

WHOSE DEMOCRACY? NGOS AND THE DEMOCRACY PROJECT IN POST-CONFLICT
SIERRA LEONE

By

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APC	All People's Congress
AFRC	Armed forces revolutionary council
CEA	Committee for the educated Aborigines
CDD	Community driven development
DACO	Development assistance coordination office
DFID	Department for international development
FGD	Focus group discussion
GAR	Gender action research
HDI	Human development index
IFI	International financial institution
INGO	International non-governmental organization
MDA	Ministry, department and agency
MDSD	Most different systems design
MSSD	Most similar systems design
MODEP	Ministry of development and economic planning
NACSA	National commission of social action
NCBWA	National congress of British West Africa
NPRC	National provisional ruling council
PIU	Project implementation unit
PNP	People's national party
PRSP	Poverty reduction strategy paper
RUF	Revolutionary united front
SLPP	Sierra Leone people's party
WAYL	West African Youth League

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Do international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) foster attitudes, beliefs and behavior supportive of liberal democracy, and, if so, how? This question is addressed in the case of Sierra Leone, a formerly failed state that underwent civil war between 1991 and 2002. In early 2002, Sierra Leoneans celebrated the end of eleven years of civil conflict and began the task of re-building. During the latter years of the war and, to a growing extent, in the post-conflict era, Sierra Leone is the recipient of a wide variety of international interventions aimed at rebuilding the state, strengthening institutions and (re) constructing democracy. International actors, ranging from bilateral donors, multilateral institutions and various international development organizations are active in Sierra Leone, contributing to, and in some instances driving the post-conflict reconstruction agenda.

Their activities are designed to transform societies into more democratic entities, by strengthening existing institutions along neo-liberal criteria and the development of civic norms. The international development community through both multilateral and bilateral agencies has in the past two decades been active in providing support of democratization efforts around the world. Much of this support has focused on assisting elections and strengthening parliaments,

turning in recent years, to building civil society. Although a large body of work exists that examines the impact of democracy assistance in post-conflict settings, much of this work has focused on the supply side of governance, examining how such assistance has strengthened institutions such as the electoral system, the judiciary, and the media. Less is known however, of the impact of democracy assistance on the demand-side of politics: what influence it plays in shaping citizen engagement with the state, political participation and understandings of democracy.

Moreover, although democracy assistance makes sense in countries that are politically stable, the utility of such support in countries where civil conflict or war has prevailed and where the state has shown signs of failure to cope with such strife is less clear. While there is a solid body of theory dealing with democratization under stable political conditions, there is a lack of both helpful theory and empirical studies when it comes to state building and democratization in post-conflict situations. The purpose of this dissertation is to make a contribution that addresses both theory and policy regarding the role of international assistance to state building and democracy in these contexts.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Do international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) foster attitudes, beliefs and behavior supportive of liberal democracy, and if so, how? This dissertation addresses this question in Sierra Leone, a formerly failed state that underwent civil war between 1991 and 2002. In the aftermath of war, Sierra Leone, like many other states in similar positions, is the recipient of large amounts of aid designed to strengthen democracy and consolidate peace. The purpose of this dissertation is to examine one specific component of such assistance – aid channeled through NGOs with the goal of building civil society and relatedly, democracy – and assess the impact of such interventions on their stated goals.

International Assistance and Democratization

International assistance¹ in post-conflict states gained greater visibility in the 1990s following the high incidence of civil wars worldwide including in African states. Between 1989 and 1999, Wallensteen and Sollenberg (2000) recorded a total of 110 armed conflicts, forty-eight of which were classified as war-level. Of the 229 armed conflicts recorded between 1946-2003, just over half (116) took place between 1989-2003 (Eriksson and Wallensteen 2004). At least half of these ended in negotiated peace settlements, often brokered by international actors (Sisk 2001) compared to 15 percent receiving international intervention between 1900-1980 (Stedman 1991, cited in Sisk 2001). Countries such as Mozambique, Cambodia, El Salvador and Sierra Leone among others have all been recent recipients of such interventions. In 1999 alone, the international community facilitated power-sharing agreements in contexts as diverse as Sierra Leone, Indonesia and Yugoslavia.

¹ International assistance here refers to all types of assistance emanating outside of the country in question, aimed at fostering peace, development and democracy. It includes multilateral and bilateral donors, international organizations, international nongovernmental organizations, and private consultancy firms among others.

For countries emerging from war, the adoption of democracy is the solution widely promoted by the international community as the antidote to further conflict, ensuring long-term peace and security (Posner 2003; Kumar 1997; De Zeeuw and Kumar 2006; Smillie and Minear 2004). There are a variety of reasons for this. These include demands by citizens weary of war, and the necessity of having a government perceived as legitimate and representative. Also of importance is the belief that a democratic government allows for peaceful resolution of conflict through the provision of various mechanisms through which dissenting voices can articulate concerns and find redress, and can serve as an effective counter to international terrorism. A democratic government is also perceived as the best environment for effective social and economic development (Kumar 1997; De Zeeuw and Kumar 2006: 5-6; Yannis 2002).

International assistance geared toward strengthening democracy is not limited to post-conflict states, but has gained increased salience in all contexts given the neoliberal orthodoxy that now dominates research and policy agendas since the fall of communism. In addition to being seen as a mechanism to safeguard peace, the generally dismal performance of structural adjustment and other policies aimed at stimulating economic development has reinforced the belief that economics and politics are linked, and sustainable development can only take place under the auspices of good governance (Green and Kohl 2007; Kumar 1997).

As a result, the international community² through both multilateral and bilateral agencies has in the past two decades been active in providing support of democratization efforts around the world in peaceful as well as post-conflict contexts. Thus, a growing number of international interventions have shifted from a focus on economic growth alone to institution building and

² For the purpose of this dissertation, the international community is used interchangeably with international assistance and is the designation for all those responsible for the provision of assistance to various countries. Although for simplicity, they are referred to as if a common entity, it is important to note that the actors making up this designation are not necessarily monolithic, acting with a common agenda using similar approaches.

democratization, extending this political agenda to states emerging from civil conflict (De Zeeuw 2005).

Democracy Assistance and Civil Society Promotion

Democracy promotion can assume many forms, including incentives such as trade benefits, or punitive measures such as economic sanctions and military intervention (Carothers 1999; Burnell 2000). However, democracy assistance, broadly understood as aid designed to advance social, economic and other conditions believed to be beneficial to democracy (Burnell 2000), has increasingly received attention as the most “significant tool” for democracy promotion (Carothers 1999). While the range of activities can differ depending on donor country, organization type, and ideological focus, nevertheless there are a set of specific institutions and organizational processes that are often the target of such assistance. These include assistance to institutions associated with democracy such as the strengthening of the capacity of post-conflict states to hold elections, judicial reform, and mass media development among others (De Zeeuw and Kumar 2006; Burnell 2000). However, with the growth in attention paid to mass attitudes, beliefs and behavior in consolidating democracy, the emphasis of consolidation theories has widened to include the promotion and development of civil society (Pridham 2000; Diamond 1997; Linz and Stepan 1997; Diamond 1999), with assistance at this sector increasingly channeled through NGOs. This literature recognizes that not only does the mass public matter in its pivotal role in the transition to democracy but also in the never-ending quest to deepen democracy beyond its formal structure (Diamond 1999: 219). Scholars have recognized that for democracy to become rooted in a society, there is not only a need for democratic institutions and rules, but the people in a country must also develop attitudes and behaviors supportive of democracy (Diamond 1994). Thus, there is a need for engagement with the wider institutional

environment, which includes norms, conventions and practices rather than confining the focus to organizations (Burnell 2000).

Civil society, conceived generally as the “space in a society between individuals and families, on one hand, and the state or government on the other” (Carothers 1999: 209), is perceived as the arena through which such attitudes and behaviors can be cultivated: it is seen as a buffer to full totalitarization in authoritarian states (Linz and Stepan 1997: 255-292), a precondition for democracy (Linz and Stepan 1997: 7), a potential instigator of democratization movements in authoritarian regimes (Diamond 1999: 234) as well as necessary for the vitality of democracy (Hadenius and Ugglå 1996). It is ostensibly the locus of change wherein citizens become politically active and informed citizenry, able to articulate their interests’ vis-à-vis an adversarial state.

Development and Democracy Assistance: Two sides of the same coin?

Given the rise in importance of the civil society concept, democracy as well as development assistance geared toward building civil society has mushroomed (Hearn 2000; Knack 2004; Ottaway and Carothers 2000) as both have been theorized to contribute to strengthening democracy, albeit in different ways. The emphasis placed on civil society in building democracy has resulted in international interventions that prioritize democracy building as a means to stabilize peace, and in development interventions that also contribute to civil society building. The academic and policy literature examining the theoretical relevance of civil society to development, democracy and correspondingly, sustained peace³ has mushroomed too.

³ The literature on civil society is extensive, and a substantial number of books and articles have appeared that range from discussions on its origin, for example, Adam B. Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society* (New York, Toronto, New York: Free Press ; Maxwell Macmillan Canada ; Maxwell Macmillan International, 1992), and, John Keane, *Civil Society and the State : New European Perspectives* (London ; New York: Verso, 1988), to its applicability in non-western contexts, J. Bayart, "Civil Society in Africa," in *African Studies Series*, ed. Patrick Chabal (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), and, John W. Harbeson, Donald S. Rothchild, and Naomi Chazan, *Civil Society and the State in Africa* (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1994). Also considered is its impact on

For many donors, the ideal trajectory is the implementation of relief and rehabilitation efforts in the immediate aftermath of war, followed by economic development with political and social interventions, of which democracy assistance is part (De Zeeuw and Kumar 2006).

Although democracy and development assistance are often viewed as two separate spheres of support, the rise in prominence of civil society in theories of democracy building and consolidation as well as development over the past two decades has resulted in a narrowing of this gap. However, while the two share to an extent, the same underlying objective of strengthening democracy, the approaches differ as do the short-term objectives (Carothers 1999).

Although traditional development assistance still emphasizes the economic domain, interventions now increasingly incorporate discussions on civil society as links are also made between democracy and development, and the former is hypothesized to lead to an increase in the latter (Hyden 1997) or the two are perceived to be complementary. Along these lines, social empowerment and participatory development projects can also impact civil society building. For example, by increasing participation in community-driven development activities (CDD), such as collective road construction and reconstruction and the rehabilitation of destroyed buildings, NGOs are seen as building trust and strengthening civil society, which in turn can lead to an increase in democratic participation as well as development. However this argument, which incorporates social capital theory, differs from democracy assistance in that it includes groups and associations that are not necessarily advocacy-oriented, the target often, although not exclusively, of democracy assistance (Burnell 2000; Carothers 1999).

democracy building. See for example, Larry Diamond, "Rethinking Civil Society: Toward Democratic Consolidation," *Journal of Democracy* 5, no. 3 (1994), Axel Hadenius and Fredrik Uggla, "Making Civil Society Work, Promoting Democratic Development: What Can States and Donors Do?," *World Development* 24, no. 10 (1996).

On the other hand, the primary focus of democracy assistance is on advocacy organizations, although it does support other elements of civil society such as trade unions, the media, and civic education (Carothers 1999). Support of advocacy organizations is also envisioned to increase citizen political participation, where the emphasis is on providing technical assistance, advocacy training, and funding for institutional support to organizations that provide an avenue for citizens to articulate their demands to the state and to hold the state accountable to citizen interests. In addition to advocacy organizations, democracy assistance targeted at civil society building also includes to a lesser extent, civic education, often performed by local NGOs through funding from international ones (Carothers 1999).

NGOs and Civil Society Building: What Do We Know?

With this focus on civil society, NGOs have come to assume a prominent role in development and democracy assistance due to the assumption that they work at the grassroots level. As a result, much of the assistance directed at this sector is channeled through NGO as they are viewed as more in tune with local contexts and subsequently more effective than state organizations (Fowler 1988).

What then is the relationship between NGOs, civil society and democracy in states recovering from conflict? While there is a solid body of theory dealing with democratization under stable political conditions, there is a lack of both helpful theory and empirical studies when it comes to democratization in post-conflict situations, where the latter refers specifically to citizen political participation and attitudes and beliefs on democracy. Moreover, although assistance aimed at strengthening democracy makes sense in countries that are politically stable, the utility of such support in countries where civil conflict or war has occurred and where the state has shown signs of failure to cope with such strife is less clear.

Let us focus first on democracy assistance in post-conflict and peaceful settings. Where there is research on democracy in post-conflict settings, much of this work has focused on the supply side of governance, examining how such assistance has strengthened institutions such as the electoral system, the judiciary, and the media (Zeeuw and Kumar 2006). Less is known however, of the impact of democracy assistance on the demand-side of politics: what influence it has in shaping citizen engagement with the state, political participation and understandings of democracy. One of the purposes of this study is to make a contribution that addresses both theory and policy regarding the role NGOs play in democratization in post-conflict contexts.

Influential works on democracy assistance in largely peaceful contexts include seminal tomes by Carothers (1995; 1999; 2004) as well as Burnell (2000; 2007), who have both written comprehensive volumes that attempt to take stock of the field, tracing its beginnings, accomplishments, limitations and avenues for future research. There is some consensus that while democracy assistance has some positive outcomes in assisting countries transitioning to democracy and in democratic consolidation, the context in which promotion occurs must be taken into account as should the form and objective of assistance (Burnell 2000; Carothers 1999). While acknowledging the difficulties of criteria selection and the establishment of causal links that make democracy assistance problematic to evaluate, Carothers (1999) nevertheless finds room for tentative hope. Using a three-fold criterion identifying countries as transitioning, undergoing stagnated or reversed transitions and finally, no transition at all, he finds that the performance of democracy assistance shifts depending on the context. For countries undergoing transitions, democracy assistance (with focus on institutions such as the electorate, media, and state institutions), can help bolster democratization. Finkel, Perez-Linan, and Seligson (2007) come to similar conclusions in newly transitioning and developing countries, although Carothers

argues that there are often other existing factors that facilitate this movement to democratic consolidation.

Burnell (2000) finds that democracy promoters must select partners carefully, with an eye to project ownership, sustainability and the development of locally-rooted support. Also important is flexibility in partners of support and in continuation or cessation of such support as well as an appreciation of the limitations of democracy assistance. Democracy assistance has performed better in some aspects than others. For example, despite lack of sustainability, post-conflict election assistance to countries in Africa and Asia led to the execution of elections largely deemed free and fair (Kumar 1998; Kumar 2000); however, democracy assistance in semi-authoritarian regime contexts face challenges due to the resistance of entrenched power structures to releasing power (Carothers 2000). A review of donor assistance to civil society in Africa finds that the support of certain types of organizations (advocacy) over others can lead to a restriction of who participates (Hearn and Robinson 2000), while in South East Asia, it would appear that international efforts to strengthen NGOs and civil society led to more concrete impacts on democratic developments (Quigley 2000).

Other studies are not so positive. Knack (2004) found no evidence to support the argument that foreign aid promotes democracy. His multivariate analysis included a large number of countries surveyed between 1975-2000 using two different democracy indexes and aid intensity measures. Others have argued that aid can actually undermine democracy, through strengthening the government sector at the expense of the private (Friedman 1995), or reduce government accountability to citizens as it provides an alternative revenue base outside of citizen taxes (Karl 1997). Although these studies are important contributions to a rapidly growing field, research on

its overall effectiveness remains scant given the constraints imposed by methodological, political and logistical contexts (Green and Kohl 2007; Carothers 1999).

Where scholars undertake research primarily on post-conflict contexts, the emphasis is again on the supply side of democracy, on institutions (see for example, De Zeeuw and Kumar 2006; De Zeeuw 2005). De Zeeuw and Kumar's (2006) comparative work on democracy assistance is a notable step in the direction of theorizing about the impact of such assistance, focusing specifically on democracy assistance in post-conflict contexts. However, by examining human rights, media development, political party development and post-conflict elections, this work is focused more on the supply side of governance and institutions, examining how such assistance has strengthened institutions such as the electoral system, the judiciary, and the media. Even the impact of human rights assistance is examined within the context of human rights organizations. Despite reporting a "mixed" record for democracy assistance in these sectors for nine countries spanning three continents (Africa, Asia and Latin America), they conclude that democracy assistance has overall had beneficial impacts in countries recovering from conflict (De Zeeuw and Van de Goor 2006). International assistance contributed to the growth and development of organizations necessary for democracy, the execution of fair and well-conducted elections, improved protection of human rights and greater media freedom. However, they also call for greater attention to context, grassroots participation, increased donor coordination and attention to capacity building so programs last beyond donor interventions (De Zeeuw and Van de Goor 2006: 280-281). It is this lack of attention to institution-building that is the biggest hindrance to more sustained impacts of democracy assistance; while activities such as training of the judiciary and parliament as well as security sector reform among other measures are effective for short-term political stabilization and socio-economic development, their long term impact on

democratic institutions is more questionable (De Zeeuw 2005). More attention must be paid to institution building, rather than simply putting new organizations in place.

In turning to analyses of the effectiveness of assistance targeted specifically at building civil society and channeled through NGOs, the results are again mixed. In contemporary literature, the effectiveness of development assistance and the suitability of NGOs in fostering development is widely debated,⁴ despite the substantial body of research positing that NGOs work at the grassroots level and are consequently more effective than state organizations as they are in tune with local contexts (Fowler 1988; Macdonald 1995). The same is true of the civil society concept itself; its effectiveness in strengthening democracy is also contested, as is its ability to contribute to the inculcation of democratic values, norms and behavior in local citizens.⁵ For example, recent research from post-communist Europe suggests that civil society assistance might be a new imperialism (Fagan 2006), contributing to the development of externally-driven groups with no grassroots support (Hemment 2004); a finding also echoed by Hearn and Robinson (2000) in their comparative work of civil society assistance in three African

⁴ A few examples of this prolific literature include David Hulme and Michael Edwards, *NGOs, States and Donors : Too Close for Comfort?*, International Political Economy Series (New York: St. Martin's Press in association with Save the Children, 1997), Terje Tvedt, *Angels of Mercy or Development Diplomats? NGOs & Foreign Aid* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998), David C. Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century : Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda*, Kumarian Press Library of Management for Development (West Hartford, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 1990), Carol Lancaster, *Aid to Africa : So Much to Do, So Little Done* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

⁵ See for some example Julie Hearn and Mark Robinson, "Civil Society and Democracy Assistance in Africa," in *Democracy Assistance : International Co-Operation for Democratization*, ed. Peter J. Burnell (London ; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000). Their empirical study of democracy assistance in three African countries reveal that while such assistance can indeed strengthen the legitimacy of democratic political institutions, funding restrictions to specific organizations often staffed by Western-educated elites constrains political participation to an elect few. Also see Gabriel Badescu, Paul Sum, and Eric M. Uslaner, "Civil Society Development and Democratic Values in Romania and Moldova," *East European Politics & Societies* 18, no. 2 (2004). Their research in Romania and Moldova found that contrary to the social capital literature, civic participation, while leading to higher levels of civic engagement, trust and tolerance on the part of elites that run organizations, does not have the same effect on the mass public. Other research that examines the impact of NGOs on civil society and democratization without necessarily focusing on the individual level include, Andrew Clayton, "NGOs, Civil Society and the State: Building Democracy in Transitional Societies," (Oxford: INTRAC, 1996). Also see, Nelson Kasfir, ed., *Civil Society and Democracy in Africa* (London ; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1998).

countries. Carothers (1999) in his examination of democracy assistance to the civil society sector, finds that assistance in countries undergoing transitions can contribute to increasing the numbers of these organizations, boosting citizen-state interaction and lead to some policy change reflective of civil society interests. However, assistance made little difference in the last two scenarios of his typology (countries undergoing stagnated transitions or none at all). In the same way, linkages between NGOs, development and democratization where the focus is on civil society has yielded contradictory results (Knack 2004; Macdonald 1995; Tvedt 1998; Smillie 2001; Badescu, Sum and Uslaner 2004) and there is little consensus on the impact of NGOs on these variables.

Problems in Measuring Democracy and Development Assistance

Measuring the impact of democracy and development assistance is however hindered by complications in the evaluation process itself. Democracy assistance spans so many different spheres that determining what to measure, and which indicators to use is a daunting task (Green and Kohl 2007). Furthermore, establishing links of causality between implemented programs and target populations is difficult (Carothers 1999; Burnell 2007). Over-reliance on quantitative indicators that focus on outputs and outcomes, reporting statistics as a sign of positive change such as numbers of civil society groups established, or people trained, often ignore the substantive changes that more qualitative research can grasp. Evaluators then, must be sensitive to the local political contexts as this can point to other variables that have contributed to positive changes outside of international assistance as well as utilize a variety of methodologies that can capture the full range of potential change. Commitment to evaluation in the long term is also necessary, as often the objectives of assistance targeted at changing behavior and shaping attitudes will not appear overnight. Evaluations must also carefully consider respondent selection: often simply focusing on project beneficiaries and using evaluators associated in some

way with the program can lead to constrained responses favorable to the program regardless of actual experience (Carothers 1999). Use of independent evaluators, and wider selection of informants to include beneficiaries as well as non-project participants can help ensure more accurate data collection (Carothers 1999). To address these concerns, the study uses data collectors unrelated to the implementing NGOs, and includes qualitative as well as quantitative indicators in data collection and analysis.

What are the Linkages? Toward an Understanding of Development and Democracy Assistance and Mass Political Behavior

Despite the lack of consensus in impacts, given the rise in importance of the civil society concept, international development organizations, through democracy and development lenses are engaged in work designed to inculcate civic norms and values supportive of democracy as well as increase political participation. The central argument often offered in support of NGOs, civil society and democracy strengthening is that citizens engaged in projects run by NGOs (be they development or democracy oriented) are more likely to be involved in groups and organizations (civil society). Such civic engagement in turn leads to higher levels of democratic values such as tolerance and trust, and also contributes to greater citizen participation in the political arena, or what I call here, strengthened democracy. Thus, an association is made between attitudes and behavior. In the vein of civic culture and civil society theories, democracy relies on the cultivation, in a populace, of attitudes and values supportive of democracy, with such attitudes resulting in behavioral change. These attitudes and values can be developed within civic associations, where participants learn how to get along, express their voice and even come to learn to trust each other. The linkages drawn between NGOs and democratic development are often limited to civil society, where the so-called participatory and democratic approach of NGOs fosters the development of civil society. It is this civil society (where civil society is

regarded foremost as associations and organizations in which individuals gather together for development purposes and/or articulate various disparate concerns to the state) that is primarily responsible for fostering development and democracy. They do this in several ways. First, in terms of sheer numbers: by increasing the numbers of voices in the political arena, a wider range of actors can have a say in the running of the country. Second, their commitment to the poor and the marginalized increases access to the state by actors otherwise silenced by lack of opportunity. Third, they ostensibly increase the number of actors able to have a voice in society holding it accountable to citizens' demands.

However, such work is often confined to civil society associations. Largely missing from evaluations of NGOs and democracy building is an examination of the impact these interventions have on micro-level political behavior, beyond a reference to civil society, which in itself refers to group political behavior. Thus, less is known of the impact of democracy assistance on the demand-side of politics at the level of the individual: what influence it has in shaping citizen engagement with the state, political participation and attitudes and beliefs toward democracy. Despite the growth in democracy and development assistance channeled at civil society and democracy building, there remains much to describe and explain in terms of impacts, especially in post-conflict settings.

It is not enough to look at associational life with its emphasis on the collective; given that the liberal model emphasizes individual participation, the study looks at how individual values are shaped by political and historical experiences, outside or in addition to civic group participation. To this end, in addition to looking at civil society, measured by membership in civic organizations, individual attitudes, beliefs and practices around democracy are examined as well and the impact of participation in NGOs measured.

Another shortcoming is that scholars often look to political institutions such as the judiciary, the media and human rights organizations when assessing the impact of international assistance on democracy building. However, what relevance might these institutions have, if the people for whom such a democracy is crafted neither understand nor are interested in democracy? How can one truly assess the implications of such interventions without taking into account the way in which people feel about their relevance to their lives?

This brief overview has sought to make clear that, so far, we lack a comprehensive theory of not only the impact of NGOs in civil society building but also their influence on individual attitudes, beliefs and behavior pertaining to democracy in post-conflict states. The increase in emphasis and, to an extent, funding for democracy assistance notwithstanding, the jury is still out as to the processes through which NGOs affect democratization as well as to whether its initiatives are successful.

Given all the limitations outlined above, more critical studies tracing the linkages between local level participation in development projects and micro-level participation in the political system is needed to better understand if and how such linkages take place (Macdonald 1995). To address this limitation, this dissertation takes as its starting point, the attitudes and behavior of individuals, and examines how this is shaped by participation in projects run by NGOs, be they development, relief or democracy-oriented in the post-conflict setting of Sierra Leone. By focusing on micro-level political participation, it contributes to the growing work that examines the impact of mass behavior in democratic consolidation, addressing the limitation of elite prioritization that looks at the behavior and choices of elites as instrumental in transitions to as well as consolidation of democracy (O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead 1986). Additionally, instead of looking at the supply side of democracy, and institutions, I look at the demand side,

focusing only on one component of democratization: civic engagement and democratic values held by the masses. This is important given the increased recognition that individual behavior and attitudes play a significant role in the consolidation of democracy in post-conflict and non-conflict states alike. By democracy strengthening, I refer to the extent in which masses adopt values and behaviors supportive of liberal democracy. The specific question examined is whether participation in NGO projects, be they democracy or development oriented, contributes to democracy strengthening (defined in more detail in Chapter 2) as understood by the development of attitudes and beliefs supportive of democracy and increased political participation. The purpose of this dissertation then, is to investigate the relationship between NGOs and democracy strengthening, where the latter specifically refers to one small component of democratization that is often the focus of civil society-building initiatives: norms and beliefs supportive of liberal democracy as well as the political behavior of those for whom the establishment of a democratic regime ostensibly benefits.

In so doing, this dissertation builds an explanatory framework of the relationship between NGO assistance and political attitudes, beliefs and participation. Such work is important for a number of reasons. Given the dearth of existing empirical works examining democracy assistance efforts in post-conflict states, the need for empirical contributions is clear. By examining the relationship between individual participation in NGO projects, wider associational activity (e.g. participation in self-help groups, ascriptive groups and voluntary groups), and beliefs and political behavior in a concrete context, this study will offer a modest empirical contribution to this field. Also, the current emphasis on development organizations as agents of change in civil society development and democracy building makes the establishment of such explanations necessary as they dictate policy and funding initiatives (Van Rooy 2000). It will

also contribute to theory building on the role NGOs play in civil society building and democratization in post-conflict settings.

Although all types of interventions are examined, the majority of interventions in the researched communities are primarily development-oriented, targeted at ordinary rural-based citizens rather than advocacy organizations. Rather than simply measuring attitudes and beliefs of civil society groups then, this study looks at the individuals that make up these groups to see whether their attitudes, beliefs and behavior are influenced by factors other than membership in civic organizations. This study thus contributes to the development of empirical knowledge pertaining to individual attitudes and behavior about democracy that goes beyond explanatory factors located at the level of civil society, often presented as the main contributor to the attitudes they hold and their political behavior. In so doing, it also sheds some light on the political activity of rural inhabitants.

Where civil society is examined, this study looks beyond advocacy organizations, which are often resident in the capital city, where political activism is frequently higher and the number of civil society organizations greater than in rural areas. Civil society in this study includes groups organized around objectives of providing basic social and health services, reciprocal development-oriented assistance and culturally specific activities, given that NGO interventions in the rural regions focus more on increasing individual capacity to take an active role in their own development, although there is also mention of democracy.

Situating Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone provides an excellent case study in which to examine the relationship between NGO assistance and democratization, specifically understood here as the political attitudes, beliefs and behavior of the masses. Since this country has only recently emerged from

a decade of conflict, numerous international interventions have included both democratization and development components.⁶

Since the end of the 1991- 2002 civil war, Sierra Leoneans are trying to rebuild the state and consolidate democracy with the assistance of the international community. Areas of intervention include the restoration of institutions for democratic governance and the inculcation of civic norms and behavior in the general populace. Although the official cessation of hostilities in January 2002 was met with much celebration, with peace came the beginning of the momentous task of rebuilding a state that was classified amongst the world's failed states (Reno 1997). The incumbent government inherited a state whose weakness stemmed from long before the war. Plundered for years by former president Siaka Stevens, who milked state institutions to support an extensive patron-client network, Sierra Leone prior to 1991 was ravaged by wide-scale corruption and inefficiency, with weak institutions, crippling debts and poor economic infrastructure. The war compounded these problems. By 2002, it had claimed the lives of an estimated 50,000 people, displaced hundreds of thousands more, and wrought massive infrastructural as well as emotional damage, scarring civilians and combatants alike, many of whom were child soldiers.

During the latter years of the war and, to a growing extent, in the post-conflict era, Sierra Leone has been the recipient of a wide variety of international interventions aimed at rebuilding the state, strengthening institutions and (re) constructing democracy. International actors, ranging from bilateral donors, multilateral institutions and various international development organizations are active in Sierra Leone, contributing to, and in some instances driving the post-

⁶ See for example, Development Assistance Coordination Office (DACO). "Development Assistance to Sierra Leone, 2006." (Place Published: Development Assistance Coordination Office, Office of the Vice President, 2006), http://www.daco-sl.org/reports/Dev_ass_rep06.pdf. This report details international assistance to Sierra Leone by category and amount.

conflict reconstruction agenda. Although there was an initial focus on short term emergency and humanitarian relief assistance (Zack-Williams 1999), international actors increasingly focused on melding development policy with international security, a course of action illustrative of concerns that increased unrest in other parts of the world could threaten international security and contribute to the rise of terrorism (Fanthorpe 2006). In Sierra Leone, this is reflected in a shift in emphasis from short-term emergency and relief-oriented work to a more long-term focus on sustained development, as evidenced in government and donor strategy reports.⁷ This broadened focus includes activities designed to transform societies into more democratic entities, focusing on good governance and accompanying calls for decentralization to ensure increased state accountability, the strengthening of existing institutions along neo-liberal criteria and the development of civic norms. For example, Sierra Leone has received democratic governance assistance through USAID for six out of a possible 14 years between 1990-2003 (Finkel, Perez-Linan and Seligson 2006). Such initiatives are rooted in the now widely accepted orthodoxy of liberal peace that views democracy as a necessary precondition for development as well as sustained peace in post-conflict states (Fanthorpe 2006) and accords international actors central roles in promoting this democracy (Carothers 1995; Kumar 1997) and have joined more traditional initiatives that focus on economic and social development.

⁷ See for example the "National Recovery Strategy: Sierra Leone 2002-2003," (Freetown: 2002).

Although not without its opponents,⁸ the liberal vision of democracy is one that dominates most literature on democracy and democracy promotion (Burnell 2000). The prevailing orthodoxy among NGO staff, academics and development institutions is that NGOs, while a part of civil society, can themselves strengthen (domestic) civil society, which, in turn is perceived as good for democracy. However, the democracy referred to is above all political, ignoring for the most part, social or economic democracy; it privileges the individual over the collective, and places emphasis on rules and procedures over participatory democracy (Burnell 2000: 4). As such, some find its promotion in African contexts inappropriate. Nevertheless, given the triumph of liberal democracy after the fall of communism, and the belief that we are at the end of history (Fukuyama 1992), there is some consensus that this form of democracy, already familiar to the countries that export it, is the best and safest mechanism. In addition, there are limits to the ability of external actors to promote grass-roots movements (Burnell 2000). This liberal conception of democracy envisions two roles for civil society: a forum through which social capital is generated and individuals develop trust that facilitates collective action and the development of civic norms and beliefs; and the advocacy perspective that views civil society as the forum through which citizens can articulate their concerns and hold the state accountable.

⁸ The appropriateness of the application of the tenets of Western liberal democracy to non-Western contexts has been sharply criticized by a number of authors for a variety of reasons. For some, the notion of civil society is a Western construct of limited value that is not necessarily applicable to all societies, including African contexts, see for example the volume by Nelson Kasfir, ed., *Civil Society and Democracy in Africa* (London ; Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1998), and, Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty : Civil Society and Its Rivals*, 1st American ed. (New York, N.Y.: Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 1994). Another articulated limitation is that the concept is also exclusive as it fails to capture the full range of associational life that shape and influence citizens' lives; this is especially true for ascriptive organizations such as those for which ethnicity serves as a criteria for membership, which are prevalent in many African societies. Gellner for example argues against the inclusion of what he calls "segmentary communities" that comprise of familial relations and rituals in Ernest Gellner, "The Importance of Being Modular," in *Civil Society : Theory, History, Comparison*, ed. John A. Hall (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1995). Still others argue that the idea of individualism at the heart of liberal democracy is also at odds with societies in which much of the emphasis is on the collective, as is illustrated for example by Paul Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement " *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 1 (1975). Ernest Gellner, *Conditions of Liberty : Civil Society and Its Rivals*, 1st American ed. (New York, N.Y.: Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 1994).

The promotion of civil society by development and democratization NGOs in Sierra Leone is thus reflective of larger international initiatives in post-conflict societies. The strategy I employ to answer this question of whether norms, values and participation of individuals is affected by internationally driven external interventions is a quasi-experimental method, comparing individuals exposed to different types of NGO projects with their levels of political participation and values held. I conducted research in seven communities in two districts in the Eastern and Northern regions of Sierra Leone. My methodology includes surveys, semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted with villagers above 18 years of age at the rural community level as well as semi-structured interviews conducted with heads of international and community based non-governmental organizations. My measurement of organizational impact is also at the individual level of analysis rather than at the level of the organization, since Sierra Leoneans have been exposed to multiple organizations during, as well as after the war. I analyze whether or not exposure to NGOs increases both the likelihood of civil society participation as well as helps socialize individuals with civic norms shared by these agents.

The methodology employed also speaks to some of the limitations of evaluations of the impacts of assistance oriented to democratization. My methodology includes quantitative and qualitative components; with close-ended as well as open-ended questions allowing respondents to give details of their attitudes and beliefs as well as reasons for participation. Additionally, the use of random selection for respondents ensured representation from those involved as well as uninvolved in a variety of projects. Respondents were also encouraged to list all projects in which they participated over a six-year period, enabling a more longitudinal assessment of project impacts. Additionally, the recording of other information, including socio-economic

variables and political history allows for more contextualization of research findings as well as the use of constants to better establish causality.

My argument builds on the political socialization tradition, which assumes that political attitudes and values are a product of the historical context in which one was raised including education and family background; epistemologically, I rely on the value assumption. This implies that individuals are value-oriented or, as Robert Keohane (2002: 1) contextualizes it, the broad context of rationality and self interests implies not only material interests but also moral interests including one's being thought well of and thinking well of oneself. This supposes that individuals act in accordance with their own belief systems and identities; their behavior can be explained through determining these identities and the meaning given to a situation (March and Olsen 1998: 951-2). This approach is useful because human beings are not simply rational creatures acting out of self-interest alone. However, this does not tell us the full story of the attitudes and beliefs that people hold about the current regime in Sierra Leone, given the years of war, and the comparative newness of the current political system. Thus, political socialization theory can be integrated into a developmental model, which suggests that while individuals attitudes and beliefs can be initially shaped by childhood experiences, learning does not end with adulthood; instead political learning is a lifetime process, and adults incorporate current political events, regime performance and their experience with the regime in their political calculations and evaluations (Diamond 1999; Rose, Mishler and Haerpfer 1998; Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005). Ultimately, individual's attitudes, beliefs and political participation are affected by their experiences with democracy (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005), and the extent in which governments can deliver political goods to their citizens impacts attitudes and beliefs more than other variables like education and socio-economic status (Diamond 1999). Similarly,

political behavior is reflective of citizen experience with government and its corresponding structures.

In Chapter 2, I explore the literature on post-conflict reconstruction, situating the theoretical underpinnings of the role NGOs are deemed to play in the recovery process. The first section addresses the interventions to which state failure has given rise, with a focus on the increased emphasis of the role of NGOs in post-conflict interventions in terms of building civil society through development and democracy projects, and how these in turn contribute to democracy strengthening. By mapping the key literature, this chapter frames notions of post-conflict reconstruction, and the ascendancy of democracy-building initiatives. I then examine what type of democracy is often the focus of these initiatives, to provide a basis for the elaboration of the various components of the dependent variable. The central components of the democracy-strengthening variable are conceptualized and operationalized, with indicators for measurement specified. Existing theories on influences on democracy strengthening in post-conflict settings are then reviewed before elaborating on the theoretical framework I adopt to explain the relationship between international assistance and democracy strengthening. The chapter concludes by reviewing the methodology employed in this study and the details of the specific case studies are described and outlined. Also discussed are the challenges of conducting this type of research in Sierra Leone as well as the shifts made in the field in light of these conditions.

Chapter 3 situates the discussion on post-conflict interventions, civil society building and democratization within the specific context of the case study: Sierra Leone. I first provide a historical overview of political development in Sierra Leone, reviewing the early colonial period, transition to independence and the development of the conditions that would eventually lead to

war, before describing international interventions generally aimed at bringing the state out of failure to development and democracy.

Chapter 4 develops my argument, that NGOs in general do have some impact on civic norms and beliefs as well as political participation. Although there is no significant difference explored between development and democracy-oriented activities, citizens who have been the recipients of international assistance are more likely to engage in the political arena and have greater knowledge of political concepts and leaders. However, they are less likely to espouse trust in the political system, despite evincing support for democracy in the abstract. In this chapter, an overview of the frequencies of the key variables used in this dissertation are provided, as well as analysis of the impact of NGO participation on the various components of democracy strengthening as defined in this study. Multivariate analysis of the various independent variables of interest is also conducted to ascertain the extent in which NGO participation influences democracy strengthening.

Chapter 5 outlines the key conclusions derived from the study and the implications of this research on NGO interventions in the arena of democratization in post-conflict societies are discussed. Notably, while NGOs can and do play a role in increasing political participation and in norms supportive of democracy, by ignoring local political contexts and structures of power, they can potentially undermine the very peace that they are trying to consolidate. Additionally, by encouraging citizens to articulate concerns, they can raise citizen expectations about government capabilities, running the risk of undermining citizen-government relations as a weakened government recovering from a conflict situation is unlikely to have the capacity to meet all these citizen demands. As Kasfir (1998) among others has argued, the promotion of a strong civil society without a state capable of meeting these demands can also serve to further

weaken the state as well as undermine state-citizen relations as the state is not perceived as accountable to citizen interests. What are needed are approaches that simultaneously target state and society, as well as time for the state to (re) develop the capacity to deliver public goods to citizens. In other words, it might be necessary to (re) build the state before democratizing.

CHAPTER 2 CULTIVATING DEMOCRACY IN POST-CONFLICT CONTEXTS

This dissertation is about democracy strengthening in post-conflict contexts and the role that NGOs play in this process. In the aftermath of conflict, there is renewed emphasis on building democracy as a mechanism to safeguard peace. Correspondingly, scholars are showing renewed interest in mass attitudes toward democracy, and the extent in which the masses intrinsically value democracy and behave in a democratic manner is seen as an equally important component of strengthening democracy (Diamond 1999). In this chapter, I will first provide an overview of the various mechanisms adopted by international actors in the aftermath of conflict, before focusing on one mechanism in particular that is growing in importance: the role of NGOs in providing development and democracy assistance geared at strengthening democracy. Next, To contextualize the discussion on NGOs and democracy strengthening, I conceptualize and operationalize the term democracy given that it is an “essentially contested concept” (Gallie 1956), with competing definitions. After establishing the basis for the discussion I then turn to the dependent variable, democracy strengthening, defining the concept, and identifying the core conceptual attributes, and components and subcomponents used in measurement. Following the specification of the dependent variables, I develop my theoretical framework of the relationship between NGO assistance and strengthened democracy. In the final section of this chapter, I turn to the central research questions, cover research sites selection and methodology used to answer the research questions.

In the Aftermath of Conflict: International Assistance in Post-War States

Although international interventions in Africa are not new, given widespread failures by African states on social, economic and political fronts, international interventions have taken on a whole new saliency. Following the demise of colonialism and transitions to independence in

the late fifties and sixties, African countries became recipients of large amounts of international aid, primarily for development purposes. The goal was modernization, with the state as the principal agent of change (Hyden 2002). Aid was often channeled through the state, and a stronger state was viewed as a prerequisite for development (Tvedt 1998). However, in recent years, this trend has reversed as current conventional development wisdom posits that a too-powerful state has been a primary reason for the lack of development in many African countries, despite years of development aid (Tvedt 1998; Hulme and Edwards 1997).

In the 1980s, under the rubric of structural adjustment, international financial institutions and donor countries began to attach direct conditionalities to aid assistance, one of the first steps aimed at directly influencing changes in African political systems. Assistance was linked to conformity with economic liberalization programs developed by the Bretton Woods institutions, with a corresponding decrease in the state's importance. The neo-liberal agenda of the 1980s with an emphasis on reduced government expanded in the latter part of the 20th century and continues today. Political reform has been added to this agenda, and to this end, bilateral and multilateral donors alike emphasize good governance as a necessary precondition for aid although this is not always enforced. Rather than development perceived as a precondition for democracy, increasingly scholars and practitioners alike find that instead, democratization can facilitate development (Hyden 1997; Hyden 2002).

The positive correlations currently assumed between democratization and development (Tvedt 1998; Hyden 1997; Hulme and Edwards 1997), have contributed to the rise in popularity of NGOs among donors as they are viewed as agents of both democratization and development. It also complements perspectives of the state as a hindrance in development and democratization initiatives. Given this context, development aid has been increasingly channeled through

international and local non-governmental organizations as they are perceived as more efficacious and less corrupt than state bodies (Meyer and Prugl 1999; Sweetman 2001; Smillie 2001; Tvedt 1998). Not only are NGOs effective in promoting development, but they can also promote democratization especially through civil society building. As Tvedt writes:

[T]his theory allocates NGOs a crucial role in the democratization of countries: they are to strengthen what is commonly called ‘civil society. [They] are conceived of as instruments for organizing local initiatives and promoting local participation as opposed to the state whose approach is seen as *dirigiste* and top down expressing the interests of a bureaucratized, alienated elite in search of illegitimate control” (Tvedt 1998: 208).

Such interventions are not limited to peaceful contexts. International assistance for democracy promotion has been advanced in a wide variety of contexts: in countries undergoing transitions, or still authoritarian, countries that are weak and failing, and countries designated as failed (Burnell 2000). While democracy promotion has long been an objective of foreign aid (Carothers 1999; Carothers 1995), it has taken on renewed emphasis and a shift in focus in recent years (McFaul 2005; Burnell 2000). Although the growing incidence of state failure in the post 9/11 context and the increasing correlation of state failure with terrorist networks has shifted emphasis from humanitarian concerns to those of security (Yannis 2002), democracy assistance is nevertheless still relevant given attempts to understand the causes and consequences of failure and the development of policy to address this. Discourse ranges from a discussion of what factors lead to state failure, to the implications of state failure and finally, the possibilities for state reconstruction— examining the interventions necessary to help states back on their feet (Rotberg 2003; Rotberg 2004). Thus, while states do focus on the development of stronger security measures to protect citizens, international interventions also call for democracy promotion as it is an international norm held by state and non-state actors alike (McFaul 2005).

International Interventions in Post-Conflict States: the Various Components

International actors undertake a variety of activities designed to secure peace in post-conflict contexts, some of which can be defined under traditional development assistance and others, under democracy assistance. Both development and democracy assistance is evaluated in this study, with the intent of seeing what impact it has on attitudes, beliefs and behavior pertaining to democracy. Broadly defined, democracy assistance can be seen as aid designed to advance social, economic and other conditions believed to be beneficial to democracy as well as strengthening democratic institutions like parliament and the electoral system (Burnell 2000). What this actually constitutes of however is contested, and can refer to activities as varied as the building of political institutions, to supporting education and economic development, as well as activities that inculcate the norms of democracy in recipient populations. In addition, given the plurality of actors already conceived to act under the rubric of the international community, the means and methods used in promoting democracy assistance are seldom uniform, and cover a variety of competing approaches.

Nevertheless, the following have been identified as key in the arena of democracy assistance: election assistance, human right assistance and media assistance (De Zeeuw and Kumar 2006). The various components of these three categories are detailed in Table 2.1.

Burnell (2000) looks beyond the institutional structures and incorporates political society, including attitudinal, behavioral and civil society dimensions. Some of these areas overlap with the foci of development assistance. Traditionally, this type of assistance is focused on improving the socio-economic conditions of target recipients. However, by engaging in community-driven development, some have argued that development activities can unintentionally impact democracy, especially in regards to the development of a political society. In the following

section, I examine the types of interventions most often undertaken in post-conflict settings, and show how they are assumed to impact on democratization.

The political arena is one of the first areas targeted following a situation of conflict (Carothers 2004; Chesterman, et al. 2005) as political factors form one of the central explanatory variables advanced for state failure. Many interrelated components of political intervention exist, all of which can be said to impact democracy in some way. These include the securing of peace, and the (re)establishment of rule of law; reintegration of ex-combatants into society and the building of state capacity to accommodate and manage the varied and often competing demands of different domestic actors, so as to increase state legitimacy. Other related components of institution building implemented include the management of elections, the promotion of human rights monitoring and the strengthening of civil society (Rotberg 2004; Kumar 1998).

First, for reconstruction to occur, peace needs to be fully assured as well as the securing of law and (re) establishment of order (Rotberg 2004). This can take the form of external military interventions; as for example was the case in Sierra Leone. In 2001, the presence of UN peacekeeping forces, British paratroopers and ECOMOG soldiers helped to maintain peace and security, and create an enabling environment for the successful conduct of elections in 2002. In other countries, such as the DRC, MONUC peacekeeping forces play an integral role in maintaining peace. International support in this arena includes the contribution of peacekeeping forces as well as the funds for their continued maintenance.

Once peace is attained, advances in related sectors are also seen as instrumental toward maintaining this peace. Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of formerly warring parties is another aspect of securing peace and stability, as well as interventions in the security sector aimed at ensuring respect of rule of law. To build such respect, a host of political

institutions are targeted for reform including the rehabilitation or reconfiguration of political systems including traditional/customary and formal law courts, the training of a fair judiciary and police, as well as the professionalization of the civil service (Kumar 1997). Other democracy assistance interventions include decentralization, promoted as a way to build accountability, with greater devolution of political power to local political authorities (Fanthorpe 2006). To this end, international actors have provided financial and technical support for decentralization, privatization initiatives and training programs for civil service and security sector actors. In Sierra Leone, the World Bank and the EU among others have provided substantial assistance (financial and technical) for devolution and privatization activities, and training of police and army personnel.

The promotion of elections following the cessation of violence is another arena in which international actors have been active. NGOS and other international agencies have all contributed in various ways to build local capacities to hold elections. This has included training in the conduct of elections including preparation of voter lists and development of election training manuals, the sending of election observers to monitor and document any irregularities, as well as the funding of capacity building for national election commission workers. International donors played an important role in the recent (2007) presidential and parliamentary elections held in Sierra Leone, providing technical and financial assistance.

While all these can be considered democracy-promoting activities, there is a growing focus on building the capacity of “demand-side” governance in addition to strengthening the “supply side” (CARE 2005; Carothers 1999). It is within this context of policy prescriptions that democracy-strengthening initiatives aimed at the mass public have come into fore, and the role

of NGOs increased (although few assessments of their impact exist in post conflict settings).⁹ Thus, international actors are also active in promoting human rights monitoring and promotion and civil society building. NGOs train local civil society organization activists as well as local NGOs in monitoring and documenting human rights abuses. They also work to instill democratic attitudes and behaviors in local populations in addition to activities on the institutional side, such as the provision of funds to set up human rights commissions and international tribunals in an effort to reconcile warring factions, and bring closure in countries like Rwanda and Bosnia as well as Sierra Leone (Kumar 1997).

The Rise of NGOs and Assistance Aimed at Promoting Democracy

Regardless of the approach adopted, the rise in importance of democracy assistance is undeniable. Carothers (1999) identifies a definite shift in US aid in particular where programs to support democracy became a core component of US aid in the late 1980s and early 1990s, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁰ In addition to the more traditional elements of democracy promotion like aid conditionality as well as development interventions to increase per capita income and improve education, there has been an increase in programs targeting the development/strengthening of institutions traditionally associated with democratic countries such as elections, legislature and judiciary, and the promotion of an active civil society (Knack 2004; Carothers 1999). USAID's Democracy and governance program for example, covering rule of

⁹ There are a number of works assessing democracy assistance in countries undergoing transitions, see for example, Thomas Carothers, "Civil Society," *Foreign Policy*, no. 117 (1999); and, Peter J. Burnell, *Democracy Assistance : International Co-Operation for Democratization*, Democratization Studies (London ; Portland, OR: F. Cass, 2000), for comprehensive reviews. Works that have examined democracy assistance in post-conflict settings have focused primarily on analysis of institutional impact; see for example, Jeroen De Zeeuw and Krishna Kumar, *Promoting Democracy in Postconflict Societies*, ed. Nederlands Instituut voor Internationale Betrekkingen "Clingendael". (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 2006).

¹⁰ Thomas Carothers, *Aiding Democracy Abroad : The Learning Curve* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999), notes that more than forty countries in Sub-Saharan Africa received US democracy aid in the 1990s.

law, civil society, good governance and elections and political processes is the second largest area of expenditure, with median funding per country rising from 3.5 million to 5.5 million between 1998 and 2005 (Burnell 2007).

Democracy assistance is concerned with culture as well as institutions as it proceeds from the perspective that in order to strengthen democracy, the inculcation of attitudes, norms and behavior associated with democratic citizens must be imparted and a vibrant civil society developed (Burnell 2000).

Much of this assistance is channeled through NGOs. Although proportionally, civil society assistance accounts for a very small percentage of development aid overall,¹¹ there is nevertheless, a net increase in the proportion of aid allocated to civil society programs and projects. USAID for example increased spending by 320% between 1991-1998, going from \$56.1 million in 1991 to \$118.1 million in 1993, and \$181.7 million in 1998 (Carothers 1999). These figures might not paint the true picture as donors classify projects in different ways, and such assistance could be subsumed under other types of aid and thus go uncounted (Green and Kohl 2007). NGOs have also grown in strength and numbers overall. According to the Yearbook of International Organizations, a conservative estimation for international non-governmental organizations alone is more than 26,000 (The Economist, cited in Mansbach and Rhodes 2003). Furthermore, given the plurality of actors already conceived to act under the rubric of the international community, the means and methods used in promoting democracy assistance are seldom uniform, and cover a variety of competing approaches. Clearly, NGOs play a central role

¹¹ According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC) “government and civil society” aid was 2.9 percent in 1998. In 2004, aid allocated to the “government and civil society” sector accounted for only 6.7% of total donor commitments in DAC countries, in *Development Aid at a Glance, Statistics by Region, Africa, 2007*.

in development and democracy promotion. What however, is the type of democracy advocated? In the next section, I discuss conceptions of democracy as advanced by these organizations.

Specification and Measurement of Variables of Importance

The contested concept of democracy lies at the heart of this dissertation; in order to discuss what is meant by democracy strengthening, it is important to first identify what is meant by democracy. In general, this debate is limited to specifications of liberal democracy, which is taken as the standard; there is little discussion on the viability of other models of democracy, or, in the case of African countries, the applicability (or lack of) of Western democratic models to African contexts, although there are some exceptions to this.¹² However, is the championing of a liberal form of democracy where the emphasis is on voting within institutions that are perhaps unrepresentative of people's concerns really the best means to improving their lives? When Sierra Leoneans think of democracy, is it within the liberal boundaries of freedoms and elections, or are people searching for political alternatives more representative of their concerns? Only after identifying how Sierra Leoneans define democracy can we begin to measure whether their perceptions are influenced by participation in NGOs among other factors. Such questions are important because if there are differences between Western and Sierra Leonean conceptualizations, one cannot help but wonder how to resolve such contradictions. Whose definitions should theorists and policy-practitioners use? What are the implications of using global rather than local notions of democracy?

¹² See for example, Claude Ake, *The Feasibility of Democracy in Africa*, Codesria Book Series (Dakar, Senegal: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2000), Claude Ake, "The Unique Case of African Democracy," *International Affairs* 69, no. 2 (1993), Mohamed Abdel Rahim M. Salih, *African Democracies and African Politics*, Human Security in the Global Economy (London; Sterling, Va.: Pluto Press, 2001), Issa G. Shivji, *State and Constitutionalism : An African Debate on Democracy*, 1st ed., Southern Africa Political Economy Series (Harare, Zimbabwe: SAPES Trust, 1991). Also see David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2006), for a comprehensive discussion of various models of democracy.

While not central to debates on democratization and democratic consolidation, some Africanists have discussed the limitations of a Western application of democracy to African contexts; for these scholars, the emphasis on political rights, with a focus on the individual is at odds with communitarian perspectives in which central concerns are social and economic rather than political: socio-economic advancements for the general populace are of primary importance rather than political concerns that focus on individual needs and values (Ake 1993; Owusu 1992). This is not to say that democratic concepts are alien to Africans. Some authors acknowledge that while there were elements of politics in pre-colonial Africa antithetical to democracy, consensual models of governance in which traditional leaders were accountable to their publics were widespread. Nevertheless, there remain key differences between these practices and perspectives on democracy with Western democracy.¹³ The consensus among such scholars is that Africans need a democracy that resonates with local contexts, blending both Western and African values and traditions into a home-grown model that can find wide acceptance across all segments of society (Osabu-Kle 2000; Kpundeh 1992). For these authors, a democracy that ignores local contexts and realities and fails to make it more relevant to local understandings will not take root as it lacks grounding in local soils. In order for sustainable democratization to occur, the implemented democracy must be one that resonates/is modified by local understandings; it has to take into account existing institutional structures and social and economic realities experienced by African states (Owusu 1992).

On the other hand, some scholars find no real difference between Africans and Western conceptualizations of democracy (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005). For these authors,

¹³ See for example, Sahr John Kpundeh, ed., *Democratization in Africa : African Views, African Voices : Summary of Three Workshops* (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1992), : 9-10, for a brief overview of African perspectives on the disjuncture between western and African understandings of democratic concepts.

Africans, like others, have a primarily process-oriented, largely liberal understanding of democracy that places emphasis on individual rights and liberties as opposed to substantive economic and social changes.

For our purposes, it is important to know how participants in the study perceive democracy as this has implications for NGO assistance in this arena. Are NGOs promoting what they think they are promoting? What are the potential ramifications for democracy strengthening, where organizations encourage a specific (liberal) vision of democracy at odds with peoples' understandings? Such questions are important because if there are differences between Western conceptualizations, one cannot help but wonder how to resolve such contradictions. Whose definitions should theorists and policy-practitioners use? What are the implications of using global rather than local notions of democracy?

The debate on whether democracy in African countries is understood differently from Western contexts will be explored in further detail in Chapter Five, where respondents' conceptualizations of democracy are examined and discussed.

Although they exist, questions on the suitability of Western models of democracy are not the mainstream, and liberal democracy, with its emphasis on the political, is the type of democracy most often promoted in post-conflict contexts as Western countries are more comfortable exporting versions of what they have at home (De Zeeuw and Kumar 2006). In countries undergoing democratization, the question that scholars and policy practitioners tend to debate is not what type of democracy should be implemented and how to improve it as much as it is implementing some element of democracy in the first place, which is often along the minimalist lines of electoral democracy. However, by ignoring a debate on what exactly democracy means for Africans, practitioners run the risk of implementing a form of democracy

that cannot be sustained. It also complicates generalizing about democracy strengthening if there is no agreement on what is understood by democracy.

Liberal democracy, the form most commonly promoted, has itself undergone some variation. Schumpeter's (1943: 269) definition of democracy as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote," while encapsulating nicely two central attributes of democracy: contestation and participation, is nevertheless limited to the ability of individuals to vote between competing elites as a means to legitimize the resulting government and fails to consider mechanisms through which citizens can hold their rulers accountable (Schmitter and Karl 1991). While a conventional definition of political participation: "legal activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of government personnel and the actions they take" (Verba, Nie and Kim 1978: 46) emphasizes contact with leaders in the formal realm, by limiting citizen participation primarily to voting, both these conceptualizations do not conceive of a role for individuals in the periods between elections. In addition, especially in African contexts where formal, elected leadership is not the only form of leadership that counts, room needs to be made for informal political behavior: Africans engage with leaders outside of the state apparatus that nevertheless impacts their lives, such as traditional leaders like chiefs and religious leaders. They also engage in community affairs and such interactions need to be taken into account (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005).

Thus, other conceptualizations have come to include a broader understanding of what it means to participate: Dahl (1971) for example, while keeping the definition of democracy relatively minimalist, as simply the existence of civil and political rights and fair, competitive inclusive elections, nevertheless, broadens participation to include associational activity; citizens

can organize themselves into competing interest groups that lobby for attention at policy levels. Where citizen involvement is seen as central to the deepening of democracy, more emphasis is placed on a broader understanding of political participation. This takes the conceptualization beyond electoral democracy, with its focus on regular competitive elections as a means for power turnover, to a consideration of political participation, an attribute that is missing from quite a number of indices measuring democracy despite being a significant component of democracy (Munck and Verkuilen 2002). Thus, while the mechanisms of elections and the quality of existing political institutions are important, there also must be citizen involvement in the system. In addition to voting, citizens must have avenues through which they can express their political preferences and competing values as well as be able to hold political officials accountable. My emphasis on citizen participation in democracy takes the conceptualization beyond electoral democracy, where the focus is on regular competitive elections as a means for power turnover. Understanding citizen involvement in democracy also necessitates a focus on the degree of political rights and civil liberties present, as these are important if participation is to take place.

Such a conceptualization recognizes that democracy requires the participation of the masses to be strengthened and speaks to John Stuart Mills point that,

The people for whom the government is intended must be willing to accept it; or at least not so unwilling as to oppose an insurmountable obstacle to its establishment. They must be willing and able to do what is necessary to keep it standing. And they must be willing and able to do what it requires of them to enable it to fulfill its purposes. The word “do” is to be understood as including forbearances as well as acts.¹⁴”

¹⁴ Mills essay “On Representative Government,” cited in Larry Diamond, “Political Culture and Democracy,” in *Political Culture and Democracy in Developing Countries*, ed. Larry Diamond (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1993), : 11.

While expanding an understanding of democracy to include the activities of the governed, a liberal definition of democracy still focuses largely on procedural factors. This is the democracy most often promoted by international actors as they tend to implement what they are most familiar with: a primarily elitist vision that is representative, rather than direct, and goes beyond voting as a measure of participation, given discussions of the limitation of electoral democracy. Thus, the definition of democracy that I use to frame this study is a liberal one that extends the notion of participation beyond voting.

While voting is a salient component of participation, there are other ways in which citizens can become involved in the political system of their country, including contact of political leaders, making political contributions, as well as organizing protests and so forth. The components of this liberal democracy also include the protection and defense of civil liberties and freedoms, self-government through elections and legitimacy of the political system in place. While other components of liberal democracy such as institutions are also important, they are not examined here, as the focus is on mass political participation rather than the institutions through which this participation is exercised.

Strengthening Democracy: Defining the Concept

Given the specific component of democracy that is examined here, how then should one understand democracy strengthening? This concept is closely linked to that of democratic consolidation of which much work has been done. As many now view democracy as the only viable game in town (Fukuyama 1992; Diamond 1999), philosophical debates are not so much about finding other governance alternatives as they are about strengthening and consolidating fledgling democracies¹⁵. However, as the term consolidation is also one that has a multiplicity of

¹⁵ See for example, Lisa Anderson, *Transitions to Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), Larry Diamond, ed., *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies : Themes and Perspectives* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns

meanings, it is necessary again to be clear about one's definitions (Schedler 1998). Schedler's typology of various ways of understanding democratic consolidation divides existing literature into the following categories: "avoiding democratic breakdown" – preventing newly established democracies from regressing into authoritarian regimes through the actions of "anti-democrats;" "avoiding democratic erosion" - the subtle, yet insidious hollowing out of democratic institutions through various activities such as behavior on the part of political leaders that undermine the rule of law or the independence of electoral institutions; "completing or stabilization of democracy" – moving from electoral to liberal democracy; democratic deepening, moving it from liberal to advanced democracies; and organizing democracy – the building of the institutions of democracy (Schedler 1998: 95-101). Where does Sierra Leone stand, according to this typology? According to Freedom House, Sierra Leone is an electoral democracy, with scores of 3 out of 7 in both the political rights and civil liberties categories (Freedom House 2008). This is an improvement over political rights scores of 4 during 2007, following the successful conduct of free and fair national elections in which the incumbent party, Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) was defeated by the opposition All People's Congress (APC). Sierra Leone is thus in the partially free category, suggesting that citizens do indeed enjoy some measure of political and civil rights and liberties, but there is room for improvement. For the most part, government respects the rights of freedom of speech and press, religion, assembly and association. In addition, the judiciary is somewhat independent, although there are incidences of favoritism and unfair rulings depending on one's financial and social standing. However, women still face defacto and dejure discrimination,

Hopkins University Press, 1997), Juan J. Linz and Alfred C. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation : Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

ethnic chauvinism is an aspect of political and social life and labor standards are not adhered to (Freedom House 2008).

If one takes a historical perspective, the argument could be made that Sierra Leone is not a new democracy per se, given the existence of both a constitution established in the 18th century and well functioning democratic institutions inherited from the colonial period. However, the years following independence saw the steady erosion of such institutions under the repressive rule of Siaka Stevens. As a result, for many commentators, rather than talk of deepening democracy, it is more appropriate to talk about preventing regression to authoritarian rule, where Sierra Leone is viewed as a newly established democracy in which political institutions are under construction. Sierra Leone can be considered a newly established democracy in some ways given that much of the democracy assistance channeled to Sierra Leone has focused on resurrecting political institutions such as the judiciary, parliament, the police and the electoral system among others. Assistance has also been channeled into building civil society and the development of citizens that are politically informed and active; for its part, development assistance has also emphasized organizing citizens to collectively work toward their own development, where the assumption, building on Putnam and other civil society proponents, is that citizens that are active in groups are more likely to have higher levels of trust and will learn attitudes, values and behaviors necessary for a vibrant democracy with the active participation of civil society.

Thus, this study can be grouped within the body of work that understands consolidation in terms of how to prevent newly established democracies from regressing. Such studies are concerned mostly with regime survival and the examination of actors who through anti-democratic motives can endanger the implemented democracy (Schedler 1998). Although such

actors can range from the military to the business classes, I am concerned here with the general population, as they too are theorized to play an important role in the persistence of democracy. If democratic consolidation is viewed in this way, democracy strengthening can be understood as steps toward an increasing scale of consolidation, where positive ratings of democracy as well as increased political participation are indicators of the extent in which people are becoming committed to democracy at normative and behavioral levels. Despite the lack of consensus on the linkages between attitudes, beliefs and behavior, and the importance of political culture, a body of literature within political science assumes that these two are related, with the former influencing the ways in which people behave. Such linkages are behind the attempts by NGOs to shape attitudes and beliefs in an effort to have a corresponding impact on behavior. Although a number of the components examined under the rubric of democracy strengthening are similar to those found in a vision of consolidation that places emphasis on stabilization or democratic deepening, this term is avoided because I consider only a few of these components. For example, while numerous theoretical debates exist on how to consolidate fledgling democracies, a general conceptualization of democratic consolidation (understood as democratic deepening), holds that democratic principles and methods be embraced at the attitudinal and behavioral levels across elites, masses and institutions (Diamond 1994). This study however focuses only on the principles, methods and behavior of non-elites, who, while not necessarily possessing the level of influence over political events and the general populace that elites have, are nevertheless important in the continuation of democracy in their countries (Diamond 1999). What exactly are these principles, methods and behaviors that are considered important?

Legitimation is central to consolidation, where all stakeholders come to view democracy as the only game in town, evincing a commitment to democracy at normative as well as behavioral

levels and in principle as well as in practice. Thus, this support must extend beyond the abstract to support for democracy within the specific context most relevant for actors. This “loyalty” (Linz and Stepan 1978) to the democratic regime entails a belief on the part of the elite and the mass public that their regime is worth their defense and obedience (Diamond 1999).

In addition to legitimation however, Diamond (1999) also includes three tasks that consolidating democracies must complete: democratic deepening, making the formal structures of democracy more liberal and accountable; political institutionalization, where institutions such as the bureaucracy, the electoral system and the judiciary are strengthened, routinized and internalized; and positive regime performance to enhance political legitimacy. However, these components for the most part (with the possible exception of political institutionalization) focus on the supply side of democracy, on the political institutions that comprise it, and the performance of government, all of which have been covered to a certain extent in other works. Although they are examined to a certain extent in this study, they are not the primary emphasis.

While mass behavior and beliefs are not the only aspects important to consider in studies on democratization, nevertheless, as Verba, Schlozman and Brady have commented, “citizen participation is at the heart of democracy (1995: 1). To understand how citizens view democratic principles and participate in democratic practices in the aftermath of conflict, is the objective of this study; thus the focus in this study is limited to that of the attitudes, beliefs and behavior of the mass public which has only recently returned to center stage in comparative politics in theories of democratic consolidation and deepening (Almond, in Diamond 1999). Combined, they are referred to here as democracy strengthening, encapsulating components of political culture theory where democracy strengthening is defined as attitudes supportive of democracy and political behavior, conditional of the judgments and evaluations people make about the

political system. Other components important to democratic consolidation such as government performance are considered only to the extent in which they impinge on citizen attitudes and beliefs on democracy.

In the following section, the attributes of the two components identified here as belonging to the variable democracy strengthening (attitudes and behavior) are specified and operationalized. Following this, five competing hypotheses that can potentially impact democracy strengthening are highlighted and later tested in addition to participation in NGO projects.

Operationalizing Democracy Strengthening

The two central components of democracy strengthening employed in the study are attitudes/beliefs and behavior. However, given that understandings of democracy can vary across different contexts, it is important to first situate such evaluations within definitions that the people surveyed hold. To this end, respondents were asked, “what does democracy mean to you?” This open-ended question, the same as that asked on the Afrobarometer¹⁶, allowed citizens to speak for themselves, thus enabling us to determine people’s understandings of democracy and ascertain the extent to which this understanding matches the concept of liberal democracy measured here. This addresses criticisms of authors such as Rose, Mishler, and Haerpfer (1998) who argue that interpretations of responses on the legitimacy of democracy are subject to potential ambiguity depending on the notion of democracy respondents’ hold. In addition, respondents were also asked questions with constrained definitions delimiting various elements

¹⁶ References to Afrobarometer survey and results in this study, unless otherwise stated, refer to the twelve-country study by Michael Bratton, Robert B. Mattes, and Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, *Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), which surveyed the following countries: Mali, South Africa, Tanzania, Ghana, Botswana, Uganda, Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Mali.

that can be associated with liberal and social forms of democracy that allow for comparisons on recognized elements of democracy.

Measurement of Attitudes and Beliefs

Having established a baseline against which to compare attitudes/beliefs about democracy, we can now turn to the specification of the strengthening democracy variable. At the level of attitudes and beliefs, elements of Almond and Verba's conceptualization of political culture, defined as "a people's predominant beliefs, attitudes, values, ideals, sentiments, and evaluations about the political system of their country and the role of the self in that system" (cited in Diamond 1999: 163) are useful. Although there is some disagreement,¹⁷ many believe that the attitudes that the general public hold about democracy can be influential in determining the likelihood that democracy will persist in that country (Inglehart 1990; Almond and Verba 1963). These attitudes include awareness of the political system and positive evaluations and feelings for it and the belief that one can participate and such participation can make a difference. Attitudes and beliefs are thus divided into two dimensions: one, belief in democratic legitimacy, and two, cognitive awareness, with the possible impact of NGO participation on these variables explored (see Figure 1.1).

Belief in democratic legitimacy

In the first dimension, "belief in democratic legitimacy", the values that people hold about their political system are measured using the following indicators: preference for democracy (at the abstract level) and evaluation and satisfaction with democracy (application in a specific context).

¹⁷ See for example, Edward N. Muller and Mitchell A. Seligson, "Civic Culture and Democracy: The Question of Causal Relationships," *American Political Science Review* 88, no. 3 (1994): who find that civic culture attitudes do not significantly impact changes in democracy.

Cognitive awareness

In the second dimension, cognitive awareness, I measure peoples' knowledge of leaders and political concepts as well as their engagement in public and political issues operationalized as their self-perceived abilities to change an unjust law and to freely exercise their vote. The former dimension is important because supposedly, for citizens to participate, they also need to be informed (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005; Almond and Verba 1963).¹⁸ For example, Almond and Verba (1963) include in their conceptualization of a "participant political culture" political interest, information and knowledge. Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi write, "The quality of citizenship improves as [citizens] learn to identify their leaders, understand how the political system works, and become exposed to contemporary policy debates" (2005: 40). Thus, increased knowledge about their political system is one factor that can ostensibly increase citizen involvement in politics as it enables them to know about avenues for involvement, and potentially increase the likelihood of making informed decisions about policies and programs. In addition, citizens who have a subjective sense of self-confidence are more likely to engage with political leaders and believe their participation can make a difference: leading to democracy strengthening.¹⁹ For this reason, I add to political awareness, external efficacy as a second component of the measure of cognitive awareness. This examines the extent to which people believe their participation counts, measured by whether they believe they can do anything about laws they deem unfair and the sanctity of their vote.

¹⁸ This is not necessarily the case, as other authors have shown.

¹⁹ See Michael Bratton, Robert B. Mattes, and Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, *Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), for a summary of the literature discussing this.

Measurement of Political Behavior

The second core conceptual attribute is behavior in the political arena (Political Behavior). I divide the concept of political behavior into two central dimensions: political engagement and civic engagement (See Figure 1-2).

Political engagement

As regime legitimacy is affected by citizen experience with democracy, Diamond, among others, argues that citizens should value participation as a norm as well as actively participate in politics (Diamond 1999; Inkeles 1969). Liberal conceptions of democracy hold participation as central in the democratic process as it is the primary mechanism through which citizens can express information about their preferences, interests and needs as well as influence the activities of government and government response (Verba, Scholzman and Brady 1995). Consequently, the extent to which individuals participate in the political process can signal their belief in the political system as well as form the arena in which they learn to become more democratic. In existing research, participation is often measured by looking at central indicators such as: citizen participation (measured by voter turnout), opposition participation, and former leader participation (see for e.g. Lindberg 2006). The addition of the latter two indicators (the opposition and former leaders) is not relevant where the primary source of analysis is mass participation in politics; consequently, my focus is only on the first – citizen participation. While conventional measures that limit participation to voting are relevant, given the importance of such expression, they fail to capture other relevant components linked to citizen participation. Citizens can express their voice in many other ways. I thus consider under political engagement, the following indicators of participation: attendance at political meetings and contact with political leaders in addition to voting. Attendance at political meetings is measured by presence or absence at three different types of meetings open to community residents and contact with

political leaders by the extent in which citizens have contacted formal and traditional leaders in the community and nationally. Finally voting behavior at national and local elections over a designated period are measured.

Civic engagement

The literature on the impact of civic engagement on attitudes and behavior around democracy is contested, but one dominant belief is that participation in NGOs can lead to an increase in levels of civic engagement, here operationalized as membership in civic organizations and participation in collaborative community driven development (CDD) schemes. The numbers of associations to which individuals belong is taken as a measure of civil society activism and is measured against other indicators of democracy strengthening to see whether it has any impact. Empirically, my measurement of civil society covers any and all organizations in which people organize themselves for a variety of activities, which include cooperative development, mutual support and financial assistance as well as secret society activities.

Competing Explanations for Democracy Strengthening

A number of competing (and often inter-related) hypotheses have been put forward to explain why and how people adopt different attitudes, beliefs and practices concerning democracy. Following Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005), we can identify five competing approaches to explain how people adopt these attitudes: culture, socio-economic factors, institutions, cognitive awareness and performance evaluation.

Institutional Explanations, With a Focus on Civil Society

At the level of norms, beliefs, and behavior, existing literature has identified education, socio-economic status, race and gender as key influencing variables on various components of democratization. More recently, following the fall of communist rule in Eastern Europe, much has been made of the concept and role of civil society. This focus has generated a large volume

of work, that traces the origins and conceptualizes the term (Hyden 1997; Carothers 1999; Van Rooy 2000; Edwards and Foley 1998), explores the applicability of the concept to developing countries (Callaghy 1994; Hutchful 1995; Kasfir 1998), and identifies it as the crucial missing link in democratic consolidation (Harbeson, Rothchild and Chazan 1994; Chazan 1993).

Assumptions that rest on the strength of voluntary associations can be classified amongst institutional explanations, as they act as structures that influence individual behavior, socializing citizens into the norms, values and beliefs that can be supportive of democracy and that encourage greater political participation. Or as Cohen and Rogers have written, they “shape the beliefs, preferences, self-understandings and habits of thought and action that individuals bring to more encompassing political arenas” (Cohen and Rogers 1992; Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005).

Although civil society is another contested term, meaning different things to different groups (Edwards and Foley 1998), there is some consensus on which approaches are mostly adopted by donors in developing contexts. Of the four distinct schools identified by Hyden (1997): associational, neoliberal, post Marxism and regime school, international actors most often adopt the associational approach.

For Hyden, the mostly US-centered associational perspective attributes a strong role to civil society in strengthening democracy and promoting development via a myriad of different yet, inter-related tasks, and has been adopted by NGOs pursuing both development and democratization agendas. Some of these tasks include undertaking development activities, mobilizing participation through communication of information as well as preventing state abuse of power (Hyden 1997: 9). This associational perspective is also often paired with another related, and contested concept that has been theorized to be supportive of democracy – social

capital. Frequently seen as the lubricant that facilitates collective action, it is the glue that is both formed within associations and holds them together. It facilitates cooperation and coordinated action as shared norms, values and trust are often the basis upon which people can form associations as well as work successfully together in groups (Coleman 1990; Putnam, Leonardi and Nanetti 1993; Fukuyama 2001). It promotes cooperation within groups and enables them to achieve ends they otherwise might not have achieved (Fukuyama 2001; Coleman 1990). Social capital is also linked to civic culture as Putnam has succinctly shown:

Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called “civic virtue.” The difference is that “social capital” calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when embedded in a sense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital (Putnam 2000: 19).

Within associations then, and facilitated by social capital, individuals are said to be able to learn the “habits of the heart” that are conducive to democracy. Through these lenses, participation in groups and associations, broadly conceptualized as civil society, can also be an indicator of democracy strengthening, influencing attitudes toward democracy as well as levels of political participation as individuals develop these norms and receive information. However, this perspective of civil society is criticized for failing to acknowledge that all civil society groups are not equal in terms of power and finances, and that more powerful groups will be able to have more of an influence in government policy (Hyden 1997). In addition, the idea of competing groups with opposing interests seems to contradict a vision of individuals cooperating and getting along (Foley and Edwards 1998: 7).

Relatedly, a contrasting perspective of civil society that is associated more with European schools of thought, but can also be found within the associational school, places emphasis on the

role of civil society as watchdog, monitoring the state; this combative perspective that sees civil society as being against the state (Foley and Edwards 1998) is in sharp contrast with the associational perspective of Putnam (1993), and Almond and Verba (1963) among others that see social capital and ‘civicness’ as vital ingredients for a stable society, contributing to generalized and specific trust in government. It is similar to Dryzek (1996) who, believing that pressures for democratization come mainly from civil society than the state, advocates that a flourishing oppositional society is central to further democratization. These two competing approaches can be seen in initiatives by international organizations to build civil society. On the one hand, NGOs promote participation in various groups and encourage individuals to work together and address development problems in their community; on the other hand, some organizations also encourage citizens to monitor state activity and ensure that they are accountable to citizen demands. Although they have different foci, both these approaches are theorized to strengthen democracy by inculcating civic norms and values and also by promoting citizen involvement in the governance of their communities. In this study, civil society is examined to see which form is predominant and whether it has any impact on respondent attitudes, beliefs and behavior pertaining to democracy strengthening.

Other institutional mechanisms that have been theorized to influence attitudes, beliefs, and behavior include party identification and the rules governing formal participatory procedures such as voting. The actual experience of participating in a democracy and abiding by the rules of participation can not only affect behavior, but shape, in turn, attitudes and beliefs (Lindberg 2006; Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005).²⁰ Using indicators of voting behavior over time,

²⁰ See for a more detailed overview of the literature addressing these links, ———, *Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

this hypothesis will be tested to see whether the act of voting has an independent influence on attitudes, beliefs and behavior.

Socio-economic variables are another potential determinant of attitudes and political behavior to which many political scientists subscribe. Factors such as education, income and occupation have been theorized to affect citizen activity although there is some debate about how this exactly occurs. For example, the civic volunteerism model of Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995) postulates that the different components of SES have varying impacts on different kinds of participation; education is seen as important in determining who votes, but other activities requiring time and money are influenced by other factors such as resources. Another demographic of importance is age; for some researchers, younger generations are seen as more likely to embrace change, whereas for others, age plays no decisive role (Shin 1999).

Cultural explanations locate the impetus for attitudes and behavior on the deep-rooted values from which individuals derive meanings for their everyday interactions. For Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005) in African contexts, such values, stressing as they do communal ties and obligations as well as respect for authority and hierarchical structures can impede political dissent. Rather than ascribing certain homogenous values to all populations, they adopt a more flexible approach that allows for cultural flexibility as individuals adopt and discard various components of norms that respond to external changes (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005: 38).

These authors find that the explanation most convincing to understand citizens' evaluations of and responses to economic policies is what they term a learning approach. This consists of cognitive awareness, what people believe a regime is, and performance evaluation, their perception of what the regime does. Cognitive awareness holds that people must be well

informed in order to participate in politics, while performance evaluations suggest that peoples' calculations of regime performance will depend in some way on their experiences with it.

Although the theory is used to explain attitudes to reform, I believe it can be modified to explain how participation in NGOs might impact attitudes and behavior about democracy. Their theory is flexible enough to account for the fact that peoples' attitudes about democracy (and in their case, market reform) reflects both experiences developed from childhood as well as more recent experiences encountered in adulthood. A political learning approach, linked as it is to political socialization, assumes that experience and knowledge are both important. At the level of knowledge, people are interested in political matters and current events as well as possess political efficacy. They are knowledgeable about policy as well as their political leaders. If one is to argue that NGOs can make a difference in the ways in which citizens understand democracy and the way in which they behave, then this approach is appropriate as it assumes that there is room for individuals to change their attitudes and beliefs beyond those formed in childhood. Additionally, by grounding attitudes toward democracy and behavior in an experiential framework, one is able to account for ways in which people view a regime and their level of engagement with it, notwithstanding evaluations of democracy in the abstract. Thus, I employ a social learning theory framework to understand and explain NGO impacts on political attitudes, beliefs and behavior.

Theorized Relationships

In view of the competing hypotheses outlined above, this dissertation takes the learning approach advocated by Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi with some modifications. Although socio-demographic factors and culture are all potentially important, an approach that recognizes individuals continue to learn beyond childhood, allows for behavioral and attitudinal change across all generations. At the same time, behavior and beliefs are modified by people's concrete

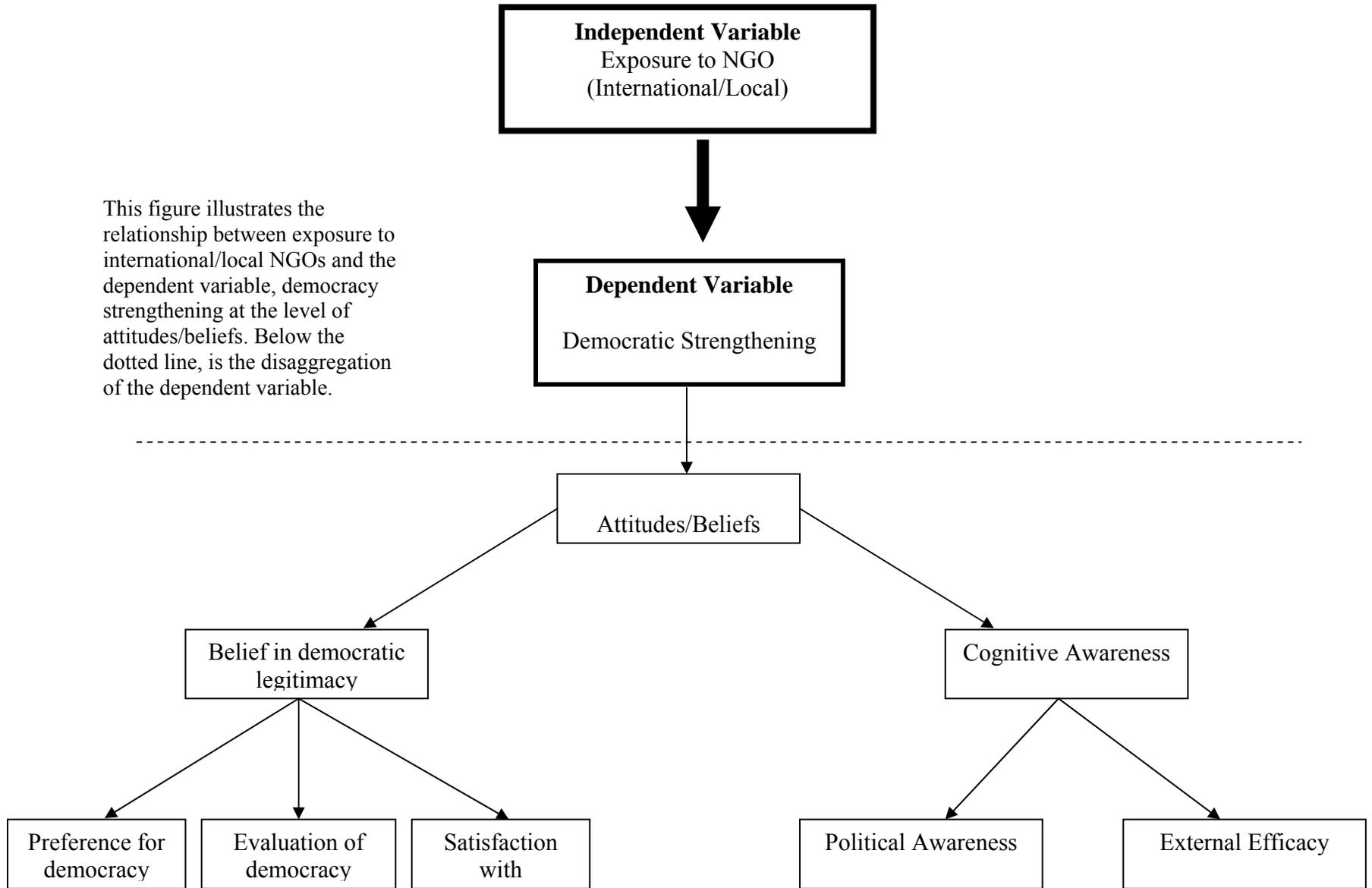


Figure 2-1. Core Conceptual Attribute 1: Interplay between NGOs and Attitudes/Beliefs

Independent Variable

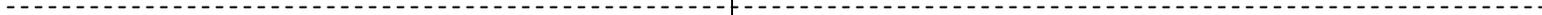
Exposure to NGO
(International/Local)



Dependent Variable

Democratic Strengthening

This figure illustrates the relationship between exposure to international/local NGOs and the dependent variable, democracy strengthening at the behavioral level. Below the dotted line, is the disaggregation of the dependent variable.



Political Behavior

Political Engagement

Civic Engagement

Contact with
political

Attendance at
political

Voting (Local
and National)

Participation in
community

Participation in CDD

Figure 2-2. Core Conceptual Attribute 2: Interplay between NGOs and Political Behavior

experiences with the regimes in place. Furthermore, institutions are also important, and I test the likelihood that NGOs increase people's participation in civic organizations that are specifically geared toward increasing political participation and/or addressing development needs within the community, and whether this also impacts attitudes and beliefs hypothesized to influence democracy.

If these assumptions are correct, that individual beliefs and political participation are a function of the learning that comes from exposure to NGO activity and/or from civil society development, the following propositions should hold: First, at the level of attitudes and beliefs, individuals that are or have been involved in NGO activities will be more cognitively aware: that is, more informed about opportunities for political participation, political leaders and political concepts. They will also have greater levels of efficacy: internal efficacy, the belief that they can participate in the formal political arena, as well as external efficacy, believing that their participation can and will make a difference.

Second, while respondents active in NGOs might be more likely to espouse abstract support for democracy, their support for democracy in practice will hinge on their experiences with democracy and its constituent institutions. Those that have benefited from increased political participation will be more likely to support it than those that have had a negative experience. These people will be more likely to turn to alternative means such as local leaders to address their problems.

Third, at the level of political participation, respondents that have been exposed to NGO projects will belong to more groups and associations than other respondents. Fourth, empirically speaking, we should see greater numbers of such citizens participating actively in the political arena, attending meetings and contacting political leaders. However such participation will be

mediated by experience with democracy, as suggested by the learning approach. Where political participation has made little difference in individual lives, we might expect that they “learn” to retreat from active political participation and seek other means to address their problems instead, going back to contacts with local, influential elites.

Methods of Research

To answer the central research question of the impact of NGOs on democracy strengthening, I used qualitative and quantitative methodologies in order to collect rich empirical data as well as achieve a high level of descriptive accuracy while engaging in comparative analysis and enhancing the generalizability of the findings. Methods included semi-structured interviews, focus groups, free lists, and surveys. I conducted semi-structured elite interviews with organization heads in Freetown as well as with regionally based field staff of the various development organizations currently operating in these communities that fit the identified profiles. Questions asked explored NGO conceptualizations of democracy as well as the programmatic and ideological goals of these interventions. I also collected basic demographic indicators of these organizations such as size, and funding.

Second, separate focus groups were held with both men and women to get a sense of collective locally rooted and context-specific understandings of democracy. During the focus groups, participants were asked to list all the words they associate with democracy. They were also asked about their political values and reasons for political participation. Responses reflected local perceptions of what constitutes both democracy and political participation, and served as a reference point for survey responses on the same question. In the focus groups, participants also revealed the linkages they identify between their participation in NNGO activities and strengthened democracy.

In addition, survey questionnaires were randomly disseminated in the communities in the two districts that included questions taken from the AfroBarometer and the World Bank Social Capital Assessment Tool examining levels of democracy, governance, social capital and political participation in developing countries. The protocol also included questions culled from focus group and key informant discussions as well as those formulated by the research team. Participants were asked to compare current understandings of democracy and levels of participation with those prior to NGO involvement. The survey questions permit the identification of the number of groups to which participants belong, the types of activities (both NGO-sponsored activities as well as locally generated activities) in which they participate, levels of trust of government and in each other, and political participation. One respondent per household was identified, alternating by gender in each subsequent household. Although the initial target was 90 interviews in each community, in smaller communities this number was reduced to 60 or 30, depending on community size. A total of 420 interviews were disseminated in the five communities. Out of these questionnaires, four were refused, resulting in a total number of 416 completed questionnaires.

To gain an understanding behind survey data responses, which pertain mainly to behavior, and to see how NGOs impact people's attitudes, values and understandings of democracy and how/whether local cultures transform these messages, longer ethnographic interviews were needed (Spradley 1980). Consequently, in addition to focus group discussions (FGD's) in each community, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants (elites), identified as community members knowledgeable on cultural practices and politics of identified communities.

Notably, Chiefs (paramount/section chief), *Mammy Queens*,²¹ female councilors and female parliamentarians were interviewed. In a similar fashion to the FGD's, these interviews allowed for perspectives about democracy and political participation that emerged from the experiences of the respondent, outside of the researcher-driven categories of survey instruments.

Criteria for Research Site Selection

Taking democracy strengthening as my dependent variable, and international assistance as my independent variable, I identified the goals as well as the projects that NGOs and International Non-governmental organizations (INGOs)²² had in place by region, differentiating by level of assistance in a geographic area, as well as among organizations mainly concerned with reconstruction and rehabilitation activities and those with more explicit goals of democratization. Such variation in the research sites was to allow for the comparison of democratic beliefs and political participation across different contexts to assess the impact, if any, of presence and differentiated NGO activities. However, as will be discussed in subsequent pages, constraints imposed by existing realities on the ground meant that this approach could not be realized.

Selection of Districts and Communities

Districts were selected using a most different systems design (MDSD) and chiefdoms and communities using a most similar systems design (MSSD). The MDSD approach (Przeworski

²¹ *Mammy Queens* are traditional women leaders appointed by a group of women elders to organize, supervise and manage women's affairs in the community, supervise and women leaders, generally elders that supervise and organize activities for women in the community.

²² The focus in this dissertation is assistance channeled through INGOs and NGOs, as they are a significant, although not the only source of development and democracy assistance. The emphasis is largely on the role of INGOs; although NGOs are also active, they tend to be recipients of aid from the larger INGOs, rather than donors themselves and often reflect the mandates and concerns of INGOs. For ease of reference, in subsequent discussion, I refer to these organizations for the most part unless differentiation is necessary, as NGOs.

and Teune 1982) entailed the comparison of districts with dissimilar histories in order to be able to do systematic comparison and control for confounding variables. The MSSD design compares units that are similar across a host of factors except for a key feature that accounts for the political outcome. Consequently, it posits that differences in patterns of behavior must be attributable to the presence of the key explanatory variable. The method allows for the control of common features while also enabling the identification of those features that might explain differences in outcome. The two districts, Kailahun and Koinadugu, were both affected by the war, but with different levels of severity. Kailahun was a chief rebel base during the war, and given its proximity to the diamond industry, experienced destruction rates of 80 percent, as rebels burned down dwellings to discourage people from returning and to ensure their control of diamond fields (Development Assistance Coordination Office 2004). In addition, its location, standing as it does at the border crossroads of both Guinea and Liberia, as well as between Kono's diamond mines and Liberia, made it highly susceptible to conflict. As one of the areas most affected by the war, Kailahun received intense NGO attention, primarily in the form of community-driven development (CDD) activities, including reconstruction and rehabilitation initiatives.

Specifically, projects in the selected regions have had health, agriculture, economic and educational components, and cover a variety of activities. More recently, select communities in Kailahun have been the recipient of activities aimed at building democracy; and thus Kailahun was deemed an appropriate site to test the activities of both NGOs concerned with providing material as well as intangible benefits.

On the other hand, Koinadugu had about 44 percent structural damage, at war end, given the remoteness of the region and difficulty of accessibility (Development Assistance

Coordination Office 2004). Koinadugu also did not benefit greatly from post-war relief efforts given this remoteness, as well as lower levels of destruction. Such marginalization originates from before the war. The largest district in Sierra Leone, Koinadugu is also among the least developed, with an extremely poor road system. Consequently, it is on the outskirts of most development interventions, by the state as well as international actors. Cultural attitudes here are also among the most conservative; Koinadugu is the only district without any female political representation at the national level, whereas Kailahun has the most representation. The two districts also vary in terms of predominant ethnic groups. Over 80 percent of residents in Kailahun are Mende, whereas Koinadugu is more mixed ethnically, with predominantly Limba Yalunka and Kuranko residents, among others (Development Assistance Coordination Office 2007).

Selection of Chiefdoms and Rural Communities Within Chiefdoms

I originally selected as my independent variable, NGO presence and number as well as type of NGO. Consequently, within target chiefdoms, selected rural communities had to vary significantly on the independent variable; that is, they had to differ on the number of NGOs present as well as type of NGO assistance (democracy/development oriented). Once the districts were selected, lists of chiefdoms and then communities were drawn up within the identified clusters of types of NGO assistance (number and type of NGOs present), and randomly selected, using a random table, with the exception of the community with limited or no NGO presence. In both Koinadugu and Kailahun Districts, names of communities matching these criteria were elicited by asking key informants within the communities, including NGO staff, councilors and

staff from the National Commission of Social Action (NACSA).²³ Given names were listed, and one randomly selected, again using a random table.

Selected Communities: A Successful Process?

The procedure used to identify communities was somewhat successful. In Kailahun, three communities in three chiefdoms were selected: one with democracy assistance, one with development assistance, and one with relief assistance (in the community with little or no NGO presence). In Koinadugu, four communities in two chiefdoms were identified. Three of these communities had development assistance, and one with no NGO assistance. In Koinadugu, there were no NGOs identified with a mandate of democracy strengthening, while in Kailahun, all the targeted communities had some level of NGO presence. In addition, all communities in Kailahun met the criteria of variation on the key explanatory variable of NGO presence or absence. However, in Koinadugu, residents in one community (Yaedia) differed along criteria of ethnicity as historic tensions between two ethnicities residing in the same area had led to a division of the community into two, with Fullah people living in one part and Yalunka in the other (Table 2-2).

Other districts that could have been selected were discarded due to lack of significant project progress. For example, the analysis of a major program funded by DFID identifying Kenema as a second pilot-site had to be discontinued because the project was behind implementation schedule.²⁴ The program, “Enhancing the Interface between Civil Society and the State” (ENCISS) was a newly created consortium (2005) of NGOs working to increase civil society capacity to participate, influence, monitor and contribute to government policies

²³ These actors were deemed as having sufficient familiarity with the terrain to be able to identify regions with little or no NGO presence, given their extensive development work and with the communities.

²⁴ The program progress was communicated to the author through an interview held with the director in February 2006.

including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan (PRSP) and local decentralization initiatives (CARE 2005).

Rather than analyzing results by district, information obtained during the research process revealed that it was more applicable to analyze individual participation in NGOs. The mobility of the population during the war years yielded a population with varied exposure to NGO activity beyond that identified during the research process (see the section on methodological issues below for more details on this). By determining each individual's experience with NGOs, it is possible to account for the impact of organizations over time as well as the variety of exposure that individuals receive. The variable NGO assistance then, refers to individual participation in NGO projects, rather than community level exposure.

Specification of the Independent Variable: The Meaning and Process of NGO Participation

Participation in NGO projects takes a variety of forms, depending on the type of assistance and the mode of operation of the particular organization. Three general mechanisms can be identified. Relief organizations targeted people in camps, and all members were generally eligible for disbursements of food and material supplies such as cups, blankets and clothes. For development projects that emphasized reconstruction, such as the rehabilitation of houses burnt down during the war, members in the community would identify those residents deemed as most poor and deserving of assistance. Civic education programs were targeted at two main groups: those active in the newly created decentralization process such as councilors who received training about various components of their new tasks, as well as general citizens who could choose whether or not to attend information sessions about their roles as citizens. For the purposes of this dissertation, the variable, participation in NGO activity can be defined as any involvement/exposure to any type of NGO activity, be it receipt of relief supplies, participation

in civic education workshops, or participation in a CDD rehabilitation initiative sponsored by NGOs.

Research Team Composition and Execution of Research

The research was conducted in conjunction with Oxfam GB in Sierra Leone. One of the requirements of Oxfam GB was the utilization of participatory methodologies, specifically, Gender Action Research (GAR). This entailed the active involvement of community members in the research process, the encouragement of community members to develop research questions addressing their central concerns, and their involvement in data collection and analysis. It was believed that this would address the empowerment and participatory goals of GAR that stress promotion of change through research. The practical implications of this were the use of several community-based data-collectors. Other members of the research team were employees of Oxfam's locally based partner 50/50, a civil society organization. They participated in the identification, selection and training of local community enumerators and monitored data collection for quality purposes. They also assisted in rudimentary data coding process and in providing feedback to the communities based on their responses to the research.

Research Process

Data collection took place over a six-week period. The first week was spent pre-testing the questionnaire and receiving comments and feedback from community members to ensure that the final questionnaire reflected their input. During week two, the research team re-assembled in Freetown to provide collective input on community suggestions to the questionnaire, revise, finalize and print the questionnaire. Weeks 3, 4, and 5 were spent on data collection. During the final week, data collectors and research team members briefly analyzed the data and presented it to community members for input and feedback.

Methodological Issues

In terms of methodology, the initial research design conceptualized data collection using an experimental design comparing regions with different types and levels of NGO activity. However, in a post-conflict setting, such a design proved to be unrealistic. Communities' experienced high levels of displacement during the war – nearly all respondents had left the community at some point because of war-related violence. Thus they had a variety of experiences; some had spent the majority of the war in camps in Guinea and Liberia where they received relief assistance in the form of shelter, food and basic equipment, whereas others had no assistance, and lived in the bush. In the years since the end of the war, there have also been a large number of interventions as well as high turnover of NGOs, thus some people have been exposed to four, five or even six NGOs whereas others have been exposed to one NGO or none. This meant that analysis had to take place at the level of the individual, rather than at the community level. Consequently, relating impact to type of NGO assistance is extremely difficult since determining whether one NGO has more impact than another, or if democracy oriented projects are overall more beneficial than development ones would require holding activity type or NGO constant. Given the selected communities, in which respondents for the most part had been exposed to a wide variety of assistance ranging from relief, to development, to democracy, this was not possible. Exposure to multiple NGO activity is one consequence of a post-conflict context where the number of NGOs has multiplied to meet felt needs, and interventions have changed quite rapidly from immediate relief to post-conflict reconstruction and development.

Another limitation of the research design is that the conduct of research under the auspices of Oxfam might have influenced received responses. Although attempts were made to stress the independence of the research agenda from the activities of Oxfam, and that received information was simply for informational and assessment purposes with no attached benefits from Oxfam or

concomitant influence on the organization's funding priorities, in situations of post-conflict such as in Sierra Leone, local populations are well aware that NGOs pose a potential windfall. They can thus tailor responses to suit such purposes, in the hope that their responses will result in increased assistance, be it from the NGO or government. Such expectations have been reinforced by numerous needs assessments conducted in local communities prior to undertaking interventions. Following these interventions, in some cases, NGOs would implement projects in response to expressed needs.²⁵

In the survey, responses that seemed to most indicate the influence of Oxfam were those pertaining to levels of wealth. Some responses to wealth baseline questions that asked, among other things, how often the respondent had gone without money, food, or school fees for children were clearly over-inflated, reflective of the belief that the worse a picture one can paint, the higher the likelihood of potential assistance. Furthermore, during FGDs, respondents asked repeatedly what the tangible results from the study would be, and requested that we take back their concerns to central government. They also made numerous references to their communities' isolation from government, and the need for NGOs/government to provide further assistance.

In Kailahun, such responses were especially prevalent in Ngeblama, a remote community where the main and shortest form of access to the community is via a four-person raft across a small river. During the rainy season, flooding results in school children in the community being cut off from schools (there are no schools within the community), as well as other parts of the district, and community members expressed their fear of being forgotten by central government. They felt that despite knowing and taking the steps required to ensure government development activity in their community, their pleas had gone unanswered, and they preferred instead to

²⁵ Author interviews with NGO heads on the process of project identification and implementation in select communities.

contact NGOs for assistance. Where government had responded to a central concern, the need for a bridge to connect the community better to the rest of the district,²⁶ they complained that the bridge was taking too long to build. At the time of the FGDs, work on the bridge had ceased, ostensibly due to a shortage of funds. FGD participants complained that inferior materials were being used, and they had not been consulted in the decision-making process that determined who would be awarded the bid. They felt that funds for the bridge had been misappropriated, and they wanted to know the mechanisms through which they could hold the builders accountable. These concerns were recounted during the FGDs along with the hope that we would pass this message along to the powers that be. Concerns of abandonment by central government, and requests to alert them to the plight of community members were also made in all surveyed communities in Koinadugu, reflective perhaps of that region's greater marginalization compared to Kailahun.

Fanthorpe (2006) among others has noted that the post-war context has implications on the responses that community members give to researchers, NGO workers and government officials alike. For this study, concerns of possible over-inflation of responses pertaining to wealth meant that these responses were excluded from the final analyses.

Another potential problem with the research design was the use of community-based enumerators, one of the requirements of the Oxfam-driven GAR methodology to meet concerns that research be empowering, and include community-members. Thus, although evaluations did not simply focus on project beneficiaries or use evaluators associated in some way with the program that could potentially lead to constrained responses (common criticisms of evaluation

²⁶ The National Commission for Social Action (NACSA) had commissioned a bridge in the community. NACSA is the government body charged with implementing community-based, demand driven activities for development in Sierra Leone. See for more details of their work, National Commission for Social Action, "Mission Statement," http://www.nacsasl.org/mission_statement.html.

methodologies sponsored by implementing organizations), the use of enumerators known to the community could have nevertheless hindered the veracity of responses as respondents might have felt constrained in answering sensitive questions. This is especially true of questions such as those asking their political preferences, when such questions were posed by people with whom they were familiar. This problem was minimized somewhat in Koinadugu as all but one of the enumerators came from a different community since none of the residents in the surveyed communities met the education requirements. In Kailahun (Ngeblama), this was true of only one of the data collectors. Since one data collector in this community met the education requirements, the other respondent was from Kailahun town and was based in Ngeblama solely for the duration of the research. The rest of the data collectors resided in the communities in which data was collected.

Another cause for concern was the level of education of enumerators. In some communities, especially in Koinadugu, levels of education for enumerators was low, and this impacted the quality of data collected, as data collectors struggled with translating the questionnaire from English to local dialects, and then summarizing responses from the local dialects into English and recording these responses.

Question wording and item choice were additional limitations of the questionnaire. For example, the measure of external efficacy used considered whether people felt that their vote was independent, and if they had the power to change laws they believed to be unjust. It would have been useful to consider other laws regarding rights and protections as well, to better substantiate this measure.

In the following chapter, I turn to an examination of the socio-political history of Sierra Leone, to provide the contextual framework through which this research can be understood.

Table 2-1. Areas of democracy assistance

Election Assistance	Human Rights Assistance	Media Assistance
Constitutional and legal reforms	Human rights observation	Media and elections
Establishment of election administration (inc. national election commission)	Support for war crimes tribunals and truth commissions	Legal and regulatory reforms
Training of election staff	Legal reforms and human rights commissions	Creation of 'alternative' media
Political party assistance	Strengthening law enforcement agencies	Conflict resolution programming
International election monitoring	Assistance for non-governmental organizations	Training of media professionals
Civil society aid (e.g. voter education)		Support to media NGOs and other relevant organizations

Reprinted from De Zeeuw (2005: 484)

Table 2-2. Community selection by region and criteria

Selection Criteria	Chosen Community	
	Kailahun	Koinadugu
Community with development NGO	Ngeima, Luawa Chiefdom (Oxfam)	Yaedia, Dembelia Sinkunia Chiefdom (CARE)
Community with democracy NGO	Ngeblama, Yawei Chiefdom (previous NGO presence – Catholic Relief Services (CRS)) Jojoima, Malema Chiefdom (International Rescue Committee/Management Systems International (IRC/MSI))	Koindukura and Gberia Fatombu, Sulima Chiefdom (previous NGO presence – Catholic Relief Services (CRS))
Community with no NGO presence		Kambaia, Sulima Chiefdom (No NGO presence)

CHAPTER 3 SIERRA LEONE: FROM COLONIALISM TO POST CONFLICT

Sierra Leone is particularly appropriate to examine the extent in which international organizations contribute to democracy strengthening in post-conflict contexts. As a state once designated as failed, Sierra Leone is the recipient of substantial amounts of international assistance, targeted both at development as well as democracy strengthening. Although a weak state long before the 1991-2002 civil war, the severity of the war plunged the state from weak into failed (Reno 2003): the government was neither able to secure the peace of those living within the country nor provide citizens with social services. At war end, the government was faced with the task of rebuilding institutions and repairing state-society relationships. In this chapter, I briefly review the historical political development of Sierra Leone, the impact of the war, and current initiatives undertaken by the international community in conjunction with the Sierra Leone government to rebuild the state and strengthen democracy. The purpose is to provide the historical contextual independent variables that might possibly influence NGO interventions in Sierra Leone as well as possible intervening ones.

Sierra Leone: The Pre-Colonial to Post-Colonial Years

Arguably one of the oldest modern states in Africa, with a constitution dating back to 1787, Sierra Leone was for many years seen as stable country, flourishing economically and politically in the years leading up to independence. At the eve of independence, many predicted success for this small West African country, bordered by Liberia and Guinea. It enjoyed a peaceful transition to independence (1961) and made history in 1967 when it became the first African country in which an opposition party came into power through the ballot box (Thompson 1997). With a sound foreign reserve account, and leaders with a history of political participation

in various capacities alongside the British, it was believed Sierra Leone would be “a showcase of West Africa” (Thomas Patrick Melady, cited in Pham 2004).



Figure 3-1. Map of Sierra Leone
 (Source: <http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/sierrale.pdf>)

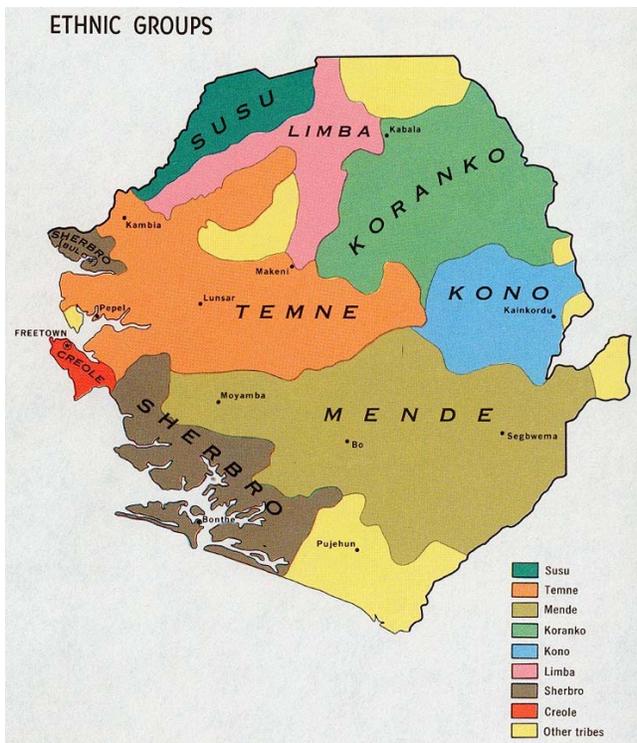
How did a country with an ostensibly promising future find itself struggling economically in subsequent years, undergoing civil turmoil, with a last-place ranking seven out of ten years on the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI)? Today, Sierra Leone holds the record for the world's shortest life expectancy (37 years), with a GDP per capita of \$253 (World Economic Outlook 2007). Once a country with a renowned higher education system, the current adult literacy rate is 34.8 percent with less than half of the population enrolled in some form of primary, secondary or tertiary institution (United Nations Development Program 2007). Although there have been significant improvements (for example, The Economist Intelligence Unit (2008) reports economic growth rates of 6.5 percent, with a projected rate of 6.3 percent in 2009), there remains much to be done.

Many of the current problems Sierra Leone faces can be traced back to the historical and political development of the country during and after colonialism. Current interventions aimed at strengthening democracy, building political accountability and promoting economic development are not implemented in a vacuum, and it is important to understand the contexts in which they operate and how these contexts might influence results.

The Colony versus the Protectorate: the Sierra Leone Colonial Experience

Like neighboring Liberia, Sierra Leone was once a haven for former slaves repatriated from various countries. The first wave of settlers was the black poor (1787), a group of freed slaves residing in Great Britain. They were joined by the Nova Scotians (1792), freed slaves that had fought on the British side during the American War of Independence, and in 1800, by Maroons, ex-slaves from Jamaica that were also living in Nova Scotia. Added to their numbers were liberated Africans, rescued by British cruisers from illegal slave ships following the abolition of slavery in 1833. Together, these groups came to form the distinct ethnic group known as Krio.

Sierra Leone became a crown colony in 1807, but British influence was initially limited to Freetown. Influence was extended into the interior only in 1896 when a protectorate was declared over the hinterland. British differentiated policies and treatment of colony and crown inhabitants' marked Sierra Leone's political trajectory in the early years of colonialism, setting the stage for much of the ethnic tensions and rivalries that have persisted in Sierra Leone since independence. These policies initially pitted the minority Krios against protectorate Africans, the other eighteen or so ethnic groups indigenous to Sierra Leone. In the wake of independence however, the more salient ethno-political divide is between the two largest groups, the Mende and Temne, each comprising approximately 30 percent of the population.



a) Figure 3-2. a) Sierra Leone map by ethnic groups, 1969 (Source: Sierra Leone Maps, Perry-Castaneda Map Collection, UT Library online: http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/sierra_leone.html. Last accessed June 2008). b) Sierra Leone map by district, 2000 (Source: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)): <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/RWB.NSF/db900SID/SKAR-64GC49?OpenDocument>. Last accessed August 2008).

The Politics of Divide and Rule: British Differentiated Policies in the Colony and Protectorate

In the early years of British occupation of Sierra Leone, the Krio received favored treatment from the British, given their adoption of many Western practices, dress and behavior. The Krio had been “taught” to prize Europeanization and the status that it conferred in the colonial era (Spitzer 1974; Collier 1970). The British colonial powers also encouraged them to believe that they were superior to indigenous Africans because of their Europeanization through missionaries, education, and prolonged contact with the British.

This favoritism was reflected in the political system as well. Krios were British subjects whereas Protectorate Africans were designated “British protected persons.” As such, Krios were governed under British common law whereas a mixed system of customary rule and British law prevailed in the protectorate, and they initially had greater political representation than Africans in the interior. Educational institutions appeared first in the Colony as well; the Grammer School, a missionary school for boys, was established as early as 1845, followed by the Annie Walsh Memorial School for Girls four years later. Education was highly valued amongst the Krio, and two of the first Africans from a British colony to graduate from Oxford and Cambridge (1876 and 1879 respectively) were Krio (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999). Many Krios went on to send their children to college, either at the reputable Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, or for those with the means to do so, abroad. They soon emerged as a small middle class elite, with many in professional occupations such as medicine and law. Krios were also active in the civil service sector with posts in the colonial administration in Freetown or in the interior as emissaries of the colonial government. Others made their wealth from trading in the Protectorate in goods such as palm oil, rubber and groundnuts.

Outlets for Political Participation in the Colony

The Krio also enjoyed some, if limited political outlets for political participation. In 1863, the British established Executive and Legislative councils to which the Governor could nominate Africans as unofficial members; initial, albeit token representation, was limited to Krios, and the first, John Ezzidio was appointed to the Legislative Council that year (Fyfe 1962).

Representation for Protectorate Africans did not come until 1924, when provisions were made for the appointment of three chiefs to the Legislative Council (in addition to opening up three of the unofficial posts reserved for colony members to election, rather than appointment). The colony also received the franchise (albeit limited given the stringent literacy and property requirements)²⁷ earlier than their protectorate counterparts, who received it in 1957. Other avenues included the Freetown Municipal Council that allowed elected representatives from 1895 as well as local boards located in villages in the colony, active from 1901 (Hayward and Kandeh 1987).

There were other outlets for political organization and expression. The Krio were also initially at the forefront of civil society movements in Sierra Leone, creating a host of organizations aimed primarily at addressing the social and occupational interests of their members (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999), especially following the rupture in relations with the British, and the accompanying discriminatory measures against them (see discussion below). Pressure groups such as the Negro Progressive Society (1908), the Rate Payers Associations (1909) and the African Progress Union (1919) served as vehicles for change, articulating the concerns of their constituents to the government, albeit without much success. Although these efforts were aimed more at protecting Krio privilege in the face of growing

²⁷ Only 1,016 persons qualified and were registered to vote out of 25,000 ; see Alexander Peter Kup, *Sierra Leone : A Concise History* (Newton Abbot David & Charles, 1975).

British preference for Protectorate Africans than reaching across ethnic boundaries and agitating for broader political participation for all Sierra Leoneans, they are nevertheless illustrative of the vibrancy of civil society in the pre-independence era. In addition, these organizations were a training ground for some of the nationalist movements that would emerge following the first world war geared more toward greater political representation. Prominent among these was the West African Youth League (WAYL) organized in 1938, under I.T.A. Wallace-Johnson. Notable as one of the few genuine attempts made to bridge the Protectorate-Colony Divide (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999: 57), it ultimately failed faced with concerted opposition from the colonial government, who feared its popularity. The years of Krio dominance were coming to an end however, as Africans in the interior gained favor with the British. In addition, as more Protectorate Africans received education, they also organized politically to agitate for increased political representation, in direct challenge of Krio hegemony.

The Rise of Political Activism among Africans from the Protectorate and the Fall of the Krio

The increasing economic and political integration of the colony with the protectorate towards the end of the 19th century, as well as the rise of racist ideology led to deteriorating relations between the British and their 'protégés'. Boundary conflicts with the French and lucrative trade opportunities among other reasons motivated British interests for more control over the interior, and they declared a Formal protectorate over this area in 1895.²⁸ At the same time, the British began to look upon the Krios with contempt, seeing their Westernized habits and adoption of British ways as pretentious, preferring in their stead, the inhabitants of the interior (Kandeh 1992; Cartwright 1970). It was also politically advantageous for the British to

²⁸ For a detailed description of the motives behind colonial expansion in the interior, see John R. Cartwright, *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone* (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1978), : 38.

align more with Protectorate Africans given their interest in the economic benefits to be derived from greater control of the Protectorate. Krios were increasingly replaced in civil servant positions in the colony by white officials: they held eighteen of forty posts in the bureaucracy in 1892; by 1912, this number had dwindled to fifteen of ninety seats, and by 1917 stood at ten (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999; Fyfe 1962). In the protectorate, the British adopted a policy of indirect rule using African chiefs, again shutting out Krios. The Krio also saw their dominance of the trade and commercial sectors erode as Lebanese immigrants established linkages with people in the interior and solidified control of transportation facilities of materials for export. By the 1950s, Krio dominance in politics as well as commerce was well on the decline (Cartwright 1970).

Krio decline was accompanied by a rise in Protectorate fortunes. Protectorate Africans availed themselves of educational opportunities as primary and secondary schools were set up in the interior²⁹ as well as sent their children abroad for higher education. Although they lagged behind Krio for many years in the education sector,³⁰ there nevertheless developed a well-educated urban elite that would effectively challenge Krio aspirations.

Through organizations such as the Committee of Educated Aborigines in the Protectorate (CEA, 1922) and the Protectorate Educational Progressive Union (PEPU), established in 1929, they too advocated for greater political representation and power for Protectorate Africans. They saw a number of key successes although the reforms ensured the domination of chiefs in these formal political institutions: the 1924 constitution provided for the appointment of three

²⁹ The first, Bo School, was established in 1905, although the British initially restricted admittance to sons and nominees of Paramount Chiefs.

³⁰ For many years, education enrollment figures were higher in the Colony than the Protectorate. For example, enrollment figures in the Colony for primary school children was 12,311 (55-60% of children aged six to 13) compared to 12,311 (4.5%) in the same cohort, Annual Report of the Education Department for the Year 1948 in John R. Cartwright, *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone* (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

Paramount Chiefs to serve as representatives of Protectorate interests; the creation of the Protectorate Assembly in 1946,³¹ a body with advisory roles to the government also ensured Protectorate representation as did the revised 1951 constitution. This provided an African majority in the Legislative Council for the first time, but with greater representation from the Protectorate: it expanded their membership in the Legislature from zero to 13, with one representative elected by each one of the 13 Protectorate administrative districts and two others elected by the Protectorate Assembly (Hayward and Kandeh 1987; Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999; Cartwright 1978). This was in contrast to the seven elected colony representatives. Moreover, as the chiefs for the most part controlled the District Councils and were the majority representatives of the Protectorate Assembly, they wielded significant power over the composition of the Legislature (Cartwright 1978: 47). Such developments would influence the relationship between chiefs and educated elites in the Protectorate, as the elites relied on the Chiefs for political representation in the formal institutions of government in Freetown, and would later depend on their support to deliver the votes of the masses with implications for politics in the post-independence period. Thus, a central ramification of British policies was the ascendancy of the elite at the expense of the masses: British collusion with chiefs in the Protectorate and the rise of an educated Protectorate elite in the colony working in collaboration with the chiefs, and often coming themselves from chiefly backgrounds, meant a dominance of elite over mass interests (Kilson 1966).

³¹ The Protectorate Assembly numbered forty-two, there were ten official members, six nominated African unofficial members and two members from within the 13 district councils, who were predominantly chiefs. Laws of Sierra Leone, chapter 185, Sec 7 (2) ———, *Politics in Sierra Leone 1947-67* ([Toronto]: University of Toronto Press, 1970).

Sowing the Seeds of Future Unrest: British Policies in the Protectorate and the Role of Chiefs

The chiefs also wielded significant control in the rural areas; both in their capacity as chiefs as well as within the new administrative structures of District Councils introduced by the British in 1947. As part of their policy of indirect rule, the British implemented a separate system of government in the protectorate. Whereas English law prevailed in the Colony, customary law governed lives in the protectorate and the British had a less direct presence there, often working through “traditional” mechanisms of leadership, through the chiefs.

Historically, chiefs/kings were the primary source of authority, ruling over small political units, often consisting of a town and its surrounding dependent villages. They had various responsibilities that included supervision of communal labor for public works, land allocation, administration and dispensation of justice and the protection of residents within their chiefdoms, and assisting the needy (Fanthorpe 2006; Collier 1970). Although the position was limited to a few ruling families and hereditary means of succession,³² chiefs were nevertheless subject to some form of accountability, governing with the assistance of chiefdom councils comprised of the chiefdom speaker, sub-chiefs as well as other elders from ruling houses in the chiefdom (Cartwright 1970). Poorly performing chiefs could be removed by a variety of means, depending on the rules obtaining for a particular group, and his position was contingent in some part on his ability to retain the support of his people by meeting their needs (Cartwright 1970: 28). While the rules of succession, scope of duties and eligibility could differ from area to area and ethnic group, chiefs in all regions were ultimately responsible for securing the material and physical wellbeing of their people (Collier 1970; Cartwright 1970), and could suffer repercussions if they

³² Ruling families were descended from original settlers or warriors that had conquered the land (see Earl Conteh-Morgan and Mac Dixon-Fyle, *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century : History, Politics, and Society*, Society and Politics in Africa; Vol. 8 (New York: P. Lang, 1999), : 49-50.

failed to do so. Intimately linked with the chieftaincy system were the secret societies; social and religious institutions that not only served as a unifying force, instilling a common sense of identity amongst chiefdoms sharing a common ethnicity but also provided chiefs their legitimacy. For example, societies such as the Poro (a male Mende secret society), could depose a chief (Little 1967). In Temne areas, an under-performing chief could be killed by his councilors (Cartwright 1978).

The British manipulated the chieftaincy system however; they undermined traditional checks to tyrannical rule and largely removed from chiefs' jurisdiction much of what made them respected. At the same time, they strengthened authoritarian components (Cartwright 1970). Under colonialism, chiefs retained control only over domestic and customary issues, (with ultimate accountability to the British) while the British concerned themselves with law and security. The Protectorate was initially divided into five administrative districts on annexation, headed by a District Commissioner for each district. Under this system, chiefs reported now to the European District Commissioner and were responsible for ensuring that subjects obeyed unpopular colonial directives such as hut tax payments. The system further stripped chiefs of many of their adjudicating rights; they now had responsibility only for minor crimes with major issues handled by the Superior Court of the District Commissioner, in which chiefs played no direct role (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999; Cartwright 1970).

By undermining existing systems of accountability, colonial support of the chieftaincy system contributed to various abuses of power and for some authors, sowed the seeds of resentment, frustration and anger that were later reaped during the civil war (see for example, Richards 1998; Jackson 2007; Fanthorpe 2006). The responsibility for retaining or removing chiefs now fell to the governor, a British official appointed to oversee the administration of the

colony. British administrators often ignored many of the rules of succession, appointing as chiefs those receptive to British interests (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999; Fanthorpe 2006). Furthermore, colonial boundaries between communities were arbitrarily drawn, and leadership reorganized to give preference to those local rulers from whom they had support. This included in some cases, the promotion of persons with no previous ties to ruling houses at all, but whose support of British interests made them desirable allies (Little 1967; Abraham 1978; Kilson 1966). Thus while colonialism was of mutual benefit to Chiefs and the British,³³ it was disempowering for the rural masses. It led to the entrenchment of policies that marginalized the poor and reinforced the power and social and economic privilege of elites.

Chiefs benefited from their positions in a variety of ways. One primary source of their power derived from their positions as custodians of land; in this context they could determine citizenship, land allocation and use, which enabled them to disproportionately distribute land to favorites and relatives. They initially retained rights to tribute and labor under the new system allowing them to expand their farms and businesses, increase their wealth and consolidate their status as patrons (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999).

Attempts at Reform: The Implementation of Native Administration, 1937 and the District Councils

In an effort to modernize the system, the British administration introduced a new system of Native Administration in 1937. Under this system, chiefs were assigned modern bureaucratic tasks such as collection of taxes and the provision of social services and development in their chiefdoms (Kup 1975: 198). The new system broke away from the past in several ways. In some aspects, it undermined chiefly authority: restrictions placed on the tributary system meant chiefs

³³ The system in place enabled the British to govern on the cheap, with little need for substantial presence on the ground. At the same time it allowed chiefs their traditional rights to service as well as supplemented this power through providing them access to the economic benefits that accrued within the colonial state, see, Gershon Collier, *Sierra Leone: Experiment in Democracy in an African Nation* (New York: New York University Press, 1970).

could no longer request labor for their farms, and rivals to his authority “whom he no longer possesse[d] traditional means of suppressing” (Little 1967: 212), were now tolerated. Their rights to forced labor was reduced, and their former sources of revenue including access to tributes, fines and fees received from Native Courts and rebates from the hut tax were now ear marked for the chiefdom treasuries that funded the Native Administration (Kup 1975). However, some chiefs still retained access to local sources of revenue, particularly through fees and fines of Native courts, in addition to the regular salaries they now received from the colonial administration (Kilson 1966). These salaries often claimed the largest share of administrative expenditures, leaving little for social services provision (Kup 1975; Cartwright 1970).

In many ways, the Native Administration system simply enabled chiefs to consolidate their privileged financial and political positions (Collier 1970). Furthermore, they benefited from rents and royalties levied on mining companies for use of land. Chief authority was even extended into the Colony³⁴ where the 1924 constitutional revisions allocated seats to chiefs as representatives of Protectorate interests in the Legislative Council. This was expanded to include one appointment to the Executive Council in 1943. Often, only chiefs and their relatives were able to send their children to school, so many of the new elite in the Colonies had chiefly connections, underscoring the linkages between traditional forms of government, the modern state and the new political elite that were to take over in the wake of independence.

Other attempts by the colonial government to improve the system of governance and increase representation for peoples in the rural areas,³⁵ served mainly to entrench the prioritization of elite over mass interests. The advisory role of the district councils were

³⁴ See the previous discussion above on the increased representation of chiefs in the politics of the colony.

³⁵ Notably, through the creation of the District Councils and the Protectorate Assembly.

expanded in 1950 when all development matters of the protectorate was placed under their jurisdiction. Although they were eligible to receive revenue with goals for development, much of this money went to salaries and other personal costs, much to the dissatisfaction of rural residents. In addition the bulk of councilors were chiefs, again ensuring that non-elites were marginalized in systems of rule.

Ethnic Tensions at the Brink of Independence

The smaller numbers of the Krio, the expansion of political rights to protectorate Africans, the development of an educated elite with protectorate ties having aspirations for political representation, as well as British racism and disdain for what they saw as Krio pretentiousness, left the Krio unable to ward off Protectorate challenges of their political dominance. Finally, the expansion of the franchise from the colony to include Africans in the protectorate in 1957 ensured the political ascendancy of Africans from the protectorate given their numerical advantages.

The Krio-Protectorate split was not the only salient divide however; tensions also existed between the ethnic groups in the Protectorate, but these were largely subsumed under the greater threat posed by the Krio prior to independence. The Mende were disproportionately represented among the elites in leadership in Freetown; the Southern region was home to the agricultural commodities that would generate the most export revenue like cocoa, ginger, piassava, and coffee, in addition to having export crops also found in the north like palm kernel, kola and groundnuts (Cartwright 1978). Moreover, train routes were concentrated in this region, moving goods from the interior to Freetown for overseas export to Britain. These regions as a result came into more frequent contact with, and received more attention from the colonial government. There was also a north-south educational divide, with southern populations overall more educated than their northern counterparts. The 1948 Annual Report of the Education Department

put northern enrollment in primary schools at 3,291, significantly less than the 11,466 in southern regions (cited in Cartwright 1978). The growth of the mining industry from the discovery of diamonds in 1930 also encouraged new patterns of mobilization, patronage and political tensions. In addition to diamonds, mining also in gold, platinum, and iron ore increased.³⁶ The more depressed regions of the northern provinces were disproportionately represented in the numbers of laborers flocking to the mining regions of Kono and Kenema, and Cartwright (1978) has estimated that there may have been as much as 30-40 percent of northerners involved during 1954-1961. The development of mining communities contributed to the rise of new sources of mobilization: by bringing together people of various ethnic groups to work in the mines, they fostered the creation of new cross-ethnic linkages and enabled Temne and other northern groups to break more decisively from the elite centered politics practiced by Southerners. At the same time however, mining contributed to the development of a politicized Kono, who despite the concentration of diamonds in their region failed to reap much economic benefit. Their dissatisfaction would eventually find expression in the Kono-dominated party, the Kono Progressive Movement, as well as through a political alliance with the Krio in the party, the Sierra Leone Independent Movement, created in November 1956 (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999).

The newfound wealth generated by diamond revenues also provided an alternative source of income for patronage policies in populations with weakened traditional ties given their distance from homes and exposure to people of different groups. It thus stood in contrast to the

³⁶ In 1939 mining employed 16,506 people, up from just 48 ten years earlier. In addition, revenue from mining exports surged, climbing to 22.1% in 1937 compared to 5% in 1935. This trend was also reflected in the shifting export patterns, as mining overtook agriculture in importance: growing from 21.5% of total exports to 70% in 1940. See, Earl Conteh-Morgan and Mac Dixon-Fyle, *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century : History, Politics, and Society*, Society and Politics in Africa; Vol. 8 (New York: P. Lang, 1999), : 49-50.

patronage structures of the old elite and the chiefs that prioritized ethnicity and could pose a challenge to it (Cartwright 1978).

The above illustrates the salience of ethnicity in shaping political developments in Sierra Leone during the years of colonialism and in the build-up to independence. Although tensions existed between different groups in the Protectorate, the chief political divide in the period leading up to independence, was between the Krio and the other ethnic groups of the Protectorate. The two groups generally viewed each other with mutual distrust. For those from the interior, the Krio were collaborators of British colonial interests, foreign agents used by the British to further their domination of Protectorate peoples (Collier 1970). For their part, the Krio felt threatened politically by the numerical superiority of those they had considered inferior, and worried about their political standing and privileges should Protectorate inhabitants receive political power.

These concerns were realized in the years leading to independence and beyond as Krios were eclipsed from the political scene. The ramifications of these developments for political developments in the post-independence years are clear; through favoritism and preferential treatment, the British used divide and rule tactics to keep groups from uniting in the common interests of the people at large; rather, as power became associated with privilege, it was pursued primarily as a mechanism for instrumental gain³⁷ and ethnicity became a mechanism through which groups tried to mobilize support, forming the primary basis of political organization (Collier 1970; Kandeh 1992). Initially, Protectorate Africans united against the Krio threat; once that was nullified, chasms emerged within other groups primarily along ethnic dimensions. This

³⁷ For a classic description of the differences between the civic and primordial realms and the resulting implications for the politics of ethnic competition, see Paul Ekeh, "Colonialism and the Two Publics in Africa: A Theoretical Statement" *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 1 (1975).

lack of unity among various groups in Sierra Leone has not only encouraged ethnic rivalries but contributed also to the patronage policies that have dogged Sierra Leone since independence.

Whither the People? Mass Responses to Colonial Rule

Many of the colonial directives were unpopular with the general populace. Entrenched privileges for chiefs, a lack of corresponding accountability combined with measures such as taxation for the masses resulted in some expressions of mass discontent. One of the earliest manifestations of discontent was the 1898 Hut Tax War organized in response to a flat rate tax implemented by the British in January 1898 to subsidize the costs of colonial rule. This provoked armed rebellion as various groups from both the north and south mounted a resistance against the British. British reprisals against dissidents were swift and brutal – chiefs that encouraged their people to not pay the taxes were imprisoned whereas those loyal to the administration were amply rewarded. The war underscored the divisions that the British had exploited; Krio traders as well as chiefs supportive of the alien administration were targeted as collaborators and nearly a thousand people died (Cartwright 1970). For their part, the government burnt houses and farms belonging to dissidents (Barrows 1976) and there were casualties on both sides. In the aftermath of the war, the generous reward of those loyal to the administration contributed to further abuses of power, as they were secure in British support (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999). Another spontaneous expression of dissatisfaction occurred in 1919, when anti-Lebanese riots broke out in the city following the return of troops deployed in the First World War to poor economic conditions and unemployment.

Continued abuses by chiefs in the rural areas combined with poor working conditions and colonial backing of international firms undercutting Sierra Leonean attempts to launch commercial businesses led to a series of riots in the 1950s. Lack of job opportunities as well as low pay, led workers in Freetown to riot and strike in February 1955 (Conteh-Morgan and

Dixon-Fyle 1999; Cartwright 1978). Peasants in the rural areas rose up against the chiefs later than year, in November, in protest of arbitrary taxation, continued extortion in the form of forced labor and unfair levies and fines, and general uninterrupted corruption of chiefs. Chiefs saw the destruction of their property, with attacks especially committed against those chiefs seen as colluding with Europeans.³⁸

Organized expressions of discontent also existed and citizens through various professional associations strove to improve working conditions and pay. Organizations such as the mostly-Krio local chapter of the National Congress of British West Africa (NCBWA, organized in 1920) and the Northern-dominated Committee for the Educated Aborigines (CEA, created in 1922) sought to increase political representation for Krios and natives respectively. Trade unions and professional associations organized strikes and protests against low wages and poor working conditions in the city, meeting with limited success (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999). For example, between 1906 and 1914, skilled workers saw a rise in their earnings from thirty-five to fifty percent following strikes, although these benefits did not accrue to the unskilled (Wyse 1981; Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999). Conversely, the six-week railway workers strike of 1926 which saw Krio elite and Protectorate Chiefs in the Legislature collaborating to assist the strikers resulted in the retrenchment of political positions of the Krios, including the dissolution of the Krio-dominated city council, and fewer promotions into the civil service (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999).

The WAYL, with its call for unity and aspirations to represent workers spanning all ethno-regional divides and occupations went further than other organizations in terms of representation. The organization embraced the skilled as well as unskilled and employed and unemployed

³⁸ See for an excellent review of the causes and scope of damage inflicted by these riots, John R. Cartwright, *Political Leadership in Sierra Leone* (Toronto ; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 66-70.

workers. Concerned with political as well as economic reform, the League also called for increased political representation of Africans in addition to economic progress. However, in light of the extensive support it garnered across ethnic and occupational divides, the colonial government repressed it, and imprisoned its leader, ITA Wallace Johnson.

The Role of Secret Societies

Secret societies were (and still are) influential in mobilizing and organizing all aspects of citizen life. The majority of ethnic groups in Sierra Leone have secret societies, with the major exception being the Krio ethnic group. An ancient cultural institution usually associated with some connection to the spirit world, these societies are not limited to Sierra Leone and can be found throughout the Upper Guinea West African Coast. They are the primary institutions responsible for the socialization of adolescent boys and girls into adulthood, teaching them the various culturally ascribed gender-specific roles and identities. Scott called it “probably the most important political force in the country” (1960: 174), and it remains an influential means to organize political life. For example, prior to colonialism, the Mende-based Poro Society could remove a chief that failed to meet his obligations (Cartwright 1970). Secret Societies could also deliver votes for politicians and ruling chiefs and cases were reported of Poro as well as Bundu (women’s secret society) members being made to swear to support a certain candidate over the other.³⁹

With membership open to all peoples of that ethnicity group, secret societies such as the Poro served as an overarching means of social organization and enabled citizens to retain

³⁹ For more details of this, see Fred M. Hayward and Jimmy D. Kandeh, "Perspectives on Twenty-Five Years of Elections in Sierra Leone," in *Elections in Independent Africa*, ed. Fred M. Hayward (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1987), Jimmy D. Kandeh, "Transition without Rupture: Sierra Leone's Transfer Election of 1996," *African Studies Review* 41, no. 2 (1998), Jimmy D. Kandeh, "In Search of Legitimacy: The 1996 Elections," in *Between Democracy and Terror : The Sierra Leone Civil War*, ed. Ibrahim Abdullah (Dakar, Senegal: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2004).

affective ties that transcended locale. For example, many of the Protectorate elite in political positions in the Western Area (formerly the Colony) had ties and memberships in Secret Societies.

Secret Societies could also mobilize citizen support against unpopular directives (Kilson 1966); for example they played a central role in organizing resistance to the unpopular Hut Tax during the 1898 war as well as in the 1955-1956 riots (Gorvie 1945; cited in Cartwright 1970). Concerning the latter, Sir Herbert Cox wrote, “[t]he influence of the Porro Society is secret, profound and universal. The aloofness in some few cases of the chiefs from the Society has enabled them to be undermined, for it is a cult which almost at will can become a primitive government of its own” (cited in Cartwright 1970). While such sentiments underscore the administration’s wary stance toward Secret Societies, it also illustrates their strength and influence. In more recent years, they were instrumental in organizing young men through civil defense forces (CDF) to protect their communities during the civil war. The political influence of these societies was also pointed out by a female politician who felt that women’s participation in the political arena in high positions today was constrained by the fact that they were not privy to political decisions taking place within the “Secret Bush”.⁴⁰ Although there are both women and male societies, many important political issues are discussed and decisions taken within the male societies.

What are the implications of secret societies for democracy building? Despite the importance and prevalence of these organizations, many contemporary theories on civil society and social capital discount them; although not necessarily parochial, they nevertheless do not meet Eisenstadt’s criteria that civil society be “accessible to citizens and open to public

⁴⁰ Author interview with female councilor, in Kailahun Town, August 15, 2006.

deliberation – not embedded in exclusive, secretive or corporate settings” (Eisenstadt cited in Diamond 1999). They are very much a part of patronage structures; membership in a Secret Society of the region/community is often necessary for a politician to be considered for election in that region, and once elected, these politicians are expected to provide opportunities for their fellow community members. Given that the government remains a foreign entity for many in the rural areas, Secret Societies are also the primary source of affiliation and support, negotiating relationships or contact between national government and local populace (Fanthorpe 2007). Thus some argue that they are a hindrance to democracy as they provide an alternative governance structure to that of national government.

In addition, the assumption is that its hierarchical structure ostensibly precludes the development of civic norms of trust and cooperation, which can only emerge where horizontal ties are the norm (Diamond 1999). However, as others such as Jay, Richards and Williams (2002) have pointed out, secret societies can be a source of community solidarity, and ignoring such institutions in the literature on social capital is a sign of Western bias that marginalizes an important component of associational life familiar to many Africans.⁴¹

From Independence to Civil War: The Post-Colonial Years

In the build up to independence, the Protectorate Africans living in the colony united against what they perceived to be a common threat -- the Krio. By unifying politically, they were able to back a claim to inherit power from the British because of their superior numbers vis-à-vis the Krio. Having effectively shut the Krio out of key posts in politics, however, tensions

⁴¹ Other authors that advocate making traditional institutions a part of the discussion on civil society building include Milton J. Esman and Norman Thomas Uphoff, *Local Organizations : Intermediaries in Rural Development* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), David C. Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century : Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda*, Kumarian Press Library of Management for Development (West Hartford, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 1990). For these authors, it is important to realize that existing social realities matter and interventions cannot simply create from scratch new institutions; furthermore, to be effective, civil society must emerge from bottom-up initiatives rather than top-down directives.

then emerged between the different ethnic identities of the Protectorate (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999; Collier 1970). Most notable was the rift between the Mende, constituting the majority people in the South (30 percent) and the Temne, the majority of the North (30 percent).

Although the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) had initially emerged as a unified force of Protectorate Africans challenging Krio political aspirations, the party's significant gains in the 1951 as well as 1957 elections led to concern among other groups as perceptions of the party as Mende-dominated gave rise to fears that it promoted only Mende interests (Collier 1970; Kilson 1966). This perception was reinforced by relatively greater economic development of the southern and eastern provinces of Sierra Leone, predominantly Mende in makeup. These areas, in addition to the Western area around Freetown were markedly more developed than the northern province from which many Temne hailed. SLPP economic patronage in the southern and eastern provinces further underscored these grievances (Bebler 1973). The perception of the SLPP as a Mende party intensified under Albert Margai, who pursued a more aggressive policy of consolidating the party under Mende rule than had his brother (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999). In addition, with its close ties to chiefs, the SLPP was seen also as elitist party, concerned with the needs of the rich and well-educated (Cartwright 1970).

Thus, cleavages along ethnic lines dominated early post-independence politics in Sierra Leone, a factor that has persisted until today. Clearly, ethnic politics dictated party alliances more than issues and ideology. In the rural areas, chiefs, especially in the Southern and Eastern regions enjoyed close ties with the SLPP, and were often able to persuade citizens on how to vote. However, this relationship retarded the development of an autonomous party structure with independent support rooted in local communities. As the SLPP relied on chiefs to deliver their support there was no need to spend time reaching out to the masses in rural areas and building up

support of their own (Cartwright 1970). By the same token, chiefs had no incentive in seeing a strong party structure at local levels as this could potentially undermine their own power (Cartwright 1970: 261). Without a national overarching organization to lend weight to potential political aspirants, appeals were personal rather than general, relying on personality and contacts. As Cartwright writes, “an aspiring representative had to cultivate a personal rather than a party appeal to the electorate...the SLPP leaders...had no incentive to draw the masses into direct participation in politics, or to try to make sweeping social changes” (Collier 1970).

The APC addressed this somewhat, reaching out to the poor urban masses as well as marginalized northerners. Disenchanted groups including Temne and Krio concerned with apparent Mende hegemony searched for political alternatives, and found this in the 1960 formation of the All People’s Congress (APC) under the leadership of former trade union leader, Siaka Stevens, a Limba, one of the smaller Northern ethnic groups. Steven’s trade unionist beginnings helped him to reach out to these populations and mobilize support, and played a role in his ascension to power. The APC originated from another breakaway party from the SLPP before independence, the People’s National Party (PNP); however, following that party’s dissolution, many of the non-Mende members went on to join Steven’s party, seeing within it the possibility of advancing their ethnic interests (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999). Contrary to the SLPP, the APC was popular with the workers, the poor living in rural areas as well as those tired of the oppression of the chiefs (statement of the National Reformation Council on the Report of the Dove-Edwin Commission of Inquiry, cited in Collier 1970), and the party actively campaigned among the masses, representing hope for social change and political development of heretofore-marginalized areas, especially in the north.

The SLPP narrowly held onto power in the 1962 elections with overwhelming ethno-regional support from Mendes, but in 1968, despite strong-arm tactics that included election rigging and fraud the APC narrowly defeated the SLPP. The observations of the Dove-Edwin Commission of Inquiry on the ethno-regional alignments of those elections are still very much salient in contemporary politics in Sierra Leone and echo many current observations of elections today:⁴²

The 1967 results showed sectional alignments throughout the country. The Sierra Leone Peoples Party was confined to the Southern Province, Kailahun and Kenema Districts and part of the Kono District in the Eastern Province; the All People's Congress was confined largely to the Northern Province and the then Western Area (Hayward and Kandeh 1987).

The year 1967 also marked a turning point in Sierra Leone politics, ushering in a period of decreased political openness and tolerance. Until this time, Sierra Leone was widely regarded as a model of democracy, holding largely free and fair elections marked by vigorous contestation of various parties and vibrant political association and discussion (Thompson 1997), although political participation and contestation was limited largely to the capital. These elections were the first in Africa in which an opposition party defeated the incumbent, attaining power through electoral means (Zack-Williams 1999), but Stevens was prevented from assuming leadership immediately. His reinstatement as prime minister only came in April 1968 following three coups over a one year period: the first by Brigadier David Lansana, loyal to Margai, who believed that Steven's victory was prematurely declared as the Governor-General did not include election results from the chiefs; a counter-coup by junior officers that falsely promised a return to civilian rule, the National Reformation Council (NRC), and a final coup a year later in April, by non-commissioned officers who returned Stevens to power one week later (Legum and Drysdale

⁴² See for example, Colin Legum and John Drysdale, *Africa Contemporary Record : Annual Survey and Documents, 1969-70* (Exeter: Africa Research, 1969), Colin Legum and John Gordon Stewart Drysdale, *Africa Contemporary Record : Annual Survey and Documents, 1968-1969* (London: Africa Research Limited, 1969).

1969). Following his reinstatement to power in April 1968, politics under Stevens was characterized by increasing brutality and political repression as well as the politics of patrimonial rule necessitated by the importance of ethnicity in political alliances and cleavages.

Stevens and the Patrimonial State

Stevens inherited a country, which, while not wealthy, nevertheless had some foreign exchange in the bank, a relatively strong GDP per capita and received more in exports than she paid for imports. By 1968, the economic turmoil of the immediate post-independence years as well as the coup had abated with improvements across board (See Tables 3-1, 3-2 and 3-3).

In the early years of colonialism, revenue from agriculture comprised the bulk of exports, although much of this revenue was re-directed to Britain. Sierra Leone, like many other colonized nations of this time, bore the hallmarks of dependent capitalism exporting raw materials to the mother country and importing more expensive finished products in return (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999). In the 1930s, minerals replaced agriculture, with diamonds being the dominant export. In 1968 around 85 percent of export revenue came from diamonds (Legum and Drysdale 1969), as illustrated in Tables 3-4 and 3-5.

In 1968, the government also had plans to increase expenditure on social services, including education, health and water supplies. Not only was the economy sound, but civil society was active - there was a long history of vibrant political activity, at least in the capital where a number of civil society group, (albeit organized along the predominant ethnic-protectorate divide with some few exceptions) competed to make their interests and concerns known to colonial administrators.

Much of this changed under Steven's leadership and state failure had its antecedents in his corrupted and terror-driven rule. Given the ethno-regional component to politics in the country and the resulting flexible nature of political affiliations and loyalty, patronage was a primary

mechanism to ensure support. Patrimonialism, a feature of Sierra Leone politics before independence (Boas 2001; Richards 1998), characterized by the use of state resources for private gain, enabled Stevens to defuse opposition and maintain a hold on power. Although Weber associates patrimonialism with a traditional-based system of rule that disappears as countries move from tradition to modernity where rule is grounded in rational or legal authority (Weber 1968), it thrived in Sierra Leone where, “there was a long-established political legitimacy of patrimonialism in the eyes of a largely rural and conservative electorate to whom state sponsorship was but a village-level moral economy writ large, in which patron-client relationships were essential to survival in a harsh and capricious agricultural environment” (Richards 1986, cited in Richards 1996: 40-41).

In this context, politics is marked by scarcity, and power is the mechanism through which various groups can ensure the distribution of these scarce resources in their favor. Additionally, where the discrepancy between official wages/income and the cost of living was extreme, one’s survival depended on these networks. Stevens expanded these networks, using patrimonialism as a way to entrench his political position. His support base were workers from the poorer northern regions where the discovery of mining deposits in the 1930s had shifted the focus of exports from the agricultural products of the south to minerals such as bauxite, iron, rutile and diamonds by the 1950s. In order to entrench his political position, he needed to reach out to other segments of society and thus, despite campaigning on a platform of ending patronage, his rule was also characterized by corruption and nepotism that spanned all areas of economy and society (Reno 1998; Abraham 2001; Boas 2001), leading to severe deterioration of the economy as he used key mineral resources to support these networks.

The presence of small valuable mineral resources like diamonds facilitated this exploitation. In the vein of resource curse theories (see for example, Ross 1999; Collier and Hoeffler 2001; Leonard and Straus 2003), diamonds have proved a disadvantage rather than a blessing in Sierra Leone. The presence especially of alluvial diamonds⁴³ facilitated smuggling as their ease of extraction made it easy for anyone to engage in the trade and their portability made government oversight difficult (Cartwright 1978). At the same time, rents could be extracted from big firms with exclusive rights also engaged in mining. Revenue from diamond smuggling was a central element in Steven's ability to maintain power and mines were exploited for his personal advantage and that of his supporters (Richards 1998). According to the Bank of Sierra Leone, before Stevens rule, diamonds generated about \$200 million in profits in Sierra Leone's formal economy, and provided 70 percent of foreign exchange reserves. However, by 1987, only \$100,000 worth of diamonds passed through formal, taxable channels (Bank of Sierra Leone, cited in Reno 1998). The economic growth generated by minerals was pocketed by a privileged few and consequently did not benefit the state or the country as a whole. Stevens and several associates appropriated not just diamond profits, but also diverted profits and assets from other state enterprises, notably from oil and rice marketing. High interest rates on loans and revenues received by peasant producers under the auspices of the Sierra Leone Marketing Board (SLMB) and pocketed by urban elite (Zack-Williams 1999) also contributed to the decline in the agriculture sector as peasants withdrew from the formal domestic market, and turned to the informal economy. The marginalization of the agricultural economy can also be attributed to the growth in importance of mining. Whereas all exports prior to 1929 were agricultural, by 1933

⁴³ Alluvial diamonds are lodged in sediments and riverbeds, close to the earth surface, and do not require capital-intensive methods of extraction. Instead they can be easily obtained using informal techniques with shovels, pans and even hands; as such they are an attractive option for poor, marginalized youth with few alternatives.

minerals made up 21.5 percent of exports rising to 70 percent in 1940 (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999).

The ruling elite also made money from kickbacks and rents from logging companies (Bates 1981; Richards 1998). Such actions, in redirecting money away from the economy to support and sustain patronage networks contributed substantially to undermining the effectiveness of most state institutions, sowing the seeds of future instability as it undermined state legitimacy (Bates 1981). This “shadow state” as Reno (1995) terms this confluence of interest between politicians/warlords and international business to generate the revenue to support patron-client networks, maintaining the façade of a state while at the same time undermining the state’s bureaucratic capabilities, severely weakened the economy and retarded development (Richards 1998; Francis 1999).

This shaky structure of the state and its ability to perform was further undermined as patrimonialism itself came under challenge: or experienced what Richards has called the “crisis of the patrimonial state” (Richards 1998: 36-37). This crisis is rooted in the reduction of available resources for redistribution given falling international prices for raw materials, constraints imposed by structural adjustment programs, and the decrease in aid assistance with the end of the Cold War (Adebajo 2002: 80). The decline of the mining industry in the 1970s led to greater poverty. This, in addition to the retrenchment of the state demanded by external powers under the policies of structural adjustment increasingly rendered it unable to provide kickbacks to its supporters and perform public tasks, generating more discontent.

The brutality and repression characterizing Stevens’s regime was another source of dissatisfaction. Stevens crushed what was previously a quite active civil society through co-optation of trade unions, agricultural cooperatives and business and professional organizations

(Tangri 1985). Following his ascension to power in 1968, he made moves to consolidate power in his hands and eliminate political opponents (Kandeh 1998). Subsequent elections held in 1973 and 1977 were among the most violent, with the opposition SLPP boycotting the 1973 elections for fear of candidates' security (Kandeh 1998; Hayward and Kandeh 1987).

Opposition to SLPP calls for a one-party regime had formed a central component of his successful 1967 campaign; on attaining power however, Stevens soon became a one-party state advocate, ostensibly as a means to stamp out ethnic chauvinism (Kandeh 1998), and he introduced a one-party constitution in 1978 through a biased referendum. In actuality, elections held under the one party banner simply exposed the class tensions underpinning ethnic tensions (Kandeh 1998) and the 1982 elections were even more violent than those held under the multiparty system. Although subsequent elections were more peaceful, patronage nevertheless continued as a means to garner support in a system without significant competition from viable political alternatives (Richards 1998).

As Stevens' activities sabotaged state economic performance, and hindered political freedoms, politically and economically marginalized citizens became disenchanted with the state and looked for alternative means of support (Kandeh 1998). Student demonstrations in 1977 sparked a harsh government response with many arrests, detentions and the closure of schools and universities. University student protests in 1985 led to many expulsions. Coups and assassination attempts from army ranks led to swift reprisals: executions and imprisonments. Despite the reduction in revenue to maintain patrimonial networks, growth of the informal economy and intensification of dissatisfaction, through a combination of repressive politics, the cooptation of the opposition into a single party regime and patronage-based distribution of

resources, Stevens was able to stay in power until his 1985 retirement when he transferred the mantle to his handpicked successor Brigadier Joseph Momoh.

Momoh and the Advent of Civil War

Things fared little better under Momoh and economic and social conditions remained poor. Although he was more open politically than Stevens, restoring multi-party system amidst internal and external pressures in a 1991 referendum, his effectiveness was hindered by an inability to sustain patronage networks due to structural adjustment policies, Stevens continued hold on much of the existing resources, as well as his own weaknesses as a leader.

The civil war started within this context when a group of rebels, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), including elements of the Liberian civil war struck Sierra Leone on 23 March 1991. The rebels received support from Charles Taylor, the Liberian warlord, and some had received military training in Libyan camps (Zack-Williams 1999). They counted among their members politically and economically excluded intellectuals and a multi-ethnic makeup, as their populist goals of an end to economic marginalization and poverty and a search for socio-economic development for all transcended all groups (Zack-Williams 2004; Richards 1996). The movement ostensibly fought for those largely marginalized by the APC regime, including high school and/or college graduates without jobs, low skilled workers trapped in low paying and dangerous jobs and the peasant youth in the rural area without prospects. Its stated aim was the removal of a state unable to provide public goods such as roads, schools, education or health care (Abraham 2001) and its replacement with one that worked in the interests of the people. However, they perpetrated many of their atrocities on the very people on whose behalf they were fighting.

Government ineptitude in dealing with the rebels led to a coup in 1992, when junior military officers under the leadership of 27-year old Captain Valentine Strasser stormed

Freetown in protest of low wages and poor equipment. By this time, the government lacked the financial capacity to pay most public sector employees, including the soldiers fighting on the Liberian border as well as doctors, nurses, teachers and civil servants. The poor economic situation, high levels of corruption among political elites as well as indifference to the poor living conditions and shoddy equipment of soldiers, all motivated the coup, and most Sierra Leoneans initially welcomed the change in regime.

However, Strasser's National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) was unable to make significant gains in ending the war or improving the economic situation, and the economy continued to shrink at an average of 1.5 percent per annum largely because of rebel activities. The NPRC regime was also blamed for diamond smuggling. Facing internal and external pressures to democratize, by late 1994, Strasser outlined a timetable for return to civilian rule, scheduling elections for the end of 1995. The move toward elections included two consultations with broad segments of society (Bintumani I and II) including civil society, churches, traditional leaders, army and political party representatives. Bintumani II was convened following a counter coup by Strasser's close friend and associate, Brigadier Maada Bio in January 1996, who justified this act by claiming that Strasser had not intended to go forward with the elections in February. However, Bio's later actions seemed to suggest that it was Bio himself who was against the forthcoming elections and giving up power. He declared his intention to seek peace with Foday Sankoh and the RUF before holding elections but retreated from this position in light of public outcry (for example, participants at Bintumani II, held February 12, overwhelmingly voted for elections before peace). Despite logistical problems and voter intimidation from NPRC as well as the RUF (with the latter chopping off limbs as a deterrence to voting) presidential and parliamentary elections were held February 26, 1996 with substantial international financial

assistance (Boas 2001). Ahmad Tejan Kabbah was inaugurated as president on 29 March 1996, and a cease-fire was signed with the rebels on November 1996. Despite the return of civilian rule in 1996 and the peace agreement, fighting continued, especially up-country, between the RUF, the ousted junta and Sierra Leonean and ECOMOG troops. The rebels, though initially a small rag-tag group, used techniques of forced coercion, drugs, and violent initiation techniques such as forcing young recruits to kill parents as mechanisms to build their numbers. Under the influence of hallucinogenic and mind altering drugs, rebels, many of whom were children, performed acts of astonishing brutality including chopping of limbs and murder of immediate family members for initiation.

The assistance of a South African mercenary group, Executive Outcomes allowed the government to make some inroads in stemming the rebel threat, but, under pressure from the IMF to reduce expenditure (they were paid in diamonds), the government terminated their contract and they left in January 1997. The bulk of community protection then lay in the hands of civil defense forces (CDF); groups of citizens that organized themselves to protect their communities against the rebel threat. A notable example were the Kamajohs, historically a traditional warring group; their successes in protecting their communities and apparent ties with the government (Sam Hinga Norma, their National Coordinator was also Deputy Minister of Defense in Kabbah's government) led to some tensions between the group and the army, many of whom had been former APC supporters with roots in the north (Abraham 2001). Citing dissatisfaction with the government for not ending the rebel war and for not undertaking effective economic reform, on May 25 1997, the army once again intervened, led by Corporal John Paul Koroma in cooperation with the RUF; many of the soldiers involved in the coup were from military barracks in Daru in Kailahun, a rebel strong-hold, (Abraham 2001: 219). The junta

released and armed inmates of the capital Freetown's main prison in the heart of the city. They then invited Sankoh to return to Sierra Leone from Nigeria where he was under house arrest, and take part in forming their government, the Armed forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). They were only removed from power following the intervention of Nigerian-dominated ECOMOG troops that reinstated Kabbah in March 1998. However, ECOMOG influence was limited largely to the capital, and the RUF remained strong in the rural areas.

The arrests, trials and executions of so-called coup collaborators in the wake of civilian return angered both the rebels and AFRC and in January 1999, they invaded Freetown in what was the most devastating and brutal attack of the war. In that one week, at least 3,000 children were abducted and 7335 people killed (Abraham 2001). In the wake of peace talks following the invasion, the government signed the Lomé Peace Accords that not only provided blanket amnesty to the coup-makers but also allocated key cabinet posts to the RUF including the newly created post of chairman of the commission for the management of strategic resources, national reconstruction and development (CMRRD) (Abraham 2001).

Although a brief peace followed, Sankoh and his fighters were slow in disarming and the large concessions they received in the peace agreement only reinforced the message that conflict was a means to power. As one commentator noted, it "gave the RUF at the negotiating table all the things it could not capture on the battlefield.... It was surrender at its most abject ... [and] legitimized barbarities of rare ferocity" (US Republican Senator Judd Gregg, 2000, cited in Abraham 2001). Problems again resurfaced in May 2000, when after months of harassment and disarmament of UN troops, the RUF captured 500, leading to international outcry and protests from domestic civil society. In addition, UN troops were increased from 1,100 to 8,700 and the British sent military assistance. Following skirmishes between Sankoh supporters and citizens

that had marched to his Freetown residence in protest, Sankoh was eventually captured and imprisoned, and the presence of UN and British troops prevented the war from breaking out again on a large scale (Abraham 2001; Boas 2001). Disarmament and demobilization of all warring factions was successfully completed February 2004 with a total of 72,490 fighters disarmed and 71,043 demobilized, including 6,845 child soldiers (Kaikai 2004; cited in IRIN 2004). On May 14, 2002, the country experienced largely peaceful elections setting it on the path of post-conflict reconstruction.

Contributing Factors to Civil War in Sierra Leone

Scholars have advanced a number of causal factors to explain the start and continuation of civil war in Sierra Leone.⁴⁴ Most agree however that the existence of a patrimonial political system, the presence of mineral resources, the marginalization of educated as well as non-literate youth by governing elites in a highly centralized system with few avenues for organized dissent and political participation are primary causes.

Some have found a correlation between mineral resources and civil unrest where the availability of such resources are associated with the origins as well as continuation of civil war (Le Billon 2000; Berdal and Malone 2000; Abraham 2001; Francis 1999). While competition for these limited resources can cause war, once underway, the state of disorder can be beneficial to warring factions, leading to its continuation. Under such circumstances, war is beneficial enabling as it does, the amassing of fortunes in a context where lack of order also means lack of policing; and,

⁴⁴ See for example, Paul Jackson, "Chiefs, Money and Politicians: Rebuilding Local Government in Post-War Sierra Leone," *Public Administration and Development* 25 (2005), M Boas, "Liberia and Sierra Leone – Dead Ringers? The Logic of Neopatrimonial Rule," *Third World Quarterly* 22, no. 5 (2001), Alfred B. Zack-Williams, "Sierra Leone: The Political Economy of Civil War, 1991-98," *Third World Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (1999), Ibrahim Abdullah, ed., *Between Democracy and Terror : The Sierra Leone Civil War* (Dakar, Senegal: Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa, 2004), Paul Jackson, "Reshuffling an Old Deck of Cards? The Politics of Local Government Reform in Sierra Leone," *African Affairs* 106, no. 422 (2007).

the winners, those who stand to gain from a state of war, may prolong a conflict if they have the power to but cannot ensure that an outright victory would keep them on the winning side. In fact the perpetuation of war can become an end in itself, providing and justifying the use of violent means to create or sustain economic profits and political power” (Le Billon 2000: 1).

In Sierra Leone, wartime disorder provided an opportunity to access benefits, and soldiers, rebels and citizens alike were involved in diamond smuggling (Zack-Williams 1999; Boas 2001; Le Billon 2000). Seemingly opposing factions such as the Rebel United Front (RUF), army coup leaders, National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC), and civilian militia like the Kamajohs, Westside Boys, and other armed movements were able to quite easily cooperate and work together (Francis 1999). This did not go unnoticed by citizens who coined the term “sobels” to describe the dual identities of soldiers who were both defenders of the government while also supporting and taking part in rebel activities and spoils. It also incorporated CDF groups who also perpetuated atrocities and participated in smuggling activities. Mineral resources contributed to the start and perpetuation of political instability, as it provided a means through which people benefited economically, illustrating the rationality of conflict and state failure.

However, the war cannot be attributed to mineral resources alone, but can also be read as symptomatic of entrenched grievances within a marginalized society (Fithen and Richards 2005). The war was a means through which citizens deprived from benefits and oppressed by patriarchal, hierarchical systems in which traditional leaders such as chiefs coerced youths to give their labor and levied high and unjust fines, could express their voice (Richards 1998). In this context, the perpetuation of war was beneficial as it allowed previously marginalized groups access to heretofore denied resources (Le Billon 2000).

Foreign intervention also contributed to the war. Most directly, Charles Taylor, currently under prosecution in the Hague for war crimes and crimes against humanity, has been accused of providing arms and funding to the rebels; ostensibly in retaliation for Sierra Leone’s harboring of

ECOMOG troops that fought Taylor's men during his attempted takeover of Liberia (Boas 2001; BBC News 2006). Additionally, some of RUF's leadership including former army photographer Foday Sankoh had received training in Libyan military camps (Zack-Williams 1999).

To summarize, reasons for civil war in Sierra Leone ranged from a patrimonial regime that had unfairly distributed resources to a privileged few, leaving many without, to the machinations of a leader bent on revenge. The legacy of neopatrimonialism resulted in many segments of the population with grievances and they were only too ready to pick up arms when the opportunity arose. The conflict was also exacerbated by the interference of Charles Taylor, president of neighboring Liberia who provided material and training support to the RUF in return for access to Sierra Leone's mineral wealth. The brutality of the war, its duration, and the use of child soldiers has been attributed to the prevalence of drugs that encouraged people to do things they otherwise might not have done.

Impacts of War

The consequences of war were wide-ranging. At least 70,000 people out of a population of 5.2 million perished (Fofana September 16, 2005). No definite figures exist for the numbers of amputees (those with body parts, including limbs, ears, tongues and so forth cut off by rebels) but estimates range from several thousand (Handicap International 2008) to 20,000 (Human Rights Watch (HWR) 2005). The true numbers of abused and abducted women, whilst high, is also unknown. The war led to extensive infrastructural damage, and economic ruin: over 3,000 villages were burnt down, 1700 educational facilities destroyed, 400 health posts vandalized and 3,000 water wells polluted and damaged (Deutsche Gesellschaft Für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) 2002). Displacement was also high, with more than 1 million people internally displaced, at least 55 percent of who were women (Physicians for Human Rights with the support of United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone 2002). The destruction and

loss of many production tools, vandalization of local industries and reduced access to arable land further hindered economic production. Political instability also characterized the war years; during the civil war, there were no less than three coups and counter-coups, as well as a succession of military and civilian rulers.

International interventions took place within these contexts. Of central importance was the issue of grievances, and the identification of mechanisms to enable local people, especially those living in rural areas to have more influence on the political system and be able to articulate their needs and hold government accountable. Psychological healing and punishment of perpetrators were also high on the list of goals. In the immediate aftermath of war, the government identified the following as priority areas of intervention in 2002-2003:

1. Restoration of state authority
2. Rebuilding communities
3. Peace Building and Human Rights
4. Restoration of the Economy⁴⁵

In the Aftermath of War: Emphases for Reconstruction

Restoration of the State

As the above shows, the restoration of effective government authority in both the chiefdoms and the capital was the number one priority for government in the post-war context. Given that state corruption, patrimonialism and lack of accountability were all cited as principal causes behind the war, institutional reform is one the primary areas of emphasis in the aftermath of war; especially reform geared toward increasing the ability of marginalized citizens to have a voice in the political arena, boosting state accountability and responsiveness to citizen needs. This took place on several levels. At the district level it meant the restoration of District Administrations and Councils, abolished since 1972 by Stevens. This formed the central

⁴⁵ Government of Sierra Leone, *National Recovery Strategy* (Freetown: Government of Sierra Leone, 2002), 3.

decentralization initiative, aimed at citizens as well as councilors. With assistance from three principal donors, the World Bank, UNDP and DFID, the government revived the 12 district and five urban councils in existence during the colonial era, and charged them primarily with raising taxes and spearheading reconstruction and development in their respective communities. This includes provision and running of social services such as health and education (Jackson 2005).

However, the power struggles between the chiefdom administration and the district councils have yet to be resolved. In addition, little has changed from the district councils implemented under colonial rule in 1950. At that time, the councils were responsible for development, while the chiefdoms remained the locus for decisions affecting local life such as customary land allocation, taxes and law and order (Fanthorpe 2006). The lines between the two tasks are blurred, and in some cases can lead to tensions. For example, although local councils can set the tax rate, the chiefdom administration is charged with collecting the taxes. They are now also mandated to share this revenue with the Local councils whereas in the past, it was the sole preserve of the Chiefdom administration. The possibilities for tension in such a set up are large. A recurring concern articulated in interviews conducted by this author in discussions with chiefs, was “with whom does the true power lie?”⁴⁶ Although the government has skirted this issue, maintaining that both are equally important, community residents are not fooled. This is evident in a remark made by a focus group respondent in Ngeblama, who said of the power relationship, “you cant have two bosses and no leader” and, “if there are two trees growing, one has to be above the other.”⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Personal interviews conducted with paramount and section chiefs, July-August 2006.

⁴⁷ FGD Discussion held with male respondents in Ngeblama, August 2, 2006.

Relatedly, many chiefs fear that decentralization will undermine their powers with many of their tasks taken over by the district councils, rendering them obsolete. In some communities, chiefs are using their influence to affect the selection of councilors, which potentially undermines the process of accountable and representative government as it replicates the elitism of the pre-war era. In other chiefdoms, open conflicts between the chiefs and the councilors can result in a stalemate for that community, as development is difficult without their mutual cooperation. Moreover, local government reform initiatives have ignored the institutions of Chiefdom Administration; although the actions of chiefs were another contributory factor to the marginalization that precipitated the war, the institution of native administration remains largely unchanged and reports are beginning to resurface of the repetition of past abuses on youths such as arbitrary fines and forced labor (Richards, Bah and Vincent 2004).

The same is true of the financial arrangements, with funding for the operation of these councils coming from development grants and local taxes collected at the chiefdom level as the 149 chiefdoms remain the main unit of political administration (Fanthorpe 2006). A revenue base that depends on income of rural earners that are often poor can lead to disproportionate development in chiefdoms with various levels of economic wealth, as some chiefdoms will be able to raise more money than others.

Restoration of state authority also extends to security sector reform; and includes initiatives aimed at improving the police sector, army, prisons and courts. Each one of these institutions have received (or still receive) training and sensitization on their duties to improve performance. For example, the British have kept a 115-member International Military Assistance Training Team (IMATT (SL)) stationed in Freetown that provides training and equipment to the Sierra Leone army.

Community Development

As part of rebuilding communities, the comprehensive DDR program demobilized and reintegrated thousands of ex-combatants into their communities, and provided them with skills-training as well as financial remuneration to assist them in their new lives. Additionally, houses, schools, health centers and other infrastructure have been built or are under construction.

Peace Building and Human Rights

The institutions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court set up in 2003 are integral components of peace-building and human rights initiatives, which were created out of the Lomé Agreement. The Special Court's goal was to facilitate national healing and reconciliation by providing a platform through which victims and perpetrators of violence could meet, and discuss in a mediated environment, experiences, share stories, explain and apologize for past actions. Through the TRC, perpetrators of violence and their victims were given the opportunity to meet, talk and give and receive forgiveness. The Special Court on the other hand is mandated to try those bearing the greatest responsibility for the crimes committed during the war. The two remaining trials are those of Charles Taylor and the RUF; the trials of the CDF and the AFRC are concluded. Verdicts are pending for the RUF following the end of closing arguments in August 2008.

The trial for the CDF defendants was controversial, as many Sierra Leoneans viewed them as heroes for their actions in protecting their communities from the RUF. Despite this, the two surviving defendants were found guilty and in 2008, received sentences of 15 and 20 years respectively. However, these sentences were much lighter than those levied on AFRC defendants, who were found guilty on a number of counts and received sentences ranging from 45 to 50 years, perhaps a sign that the CDF were given leniency in light of popular perceptions.

In spite of the resources and publicity of the Special Court, its activities are not widely followed by local Sierra Leoneans. Although the hearings and testimonies are public, they are not well attended, and many Sierra Leoneans see the Special Court as a waste of money, having little impact on their lives. 48

Economic Development

The economy is another priority area targeted for reform. Current emphases are on increasing food crop output, improving mining conditions and regulations and increasing diamond and rutile mining exports, reconstruction of communications and road infrastructure as well as use of micro-finance to stimulate development among rural elites in particular.

In the years since the war, Sierra Leone has shown signs of turning around, although progress is slow. Politically, it appears that democracy is taking root in Sierra Leone, along with other West African states such as Ghana and Liberia (Timberg 2008). Presidential and parliamentary elections held in 2007 were deemed largely free and fair by international and local monitors alike. The APC narrowly defeated the widely favored incumbent party, the SLPP, and despite allegations of fraud, there was a peaceful turnover of power, with the APC assuming leadership in January 2008. The second local government elections were held July 5, 2008 and were also declared free and fair despite outbreaks of violence in contested areas like Kono. However, the low voter turnout was ascribed to disenchantment with the decentralization process. International assistance is playing a prominent role in Sierra Leone's recovery and the country receives aid in support of all aspects of society and economy, from psychosocial counseling to facilitate the reintegration of ex-combatants into society, to state and civil-society building. In the following section, I further describe the political economy and institutional

⁴⁸ This observation is based on author's personal observation of Special Court Trials and discussions with Sierra Leoneans in 2006.

structures in the post-war period, with specific reference to the role that international assistance and, more specifically, NGO assistance is playing. I provide an overview of the different types of assistance Sierra Leone currently receives before focusing specifically on the assistance that is important for this study – that provided by NGOs.

International Assistance in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone

The civil war was officially declared over in January 2002, following a succession of international military initiatives that included a coalition of West African forces (the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)), under the auspices of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), mercenaries such as Executive Outcomes, as well as 800 British paratroopers. Similar to other post-conflict countries, Sierra Leone received substantial amounts of international assistance, initially for emergency relief, and more recently, for development and democracy initiatives. Currently, Sierra Leone receives more aid than neighboring West African states undergoing or emerging from conflict.

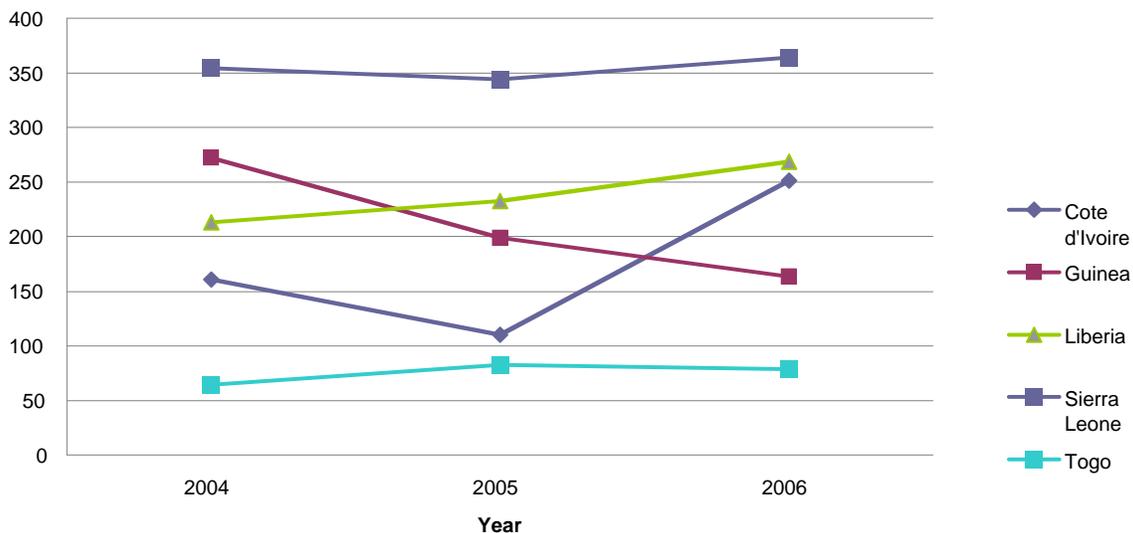


Figure 3-3. Overseas development assistance to five African countries. (Source: DACO 2006, <http://www.daco-sl.org/report.htm>. Last accessed March, 2008).

Sierra Leone receives aid from a variety of sources, including bilateral and multilateral donors, various UN agencies and NGOs. Assistance is from overseas development assistance (ODA)⁴⁹ as well as non-ODA sources. In 2006, Aid assistance to Sierra Leone totaled \$396.2m, up from \$286m in 2005 (Development Assistance Coordination Office (DACO) 2006)⁵⁰. Although overall levels decreased in 2003, a reflection of the country’s transition from the emergency relief dominance of the immediate post-conflict era, it picked up again in 2006, as donors shifted emphasis to long term recovery, development and democracy strengthening (DACO 2006).

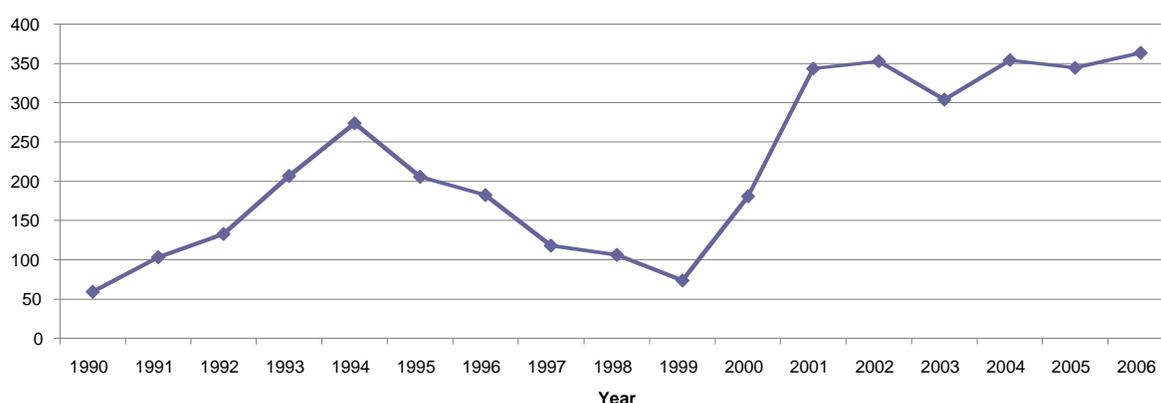


Figure 3-4. ODA net disbursements for Sierra Leone 1990-2006. (Source OECD, http://www.oecd.org/document/33/0,2340,en_2649_34447_36661793_1_1_1_1,00.html. Last accessed March, 2008).

Due to changes in the way the Development Assistance Coordination Office (DACO)⁵¹ measures aid, 2006 is the first year in which figures reflecting NGO assistance from the organizations themselves is reported separately, rather than counted as part of overall bilateral

⁴⁹ ODA is defined as “Flows of official financing administered with the promotion of the economic development and welfare of developing countries as the main objective, and which are concessional in character with a grant element of at least 25 percent (using a fixed 10 percent rate of discount).” (OECD Glossary of statistical terms, Official Development Assistance (ODA)). ODA refers primarily to assistance from bilateral and multilateral institutions.

⁵⁰ Hereafter referred to as DACO 2006.

⁵¹ DACO is the body charged with collecting data on levels of international assistance in Sierra Leone.

and multilateral assistance. In previous years, only ODA assistance was counted. Although total levels of this type of assistance channeled through INGOs and NGOs has decreased from 26 percent in 2005 to 15 percent, the inclusion of non-ODA⁵² assistance in 2006, totaling \$34.8m means that aid from NGO's remains considerable. In 2006, NGOs and INGOs received 26 percent of non-ODA and ODA assistance to carry out activities in Sierra Leone. Although the highest proportion of aid assistance (36 percent) went to the category of ministry, department and agency (MDA),⁵³ and the new method makes it difficult to compare NGO activity in Sierra Leone across time, it is nevertheless clear that NGO activity in Sierra Leone is significant. INGOs and NGOs proliferated toward the end of the war (Zack-Williams 1999), growing from 30 in 1996 to 90 in 2002, according to the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning (MODEP).⁵⁴ In 2005, over 300 national and international NGO's were registered with MODEP.⁵⁵ Aside from NGOs and INGOs, the various organizations under the United Nations also receive donor aid to implement development activities. The Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) also receives assistance through direct budget and balance of payment support (DACO 2006). The proportion of aid given to each modality is shown in Figure 3-5.

In the next section, I review the principal areas in which NGOs are active in Sierra Leone, illustrating the transition from post-war recovery to the more long-term focus on development and democratization, which form the basis of this research.

⁵² Non-ODA assistance to NGOs and INGOs refers to assistance these organizations receive from donations by the general public, philanthropists and their headquarters. This is differentiated from ODA-assistance, received from bilateral and multilateral institutions. See, Development Assistance Coordination Office (DACO). "Development Assistance to Sierra Leone, 2006." (Place Published: Development Assistance Coordination Office, Office of the Vice President, 2006), http://www.daco-sl.org/reports/Dev_ass_rep06.pdf.

⁵³ Project support assistance channeled through Project Implementation Units (PIU's) located within government ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs).

⁵⁴ Personal communication with MODEP Director, 2002

⁵⁵ Follow-up interview with MODEP Director, February 2006

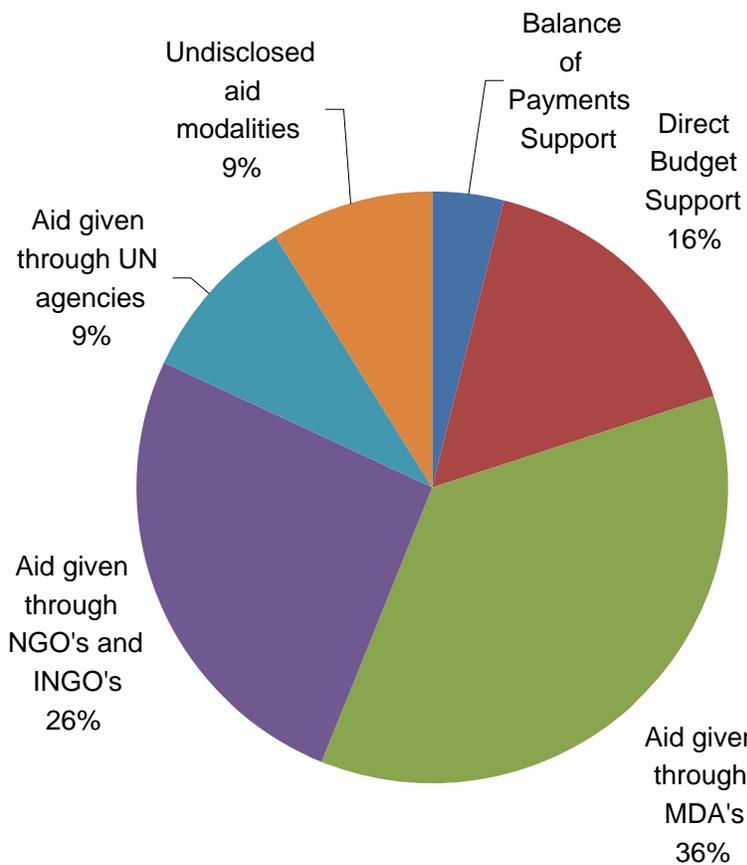


Figure 3-5. Proportion of aid given to Sierra Leone by aid modality. (Source: DACO 2006, <http://www.daco-sl.org/report.htm>. Last accessed March, 2008).

NGO Sectoral Targets: From Relief to Democracy and Development

Organizations active during and immediately after the war focused mostly on emergency relief and aid, providing shelter to refugees, food and material supply provision in camps, as well as resettlement and reintegration as areas became safe for return (Turay 2001). Short-term relief provision was soon replaced in 2003 by programs stressing long-term strategies; these have a development-oriented approach advocating strengthening local capacities with a view to long-term rehabilitation and economic development (UNDP and GOK 2005; DACO 2005). As Figure 3-6 shows, there is a sharp decrease in humanitarian and food aid as the country moved out of the immediate post-conflict context. On the other hand, assistance in the social sector increased

significantly, with moderate increases in infrastructure and governance and security (see Table 3-6 for detailed descriptions of the various categories of assistance).

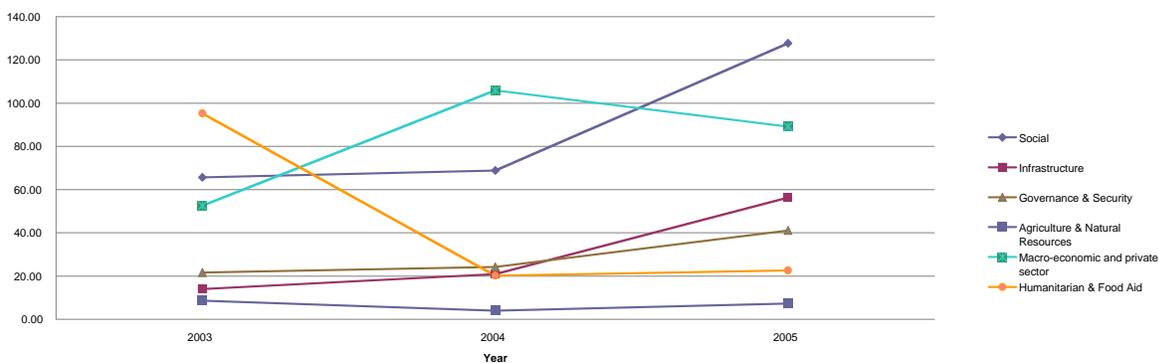


Figure 3-6. Total disbursements by sector, 2003-2005. (Source: DACO 2005, <http://www.daco-sl.org/report.htm>. Last accessed March, 2008).

Democracy-building initiatives such as institution strengthening, decentralization, civil society and social capital building have more recently accompanied these programs (DACO 2006; Smillie 2001). Currently, donors implement activities according to the three pillars identified in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), and a growing number of initiatives have addressed the concerns of Pillar 1, good governance (see Table 3-7 for a breakdown of financial disbursements by pillar). In terms of overall levels of donor assistance, (bilaterals, multilaterals and NGOs), activities under this pillar are almost equally shared with those under Pillar 3, Human Development (28 percent and 27 percent respectively), with 29 percent of funds spent on activities under Pillar 2, Food Security.

However, this reflects the extent in which NGOs are active in Pillar 3. With the removal of NGO assistance as well as direct budget support, one finds that a higher proportion of overall assistance is directed toward good governance, peace and security activities. Total aid to Pillar 1 rises three percentage points, to 36 percent; Pillar 2 receives 30 percent of aid and Pillar 3, 29 percent of assistance.

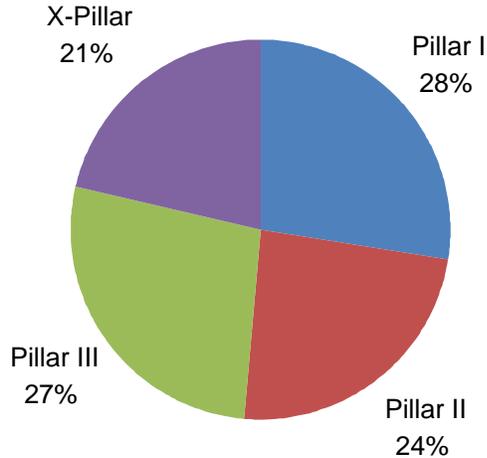


Figure 3-7. 2006 Aid disbursements by pillar, including NGO assistance (Source: DACO 2006, (Sesay and Hughes 2005; Turay 2001). Last accessed March, 2008).

Although NGOs are the largest group of donors in the third pillar, they also have a significant presence in Pillar 1. USAID are the largest donor in this category behind the EC, and they work entirely through NGOs (DACO 2006).

Democracy strengthening is a key component of recovery strategies with a target of rebuilding failed states, promoting economic development and stabilizing peace. In Sierra Leone, this is evident in the significant amount of aid allocated to this sector. Although current development discourse emphasizes the importance of democracy for economic development, the initiatives of NGOs in promoting economic development through collective action initiatives such as CDD have received attention alongside activities that emphasize civic education. This dissertation will answer the question as to whether these initiatives have any effect in strengthening democracy at the individual level. Additionally, it will contribute to understanding what the linkages are between NGO assistance and democracy strengthening, and the processes through which this occurs in post-conflict settings.

Table 3-1. Sierra Leone financial statistics (m. of US dollars) ⁵⁶

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
<i>International Liquidity (m. of Leones)</i>					
Central Bank	19.1	21.3	19.2	15.9	27.5
IMF Gold Tranche Position	1.3	1.3	0.8	-	-
Foreign Exchange	17.7	19.9	18.4	15.9	27.5
<i>Central Bank</i>					
Foreign Assets	13.61	15.18	13.73*	13.25	22.90
Reserves Money	16.57	18.03	19.34	17.70	21.35
Foreign Liabilities	-	-	-*	3.81	3.79
<i>Commercial Banks</i>					
Reserves	2.78	3.19	4.69	2.97	3.21
Foreign Assets	1.67	0.23	0.24*	0.21	1.02
Foreign Liabilities	7.02	5.71	5.92*	5.17	4.31
Foreign Assets (net)	8.26	9.70	8.05*	4.48	15.82
<i>Exports (f.o.b.)</i>					
Diamonds	67.97	63.22	59.22	50.46	79.72
Iron Ore	39.82	36.96	31.29	29.76	46.57
Iron Ore	10.46	10.90	9.77	9.02	10.32
Palm Kernels	4.87	5.68	4.62	1.10	8.59
<i>Imports (c.i.f.)</i>					
	69.47	77.40	71.40	65.27	75.48
<i>Prices (1963=100)</i>					
Consumer Prices	112	117	122	128	129

*Foreign assets and liabilities revalued during November, 1967. (Source: International Monetary Fund, in Legum and Drysdale 1969: B606)

Table 3-2. GDP at current factor cost

1963-64	201.2 m Leones
1964-65	226.2 m Leones
1965-66	240.4 m Leones
1966-67	248.0 m Leones

(Source: Legum and Drysdale 1969: B-605)

Table 3-3. External trade (m. Leones)

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
<i>Summary</i>					
Export and re-exports	68.63	63.22	59.06	50.53	79.87
Imports	70.82	77.41	71.70	65.27	75.48
Balance	-2.30	-13.65	-12.64	-14.75	+4.39

(Source: Legum and Drysdale 1969: B-606)

⁵⁶ US\$=1.2 leones; all the following tables are reprinted from Colin Legum and John Drysdale, *Africa Contemporary Record : Annual Survey and Documents, 1969-70* (Exeter: Africa Research, 1969), Colin Legum and John Gordon Stewart Drysdale, *Africa Contemporary Record : Annual Survey and Documents, 1968-1969* (London: Africa Research Limited, 1969).

Table 3-4. Principal exports (m. Leones)

	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968
Diamonds	39.82	36.96	31.29	29.74	46.93
Iron Ore	10.46	10.90	9.63	9.03	10.50
Palm Kernels	4.87	5.68	5.10	1.10	8.59
Coffee	2.72	1.35	3.92	0.64	3.13
Cocoa	1.14	0.90	1.44	1.46	2.32
Piassava	0.71	0.44	0.39	0.40	0.93
Bauxite	0.41	0.58	0.78	1.05	1.48

(Source: Legum and Drysdale 1969: B-606)

Table 3-5. Expenditure on Gross National Product (Percentage)

	1963/64	1964/65	1965/66
Private consumption	80.0	83.2	79.8
Public consumption	8.6	8.0	7.6
Gross investment	11.4	8.8	13.6
Total domestic demand	100.0	100.00	100.0
Import surplus	0.5	2.5	4.0
Gross National Product	99.5	97.5	96.0

(Source: Legum and Drysdale 1969: B-606)

Table 3-6. Categories of assistance defined

Sector	Definition
Social	Health and Sanitation, Education, HIV/AIDS, Recovery, Youths, Gender
Infrastructure	Energy, Roads, Transport, Water, Communication, Housing
Governance and Security:	Security, Public Sector Management, Decentralization
Agriculture & Natural Resources:	Agriculture, Marine, Minerals, and Environment
Macro Economic and Private Sector	Macro-economic, Private/Informal sector, Trade, Industry, Micro-finance, Tourism and Culture
Humanitarian and Food Aid	Humanitarian, Emergency Relief and Food Aid

(Source: DACO 2003, http://www.daco-sl.org/reports/Dev_ass_rep03.pdf. Last accessed February, 2008).

Table 3-7. Sierra Leone assistance by pillar, 2006

Pillar	Area of Concentration	USDm
Pillar I: Good governance, peace and security	Includes working on issues such as reforming the civil service, increasing transparency and accountability of MDA's, decentralization of government	98.6
Pillar II: Food security and job creation	Focus on promoting growth, with a particular focus on increasing food security and creating employment; working towards private sector development, particularly in enhancing the productive sectors such as Agriculture, Mining and Fisheries	85.19
Pillar III: Human development	Promoting Human Development through addressing low levels of education, poor health status- especially of the poor and vulnerable, little access to water and sanitation and health care related to HIV/AIDS	99.87
X-Pillar	A combination of all three sectors	76.44
Total Support		360.1

(Source: DACO 2006: 30-32)

CHAPTER 4 PARTICIPATION IN NGOS AND DEMOCRACY STRENGTHENING: A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP

Democracy strengthening takes place on two levels: first, in the realm of attitudes and beliefs, and second in the realm of behavior. Thus, for there to be any increase in democracy strengthening, people must believe in democracy in principle as well as practice and their political behavior be reflective of their experience with democracy. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the relationships between participation in NGOs and democracy strengthening. Attitudes as well as behavior are examined, in relation to NGO exposure, and different levels and types of NGO assistance. The central hypothesis is that NGO participation makes a difference in democracy strengthening.

The following types of assistance are all considered under the rubric of NGO assistance: democracy, economic, social and relief assistance. Democracy assistance refers to any and all assistance with the end goal of promoting democracy in its various components; economic assistance to improving the financial wellbeing of participants; social assistance, the social development of participants in arenas including education and health; and relief assistance to that provided by NGOs during the war and immediate post-war years in areas such as food supply and shelter. Does international assistance affect peoples' beliefs and attitudes about democracy? Does it influence them to behave more democratically? In this chapter, I provide a picture of the respondents, presenting the distribution of socio-economic indicators, religion, gender and age. The distribution of data is accompanied by tests on the hypothesis that participation in NGO activity impacts democracy strengthening. These are followed by multivariate models exploring the relationship between a variety of possible independent variables on democracy strengthening, including participation in democracy projects. In the conclusion, the broader implication of this study for NGO activity in post-conflict contexts is discussed.

Demographic Breakdown of Participants

Participant identification and selection initially took place at the level of chiefdom within two regions, Koinadugu and Kailahun, although the independent variable, participation in NGOs is measured at the individual level (see Chapter 2). Using an experimental design, communities were selected according to whether they were recipients of development, democracy and/or no assistance (Chapter 2). Of the five chiefdoms targeted, three are in Kailahun (Luawa, Yawei and Malema) and two in Koinadugu (Dembelia Sinkunia and Sulima Chiefdoms). Although community exposure to these three types of NGO assistance formed the initial baseline for community identification, pre-testing of the questionnaire revealed that individual respondents participated in NGOs beyond those of immediate interest to the research. High levels of displacement during the war, refugee experience and high project turnover meant that in some cases, individuals had been exposed to two, three and even four different types of projects. For this reason, NGO participation is measured at the level of the individual, rather than at the level of community. Consequently, the overall distribution of socio-economic variables is first covered without respect to region, before turning to general distributions of the dependent variable. It is important to first know the distribution of the variables of interest before elaborating specifically on how NGO participation affects democracy strengthening as such distributions are instrumental in identifying potential relationships of interest and are important in getting a feel for the data.

Frequency of Distribution of Demographic Variables

The key demographic indicators collected were gender, ethnicity, religion, age, education and occupation (see Tables 4-1 to 4-6 for the distribution of socio-economic characteristics of respondents). Selected communities in Kailahun were in Luawa (Ngeima), Malema (Jojoima) and Yawei (Ngeblama) Chiefdoms respectively; in Koinadugu, they were from Sulima

(Koinadugu and Gberia Fatombu), and Dembelia Sinkunia (Yaedia) Chiefdoms. Total population size of Koinadugu District is estimated at 234,330 and in Kailahun, 358,259 (Sierra Leone Census, cited in Development Assistance Coordination Office 2007). Men were slightly over-represented in the sample (52.4 percent to 47.6 percent) given that the questionnaire was conducted during the rainy season and women were harder to reach as they were often out on their farms. The majority of respondents were from the Mende ethnic group (53.9 percent), reflective of the responses collected from Kailahun, which were all in Mende dominated regions. Yalunka (36.7 percent) and Fullah (5.8 percent) were the next two highest numbers of responses; in Koinadugu, although the main ethnic groups are Limba, Kuranko and Yalunka, in the communities surveyed, the majority of respondents were Yalunka, and this is reflected in the high number of respondents from this ethnic group.

In terms of religion, the majority of respondents were Muslim (89.7 percent) as the two Districts surveyed are predominantly Muslim. Levels of literacy are low overall in the two regions; however, they are higher in Kailahun than in Koinadugu, also reflected in the survey sample. The average literacy rate in Koinadugu is 21 percent (Development Assistance Coordination Office 2007); in the survey only 7.7 percent had some sort of formal education, compared to 40.6 percent in Kailahun District, where according to the 2004 census, actual literacy figures are 32 percent (Development Assistance Coordination Office 2007).⁵⁷ Levels of education were thus lower in the sample than actual reported figures, reflective perhaps of the remoteness of some of the communities represented in the sample. Communities in both districts rely heavily on farming for their livelihood; in Kailahun, coffee, cacao and rice are primary, whereas in Koinadugu, cattle rearing and palm oil production are central. In addition, mining

⁵⁷ The higher numbers in the sample data could be reflective of the fact that men are over sampled; literacy rates for males is 43 percent.

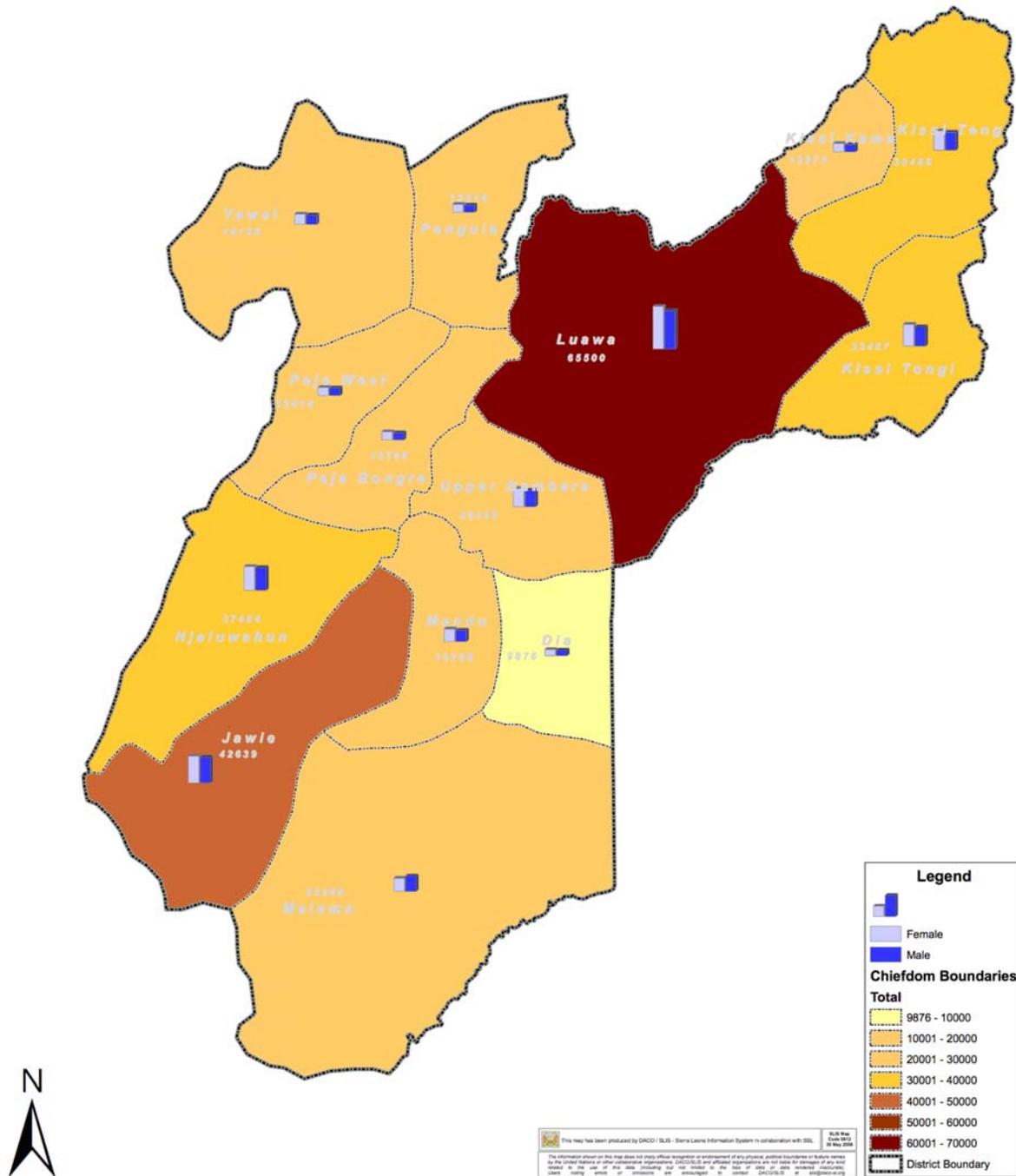


Figure 4-1. Demographic breakdown of Kailahun district. Source: Geographic Data Planning Map, last accessed from http://www.daco-sl.org/encyclopedia/8_lib/8_2b5_p.htm, August 11, 2008.

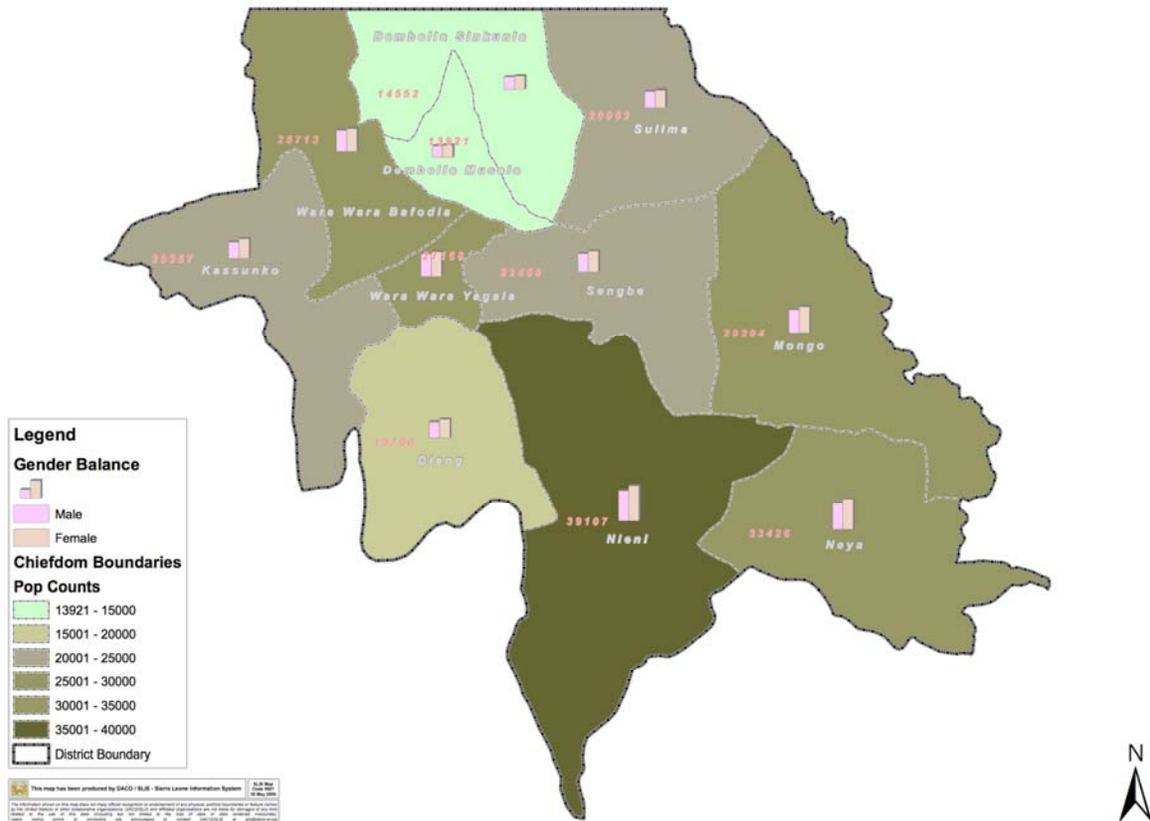


Figure 4-2. Demographic breakdown of Koinadugu district. Source: Geographic Data Planning Map, last accessed from http://www.daco-sl.org/encyclopedia/8_lib/8_2b5_p.htm, August 11, 2008.

takes place in both regions. In the sample, 82 percent of respondents listed farming as their primary occupation. Standards of living in both chiefdoms are low; life expectancy in Kailahun is 48.6 percent, and nearly half of the population (46.1 percent) lack regular access to safe drinking water. In Koinadugu, life expectancy rates for both sexes average 49.3 percent, and nearly 69.1 percent lack access to safe drinking water, reflective of the greater marginalization of the region, compared to Kailahun District. There are also fewer schools and peripheral health units (PHUs) in the former as compared to the latter. The maps that follow illustrate the distribution of population by chiefdom.

Impact of NGO participation on Democracy Strengthening: an Overview of the Distribution of the Dependent Variable

In this section, the frequency distribution of variables associated with democracy strengthening are provided and explained, looking at the key subcomponents making up this concept. In the subsequent section, I examine the impact that participation in NGOs has on the various components of the democracy-strengthening variable, at the level of attitudes, beliefs and behavior. The premise is that democracy strengthening takes place on two levels: first in the arena of attitudes and beliefs about democracy, and second, at the level of observed behavior. The two components at the level of attitudes and beliefs are belief in democratic legitimacy and cognitive awareness.

At the level of behavior, the following two components are examined: political engagement and civic engagement. In sum, democracy strengthening entails an abstract preference for democracy, evaluations within the specific country-context that depend on experiences with democracy, and the belief their participation can make a difference. This in turn should affect behavior and we should see levels of political engagement that correspond with knowledge about democracy. In addition, we should also see greater levels of associationalism and participation in CDD. The central supposition tested is that the two components of attitudes and behavior are influenced by participation in NGO programs and projects.

Sierra Leonean Understandings of Democracy

Prior to exploring the distribution of responses on attitudes and beliefs, and specifically, the distribution of responses around democracy, it is important to know how Sierra Leoneans understand democracy as this will allow us to have a consistent understanding of democracy as well as ascertain the extent to which there is a disjuncture between NGO democracy promotion attempts and how Sierra Leoneans perceive democracy. Do Sierra Leonean conceptions of

democracy resemble Western conceptualizations or are they culturally specific, with a focus on economic and social improvements as some theorists posit? To answer this question, respondents were asked, “What does democracy mean to you?” This encouraged respondents to talk about democracy in their own words. Although the question was translated into local vernacular, the English word “democracy” was retained to assess respondent familiarity with the term.

The findings to this question were very similar with those of Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005) in their analysis of African conceptualizations of democracy in twelve African countries.⁵⁸ First, respondents aware of the concept overwhelmingly gave responses that revealed positive associations with the word democracy (97.1 percent). Only 1.3 percent had a negative conception of democracy, where democracy was equated, among other things, with bad governance and social and political conflict. A few respondents also gave neutral definitions of democracy (1.7 percent), seeing it as civilian government, or simply a change of government.

The positive evaluations found among Sierra Leonean respondents is actually higher than in the Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi study, where the laudatory responses of the concept ranged from 73 percent to 93 percent of respondents. The number of negative responses is almost the same, however; only 1 percent of respondents in their study gave a negative definition. The overwhelming number of positive responses is also consistent with judgments on democracy in other post-transition contexts, even outside of Africa (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005).

A second finding that resonates with their study is that respondents define democracy in procedural as well as substantive terms, contrary to predominant perceptions that Africans are more concerned with substantive questions of social and economic development. Of those that could give a definition for democracy, 71.8 percent gave responses that correlated with

⁵⁸ See Table 4-7 and 5-8 for a comprehensive list of responses, and their distributions.

procedural understandings of democracy; that is, those classified as civil liberties, popular participation and political rights. A minority (28.2 percent) defined democracy in terms of what it could deliver substantively, including peace and unity, equality and justice and socio-economic development. In their study, Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005) find that 54 percent of interviewed Africans defined democracy in procedural terms. Thus, it would appear on initial observation, that respondents subscribe to a view of democracy dominated by individual rights, at odds with the communal concerns most commonly ascribed to African respondents (Cobbah 1987; Owusu 1992).

Relatedly, Sierra Leonean respondents offered largely liberal definitions of democracy. The most commonly cited definition was civil liberties (27.8 percent), with emphasis on general freedoms and freedom of speech followed by other individual liberties, and to a lesser extent, political rights. Popular participation was the next response (12.7 percent), with government by, for and of the people most frequently cited. Peace and unity came next, (11.6 percent); more than likely reflective of weariness of eleven years of civil war. Along the same lines, Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005) find that civil liberties and personal freedoms are the most frequently cited (41 percent overall), again followed by definitions of democracy as government by the people and government by, for and of the people.

The prevalence of popular responses, found in the Afrobarometer as well as this study, are unsurprising, reflecting not only perhaps learned responses from school and sources such as NGOs, but also the desire for political participation beyond elections that scholars have described as being culturally rooted (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005). Although to a certain extent, chieftaincy structures in Sierra Leone are inherently authoritarian, stemming from pre-colonial times, chiefs were supposed to be accountable to their subjects or risk being

removed. They were also supposed to implement development projects that were in the interests of these people. The central role still ascribed to chiefs in their communities presently is evidenced by the fact that they are often the first point of contact for any and all plans and projects that community residents (as well as outside organizations) wish to undertake.

In the same way, many citizens in FGDs and open-ended responses emphasized the importance of government that was responsible to their needs and interests. In addition to responses that democracy meant government by the people, and for the people, respondents also stressed that democracy meant that the government involved citizens in political affairs, or as one respondent put it, “Everyone is allowed to give his or her opinion about how government should be run.”

Still more detailed responses were given in response to the question about what they considered good government.⁵⁹ In addition to the provision of substantive socio-economic goods, the characteristics of a good government included a government that “should have concern for their people and their children;” “meets his people, works with them, listens to their views, allows them in development participation;” “listens to everyone’s opinion;” and so on. Respondents further elaborated on these views when discussing reasons for voting. For example, among the most prevalent of reasons cited for deciding to vote against a particular councilor was the absence of that councilor from the community, and his/her failure to implement programs and plans that addressed citizens’ expressed needs.

Closely following popular participation, incorporating not just a government that listened to people but also involved them in debate and discussion, was peace and unity (8.5 percent). This finding is again similar to Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005), who found that peace

⁵⁹ See Table 4-9 for the full range of responses to the question, “In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a good government?”

and unity were mentioned concerns, especially in Uganda, where it is attributed to that country's long involvement in civil war. Nearly one-third of respondents were unable to give a definition for democracy however, (32.6 percent) showing that there still remains quite a bit of uncertainty about what democracy means.

Respondents exposed to NGOs were more likely to give definitions that focused on individual rights and liberties such as civil liberties and political rights. Although it would appear that Sierra Leoneans hold very similar conceptualizations of democracy as Western liberal democratic models, it is interesting to note that the majority of responses to the question, "what in your opinion is good government?" referenced definitions that emphasized substantive accomplishments such as social and economic development.

For many Sierra Leoneans (69.4 percent), a good government is one that provides roads, schools, hospitals, shelter and so forth, rather than political liberties and freedoms (accounting for only 4.9 percent of responses). Respondents elaborated that a good government was one that cared for its people, where the emphasis is on socio-economic wellbeing. Peace and stability was the next frequent response, although much lower than responses on socio-economic development (8.5 percent). Popular participation came a close third with 7.3 percent of responses. Although some respondents' referenced good governance and civil liberties, these were the minority (5.6 percent and 4.9 respectively). Thus, substantive rather than procedural concerns dominate local understandings of good government, a very different scenario from definitions of democracy. Although many Sierra Leoneans state that democracy is the best system of government, many of the given definitions are at odds with the characteristics respondents later ascribe to a well performing government.

How can this disjuncture be explained? One possibility is that Sierra Leoneans, especially those exposed to NGOs and having some level of education, are familiar with the terminology of democracy; especially liberal democracy as this correlates closely with what is heard on the radio, taught in schools and propounded by NGOs. However, this understanding of democracy is not only shallow, but in terms of what people hold to be important, it appears to be least on their list of priorities. Thus, the encouragement of one particular view of democracy that for the most part, embraces liberal discourses of individuality, rights and freedoms can in fact be undermining government in Sierra Leone as it does little to help the state figure prominently in peoples lives and to perform the tasks that would render it legitimate in the eyes of the populace.

Distribution of Responses on Attitudes/Beliefs

At the normative level, respondents were asked about their belief in the legitimacy of democracy.

Belief in democratic legitimacy

Under legitimacy the following three indicators were measured: preference for democracy, evaluation of democracy and satisfaction with democracy.⁶⁰ Overall, respondents reacted favorably to the concept of democracy in principle and in practice; nearly 95 percent of respondents indicated a preference for democracy compared to any other form of government (see Table 4-10).

⁶⁰ These questions are the same as those used on the Afrobarometer. The high rate of respondents favorable to the concept of democracy is comparable to Afrobarometer findings across other countries in Africa; Across 12 countries in which the surveys have been implemented, 70% indicate a preference for democracy (Bratton, Mattes, Gyimah-Boadi 2004). Sierra Leone is among other countries like Botswana, Tanzania and Nigeria, where greater than 80% of the populace indicate a preference for democracy.

This response is closely related to rejection of alternative regimes,⁶¹ wherein respondents were asked about their support or rejection of various ways in which their country could be governed.⁶² Respondents overwhelmingly rejected the various forms of authoritarian government including one-man rule (94 percent), one-party rule (90.5 percent), and military rule (83.7 percent). This is similar to a majority of the interviewed countries in the Afrobarometer where many respondents were overwhelmingly against military and presidential dictatorships, although in a few countries, notably Namibia, South Africa and Lesotho, the average mean score of respondents rejecting authoritarian rule in general were lower (60, 66, and 63 percent respectively compared to scores in the 70s and 80s for other surveyed countries). On the contrary, quite a substantial amount of respondents are willing to have a political system that gives them more voice in the decision-making and political running of their country, a finding that is echoed in open-ended responses in which citizens felt that a good government was one that consulted its people and included them in the decision-making process. The popularity of direct rule suggests that while respondents do not want a return to traditional rule, they are nevertheless in favor of more voice in the running of the country, desiring greater government consultation with citizens, involvement in political decision-making and increased government accountability. In conclusion, the results reinforce that respondents are in favor of democracy and overwhelmingly reject authoritarian regimes.

Respondents were more critical in terms of the substantive performance of democracy in Sierra Leone (See Table 4-12). Over half of the respondents (56.8 percent) expressed positive levels of satisfaction with democracy as practiced in Sierra Leone. Given that satisfaction with

⁶¹ See Table 4-11 for a distribution of responses to this question on preferences for different regime types, including one-man rule, one-party rule, military rule and popular rule.

⁶² Responses of “oppose” and “strongly oppose” are collapsed for ease of representation

democracy is a measurement that uses as a frame of reference, concrete regime performance rather than an abstract ideal, it is no surprise that percentages are lower than those expressed in support of democracy. Respondent responses on satisfaction with democracy closely mirror that of other African countries surveyed by the Afrobarometer where on average, 59 percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with democracy. This is similar to Eurobarometer scores of 56 percent in 1996, but higher than Eastern Europe in the same period where only 34 percent were satisfied and Latin America where 30 percent said they were satisfied in 2000. Such positive responses could perhaps be a reflection of a country still riding on the waves of peacetime euphoria; after so many years of war, the existence of a regime in which peace is safeguarded is regarded as a positive change.

Respondents were also less likely to rate Sierra Leone a full democracy.⁶³ Nevertheless, compared to responses on the Afrobarometer, Sierra Leoneans rate Sierra Leone a democracy higher than the regional average of 30 percent and comparable to the regional high of Botswana at 46 percent. Only a small minority of respondents (7.9 percent) indicated that Sierra Leone was not a democracy. This suggests that despite problems, Sierra Leonean respondents do believe that Sierra Leone is a democracy, although levels of satisfaction with this democracy vary. Why the variation in responses will be explored in greater detail in upcoming sections.

Cognitive Awareness

The second dimension of the variable, democracy strengthening, at the level of attitudes and beliefs, is cognitive awareness, measured by political awareness and external efficacy. Political knowledge has been linked to the ability of citizens to hold officials accountable, evaluate leader performance and support for political reform (see Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-

⁶³ See Table 4-13 for the distribution of responses to the question, ““in your opinion, how much of a democracy is Sierra Leone today?””

Boadi 2005: 213). Political knowledge is also linked to political participation, with more citizens reporting higher levels of participation (Milner 2002).

In terms of political awareness, respondents were asked about their knowledge of political leaders (where the expectation is that higher levels of knowledge would be linked to higher levels of contact); their knowledge of the political concepts democracy and decentralization, and external efficacy as measured by their self-perceived impact on political affairs.

To measure political knowledge, respondents were asked whether they knew the names of their Paramount Chief, Ward Councilors, President, Vice President and Member of Parliament (Table 4-14). Findings indicated high knowledge of traditional leaders (Paramount Chief/Section Chief), but showed more variation on knowledge of other leaders. For national leaders, a majority of respondents were able to name the president (70.3 percent), perhaps reflective of the high interest generated in the elections in the aftermath of war. Although lower in number, a majority of respondents (52.3 percent) were also able to name the Vice President, similar to other countries surveyed by the Afrobarometer, where despite some regional variation, a majority of respondents could identify this person. However, only 17.1 percent could name their MPs, below the average of one in three respondents surveyed in the Afrobarometer (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005).

More respondents could name their regional representative, with over half of the respondents able to identify their councilor. This is more than the average of four in ten reported in the Afrobarometer, and closer to high performing countries like Botswana, Ghana, Mali and Zimbabwe, where over half of the respondents could name their local representative. Sierra Leoneans are also better informed than US respondents, where only one in three respondents could name their House representative (Morin 1996, cited in Milner 2002: 44). Thus, despite the

newness of the local council system, and struggles for power between newly elected councilors and traditional leaders that have led to low levels of knowledge of councilors in South Africa (in 2000, less than 1 percent could name their councilor),⁶⁴ in Sierra Leone, levels of awareness are quite high. This could be reflective of the concerted attempts made by both government and NGOs to sensitize local populations to the role of councilors; many respondents were able to articulate concerns about the lack of performance of local council representatives in open-ended questions on their perceptions of various governing institutions. The relatively high knowledge of councilors also implies that decentralized systems of governance, in which leadership is situated at the local level and theoretically easier for people to access, and ensure control and accountability, is ostensibly a good thing; in addition, knowledge is positively correlated to contact. However, on the whole, citizens had unfavorable perspectives of councilors, perceiving them as difficult to access; potentially minimizing many benefits of this knowledge.

There is some regional variation however in knowledge of leaders; communities in Kailahun, where there are overall higher levels of education and NGO involvement, reported significantly higher levels of knowledge of the following leaders: president 91.5 percent (compared to 63.5%) and vice president (66.5 percent compared to 37 percent).⁶⁵

When it came to political concepts, over half of the respondents had heard of democracy and were able to give a definition (See Table 4-15). Much lower numbers reported hearing about decentralization, the other political concept (21.0 percent) and only slightly more had heard of the Local Government Act, the legislative act that ushered in the decentralization process.

Decentralization is a major component of the move to increase democracy in Sierra Leone and

⁶⁴ Cited in Michael Bratton, Robert B. Mattes, and Emmanuel Gyimah-Boadi, *Public Opinion, Democracy, and Market Reform in Africa*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁶⁵ X² values significant at .000 level

many NGOs have undertaken sensitization around its precepts and the role of citizens in such a context. Nevertheless, given the premise that democracy is important in consolidating peace in a post-conflict context, and that one of the priorities of NGOs as well as government is in the promotion of democracy, there is still a substantial amount of people that are unfamiliar with this concept as well as related concepts. The possible implications of this for democracy strengthening are elaborated in the conclusion.

External Efficacy

The second indicator of the variable, democracy strengthening, at the level of attitudes and beliefs is external efficacy: the belief that one can participate and such participation can make a difference. To this end, respondents were asked about their perceptions of the independence of their vote, as well as the ability of their vote to change/influence unfair laws at the chiefdom (local) level and the national level.⁶⁶

Respondents expressed low levels of efficacy in terms of their ability to alter laws perceived as unfair. The law at the chiefdom level referred to was that of taxation, which was recently increased to LE 5,000 (\$3.00) per household. During focus groups, participants expressed dissatisfaction with this new law, feeling the tax was too high. This indicator was chosen as the issue of tax payment is historically a source of conflict in Sierra Leone. It was the central contributing factor to one of the most serious challenges during colonial rule – the 1898 Hut Tax War, and more recently, has been a source of some contention given that where chiefs formerly controlled the setting of tax rates, collection and usage of revenue, under decentralization, the local government can set the tax rate and share collected revenue with chiefs.

⁶⁶ See Tables 5-16 and 5-17 for the distribution of responses on these variables.

The ability to change an unjust law at the chiefdom level (in this case, the contribution of three bushels of rice per family to the chief) was the second issue debated. Richards (1998) among others has suggested that excessive demands by chiefs and lack of accountability was one of the factors contributing to war, and one of the areas in which chiefs have been perceived as taking advantage is in this aspect. Respondents indicated very low levels of efficacy for both these questions, with 75 percent and 70 percent respectively saying they had no chance to change either one of those laws; a slightly higher percentage expressed more chance at changing an unfair law imposed at the chiefdom level.

Slightly over half of the respondents believed in the integrity of their vote however, and that they had the power to refuse if a “big man” tried to tell them which way to vote. Some respondents who indicated “no” elaborated in the open-ended follow up asking “why or not,” saying that even if they could not say no to the person, the sanctity of the voting booth ensured their privacy and the powerful person would not be able to see which way they voted.

Distribution of Responses on Political Behavior

In addition to norms and beliefs, democracy strengthening is also hypothesized to take place at the level of individual behavior, or more specifically, participation in the political and civic arenas. This participation can take several forms.

Political Engagement

Under the political engagement dimension, (defined as the level of political activism of individuals within their communities), I add attendance at political meetings and contact of traditional and elected political leaders to the standard measure, voting, which is frequently used as an indicator of participation in studies of electoral democracy. However, voting as a sole measure of participation is limited, and does not do justice to the large number of other existing avenues through which individuals can articulate their interests, express their preferences and

advocate for change (Richards 1998; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995). Consequently, under political engagement, I measure attendance at political meetings and contact of aforementioned leaders in addition to voting.

Attendance at local meetings

Respondents were asked about attendance to political meetings held at the chiefdom and district level, which are instrumental in the formulation and implementation of development plans for the community. With decentralization, communities are charged with the task of identifying development needs within their community and provided with a variety of avenues through which these demands can be made. Three opportunities for input and discussion exist. At the most basic level, community members can attend Village Development Committee (VDC) meetings, spearheaded by a VDC committee. These are present in all villages, and are the most accessible. Although VDCs existed before the civil war, many were resuscitated in the post-conflict period by NGOs who needed a facilitating body to implement development plans within the community.

Ward committees are increasingly replacing VDCs as the primary instrument through which community members can become involved in the development of their community as VDCs and Chiefdom Development Committees (CDCs) are becoming associated with corruption and elite interests (Fanthorpe 2006). Wards are the smallest arm of local government in Sierra Leone consisting of aggregates of several neighboring villages. NGOs work more in partnership with them now than with CDCs and VDCs. Each ward committee is made up of councilors elected from that ward, the Paramount Chief, if applicable, and no more than ten people (five men and five women) elected by ward residents.⁶⁷ According to the Local Government Act,

⁶⁷ See Government of Sierra Leone, *The Local Government Act, 2004* (Freetown: Government of Sierra Leone, 2004).

WC's are the approved focal point for development in the ward, responsible for the organization and mobilization of citizens for voluntary CDD activities and educating citizens about their rights and responsibilities in the wake of decentralization. With monthly meetings open to all residents, wards are also the focal point for residents to discuss community development priorities, and air their concerns, which the ward can then act on or make recommendations to the Local council (charged with implementing development activities for the district) for further action. Last, the Local Council is the focal point of local government and the principal organ for development at the local level. Meetings are to be held at least once monthly, at the district or town headquarters, and are open to all residents. All ward committee members are supposed to have input into these meetings, bringing petitions and requests from their various constituencies for consideration by the Local Council. Local councils are the main link between central government and people in their locale, responsible for ensuring that development plans and projects are undertaken in the interests of those they represent. They can take decisions on which development plans to implement and make financial allocations based on monies collected from local taxes as well as allocated by the government and donors. The council consists of at least twelve members, consisting of the Chairman (elected, one of the councilors), other elected councilors from the locale, and select Paramount Chiefs. However, local council meetings are often a distance away from the average community resident and are less easy to attend.

Although the times and location of ward committee and district council meetings are to be publicized throughout the community and are free and open to the public, overall knowledge of ward committee meetings and district council meetings are low; village/chiefdom development committee meetings are better attended, as would be expected given the lower costs associated with attendance and its familiarity with citizens. Only 14.4 percent of respondents reported

attending district council meetings, compared to 21.9 percent that said they had attended a ward committee meeting in the past year. On the other hand, 46 percent of respondents reported attending at least on village development meeting during the same time frame (see Table 4-18).

Contact with political leaders

Another component of political engagement is the extent to which citizens have contacted political leaders within the past year. Linked to this is knowledge of political leaders; one would expect that knowledge of one's leaders would be positively correlated to higher levels of contact. This was indeed the case: the lower levels of knowledge of formal leaders coincided with low rates of contact; on the other hand, respondents were more likely to have contacted traditional leaders, with whom they were more familiar. Reasons for this varied. In the open-ended questions on the questionnaire, many respondents complained that councilors did not reside in their wards (although they are mandated to do so) and were difficult to contact. Many of them resided instead in Freetown. This was also true of members of parliament who also resided in Freetown with respondents finding them far removed from the concerns of those they were elected to represent⁶⁸.

In focus group discussions, male respondents were also more likely to indicate willingness to contact local chiefs and female respondents, *Mammy Queens*⁶⁹ about development problems or issues. In contrast, to elected formal leaders, traditional leaders such as Mammy Queens and Chiefs are resident in the community as are community groups and NGOs. Participants also expressed dissatisfaction in both FGDs and open-ended questions with the slowness of response

⁶⁸ See Table 4-19 for the actual breakdown of the distribution of responses to the question, "In the past year, have you ever got together with other people/by yourself contacted the following people [insert person] to either talk about a problem or suggest they do something that will benefit the community?"

⁶⁹ Mammy Queens are traditional women leaders appointed by a group of women elders to manage women's affairs in the community.

of government to articulated demands, preferring instead to take matters into their own hands through locally organized community driven development groups, appeals to NGOs, or traditional elders such as the chiefs. This could potentially have a negative impact on democracy strengthening as citizens have little incentive to engage with the formal channels of development or with the state.

Voting

The third indicator of political engagement is voting. Respondents were asked about voting behavior at national and local levels (see Table 4-20). Questions asked were on whether they voted in two national elections (1996, 2002) as well as the first local council elections held in many years (2003). The year 1996 marked the first elections since the adoption of the multi-party system in 1991.

In general, voter turnout in Sierra Leone is high, far exceeding turnout in US presidential elections. National election turnout was higher in 2002 than in the 1996 elections, which took place during the war. Those elections faced significant problems given the then existing political insecurity and heightened violence of rebels as well as a military government against elections before peace (Kandeh 2004).

Although responses on voting are often over-exaggerated given its characteristic as a political activity that is laudable and seen as something that good citizens should do, in this case responses are actually less than those reported by respondents, although still quite high overall. Despite some discrepancies between reported official figures and national averages, it is clear that the voter apathy that is part of the US political system is yet to reach Sierra Leone. People see voting as not only a fundamental right, but also a duty/obligation. They also associate it with the arena through which political change can take place, citing dissatisfaction with current president/councilor as a reason for voting. Officially reported voter statistics for the 2002

elections at 81.4 percent is much higher than the Afrobarometer mean of 57.9 percent, as are the self-reported figures: 78.4 percent compared to the Afrobarometer mean of 71 percent.

Interestingly, in over 50 percent of cases where respondents expressed dissatisfaction for current standards of living, they were still willing to vote for the same party, citing the incompetence of the advisors around the president for economic problems, rather than the president himself. There is a larger discrepancy between self-reported and official figures for the 1996 elections: self-reported turnout figures for the 1996 elections are 20 percentage points lower than official figures; this was reflected in open-ended questions that queried reasons behind not voting; the majority of people that did not vote in the 1996 elections could not do so because of voter intimidation or they were refugees in another country. Some respondents were also too young to vote.

Civic Engagement

This dimension of political behavior looks at respondent's involvement in development activities in their communities. The indicators used are involvement in community groups and respondent participation in community-driven development activities.

Membership in community organizations

Respondents overall were reasonably active in groups, with an average of over two groups per person (see Table 4-21). The most common type of group membership were development groups, that is, groups related to community driven development and mutual assistance such as labor gangs (organized groups that work on each others' farms), road brushing (keeping the roads cleaned and passable), credit or savings groups, and youth groups.⁷⁰ The next group with high membership was cultural groups; much of this reflected membership in secret societies.

⁷⁰ See Table 4-22 for a breakdown of the types of groups to which participants belong.

Also classified in this category were religious groups and cultural associations. Membership in professional associations, such as teacher associations, trade unions, labor and education groups like school management committees was 18 percent, while recreational group membership (sports groups) and political groups reported the lowest levels of membership.

Participation in community-driven development

Most of the respondents reported participating in CDD activities (see Table 4-23). The most frequent type of activities reported were road brushing and town cleaning. Other communal activities in which respondents were involved include the construction of communal facilities such as mosque/church, town hall, bridges, health facilities and schools (the latter two in conjunction with NGOs); working on a communal farm with proceeds shared; organizing into labor groups and selling labor to raise proceeds to fund construction of communal buildings like mosques and churches, and contributing to the reconstruction of shelter for selected community residents.

Labor was divided in construction activities, with men providing the sand, making the bricks and contributing labor, and women often responsible for provision of food items and cooking for the workers.

NGO Participation and Democracy Strengthening: What are the Relationships?

The central hypothesis of this study is that exposure to NGO projects results in strengthened democracy, measured at the level of attitudes/beliefs and behavior of individuals. In this section, the impact of NGO participation on the two components of democracy strengthening is explored to see whether this is indeed the case.

Attitudes and Beliefs: Belief in Democratic Legitimacy

The majority of respondents held largely favorable perceptions of democracy in principle (94.9 percent), with smaller percentages expressing favorable opinions of democracy in practice

(42.6 percent believed Sierra Leone was a full democracy, and 56.7 percent expressed some level of positive evaluation of democracy). However, to what extent does participation/not in NGO activities influence preference for democracy, evaluation of democracy and satisfaction with democracy?

Using a T-test to measure whether differences exist in the means of NGO participants and non-NGO participants, we find that there are indeed significant differences in the means within all categories. On the “preference for democracy” question asking respondents to rank which statement they agreed with the most, respondents active in NGOs⁷¹ were less likely to indicate a preference for democracy than those participants that had not participated in NGO projects.⁷²

On the question of how much of a democracy is Sierra Leone), respondents that had not participated in NGO projects,⁷³ were more likely to indicate a preference for democracy than those participants active in NGO projects.⁷⁴ Finally, the group that participated in NGO projects⁷⁵ was also less likely to be satisfied with democracy than its peers.⁷⁶

Given the low overall numbers of respondents that said a non-democratic government was preferable in certain situations (3.6 percent) or felt that “to people like me it doesn’t matter what form of government we have” (2.0 percent), some cells had counts of less than five and so cross tabs were not feasible. Thus, although more respondents exposed to NGOs indicated that democracy is preferable to any form of government, (192 compared to 179), it is not possible to

⁷¹ (X=1.87, SD=.472).

⁷² (X=1.96, SD=.273), t (391) = 2.287, p= .023).

⁷³ (X=2.21, SD=.985).

⁷⁴ (X=1.85, SD=.981), t (341) = .001.

⁷⁵ (X=2.36, SD=1.582).

⁷⁶ (X=2.36, SD=1.582), t (353) = .013.

determine whether this difference is significant. However, the large number of respondents indicating democracy as a preferable means of government allows us to infer that a majority of Sierra Leoneans do indeed support democracy, similar to Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005) findings that democracy enjoys popular support especially in countries recently undergoing multi-party elections. In Sierra Leone, despite, or perhaps as a result of the turbulence of recent years, respondents are especially committed to democracy, seeing within it the possibility of peace and stability. Citizens in the majority of African countries surveyed by the Afrobarometer consistently express high levels of support for democracy, in a variety of circumstances: from stable countries with a relatively long history of unbroken solid regime performance (Botswana) to Zimbabwe under Mugabe. Thus it would appear that regardless of participation in NGOs, citizens in Sierra Leone, like many other citizens across Africa hold the principle of democracy dear.

Endorsement of democracy in practice is less enthusiastic. In terms of concrete evaluations of democracy within Sierra Leone, more dissatisfaction is expressed (see Table 4-24). There is a clear demarcation here between respondents who have been exposed to NGOs and those who have not participated in any NGO programs/projects. Respondents in the former category are less likely to express satisfaction with the way in which democracy operates in Sierra Leone than those in the latter category, a difference that was statistically significant, using Fishers Exact Test.⁷⁷ Relatedly, using chi-square tests to uncover association (note, these tests do not assume causality), the percentage of respondents that believed Sierra Leone was a full democracy differed depending on NGO participation,⁷⁸ with respondents exposed to NGO less likely to

⁷⁷ Categories were collapsed into satisfied/not with democracy, excluding those that expressed “no opinion”, “do not know”, and “no response.”

⁷⁸ (χ^2 (3, N = 346) = 1.80, p < .000)

believe this to be the case (see Table 4-25). Despite these differences, respondents reacted favorably overall to the concept of democracy in principle and in practice.

Attitudes and Beliefs: Cognitive Awareness

This section considers the impact of NGO participation on political awareness (measured specifically as knowledge of leaders and of political concepts/definitions of democracy, Local Government Act and decentralization) and external efficacy, respondents' self-assessments of their ability to change unjust laws and freedom of their vote.

Knowledge of leaders

Respondents were asked whether they knew the names of their Paramount Chief, Ward Councilors, Members of Parliament, Vice President and President. Traditional leaders were included since informal politics is also a central aspect of politics in African countries, and such leaders are often an integral part of any political system (Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi 2005). Findings indicate that knowledge of traditional leaders (Paramount Chief/Section Chiefs) is high across both sets of respondents. This parallels the findings of Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005), who note that Africans are more likely to contact traditional leaders for community problems than elected representatives. It also reinforces the idea that knowledge of leaders is an important pre-cursor to contact; implying that people are more likely to contact people with whom they are familiar. These findings also echo Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995) who find in their study of US politics, that personal acquaintance with public officials increases the likelihood that citizens contact these officials, and that the relative accessibility of local officials increases the likelihood that they are known by respondents.

Knowledge of other leaders was much lower. Knowledge of councilors was low overall, and NGO participation made little/no difference⁷⁹. There were significant differences amongst knowledge of some, although not all political leaders. In cases of community leaders located at the chiefdom or community level, such as the chief, many people were already familiar with this person, and NGO participation made little if no difference in this knowledge. NGO participation also did not make a significant difference in knowledge of ward councilors. On the other hand, NGO participation made an impact on knowledge of formally elected leaders, specifically the Vice President, MP and President. A greater number of people that had participated in some form of NGO activity were able to correctly name these politicians. Of respondents not active in any NGO projects, 29.7 percent could correctly name the Vice President. On the other hand, 75.6 percent of respondents exposed to NGOs were able to correctly name the Vice President. The same is true of knowledge of the president. Although more people were able to correctly give the president's name, for respondents that had not participated in NGO projects, 57.3 percent were able to correctly name the president as compared to 96.7 percent of respondents exposed to NGO projects.

Knowledge of political concepts

Respondents that participated in NGO projects were significantly more likely to have heard of the political concepts democracy and decentralization, and offer definitions, as well as know about the Local Government Act.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ See Table 4-26 for the impact of NGO activity on knowledge of leaders.

⁸⁰ (p = .000), see Table 4-27.

Attitudes and Beliefs: External Efficacy

The second component of cognitive awareness is external efficacy, measuring the ability of respondents to change laws they consider unjust, and their belief that they can vote as they choose to free from pressures of elites in the community.

Ability to change unjust law

Not all of the three components making up external efficacy (ability to say no to vote persuasion, and ability to change unjust chiefdom and national laws) yielded means that were significantly different. In terms of the three components making up external efficacy, t-tests reveal different levels of significance in the means of each category. The only significant difference in means is found in the number of respondents that believe they have the power to change an unjust chiefdom law,⁸¹ as compared to those who believe they have no power.⁸²

Furthermore, χ^2 tests reveal a statistically significant relationship between NGO participation and ability to change an unjust chiefdom law with 36.0 percent of respondents with NGO experience responding in the affirmative compared to 22.7 percent in the non-NGO category (see Table 4-28). Thus, it would appear that respondents participating in NGO activities were significantly more likely to believe they had the power to change an unjust law, but only at the chiefdom level. There was no significant difference between the two categories on changing a law at the national level, or on the ability to resist pressure to change ones vote. The perception of greater influence at the local level reinforces the view that individuals believe they have more control/power over matters closer to them, as well as the importance of local-level politics compared to national level politics.

⁸¹ (X = .51, STD = .743)

⁸² (X = .33, STD = .650), p = .008.

Political Behavior

There are a variety of ways in which individuals can participate in the political arena. In addition, civic participation is also linked to greater political participation, thus both are considered under political behavior.

Political Behavior: Political Engagement

Not only is political engagement/participation a multi-dimensional concept, the informal aspects of political behavior in many African countries as well as the emphasis on communal activities necessitates the consideration of contacts with traditional leaders as well as formal ones, and civic engagement. Similar to Western countries, participation encompasses more than voting. The indicators of political engagement (attendance at political meetings, contact of political leaders and levels of voting) showed different impacts depending on NGO exposure.

Attendance at political meetings

Political (development) meetings are a primary mechanism through which individuals can impact development and change in their communities, as well as hold officials accountable. However, overall knowledge of ward committee meetings and district council meetings were low, and knowledge of and attendance at these meetings was not significantly affected by NGO exposure.

On the other hand, at the community level, attendance at village development meetings while originally high increases even more depending on exposure to NGO projects.⁸³ A total of 39.4% of respondents with no exposure to NGOs said they attended VDC meetings. This increases to 52.1% for respondents who have had some contact with NGOs. This suggests that while NGOs might have some impact on people's willingness to be active in development

⁸³ See Table 4-29 for the impact of NGO participation on VDC meetings.

programs in their communities, respondents still prefer that local problems and issues are solved at the lowest often non-formal level, rather than through the formal channels such as the ward and local councils established by the state. When asked to elaborate on the topics discussed at the last community meeting they attended, the majority of responses indicated meetings organized spontaneously by concerned individuals in the community for self-help purposes, such as road construction, brushing of each others' farms (to ensure better growth of produce), and the building of a community centre or place of worship. Few people take advantage of the decentralized structures of governance provided by the government to increase their input into local development priorities, petition government and hold them accountable, similar again to the findings of Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005) that respondents in half of the countries surveyed were more likely to engage in locally organized collective action for development purposes than go through formal state channels.

Contact with political leaders

The findings depicted in Table 4-29, that respondents are more likely to be active in meetings at the lowest organizational level are consistent with those of Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005), who find relatedly, that Afrobarometer respondents across all surveyed countries are also more likely to contact traditional political leaders rather than formal elected ones to address problems in their communities (by 27 percent compared to 14 percent) and social networks are more important than formal ones. In similar fashion, findings in this study indicate that respondents were twice as likely to contact informal leaders and local community groups than formal ones. This feature is consistent among respondents with NGO exposure as well as those who have not participated in any NGO projects. Although more respondents in the former category reported contacting chiefs, mammy queens, and local community groups than in the latter category, the differences were not significant. In this respect, it would appear that the locus

of authority for Africans continues to be rooted in local contexts as embodied by chieftaincy or other traditional systems rather than national governments as Owusu (1992) has claimed, regardless of whether they participate in an NGO or not. This emphasizes the distance that continues to exist between individuals and the formal institutions of the state; where people can, and do live their lives outside of state intervention and assistance. However, it is important not to overstate the case, as some respondents do report contact with local elected officials, albeit at lower rates. Even the pattern of this contact is again reflective that government representatives closer in geographic space to respondents are more likely to be contacted: thus, respondents report contacting ward councilors more frequently than they do councilors (26.1 percent versus 22.9 percent), and government in Freetown much less (9.9 percent).

Voting

Participation/not in NGO activities had very little impact on whether people voted, at the presidential and parliamentary level as well as local council. In the 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections over 70 percent said they voted from both categories. Turnout for the local council elections in 2004 was lower in both categories, averaging about 50 percent, but again, there is no significant difference across the two categories. However, higher numbers in national elections than local elections could indicate that local government has yet to take root in local communities. As mentioned earlier, decentralization is a relatively new phenomenon in Sierra Leone; district councils have only recently been reinstated (2002) since their abolition during Stevens' era.

Political Behavior: Civic Engagement

Participation in voluntary associations, and in community-driven development activities can ostensibly serve as a training ground for citizens to inculcate civic norms, and hone skills necessary to engage in the political world. To what extent are citizens exposed to NGOs more

likely to participate in voluntary associations and participate in activities aimed at developing their communities?

Participation in community associations

Respondents with NGO experience were more likely to belong to more groups than those not exposed to these organizations.⁸⁴ Only 10 percent of respondents with some NGO contact did not belong to any group at all, compared to 38.6 percent of respondents with no NGO contact.⁸⁵ Again, many of these groups are ones organized by community members to address development needs they may have, rather than organizations created by the state. Some of these groups are also created/sponsored by NGOs; thus NGOs provide an alternative source for development assistance and organizing to meet these development needs outside of the state.

Participation in CDD

Respondents with NGO exposure were significantly more likely to participate in CDD activities in their communities, than those without NGO exposure, with 85 percent of those in the former category participating compared to 69.4 percent of respondents without NGO exposure.⁸⁶ While it can be argued that it is only natural that a higher numbers of participants exposed to NGOs are also active in CDD given that NGOs do encourage citizens to organize collectively to address their development needs and provide avenues for them to do so, a majority of respondents, regardless of whether they belong to NGOs or not are nevertheless active in their communities. This shows that many community members are involved in addressing development concerns in their communities, even without the external impetus provided by

⁸⁴ See Table 4-30 for a breakdown of the impact of NGO membership on the number of groups to which respondents belong.

⁸⁵ (p = .000).

⁸⁶ See Table 4-31.

NGOs, and further reinforces the perspective that citizens for the most part, live their lives outside the reach of the state.

Toward an Understanding of NGO Impact on Democracy Strengthening

From the above discussion, it is clear that there is some relationship between the participation in NGO programs and projects and the various individual components of democracy strengthening as measured at the level of attitudes and beliefs. However, attitudes, beliefs and behavior around democracy can be influenced by a variety of factors, including education, gender, and ethnicity. In this section, the various components of the democracy strengthening variable are combined to form four indexes which are then used in multivariate analysis to assess the extent in which NGOs do indeed affect political beliefs and behavior, and what impact other possible independent variables might have.

Two indexes were created to incorporate the components attitudes and beliefs (belief in democratic legitimacy and cognitive awareness), and two more for political behavior (political engagement and civic engagement). Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha) was conducted on each one of the indexes.

With this index established, it is possible to measure the combined effects of the following possible influencing variables on democracy strengthening: gender, ethnicity, age, education and occupation.

Discussion of Predictor Variables

Other studies have found correlations between gender and political participation, with males more likely to participate in politics. Another potential predictor is ethnicity, or region, where different experiences might contribute to different outcomes. Given that ethnicity correlates with district and chiefdom selection, I use this as a proxy for ethnicity. Over fifty respondents are Mende, all exclusively from Kailahun District, with a handful of Kissi. The next

highest frequency are Yalunka respondents (36.3 percent), all from Koinadugu, followed by Fullah respondents who are also resident in some parts of Koinadugu. Given that the predominant responses fall within the two ethnic groups of Mende and Yalunka, that in addition hail from two regions with differentiated socio-economic experiences, I use the district (Koinadugu or Kailahun) as a rough proxy of ethnicity and examine whether this a predictor of political attitudes, beliefs and participation.

Education is also compressed into a dummy variable, as the majority of respondents (70 percent) are uneducated, and the values of the other categories are widely dispersed. Education is another hypothesized variable, positively impacting attitudes and beliefs about democracy, with greater levels of education associated with higher knowledge of leaders and assessments of political efficacy. Given that the majority of respondents are farmers, (82 percent), occupation is also collapsed into a dichotomous variable.

Factors Affecting Beliefs/Attitudes about Democracy

In the following section, the created indexes from the various measures making up each of the four main components, are measured against each of the possible alternative explanations for attitudes, beliefs and behavior exhibited by respondents.

Supply of Democracy

To come up with the index of supply of democracy, the standardized scores for the variables, evaluation of democracy and satisfaction with democracy were added together.⁸⁷ Standardized scores are used to account for the differences in variance of different measurements. If values with larger variance were added to ones with smaller variance, the value

⁸⁷Although Cronbach's Alpha is low (.289), the two components are significantly correlated at the .01 level.

with a higher variance would dominate the new value created. Standardization removes the bias that such a procedure would engender.

A learning approach assumes that experience with democracy will impact the ways in which people view democracy. While respondents on the whole espoused a preference for democracy, in practice, the evaluations of democracy as it operates in Sierra Leone were less favorable. This is reflected in the model below, which is significant. While participants with former or current NGO involvement are more likely to be informed about their leaders and political concepts, at the same time, we find that respondents in this group are also likely to hold more pessimistic views about the way in which democracy operates in Sierra Leone. That is, respondents that have participated in NGO projects are more likely to say that the supply of democracy in Sierra Leone is low. In addition, the more organizations to which an individual belongs, the higher the likelihood of rating democratic supply as low. Gender is also a significant predictor of the likelihood of rating democracy in Sierra Leone positively, with women more likely than men to rate the democratic supply in Sierra Leone more highly (see Table 4-32).

Cognitive awareness

Political awareness and external efficacy are the two principal subcomponents examined under the cognitive awareness variable. To create this index, separate indexes for political awareness and external efficacy were created and then summed. For the political awareness index, the mean score of responses on knowledge of different leaders was summed and the standardized scores obtained. Mean responses on respondent knowledge of the two political concepts of democracy and decentralization as well as the Local Government Act were also summed, standardized scores obtained and the two standardized scores added together.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Cronbach's Alpha, .709.

The model for external efficacy combines the self-perceived ability of individuals to change laws they consider unjust, as well as vote, free from external pressures. Again the standardized scores of these two indicators (for external efficacy) were summed and then added to the political awareness index to form the index for cognitive awareness.⁸⁹

Although this model⁹⁰ also shows that NGO participation is significantly and positively correlated with cognitive awareness, interestingly, respondents in Kailahun District are less likely to be cognitively aware than respondents in Koinadugu. For every unit increase in age, participants are more likely to be cognitively aware, and again, women are less informed than men. Farmers are also less likely overall to be cognitively aware. This could perhaps reflect those respondents that believe they have little ability to influence unjust laws or enforce their vote.

Factors Affecting Political Behavior

The political engagement index combines the standardized scores of respondents' contact with political leaders, attendance at political meetings and self-reported voting experiences.⁹¹ Although the model is significant overall, NGO participation is not significantly related to political engagement. However, participation in development groups does increase the likelihood that people will be politically engaged, as suggested in the literature. Furthermore, region is significant as hypothesized, with respondents from Kailahun more likely to be politically engaged. An increase in respondent age is linked to an increase in political participation and women are less likely than men to be politically engaged.

⁸⁹ Cronbach's Alpha, .552; change of unjust chiefdom law and unjust local law are significantly correlated (at the .01 level, but neither are correlated with perceived ability to vote freely.

⁹⁰ See Table 4-33.

⁹¹ See Table 4-34.

The civic engagement index combines the standardized score of the total number of associations to which respondents belong with the standardized scores of participation in community driven development.⁹²

The civic engagement model is also significant, with participation in NGOs significantly correlated with participation in civic organizations as well as community development activities. Men are again more likely to participate in such activities than women.

Testing Alternative Hypotheses

In addition to participation in NGOs, there are a number of other plausible variables that might influence people's attitudes and beliefs about democracy. Each competing explanation will be examined in turn before turning to the key independent variable used in this study: participation/not in NGO activities.

The Impact of Gender

A well-developed theory of the literature on political participation is that gender influences how people think about politics as well as the extent in which people are active in the political arena. Women are less likely to join political organizations and run for public office (Burns, Schlozman and Verba 2001) or at an even more fundamental level, are less informed than men about politics.⁹³ Are there gaps in the way in which women and men in Sierra Leone both understand and view democracy and in their political activity? Are men better informed, and women less likely to participate?

This study reinforces findings by other authors that women lag behind men in terms of cognitive awareness, political behavior and civic engagement. Women are less likely to report

⁹² See Table 4-35.

⁹³ For a good overview of this literature, see for example, Jeffery J. Mondak and Mary R. Anderson, "The Knowledge Gap: A Reexamination of Gender-Based Differences in Political Knowledge," *Journal of Politics* 66, no. 2 (2004).

high levels of knowledge of political leaders (often a pre-cursor to contact of such leaders), less likely to believe in the sanctity of their vote as well as know political concepts. Moreover, they are not as likely to contact political leaders, attend political meetings, belong to civic organizations and participate in community driven development. Alternatively, women are more likely to rate democratic supply higher than men, perhaps reflective of the claim in this study that higher knowledge of political concepts is correlated to higher levels of critical assessment – which could explain why men rate democratic supply lower.

The Impact of Region: Which is More Influential – Kailahun or Koinadugu?

Kailahun, situated in the Eastern part of the country, was most affected by the war; as the RUF main rebel base, the district suffered greatly from their destructive activities. As one of the diamond-producing regions in Sierra Leone, it yielded a steady revenue for the rebels and much of it was destroyed during the war as rebels tunneled through houses in search of diamonds as well as burnt homes and fields to deter fleeing residents from returning. In the post-war period, Kailahun has received extensive amounts of international assistance, compared to Koinadugu, which continues to be marginalized, as under previous regimes. Although refugee rates in both districts were comparative (in the survey, around 85 percent of respondents in Kailahun said they left their community compared to nearly 83 percent of residents in Koinadugu), Kailahun was one of the first areas to benefit from post-war reconstruction in the aftermath of war given the perception of greater need as well as ease of access. However, Kailahun overall boasts more educated residents than Koinadugu as well as better standards of living. There are a total of 310 primary schools and 25 junior secondary schools boasting enrollment figures of 87,124 in primary school and 5772 in secondary school. Literacy rates stand at 32 percent (43 percent for males and 22 percent for women). The predominantly Muslim population divided between

Mende and Kissi is engaged in income generating activities that include small-scale mining, coffee, rice and cacao production.

In contrast, the northern region of Sierra Leone is less developed than its southern counterpart, (see Chapter 3), and Koinadugu is no exception. The largest district in Sierra Leone, chiefdoms and villages are often situated miles apart and road infrastructure is poor, especially during the rainy season when roads are often impassable. With 278 schools, Koinadugu trails behind Kailahun, having correspondingly low rates of enrollment: 69,424 enrolled at the primary school level, and 2,906 pupils are enrolled in the 12 junior secondary schools, nearly half less than in Kailahun.

Diamond mining is also prevalent here, along with gold. Koinadugu is also known for its beef, and inhabitants engage in palm oil production as well. Koinadugu literacy rates are lower than Kailahun's: 21 percent (30 percent for males and 14 percent for women). In the survey, Kailahun respondents reported higher levels of education than Koinadugu respondents (85 percent compared to 58 percent).

Given these substantial differences in socio-economic standing, it was expected that levels of democracy strengthening would be higher in Kailahun where standards of living and levels of education are higher as well as overall level of intervention. Statistical results are mixed. In the case of democratic legitimacy, region plays no significant role after controlling for NGO participation and other variables. In terms of cognitive awareness, it would seem that Koinadugu residents are more cognitively aware than Kailahun residents, contrary to expectations. The same is true of civic engagement. In terms of the former, it might be a reflection of the problems inherent in combining variables to form an index, because in both the questionnaire as well as focus group discussions, Koinadugu respondents were less likely to know their leaders (formally

elected ones) than Kailahun residents, and fewer of them could define the political concepts of democracy and decentralization or knew about the Local Government Act. They also expressed lower levels of political efficacy. Given that Koinadugu residents have lower levels of education and talk about their remoteness from central government or external interventions, this is unsurprising. The same is true for civic engagement; Koinadugu residents were less likely to belong to civic groups and participate in community driven development.

As hypothesized, respondents in Kailahun were more politically engaged than their Koinadugu counterparts. In focus group discussions, Koinadugu residents reported having very little interaction with political officials and leaders overall, as well as with NGOs; NGO presence was less felt in Koinadugu especially in light of the remoteness of the region. NGOs found it difficult to access many areas in Koinadugu because of poor road networks. This was worse during the rainy season when many roads became impassable. Residents in one community in particular remarked to data collectors that this was the first car they had seen in twenty years. Historically, as we have seen in Chapter 3, communities in the South and East were more developed than in the north. For some, this was not just reflective of political inequalities where the South was favored, but also a result of (Southern) chiefs that were more interested in implementing development in their communities. Some communities were more interested than others in self-development. This might be another explanatory factor that helps us understand the discrepancies between the two regions observed here. Respondents in communities like Jojoima in Kailahun said that to counter the lack of national government intervention in their communities, they undertook development projects themselves, citing as an example, a recent initiative of the youth to organize themselves into groups and build a community centre where

the youth could enjoy themselves. Koinadugu residents in the study expressed few such initiatives.

Although some of these other hypothesized independent variables (education, region, gender, religion, age and occupation) show more impact on democracy strengthening than others, for the most part, it does not rule out the impact of participation in NGOs. Even though we are unable to distinguish among different types of interventions, clearly, participating in these activities influences attitudes, beliefs and political participation. However, rather than results that underline the notion that all “good” things go together, with NGO participation resulting in attitudes and beliefs supportive of democracy as well as behavior, the main finding is that while NGO participants are indeed more knowledgeable, they are less likely to be satisfied with democracy in practice and also less likely to participate politically. Reasons for this will be explored in the subsequent chapter.

Table 4-1. Gender distribution

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	218	52.4
	Female	198	47.6
	Total	416	100

Table 4-2. Ethnicity distribution

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Ethnicity	Mende	223	53.9
	Yalunka	152	36.7
	Fullah	24	5.8
	Kissi	8	1.9
	Limba	2	.5
	Mandingo	2	.5
	Soso	1	.2
	Kono	1	.2
	Temne	1	.2
	Total	414	100.0

Table 4-3. Religion distribution

		Frequency	Percent (%)
Religion	Muslim	373	89.7
	Christian	43	10.2
	Total	416	100.0

Table 4-4. Education distribution

		Frequency	Valid Percent (%)
Level of Education	None	306	73.6
	Primary	49	11.8
	Junior Secondary School	35	8.4
	Senior Secondary School	14	3.4
	Vocational	10	2.4
	Koranic	1	.2
	College/University	1	.2
	Total	416	100.0

Table 4-5. Age distribution

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Age	15 thru 19	10	2.6
	20 thru 24	32	8.3
	25 thru 29	44	11.4
	30 thru 34	39	10.1
	35 thru 39	49	12.7
	40 thru 44	45	11.7
	45 thru 49	44	11.4
	50 thru 54	27	7.0
	55 thru 59	15	3.9
	60 thru 64	16	4.2
	65 thru 69	15	3.9
	70 thru 74	18	4.7
	75 thru 79	10	2.6
	80 thru Highest	21	5.5
	Total	385	100.0

Table 4-6. Occupation

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Farmer	336	82.4
	Student	17	4.2
	Trader	17	4.2
	Business	9	2.2
	Carpenter	6	1.5
	Tailor	6	1.5
	Teacher	4	1.0
	Medical worker	3	.7
	Arabic leader	2	.5
	Mason	2	.5
	Accountant	1	.2
	Black smith	1	.2
	Contractor	1	.2
	Driver	1	.2
	Gold smith	1	.2
	Mechanic	1	.2
	Total	408	100.0

Table 4-7. What does democracy mean to you? (First response)

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 freedom (general)	78	32.8
	2 freedom of speech	13	5.5
	3 other individual liberties	2	.8
	4 group rights	5	2.1
	5 government by, for, of the people	35	14.7
	6 power sharing	2	.8
	7 listening to/informing the people	3	1.3
	8 political accountability	5	2.1
	10 electoral choice	5	2.1
	11 the right to vote	7	2.9
	13 majority rule	3	1.3
	14 social peace	11	4.6
	15 national unity	19	8.0
	17 mutual understanding and respect	11	4.6
	20 social justice	4	1.7
	23 developing the country	9	3.8
	27 effective and efficient government	2	.8
	28 rule of law	5	2.1
	29 transparency/openness	1	.4
	31 personal responsibility	1	.4
	33 telling the truth	1	.4
	34 other	9	3.8
	35 civilian government	1	.4
	36 change of government	3	1.3
	38 social and political conflict	1	.4
	42 bad governance	1	.4
	43 other	1	.4
	Total	238	100.0

Table 4-8. Classification of Democracy meanings

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	1 civil liberties	98	27.8
	2 popular participation	45	12.7
	3 political rights	15	4.2
	4 peace and unity	41	11.6
	5 equality and justice	4	1.1
	6 socio-economic development	9	2.5
	7 good governance	8	2.3
	8 other positive attributes	11	3.1
	9 neutral meanings	4	1.1
	10 negative meanings	3	.8
	99 don't know/never heard of democracy	115	32.6
	Total	353	100.0

Table 4-9. Classification of “good government” meanings

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	socio-economic development	286	69.4
	peace and unity	35	8.5
	popular participation	30	7.3
	good governance	23	5.6
	civil liberties	20	4.9
	don't know/never heard of democracy	9	2.2
	other positive attributes	4	1.0
	equality and justice	3	.7
	political rights	2	.5
	Total	412	100.0

Table 4-10. Preference for democracy

<i>Question: Which Statement do you agree with the most?</i>	Frequency	Percent (%)
In certain situations a non democratic government can be preferable	14	3.6
To people like me it doesn't matter what form of government we have	8	2.0
Democracy is preferable to any form of government	371	94.4
Total	393	100.0

Table 4-11. Rejection of alternative regimes

		<i>Question: Some people say we would be better off if the country was governed differently. What do you think about the following options:⁹⁴</i>	
		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	One-man rule	394 (n=408)	94
	Military rule	351 (n=407)	83.7
	One-party rule	379 (n=408)	90.5
	Traditional rule	366 (n=407)	87.3
	Popular rule	263 (n=407)	62.7

Table 4-12. Satisfaction with democracy in Sierra Leone

		<i>Question: How satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Sierra Leone?</i>	
		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Not at all satisfied	61	17.2
	Not very satisfied	54	15.2
	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	2	.6
	Fairly satisfied	105	29.6
	Very satisfied	133	37.5
	Total	355	100.0

Table 4-13. Evaluation of democracy in Sierra Leone

		<i>Question: How much of a democracy is Sierra Leone?</i>	
		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	Not a democracy	27	7.9
	Major problems but still a democracy	86	25.1
	Minor problems but still a democracy	84	24.5
	Full democracy	146	42.6
	Total	343	100.0

⁹⁴ (a) We should abolish elections and parliament so that the president can decide everything, (b) the army should come in to govern the country, (c) candidates from only one political party should be allowed to stand for elections and hold office, (d) all decisions should be made by a council of traditional leaders (i.e.: chiefs), (e) the most important decisions, for example, on the economy, should be left up to you the people.

Table 4-14. Knowledge of political leaders

<i>Question: Can you tell me the name of:</i>		Frequency (correctly identified)	Percent (%)
Yes	Paramount Chief	388 (n=415)	93.5
	Councilor	235 (n=415)	56.6
	Member of Parliament	71 (n=414)	17.1
	Vice President	223 (n=415)	53.7
	President	330 (n=416)	79.3

Table 4-15. Knowledge of political concepts

<i>Question: Have you heard of:</i>		Frequency	Percent (%)
Yes	Democracy	238 (n=353)	56.8
	Decentralization	88 (n=403)	21.0
	Local Government Act	99 (n=358)	23.6

Table 4-16. Chance to change unjust policies (local and national)

		Frequency	Percent (%)
<i>Question: what chance do you think you have to change an unjust local government policy?</i>	No chance	312	75.6
	Little chance	51	12.3
	Good chance	50	12.1
	Total	414	100.0
		Frequency	Percent (%)
<i>Question: what chance do you think you have to change an unjust chieftom law?</i>	No chance	291	70.5
	Little chance	70	16.9
	Good chance	52	12.6
	Total	413	100.0

Table 4-17. Ability to refuse someone more powerful telling you how to vote

<i>Question: If someone more powerful than you tells you to vote for somebody that you do not want to vote for, do you feel like you can say no?</i>		Frequency	Percent (%)
Valid	No	182	44.7
	Yes	225	55.3
	Total	407	100.0

Table 4-18. Attend political meetings

<i>Question: In the past year, have you attended any of the following?</i>		Frequency (Numbers that attend)	Percent (%)
Yes	Attend District Council Meetings	59 (n=409)	14.4
	Attend Ward Committee Meetings	89 (n=407)	21.9
	Attend Village Development Committee Meetings	189 (n=411)	46.0

Table 4-19. Contact of political leaders (formal and traditional)

<i>Question: In the past year, have you ever got together with other people/by yourself contacted the following people to either talk about a problem or suggest they do something that will benefit the community?</i>		Frequency (Contacted)	Percent (%)
Formal	Government in Freetown	40 (n=404)	9.9
	District Councilor	93 (n=407)	22.9
	Ward Committee Members	105 (n=402)	26.1
Traditional/ Community Leaders	Paramount/Section Chief	174 (n=411)	42.3
	Mammy Queen	159 (n=407)	39.1
	Local Community Group	151 (n=401)	37.7
International	NGOs	154 (n=395)	39.0

Table 4-20. Votes cast in local and national elections (official⁹⁵ and self-reported⁹⁶)

Type and Date of Election	Officially Reported Voter Turnout (%) ⁹⁷	Self-Reported Reported Voter Turnout (%)
Presidential Elections (1996)	68.6	48.6
Presidential Elections (2002)	81.4	78.4
Local Elections (2004)	n/a	53.0

⁹⁵ The source for official figures is International Institute for Democracy and International Assistance (IDEA) (http://www.idea.int/vt/country_view.cfm?CountryCode=SL#topParliamentaryElections. Last accessed, April 11, 2008).

⁹⁶ Self-reported figures are responses from the questionnaire.

⁹⁷ Calculated (as a percentage) on the basis of total votes cast divided by the number of names on the voters' register.

Table 4-21. Total number of groups to which respondents belong

Group Number	Frequency	Percent (%)
0	97	23.8
1	79	19.4
2	70	17.2
3	64	15.7
4	47	11.5
5	26	6.4
6	8	2.0
7	11	2.7
8	4	1.0
9	2	.5
Total	409	100.0

Table 4-22. Types of groups to which participants belong

Member (Group Type)	Frequency/N (Yes)	Percent (%)
Development Group	270 (n=416)	64.9
Cultural Group	194 (n=416)	46.6
Interest Group	78 (n=416)	18.6
Issue Group	26 (n=416)	6.3
Recreational Group	17 (n=416)	4.1
Political Group	8 (n=416)	1.92

Table 4-23. Number of respondents participating in CDD

Participate Yes/No	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
No	90	22.4
Yes	311	77.6
Total	401	100.0

Table 4-24. Impact of NGO participation on satisfaction with democracy

	Satisfaction with Democracy			
	Not satisfied (%)	Satisfied (%)	Total (N)	
Participation in NGO projects	No NGO	26.0%	74.0%	100.0
	Some NGO	38.6%	61.4%	100.0
	Total	32.6%	67.4%	100.0%

p < .008, one tailed Fisher's exact test

Table 4-25. Impact of NGO participation on evaluation of democracy in Sierra Leone

		NGO Participation		
		No NGO (%)	Some NGO (%)	Total (n)
<i>How much of a democracy is Sierra Leone?</i>	Not a democracy	8.8%	7.1%	27
	Major problems but still a democracy	13.8%	35.0%	86
	Minor problems but still a democracy	25.6%	23.5%	84
	Full democracy	51.9%	34.4%	146
	Total	100.0%	100.0%	343

(χ^2 (3, N = 346) = 1.80, p < .000)

Table 4-26. NGO impact on knowledge of leaders

Knowledge of Political Leaders	Participate in NGO project (%)		Significance
	No	Yes	
			$\chi^2(1) = 104.3746$ p < .000
Know president			
No	42.7	3.3	
Yes	57.3	96.7	
Total (n)	100 (199)	100 (213)	
Know Vice President	No NGO	Some NGO	$\chi^2(1) = 84.2314$ p < .000
No	70.3	24.9	
Yes	29.7	75.1	
Total (n)	100 (195)	100 (213)	
Know Paramount Chief	No NGO	Some NGO	$\chi^2(1) = 92.2112$ p < .000
Yes	91	97.7	
No	9.0	2.4	
Total (n)	100 (200)	100 (213)	

Table 4-27. Knowledge of political concepts by NGO participation

		NGO participation		
		No NGO	Some NGO	Row Totals and Significance
Number of respondents that have heard of the following:	Local Government Act	31 (17.1%)	68 (38.4%)	99 (n=358) $\chi^2 (1) = 2.028E1$ p < .000
	Democracy	89 (53.3%)	149 (80.1%)	239 (n = 353) $\chi^2 (1) = 2.880E1$ p < .000
	Decentralization	21 (10.7%)	67 (32.5%)	88 (n = 403) $\chi^2 (1) = 2.82E1$ p < .000

Table 4-28. Impact of NGO participation on efficacy

		NGO Participation		
		No NGO	Some NGO	Row Total
Ability to change unjust chieftdom law	No chance	154 (77.4%)	137 (64.0%)	291
	Little chance	25 (12.6%)	45 (21.0%)	70
	Good chance	20 (10.1%)	32 (15.0%)	52 (12.6%)
	Total	199 (100.0%)	214 (100.0%)	413

Table 4-29. NGO participation by attendance at VDC meeting

		NGO Participation		
		No NGO	Some NGO	Row Total
Number attending	Village Development Committee Meeting	78 (39.4%)	111 (52.1%)	189 (n=411) (46.0)

$\chi^2(1) = 6.683$ p = .01

Table 4-30. NGO participation in CDD by NGO participation

		NGO participation		
		No NGO	Some NGO	Row Total
Number of groups to which respondents belong	0 groups	76 (38.6%)	21 (10.0%)	97
	1-3 groups	99 (50.3%)	114 (54.0%)	213
	4-6 groups	20 (10.2%)	61 (28.9%)	81
	7-9 groups	2 (1.0%)	15 (7.1%)	17
	Column Total	197 100.0%	211 100.0%	408

$\chi^2(3) = 6.253E1$ $p = .000$

Table 4-31. NGO participation in CDD by NGO participation

		NGO Participation		
		No NGO	Some NGO	Row Total
Participation in Community Driven Development (CDD)	No	60 (30.6%) (69.4%)	30 (14.6%) (85.4%)	90
	Total	196 (100.0%)	205 (100.0%)	401

$\chi^2(1) = 1.470E1$ $p = .000$

Table 4-32. Determinants of perception of democratic supply
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.466a	.217	.196	1.39684

a. Predictors: (Constant), some education, Gender-women, Religion - Muslim, Age, NGO participant, Number of active organizations, District

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	138.157	7	19.737	10.115	.000a
	Residual	497.545	255	1.951		
	Total	635.702	262			

a. Predictors: (Constant), some education, Gender-women, Religion - Muslim, Age, NGO participant, Number of active organizations, District

b. Dependent Variable: Perception of democratic supply

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.290	.487		.595	.552
	NGO participant	-.317	.191	-.102	-1.658	.099
	q5_R_Total_No_Groups_Range	-.679	.133	-.352	-5.100	.000
	District	.324	.226	.100	1.431	.154
	Age	-.010	.026	-.022	-.377	.707
	Religion – Muslim	.065	.280	.014	.234	.815
	Gender-women	.304	.179	.097	1.701	.090
	q.1.6_R_Education_Dummy	.133	.208	.039	.641	.522

a. Dependent Variable: Perception of democratic supply

Table 4-33. Effect of cognitive awareness

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.555a	.308	.292	2.51968

a. Predictors: (Constant), some education, Gender-women, Occupation-farmer, NGO participant, Religion - Muslim, Age, Group Member, District

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	984.981	8	123.123	19.393	.000a
	Residual	2215.726	349	6.349		
	Total	3200.707	357			

a. Predictors: (Constant), some education, Gender-women, Occupation-farmer, NGO participant, Religion - Muslim, Age, Group Member, District

b. Dependent Variable: cognitive_awareness_index

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.165	.830		2.609	.009
	NGO participant	1.132	.289	.189	3.924	.000
	Group Member	.701	.379	.101	1.849	.065
	District – Kailahun	-1.998	.339	-.331	-5.893	.000
	Gender-women	-.643	.275	-.107	-2.336	.020
	Age	.128	.041	.149	3.167	.002
	Occupation-farmer	-1.262	.373	-.160	-3.387	.001
	Religion – Muslim	.629	.477	.062	1.318	.188
	some education	.082	.333	.012	.247	.805

a. Dependent Variable: cognitive_awareness_index

Table 4-34. Affecting Political Engagement
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.446 ^a	.199	.181	1.95489

a. Predictors: (Constant), Group Member, Religion - Muslim, Gender-women, Occupation-farmer, some education, Age, NGO participant, District – Kailahun

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	336.986	8	42.123	11.022	.000a
	Residual	1360.492	356	3.822		
	Total	1697.478	364			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Group Member, Religion - Muslim, Gender-women, Occupation-farmer, some education, Age, NGO participant, District - Kailahun

b. Dependent Variable: PolEng_Index

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-4.171	.635		-6.567	.000
	District – Kailahun	1.674	.262	.385	6.392	.000
	Gender-women	-.536	.211	-.124	-2.535	.012
	Age	.094	.031	.152	3.011	.003
	Occupation-farmer	.143	.286	.025	.499	.618
	Religion – Muslim	-.192	.366	-.027	-.524	.600
	some education	.138	.260	.028	.530	.596
	q4.12_NGO_Participation	.153	.221	.035	.692	.489
	Group Member	1.614	.289	.324	5.591	.000

a. Dependent Variable: PolEng_Index

Table 4-35. Affecting civic Engagement
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.584a	.341	.328	1.33997

a. Predictors: (Constant), NGO participant, Gender-women, Religion - Muslim, Age, some education, Occupation-farmer, District – Kailahun

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	324.323	7	46.332	25.804	.000a
	Residual	626.637	349	1.796		
	Total	950.961	356			

a. Predictors: (Constant), NGO participant, Gender-women, Religion - Muslim, Age, some education, Occupation-farmer, District - Kailahun

b. Dependent Variable: CivicEngment_Index_

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.453	.347		4.183	.000
	District – Kailahun	-1.312	.161	-.399	-8.150	.000
	Gender-women	-.473	.145	-.145	-3.257	.001
	Age	-.020	.021	-.044	-.950	.343
	Occupation-farmer	.303	.203	.068	1.489	.137
	Religion – Muslim	.293	.255	.053	1.149	.251
	some education	.164	.177	.044	.924	.356
	NGO participant	.881	.147	.270	5.988	.000

a. Dependent Variable: CivicEngment_Index_

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS: IMPLICATIONS OF DONOR ASSISTANCE AND DEMOCRACY IN SIERRA LEONE

This study has shown that NGO assistance in post-conflict settings is a central mechanism employed by the international community to stabilize peace and implement democracy and development. What is less clear, however, is what impact these interventions have on understandings of democracy, attitudes and beliefs pertaining to democracy and finally, political behavior. Drawing on the core assumptions of the civil society literature, one purpose of the study was to contribute to a better understanding of what motivates individuals to participate/not in politics and whether/how their understandings and beliefs about democracy translate into political behavior, including voting, attendance at political meetings and in civic associations.

In this chapter, I examine what, if any, are the tangible implications of such assistance in the recipient country of Sierra Leone, as well as explore the questions to which such interventions give rise. Furthermore, the limitations of such a study are explored as well as possible areas for future research.

Whose Democracy? Donor Assistance Versus Recipient Priorities

The question about Sierra Leonean understandings of democracy revealed a populace that ostensibly views democracy through liberal lenses. However, an alternative question, that asked respondents about what characteristics a good government should possess, showed that rather than responses pointing to liberal freedoms, Sierra Leoneans instead expressed preference for a government that addressed their social and economic concerns. Foremost among these issues were good roads, provision of health care and education facilities as well as improvement in standards of living. These responses were reflected in focus group discussions as well. When respondents were asked to rank their topmost concerns, the majority of respondents in male, female, young and old groups alike talked foremost about economic and social concerns across

all communities. During FGDs it appeared that democracy was last among respondents' priorities; at least not a democracy that emphasizes individualism. Instead, respondents asked about the provision of collective goods such as schools, hospitals and good roads.

They relatedly expressed frustration that government was not meeting these development needs. It would thus appear that despite giving responses on democracy that echo what one might hear in a developed country setting, such responses reflect perhaps reflexive, instinctive responses that repeat what respondents have heard from NGOs, civic education and radio, the most commonly cited responses to the question, "where did you hear about democracy?" In particular, respondents that had heard about democracy from the radio mentioned the station Radio Moa,⁹⁸ a station with programming supportive of democratizing aims. Thus, their responses seemed to be reflective of what they had heard from various sources, rather than deeply held views.

In addition, despite expressing at the same time, the belief that democracy is the most preferable form of government and supporting it for the most part in both theory and practice, upon probing further, it would appear that the freedoms and rights they associate with democracy are not the criteria by which they judge the best system of government. Whilst many do indeed define democracy in liberal terms, what they demand most from government is that it addresses substantive issues, including peace, unity, equality and justice, in addition to socio-economic improvements.

Popular participation, another commonly evoked definition for democracy is also reflected in responses on good government: respondents felt a good government was one that listened to their problems, involved them in discussion and decision-making and responded to these

⁹⁸ Radio Moa is a community radio station established in December 2003, serving the Kailahun region, with funding from USAID.

demands accordingly. Prominent among these demands were again socio-economic concerns. It would appear then that even though definitions of democracy are predominantly liberal, this is not the type of government in which people have interest. Instead, substantive concerns are high amongst the peoples' list of priorities, and an effective government is one that addresses those concerns, rather than one that ensures that individual rights and liberties are assured.

It can be argued that the promotion of democracy along liberal lines undermines this in several ways. First, organizations that promote economic development tend to do so by encouraging citizens to organize into groups to address their development problems and concerns. Such organization, by promoting citizen-led development, encourages self-sufficiency. While not necessarily a negative quality, it can nevertheless lead to citizens that are more likely to take matters into their own hands than engaging with the state.

A second related limitation is that NGOs become surrogates for states, a critique that has been made by a number of authors in different country contexts. For example, a high ranking CARE official mentioned that lessons learned by his organization was that while the organization's strength lay in community based work and in organizing communities to implement their own development, by marginalizing the State, such work was unsustainable as NGOs cannot and should not take over the government's role.⁹⁹ Instead, he felt it was important to come up with a way to link citizens and the state in development programs and projects. By taking on tasks such as feeding communities, or assisting them in boosting their agricultural production, organizations run the risk of further undermining the state. Given that the provision of public goods is a key activity that citizens expect from a well-performing state, encouraging

⁹⁹ Interview conducted by author with CARE official, February 20, 2006

citizens to not expect such provision from the state can only further weaken citizen-state relations.

Third, the mechanisms through which NGOs promote democracy can also have a negative impact in terms of citizen-state relations. The emphasis of many of these programs when targeted at the masses, is the education of citizens about what democracy means and what role they should play in such a democracy. Through good governance sensitization meetings run by local and international NGOs such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Africare, the 50/50 group and Campaign for Good Governance (CGG), as well as radio programs such as those run by Radio Moa, citizens have received sensitization around topics ranging from the importance of equal gender representation in development groups, to holding political leaders accountable. In terms of the latter, USAID is a central donor. One prominent example is a three-year, \$4.5 million Strengthening Democratic Governance (SDG) program (originally with a March 2008 end-date) implemented by Management Systems International (MSI), which in turn has partnered with a number of different NGOs depending on the region. In Kailahun, the implementing partner is IRC. MSI had as its goal, the broadening of community-based political participation in national dialogue through a variety of activities, including the training of regional coordinators and local mobilizers responsible for sharing the information received to ward committee members and interested residents. Through workshops and seminars, residents are educated about their rights, and the importance of their involvement in all stages of the development in their communities, from articulating priorities to the planning, monitoring and evaluation of development projects in their communities. Although this appears to be in line with community priorities that stress socio-economic development, the state at present lacks the capacity to implement many of these development needs for a number of reasons. Post-conflict

states such as Sierra Leone are still weak in terms of capacity. Despite the aggressive promotion of decentralization and the district councils and ward committees, the government has failed to provide a correspondingly stable revenue base through which communities can finance their own development (Jackson 2007). Given the low standards of living currently obtaining in rural areas, a dependence on taxation is clearly inadequate. Other sources of income such as NGO grants are not sustainable. Thus, encouraging citizens to go through the formal channels to implement community-based development could not only fail but also lead to frustrations as citizens find government unresponsive to their demands due to a lack of fiscal and implementing capabilities. In their stead, NGOs can provide the financial (although unsustainable) resources to assist community members in building roads, schools or establishing seed banks. Donors can also undermine government accountability to citizens as well, by providing an alternative revenue base outside of citizen taxes (Karl 1997).

A complementary approach for democracy strengthening programs targeted toward civil society is training newly elected councilors and ward committees on their tasks in addition to training citizens about their rights and responsibilities. However, according to the CARE official, the belief that political leaders should be experts in terms of their responsibilities was “strange and unrealistic,” and he pointed that such training would never be considered for officials in similar capacities in the United States or other western countries. Training also does not necessarily equate behavioral change. He found that the training of local councilors, or community residents could result in highly informed segments of the population that could articulately discuss meanings of civil society, and give appropriate responses concerning accountability, equality and rule-following, but this did not necessarily mean their behavior changed.

For this respondent, the formal mechanisms of power advocated by decentralization initiatives further ignored existing power structures in communities and entrenched ways of accomplishing community goals and objectives. Furthermore, identification of the real power relationships existing in communities was also often ignored in project implementation. A former aid worker with IRC echoed this perspective.¹⁰⁰

Since training and other such programs did not adequately take into account local, existing realities on the ground, the assumption that behavioral change comes with education and training was overly simplistic, and unrealistic in practical settings. Thus, community residents would still readily bypass formal political structures and use patronage networks, relying perhaps on a highly placed family member, or connections with the chief to achieve desired ends. People were more likely to favor channels that would actually bring about intended results. Study respondents echoed these insights. Community members in Kailahun, a district that overall had been more exposed to NGOs and especially those in Jojoima (the community in which the democracy strengthening project jointly implemented by MSI and IRC had been implemented), remarked in focus group discussions that they knew the official channels they were supposed to use in order to accomplish development in their communities but found them ineffective. When formal channels fail, it is only natural that they turn to mechanisms they know to be more effective, such as resorting to local structures of power, or self-help initiatives. The fact that the channels they turn to more are traditional leaders, reveals the truth behind the CARE official's words: these channels are where the true depositary of power lie, and yet, they are largely marginalized by decentralization initiatives.

¹⁰⁰ Interview conducted by author with ex-IRC development worker, February 14, 006

Fourth, citizen-state accountability is further undercut by donor-driven agendas. Sierra Leone is heavily dependent on aid with nearly half of the current budget coming from grants, loans, debt relief monies as well as donor agencies (Development Assistance Coordination Office (DACO) 2006; Eurodad with Campaign for Good Governance 2008). This aid dependence makes it difficult for the government to set the agenda in terms of prioritization of needs as their position as supplicant leaves them with little bargaining power. Although one of the central aims of the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness¹⁰¹ was to encourage aid organizations to take steps to ensure aid recipients assumed ownership of implemented programs and that these programs were in line with the country's own Poverty Reduction Strategy Plan (PRSP), continued abuses by the Sierra Leone government and a corresponding lack of trust on the part of donors has led to the continued imposition of conditionalities (Eurodad with Campaign for Good Governance 2008). The current popular buzzwords in global aid dissemination of democratic ownership and mutual accountability ring hollow in Sierra Leone where for the most part, civil society and government have little input into these development plans.¹⁰² Conditionalities illuminate this well. Although some donors also provide direct budget support, the conditionalities attached to this aid is another way in which the independence of the Sierra Leone government is undermined as this aid is often contingent upon government

¹⁰¹ The full text of the declaration can be found on the OECD website: http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en_2649_3236398_35401554_1_1_1_1,00.html, last accessed, August 13, 2008.

¹⁰² This perspective was repeated to me over the course of a number of interviews with civil society organizations as well as government officials, conducted in 2004 and 2006. Government officials often complained about being marginalized in the discussion of what types of programs and projects NGOs should implement, and often did not know what these organizations were doing across the country. They felt that this was a central contributing factor to the duplication of assistance efforts and the lack of effectiveness of aid in bringing about concrete changes. Civil society activists complained that interventions were often western-biased, with little regard for what they considered to be the priorities of the nation. These findings were also echoed in a report commissioned by Eurodad with Campaign for Good Governance, "Old Habits Die Hard: Aid and Accountability in Sierra Leone," ed. European Network on Debt and Development (2008).

compliance with donor-priorities. The IRC aid worker expressed that in the diverse programs implemented by her organization¹⁰³ as well as other NGOs, NGOs tended to bypass political structures, especially as the new decentralized governance structures were so new and the devolution of power still shaky.

Senior staff in a number of interviewed organizations including CARE, IRC, MSI and Oxfam talked of the importance of balancing between implementing programs that were donor versus community-driven and acknowledged that this was a true concern as donors often had agendas and monies set aside for specific projects that might not necessarily reflect community priorities.

The term “community priorities” masks another political question –whose priorities are actually articulated within communities? The language of participation, found throughout nearly all NGOs implementing assistance in Sierra Leone is also problematic, as it masks the very real concern of who exactly is participating. In many communities where local input is solicited, NGOs tend to assume a communalistic ideal of rural Sierra Leone, free from power inequities (personal interview with former IRC aid-worker). It is unrealistic to expect that simply embracing the rhetoric of participation will assure that all voices are represented. Thus, the aid worker found that articulated needs were often more representative of elite interests rather than a broad swathe of the community. The inequalities of power relations within communities were visibly brought home during the execution of this study. The study was implemented under the auspices of Oxfam GB, and used the gender action research (GAR) approach, that stressed the inclusion of community members in the research process as well as the use of participatory

¹⁰³ In 2006, at the time of the study, IRC programs include democratic strengthening, education (provision of educational and recreational materials to students, and teacher training among other activities); primary health care, Gender-based violence prevention and health, community development (through empowering communities to improve food and economic security), environmental health, (through the rehabilitation of wells and latrines, and promotion of community hygiene) as well as camp management for Liberian refugees among other activities.

measures to ensure that respondents were not simply seen as research subjects, but active participants in the research process, identifying problems and areas of concern that they wished to see addressed.

There were two problems that illuminated the concerns of power imbalances existing within communities.¹⁰⁴ First, as the baseline survey called for the use of community members as project enumerators, it was decided to use the approach of asking community members to participate in the identification and selection of these enumerators during an open meeting. However, despite holding meetings in which all residents were encouraged to participate, more often than not, community leaders were the ones that made the bulk of the suggestions. Not only did this showcase the loudness of certain voices and the mutedness of others, it also illuminated rivalries between elite groups. In one case, it led to some dissent between the chief and the councilor, illustrative of the underlying rivalries between traditional leadership and the new systems of leadership represented by the councilors. Disagreement between the chief and councilor on names provided in a community in Kailahun, led the chief to accuse the councilor of always trying to ensure that “her people” benefited from development projects.¹⁰⁵ Second, the position of enumerator required skills of literacy and language as data collectors needed to be fluent in at least three languages: English, the local lingua franca (Mende, Yalunka, Fullah and so on), as well as Krio. Only the well educated met these criteria, and only elites within communities were well educated. Thus, the involvement of everyone is often an unattainable dream due to the real constraints and power imbalances that exist on the ground.

¹⁰⁴ See for further details on this, Fredline A. O. M'Cormack, "Pacer Baseline Survey Report, Kailahun and Koinadugu Districts, Sierra Leone," (Freetown: Oxfam GB and the 50/50 Group, 2006).

¹⁰⁵ The position of enumerator came with monetary compensation, hence the linkage of it with a development good.

One primary example of a top priority that is donor-driven, with implications for citizen-state relations is that of privatization of public enterprises such as power and water.¹⁰⁶ In the case of water, around 28 percent of Sierra Leoneans have access to clean water, yet despite examples of the inability of privatization initiatives to effectively deliver public goods such as water to all citizens, and the need to look into alternatives such as the reformation of the public utilities that control such goods, the World Bank and donors such as DFID insist on privatization (World Development Movement). Not only do these agendas reflect those of donors, preventing the Sierra Leonean government from emphasizing its own priorities, such decentralization initiatives have the potential of further undermining government accountability to citizens by removing from government hands, those very activities that people see as being the domain of an effective government. Thus the activities of both development-oriented as well as democracy-oriented organizations can have detrimental effects on building citizen-state accountability, albeit in different ways.

There are other problems with reliance on international assistance. A related concern to that of agenda-setting and control of policy agendas is accountability. It is an ironic truth that many of the organizations that aim to encourage the Sierra Leone government to be accountable to its populace are themselves only accountable to each other, or to their donors who for the most part, reside in the western hemisphere. By emphasizing a certain perspective of democracy, they could be imposing their own agendas; at odds with the ideal of democracy, which encourages that all perspectives are heard and that the wishes of the majority are taken into account. In so doing, NGOs can be seen as undermining their own democratic agenda. Again, this was seen

¹⁰⁶ For example, in 2001, the IMF made privatization of public enterprises a condition of receiving aid. It was also the qualifying criteria that allowed Sierra Leone to be a part of the Heavily Indebted Poor Country initiative in 2002, see World Development Movement, "Turn of the Privatisation Tap," *Liberation Afrique*, 21 September 2006.

during the execution of the study. As the GAR approach dictated that respondents articulate their concerns, during FGD discussions with participants in which we asked them to discuss the questions and concerns they wanted to see most addressed, questions of democracy were far from their interests. Instead, as has been seen in the responses about good government, respondents were concerned with government provision of socio-economic development as well as popular participation. Respondents were tired of researchers coming into their communities and asking questions that had little bearing on their material improvement. In communities ravaged by civil war and large-scale destruction, concerns are about addressing those needs. This is not to say that they respondents did not have questions around governance issues. Although these questions only came up when respondents were prompted about whether they had any questions about democracy and governance, questions raised showed that village residents were most concerned with issues of accountability. Questions ranged from the following: why despite going through appropriate channels, government failed to address articulate priorities; why government had not delivered on campaign promises such as free primary and secondary education, and freedom from hunger; how to ensure accountability of funds channeled through donors and government officials; and how to avoid coercion from community elites such as chiefs regarding their votes at election time. Questions also came up regarding gender relations, specifically concerning marital relations including taking on a second wife, and telling a wife how to vote. Thus, citizens are concerned about issues that fall under democracy, but often the focus is on ensuring that government is accountable to citizen demands, rather than solely or even mostly on individual rights and responsibilities. Yet, programs and projects do not focus enough on strengthening government capacity to deliver such goods. Instead, citizens perceive that funds are spent on things that they do not necessarily believe impact their lives. The Special

Court is one such example; despite the large sums of funds poured into it, it is ignored for the most part by many Sierra Leoneans.

Unequal power relations between donor and government are further illustrated by the existence of NGOs that often implement programs and projects unbeknownst to the government (Personal communication, Eric Jumu, National NGO Coordinator, MODEP). Although the government has taken a number of steps to ensure greater accountability and synchronization which include donor coordination meetings and stringent registration requirements that include the detailing of all programs and projects and areas of operation, some of these steps are sidestepped or ignored by many international organizations who view them as irritating and cumbersome measures designed by a corrupt government searching for ways to extract money. The existence of parallel governance structures such as the Decentralisation Secretariat, the HIV/AIDS secretariat and the Governance Reform Secretariat also enable donors to bypass the government and implement programs more in line with their own priorities (Eurodad with Campaign for Good Governance 2008).

The unequal power relations between NGOs, donors and the Sierra Leone government needs to be explicitly recognized as it underlies the very way in which aid is disseminated, the policy decisions that are taken as well as the relations between citizens and their government. If such unequal relations remain unaddressed, how can we begin to talk about government accountability to its people, when implemented policies are ones that not even articulated by the local populace or government-driven? Another example of this inequality is that whereas governments will not receive aid if they fail to meet stated conditions, they have no mechanisms in turn to ensure that donors deliver on amounts of promised aid. In Sierra Leone in 2007, donors gave \$26 million less than they promised, negatively affecting the government's budgeted

expenditure and spending plans, the bulk of which were targeted for poverty reduction (Eurodad with Campaign for Good Governance 2008).

How do these unequal power relations affect the promotion of democracy in post-conflict contexts? When it comes to democratization in these situations, it appears that the emphasis should be on certain aspects and less on others. The focus should be more on strengthening the institutions of democracy first, or at the least, increasing state capabilities to provide public goods for citizens. As we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, donors are indeed focusing on enhancing the supply side of democracy in addition to other programs. To this end, donors such as the World Bank and DFID are contributing to the strengthening of democratic institutions like the police and judiciary and assisting in the implementation of decentralization in addition to working on the demand side of civil society, with a focus on increasing political awareness and general mobilization. However, as a number of authors have pointed out, assessments of such efforts have shown not only the limitations of interventions geared at building civil society, but also the limitations of the institutions of democracy thus implemented (Burnell 2007; De Zeeuw 2005). For DeZeeuw (2005), while donors have successfully created new institutions at the micro-level, the sustainability of these institutions is not so certain. The lack of congruence between donor objectives and citizens needs is one cited reason. Others include: a lack of emphasis on mechanisms designed to ensure that created organizations can be financially independent and survive without donor funding, as well as the problems inherent in ignoring power relations existing on the ground.

The above-mentioned issues suggest that rather than focusing on individual rights, in the short-term, NGOs working on civil society building and active in training citizens on their rights and responsibilities might want to focus less on encouraging citizens to make excess demands on

the state, until the state is in a position to meet these demands. Additionally, for organizations promoting citizen driven community development, more focus should be on activities that citizens can undertake in partnership with the state, that call for state involvement but at the same time do not place the entire financial burden on a state ill-equipped to meet these requests. However, rather than NGOs be the implementing partner, the state should take on this role; in this way, citizens can feel comfortable turning to the state rather than to NGOs for development purposes. Such insights are not new. The MSI Chief of Party in Sierra Leone and overseer of the project Strengthening Democratic Governance (SDG) in Sierra Leone during this time, showed real sensitivity to these issues in particularly informative discussions, where he elaborated on the need to move away from simply educating citizens about their rights, to also discussing citizen responsibilities, as well as the importance of re-directing the focus of citizen demands from NGOs to government to build accountability¹⁰⁷. However, this has to be accompanied by a rise in government capacity as well.

Additionally, rather than attempting to do all things at once, donors perhaps should concentrate on a limited range of interventions, and do those well. As several NGO workers as well as government officials remarked in interviews, some NGO work is diffuse and lacks cohesion; monies are funneled into many different projects, mitigating impact. Donors might need to focus first on boosting government capacity to provide public goods that people associate with good government, as well as provide an enabling condition for this to take place (which might require less focus on privatization initiatives).

In terms of the first point, it is clear that decentralization can meet people's needs for greater involvement in state decisions and priority identification; however, decentralization as

¹⁰⁷ A series of author interviews were conducted with the Chief of Party during 2006.

currently promoted needs to be adjusted, taking into account more, existing traditional structures of power.

Limitations of Decentralization

One of the assumptions made about interventions in post-conflict societies is that war, despite the destruction, can be a force of change as it can provide a space for democratization and the building of new institutions to replace ones that contributed to the war in the first place (Moore, Squire and MacBailey 2003; Fanthorpe 2006). Society is seen as malleable and “plastic,” open to the creation of new and improved institutions (Moore, Squire and MacBailey 2003). However, this plasticity should not be over-emphasized; the destruction of external institutions does not necessarily mean the destruction of the attitudes, values and behaviors that went with these institutions.

Despite significant advances made such as training of leaders in institutions underpinning democracies like the judiciary and the media (De Zeeuw and Kumar 2006), problems of abuse of power by traditional leaders, including excessive and harsh judgments that enrich the chiefs while impoverishing rural inhabitants continue to evoke anger (Fanthorpe 2006).

Decentralization has focused on rebuilding the formal institutions of the state, but has largely failed to address the limitations and contradictions inherent in having traditional leadership co-existing with modern political systems, and could, in fact be re-creating the conditions that caused war in the first place (Hanlon 2005). There is much research that appears to point to the necessity of doing away completely with the chieftaincy system. Authors such as Paul Richards as well as donor reports citing first hand research within communities suggest that a central component of the war lay in the injustices perpetuated by the chiefs, rooted in the interferences of the colonial system and continued under the SLPP and APC regimes (Fanthorpe 2006).

Furthermore, others point to the wide scale destruction of institutional structures of governance

such as government buildings and court barriers as indicative of the level of alienation between citizens and government, represented both by formal and traditional government, as well as their dissatisfaction with these institutions. Correspondingly, much of the attention of decentralization has focused on the resurrection of local government as an alternative to the centralized system in existence prior, and sensitization of citizens on local government and their responsibilities within this system. Development is pushed through these institutional structures and the chiefdom system is largely ignored. However, in resuscitating local government and District Councils (abolished under Stevens in 1972), much along the same lines as during the colonial era, old tensions between modern and traditional forms of leadership have again emerged, possibly setting the ground work for a return to conflict (Jackson 2005; Fanthorpe 2006; Hanlon 2005). These scholars urge donors engaged in governance reform to be careful they do not simply replicate institutions that contributed to the war in the first place. The implication is that true change, and by extension, sustained peace can only come with the transformation of these patron-client relations, and that participatory and accountable governance will remain an illusory goal unless Sierra Leoneans in the rural areas “change from being subjects [of chiefs] to citizens with rights and responsibilities” (Jay and Koroma 2004; cited in Fanthorpe 2006: 33).

However, Fanthorpe disagrees with the belief that chiefdom administration needs to be discarded. Citing data from community meetings held in various chiefdoms, he finds that the chiefdom administration remains an important component in people’s lives. Rather than rejection of the system, what is needed is reform, which would allow citizens to have more voice. This would include more oversight/influence in the election of paramount chiefs, which currently are elected only by chiefdom councilors,¹⁰⁸ increased oversight in budgets and tax lists

¹⁰⁸ Chiefdom councilors are not only able to vote for Paramount Chiefs but are also responsible for the maintenance of order in the community, and ensuring the collection of taxes. They have the authority to arrest non-payers and or

as well as a better reinforcement of existing laws (Fanthorpe 2006: 43-44). Such influence would be reflective of citizen-articulated wishes in this study for greater participation in decision-making.

Rather than discounting prevalent claims of the problems and abuses of the chieftaincy system as an indicator that people want it removed, Fanthorpe (2006) finds this reflective instead of a country in which people have learned to speak the language of development and relief agencies; people are interested principally in having development come to their communities; If a discourse of marginalization and conflict can result in this, then this is what will be discussed. Similar findings emerged in this study. When respondents were given the opportunity to articulate what they felt to be the most salient concerns in their communities, recurrent issues discussed were war-time destruction and lack of adequate government redress, poverty, and the neglect of the region by the central government.

Although community members employ a variety of strategies to meet these needs, one commonality that emerged is the importance of chiefs in any development initiatives. Chiefs are often the first point of contact for development projects and people are more familiar with the names of paramount chiefs than they are with district councilors. Furthermore, survey data point to the fact that people trust councilors less than they do Paramount Chiefs, and the central reason for this is that these councilors are often not resident in their communities, or they do not know who their councilors are. This does not mean that rural residents do not realize the problems within the system or that they place blind trust within the traditional political institutions.

Respondent responses to questions of trust on local institutions such as the native courts indicate

remand them to the native courts. Chieftain committees make up the executive arm of the council, and historically were comprised of the PC, Senior Speaker, Two members of the District Council ward and a Councillor (literate) that was suggested by the Local Government Minister, as well as a Mammy Queen and youth representative.

that they are well aware that these systems are corrupt. Respondents felt that these courts worked more in the interests of elites and those with money to pay to have cases resolved in their favor. In addition, during FGDs with male youth members, chiefs were criticized for being too controlling, and levying unfair fines for minor infractions. These seeming contradictions: the recognition of the corruption within the traditional systems while at the same time their importance in people's lives, point to the need for reform rather than marginalization that Fanthorpe finds western researchers advocating for: "When asked if the chieftaincy system has a future, informants tend to reply that institutional reforms are urgently needed. But the predominant response is that chiefs still have a vital role to play because they (and by implication not the state) 'know a person's right', i.e. the customary rights and properties that establish de facto local citizenship." (Fanthorpe 2006: 44).

Given the role that chiefs play in peoples lives, a focus on local government reform that neglects reform of the chieftaincy can risk putting in motion the same forces that contributed to the war (Fanthorpe 2006; Jackson 2005). Instead, attention needs to also be paid to chiefdom administration reform – it is the form of government that most people are familiar with given the absence of the central government in their lives. Even after some experience of local government, people find that it has yet to deliver, and still turn to the Paramount Chiefs.

Limitations of the Study

In terms of methodology, the initial research design conceptualized data collection using an experimental design comparing regions with different types and levels of NGO activity, but existing realities on the ground of multiple exposure with a number of NGOs depending on war experience meant that analysis was conducted at the individual rather than organizational level (See Chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion of the change in research design and the resulting implications and limitations of this).

There are some limitations to conducting analysis at the individual rather than the organizational level given the truth that local populations have been exposed to multiple organizations. For one, determining which NGO has had the most impact, or which type of assistance is most beneficial for democracy strengthening requires the ability to compare treated and untreated populations, a phenomenon that is very difficult in the often less neat realities that constitute the research world of the social scientist. People have been exposed to a wide variety of assistance ranging from relief, to development and democracy. Thus, while looking at how participation in the different types of assistance shape understandings of democracy, attitudes/beliefs and political participation would be one step to addressing Fisher's (1997) concerns that generalizing about NGOs could obscure the vital differences and ultimately the varying impacts to which differences amongst NGOs might give rise – given the existence of so many NGOs with competing mandates, historical origins, ideologies, methods of operation and objectives (Korten 1990) – this was not possible in light of the life histories of the respondents that participated in this study.

Yet, a better understanding of the relationships between attitudes, behavior and NGO activity can be had by disaggregating among the different types of NGOs because they have different objectives, modes of implementation and even beneficiary selection. For example, relief activities for the most part target all affected populations. Refugees in camps run by the International Red Cross during the war did not discriminate in terms of the people to which they provided assistance. On the other hand, the activities of IRC and MSI, by focusing training on community mobilizers (individuals within the community that serve as a resource point on democratization), as well as sensitization forums about individuals rights as well as responsibilities to government, could possibly have attracted those who already had an interest in

politics or played a leadership role in their communities. In the same way, the Regional Information and Community Centers (RICCs) that MSI/IRC contributed in establishing as a public meeting space, information and learning center in which community members could meet and discuss issues of concern with local leaders, could attract citizens that are already politically active and predisposed to such interests. Thus, one could argue that a link between these individuals and increased political participation is only natural.

It is clear that IRC/MSI interventions did have an impact, as FGD respondents in Jojoima, the community in which these two organizations are active were more likely than respondents in the other communities in Kailahun to know the processes by which they could articulate their development concerns through ward committees and the district council, all of which are topics discussed during sensitization and training meetings.

Economic and social development programs work in different ways, depending on the organization. For some organizations such as Oxfam, provision of water pumps, wells and latrines were done following meetings with community members where they identified their priorities. On the other hand, their governance programs were more targeted. In conjunction with the Decentralisation Secretariat, Oxfam has trained ward committees on their functions in an effort to build accountability. They have also worked on increasing women's political participation, identifying and working with interested women on their bid to run for political posts ranging from president, and MP positions to local councillor. Such different types of activities and respondent identification might have different outcomes in terms of attitudes, beliefs and political participation.

Rehabilitation and reconstruction activities, under the rubric of social development were designed to assist the poorest of the poor and used a variety of mechanisms to ensure that

appropriate beneficiaries were identified. For example, in this study, according to FGD respondents, Catholic Relief Services, working in Ngeblama chiefdom, asked community members to identify the most vulnerable in the community and these were the people that received assistance in rebuilding their homes. A similar process was recounted to me by other organizations engaged in such reconstruction. However, one criticism that an aid worker related was that although NGOs made independent attempts to verify the veracity of these lists, such as asking neighbors and friends, this method is not foolproof and in some situations, it was revealed that the elites in some communities were the ones that received housing. Thus, not only is it important to peer within organizations and assess the methods in which participants are selected as this might impact their attitudes and beliefs about democracy, it is also important to recognize, acknowledge and address, that power inequalities existing within communities can also influence project outputs and outcomes.

Future studies that can disaggregate NGO assistance, including objectives, methods of selection and so on, would be useful to identify whether different types of assistance have differing levels of impact, and contribute to tailored responses in different contexts. It can also shed light on the question of whether differences exist in the level of impact of NGOs with development agendas versus those with a more explicit focus on democratization.

Another limitation of the study was the time frame in which research was conducted. A number of scholars have pointed out that effective evaluations of democracy (and development assistance) require long-term commitment to evaluation given that the objectives of behavioral and attitudinal change do not appear overnight (Carothers 1999; Burnell 2007). Finkel for example, found a lagged dimension in the positive effects of USAID democracy assistance. This dissertation takes only a single snapshot of political activity at one moment in time. To get a

truer picture of the impact of these interventions, further studies with the same populations would be ideal. This would contribute to a picture of how sustained contact with these organizations shape attitudes and behavior over time.

Implications of Research

The results of the analyses seem to indicate that participation in NGO projects affects attitudes/beliefs and political behavior to some degree: participants exposed to NGOs report higher levels of political engagement, contact with political leaders and attendance at political meetings. For the most part, however, this engagement is with traditional leaders and institutions and not the formal ones associated with the state. For example, regarding leader contact, NGO participation is significantly related to increased contact only with traditional leaders such as chiefs ($p = .008$) and mammy queens ($p = .002$); local community groups ($p = .010$) as well as NGOs ($p = .012$), but not with formal leaders and institutions like the councilor, ward committee or government in Freetown. Such findings are reinforced by responses to questions on trust of political institutions and leaders where low levels of trust were reported of the ward committee, councilor and government in Freetown as compared to paramount chiefs. NGO participants also generally belong to more community associations and participate more in community driven development activities in their communities.

In terms of attitudes/beliefs about democracy, however, the results are more mixed. These respondents are less likely to evaluate democracy positively, and are less satisfied with democracy than their counterparts who have no NGO experience. Nevertheless, they have greater knowledge of leaders as well as political concepts, all important in making informed evaluations about the way in which democracy works, and, some might say, are necessary preconditions for holding government accountable. Respondents exposed to NGOs were significantly more likely to know the name of president and vice-president, as well as the chief,

but this significance disappears when considering other leaders such as the councilor, and member of parliament.

Regarding external efficacy, more respondents exposed to NGOs expressed the belief that they had the power to change an unjust law at least at the chiefdom level; significance disappears at the national level however, and respondents in both categories say they do not have the power to impact such laws with respondents in the NGO category reporting just slightly more negative responses (75 percent compared to 76.2 percent).

Such a variety of responses are in line with the learning approach advocated here. It would appear that through the activities of NGOs, respondents are able to gain greater knowledge about the political system and also engage more with politicians. However, given that such exchanges do not necessarily bear fruit in the sense of greater responsiveness from central government and increased development at the community level, such respondents become frustrated, and work more within local organizations and local leaders to get things done. In addition, this frustration leads to more negative perceptions overall of democracy within the specific context of Sierra Leone. Participants active in NGOs are less likely to evaluate democracy as practiced in Sierra Leone favorably. In addition, they have lower ratings of satisfaction with democracy than those not exposed to NGOs.

Where the assumption is that that all good things of democratization go together, this study shows that this is not automatically the case. Knowledge and awareness about politics do not necessarily result in greater political participation. Rather, it provides a lens through which people can assess the benefits of political participation, at least in the formal arena. Respondents who are more informed about the way in which political institutions work, as well as their rights and obligations as citizens are less likely to participate in these formal structures if they see that

such participation yields few tangible benefits. In addition, such respondents are more likely to be less satisfied with democracy given that their expectations are higher in light of their increased knowledge and participation; they are more likely to be more demanding than those who have not had such experience. Democratic awareness allows people to be more critical of democracy, but this critical perspective can actually lead to less participation, rather than more, at least in the formal arena.

This combination of results suggests that there is no clear answer to the impact of NGOs on democracy strengthening. However, some preliminary comments can be made, especially when these results are interpreted within the context of open-ended responses in the questionnaire as well as focus group discussions. For instance, the increased numbers of respondents active in NGOs that are more likely to express dissatisfaction with democracy is supported by focus group responses. In these discussions, respondents exposed to NGOs were also more likely to have engaged in political activities, attended political meetings as well as contacted political leaders. These same respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the outcome of these endeavors. As one respondent put it: “We know what to do. We know to contact our ward committees and local councils if we want development, but we have done all of these things, and nothing has happened.”¹⁰⁹ These respondents also indicated that through NGOs they had learned more about the process of decentralization. As a result, they were familiar with the official mechanisms through which development was to take place in the community. Such citizens on one level feel empowered about their ability to express themselves and make an impact in their community. As can be seen, they have higher levels of expressed efficacy than do respondents that have not been exposed to NGOs. Responses to open-ended questions about

¹⁰⁹ FGD conducted with male youth group members in Ngeima, Kailahun, August 10, 2006.

reasons for voting included the belief their vote counted, and their desire for change in the community. Although aware of the processes through which development is to be implemented (discussion with ward committees and presentation of these discussions to councilors), the general perception appears to be that these are largely ineffective. Furthermore, when asked about reasons for voting, many cited the limitations of the local councilors, and frustration with the slow pace of development in their communities. Respondents perceived councilors as far removed from their communities, and overall uninterested in bringing about greater community development.

In view of this, respondents were more likely to turn to local influential elites for development, organize themselves in groups to implement development projects in their communities, or reach out to NGOs for assistance. Thus their participation in civic associations and community driven development tend to be high.

While NGOs are contributing to the formation of groups through which citizens can organize in CDD and civic associations, as well as teaching citizens about their civic duties, some caution is in order. Ultimately, we cannot forget that NGOs have an ideological agenda that they are promoting; however, this agenda is not imposed on citizens with blank slates; they bring their historical experiences, and culturally based perspectives into the picture as well. Even though donors do not have the same perspective of democracy as people on the ground, and can be seen in some ways as imposing their views of democracy from above, citizens are nevertheless still able to negotiate their own realities.

Thus while it appears that citizens have embraced democracy, seeing it as the best form of government, and can espouse the rhetoric that prioritizes individual rights and responsibilities, the NGO democracy project is one that is implemented on contested terrain. Despite questions

that can be raised regarding citizenship in Sierra Leone as it is foreign/outside actors that are attempting to cultivate values regarding participation in local and national governance structures rather than organic processes stemming from within the state itself, such attempts do not go unchallenged. At heart, Sierra Leoneans are still very much interested in government that meets their socio-economic needs. Participation is also central to this perspective; citizens want to do more than simply elect their leaders. They want to be able to have a say in the development plans that are implemented in their communities, and they want a government that is responsive to these demands. People are also capable of taking the rhetoric of participation propounded by these organizations, interrogating it and making it fit within the context of their lives. They reach out more to traditional leaders as well as NGOs whom they perceive to be more effective at addressing their concerns than to formal leaders. Additionally, although it can be argued that NGOs, by taking on development roles traditionally ascribed to the state, (in addition to the privatization measures advocated by many Western donors), are promoting a democratic consciousness that undermines citizen-state accountability; people nevertheless continue to ascribe the role of public goods provider to the state, in theory if not in practice. Given this scenario, it is possible to expect that if the state successfully fulfils this role, people will be willing to engage with formal state institutions. However, given that the local levels of leadership are the most salient, it is necessary to find a way to synthesize both formal and traditional forms of leadership.

The experiment of democracy and the makings of civic citizens must face the reality of a nascent state, emerged, yes, from the crisis of state failure, but nevertheless still struggling to find a way to become relevant to citizens, socially, economically and politically. First, by undertaking many of the social welfare and economic development programs of the state, NGOs

further contribute to the undermining of state-society relations. Respondents were more likely to seek support from an NGO for a development project for their community than they were the state. This has negative implications however; for example, communities engaged in self-government, be it through the assistance of NGOs, or citizen-controlled community-based organizations risk developing in ways that are incommensurate with surrounding environs, or one can find different standards obtaining in different regions. States are best placed to develop general guidelines for quality control and coordination of development initiatives that can be enforced nationwide.

Second, by encouraging citizens to participate, and be more active in the political realm, these organizations are contributing to possible insecurities. The state is unable to accommodate the many demands that newly empowered citizens make, possibly increasing citizen frustration as they follow the appropriate mechanisms without seeing any benefits. This could further alienate citizens from the state. During a particularly heated exchange in an FGD with youth in Kailahun, they expressed dissatisfaction with the return to “old ways” following the war. They felt that traditional leaders unfairly exacted fines, and appropriated their labor without adequate compensation. Some youth openly talked about how the war at least brought some measure of equality and addressed their concerns as youth in a farming community with little prospects by way of earning much revenue. In a community where at least half of the youth were former ex-combatants reintegrated into their home communities following the war, such sentiments could coalesce into a return to conflict.

Third, NGOs need to pay more attention to the post-war context when implementing development and democratization initiatives as this remains a factor in peoples’ lives. Respondents’ sense of the future is predicated to a certain extent on their past and war

experiences influence somewhat their take on what is considered important for a well-functioning government and democracy. Notably, respondents' concern with socio-economic development, including the reconstruction of housing, schools and clinics given the widespread destruction of during the war, can be taken as evidence of this, as well as their continued economic insecurities. The need for a government that could secure peace was also expressed in FGDs and open-ended survey questions, with some respondents equating democracy with a government that can safeguard their peace. A total of 8.5 percent of respondents associated peace with a good government in their first response, and 11.5 percent associated it with democracy. In addition, a common response to the question, "why did you vote," was that the then SLPP government promised to restore peace to the country. In a post-conflict context, a focus on individual rights and responsibilities is far from the immediate concerns that people have. At the same time, the demands of participatory governance show that citizens long marginalized from the decision-making processes in their communities would like to have a say in how their lives are governed.

In addition, citizens point to issues of access and accountability; respondents want access to public goods and they want these to be provided under the institutional rubric of the state. However, the building of schools, roads, bridges, and health facilities are being undertaken not by the state, but by NGOS, working in conjunction with local communities under the rubric of community driven development. Focus group respondents' revealed they are more likely to seek out NGOs and traditional community leaders to implement development in their communities, than they are to go through the formal channels of government. Such findings are reinforced in the survey, where community respondents were nearly as likely to contact NGOs as they were traditional leaders for programs benefiting the community. Responses indicated that contact of

paramount chiefs was highest, at 42.3 percent, followed by the Mammy Queen (39.1 percent) and local community groups (37.7 percent). Level of contact of NGOs was similar at 39 percent, compared to that of formal channels of government. Although it is unsurprising that levels of contact of government in Freetown stood at 9.9 percent given the remoteness of central government and the lack of effective communication channels, contact of community-based formal leaders such as the Ward Committee members and the District Councilor was also quite low (26.1 and 22.9 percent respectively).

This perhaps is one of the arenas where NGOS can focus their attention, but by finding ways that articulate the realities of communities where governance is more local than national, and directed at traditional rather than formal state institutions and elected leaders. Finding a way to synthesize both forms of leadership as well as building state accountability and responsiveness is key. The policies of decentralization are a further concern. Most of the emphasis has been on introducing what to many people are new forms of governance, and ignoring the traditional systems of leadership currently in place. This has a number of serious ramifications. First, as indicated above, the inequities within the former system that privileged the older elite was one of the contributing factors to the war (Richards 1995). No attempts have been made to reform this system, and instead resources are being used to create, from scratch, a new system of governance that has yet to claim the loyalties of people. A further conflict exists between chiefs and the new political elite (local government officials) who now officially hold the keys for development of their communities. As Burnell has noted elsewhere, the modification of political behavior by external programs and projects is further complicated by the existence of informal institutions, incentive structures influencing behavioral change as well as socio-economic conditions (2000: 351). Despite the existence of these new forms of leadership, traditional leaders are still

perceived as the most appropriate forum for many people interested in bringing development to their communities.

The seeming contradictions of respondents active in NGOs appears to echo these problems. Although they have increased knowledge, and are increasingly active in their communities, rather than leading to strengthened democracy, a failure to build on local capacities for development, informal/traditional sources of governance and low government capabilities could lead to empowered democrats exercising an empty democratic voice, and potentially lay seeds for a return to instability.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the widespread assumption that lies behind donor and NGO interventions aimed at building democracy is the existence of a link between attitudes and behavior, where civil society for example, enables citizens to develop attitudes and values supportive of democracy and with a related impact on their political behavior.

This study has tried to peer within the NGO box by disaggregating civil society into its constituent parts comprised of individuals. Civil society is comprised of actors. How do these individual actors perceive democracy and behave politically? Is civil society the only explanation for why they become involved in politics or think and behave in the ways that they do? How do such individuals perceive the political structures governing their lives? The study illustrates that it is not sufficient to look at associational life for explanations about political attitudes and beliefs, but also the experiences of each individual. This is especially salient in a post-conflict context where given the experience of civil war and displacement, individuals have been exposed to a variety of experiences and education, depending on their conflict experience: whether they were in camps and came into contact with NGOs teaching on democracy or whether they were in the bush, intent on safeguarding their lives. Furthermore, individuals emerging from such

contexts appear less interested in questions of democracy, and more focused on livelihood concerns. Despite the premise that democracy is important in consolidating peace in a post-conflict context, and that one of the priorities of NGOs as well as government is in the promotion of democracy, there remains a substantial amount of people that are unfamiliar with the concept as well as related concepts. In addition, although people's conceptualizations of democracy made much reference to political freedoms, there was also reference to a desire for greater input into the decisions made by government and for more consultation. These calls for popular participation, though seemingly liberal, are married to more substantive concerns when citizens are asked about what they believe are the functions of a good government. Although seemingly antithetical, I would argue that notions of popular participation are very prevalent in citizens ideals of democracy, but that the concerns they would like to bring to the attention of government are those that will lead to substantial improvements in their lives. Thus, a good government is one that provides hospitals, schools, and even sets fair prices for agricultural commodities. In the context of peace, citizens now want their quality of life to improve, as well as peace to continue. It would appear that exposure to NGOs teaches citizens the lingo of liberal democracy; they can talk about freedom of speech, and government for and by the people; however, their preferences, when it comes to what they actually want government to do, is not necessarily so liberal; instead it reflects the daily concerns that they live with: how to put food on the table, how to educate their children and how to improve their livelihoods.

At the same time, it is undeniable that citizens would like greater representation in the political decisions made and in the concerns that government addresses. To this end we see as part of the responses on democracy, a demand for freedom of speech and representation – however to what end? Rather than simply as a means in itself, it would appear that they demand

these freedoms as a means to an end: where the end is to have greater government attention to their daily concerns. The concerns as articulated in FGDs included the following:

- Lack of good roads
- Lack of adequate water supply
- Lack of adequate or well equipped hospitals
- Lack of schools
- Lack of financial assistance with selling and marketing of produce
- Lack of money for small business enterprises
- Lack of marketplace or business center
- No Dancing Hall/Entertainment
- Lack of housing (especially those whose houses were burned down during the war)

In light of these concerns, should NGOs continue to promote western forms of democracy in Sierra Leone, or in post-war contexts across Africa more generally? As Owusu (1992) among others have maintained, this study supports the claim that Africans still maintain primary affiliations at local rather than national levels. Carother's (1999) insight, that countries come with entrenched political values and structures that are not so easily wiped away, is valuable here. Decentralization, by trying to focus on strengthening the capacities of local government at the chiefdom/regional level would seem to be appropriate. However, such decentralization needs to take into account traditional authorities that still command much attention and loyalty, including the various bodies making up chiefdom authority such as chiefs, sub-chiefs and Mammy Queens. Thus, this democracy must overall be "a new viable political synthesis which derives 'firmly from the African past, yet fully accepts the challenges of the African present'" (Owusu 1992: 379).

Owusu (1992) has argued that there are elements of western democratic systems that could be modified to suit different contexts. For example, even the system of competition currently existing, with its focus on election of a central leader could be modified to a system that places less emphasis on a central leader as presidential systems do, and allows for a more consensual

model that includes power sharing amongst majorities and minorities, or greater inclusion of all voices, as found under the Westminster model of democracy. What this could mean in a decentralized system is the assurance that people do get a say in the development practices and projects implemented in the country; not simply on paper but in reality as well. Although at present the system of ward committees and local councils in Sierra Leone ostensibly provide the platform for such inputs, in practice, discussion is limited to the social and political elites within communities.

In addition, democracy assistance that prioritizes civil society building and promotes individualistic western concepts of rights and freedoms might not necessarily be the most applicable. Africans, and more specifically, Sierra Leonean respondents in this study are also interested in socio-economic development, as evidenced by the overwhelming numbers who named these issues amongst desirable characteristics of good government. Rather than prioritizing a liberal vision of democracy, the widespread perception among respondents that a good government addresses substantive issues such as socio-economic development suggests that democracy promotion should include measures to strengthen government capacities to deliver public goods to populations. At present, community members are more willing to go to local elites or NGOs to address development needs in their communities, rather than through the formal channels of local government. This is partly as a result of familiarity with these institutions, but it is also reflective to an extent, of dissatisfaction with government to address articulated problems. Although encouraging citizens to be more active in addressing development concerns in their community, especially given the financial weakness of the state and its inability to meet many of these demands is useful in the short run, it could have the long-range impacts of simply reinforcing citizen disengagement with the state. Instead, the state needs

to be strengthened to be able to provide public goods as this is one way to build its legitimacy among the populace.

Such concerns can be taken one step further – given that the institutions of importance in peoples lives are those closer to home, in what ways can these traditional political institutions be incorporated into democratic models that resonate more with local realities? Rather than sidelining chieftaincy systems and local, civic organizations where membership criteria is often primarily ascriptive, Owusu (1995) for example, sees great potential for grass-roots democracy where citizens participate in their own development. In the same way, chieftaincy systems can be a valuable tool in promoting democracy as “despite its inherent social inequality, [the chieftaincy] embodies shared values and virtues of accountability, service, probity; the tradition of voluntarism and self-help; and a spirit that extols the committed and total involvement of all the members of a community in the formulation and implementation of policies for the community’s welfare.” (Owusu 1995: 158). Notwithstanding that the chieftaincy system itself has elements contradictory to democratic principles, including mechanisms of election as well as its manipulation and use for domination and control by colonial powers during colonial times, its continued importance in modern day Sierra Leone lends itself to consideration and possible reform in democratic projects today and steps can be taken to incorporate such systems within decentralization models, increasing the perception that government is working on peoples’ behalf.

In conclusion, it is clear that donor-implemented programs and projects are in many ways unsuited not only to on-the-ground realities, but also local demands and interests. Rather than an emphasis on civil liberties and political rights, respondents perceive that a desirable government should be one that addresses their socio-economic needs. It appears then that they ultimately

have a more socio-economic conception of democracy than donors (who embrace a more liberal perspective). This differs somewhat from the findings of Bratton, Mattes and Gyimah-Boadi (2005) who argue that contrary to many studies that find that Africans hold a more communitarian perspective of democracy, and are more in favor of substantive rather than political rights, African conceptualizations of democracy are more universal than particular. This is also at odds with Marshall's (1964) concept of citizenship; For Marshall, citizenship entails activities on the parts of both citizen and government: citizens have duties they must perform and at the same time, the state is supposed to protect citizen rights. Most of the emphasis of responses given in the survey, open-ended questions and FGDs emphasized what government was to do for citizens but very rarely touched on citizen obligations to the state. In addition, for Marshall, in a liberal democracy, civil and political rights should precede social ones. Here, it is the socio-economic concerns that dominate and that citizens want to see addressed. However, they do not express this voice in an organized fashion, and instead use informal mechanisms to get their needs addressed.

NGOs should thus focus more on strengthening citizens' ability to articulate these concerns using the formal established channels, and in turn, on assisting government (both at the central and localized levels) with developing the capacity to respond to these demands. Furthermore, greater effort needs to be made to synthesize the two different forms of leadership to encourage greater individual political participation and citizen involvement in the socio-economic development of their communities. At present, although socio-economic problems are the dominant concerns, study respondents can only address these problems through the informal channels of traditional leaders and NGOs; strengthening government responsiveness and

incorporating traditional structures of leadership into formal ones could mitigate this, as well as redirect citizens to engage more directly with the state.

APPENDIX A QUESTIONNAIRE

[ENUMERATOR: Select appropriate code for District. Write names for Section and Town/Village in spaces provided.]

Kailahun 01
Koinadugu 02

Household Selection Procedure

ENUMERATOR: It is your job to select a random (any) household. A household is a group of people who presently eat together from the same pot.

Start your walk pattern from the start point that has been randomly chosen by your Field Supervisor. Team members must walk in opposite directions to each other. If A walks towards the sun, B must walk away from the sun; C must walk in opposite direction from A and B. The sampling interval will be every other house, (sampling interval of 3) unless otherwise indicated by supervisor. This means that you choose the third dwelling structure on the right, for every next household.

ENUMERATOR: If a call is unsuccessful, use the table below to record your progress until you make a successful call. Circle a code number for unsuccessful calls only.

Reasons for Unsuccessful Calls

Reason for unsuccessful call	Household1	Household2	Household3	Household4	Household5
Refused to be interviewed	1	1	1	1	1
Person selected was never at home	2	2	2	2	2
Household/Premises empty for the survey period	3	3	3	3	3
Did not fit gender quota	4	4	4	4	4
Other (Specify)					

If no-one is at home (i.e. premises empty), substitute with the very next household to the right. If the interview is refused, use the day code to select a substitute household (i.e. after a sampling interval).

When you find a household with someone home, please introduce yourself using the following script.

Good day. I am working with Oxfam and 50/50 Group, and we are really interested in learning about people's participation in politics. We do not represent the government or any political party. We want to find out about how people participate in development and governance in this community, so that this country can have good leaders. This is important as it can help move this country forward. What you say will be very helpful to us. All information will be kept private. Your household was selected by chance. We would like to talk to an adult in your household – would you help me choose one? *Note: The person has to give consent by saying yes. If they refuse to participate, leave the house, and go to the third house on the right (using the sample code of 3). If they agree, then do the following:*

****Respondent Selection Procedure [Make sure you alternate between men and women. Circle the correct code below]**

	First Interview	Male	Female
Previous interview was with a:	0	1	2
This interview must be with a:		1	2

Please tell me the names of all males/females [*select correct gender*] who presently live in this household. I only want the names of males/females [*select correct gender*] who are citizens of Sierra Leone and who are 18 years and older.

[If this interview must be with a female, list only women’s names. If with a male, list only men’s names. List all eligible household members of this gender who are 18 years or older, even those not presently at home but who will return to the house at any time that day. Include only Sierra Leone citizens].

Women's Names	Men's Names
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8	8
9	9
10	10

Take out your slips of numbered paper. Present them face-down so that the numbers cannot be seen. Ask the person who is selecting respondents to pick any paper, by saying:

Please choose a piece of paper. The person who corresponds to the number chosen will be the person interviewed.

[ENUMERATOR: REMEMBER to circle the code number of the person selected on the table above].

The person I need to speak to is [insert name] _____. Is this person presently at home?

If yes: May I please speak to this person now?

If no: Will this person return here at any time today?

If no: Thank you very much. I will select another household. **Substitute with the next household to the right and repeat the respondent selection procedure. (NOTE: YOU CAN ONLY SUBSTITUTE HOUSEHOLDS NOT INDIVIDUALS.)**

If yes: Please tell this person that I will return for an interview at [insert convenient time]. **If this respondent is not present when you call back, replace this household with the next household to the right. If the selected respondent is not the same person that you first met, repeat Introduction:**

Good day. I am working with Oxfam and 50/50 Group, and we are really interested in learning from you about your participation in politics. We want to find out about getting good leaders in this community as well as how people can participate in development and government. Although you will not receive any money for participating in this survey, what you say is very important to us as you can help us learn about people’s involvement with government, which can help move this country forward. Everything you say will be kept private, so please feel free to tell us what you think. The interview will take about one hour. It is completely up to you to participate and there is no penalty if you refuse. Do you want to take part? **[PROCEED WITH INTERVIEW ONLY IF ANSWER IS POSITIVE].**

How many calls were made to the household where the interview actually took place? **(CIRCLE CODE NUMBER)**

1

2

Date of Interview **(DAY, MONTH, YEAR)** _____

Duration of interview **(NOTE START/END USING 24HR CLOCK)** _____

*****ENUMERATOR – DO NOT GIVE “DON’T KNOW” AS A RESPONSE OPTION, BUT IF RESPONDENT GIVES THIS RESPONSE ON THEIR OWN, CODE AS - 9. *******

ENUMERATOR, WRITE DOWN THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION PRIOR TO INTERVIEW

District _____

Chiefdom _____

Section _____

Community _____

Observe and record details on materials used to build house and roof

BEGIN INTERVIEW

1 Respondent Demographics I would like to start by asking you some questions about yourself.

1.1 How old were you on your last birthday? _____
(ENUMERATOR, RECORD THREE DIGIT NUMBER OR -9 IF UNKNOWN. IF LESS THAN 18, STOP INTERVIEW, AND RANDOMLY SELECT ANOTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBER)

1.2 What tribe/nation are you?

1. Mende 2. Kiwi 3. Temne 4. Kuranko 5. Limba 6. Yalunka 7. Fullah 8. Other **(SPECIFY)**

1.3 What language do you speak at home?

1. Mende 2. Kissi 3. Temne 4. Kuranko 5. Limba 6. Yalunka 7. Fullah 8. Other **(SPECIFY)**

1.4 Respondent Religion

1. Muslim
2. Catholic
3. Protestant (Mainstream, e.g. Anglican, Methodist)
4. Protestant (Evangelical/ Pentecostal)
5. Jehovah's Witness
6. Seventh Day Adventist
7. Christian (OTHER, please specify) _____
8. Traditional religion
9. None

1.5 How many times in the last month have you attended religious services, excluding weddings and funerals? **[If 0], How many times in the past year? [ENUMERATOR – WRITE IN FIGURE GIVEN AND ASSIGN CODE AFTER INTERVIEW]**

Never	1
About once a year or less	2
About once every two or three months	3
Sometimes (once or twice per month)	4
About once a week	5
More than once a week	6
Don't know	-9

3.5 Why did you leave the community?

[PLEASE LIST ALL PLACES VISITED]

3.6 Did you ever live in a camp during the war?

0=No (**GOTO 4.3**)

1=Yes

3.7 Which camp(s)? _____

4.0 NGO Involvement

4.1 Were there any NGOs that assisted you in the camp(s)? **[specify that NGO refers to any international or national organisation(s) working in the community]**

0=No (**GOTO 4.3**)

1=Yes

4.2 Please tell me all the different NGO projects in which you participated in the camp, giving the NGO(s), project location, dates of participation and activities **[EUMERATOR, USE TABLE IN 4.4 TO RECORD INFORMATION]**.

4.3 Did you receive any (other) NGO assistance before or during the war?

0 = No (**GOTO 4.5**)

1 = Yes

4.4 Please tell me all the different assistance, giving the NGO(s), project location, dates of participation and activities.

NGO	Location	Date(s) of Participation Pre-War	Date(s) of Participation During-War	Project Name/Activities

4.5 Did you receive any NGO assistance after 2001 (**or after war?**)

0 = No (**GOTO 4.7**)

1 = Yes

4.6 Please tell me all the different assistance giving the NGO(s), project location, dates of participation and activities.

NGO	Location	Date(s) of Participation	Project Name/Activities

4.7 Is there any difference in the types of groups and associations that you are active in now compared to before the war?

0 = No (**GOTO 4.9**)

1 = Yes

4.8 What are these differences?

4.9 Since NGOs have begun working in your communities*, do you participate in more, less or the same number of groups and associations?

More Groups	Same number	Fewer Groups	Not applicable [ENUMERATOR: CODE THUS ONLY IF PARTICIPANT IS NOT ACTIVE WITH ANY NGO]	Don't know
1	2	3	- 7	-9

[* ENUMERATOR: IN COMMUNITIES WITHOUT NGOS, QUESTION SHOULD READ "COMPARED TO BEFORE THE WAR"]

4.10 Have you received any information about democracy from any NGOs?

0 = No (**IF NO go to 5.1**)

1 = Yes

4.11 Can you tell me which NGOs gave you this information, and what information you were given?

5.0 NGO Impact on Group Membership

5.1 Now I would like to ask you some questions about the organizations in which you are a member. I am going to read you a list of voluntary organizations/associations. For each one, could you tell me 1) whether you are a member of this group? (**FOR EACH GROUP IDENTIFIED, ASK:** 2) How did this group come into being? 3) Do you hold leadership position in group? 4) How active are you in the group? [**ENUMERATOR, GO THROUGH THE LIST WITH PARTICIPANT, ASKING ALL THREE QUESTIONS FOR EACH RELEVANT GROUP IDENTIFIED**]

Type of Organization or Group	Member of Group 0=No...1=Yes ENUMERATOR: CODE-FOR-MEMBERSHIP-AND-WHERE-APPLICABLE, SPECIFY GROUP-TYPE	Group Creation 1. → Concerned Residents 2. → NGO 3. → Paramount Section Chief 4. → District Council 5. → Central government officials 6. → Other (Specify)	Do you hold a leadership position in organisation? 0.No 1.Yes (specify position)	How active are you in the organisation? ENUMERATOR: (Probe on how often they attend meetings, participate in group's activities, speak up at meetings)
A. Farmer/Fisherman group or cooperative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
B. Labour Gang E.g. Road brushing, town cleaning, farming (SPECIFY TYPE)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
C. Traders or Business Association (SPECIFY)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
D. Professional Association → (doctors, teachers, veterans) (SPECIFY)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
E. Trade Union or Labour Union (SPECIFY)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
F. Village development committee/Ward committee/Community development committee (SPECIFY)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
G. Religious or spiritual group (e.g. church/mosque study groups)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
H. Political group or movement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I. Cultural group or association (e.g. arts, music, theatre, film)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
J. Burial society	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
K. Credit or savings group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
L. Education group (e.g. parent-teacher association, Community Teacher Association, School management committee)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

M. Health group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
N. Water and waste management group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
O. Sports group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P. Youth group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Q. Secret Society E.g.: Poro, Sande, Bondo, Hunting, Other (PLEASE SPECIFY)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
R. Other groups	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6.0 **Trust**

6.1 Now I want to ask you about whether you know some of the people in leadership positions in this country. Can you tell me the name of: **(ENUMERATOR: WRITE DOWN RESPONDENT ANSWER, THEN ASSIGN CORRECT CODE AFTER INTERVIEW)**

	1. Correctly identified 2. Know but can't remember 3. Incorrect guess -9. Don't know
A. Paramount Chief	
B. Section Chief	
C. The councillor from your ward?	
D. Member(s) of Parliament for this district	
E. Vice President	
F. President	

6.2 About how many close friends do you have these days? These are people you feel at ease with, can talk to about private matters, or call on for help. **[ENUMERATOR: WRITE NUMBER GIVEN]** _____

6.3 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you have to be careful in dealing with people?

0 = You have to be careful 1 = People can be trusted

6.4 If you suddenly needed to borrow a small amount of money [enough to pay for expenses for your household for one week], are there people beyond your immediate household and close relatives (i.e. brothers, sisters, parents' sisters and brothers) to whom you could turn?

0 = No 1 = Yes

6.5 Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you have to be careful in dealing with people?

1 = You have to be careful 1 = People can be trusted

6.6 In general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Disagree strongly	Disagree Somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree Strongly
A. Friends of the family are willing to help if you need any help	1	2	3	4	5
B. Most family members are willing to help if you need it.	1	2	3	4	5
C. Most people in this community are willing to help you if you need it	1	2	3	4	5
D. Most people in this district are willing to help you if you need it	1	2	3	4	5
E. Most people in this country are willing to help you if you need it	1	2	3	4	5

6.7 Now I am going to read you a list of people that are in politics. For each one, please tell me how much you trust them and the reason for your choice. **[ENUMERATOR: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO GIVE OPINION, THEN PICK CODE THAT MATCHES RESPONSE. PROBE FOR STRENGTH OF OPINION]**

	0. Do not trust at all 1. Trust a little 2. Somewhat 3. A lot -9. Don't know person	Reason
A. District councillor		
B. Your Member(s) of Parliament		
C. President		
D. Paramount Chief		

6.8 Please tell me how much you trust the following, and give reason for your choice. **[ENUMERATOR: ALLOW RESPONDENT TO GIVE OPINION, THEN PICK CODE THAT MATCHES RESPONSE. PROBE FOR STRENGTH OF OPINION]**

	0. Do not trust at all 1. Trust a little 2. Somewhat 3. A lot -9 Don't know person	Reason
A. Village Development Committee		
B. Ward Committee		
C. Courts of law		
D. Police		
E. National Electoral Commission (Those responsible for making sure elections are carried out properly e.g. Boundary delimitation)		
F. Army		

6.9 If a community project (such as building a school or hospital) does not directly benefit you, would you contribute time to the project?

0 = No

1 = Yes

6.10 Would you contribute money to the project?

0 = No

1 = Yes

7.0 **Collective Action and Cooperation:** Now I would like to ask you some questions about how people organize to get things done in the community.

7.1 In the past year did you participate in any community labour activities (e.g. self-help project like road building), in which people came together to do some work for the benefit of the community?				
If Yes		If NO (GOTO 7.3)		
Number of times?	[For each time ask] who was main person that motivated people to come together	Would if had chance	Would never do this	Don't know [Do not read]
		1	2	- 9

7.2 Please describe the activity [e.g., how it came about, who were the main people involved in bringing people together, type of activity]

8.7 How did you hear about the existence of the following meetings?

Meeting	Source of information	Have not heard about meetings
A. District Council Meetings		-9
B. Ward Committee Meetings		-9
C. Village development Committee Meetings		-9

8.8 In the past year, have you ever got together with other people/or by yourself contacted the following persons to either talk about a problem or suggest they do something that will benefit the community?

	Never [GOTO 8.6]	Only once	A few times	Often	Don't know
A. Paramount/Section Chief (specify)	0	1	2	3	-9
B. District Council	0	1	2	3	-9
C. Government in Freetown	0	1	2	3	-9
D. NGO (specify)	0	1	2	3	-9
E. Local community group (e.g. CDC/VDC/Youth Group) (specify which)	0	1	2	3	-9
F. Ward Committee Members	0	1	2	3	-9
G. Mammy Queen	0	1	2	3	-9
H. Churches	0	1	2	3	-9
I. Other (specify)	0	1	2	3	-9

8.9 [IF YES] Please describe the issue(s) and the outcome

8.10 Who usually comes up first with ideas for local development projects in this community, in your opinion? [IF MORE THAN ONE PERSON IS LISTED, ASK RESPONDENT TO RANK THEM IN ORDER OF IMPORTANCE]

1. Paramount/Section Chief (specify) _____
2. District Council _____
3. Government in Freetown _____
4. NGO (specify which) _____
5. Local community group (E.g. VDC/CDC) (specify type) _____
6. Ward Committee Members _____
7. Other (specify) _____

9.0 **Understandings of Democracy**

9.1 In your opinion, what are the characteristics of a good government?

9.2 What are the characteristics of a bad government?

9.3 What does democracy mean to you?

9.4 Where did you hear about democracy? **[IF NEVER HEARD, GOTO 9.5]**

9.5 Democracy can mean many different things for people. I am going to mention some of the meanings that people attach to democracy. For each one of the things I mention, please tell me if it is not at all important, somewhat important, or very important for a society to be called democratic.

	1 Not important at all 2 Somewhat Important 3 Very important -7 Don't know
A. Elections are held regularly	
B. The majority rules	
C. At least two political parties compete with each other	
D. Anyone is free to criticize the government	
E. Education for everyone	
F. Jobs for everyone	
G. Small income gap between rich and poor	
H. Everyone enjoys basic necessities like shelter, food and water	

9.6 Please tell me if you have ever done any of the following things since the last elections in 2002?					
	Never	Only once	A few times	Often	Don't know
A. Joined a demonstration	0	1	2	3	-9
B. Worked/Volunteered for a candidate/party (ENUMERATOR: specify if work, volunteer, candidate, party)	0	1	2	3	-9
C. Contacted a public official about a political issue	0	1	2	3	-9
D. Attended campaign rally	0	1	2	3	-9
E. Attended community meeting	0	1	2	3	-9
F. Helped raise funds for a candidate	0	1	2	3	-9
G. Gave money to a political candidate	0	1	2	3	-9
H. Tried to persuade others to vote a certain way	0	1	2	3	-9

10.0 **Empowerment**

10.1 What chance do you think you have to change an unjust local government policy? (for example, if the Local council asks everyone to pay LE 5,000 for taxes and you think this is too much, do you think you can get the council to change the policy to a lower amount?)

1. No chance
2. Very little chance
3. Little chance
4. Good chance
5. Very good chance

10.2 What chance do you think you have to change an unjust chieftdom law? (for example, if the chief asks everyone to contribute 3 bushels of rice per family and you think this is too much, do you think you can get the chieftdom council to change the policy to only 1 bushel?)

1. No chance
2. Very little chance
3. Little chance
4. Good chance
5. Very good chance

10.3 If someone more powerful than you tells you to vote for somebody that you do not want to vote for, do you feel like you can say no?

0. No 1. Yes

11.14 Do you feel close to any political party?
 0 = No **(GO TO 12.0)** 1 = Yes

11.15 Which political party do you feel close to? _____
(WRITE NAME OF PARTY)

11.16 Why do you feel close to this party?

12.0 Women and Politics: Now I would like to find out your opinion about women and politics.

12.1 What is your opinion about women holding political positions?

12.2 Would you ever vote for a woman political candidate for president?
 0= No 1=Yes

12.3 Why or why not?

12.4 Would you ever vote for a woman to be a member of parliament?
 0= No 1=Yes

12.5 Why or why not?

12.6 Would you consider financially supporting a woman political candidate?
 0= No 1=Yes

12.7 Why or why not?

12.8 In general, do you agree or disagree with the following statements?	Disagree strongly	Disagree Somewhat	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree Somewhat	Agree strongly
A. Women should have the same chance of being elected to political office as men.	1	2	3	4	5
B. Men make better political leaders than women, and should be elected rather than women.	1	2	3	4	5

12.9 It is said that women normally take care of the home. If she becomes involved in politics, do you think that she can still be able to run the house as she did before? (E.g. respect her husband, do domestic work, be respected by others)?
 0 = Yes 1=NO

12.10 Why or why not?

12.11 What do you think women in this community should do in order to get into leadership/political positions?

12.12 Do you think a woman should be able to vote for a candidate of her choice, even if different from that of her husband's?

0 = Yes

1 = NO

12.13 Why or why not?

12.14 Have you heard of decentralization?

0 = No **(GO TO 13.1)**

1 = Yes

12.14.1 What do you understand by decentralization?

Have you heard about the Local Government Act?

0 = No **[GO TO 13.1]**

1 = Yes

12.14.2 What have you heard about the local Government Act

13.0 Support for Democracy

13.1 Which one of these statements do you agree with the most? [**CIRCLE CORRECT RESPONSE**]

- A. Democracy is preferable to any other form of government
- B. In certain situations a non-democratic government can be preferable
- C. To people like me, it doesn't matter what form of government we have

13.2 Some people say we would be better off if the country was governed differently. What do you think about the following options [**ENUMERATOR, PLEASE WRITE DOWN ANY INTERESTING COMMENTS THAT EXPLAIN WHY RESPONDENTS FEEL A CERTAIN WAY**]

	5 Strongly support 4 Support 3 Neither support nor oppose 2 Oppose 1 Strongly oppose
A. We should abolish elections and parliament so that the president can decide everything	
B. The army should come in to govern the country	
C. Candidates from only one political party should be allowed to stand for elections and hold office	
D. All decisions should be made by a council of traditional leaders (i.e. Chiefs)	
E. The most important decisions, for example on the economy, should be left up to you the people	

14.3 In your opinion, how much of a democracy is Sierra Leone today?

- 1 = Not a democracy
- 2 = Major problems, but still a democracy [**GOTO 14.4**]
- 3 = Minor problems, but still a democracy [**GOTO 14.6**]
- 4 = Full democracy
- 9 = Don't know

14.4 [**IF MAJOR PROBLEMS**] What are the problems?

14.5 [**IF NO DEMOCRACY**] Why do you think it is not a democracy?

14.6 Generally, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in Sierra Leone?

- 1 = Not at all satisfied
- 2 = Not very satisfied
- 3 = neither satisfied not dissatisfied
- 4 = fairly satisfied
- 5 = Very satisfied
- 9 = Don't know

14.7 Please explain your choice

Support for private provision: Now I am going to ask you some questions about the type of role you feel government should play in Sierra Leone

15.1 Who should take the main responsibility for the following tasks? Is it Government in Freetown (**G**) or District Council (**DC**), private business (**B**) rich people (**I**), NGOS (**N**) or some combination of these?

	G/DC (Specify which)	B	I	N	Some combination (ASK TO SPECIFY AND WRITE IN)	Don't know [do not read]
a) Providing schools and clinics	1	2	3	4	5	-9
b) Creating jobs	1	2	3	4	5	-9
c) Building houses	1	2	3	4	5	-9
d) Reducing crime	1	2	3	4	5	-9
e) Buying and selling agricultural and mineral commodities	1	2	3	4	5	-9
f) Helping citizens obtain credit	1	2	3	4	5	-9
h) Road construction	1	2	3	4	5	-9

16. Information and Communication.

16.1 Where do you get most of your information about the following: **[READ OUT THE LIST OF THINGS, AND ALLOW RESPONDENT TO TELL YOU IN OWN WORDS THEIR PRIMARY SOURCE; THEN ASSIGN RELEVANT CODE AFTER INTERVIEW]** [PLEASE SPECIFY THE MOST IMPORTANT]

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Radio 2. Newspapers 3. Friends/family 4. NGO 5. Chief/Village headman 6. Government 7. VDC/WDC/District council 8. Community Notice board/posters 9. Religious leader 10. Teacher 11. Political party representative 12. Campaign/political rally 13. TV 14. Respondent own observations 15. Other, specify _____ <p>-7 Not heard anything</p>
A. Government in Freetown	
B. Politics	
C. Decentralization	
D. Local Government Act	
E. Democracy	

16.2 How often do you get news from:

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Every day 2. Few/Several times a week 3. Once a week/Few times a month 4. Once a month or less 5. Never
A. Radio	
B. Family	
C. Town Crier	
D. Friends	
E. Newspapers	

17. If a presidential election were held tomorrow, which party's candidate would you vote for?

Thank you very much for your assistance with this work!

APPENDIX B
SELECT LIST OF INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS INTERVIEWED

Interviews conducted with female councillors, Kailahun, August 1, 2006

Councillor Name	Chiefdom
Frances J. Swarray	Malema Chiefdom
Frances Wara	Jojoima Chiefdom
Fatmata B. Sannoh	Luawa Chiefdom
Tomah B. Kallon	Jawei Chiefdom
Mary Hawa John-Sao	Jawei Chiefdom
Tomah B. Kallon	Jawei Chiefdom
Fatmata B. Sannoh	Luawa Chiefdom

Interviews and FGDs conducted with key informants and community members, August 2006

Chiefs

Section Chief, Gberia Fatombu, July 31, 2006
 Sando, Town Chief, Yaedia, August 1, 2006
 Musa Macarthy Joe, Town Chief, Ngeima, August 1, 2006
 Musa Bockarie, Section Chief, Ngeblama, August 2, 2006

Mammy Queens

Nafahtha Samura, Gberia Fatombu, July 31, 2006
 Kumba, Yaedia, August 1, 2006
 Hawa Bockarie, Ngeblama August 2, 2006
 Mammy Queen, Ngeima, August 4, 2006

Youth Leader

Lamin Sovula, PRO, Youth Group, Ngeima, August 30, 2006

Focus Group Discussions, July 31 to August 28th 2006

Koinadugu

Yaedia (July 31, 2006)

Male Focus Groups

1. VDC and WDC Group -- 4 VDC and 1 WDC member present
2. Male youth group members – 9 participants

Female Focus Groups

1. VDC and WDC Group members – Six participants
2. Female youth group members – 11 participants
3. Women elders – 3 participants

Gberia Fatombu (August 2, 2006)

Male focus group

Village chief, male elders, male youth group members

Female Focus Group

Mammy Queen, female elders, female youth group

Kailahun

Ngeblama (August 3-4, 2006)

Male Focus Group

Youth group members – 11 participants

Community elders – 2 participants

Elite Focus Group

Ward Development Committee Member – 1 participant

Village Development Committee Member – 1 participant

Male Youth Leader – 1 participant

Female Youth Leader – 1 participant

Ngeima (August 4, 2006)

Male Focus Group

Assistant Section Chief

Youth group members – 9 participants

Female focus group

Mammy Queen

Female youth group members – 8 participants

Jojoima (August 26th 2006 – August 28th 2006)

Male focus group

Youth group members – 5 participants

VDC members – 5 participants

Ward Committee members – 3 participants

Councillor Representative

Female focus group

Mammy Queen

Female economic groups' members – 9 participants

Female youth group members – 3 participants

Interviews conducted with Honourables, September 17th to November 14th, 2006

Honourable Name	Party	Region of Representation
Honourable Mary Massalay	SLPP	Pujehun District
Honourable Janet Sam-King	SLPP	Bo
Honourable Veronica Kadi Sesay	SLPP	West 2, Shenge, Moyamba District
Honourable Zainab Kamara	SLPP	East 1, Freetown
Honourable Haja Hafsatu Kabba	APC	York District
Honourable Bernadette Lahai	SLPP	Kenema District
Honourable Musu Kandeh	APC	Tonkolili District
Honourable Elizabeth Lavalie	SLPP	BO

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