

SIERRA LEONE

A RISK ASSESSMENT BRIEF

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## PART I: STRUCTURAL FACTORS AND EVENTS

1991-May 2000→ Indicators of Conflict

### A) Structural factors

- \* Military Coup (1992/96/97), Civil War (1991-Nov. 2000)
- \* Despite the existence of a constitution and the apparent freedom of the political system (a directly elected president and a single parliamentary chamber), the 1996 elections were tampered, the constitution was suspended, demonstrations were banned, and political parties were abolished thereby eliminating civil freedoms and democracy.
- \* Total Population: 5,426,618(2001) with a negative growth rate of 15.20% since 1995
- \* Foreign Investment: -80% in 1999 from 1995; Debt Service: \$1.28B
- \* Life Expectancy: 37yrs (1998); Infant Mortality Rate: 146.52 deaths/1,000 live births (1998); Maternal Mortality Rate: 2,100/100,000 (1998)
- \* GDP Growth Rate 1980-90 (1.2%); 1996 (5%); 1997(-18%); 1998 (-1%); 1999 (-8%)

### B) Events

- \* Insurgency (1989/92/96/99/00/01), Civil War (1980-present),
- \* 1991: Parliament approves new constitution in Sierra Leone but the start of the rebel war postpones implementation.
- \* April 29, 1992: Capt. Valentine Strasser ousts President Momoh in a military coup, announces first multiparty elections since 1967.
- \* February 1996: elections organized by the military junta that toppled Captain Strasser in a coup results in win for Ahmed Tejan Kabbah's SLPP.
- \* May 25, 1997: Major General Johnny Paul Koroma deposes President Kabbah in military coup, suspends constitution, bans demonstrations, abolished political parties
- \* October 8, 1997: Security Council imposes sanctions
- \* February 1998: ECOMOG forces storm Freetown
- \* January 1999: Rebels enter Freetown
- \* May 18, 1999: Ceasefire
- \* July 17, 1999: Lome Peace Agreement signed giving rebels posts in government and immunity from prosecution but peace does not last.
- \* Nov-Dec. 1999: UN troops arrive
- \* April/May 2000: UN forces attacked, 300 UN soldiers taken hostage after 10 months of relative stability

2000-PRESENT→ INDICATORS OF POTENTIAL PEACE

### A) Structural factors

- \* Refugees: 341,205 registered and over one million unregistered Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) (Nov. 2000); Returned Refugees: 35,000(2000) Returned IDPs: 55,000 (2000), 45,000 (2001)
- \* Although resettlement of about 1-2 million refugees and displaced persons began with the peace process in Nov. 2000, the resettlement was hampered by continued rebel control of certain area and the inability of international forces to enter certain parts of the country. The return of refugees and IDPs has been, and continues to be facilitated by the presence of UNAMSIL and UNHCR.
- \* President Kabbah regime (Feb/Mar. 1996-present) did not have control over a substantial amount of the country (esp. the diamond mining areas) until the rebels' handover of weapons.

- \* The elections in May 2002 will prove to be the test of the commitment to peace and the abolishment of corruption.
- \* Total Armed Forces: less than 15,000 (Disarmament of 46,453 combatants)
- \* Youth Bulge: 0-14yrs 44.73%, 15-64yrs 52.12%
- \* The presence and number of arms are difficult to determine since there are thousands of child soldiers, as well as numerous small arms and the smuggling of small arms which are not included in official tallies.
- \* GDP: \$2.7B; GDP Growth Rate: 4.2%; GDP per capita: \$510 (2000)
- \* Exports in 2000 increased for the first time in several years. [Inflation Rates: 15% (2000); Exchange Rates: \$1US=1,653.39SLL(Jan.2000), 1,936.00SLL(Jan. 2001); Trade (exports): +31%(2000) from 1995]
- \* Life Expectancy: 45.6 yrs (2001)

## B) Events

- \* Liberian President Taylor supplied arms to the RUF in exchange for diamonds. Sierra Leone's militia supported insurgency in Lofa, Liberia (Nov.2001).
- \* The U.S. observed 5,000 RUF members entered Liberia and joined Taylor's army. The U.S. also suspects that Taylor has ties with the al-Qaida.
- \* Guinea: Political Conflict (2000), Rebels' Insurgency (2001), Civil War (Oct. 2000-Nov.2001)
- \* May 2000: Rebel leader Foday Sankoh is captured, UN soldiers released
- \* November 10, 2000: ceasefire agreement signed by the government and the RUF including disarmament provisions and a commitment to return to peace process. (Abudja Agreements)
- \* January 16, 2002: Agreement signed establishing a Special Court for Sierra Leone to punish the worst offenders of crimes against the people during the conflict. Does not distinguish between government and RUF individuals.
- \* January 17, 2002: Britain announced it would maintain its strength of soldiers in Sierra Leone through the upcoming elections, the Security Council mandates UNAMSIL to assist with logistical support during the May elections
- \* January 18, 2002: President Kabbah declares disarmament complete and the war over and lifts the curfew that had been in place since the restoration of civilian rule four years ago. RUF leader Issa Sesay touts the war on poverty as the next battle to be fought. UNHCR announced it will begin repatriating refugees currently in camps in Liberia by next month. President Bush renewed ban on rough diamonds from Sierra Leone and Liberia except those certified by the government.
- \* January 21, 2002: President Kabbah and RUF leader Issa Sesay take part in symbolic ceremony in traditional rebel enclave of Makeni by lighting bonfire of weapons. President Kabbah announced the restructuring of the military by April 1st which over the next 2-3 years will see a troop strength of about 11000.
- \* January 22, 2002: EU commits \$15 million in aid to assist the displaced in the Mano River Union states of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. Japanese Government grants \$3 million to the reintegration of former combatants in Sierra Leone.

## DIAGNOSIS

- \* The corruption that had been endemic to Sierra Leone politics since its independence in 1961 was a major cause of the conflict and must be rectified for lasting peace.
- \* It appears that with the capture of Foday Sankoh and his replacement by Issey Sesay the RUF and the government were finally able to engage in constructive dialogue facilitated by third parties (I.e. the UN) that are now welcome in Sierra Leone
- \* Population does not stand out as a serious issue in comparison to other African countries that have been involved in conflict.
- \* With child soldiers being disarmed and reintegrated and the fact that the short life expectancy puts half the population under the age of 15, the greatest demographic problem seems to be the youth bulge.
- \* The civil war adversely affected the country's economy in spite of the rich natural resources (diamonds).  
The recent discovery of oil and gas has the potential to invigorate the economy.
- \* Exchange rates and inflation rates were hit hard by the conflict and have failed to rebound fully since the ceasefire of 2000.
- \* Much of the economic structure is dependent on foreign aid. The fulfillment of foreign aid commitments is integral to the rebuilding of the country.
- \* Evidence illustrates a weak capacity for the state to provide for needed public services especially relating to health and education. [Access to Improved Water Source: 28%; Access to Sanitation: 28% (2000)]. Therefore, a fulfillment of aid commitments regarding education and reintegration of soldiers are integral to the success of the peace process.
- \* Deforestation, overpopulation, the low rate of irrigated land and the low access to safe water have the potential to cause conflict although these indicators have not arisen as conflict issues in the past. [Rate of Deforestation: 2.9%; People per Sq. km of Arable Land: 649 persons in rural area; Irrigated Land: 5.4% of crop land; Access to Safe Water: 58%(urban), 21%(rural)]
- \* Having ties with many international organizations will help facilitate the peace process.
- \* Political conflicts in Liberia and the inflow of refugees to Guinea will have a destabilizing effect in the region. [501,500 refugees (end-1999)]
- \* While GDP growth rates were largely negative between the early 1990s and 1999, the growth rate for 2000 was 4.2% indicating some positive progress since the implementation of the peace process.

## PART II: ACTORS

- \* Government of Sierra Leone: Under President Kabbah wants to keep the current 'peaceful' situation, including dialogue between the government and the RUF, interested in rebuilding and reforming the country's economic, social and political infrastructure. Needs: to participate fairly in the upcoming elections, future government needs recognition and support from the international community.
- \* RUF: (Revolutionary United Front) Led by Issey Sesay, interested in ending corruption, bringing peace to the people, and in battling poverty, nepotism and mismanagement, want to reform social structure (health, education), continuation of peace process. Needs: Representation in government, more equally distributed control of resources, full participation in political process, recognition of mandate.
- \* Liberia: specifically, Charles Taylor dictator president, funneled weapons to rebels in exchange for diamonds. Needs: Selfishly to keep control of his country which will prevent conflict from spreading to surrounding areas, but would like turmoil elsewhere as a vehicle for power.
- \* ECOWAS/ECOMOG: (Economic Community of West African States), Want to facilitate an ongoing peace, first entered Sierra Leone in 1998 when they reinstated President Kabbah and attempted to assist him in regaining control. Needs: Introduce and maintain relative stability in the area.
- \* United Kingdom: Former colonial power and major international actor involved, assisting/training new police force/army, providing aid for reconstruction/resettlement. Needs: To maintain peace (fulfill aid commitments?), in order to protect international peace and security.
- \* United Nations: (UNAMSIL), Originally deployed 1999, mandate extended twice, at their peak had over 17000 personnel in the region. Intended to assist government in re-establishing and consolidating authority, promote political and peace processes towards reintegration and stabilization. Provide observers for elections. Needs: Resources and international support as well as continued local recognition to facilitate the fulfillment of their mandate.
- \* Citizens of Sierra Leone: Want a safe environment and assistance in rebuilding. Needs: Lasting peace, a stable and legitimate government, better infrastructure, continued international assistance, a focus on education, health and jobs. Need closure and reconciliation.

### PART III: OUTCOME SCENARIOS

Worst case scenario: resumed hostilities

- Elections are fixed or do not occur; corruption in government returns and grows.
- New government disintegrates; the RUF fails to convert to a legitimate political party and rebels rearm.
- The ruling Sierra Leone's Party (SLPP), the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) or the Kamajors spoil the peace process.
- New government is unable to improve the infrastructures for human development and social services; social and economic management continues.
- Arms-for diamonds trade resumes and power struggles arise over newly found oil resource.
- UN programs are discontinued or unsuccessful: child soldiers and ex-soldiers fail to disarm and reintegrate civil society; refugees and IDPs cannot resettle.
- The international community fails to hold up their aid promises or international aid to Sierra Leone is terminated.
- The UK withdraws from Sierra Leone.
- Neighboring conflicts in Liberia or Guinea expand and spill over Sierra Leone.
- The international and national economy takes a downturn making reconstruction more difficult.

Best case scenario: a lasting peace

- Fair and free elections occur in May of 2002 as planned; new leaders are recognized and accepted.
- New leaders are committed to restoring peace in the country and peace strategies are successfully implemented.
- No rearmament or recruitment occurs on any side. The RUF and other armed parties a more stringent disarmament process that includes search operations led by the Sierra Leone Police and UNAMSIL in order to disarm soldiers in hiding.
- Reconciliation among former fighting groups occurs.
- The Special War Court is implemented and prosecutions are conducted without corruption.
- The continuation and timely delivery of UN aid packages.
- Rapid or timely completion of UN reintegration and resettlement programs.
- Continued economic growth and uncorrupted utilization of money leads to a rapid development of social infrastructures and a successful war on poverty.
- Turmoil in neighboring countries is neutralized and isolated.
- The international community, especially the UK, stays committed and focused on Sierra Leone's national recovery.

Most likely scenario: a fragile peace

- The government stays focused on making the elections happen as scheduled.
- Elections occur but the level of participation is lower than the government had anticipated (Voter registration is very slow as a result of slow repatriation).
- There is a difficult (but continued) dialogue among the parties.
- Violent confrontations are less likely to break out mainly because the country is tired of fighting.
- The Special War Court proceeds but not all perpetrators are brought to justice.
- There is a continued international presence (UN and UK) but their programs are lengthier and more costly than expected; the resettlement and reintegration of refugees and IDPs.
- Britain continues to retrain and restructure Sierra Leone's military.
- Social and economic restructuring is slow and concrete results fail to be achieved promptly.
- Illegal trafficking and mining of diamonds continues.

## SELECTED SOURCES

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