

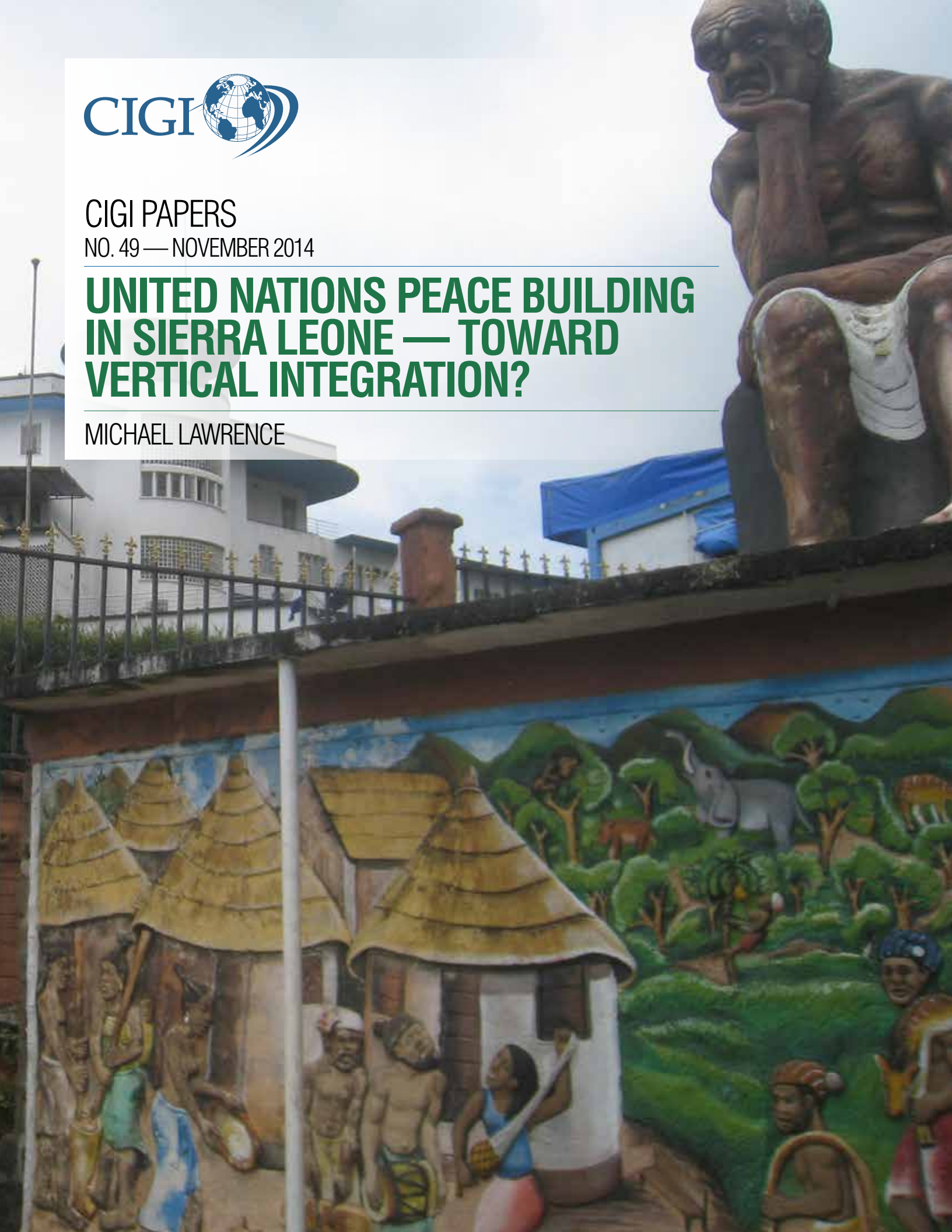


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UNITED NATIONS PEACE BUILDING IN SIERRA LEONE — TOWARD VERTICAL INTEGRATION?

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ABOUT THE PROJECT

Post-conflict peace building has emerged as a crucial global governance challenge and has become increasingly institutionalized — especially with the formation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission — as the centrepiece of the UN system’s peace and security agenda. The post-Cold War record of peace building is, however, uneven at best; much remains to be learned about how international actors can best assist war-torn societies in the transition to sustainable peace.

Drawing on the concept of vertical integration — a notion that underlines the need for greater coherence and coordination of peace-building efforts among actors working at international, national and local levels — this project aims to generate policy-relevant research that leads to improved peace-building practices by multilateral actors.

ACRONYMS

APC	All People’s Congress
APPYA	All Political Parties Youth Association
CSP	Civil Society Platform
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Council
DISEC	District Security Committee
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
NYC	National Youth Commission
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NSA	Non State Actors
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PROSEC	Provincial Security Committee
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SLPP	Sierra Leone People’s Party
SRSG	Special Representative to the Secretary General
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNIPSIL	United Nations Integrated Peace Building Mission in Sierra Leone
UNPBC	United Nations Peace Building Commission

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This research report examines the “vertical integration” of United Nations (UN) peace building efforts in Sierra Leone by examining the extent to which the mission reached beyond national government institutions and elites to engage society more broadly in peace building. It focuses on the country’s youth crisis as a persistent cause of conflict that presents ample opportunity for civil society engagement, and identifies two modes of coordinating youth peace building efforts across international, national and local scales. After exploring different understandings of peace building between these actors, this report ultimately argues that the United Nations fostered only weak vertical integration on the crucial issue of youth marginalization; that the lack of engagement leaves the peace vulnerable; and that deeper vertical integration can help ameliorate this ongoing challenge.

INTRODUCTION

At the end of March 2014, the United Nations Integrated Peace Building Mission in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) concluded more than half a decade of operations in the postwar country. Becoming one of the first client states of the UN Peace Building Commission (UNPBC) in June 2006, Sierra Leone is today the first state to graduate from the UNPBC agenda to become (perhaps) the first success of the yet embryonic UN peace-building architecture.

The mission was conceived and executed as a model of integration, coordinating 18 UN agencies and related organizations under one “Joint Vision for Sierra Leone.” While such horizontal integration across international actors undoubtedly represents progress in UN practice, this paper considers another — but potentially even more crucial — form of integration. It assesses the extent to which UN peace building reaches beyond national government institutions and elites to engage society more broadly in peace building. The analysis develops the concept of “vertical integration” in order to explore the coordination and coherence of peace-building actors and efforts across multiple scales — international organizations, national government, national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local civil society — and their ability to foster broad participation in peace building by uniting top-down with bottom-up initiatives.

Youth marginalization represents a persistent cause of conflict in Sierra Leone today, and the nature of the issue provides ample opportunity to include civil society organizations (CSOs) and youth themselves in peace building. This report thus examines vertical integration in the specific context of Sierra Leone’s youth crisis. It is based upon interviews conducted in September 2012 and March 2013 with UN personnel, government officials and civil society representatives (particularly those working on the youth issue) in Freetown, Bo, Makeni and Koidu (see

Appendix 1). Ultimately, this report argues that UNIPSIL fostered only weak vertical integration on the crucial issue of youth marginalization, the lack of engagement leaves the peace vulnerable and deeper vertical integration can help ameliorate this ongoing challenge.

VERTICALLY-INTEGRATED PEACE BUILDING

One of the most prominent critiques of international peace building efforts is that its focus on governmental bodies produces superficial institutions that float above society while excluding the populations of war-torn states from the peace-building process (Donais and Knorr 2013, 1-2). “The subculture of UN missions, their leadership and much of their staff,” argue Jarat Chopra and Tanja Hohe (2004, 243), is “rooted in diplomatic habit, relating institution-to-institution or at most talking to a minority elite. [...] Excluded from the equation, extraordinarily, [are] the people of the country.” Similarly, Roger Mac Ginty (2008, 145) criticizes the “IKEA peace” in which international peace builders quickly unpack and assemble standardized liberal institutions without regard for local context. These points challenge one of the foundational assumptions of the liberal peace, namely that strong liberal state institutions will steer the behaviour of society more broadly towards peace. Today there is growing concern that rather than institutions shaping society, it is society that shapes institutions; for institutions to promote peace, they must be based in the social context and respond to the needs and concerns of everyday people. Such questions have opened debate within and around the United Nations over whether it should emphasize institution building or expand its engagement at the grassroots level (for example, Heemskerk 2007; Conflict Transformation Working Group 2002).

The argument for engagement, much broader than institution building, is perhaps best understood by dividing peace building into two distinct “peaces.” The first peace, as a product of peace making, originates in the negotiated settlement between elites of a conflict’s opposing factions. It seeks to create institutions that will balance the interests of the formerly warring parties to prevent them from reverting to armed conflict. This first type of peace, however, represents an elite bargain that excludes the rest of society who have suffered the brunt of the war.¹ If elites genuinely represent their society, as they often claim to, the top-down nature of the first peace is not

1 In the case of Sierra Leone, the first peace arose from the 1999 Lomé peace agreement and the ensuing peace process that ended the conflict in 2002. As just one example of the limitation of the first peace, the Lomé accord installed Foday Sankoh, the leader of the rebel army the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) which was responsible for the worst atrocities inflicted upon Sierra Leone, as vice president of the country (1999-2000) in a Faustian bargain to end the bloodshed (Sankoh was subsequently arrested for war crimes).

a problem; yet this rarely appears to be the case in recent conflicts such as the war in Sierra Leone. In such instances, the exclusions, shortcomings and incompleteness of the first peace necessitate the creation of a “second peace” that extends the peace to society more broadly by ensuring political arrangements incorporate the needs, interests and aspirations of the population. Where the first peace satisfies the interests of the present elites to prevent the recurrence of the conflict recently past, the second aspires to create political processes that can manage the actors, conditions and drivers that might ignite violent conflict in the future. While the first peace demands a focus on building strong national institutions that effectively balance elite interests, the second peace is more concerned with the meaningful participation of citizens in the governing process.²

If international peace building remains excessively top-down and exclusive, critics suggest that the problem be rectified with deeper engagement of civil society and local communities in the design and execution of peace-building activities (alongside more traditional activities focused on elites and governmental institutions). Noting the tension between respecting a government’s sovereignty and transforming the country’s politics into a more peaceful configuration, Roland Paris (2010, 356-7) concludes that “more research is needed on the sources of local legitimacy, including the challenge of incorporating the mass public and non-elites into post-conflict and political and economic structures and directly into the management of international peace-building operations themselves.” Similarly, Chopra and Hohe (2004, 242) propose a “participatory” approach to peace building “in which space is provided for local voices to be expressed and communities to get directly involved in the evolution of their own cultural or political institutions, as part of a gradual integration into the national state apparatus.” Perhaps most importantly, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Council (DAC) has recently moved away from an exclusive focus on formal government institutions to argue that “the evolution of a state’s relationship with society is at the heart of state building” (OECD DAC 2011, 11).

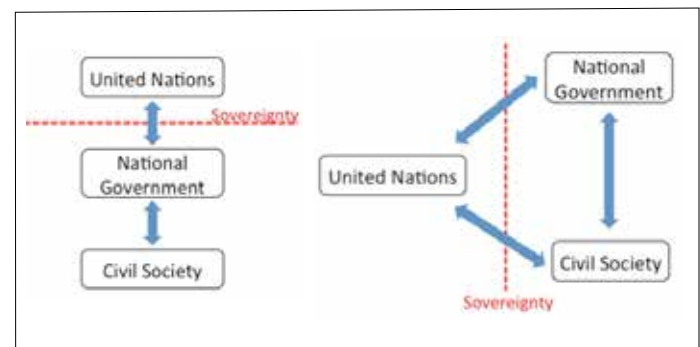
This paper pursues these suggestions using the concept of vertical integration. While considerable attention has been devoted to improving the integration of peace-building efforts horizontally between various UN agencies, vertical integration concerns the coordination and coherence of peace-building initiatives by actors at different scales — international, national and local. It refers to the chain of relationships between state, society and the international community. The vertical integration concept can be

2 The distinction between the first peace and second peace loosely mirrors the concepts of negative peace, as the cessation of hostilities, and positive peace, which addresses issues of justice and the underlying causes of conflict.

operationalized in two ways. Conceived as “coherence,” it compares and contrasts understandings of the causes of violence, the strategies appropriate to redress them and theories of social and political change utilized by actors working at different scales. Conceived as “coordination,” it analyzes the flow of ideas, information and resources between peace-building initiatives operating at different scales. In the latter operationalization, the vertical integration concept looks for mechanisms and procedures that link the efforts of international, national and local peace builders. Coherence refers to ideational agreement on the meaning of peace building in a given context, while coordination refers to the organizational linkages between different peace-building actors.³

Coordination can be assessed in terms of three factors: the *extent* to which actors at different scales coordinate their peace-building efforts; the *direction* of the flow of ideas, inputs and designs for peace building, whether from top to bottom, bottom to top or both; and the *character* of these relationships. On the latter point, and as illustrated in Figure 1, we can distinguish two broad “modes” of vertically-integrated peace building by their different configurations of international, national and local peace builders.

Figure 1: Linear and Triangular Modes of Peace Building⁴



Source: Author’s own diagram.

The linear mode reflects the orthodox UN ambition to construct strong state institutions. The “relevant actors”⁵ are governmental officials and this mode employs a traditional understanding of sovereignty by supporting the state’s capacity to manage its own internal affairs.

3 This framework uses these terms in a manner similar to Cedric de Coning wherein “coherence” is the aim of peace building and “coordination” is the activity through which coherence is pursued (2007, 8).

4 In these diagrams, the arrows denoting the flow of information, resources and the directions are represented as bidirectional, but may also be unidirectional.

5 The UNPBC is mandated to bring together “all relevant actors” in peace building, but these actors are not specified.

The United Nations works with the government, and the government works with civil society. In these ways, scales form a nested hierarchy in which UN relations to local actors are heavily mediated by government. In the triangular mode, by contrast, international peace builders aspire to construct strong state-society relations by working directly with both state institutions and civil society. It utilizes a multifaceted understanding of sovereignty as both the legal rights of the state and the “popular sovereignty” of society by supporting state institutions while working in parallel to strengthen civil society’s role in governance. Connections are decentralized and trans-scalar.

The crucial difference between the two is the role played by civil society in peace building. In the linear mode, civil society actors may serve as implementers of UN and government programming, but under the direction of these higher authorities. In the triangular mode, international actors empower civil society to work alongside the government in all phases of peace building (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation) as a partner, and to serve as a counterbalance to state politics. In the triangular mode, civil society is an agenda-setter and program designer, as well as implementer. The international community thereby engages in “society-building” (Andrei 2010, 547) alongside state building in an effort to construct state-society relations conducive to a lasting peace. Both modes have a number of advantages and disadvantages and are presented here as ideal types. In practice, they mark the opposite ends of a spectrum and any present or future UN peace-building mission likely lies somewhere in between.⁶

Thus defined, the concept of vertical integration helps explore the critique that UN peace building is too top down in the context of a specific post-conflict society using three broad research questions:

- To what extent is UN peace building in Sierra Leone vertically integrated?
- What are the opportunities and obstacles to vertical integration?
- To what extent is vertical integration necessary for peace building success?

THE PERSISTENT CAUSES OF CONFLICT IN SIERRA LEONE

The answers to these questions must consider the actions required for successful peace building in Sierra Leone,

⁶ These ideal types are, of course, oversimplified and presented here as heuristic devices. In practice, the United Nations, the government and civil society each must be disaggregated in ways that complicate their relationships.

which invokes the root causes of conflict in the country. The causes of the civil war were, of course, “many and diverse” (Truth and Reconciliation Commission [TRC] 2004 vol. 2, p. 26, art. 39),⁷ but two broad issues stand out for their centrality, as well as their persistence as obstacles to sustainable peace: political patrimonialism and corruption; and the marginalization of youth.⁸ Both issues, explained in turn below, bear significantly upon the issue of vertically-integrated peace building in Sierra Leone.

Shortly after its independence in 1961, Sierra Leone became deeply divided between the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP), drawing its support from the Mende-dominated south, and the All People’s Congress (APC), drawing its support from the Temne-dominated north and west. “Party politics became the greatest obstacle to national cohesion and identity” (TRC 2004 vol. 2, p. 5, art. 11). Rather than developing a strong publically-oriented state, each party developed a patronage network through which it distributed resources to favoured supporters, building exclusive chains of authority that extended from the capital to aligned chiefdoms. While patrimonialism in some instances provides a stable and legitimate mode of governance, these networks in Sierra Leone became increasingly corrupt and ineffectual. Once the APC implemented a one party constitution in 1978, the “central government sustained itself through corruption, nepotism, and the plundering of state assets” (TRC 2004, vol. 2, p. 6, art. 13). A series of economic crisis in the 1980s destabilized these patterns by rendering patrimonial networks narrower, fiscally constrained and vulnerable as state institutions including the army, police, judiciary and civil service deteriorated. The general population became increasingly impoverished, excluded

⁷ The causation of the conflict was complex and contingent. Resource wealth (diamonds) and regional conflict (mainly support to the RUF by Charles Taylor of Liberia), for example, both played a discernible but unnecessary role in the causation of the conflict — the war would still likely have occurred without them, though it may have unfolded differently. Additionally, colonialism and its legacy provided the broader context of the conflict. Notable accounts of the causes of the conflict include: TRC 2004; Peters 2011; Cubitt 2012b. This synthesis is based on these sources.

⁸ The country’s TRC (2004 vol. 2, p. 27, arts. 13–17) concluded that the “central cause of the war was endemic greed, corruption and nepotism that deprived the nation of its dignity and reduced most people to a state of poverty. Successive political elites plundered the nation’s assets, including its mineral riches, at the expense of the national good... Government accountability was non-existent. Institutions meant to uphold human rights, such as the courts and civil society, were thoroughly co-opted by the executive. This context provided ripe breeding grounds for opportunists who unleashed a wave of violence and mayhem that was to sweep through the country. Many Sierra Leoneans, particularly the youth, lost all sense of hope in the future. Youths became easy prey for unscrupulous forces who exploited their disenchantment to wreak vengeance against the ruling elite.” The TRC also found “that many of the causes of the conflict that prompted thousands of young people to join the war have still not been adequately addressed...[and persist as] potential causes of conflict, if they remain unaddressed” (ibid., vol. 2, p. 29, art. 37).

from politics, deprived of their rights and disaffected with government so that by “1991, Sierra Leone was a deeply divided society, full of the potential for violence. It required only the slightest spark for this violence to be ignited” (TRC 2004, vol. 2, p. 30, art. 45).

Patrimonialism can be understood as the vertical integration of *politics* insofar as it links local communities to national-level elites who can engage the international community and channel resources back through their personal networks. This long-standing patrimonialism survived Sierra Leone’s civil war and remains deeply entrenched today. These tightly guarded networks, however, do not represent a form of vertically-integrated *peace building* because they tend to be conflict *reproducing*, and because they fail to serve large portions of the population, particularly youth.

Democratic politics remain “winner takes all” (and consequently “loser loses all”) so that the parties prioritize partisan politics over national development and public interests. Deep mutual suspicion prevents inter-party cooperation on the issues facing the country and preserves the potential for ethnic or regional conflict (Cubitt 2012a, 47). Access to government and influence over policy making are not based on the rights of citizens and the merit of proposals, but on connections within the ruling party.⁹ Through such patronage networks, “it appears state elites have involved informal organisations as a strategy to consolidate the status quo and peace among themselves as well as control rural populations and their territories — that is, not an attempt to consolidate peace in respect of what citizens want” (Tom 2013, 247). These informal hybrid arrangements may support the first peace, but at the expense of the second peace insofar as they remain highly exclusive, unaccountable and deeply conflictive.

Although there have been improvements, corruption remains rampant; the country ranks 123 of 174 on Transparency International’s 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index and corruption is repeatedly cited in the Secretary-General’s reports on UNIPSIL as one of three main risks to the peace. It is this context that justifies the United Nation’s focus on improving national governance, but it also underscores the importance of civil society engagement as a counterweight that could help transform these deeply entrenched political obstacles.

9 Indeed, the World Bank (2007, 25-26) notes “There is a widespread perception amongst CSOs that certain unwritten rules must be followed if they [are] to access funds from government or influence policy. Service delivery CSOs for instance must play by such rules as giving kick backs to government officials for contracts awarded to them. Those who refuse to play by these ‘unwritten rules’ are often excluded, penalized or even threatened.”

The second persistent cause of Sierra Leone’s civil war is the country’s youth crisis.¹⁰ More specific than a set of issues affecting a certain age bracket, a youth crisis denotes systematic obstacles blocking the developmental transition from the dependency of childhood to the independence, agency, status and social responsibilities of adulthood. A youth crisis represents a form of social breakdown in which existing traditions and processes no longer enable young people to advance into established roles, responsibilities and behaviours, leaving them in a limbo of unfulfilled aspirations (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP] 2006).

As Sierra Leone’s patronage networks narrowed and receded in the 1980s, increasing swathes of youths in both rural and urban areas became disenfranchised, frustrated and exploited. Elders in rural areas, who controlled (and continue to control) access to land, wealth and marriage, provided youth with less and less hope of advancement while using customary courts to demand increased servitude (Peeters et al. 2009, 16). Some fled to the cities, but many of these frustrated youth joined the ranks of the RUF rebellion. In the cities, youth faced rising unemployment, exclusion and the repression of dissent, culminating in a coup d’état by the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) which captured the imaginations of youth and recruited scores of young people into the Sierra Leone Army (SLA). Through these channels, “marginal and disaffected youth, both rural and urban, made up the vast majority of the fighting forces” (TRC 2004, vol. 2, p. 94, art. 446).

Today, youth have abandoned the gun, but their wider crisis remains as they struggle to find the livelihoods, welfare, dignity and agency that will enable them to live as independent adults and build a meaningful future. Sierra Leone’s 2003 National Youth Policy defines youth as anyone between the ages of 15 and 35,¹¹ which, by the 2004 census, represents 34 percent of the country’s 4.9 million inhabitants (Peeters et al. 2009, 4), whose life expectancy at birth is just 47.8 years (UNDP 2013). Today, around 70 percent of youth are underemployed, over half are unskilled and illiterate and the majority live in overcrowded urban areas despite the fact that most opportunities for livelihood lie in rural agriculture (Cubitt 2012a, 23). As Christine Cubitt (2012a, 15) finds, “Ten years on from the end of hostilities, the majority of the country’s youth remain deeply impoverished with

10 Discussions of youth in relation to conflict and peace building in Sierra Leone refer predominantly to male youth, who formed the majority of combatants of the war and today face continued frustrations that threaten the peace.

11 The age range of youth is broad because the war created a “lost decade” in the development of the country’s young people. Christine Cubitt (2012a, 18) proposes that a better definition of youth is “those citizens with no access or entitlement to jobs, land, property or wives; those with little or no social protection; the marginalized and powerless.”

few economic opportunities or hopes for change, amidst a political culture that sidelines their interests.”

As several members of civil society commented, the masses of marginalized and disenfranchised youth remain “a standby army,” a “ready market for violence,” “easy fuel” for conflict and a “time bomb” that can be activated when needed. Youth have no desire to return to war and indeed, if empowered, represent a major force for peace, yet their continued crisis leaves the peace vulnerable.¹² Masses of marginalized and disaffected youth could be mobilized for mass violence in three ways. First, if political tensions between parties escalate, they might mobilize youth to contest politics through violence, as occurred during the 2007 election (Christensen and Utas 2008), though not the 2012 election. The constitutional reform process now underway could become one such flashpoint. Second, if drug trafficking networks continue to expand their presence in the country, they may attract youth with lucrative salaries to defend drug routes and advance organized criminality. Conflict between rival drug trafficking networks, or traffickers and state security forces, could escalate into widespread violence. Finally, if youth lose all hope that the government is working to improve their lives and their situation can get better, they could mount violent resistance.¹³ As Minister of Youth Employment and Sport Paul Kamara explained in an interview, no matter what other peace-building successes are achieved, to fail on youth is to fail entirely.

THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE CIVIL SOCIETY LANDSCAPE OF SIERRA LEONE

Peace building is a complex and multi-dimensional endeavour, and its vertical integration can be assessed within a variety of program areas, from democratic governance to agricultural reform. As a matter of expedience, this paper assesses vertical integration in the context of the youth crisis as one of the key persistent causes of the war, an issue that permeates almost all others, and an area in which there is ample opportunity to include youth-serving organizations and the youth themselves in peace building. At its broadest, however, vertical integration concerns the involvement of civil

society more generally in peace building, and youth represent an essential facet of that bigger picture. Youth are an active part of civil society, and civil society participation is a major avenue of youth participation in post-conflict Sierra Leone. A recent survey found over 1800 initiatives supporting youth activities throughout the country (UN 2011, 39). The analysis of vertical integration within youth programming, however, must first be situated within the broader challenges of Sierra Leonean civil society and the history of UN engagement with it.

Sierra Leone’s civil society ballooned after the war but remains highly fragmented, presenting numerous obstacles to international engagement. CSOs range in type from formal NGOs (similar to their Western counterparts) to indigenous organizations that mirror indigenous cultural forms and operational logics (such as the sodalities, or secret societies), with a range of hybridity in between (World Bank 2007, 3). Civil society ranges in scale from community-based organizations that meet at a street corner to discuss the issues affecting the area to NGOs with national programs and international ties. Finally, NGOs range in their (Western) “professionalism” from those that are largely illiterate and lack even a bank account, to those well-versed in the latest standards of finance, project management and impact assessment (as well as the diplomatic culture of the international community).

In general, the civil society landscape suffers from a frequent lack of capacity, scant resources, shortage of coordination and duplication of efforts. The scarcity of resources creates two additional complications. First, to attract donor funding, many organizations become “catch all” organizations that claim to work on a broad range of themes or sectors in which they lack experience and expertise (Badasi Sesay 2012, 6-7; World Bank 2007, 24). In a process known as “skewing,” many such organizations have built agendas to suit the priorities of external donors rather than local communities. In this way, civil society becomes accountable to donors, but not those they are purportedly assisting (Cubitt 2013, 102, 105). Second, many individuals create CSOs simply as a means of livelihood (often “one-man shows” attracted by the misperception of plentiful donor funding) rather than the possession of the relevant expertise or commitment to social change (World Bank 2007, 1, 3; Cubitt 2013, 101). With so many livelihoods on the line, civil society remains a fiercely competitive arena, often to the detriment of peace building and development (Cooley and Ron 2002).

The greatest challenge of Sierra Leone’s civil society landscape, however, is that the majority of organizations are politically aligned, if not co-opted entirely. The dearth of funding leads many CSOs to enter political patronage networks in order to ensure the livelihood of

12 The TRC (2004, vol. 2 p. 95, art. 459) points out that “Despite the important strides made by the government since the conclusion of the war, the condition of the youth in Sierra Leone continues to be problematic. A significant number of young people have expressed frustration and concern that the circumstances that resulted in the war have not been meaningfully addressed. A failure to address these shortcomings will have serious repercussions for Sierra Leone.”

13 In line with these three mechanisms for a return to mass violence, the secretary general’s reports to the Security Council on UNIPSIL identify “illicit drug trafficking and organized crime,” “youth” and “corruption” as the “main risks to peace building.”

their members and survival of their organization.¹⁴ Yet, by forfeiting their independence and autonomy, these groups cease to be “civil society” in a meaningful sense. Further, because many CSOs are known to be politically affiliated, any group that challenges the government and its interests is easily dismissed as merely “working for the opposition.”¹⁵ The government works with CSOs “that are less threatening or whose personnel have biographical and ethno-regional linkages with pre-eminent state personnel” (World Bank 2007, 23). As a UNIPSIL policy brief depicts the civil society landscape, “There is rampant tribalism, nepotism, regionalism and an emphasis on ‘who you know’ rather than ‘what you know’” (Bedasi Sesay 2012, 7). Youth representatives who raise hard facts are often dismissed as firebrands and troublemakers, risking marginalization in what they see as a subtle form of censorship. The politics of the civil society landscape ultimately prevent many CSOs from acting as watchdogs and counterweights to state politics advocating on behalf of equal citizens (rather than constituencies) to make progress on issue of public (rather than partisan) interest.

Such a civil society landscape provides an arduous context for UN engagement, especially given the international body’s most basic nature as an inter-governmental organization tooled to work with governments. At the same time, the UN and academic communities alike recognize the immense value and multiple roles of civil society in peace building.¹⁶ As former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan explained to the Security

14 As the World Bank (2007, 4) also found, CSOs widely perceive that government corruption and patronage ultimately determine who has access to funding and influence on policy.

15 Indeed, the former Special Representative to the Secretary-General of UNIPSIL Michael van der Schulenberg was declared *persona non grata* and forced to leave the country by the Sierra Leonean government over allegations he was working too closely with civil society and the opposition. Since his removal, UNIPSIL has had to be more cautious in their dealings with civil society to avoid such governmental backlash. In a context where any civil society criticism of government or action contrary to government interests is decried as a conspiracy of the opposition, it is very difficult for the UN system to support a civil society that can serve as a watchdog and counterweight to the government.

16 A summary of a World Federalist Movement — Institute for Global Policy (2006) discussion paper details the value of civil society engagement: “Central to successful peace building is **local ownership** of the peace building process and engagement in the development and implementation of strategies for rebuilding. Civil society organizations are uniquely equipped to **mobilize individuals in peace building activities** and may be some of the few remnants of social networks in post-conflict situations. Civil society organizations can be **important resources for local knowledge** and expertise in various sectors related to rebuilding societies after conflict and should be utilized early on in the peace building process in the **development of a strategic plan**. Additionally, CSOs may be able to provide a **valuable link** between the UNPBC and local population, both in identifying local priorities in peace building and transmitting information about the coordinated peace building strategy. Finally, civil society organizations are often engaged in **providing goods and services** as part of humanitarian relief and coordinating other essential activities, including justice mechanisms.”

Council in June 2004, “engagement with civil society is not an end in itself, nor is it a panacea, but it is vital to our efforts to turn...peace agreements into...peaceful societies and viable states. The partnership between the United Nations and civil society is therefore not an option; it is a necessity” (quoted in Heemskerk 2007, 18). In this context, the UN peace-building cooperation framework stresses the need to include and capacitate civil society groups (among others) in order to consolidate democracy and good governance in Sierra Leone.¹⁷

The United Nations has engaged with civil society throughout its presence in Sierra Leone. Towards the end of the war and in its aftermath, collapsed state institutions lacked the capacity to distribute the humanitarian relief and services desperately needed by the country’s war-shattered population. The United Nations thus supported networks of local and international NGOs to deliver relief across Sierra Leone until state institutions developed and the country transitioned from relief to peace building. Even today, the United Nations widely contracts NGOs to implement its projects. The UNDP, for example, contracts NGOs for up to 90 percent of its project implementation and engagement of local stakeholders.

As vertical integration, however, this cooperation tends to be highly limited. First, the project designs are largely donor driven, and then contracted out to NGOs; when civil society is consulted in project design, it is often in a superficial “tick-the-box” manner. More importantly, UN agencies are heavily bureaucratized, work within high standards of accountability and are equipped to provide large amounts of concentrated funds. As a result, the United Nations tends to work predominantly with highly professionalized, national-scale (if not international), well-known, and Freetown-based NGOs on large-scale projects. Many organizations that possess local knowledge or genuinely change communities at the grassroots level, however, lack bank accounts, regular staff, proven financial management capabilities, communications and the ability to write “professional” project proposals, excluding them from project funding. In the vertically-integrated ideal, NGO implementing partners funded by the United Nations will reach out to include smaller-scale CSOs in their programming, incorporating grassroots perspectives

17 “Efforts in support of governance institutions need to be complemented through enhanced dialogue among political parties and the reconciliation and full participation of all segments of the population in decision making. In that context, enhancing the role and participation of civil society, including youth and women’s groups, in political transformation is critical and requires urgent attention and support through capacity-building activities and the strengthening of coordination mechanisms” (UNPBC 2007, 6, art. 18). Indeed one of the UNPBC’s commitments within the Framework is to “support capacity-building initiatives for the private sector and civil society, especially women’s and youth organizations, which contribute to peace consolidation, reconciliation and community-based socio-economic recovery and reconstruction” (*ibid.*, 12).

in their project design, sharing their funds by contracting out local implementation and more generally working to capacitate smaller CSOs. While some NGOs pursue this ideal, most conduct project design and implementation alone without including local civil society.

Here it is useful to make a rough distinction between NGOs and CSOs. CSOs are constituency-based organizations; they have a membership that pursues its own interests and its own solutions to the issues that affect constituents. NGOs tend to be professional service contracting agencies that attempt to solve problems on behalf of others.¹⁸ Both make crucial contributions to peace building. The risk, however, is that when the United Nations works predominantly with NGOs, and NGOs do not reach out to local CSOs, then grassroots needs, voices and contributions are marginalized from peace building. When donor funds dry up and NGOs scale back their activities or withdraw, local CSOs will remain unable to contend with persistent problems. NGOs are, at best, imperfect intermediaries between the United Nations and grassroots civil society. As one World Bank report found, a major obstacle to effective programming is “non-recognition and non-engagement of neo-traditional and traditional civil society groups by donor and development agencies” (2007, 3).

More generally, UN peace building remains focused on state and government institutions, with civil society a secondary consideration at best. This approach echoes Elizabeth Cousins et al.’s argument that peace building should be “ruthlessly modest” in its ambitions, so that success “is to cultivate political processes and institutions that can manage group conflict without violence but with authority and, eventually, legitimacy” (2001, 15). Capitalizing on the UN’s comparative advantage as an inter-state institution tooled to support governments, the main thrust of UN peace building in Sierra Leone is to create governmental institutions capable of channelling the underlying causes of the conflict into political processes rather than see them erupt into violence.¹⁹ For UNIPSIL, the democratic ideal is to forge a direct relationship between citizen and government via parliament, rather than through civil society, which is not fully democratic; the aim is to have government implement all social programming, and civil society reduced to an advocacy role.

To conclude, it is crucial to stress that the United Nations is hardly neutral in its interactions with Sierra Leone’s civil

society; it exercises significant political power through its distribution of money and influence to some segments and not others. Its technical and bureaucratic nature favours large-scale NGOs versed in Western professionalism, but largely excludes smaller and more traditional groups engaged in a myriad of peace-building efforts at the local level. There is a widespread perception among civil society that the United Nations works only with a small handful of organizations that know how to “tell them what they want to hear” and in this way overlooks much of the peace-building activity carried out by other civil society actors throughout the country. Further, by working closely with the government, the United Nations positions itself to pursue the elite-driven “first peace,” but limits its ability to pursue the second. It moreover risks co-optation into the country’s patronage networks (including their aligned civil society organizations) and is thus viewed with suspicion by civil society more broadly. Yet, despite its general orientation towards government and the politics of this position, the United Nations has found two mechanisms through which to pursue vertical integration on the issue of youth marginalization, as explained in the following two sections.

VERTICAL INTEGRATION AS COORDINATION: THE NSA PROJECT AND THE TRIANGULAR MODE

Recognizing that its focus on government institutions remained incomplete, UNIPSIL in 2010 founded the Non state Actors (NSA) project with a budget of five million dollars (in addition to the US\$35 million allocated for working with the government) to engage society more broadly in pursuit of non-violent elections. Much of the project focused on building political parties’ political tolerance and respect for the law and committing religious and chieftom authorities to remain non-partisan, but two additional components directly engaged youth and civil society: support to the All Political Parties Youth Association (APPYA) and the Civil Society Platform (CSP). These programs represent an experiment in vertically-integrated peace building that approaches the triangular mode outlined above.

Amid a long history of violence by politically affiliated youth, the NSA project trained APPYA in manifesto writing, public speaking, campaigning and outreach activities. It further provided almost US\$500,000 to enable APPYA members to preach peace at the district and community levels and to engage political party leadership to ensure peaceful elections. This support attempted to bring youth into politics where they could advocate for their needs and other forms of empowerment, and cohered with the UNIPSIL’s orientation as a political mission.

¹⁸ This insight is indebted to Yirah Masaray, UNIPSIL civil affairs officer in the UN joint regional office in Makeni.

¹⁹ Such institutions include the Political Parties Registration Committee, the National Elections Commission, the Human Rights Commission and the Anti-Corruption Commission. These are supported in order to consolidate a lawful and democratic culture by reducing corruption, patrimonialism, abuses and other governance issues.

As a means of engaging society, however, the deep political distrust between the parties hampered the impact of this strategy. Both membership and advancement within the youth wings depend upon young people's loyalty to their party. Whenever partisan interests come into conflict with the public interest, APPYA members are compelled to pursue the former to the detriment of the organization's spirit of inclusion and tolerance. This challenge is particularly acute around election time, when the stakes and tensions are high. Indeed, in the run-up to the November 2012 elections, partisan conflict over the leadership of APPYA's national executive left the organization largely paralyzed. With the elections concluded, there is greater latitude for cooperation, but APPYA faces the added challenge of limited resources; the political parties tend to fund their youth wings only around election time and, in the interim, APPYA depends on UN funding to carry out its activities. While on the one hand APPYA provides a mechanism to integrate the youth into the political life of the country, on the other it reproduces the political patronage and partisanism that represent a persistent cause of conflict.

If APPYA represents a narrow and politically fraught segment of civil society, the CSP component of the NSA project offers a better example of vertical integration in the triangular mode. At the 2006 National Social Forum in Bo within the Southern Province,²⁰ a wide range of Sierra Leonean NGOs and CSOs recognized the difficulty of engaging with the United Nations, and thus organized themselves into six thematic clusters. These clusters would allow CSOs to cooperate, pool their knowledge and resources, specialize in their areas of comparative advantage and avoid the duplication of efforts while providing a one-stop interface for UN engagement. Membership is voluntary, and the CSP includes approximately 100 organizations; many of these are youth organizations, and even more include a youth component in their programming. Each cluster has its own structure, with a lead organization (generally a well-established, large-scale NGO) responsible for coordinating its activities. The clusters are coordinated by a steering committee comprised of lead and co-lead organizations and headed by John Caulker, director of Fambul Tok.

Table 1: Clusters of the CSP

Cluster	Lead Organization	Co-lead Organization
Governance	Campaign for Good Governance	Not applicable
Peace, security and human rights	Fambul Tok	Mano River Women's Peace Network
Natural resources	Network Movement for Justice and Development	National Coalition on Extractives
Social movements and social change	Trade Union Confederation of Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone Traders' Union
Information, communication and education	Sierra Leone Association of Journalists	Women in the Media Sierra Leone
Elections	National Election Watch	Not applicable

UNIPSIL also recognized that its engagement with civil society had been ad hoc and fragmented, and in August 2011 invited the clusters to a UN session in which they developed the CSP as the mechanism by which the civil society clusters and the United Nations could engage in policy dialogue as part of the NSA project. Consistent with the triangular mode of vertical integration, the Platform for UNIPSIL represented an avenue towards "effective grassroots development [that] might shift the burden of expectation currently fixed on the state" (Badasi Sesay 2012, 10). Cluster heads had monthly meetings with the executive representative to the Secretary-General in which they presented CSO perspectives to the United Nations, and UN officials updated the CSP on their activities. In preparation for the November 2012 election, the NSA project sponsored the clusters with US\$360,000 to conduct outreach programs, educate communities about the electoral laws and conduct townhall peace meetings.²¹ These activities targeted ex-combatants in particular because of their vulnerability to exploitation by political elites who recruit them to foment electoral violence. In this role, civil society was better able to avoid partisanism, and thus be more effective than APPYA.

While the CSP represents an innovative step towards the triangular mode of vertical integration, its realization was significantly hampered by several factors. First, UNIPSIL's narrow focus on peaceful elections kept it from utilizing the full potential of the Platform. All clusters were deployed in non-violent elections programming rather

²⁰ This National Social Forum was organized by the Civil Society Alternative Process of Sierra Leone, July 10–13, 2006.

²¹ As several members of the CSP lamented, these activities were originally allocated one million dollars, but the amount was reduced to US\$360,000 due to fears concerning their limited spending capacity. This money came jointly from UNIPSIL and UNDP (Badasi Sesay 2012, 9).

than their actual thematic specializations (including youth employment and empowerment). The agenda was largely set by UNIPSIL, and joint UNIPSIL-CSP programming ended with the elections.

Second, as a mechanism to bring local and grassroots perspectives into UN peace building (and vice versa), the CSP was also significantly hampered by intra-civil society politics and exclusion. From the beginning, the mechanism was steeped in politics because the United Nations chose to create its own Platform rather than utilizing the Civil Society Election Coordination Platform supported by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development and the European Union. During the peaceful elections campaign, cluster leads were responsible for distributing UN funds to cluster members in order to implement programming, but many smaller organizations complained they received little or no funding and were excluded from project design and decision making. Some CSOs felt that the cluster heads had excessive discretionary power, did not work to include others, remained too concentrated in Freetown and failed to represent the views of smaller organizations and address the issues facing the rest of the country. As a UNIPSIL policy brief argues, clusters "need greater communication, sharing of information and collaboration" and "to strengthen and democratize their internal decision making structures" (Bedasi Sesay 2012, 11). The top-down nature of the clusters themselves impeded vertical integration insofar as leads failed to include and empower small-scale and local CSOs, some of which argue that a more decentralized and coalition structure would improve the Platform.

Third, both civil society and the United Nations have so far missed the opportunity to use the CSP as a means of strengthening and capacitating civil society to play a constructive role in peace building and democratic governance. The NSA project had hoped that the larger and more well-established organizations of the clusters would help to "professionalize" the smaller, younger and fledgling organizations so that they could more effectively influence policy making and carry out programming. In addition to this mentorship and capacity-building role, it was the responsibility of the cluster heads to bring the concerns, needs and views of smaller organizations into their discussions with the United Nations. While there was some effort in some clusters to foster such capacitation and inclusion, these functions were largely cast aside when the Platform turned its focus to the peaceful elections campaign.

These problems stem in part from disagreement over the basic purpose of the CSP. Where UNIPSIL understood it as a forum for policy dialogue, member CSOs viewed it as a potential funding mechanism, arguing that they need resources if the CSP is to help strengthen and develop civil society and serve as a counterbalance to governmental politics. For its part, UNIPSIL was well aware of the

problematic politics and the lack of capacitation, inclusion and mentorship within the clusters, but did not take action to remediate these issues. It collaborated with the CSP solely to contract out its peaceful elections campaign. As a consequence, it missed a prime opportunity to strengthen the role of civil society in democratic governance and peace building.

With UNIPSIL concluded, the UNDP now has the option to take over its engagement with the CSP and rectify these shortcomings. While the Platform represents a very shallow and ephemeral example of vertical integration so far, the clusters retain significant (if yet unrealized) potential to include civil society — both national and grassroots — in peace building across several key issue areas (including youth marginalization). There are several measures that the UNDP might consider to improve the CSP as a mechanism of vertical integration for improved peace building. First, it will have to encourage a reconstitution of the clusters in order to foster more inclusion, a fair distribution of resources, democratic decision making and mentorship of smaller organizations by larger ones. Second, the UNDP should fund (or help find donor funding for) the clusters for projects in their thematic areas and civil society capacity building. In its ideal form, the Platform would constitute a civil society trust fund in which civil society sets its own rules and priorities through processes of peer oversight.²² Finally, the UNDP could encourage the government to work with the CSP as a key mechanism of its civil society outreach (though this will require training for many CSOs on how to constructively engage with government).

VERTICAL INTEGRATION AS COORDINATION: THE NATIONAL YOUTH COMMISSION AND THE LINEAR MODE

While the NSA project directly engages civil society, many within the United Nations argue that the organization should concentrate its efforts on developing government institutions that can manage state-society relations (as a basic prerogative of traditional sovereignty). The rationale for this approach in Sierra Leone is simple: the conflict had *political causes*. UNIPSIL is by its very nature a political mission, it thus concentrates the majority of its efforts on elections and institutions of good governance so that the country can steer its own more peaceful future. Further, many would argue that the democratically elected government is much better positioned than foreigners to understand and contend with the country's complex social problems and challenging social environment. Therefore, in a (more conservative) linear mode of vertical integration, the United Nations supports the development

22 I am indebted to Frances Fortune for this suggestion.

of government institutions that can meaningfully engage civil society on key issues of peace building.

Within this mode, the UNDP supports two government institutions that are mandated to address the country's youth crisis: the Ministry of Youth Affairs and the National Youth Commission (NYC).²³ While the Ministry of Youth Affairs is charged with policy making, the NYC is deliberately designed as a mechanism of vertical integration. The establishment of a youth commission was one of the key recommendations of the TRC in 2004, but the NYC was only created in December 2009, becoming operational in June 2011 and formally launched in November 2011. Its core mandate is "to implement policies, and projects which will empower the youth to develop their potential for national development" (Government of Sierra Leone [GoSL] 2009, art. 10.1); it is intended to serve as a focal point for action on youth employment and empowerment, to coordinate youth groups and youth-serving organizations and to represent youth voices and interests within government. Its planned flagship programs include a National Youth Service to offer university students an internship in government, technical vocation education and training to better match the labour supply with demand and the establishment of Youth Multi-Purpose Centres of Excellence, which will include educational, recreational and business development facilities for youth.

Over 2,000 youth groups and youth-serving CSOs across the country have registered with the NYC, creating a national network that, once developed, could facilitate the bottom-up integration of youth ideas and views in national policy and the top-down distribution of resources to enable these groups to develop youth throughout the country. In general, youth CSOs are highly optimistic that the NYC will make progress on youth issues, but with the recurrent caveat "if it sticks to its mandate" — that is, if it receives the resources necessary to perform its functions and avoids the corruption and patrimonial politics that stymie other government agencies.

The NYC apparatus also reaches to the district level with its district youth councils, which are voted in by local youth groups to work with the district councils on youth issues, and to the chiefdom level with chiefdom youth councils to work with the chief and chiefdom development committees on youth issues (see Appendix II for a map of different scales of governance in Sierra Leone). At the time

of research, seven of 13 districts had operational district youth councils and chiefdom youth councils, with more to be established soon. These youth councils, however, lack funding for programs and have been marginalized by district and city councils. Further, they were not consulted or involved in the National Commission for Social Action's youth cash for work program. While the district and chiefdom youth councils could serve as an important link between the national and the local, they have yet to be empowered as significant actors in local politics and on youth issues.

The NYC is still in its infancy and has yet to establish its role. It has still to decide whether it will focus its efforts on advocacy, projects, employment or research on youth issues, and how it will balance political neutrality with its purpose of political intervention on behalf of youth (to secure their voice within district councils, for example). Two major obstacles could prevent it from deepening its vertical integration and making progress on the youth crisis.

The first is its lack of resources and capacity. The UNDP has supplied the NYC with equipment and training, but the latter has yet to pass a key audit of its financial capacity that would enable it to receive direct funding. Instead, the NYC provides its priorities and advice to the UNDP, which then directly funds implementers.²⁴ Until it receives such funding, the 2013 budget from the government is a meagre one billion leones (approximately US\$230,000). As a result, the NYC has only two to three program officers charged to coordinate youth affairs throughout the entire country; it will need much greater and more decentralized capacity if it is to reach the grassroots level with effective programming. As the United Nations (2011, 38) notes "There is a huge youth expectation on the Youth Commission to create job opportunities. Inadequate resources will make this practically impossible for the commission." Funding is thus the greatest challenge facing the NYC, and one of its top priorities is to establish a youth development trust fund. China has recently pledged US\$35 million to the GoSL for youth activities, but the allocation of these funds has yet to be determined, and may or may not benefit the NYC.

Second, the NYC faces the risk of political interference. As an independent commission, it was designed to avoid the partisan politics and bureaucracy that mar other government institutions, and the commissioner, Anthony A. Koroma, is widely respected as a person of integrity who has challenged bad governance and avoided partisan conflicts. But youth remains a politically charged issue, and there are those who would like to exploit the commission for partisan political interests.

23 Support to the NYC is one of two parts of the UNDP's youth programming. The second part focuses on employment generation for youth through business development centres in five major cities, a career guidance service within the universities and an internship program for university graduates. Before the creation of the Peace Building Fund, the UNDP could directly disperse its budget and often gave grants directly to civil society including small NGOs and direct beneficiaries. Now, it is more strategic and aspires to create a climate conducive to business and youth entrepreneurialism.

24 The goal is for the UNDP to directly fund the NYC, and the NYC to itself fund project implementation, by 2015.

Ultimately, the NYC, as a linear form of vertically-integrated youth peace building, has significant promise but remains fledgling and under-resourced. The United Nations can support its development by encouraging — or, if necessary, pressuring — the national government to respect its independence and provide to it the resources and policy influence it needs to serve youth. The United Nations and government can also pressure district and chiefdom councils to actively include their counterpart youth councils in local decision making. These youth bodies could also contribute to more effective youth project implementation if they are involved in local needs assessments and monitoring. Indeed, the NYC is well poised to conduct social action research using participatory research design to understand the intricacies of youth issues at the local level. Finally, all donors should integrate their youth programming into the NYC in order to benefit from its networks, support its capacity and (hopefully) achieve greater impact from their funding. Without donor engagement and resources, the NYC could easily fade into irrelevance.

VERTICAL INTEGRATION AS COHERENCE: DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF PEACE BUILDING?

The previous sections examined two mechanisms that link peace-building actors at different scales of operation, arguing that, while both bear potential, neither has yet fostered deep integration. Whereas these sections understood vertical integration as coordination, this section explores it in terms of coherence by analysing the differences in actors' understanding of peace building in the area of youth. As a form of discourse analysis, this operationalization examines the similarities, divergences and power relations within the definition of problems and solutions. While there are many divergent perspectives on peace building in Sierra Leone, one particular disagreement between top-down and bottom-up approaches is systematic and fundamental: the role of youth participation in peace building.

The issue of youth marginalization in Sierra Leone is multi-faceted, extensive and intractable. Exacerbating the issue is the UN system's bureaucratic encumbrance, which divides UN programming on youth employment and empowerment between different agencies and conceives the issue in terms of discrete outputs — job creation, school attendance, HIV/AIDS infection rates, health care, access to justice, etc. The danger of such a fragmented approach is that its ultimate impact will be less than the sum of these discrete projects. Further, there is a risk that the wide-ranging problems of youth exclusion will be reduced to the issue of unemployment. Youth empowerment is multi-dimensional so that a holistic strategy must include: a rights-based approach which creates the laws, policies

and institutional procedures that include and advance youth; an economic approach to ensure that the country invests in youth and provides them viable livelihoods; and a socio-political approach to ensure that youth are active participants in the political and communal life of the country (Kemper 2005).

Youth CSOs, for their part, tend to understand the youth and peace building problematic differently by emphasizing a more holistic approach based on the participation of youth themselves. Successful peace building is not just about the outputs and results; it requires the active participation of youth in every stage of the process. UN officials understand the broad issue areas of youth marginalization — employment, education, health, participation, etc. — but the United Nations does not consult with youth on the local manifestations of these program areas; rather, it deals exclusively with government. For youth, one of the most important characteristics of any youth program is its ability to mobilize youth solutions to youth problems, wherein youth themselves have a role in defining local challenges, designing sustainable strategies, implementing solutions and ensuring their continued success. Where the United Nations operates in discrete “projects,” youth and youth-serving organizations aim to establish long-term processes.

Sierra Leonean youth were exploited by the war, but also feel exploited by the peace. They see millions of dollars spent in their name without being consulted in programming or benefitting from its implementation. Youth CSOs often complain of a lack of transparency and accountability from the United Nations on its programs and funding. The general consensus among these CSOs is that any program that is not designed and implemented by youths is not genuinely helping them. When youth programming is done for youth (by government and international actors) rather than *by* the youth themselves, it is actually *disempowering* insofar as it perpetuates a culture in which they feel patronized. Christine Cubitt (2012b, 172) argues, “When the reconstruction is designed for outside purposes the lack of local ownership and sense of disempowerment becomes a new challenge facing the peaceful recovery of the country.” Such an approach also stigmatizes youth as inherently violent and volatile, and thus treats them as a problem to be controlled and managed rather than supporting them as a source of energy that will drive the country's future progress. Active involvement in development is an indispensable part of development itself.

For the bureaucracies of the United Nations and other donors, such a participatory approach to development is inefficient and unwieldy. Operationally, the UN system is institutionally tooled to disperse large-scale grants for large-scale programs by a small group of large-scale implementers. Youth-led solutions, on the contrary, require a large diversity of small-scale grants and programs that

are locally specific. Yet youth CSOs argue that to really understand youth issues, donors and government must actually meet with youth, and that youth involvement in the design and implementation of a project will ensure greater impact and stability.

This argument finds support in a joint impact assessment of the GoSL and UNDP (2011, 7) on youth employment programmes, which argues that the “relief approach, a continuation of the humanitarian relief modality, treated communities largely as beneficiaries and not development partners. The projects that adopted the new empowering approach did not simply supply inputs for communities but instead required communities to drive the process.” The latter approach was found to produce much more sustainable results, enabling recipients to be self-reliant rather than externally dependent. As a result, one of the report’s key recommendations is to “strengthen the capacity of development agencies in Sierra Leone to employ a more community-empowered development approach. This community-centred approach engages communities as equal partners in the development process and contributes to reversing the cycle of dependency created by the war” (ibid., 8).

ANALYSIS: VERTICALLY-INTEGRATED PEACE BUILDING AND SIERRA LEONE’S ONGOING YOUTH CRISIS

In the UN Development Assistance Framework, the UN country team pledges to “encourage community participation and empowerment to ensure that local people have a strong voice in all decision [making] that directly affects their lives and future” (United Nations Country Team [UNCT] 2006, 12). The Peace Building Cooperation Framework for Sierra Leone states “notwithstanding the significant progress made, peace and stability in Sierra Leone remain fragile ... The unemployment and marginalization of youth in particular present a serious threat to stability and peace” (UNPBC 2007, art. 4). As a result, the first of six priority areas for peace building is “youth employment and empowerment,” which remains a cross-cutting issue in the UN’s *Transitional Joint Vision* for 2013-2014. Despite these statements, there has been little vertical integration on the youth issue and scant progress in relation to its magnitude. This section returns to the three key questions set out at the beginning of the paper (concerning the extent, opportunities, obstacles and necessity of vertical integration), and argues that these two shortcomings are linked.

Officials and civil society members alike agree that little has been done to address the youth issue since the end of the war in 2002. As UNIPSIL’s Executive Representative to the Secretary General Michael van der Schulenburg lamented

to the Security Council in March 2010, “Despite the magnitude and significance of this social problem [youth], relatively little progress has been made. Over the last two years, there have been many plans and assessments but they have resulted in relatively few tangible programmes that would significantly impact the lives of a sizeable number of the youth” (v. d. Schulenberg 2010). Two years later, he argued, “no real difference has been made in getting the youth engaged in the development of the country. Sierra Leone’s persistent poverty levels are factors that breed malcontent and that could undo all the successes of the last years” (ibid. 2012, 6).

Given this situation, other officials warned the Security Council that youth unemployment poses a “latent threat” to peace in Sierra Leone (United Nations Department of Public Information [UNDPI] 2010). So long as youth remain frustrated, marginalized from wider society, living in desperate circumstances and denied dignity and opportunity, they remain ready fuel for a resumption of mass violence. While the risk is easily and often exaggerated, the same conditions that drove masses of marginalized youth to take up arms during the civil war still persist today. The UN system continues to make great strides in many other areas of peace building, from improving democratic governance to justice reform, but so long as the youth crisis persists, the peace remains vulnerable. Only recently, with UNIPSIL closing and the UN role shifting from peace building to “a routine, long-term developmental trajectory” (UN 2012, 7), has action on youth marginalization begun in earnest.

In relation to youth peace building, the UN system has not been deeply vertically integrated. UN engagement with Sierra Leonean civil society has been highly restricted because the landscape is politically fraught and UN cooperation selective. The engagement that does occur is narrow, restricted to large-scale professional NGOs (including international NGOs) acting as implementing partners and generally failing to include and collaborate with local civil society. As an experiment in the triangular mode of vertical integration, UNIPSIL’s NSA project’s concentration on APPYA represents a narrow and politically problematic segment of youth civil society. The CSP is dominated by large-scale NGOs, not yet an effective vehicle for connecting the United Nations to grassroots organizations, and was engaged restrictively as a service contracting mechanism for peaceful elections rather than for programming in its thematic areas (including youth issues) and in civil society building. UNDP’s support to the NYC represents a very promising mechanism for vertical integration in the linear mode, but remains fledgling, grossly under-resourced, and vulnerable to the country’s politics. This includes plans for a network that would link grassroots youth CSOs with national government and donors and ensure youth representation at the various

levels of governance, but this infrastructure has yet to be realized and will take considerable efforts to establish.

At the same time, both of these mechanisms represent promising opportunities to deepen the vertical integration of peace building in Sierra Leone. The shortcomings noted above can be corrected if they receive sufficient attention and resources. The CSP must be reconstituted to include and capacitate small-scale CSOs and its clusters given funding to carry out programming in both their thematic foci and to build civil society more generally. The NYC requires considerable international support to ensure its independence, capacity and ability to transform local politics by creating meaningful space for youth councils. Both could effectively connect top-down with bottom-up peace building in ways that might foster better youth employment and empowerment.

There are, however, several major obstacles to vertical integration in the area of youth, which also hamper progress on the youth crisis more generally. The first is the politicization of civil society, which renders the government suspicious of many CSOs as well as international engagement with civil society, and ensures that partisan politics often trumps commitment to the issues (as illustrated by the case of APPYA in the lead up to elections).

The second obstacle is that the United Nations generally must follow the lead of the host government to take concerted and cross-cutting action. So far, government action on youth has not been remotely commensurate with the need, and politicians are accused of using youth as “window dressing” rather than empowering them for change (Cubitt 2012a, 37). In the past, successive governments have made bold policy pronouncements on youth, but without clear plans for implementation or sufficient information on the issues. Yet, there are indications that this situation may change. Re-elected in November 2012, President Ernest Bai Koroma has pledged on multiple occasions to make youth the top priority of his next five years in office, and for the first time since the war over 10 percent of the cabinet is comprised of youth (a recommendation of the TRC). Youth are mainstreamed into all eight pillars of his *Agenda for Prosperity* (Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper III), and civil society has been involved in the formulation of the plan. At the same time, youth have high expectations of the government, and display a growing cynicism over broken promises.

The third major obstacle is the institutional nature of the United Nations itself. Its commitment to accountability in its funding creates high restrictions on the type of NGO it can work with and prevents it from engaging the traditional and community-level groups that are more embedded at the local level. Funding modalities restrict what the United Nations can do; yet, at least several program officers recognize that the UN’s inability to

move beyond large-scale and professional NGOs to reach local CSOs and youth represents a strategic gap and limitation to effective programming. Finally, the United Nations remains focused on strengthening government institutions, guided by an understanding of the liberal peace that prioritizes elite ownership over broad-based participation (in this respect, support to civil society is feared as potentially undermining the ministries). Such an approach overestimates the extent to which election votes signal confidence in government and overlooks the myriad of peace-building efforts unfolding at the local scale.

The most important question that remains is *vertical integration necessary for successful peace building in the case of Sierra Leone’s youth crisis?* The active involvement of everyday people in peace building and in deciding the nation’s future, from the grassroots to the national scale, is certainly a moral imperative that derives naturally from liberal peace ideology and helps distinguish international peace operations from imperialism. But the United Nations has limited time and resources and faces a number of constraints on deepening its engagement with host societies. Must it deepen its vertical integration to avoid a relapse of mass violence?

The continued marginalization of youth remains a threat to the entire peace-building enterprise, but nobody is likely to resolve the youth crisis in the near future. There are no silver bullets for this deeply intractable issue and, if youth empowerment and employment is achieved, it will most likely occur in a generational timeframe. There are, however, four key factors that suggest deeper vertical integration could advance this process and represents a necessary condition of success.

First, as the section on “vertical integration as coherence” found, youth will only feel truly empowered and satisfied with their condition if they are actively involved in transforming it. The youth crisis goes beyond issues of employment; it requires status, dignity, agency and hope for a better future on the part of this long-marginalized segment of the population. Solutions that are not designed and implemented by youth themselves perpetuate a patronizing culture, while often failing to have a meaningful impact on young people’s lives. Successful action is unlikely to be achieved when elites and elders determine the content and funding of priorities (Ismail et al. 2009, 50); a participatory approach is just as important as any output as an essential characteristic of success.

Second, while the United Nations and the government understand the broad areas of youth marginalization — employment, education, health, skills, political participation, etc. — youth are better poised to identify their needs within their own specific local context. The needs of youth in rural agricultural areas differ from those in fishing areas and both differ from those of urban slums. Moreover, leadership in peace building

from the government (and the United Nations via its cooperation with government) remains highly suspect amid a continuing climate of corruption, patronage and divisive partisanism. Peace-building initiatives that avoid such pathologies are likely to be local and grassroots in nature. By establishing and empowering local youth councils to conduct needs assessments, program planning, monitoring and evaluation, government and donors can make much more targeted and effective interventions to support this potential.

Third, a recent report on youth vulnerability and exclusion in West Africa (Ismail et al. 2009) found that youth marginalization is unlikely to produce violent outcomes if they still have at least some sense of social place provided by family, religious authorities, NGOs and community groups. Indeed, “Respondents across the seven case studies identified CSOs or NGOs as the most important sources of support to them” (ibid., 54). Similarly,

Youth perceive such collective endeavours as legitimate and effective sources of moral, socio-economic, political and even physical security. Not unexpectedly, such private and voluntary initiatives deliver much needed socio-economic, political and moral services to youth by tapping into a vast reservoir of workable ideas, resources and strategies fed by domestic and international sources. Unfortunately, more often than not, state-led initiatives and policies throughout West Africa supposedly aimed at the youth have yet to connect with these initiatives or even acknowledge them (ibid., 10).

If involvement with CSOs helps to sustain vulnerable and marginalized youth and prevents a return to violence, then it is important for governmental and international actors to support and collaborate with such entities as a key peace building measure during the slow, long-term remediation of the youth crisis. Programs that work through these segments of civil society are less prone to politicization and more responsive to youth needs because of their participatory and local nature (ibid., 11).

Finally, deeper vertical integration on the youth issue could significantly advance peace building in Sierra Leone by promoting a *hybrid* peace that helps transform the country’s conflict reproducing political structures. In one of the most important developments of the recent peace building literature, the hybridity theme argues that peace operations inevitably see external designs redirected by internal forces (Mac Ginty 2010), and that international peace builders must reach out to the local and the everyday — even when they bely liberal peace orthodoxy — in order to better manage this hybridity (Richmond 2009). This focus on local agency helps explain the failure of international attempts to create strong central institutions

in the Western image, and aspires to temper the liberal peace orthodoxy by engaging indigenous institutions and social forces (even illiberal ones) when they serve peace.

In Sierra Leone (as elsewhere), an exclusive focus on government institutions and elites risks further entrenching patrimonialism and corruption, as support to state institutions becomes co-opted into exclusive networks. As argued above, this type of hybridity can support the first peace (inter-elite agreement), but at the expense of the second peace insofar as it reproduces sources of conflict while excluding large swathes of the population (see, Tom 2013, 247–249; Cubitt 2012b, 172). Patrick Tom distinguishes this form of hybridity from an emancipatory one that seeks to include greater portions of society to transform dysfunctional power structures. He identifies local NGOs as a potential source of such hybridity because they are able to engage with local customs and traditions (such as reconciliation, cleansing ceremonies, peace huts and local courts) while advocating liberal peace concepts (such as democracy, accountability and human rights) (Tom 2013, 250–254).

In this sense, the active inclusion and empowerment of youth and youth CSOs at different scales of governance — from chiefdoms to national government — offers an opportunity to transform, or at least weaken, Sierra Leone’s deeply entrenched political pathologies. Where an exclusive focus on elites and government institutions risks merely entrenching these patterns, the inclusion of traditionally marginalized segments of society could introduce constructive new political dynamics as a transformative process of hybrid peace building. Such engagement would bypass the orthodox international preference for centralized representational democracy as the sole locus of politics, but could promote accountability, transparency and participation within local-level politics in a context-specific manner. In this way, greater vertical integration of youth and peace building in Sierra Leone could foster socio-political transformation that remediates persistent causes of conflict by empowering a largely excluded form of local agency.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEWS IN SIERRA LEONE

This paper is based upon interviews conducted by Michael Lawrence with members of the United Nations, GoSL, NGOs and CSOs in Sierra Leone, September 2–16, 2012 and March 9–24, 2013. It represents the author’s interpretation and synthesis of these meetings. As such, the views expressed herein are the sole responsibility of the author and should not be attributed to any particular individual or organization listed below.

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Abu Badasi Sesay, associate democratic governance officer, UNIPSIL (Freetown)

Bessan Vikou, political and peace building officer, UNIPSIL (Bo)

GOVERNMENT:

Adonis Abboud, consul of Serbia (Freetown)

Ismail al-Sankoh Conteh, deputy minister of sport (Freetown)

Bokarie Ensa, former youth representative to the commonwealth for Sierra Leone (Freetown)

Raymond Kabia, deputy minister of internal affairs (Freetown)

Paul Kamara, minister of youth, employment and sports (Freetown)

Anthony A. Koroma, national youth commissioner (Freetown)

Charles Moina, director in the ministry of youth, employment and sport (Freetown)

Osman Beree Sesay, chairman, Portee community development committee (Freetown)

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Ismail Al-Sankoh Conteh, national executive president, NYC (Freetown)

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Desmond Dumbaya, resource centre manager, Enhancing the Interaction and Interface between Civil Society and the State (ENCISS) (Makeni)

Ambrose James, country director, Search for Common Ground (Freetown)

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Kissytown Youths Against Violence and Integrated Development Projects (Bo)

Mahmud Tim Kargbo, Youth Alliance for Justice and Peace (Freetown)

Portee Youth Organization

Quarry Youth Organization (Freetown)

Solar Development (Freetown)

United Family Protective Organization — Fulah Town (Freetown)

Car Wash (Bo)

APPENDIX 2: SCALES OF GOVERNANCE AND YOUTH IN SIERRA LEONE

Government	NYC	APPYA	UNIPSIL	UNDP	Human Rights
National	NYC	National APPYA executive	UNIPSIL headquarters in Freetown	UNDP	Human rights commission
Regional	Regional NYC offices	Regional APPYA executive	UN joint field offices (Bo, Makeni, Koidu, Kenema)	Implementing partner (national scale NGO)	PROSEC (Provincial Security Committee)
District councils (13) and city councils	District youth councils	District level APPYA		Local civil society organizations	DISEC (District Security Committee)
Chiefdoms (with a council of elders) and community development committees	Chiefdom and zone youth councils	Chiefdom- and constituency-level APPYA		Local civil society organizations	Civil society human rights monitors
Notes on Vertical Integration					
After the war the government underwent a process of decentralization by devolving powers to the district councils in an effort to improve responsiveness to citizens' needs and avoid the centralization and exclusion that contributed to the conflict.	Presently, the district, chiefdom and zone level youth councils have yet to be established across the whole country, and those that are set up still lack meaningful influence within district and chiefdom councils.	APPYA reaches from a national executive down to the constituency level throughout the country. During the elections, it was engaged by UNIPSIL's NSA project in pursuit of peaceful elections, but was significantly hampered at the national level by partisan conflict over the organization's leadership.	UNIPSIL worked primarily with the government, but had four regional offices that related to sub-national APPYA, as well as PROSEC, DISEC and human rights monitors at the local level.	Ideally, the UNDP contracts its projects to an implementing partner (generally a large-scale professional NGO) which then subcontracts local implementation to CSOs at the district, chiefdom or community level. In reality, the implementing partner often implements the program itself without including local CSOs.	In perhaps the best example of vertical integration in Sierra Leone, the human rights section of UNIPSIL established local volunteer human rights monitors who are represented at DISEC, PROSEC and during the elections consulted with the Office of National Security. They can also call on UNIPSIL and the Human Rights Commission.

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