding perspective, the three-year Distance Education Programme has been an important catalyst and exception to this critique. In reducing the number of unqualified teachers in Sierra Leone, particularly in remote and rural areas, the project has been sustainable, modestly funded and well integrated within the national system – with teachers receiving the same certificate as their in-service counterparts. A detailed study of the history, development and quality of this programme would be useful and potentially beneficial for other countries facing similar problems. There remain issues and questions related to UNICEF's promotion of the one-year distance programme to ensure its durability and integration within the system.

From a peacebuilding perspective, the role of teachers in shaping the minds and ideas of young people is central and much more needs to be done to ensure that issues related to teachers and teacher training are better integrated into the overall logic of educational interventions in conflict and post-conflict environments. This issue also merits further research and investigation to inform international policymaking.

### **7.3. Provide guidance on education interventions contributing to peacebuilding based on models and approaches used by UNICEF and its partners to initiate, promote and implement education initiatives in support of peacebuilding**

In this section of the conclusion, I will reflect on the general findings of the research on the relationship between education and peacebuilding and provide guidance aimed at the education and peacebuilding community more generally, as well as offer recommendations.

Firstly, the question for UNICEF and other development partners seeking to promote the role of education in Sierra Leone and elsewhere in post-conflict peacebuilding is to enter into the debate inside the UN and the international community on the core priorities of peacebuilding missions, the sustainability of the current dominant model (security first), the chronology of interventions and priorities, and the potentially more sustainable peacebuilding processes that might emerge if there was a better balance, both in resources and effort, placed on the social sectors to seek to transform the inequities of access and opportunity that often provide the underlying drivers of conflict. At least in the Sierra Leone case it seems that the education community was not at the heart of these 'peacebuilding' policy discussions, and while, as we shall see, UNICEF and other partners enabled education to play an important role in the conflict humanitarian intervention period and the post-conflict reconstruction period, those interventions appear to run parallel, rather than being fully integrated into the UN mission.

#### ***Recommendation 1***

*Agencies involved in education in Sierra Leone and other countries need to find ways to influence current peacebuilding strategies in order to carve out a better location for education therein. This requires being present both in decision-making spaces in Sierra Leone, but also in New York and other centres of power where peacebuilding policy is developed.*

Secondly, in order to be able to influence the UN peacebuilding agenda, agencies involved in the education sector in conflict-affected states such as Sierra Leone need to develop a peacebuilding lens at all stages of policy and programming, and must be able to articulate a coherent vision of the role of education in peacebuilding. This will require capacity-building interventions across agencies from the headquarters level to field offices.

### **Recommendation 2**

*Agencies involved in Sierra Leone and other countries need to develop the capacity to adopt a peacebuilding lens to policy and programming development in the education sector. This will require capacity-building interventions across agencies from the headquarters level to field offices to develop a coherent peacebuilding approach in conflict-affected states.*

Thirdly, it seems clear that UNICEF in Sierra Leone and other agencies know very well what to do in education during serious conflicts and have a well-developed repertoire of delivering education to refugees, internally displaced people and affected communities. While there are clearly divisions both within and between different agencies on the priority of delivering education during conflict, there is a coherent set of instruments and policies to deliver education. Similarly, in the immediate aftermath of conflict, there is a well-rehearsed set of education programmes that deal with the reintegration of ex-combatants, and accelerated learning programmes for students who have missed out on education, school reconstruction and refurbishment, psychosocial support, etc. While there may be some coordination and technical issues that can be improved, and scaling up coverage was clearly an issue in Sierra Leone, the programmes appear to be well thought through and appropriate to the needs of the population groups.

What is less clear in the medium term is what UNICEF and other agencies should prioritize in education in post-conflict contexts. Should agencies revert to standard 'development' practice or should there be a medium-term conflict approach to education systems in conflict-affected states? At present, it seems that UNICEF and others revert quickly to the general education programmes that they carry out all over the world in low-income contexts to promote development. In view of the current concern with durable peace and peacebuilding and the dangers that countries might revert to conflict, it may be advisable to develop education programmes in post-conflict environments that actively address the particular drivers of conflict and are modified to a **development + drivers of conflict** education approach: **a peacebuilding development approach to education**. This would entail seeking to focus attention on specific contextually defined drivers such as inequalities (geographic, ethnic, political, gender) through educational programmes. This might modify substantially programming priorities for the delivery of education services and also advocacy objectives of lobbying national governments in post- conflict contexts.

In the context of Sierra Leone, this would lead to a greater emphasis on reducing urban/rural divides in access and quality to basic education including gender disparities, to a strong focus on youth opportunities, and a commitment and

prioritization to addressing educational inequalities in the country. For agencies dealing specifically with youth issues, it might entail a focus on second-chance education and TVET programmes. The large groups of marginalized and unemployed youth evident in urban areas represent a vivid reminder of both the failure of post-conflict development to be inclusive and evidence of the wasting of the great potential contribution that youth could make to Sierra Leone's future development. In the post Paris Declaration environment, where donor and government coordination is prioritized, this would also necessitate UNICEF and other agencies lobbying the Government of Sierra Leone and other agencies much more forcefully to address issues of equity and educational redistribution in the country.

### **Recommendation 3**

*Development partners working in education and peacebuilding need to develop a strategy for the role of education in the medium-term period after conflict. We suggest a link between conflict analysis and development strategy – a peacebuilding development strategy for education.*

Fourthly, educational interventions related to peacebuilding appear to have different levels of focus: from broad structural interventions – which address the overall systemic problems of the education system – to more micro interventions that are underpinned by conjunctural and strategic concerns relating to security and stability, such as skills training related to DDR and psychosocial interventions. We need a better language to talk about these things and their interrelationship to peacebuilding. Similarly, education is no doubt part of many other interventions – e.g., human rights training for the military and police, or capacity development of civil servants – which we don't associate with education. This reflects the earlier points of the absence of engagement of educationists with the broader peacebuilding community, which it is necessary to address.

### **Recommendation 4**

*There is a need for a better set of terminology to describe the different ways that education contributes to peacebuilding, rooted in the language of peacebuilding but with a particular educational angle.*

Fifthly, in reviewing the variety of education programming, there are clearly issues related to the need for short-term solutions to educational 'problems' and the need to reflect on their long-term effects. Teacher training was one key example whereby we can see countless agencies, training countless teachers on a variety of short courses, but which often lacked a long-term perspective. More thinking needs to be done on strategic planning of interventions, the coordination between agencies and national governments, and on the long-term development of the education sector.

### **Recommendation 5**

*More thought and planning needs to be placed on the long-term integration of immediate post-conflict educational interventions, particularly, although not exclusively, in relation to the issue of teacher training.*

Sixthly, Sierra Leone is clearly under massive resource constraints, which drive down civil servant and teacher salaries. However, if development partners and national governments are not to waste valuable resources on teacher training, there needs to be a commitment to increasing teachers' salaries, which are currently woefully inadequate. Similarly, incentives for teachers to live and work in remote areas must be restored if the uneven geography of qualified/unqualified teachers is to be addressed. Developing a stable and motivated teaching workforce and ensuring that the teachers are spread evenly throughout the country would make a great contribution to peacebuilding and improve the chances of the success of educational reforms and innovations.

#### **Recommendation 6**

*If an equitable, efficient and quality education system is to be developed in Sierra Leone, there needs to be urgent attention to an increase in teachers' salaries, as well as incentives for teachers to relocate to rural areas.*

#### **7.4. Identify strengths, weaknesses and recommendations for UNICEF-supported education programming as it relates to peacebuilding**

In this section of the conclusion, I will reflect on the specifics of UNICEF's role in education and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. As the report has hopefully demonstrated, the work of UNICEF in education has been exemplary, despite the broader marginalization of education in the country in the post-conflict period. UNICEF has acted as the lead partner in education and, by many accounts, has contributed an enormous amount to the notable improvement of the country's education system. There was a sense from many informants that they saw UNICEF and the Ministry of Education as intertwined, perhaps due to the many areas of education that UNICEF works alongside the Ministry, and the lack of participation of other agencies in the education sector.

Firstly, UNICEF's transition in education and beyond in Sierra Leone to more upstream work with the Government of Sierra Leonean brings a range of challenges for the agency, particularly in post-conflict states and those with a high dependency on international assistance. UNICEF's clearly defined mandate on promoting basic education and its strong influence in education ministries in places such as Sierra Leone is not necessarily matched by the presence of other organizations working in the sector that address other levels of education, i.e., UNESCO. This might place UNICEF in difficult situations in terms of the advice and advocacy that it can provide in ESP development to the Government, due to its institutional mandate to focus on basic education.

#### **Recommendation 7**

*UNICEF Sierra Leone needs to reflect on the implications of its shift to upstream work and the tensions between broad engagement in the sector and its narrower mandate in education. While the organization currently seems to be managing this tension, a coherent strategy is necessary in the long term.*

Secondly, it is possible to conceptualize all of UNICEF's educational support as peacebuilding. However, if UNICEF were to decide and develop its interventions on the basis of peacebuilding prerogatives (and therefore conflict and political economy analysis) the outcomes might be quite different. Maybe this is an appropriate time to think through the tensions/decisions that need to be made between normal UNICEF activities and peacebuilding activities – and similarly reflect this in discussions with donor/state/CS partners. Rather than post-hoc justification, might it be useful to think through what peacebuilding education strategies might bring to the UNICEF table and the pros and cons of heading off in this direction?

**Recommendation 8**

*UNICEF in general, and UNICEF Sierra Leone in particular, need to reflect on the implications of embracing a peacebuilding approach to education and have an internal debate on the pros and cons of moving in this direction for the organization.* Thirdly, UNICEF's current upstream work in developing the capacity of the Ministry of Education and its strong relationship should not preclude it from being a harsh critic where government policies and practice appear to be running counter to UNICEF's equity focus and broader peacebuilding objectives. The clearest example of this is the skewed resources directed to favouring higher education.

**Recommendation 9**

*UNICEF should lobby the Government to divert more resources towards the most marginalized areas of education and challenge the shift towards elitism within the education system, which runs counter to long-term sustainable peacebuilding.* Fourthly, while UNICEF education section plays a minor role in the UN Joint Vision for Sierra Leone, and has been frustrated by education's marginalization in the overall Peacebuilding Fund, it should consider persevering and lobbying for funds. The case of Sierra Leone clearly shows the value people attached to education and its important role in the peacebuilding process. While educational investment is clearly a long-term investment, the argument needs to be made that sustainable peacebuilding is also a long-term process and won't necessarily emerge from short-term security first interventions.

**Recommendation 10**

*UNICEF education should engage, lobby and advocate for a greater role for education within the UN Joint Vision for Sierra Leone.*

UNICEF's work and effort in teacher training appears exemplary in a range of ways. UNICEF currently engages in teacher training initiatives for in-service, pre-service and distance education teaching to promote the integration of emerging issues (a new curriculum component that covers a range of topics, including human rights, health and hygiene, etc.). Similarly, it is involved at all levels in promoting child-centred pedagogies. Furthermore, it now coordinates the one-year Distance Education Teacher Training Programme, as well as contributes to the three-year programme. Unfortunately, there is little documentation and evaluation related to these interventions. Research on all of this work might prove UNICEF more generally.



### **Recommendation 11**

*UNICEF should conduct analysis, evaluation and research on its engagements with teacher-training innovations in Sierra Leone.*

## **8. FINAL CONCLUSIONS**

The case study of the role of education in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone clearly raises a number of important issues more generally on the role of education in peacebuilding. Firstly, it clearly demonstrates the role of education in contributing to the drivers of conflict. An inequitable, elitist and ultimately collapsing system sowed the seeds of discontent among large swathes of the population. Secondly, the massive demand for education after the end of the war demonstrates the high value attached by Sierra Leoneans to the potential of education. Thirdly, the international community and the United Nations model of security first post-conflict peacebuilding clearly see education as a marginal component of their agenda. As a result, the vast majority of resources have been spent on security and democracy promotion to the detriment of the social sectors. Despite this lack of commitment to education, the education system has made important moves forward since the end of the conflict. Similarly, educational interventions both during the conflict, in the immediate aftermath and throughout the medium term have played an important role in peacebuilding.

As noted in the paper, this marginalization of education is partly a result of the dominant understandings of both the drivers of conflict in Sierra Leone and the hegemonic understanding of peacebuilding. The peacebuilding definition that emerges from this is a very thin one, which is much closer to Galtung's notion of 'Negative Peace' (the end of war) than the transformatory potential that the concept might have. Education has the potential to play a much greater role in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and elsewhere, but it requires that the current model of peacebuilding is challenged and modified for a more sustainable model that emphasizes the long-term transformations necessary for sustainable peacebuilding and balances security concerns with investments in mechanisms that can address underlying structural inequalities that underpin conflicts. Education has a great deal to contribute to ensuring that countries don't return to war, but its potential remains unfulfilled.

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