

**SELECTED ISSUES OF AFRICA: GOVERNANCE, CONFLICT AND PEACE-  
BUILDING**

**BY**

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## **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to Catechist Norbert Ayaamo of the Madina Northern Outreach Programme (NOP) – Presbyterian Church of Ghana.

## ABSTRACT

*This work takes a cursory look at some important dynamics and trends on Africa's political development. It underscores three important issues of governance, conflict and peace-building.*

The work constitutes three main chapters. Chapter one analyses the democratic dispensation of the Fourth Republic of Ghana. It takes a look at some of the challenges of *Ghana's democracy and concludes that Ghana which has won the accolade of being "the gateway" of democratic governance in Sub-Saharan Africa is at best a democratizing state rather than being democratic. The findings of the work clearly give the evidence of fear, acrimony and incumbency abuse of elections as a constant threat to Ghana's democratization process. It has also been revealed that ethnicity has become a major determinant of electoral politics in Ghana which has been couched in the Akan-Ewe electoral card played by the two front-horses of Ghana's politics, the NPP and the NDC whose electoral successes have been influenced by the Akans and Ewes respectively since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1992. Other challenges include the low participation of women in politics and public life, the frequent boycotts of parliamentary sessions by the NPP and the NDC and the lack of respect for the rule of law.*

Chapter two examines the impact of conflict on poverty and food security in Africa. It concludes that all the effects of conflict are poverty and food insecurity related. The work establishes the fact that poverty and food insecurity on the African continent has been exacerbated by the conflict prone nature of African states from the loss of lives and physical suffering to the effects of conflict on the natural environment. The work draws practical examples from intractable civil war countries like Angola, Sudan, DR Congo and Sierra Leone among many others for concrete evidence upon which the lessons of the study are much appreciated for the progress of the continent.

The final chapter underscores the challenges of post-conflict peace-building in Africa. It takes a deep analysis of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SLTRC) inaugurated in 2002. The analysis of the SLTRC offers a good lesson for the viability of truth commissions as effective transitional justice mechanism for addressing the legacy of past human rights abuse. The SLTRC remains one of the effective of its kinds in Africa due to its massive international involvement, the greater participation of civil society organisations throughout the activities and processes of the commission, the public hearing and high publicity of the proceeding of the commission and the special attention given to women and children. However, the commission was plagued with a number of challenges, inter alia; the simultaneous operation of the Sierra Leone Special Court (SLSC); obstacles of making the wider public aware of and knowledgeable of the commission such as illiteracy, lack of single lingua franca and security concerns etc.; serious mismanagement and staff recruitment problems; and time, resource and funding constraints.

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **THE CHALLENGES OF DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION: A DISSECTION OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC OF GHANA**

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The end of the cold war with the collapse of communism witnessed a new wave of democratization which swept across the world system. Africa was no exception of this experience as in the late 1980s and early 1990s, authoritarian politics which dominated the continent in the early post-independence era gave way for the emergence of liberal democratic governance. In Africa this evolution was made possible through domestic and internal pressures. International pressures were exerted through the conditionalities of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) by the Bretton Wood Institutions, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund which made democratic governance a key prerequisite for aid. On the domestic front, the politics of individualism of African leaders, authoritarian and dictatorial politics coupled with economic hardships gave no option to citizens than to cry out for new independence.

Democratic governance has become or regarded as the best form of government in the world by which all states are being encouraged to embark on its principles as the only true way of ensuring good governance. It is associated with the benefit of political and socio-economic development and the absence of it is the reversal. In actual fact, the practice of democratic governance is the “only game in town” (Linz and Stepan, 1996:15) cited by Omotola (2007).

Ghana returned to constitutional rule in 1993 after eleven turbulent years of the authoritarian military –cum – civilian Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) under the chairmanship of Flight Lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings (Frempong, 2007). The PNDC ushered the country into the Fourth Republic and adopted the name, National Democratic Congress (NDC) with Rawlings being the founder and leader who became the first president of the first eight years after emerging as the winner of the 1992 and the 1996 elections. The New Patriotic Party (NPP) became the first longest opposition party until it wrestled power from the NDC in the 2000 elections which marked a new phase of the infant liberal democratic governance in the country. The country has since 1992 conducted 5 consecutive successful elections albeit the challenges and anomalies associated with each of them.

The question of democratic governance is highly contested in Africa and let alone to argue that African states are democratically consolidated.

This chapter examines the challenges of democratic consolidation by using Ghana's Fourth Republic as the focus of analysis and argues that Ghana which has received the international accolade of being the gateway of democracy in Africa especially Sub-Saharan Africa at best is still in the democratization process. Thus, it is yet to reach the level of a democratic state.

## **1.1 THE DEBATE OF DEMOCRATIC CONSOLIDATION**

Democratic consolidation presupposes that a democratic regime exists from the beginning to the end of the process. Democracy is indispensable starting of a democratic

consolidation (in form of a ‘consolidating democracy’) and in its hopeful outcome (in form of ‘consolidated democracy’) (Katusimeh, 2004:102).

There are two main views on democratic consolidation which are the narrow view and the broader view. The narrow view is popularly associated with Samuel P. Huntington’s ‘Two-Turn Over Test’ which is a mechanistic test based on the achievement of two peaceful party alternation of power by a country. The logic behind the test is that democracy is consolidated only if governments can routinely be removed by electoral means and the only reliable indicator that they can be removed is that they have been removed. Thus to Huntington, after two cycles of peaceful leadership replacement, most political actors both won and lost without revolting which indicates that they have accepted the rules of the electoral game (Bratton, 2004: 154-155).

Thus, going by Samuel Huntington’s two-turnover test Ghana’s democracy no doubt is consolidated through Election 2008. The Rawlings-led National Democratic Congress (NDC) after two terms of administration (1993-2001) was defeated in the 2000 elections by the New Patriotic Party (NPP) led by J.A Kufuor which was re-elected in 2004. In 2008, the NDC led by Prof. E.A Mills after eight years in opposition recaptured power passing the two-turnover test (Frempong, 2012:19). This view reduces democratic consolidation to mere alternation of power through elections but it is far beyond achieving two successive and peaceful transfer of political power as would be revealed by the broader school of thought.

The broader view on democratic consolidation is most credited to the work of Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan (1997). Their view is a more comprehensive and holistic approach of defining and measuring democratic consolidation. To them a democracy is consolidated when it is internalised behaviourally, attitudinally and constitutionally. Behaviourally, no significant actors

attempt to use non-democratic means to obtain a political goal; attitudinally, democratic procedures and institutions are considered by the vast majority to be the preferred way of organizing politics and constitutionally, both governmental and non-governmental are subject to the laws and institutions of the democratic process. Democratic consolidation is therefore a total institutionalization of democratic ethos and practices.

## **1.2 THE WEAKNESSES OF GHANA'S DEMOCRACY**

Based on the broader view on democratic consolidation, I argue as mentioned earlier that Ghana is still in the process of democratization albeit the progress it has made so far since the transition to constitutional rule in 1992. This is because of the anomalies and weaknesses which have continue to be not only a challenge but threats to democratic stability.

### **1.2.1 The Fear, Acrimony and Incumbency Abuse in Elections**

Despite the successes that the country has made so far in electoral politics, the continuous fear and acrimony that characterise elections in Ghana before, during and after elections clearly show that country is yet to attain a democratic status and not too far from electoral civil war. A state of democratic maturity where peaceful and violent free elections would not depend on religious bodies to pray for the nation before, during and after elections, rather the electoral rules and procedures would be respected and adhered to as a condition for achieving a successful election. Do advanced democratic countries like the USA rely on prayers for free and fair elections? The answer is simply NO because the electoral rules and institutions are working and well internalised.

The use of macho men by political elites before, during and after elections has virtually become a norm in the electoral politics of Ghana. They are used to intimidate voters in areas considered to be strong holds of opposing parties and they are also used to disrupt the electoral process where one perceives defeat. There have also been instances of election-related violence before, during and after elections. For example, the 2000 post-election violence in Bawku and in 2004 there was episodes of violence in Tamale with the arrest and subsequent death in military custody of Alhaji Mobila, the Regional Chairman of the Convention People's party (CPP) becoming the darkest spot in the 2004 elections (Frempong, 2008).

The abuse of incumbency advantage in the electoral politics of Ghana has fueled animosity between incumbent and opposition governments. The phrase "abuse of incumbency" refers to the use of government resources, not available to any other candidates, to aid an incumbent running for reelection (Chemerinsky, 1988:774). There have always been concerns raised by opposition parties of abuse and intimidation from the camps of incumbent governments as a result of incumbency advantage. As Gyimah-Boadi (2001) revealed, the pre-election environment of the 2000 elections was characterized by deep mistrust and intense acrimony between the then ruling party, NDC and the opposition NPP. Reports of ruling party agents and organs of the state intimidating the opposition were rife, and there was a pervading sense that violence might erupt. All this created an unprecedented state of public anxiety as many people feared that the transition would be disrupted and the election might degenerate into civil conflict (Gyimah-Boadi, 2001:1). In the 2008 elections, the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) revealed that the most flagrant incumbent abuses involved the use of state vehicles, state security apparatus, state venues and paraphernalia and the state helicopters to distribute campaign materials of its presidential candidate, Nana Akufo Addo (Azeem, 2011:7). The continued

incumbency abuse is a major threat to the sustenance of multi-party politics which is a key element of democratic governance.

### **1.2.2 The Increased Ethnicity in Ghana's Politics**

Another challenge in Ghana's democratic dispensation is the increased and heightened level of ethnicity in all the realms of political life which has the poisonous tendency of breeding divisions and unnecessary tensions. In a country where ethnic sentiments rather than competence are used to galvanize political power, its democratic credentials become questionable. Ethnicity has become the dominant variable in the determinant of political power in Ghana and political elites and politicians continue to exhibit ethnic intolerance and prejudice which has the propensity to foment violence in the near future or days if triggered by any unanticipated event.

Particularly, since 2000, elections have been shaped by the Akan – Non Akan divide. The NPP has continued to gain most of its votes from the five Akan regions while it has performed poorly in four Non-Akan regions and for the NDC the reverse. The only exception is the Greater Accra Region due to its cosmopolitan nature and regions which do not vote base on ethnic lines are normally ridiculed rather than hailed (Frempong, 2008).

Ethnic voting can become a political problem because it can lead to clientelistic and patronage politics and by extension, a leading obstacle to democratic building. In addition, ethnic politics eliminates the relevance of formal institutions, ideology and policy differences in the organization of the wider civic political arena (Berman et al. 2004:2) cited by Arthur (2009:69). This threat has been confirmed by Throup (2011) that in Ghana there are latent tensions in all segments of the public sector arising from the perception that opportunities and resources are

granted disproportionately along ethnic lines by the party in power which is a potential threat to the stability of the country. The rate at which ethnicity is eating up into the politics of Ghana is therefore a big threat to the democratic progress of the country.

### **1.2.3 The Marginalisation and Low Participation of Women in Politics**

It has been argued that participation of women in politics is not only a means of realizing the broad agenda of good governance but also emphasizes the point that without their involvement, progress in other areas of development is likely to be halted because women's exclusion from politics deprives government of half of its citizens talents and contributions (Allah-Mensah 2005:97).

The low participation of women in politics is yet another challenge in Ghana's democratic progress which doubts its democratic consolidation prospects. Despite the efforts of government to ensure gender equality and promotion of women participation in politics to show its commitment to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), women are still marginalized in this effect. Currently, women account for only 19 out of the 230 positions in the nation's parliament (8.5%) and only 6.5% of District Chief Executives within the local government positions.

The CEDAW committee has noted poor implementation of the affirmative action policy and women's representation on elective and appointive bodies of state remains at a dismay low level, despite the 40 per cent quota. Both governments and political parties in their candidate selection have done little to improve upon the situation and one effect of such low representation

has been long delays in passing legislation of critical importance to women like the Domestic Violence Bill which only became law in 2007 since under debate in 1999 (AfriMAP, 2007: 7).

Human right is an essential element of democracy and as such the marginalization and underrepresentation of women in politics deny them of their right to political participation. Women in fact play significant role in electoral campaigns and mobilization of supporters for political parties. However, intra party politics in Ghana do not show any significant commitment toward an increase in women participation although they have the resources to do so. The selection and nomination processes within political parties continue to skew to the advantage of men at the expense of women. Political parties have failed to give the necessary financial support to women candidates within their parties which does not speak well of the democratic progress of the country.

#### **1.2.4 Frequent Boycotts of Parliamentary Sessions**

This weakness in Ghana's democracy has been identified by Frempong (2008). He argues that the frequent boycott of parliamentary sessions by opposition groups casts doubts on how deeply the political elite have imbibed the ethos of consensus building which is one of the chief principles of democracy. The two front-horses in Ghana's politics, the NPP and the NDC have sowed the seeds of lack of consensus building and continue to make it their normal practices and hallmarks.

The current opposition party, NPP has its own history and habit of frequent boycott of parliamentary sessions. While in opposition before coming to power in 2001, the NPP had

boycotted parliament over issues like vetting of presidential ministerial nominees and the budget (Frempong, 2008). This culture is still being carried on as it has continued to boycott parliamentary sessions on issues like the Constitution Instrument (CI 73) that would see the creation of the new additional constituencies. On 20<sup>th</sup> February, 2012 the minority NPP boycotted a meeting in parliament between the house and a delegation from United Kingdom (UK) following the arrest of their colleague O.B Amoah.

The ruling party NDC is also a twin brother to the NPP in terms of parliamentary boycotts. When in opposition, it boycotted parliamentary sessions over issues like, national reconciliation, national health insurance, extension of the franchise to Ghanaians abroad, and boycotted the house for about two weeks over the conviction of one of its members, Daniel Abodakpi (then MP for Keta) by a Fast Track Court over issues related to his tenure as a Deputy Trade Minister in the NDC government.

Whatever reasons or justifications for the tradition of frequent parliamentary boycotts by these parties, it is crystal clear that the politics of Ghana is lacking elite consensus building. Even if the outcome might be in the interest of the nation partisan interests continue to overshadow national interests.

### **1.2.5 Lack of Respect for the Rule of Law**

Another weakness in the democratic process of Ghana is the application of the rule of law. Any state which claims to be democratic must strictly respect the rule of law since it is inseparable from democracy.

The democratic process of Ghana has some major weaknesses in the application of the principle of rule of law. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in its 2011 final report on Ghana has captured two important weaknesses associated with the principle of rule of law in Ghana. First the concentration of power in the executive branch leading to conflicts of interest among officials that have the responsibility to enforce the law. This sort of weakness is embedded the presidential appointees such as the Minister of Justice and Attorney General who may have the constitutional power to uphold the law are faced with political incentives not to prosecute members of their own party. This is contrary to the equality before the law which is a very important feature of rule of law. The report further identifies weak accountability mechanisms in other areas of government such as the parliament and the deliberate attempts to keep the judiciary weak promote the culture of impunity in the political systems as the only ones who are prosecuted are those outside government but not those in power. It is interesting but more serious to note that the NPP and the NDC are content with this situation (USAID, 2011).

The report further reiterates that political elites within both the NPP and the NDC claim that NPP and the NDC would rather have all of the power some of the time than some of the power all of the time. Thus, to the political elites such powers are desired because greater oversight and transparency would interfere with the capacity to steer the economic resources to their political backers. This motive therefore becomes a very important variable in explaining the massive corruption in the country.

The second weakness in the application and practice of rule of law in Ghana is the extremely low capacity of the state to enforce the law at the local level in many parts of the country, especially in rural areas (USAID, 2011).

If political elites especially within the NPP and the NDC fancy the inappropriateness of rule of law in Ghana, then corruption and injustice would continue to haunt the infant liberal democracy of Ghana.

Apart from the above flaws in the democratic system of the Fourth Republic of Ghana, numerous still exist which to a large extent nullify the assertion that Ghana is democratically consolidated. The dirty inter and intra party politics by political elites of the two elephants in Ghana's political scene, the NPP and the NDC confirms the defence of the protagonists of politics that politics is never a bad game but only has bad players. The lack of respect among and within political elites and the intra party factions or disunity have negative implications on the national politics. The accusations and counter accusations between the NDC and NPP is yet another serious issue.

Also the recent activities of foot soldiers is also a mayor threat to the democratic path of the country as a result of clientelistic and patronage nature of politics in Ghana. Those who are promised of reward by their parties have to use force at the expense of the constitutional and institutional procedures of the country. There have been so many occasions of violence behaviours of foot soldiers such as sacking District Chief Executives from their offices and the seizure of public keys.

Democratic governance is associated with the dividends of socio-economic improvements in the standard of living of the citizens. The high unemployment rate especially among the youth, poor infrastructures like school buildings, accessibility of drinking water, good health facilities and chronic poverty in some parts of the country especially the northern all prove that Ghana still has a lot to do to attain the level of democratic consolidation

However, Ghana's democratic prospects must be acknowledged. Thus despite the numerous challenges and weaknesses, the country has been able to make some progress. The peaceful turn over or alternation of power in 2001 and 2008 is worth commending. There have also been some efforts to improve the rights of women with the creation of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWAC) by the government. The appointment of women as Chief Justice and Speaker of Parliament by the NPP and NDC governments respectively is also remarkable and a good step towards the right direction. The promotion of free and independent media has facilitated freedom of speech and expression giving room for a wider participation of the ordinary citizen.

### **1.3 CONCLUSION**

Ghana's respect in the international community as one of the best countries in terms of good governance remains somewhat debatable. Of course comparing her democratic credentials to many states in Africa and perhaps some parts of the world, it may be justified. However, the underlining weaknesses such as the fear and abuse incumbency advantage in the electoral politics, the ethnicity pattern of politics, the lack of consensus building and dirty politics among political elites, the marginalization of women in politics, the high unemployment rate and the undermining of the principle of rule of law among many others question the democratic progress of the country. It must be noted that democratic consolidation is more than alternation of political power or conducting free and fair elections. The net must be cast wider to encompass every aspect of democracy. The progress amid the weaknesses must be carried on while avoiding complacency as the country is not too far away from instability. I conclude therefore that Ghana is at best a democratizing country but not too far away from becoming democratic.

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## CHAPTER TWO

### IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON POVERTY AND FOOD SECURITY IN AFRICA

#### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

The African continent especially Sub-Saharan Africa has been characterized as a continent caught in the “web of conflict” in the eyes of the international environment due to the variegated nature of conflicts and the ease at which states easily break into conflict. Almost all the states in Africa have one way or the other experienced some level of conflict in the post-colonial Africa in various forms inter alia; conflicts emanating from authoritarian and dictatorship politics, religious, ethnic, civil wars and dissensions within states and border-skirmishes among states. It is therefore not surprising that the continent again is regarded as the poorest continent with chronic poverty in the world with governments still battling with the antidote and panacea to political and socio-economic crises. Thus, the problem of conflict and insecurity is destabilizing the continents peace process as it is argued that no continent that is bedeviled with the problem of peace and security in its societal milieus could progress (Ejiaku, 2009). Armed or violent conflicts do not only breed poverty and food insecurity but also exacerbate the already existence of chronic poverty in some parts of the continent.

The costs of war for Africa’s people, its cultures and societies, and its economies have been immense. Indeed, measured in terms of death, refugees and displaced persons, and lost economic opportunities, African war is one of the great calamities of our era. It is also a calamity

in dimensions that are more difficult to measure, including the anguish and suffering of millions, and the destruction of traditional ways of life, perhaps forever (Copson, 1994:3).

Statistics confirm that Africa has a population of about 600 million<sup>1</sup>, more than double of the United States, yet it is estimated that average real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Per capita income is 11% in Africa, which is lower today than it was in the 1970s. Evidence shows that 200 million Africans have no access to proper health care, and proper hygiene. Another 47% are without access to safe water (Mark, 2007:1) cited in Ejiaku (2009: 15).

It is therefore an obvious fact that armed conflicts in Africa especially Sub-Saharan Africa continue to be a major source of the high prevalence of chronic poverty and general food insecurity. As noted by Luckhman et al (2001:1) armed conflict is arguably now the most single important determinant of poverty in Africa certainly of the concentrated forms of poverty that develop when population are displaced, livelihoods vanish and safety networks break down.

How then does conflict impacts on a continent which is already inherent with the disease of poverty and food insecurity or famine as a result of natural disasters and other factors like poor economic management, politics of exclusion and inequitable distribution of resource and high rate of illiteracy among many others? This is what this chapter seeks to explore.

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<sup>1</sup> Current statistics show that the total population of Africa is about 800 million.

## 2.1 CONCEPTUAL ISSUES

In order to understand the impact of conflict on poverty and food security, it is very imperative to examine the relationship between conflict<sup>2</sup>, poverty and food insecurity. It is obvious that all the possible effects of conflicts are poverty and food security related.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1.1 Conflict and Poverty Nexus

Poverty is a contested concept and it is contested for a reason. Arguments over how poverty should be conceptualized, defined and measured go beyond semantic and academic hair-splitting. The conceptualization, definition and measurement of poverty in a society is like a mirror-image of the ideals of that society (SPII, 2007:5). The definition of poverty therefore involves a multidimensional approach since the identification of who is poor requires different policy outcomes.

There are four main multidimensional approaches that give alternative meanings to the explanation and measurement of poverty:

- **Monetary approach:** this approach is the most commonly used. It is measured by the fall of the level of income. It is normally associated with the lack of basic human needs such as water, food, shelter and health as a result of lack of or inadequate monetary resources.
- **The capability approach:** This approach views poverty as the lack of basic human capabilities such as capacity building and the realization of human potentials. It was

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<sup>2</sup> Conflict here is violent or armed conflict or war which has attracted scholars of Conflict and Peace studies in recent times. It involves the use of sophisticated destructive and armed weapons between or among combatants.

<sup>3</sup> Loss of lives, destruction of infrastructure, assets and livelihoods, fear and insecurity, internal and external displaced population and the effects on the natural resources or the environment etc. have direct or indirect implication of poverty.

developed by Sen who defined basic capabilities as the ability to satisfy certain crucially important functionings up to certain minimally adequate levels (Sen, 1993:41) cited in Laderchi et al. (2003:14).

- **Social exclusion approach:** this approach defines poverty as the exclusion of particular individuals or groups in the normal activities and processes within the society depriving them of their social
- **Participatory approach:** this approach was pioneered by Chambers. It aims to get people themselves to participate in decision about what it means to be poor and the magnitude of poverty (Chambers 1994; Chambers, 1997) cited in Laderchi et al. (2003:14).

However, in the context of Africa poverty has been largely operationalised to mean absolute poverty which is the lack of basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and health (Ejiaku, 2009). This is what is mostly explained as chronic poverty.

Although seems simple, the nexus between conflict and poverty is very complex and scholars of conflict and peace studies continue to be divided. Some are of the view that poverty causes conflict whereas others maintain otherwise.

Conflict obviously brings poverty in as much as it brings destruction, violence and hatred. Poverty however, is also thought of as being a cause of conflict when grievances are not met; it is argued that poor people will riot, question government altogether and join rebel groups. Economic decline and extreme poverty may then reinforce tendencies to resort to violent means (Restrepo et al., 2008:6).

Luckham et al. (2001) emphasizing on the dynamic and mutually reinforcing relationship between conflict and poverty argue that not only has armed conflict been a major determinant of poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa but poverty has amplified conflict's impact and made civilians more vulnerable and in turn remain among the major sources of conflict.

### **2.1.2 Conflict as a cause of Food Insecurity**

There is a significant relationship between armed conflict and food security. Sikod (2008) defines food security as the ability of a country, region or household to meet the required levels of food consumption at all times. He identifies availability, access and affordability as important elements of food security. In actual fact all these important elements are affected by the outbreak of conflicts in one way or the other.

The outbreak of conflict disrupts largely agricultural and livestock production and the market systems upon which the livelihood of people depend for survival and source of food for the entire population. The most vulnerable in conflict situations especially in Africa are the rural poor who depend on subsistence agriculture for livelihood. The displacement of population may put pressures on the already limited food in the host countries intensifying their food insecurity.

## **2.2 TRACING THE IMPACT OF CONFLICT ON POVERTY AND FOOD SECURITY IN AFRICA**

For the purpose of this study we are much interested in the effects of conflict on poverty and food insecurity which is the main burden and focus of this chapter.

There is no doubt that there is a direct link between conflict, poverty and food insecurity. The regular food crisis Africa has been facing stems from poverty, and one root-cause of poverty is conflict (Sikod, 2008:210).

### **2.2.1 Loss of Lives and Physical Suffering**

One of the deadly effects of violent conflict or war on the people of Africa is death and physical suffering or injuries. The high rate of mortality as a result of violence, mass killings and genocides in most African states has immense impact on poverty and food security. Between 1980 and 1994, data on rate of mortality from violent conflict suggested that from 2 million to upwards of 4 million people have died as the direct or indirect result of war (Copson, 1994).

The Rwandan genocide for example recorded estimated massive killings of one million lives. The impact of death as an effect of violent conflict to a large extent affects the human resource and human capital of a country. In most cases the victims of death are those of the working age who serves as a source of livelihood for the young and the aged. The deaths of such people therefore end the source of livelihood for their dependents leaving them vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity. In Africa, the backbone of the economy is agricultural production and farmers usually constitute a large percentage of victims of death. In these circumstances, the availability of food for consumption at the individual, household and the national levels as a whole becomes a major humanitarian problem leaving people to swim in extreme famine. Thus, reduction in food production further decreases food security and reduces the coping capacity of those dependent on these sources for livelihoods (Messer and Cohen, 2004).

The physical suffering and injuries meted out to victims of conflict affect their livelihoods which has severe implications on poverty and food security. For instance, women in

Sierra-Leone were targeted by armed combatants and attacked, raped, taken as “bush wives”, among many other things. Once raped they often suffered poor health and were frequently unable to re-marry into the community. Many became dependent upon petty trading to survive and sipped deeper into poverty (Ginifer, 2005:4). In the case of the DR Congo war<sup>4</sup> which was described as “war within war”, combatants and peacekeepers demanded sex from girls and women in exchange for food.<sup>5</sup> This strategy of war by combatants did not only cause pain to these vulnerable groups but the additional psychological trauma rendered them useless in the eyes of the society to be reintegrated into the community and let alone to start meaning economic activities for short term survival and eventual source of long term livelihood.

This inhuman punishment to a large extent exacerbated the plights of the rural poor small householders exposing them to chronic poverty. In the Sierra-Leone war, civilians who were fortunate to live where not spared either. Various atrocities were committed against civilians inter alia; amputation of limbs and arms, lips and ears and decapitation with devastating effects on their livelihoods (Kaldor and Vincent, 2006). These atrocities had severe effects on the human capital of the country putting its economy at risk especially at the agricultural sector which is the source of food for the country.<sup>6</sup> Even the few people who could afford food had no food available and let alone to access and buy for consumption. Thus, causing extreme famine right from the individual to the national level and absolute poverty for producers whose livelihood depended on small and large scale farming.

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<sup>4</sup> In fact this war has been described as one of the intractable and protracted armed conflict in Africa. The massive death gave it the title “Africa’s World war”.

<sup>5</sup> This is popularly known as the food for sex syndrome in the Democratic Republic of Congo war.

<sup>6</sup> This is not to mean that only farmers were affected but they were the most victims of these atrocities.

### **2.2.2 General Fear and Insecurity**

Another dreadful impact of conflict on poverty and food security is the general fear and insecurity in conflict situations. This effect has diverse implications on poverty and food security in Africa. For the fear of being killed or brutalized, movements of civilians are restricted putting economic activities at a standstill. In Angola, the diamond mining was constrained by insecurity and the inability of small operators to pay expensive security (Economic Intelligence Unit 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter, 2000) cited in Luckham et al. (2001:26). In Chad, the general insecurity due to frequent conflict from 1960 to 1995 prevented the exploitation of oil deposits capable of producing at least 10 million tons per year (Luckham et al., 2001). In the case of the Sierra-Leone civil war, the notorious rebel group, Revolutionary United Front (RUF) used small and light weapons (SALW) to extort goods and labour from civilians which had drastic impoverishing effects creating high levels of rural and urban insecurity in the absence of state protection (Ginifer, 2005).

This situation apart from limiting movements of people, directly or indirectly disrupts local trading systems and cut people off from the markets on which their livelihoods and survival depend. For instance, in Uganda violent conflict had devastating consequence on one of the poorest groups in the country who are pastoral farmers due to the repeated disruption of cattle markets (UNDP, 2005). Conflict is therefore an important variable for explaining the deep-rooted cause of poverty in countries with a history of intractable and protracted conflicts.

The general atmosphere of fear and insecurity get majority of civilians internally and externally displaced which has poverty and food security implications as people are denied of economic fortunes. Luckham et al. (2001) argue that the concentration of displaced persons in

relief camps has all too often encouraged the abandonment of their assets, livelihoods and way of life rather than protecting them and the use of food aid has undermine domestic food production and promoted the culture of dependency. Normally refugees (externally displaced persons) and IDPs (Internally displaced persons) are forced to quit their homes and general livelihood to different environment without access to food, water and shelter over a long period and thereby exposing them to extreme poverty and food insecurity.

Refugees and IDPs normally have no option than to live in a difficult environment with limited resources. Refugees in particular usually face restrictions or access to work for a short term livelihood by some sections of the unemployed citizens of the host countries especially the unemployed youth. Under such conditions, rural communities are affected denying them of a source of livelihood through the loss of skills and expertise in sectors such as health, education and especially the agriculture leading to impoverishment (Ginifer, 2005). Again the human resource and human capital of the country are affected with collapse of livelihoods as agricultural and other economic activities become significantly affected. In the case of the Sudan crisis, as a result of the massive displaced persons, few households were expected to return for the 2005 planting season with access to food and income becoming precarious (UNDP, 2005: 155). In Sierra-Leone, the conflict displaced an estimated 500,000 farm families which led to a reduction in rice production, a key nutritional commodity in the country as farmers were forced to flee as a result of insecurity in the farm villagers (Ginifer, 2005). The influx of refugees put more pressure on the economic conditions of the host countries that might already be struggling with poverty and food insecurity eventually adding to their woes. Thus, externally displaced persons in conflict situations have both internal and external implication on poverty and food security.

### **2.2.3 Destruction of Infrastructure and Assets**

Destruction of physical infrastructure and assets is one of the obvious consequences of conflict that affects the poverty and food security of a country. The outbreak of conflict creates the opportunity for deliberate destruction and looting of assets and properties upon which the livelihoods of the people depend. Important infrastructures such as schools, police stations, industries, hospital and clinics are key targets of rebel groups. For instance during the Mozambique conflict, RENAMO rebels deliberately targeted economic establishments particularly the electricity transmission grid and as a result, hydroelectricity production sharply dropped from 10,7000 gwh in 1980 to 173 gwh in 1986 which brought all economic activities dependent on electricity to halt with serious consequences on people's livelihoods (Goudie and Neyapti, 1999) cited in Draman (2003). Roads and bridges which link up the rural areas to urban areas for trade and other economic activities are equally affected with the dividends of loss of livelihoods and food insecurity. In such situations, the accessibility of food for consumptions becomes difficult if not impossible by individuals, households and the nation as a whole. Food producers are also affected, threatening their source of survival. Individual and household assets and properties such as houses, livestock, lands, and moneys among many others are commonly destroyed. For instance during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, 12% of household lost their house while cattle stock on the average decreased by 50% (Verpoorten, 2002) cited in Justino (2008:8). In Angola, villages and homes of civilian population were deliberately burnt down which prevented them from farming.

Children in Africa are regarded as great assets for their parents and society as a whole. The harm done to large number of children by African war has been a major source of concern from both humanitarian point of view and because of its implications for Africa's future

(Copson, 1994:9). It has been estimated that of the 3 million deaths worldwide related to armed or violent since 1990, children constitute about 2 million, with majority of these deaths occurring in DR Congo (UNDP, 2005). In Sierra-Leone, the RUF especially gave children a mixture of cocaine, gun powder and alcohol to increase their aggression. An estimated amount of 36,600 children were said to be affected by the conflict in 2001 including child soldiers, camp followers, street children and war affected children in IDP camps (UNDP, 2002 :67) cited in Ginifer (2008).

The conscription of children as soldiers in armed conflicts has been a potential loss of asset for parents. Child soldierism is a common feature of conflicts in Africa with deadly impact on the human resource and capacity development of a country. Children are also seen as source of social security and of livelihoods for their parents and their future become threatened with the outbreak of violent conflict. Majority become school drop outs and end up as criminals and nuisance to the society which affect both short term and long term economic productivity of a country.

#### **2.2.4 Financial Cost Involved in Conflict**

It is estimated that military spending increases during armed conflicts such as civil wars with an extra spending of 1.8% of GDP and only falls back by 0.5% after the conflict (UNDP, 2005; Hoeffler, 2008). In actual fact, resources that could be invested in all sectors of the country such as health, education and employment are dislocated or diverted to the defensive and offensive unproductive areas. Nkurunziza (2008) has explicitly given two main reasons for the high expenditure on the military; **a)** pressures from the militaristic lobbies constituted during the war and **b)** the need to ensure that government maintains a dissuasive military capability to

respond to any resurgent conflict. The implication of this is the reduction or decrease in social and economic growth of the country with the balance sheet of poverty and food insecurity.

In Africa, where majority of the leaders are power-drunk, hitherto conflict divert state funds to consolidate their personal interests by bribing the media for coverage and provision of armed weapons for the military against any anticipated and unanticipated threat. The outbreak of conflicts only worsens the case.

The financial cost associated with post-conflict reconstruction is a headache for any country emerging from armed conflict leaving governments with lack or inadequate resources to develop important sectors of the country especially the health sector which normally needs immediate attention as a result of injuries and diseases caused by the conflict. In severe conflicts where the state administration collapse domestic tax revenues is equally affected leaving post-conflict governments with limited or no resources for the development of the general welfare of the citizens and donors become reluctant until the conflict is convincingly resolved. In Africa where majority of livelihoods depend on the agricultural sector as a source of income and food security, the sector becomes severely devastated. The few resources available would be concentrated on rehabilitation and reconstruction of economic and social infrastructures destroyed by the conflict which could have been used in improving and expanding already existing ones like investing in the agricultural sector with the provision of subsidies on inputs to increase productivity and the general standard of living for the population especially the rural folks who are the most affected.

### **2.2.5 Starvation of Private Investment**

One of the economic costs of conflict is the starvation of private investment in the country. It is a common logic that no investor would take the risk of investing in any unfriendly environment. The private sector is increasingly becoming the source of livelihood for people than the private sector in contemporary Africa. Armed conflicts force internal and external investors to withdraw their investment from the socio-economic sectors. Even in post-conflict times, internal and external investors become much cautious than ever due to a perceived lack of economic security (Haris, 1999) cited by Luckham et al. (2001). For example, in DR Congo, Angola and Sierra-Leone investment in the mining sector has been severely affected due to the protracted nature of the conflict characterized by fear and insecurity. During the height of the Sierra-Leone civil war in 1997-1999, mining and manufacturing companies closed down with total investment and output declining to their lowest levels (Ginifer, 2005: 17). Individual investors normally transfer their money intended to invest in their country to foreign accounts. Thus, a conflict-prone state is a scarecrow for both internal and external investors. The private sector also serves as an income generating source for states through taxation and the decline of investment eventually cause a major blow for economic growth as the same income are used by the state to improve the living standards of the citizens.

It has been identified that insufficient or lack of investment in agricultural production is a major threat to the food security in the African continent. This sector as already emphasized is the main source of livelihood for the rural poor and hungry in Africa and as such investment and support services for the sector is very crucial. However, the outbreak of conflicts severely affects investment in this sector making people vulnerable to poverty and food insecurity. Foreign agricultural investment is a potential source of employment especially for the rural dwellers,

government revenue and an avenue for local farmers to learn new methods and practices for high yield agricultural production. This sector becomes hugely devastated in the wake of conflict outbreak due to fear, insecurity and all the dreadful spillover of armed conflict. Investors therefore have no options than to withdraw ending the source of livelihood for people, especially the vulnerable rural poor.

### **2.2.6 Destruction of the Natural Environment**

The outbreak of conflict has a gross devastating effect on the natural environment. The effect of armed conflicts today reaches far beyond human suffering, displacement and damage to homes and infrastructure. Modern conflicts also cause extensive destruction and degradation of the environment which often extends beyond the borders of the affected-countries can threaten the lives and livelihoods of people well after peace agreements are signed (UNEP, 2009). This brings about both short-term and long-term poverty and food security implications in diverse ways on the population of Africa, especially Sub-Saharan Africa were majority depend on the environment and its natural resources for survival and livelihoods.

In conflict situations, combatants target the natural or mineral resource areas which serve as a major source of income and source of livelihood for the people. As pointed out by Sikod (2008) mineral or resource rich countries become poor as a result of the activities of rebel groups who target such important areas either for destruction or control. In actual fact, the destruction of the vegetation upon which agricultural production depends renders the cultivated lands infertile affecting the production of food for income generating and consumption. Mining is equally

affected directly or indirectly through armed conflicts depriving people of their source of livelihoods.

## **2.3 CONCLUSION**

The outbreak of armed conflicts in Africa is a major factor explaining the prevalence of chronic poverty and food insecurity in the continent. The continent as already explained is suffering from the disease of poverty and the effects of war or violent conflict continue to exacerbate the situation.

The effects of conflict like the loss of human life, physical suffering, destruction of infrastructure and assets, mass displacement of population and the destruction of the natural environment among many others are all poverty and food insecurity related with both internal and external dimensions especially the mass external displaced populations (Refugees) who add to the poverty and food insecurity situations in the host countries.

The study therefore concludes that there is the need for effective conflict preventive and management mechanisms to at least avoid its devastating effects on the long and short terms livelihoods of citizens especially the rural poor who are the most victims in conflict situation. The benefits of war are far less and nowhere near to the costs involved.

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## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **TRUTH COMMISSIONS IN AFRICA: REFLECTIONS ON THE SIERRA-LEONE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION**

#### **3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Dealing with the past has become a mantra for many countries emerging from violent conflicts, including genocide, ethnic cleansing, civil war, and abuses associated with military dictatorships, one-party state, and other forms of dictatorial rule. It is widely claimed that leaving past human rights violations unattended to, will encourage a culture of impunity and renewed violence (Mendeloff, 2004). Truth commissions are an increasingly common feature of countries in transition from authoritarian regimes to some kind of democratic government. To many, they are the best – or only – way to achieve a full accounting of crimes committed against fellow citizens and to prevent future conflict (Rotberg and Thompson, 2000). It is for this reason that transitional justice has become a common and important mechanism in the international system for ensuring effective peace-building in countries emerging from periods of gross human rights abuse.

Truth commission is the commonest mode of transitional justice. The phrase “truth commission” is a generic term of recent adoption given to bodies that carry out official truth seeking inquiry into past abuses (Hayner, 2002) cited by Apori-Nkansah (2011) . Since the 1990s the international human rights community has advocated this mechanism as an important part of the healing process, and they have been suggested as part of the peace process of

virtually all intra-national conflict that have come to an end (Frempong, 2005). Ultimately, it is hoped that the work of the commission can help a society understand and acknowledge a contested or denied history, and in doing so bring the voices and stories of victims, often hidden from public view, to the public at large. A truth commission also hopes to prevent further abuses through specific recommendations for institutional and policy reforms (OHCHR, 2006).

In transitional African societies, truth and reconciliation commissions have been widely used to address the legacy of past human rights abuse in the peace-building and stability process. The foundation of this strategy for healing the wounds of the past lies in the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SATRC) which was created after the end of Apartheid South Africa and return to majority rule in 1994. Successive truth commissions of transitional states in Africa largely used the examples and lessons from the South Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a guide in their attempt to ensure peace and national reconciliations as a foundation for building trust and stability for the present and the future. Examples include the Rwandan Truth Commission, Ghana National Reconciliation Commission and Liberia Truth Commission among many others.

Many of the transitional arrangements in Africa over the last decade have given rise to a truth recovery process either in the form of a truth commission or, in some instances, to a truth commission operating side by side with a criminal justice mechanism, taking the form of a special “hybrid” court, which has both a domestic and an international character (Sooka, 2006). This was the special case of the Rwandan Truth Commission.

Truth commissions despite their prospects are equally faced with numerous challenges which normally plague their objectives. This chapter seeks to explore such dynamics by using

the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SLTRC) which was established on the basis of the provisions of the Lome Peace Agreement and submitted its report in 2004 as the context of analysis. It has been argued that the Sierra-Leone conflict recorded large scale of amputation involving one or more or both limbs, rape, kidnapping and other forms of impunity that were quite unprecedented in the history of civil war not just in Africa, but also in other parts of the world (Sesay, 2007).

### **3.1 BRIEF BACKGROUND OF THE SIERRA LEONE CIVIL WAR**

The West African State of Sierra Leone gained independence from Britain in April 1961 with a promise of a budding democracy under the first Prime Minister, Milton Margai. His death in 1964 and the resultant struggle for power between his half-brother Albert Margai and Siaka Stevens set the country on its path of self-destruction. Stevens assumed power in 1968 and for seventeen years ruled the country like his personal fiefdom. Over-centralization and abuse of power, systematic exclusion and molestation of political opponents, economic mismanagement and corruption and a witting sense of sarcastic humor characterized his rule. In 1985, he defied the constitution and handpicked the then army commander, Joseph Momoh as his successor. Six years later, on 23 March 1991, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Foday Sankoh began a rebellion which lasted for more than a decade (Frempong, 2005).

The RUF survived the Momoh regime which was ousted in a military coup in April 1992; and the subsequent two-phased military junta of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) (1992-1996). When the democratically elected Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) government of President Tejan Kabbah was overthrown in May 1997, the RUF had the luxury of ruling with the new military junta, Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC). In 1998,

ECOWAS peacekeepers, ECOMOG removed the AFRC/RUF coalition and reinstall Kabbah, only for the coalition forces to return in 1999 to invade Freetown with worse human rights violations. This was what set the stage for the Lome Peace Agreement of July 1999 (Frempong, 2005). It is estimated that out of 4.5 million people, over 75,000 died, approximately 4,000 amputation survivors, 2,000 displaced internally, 500,000 refugees and at least 5,000 child soldiers (Apori-Nkansah, 2011).

### **3.2 The Sierra Leone truth commission**

The Sierra-Leone Truth Commission (SLTRC) was created under the Lome Peace Accord, signed in July 1999 and passed by an Act of parliament in 2000 establishing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Act 2000. In July 2002, six months after Sierra Leone's eleven-year-long civil war was officially over, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was inaugurated. "Truth hurts," announced the TRC's posters and leaflets, "but war hurts more." Radio and television skits and jingles in Sierra Leone's lingua franca, Krio, urged listeners to "come blow your mind; come clear your chest," to "make peace sidon na Salone" ("sit down in Sierra Leone"). Blow mind—the release of thoughts and feelings—was the Krio expression used to convey to a Sierra Leonean audience the practice of truth telling in the TRC hearings (Shaw, 2005: 2).

The composition of the commission was hybrid comprising four Sierra-Leoneans (Rev. Joseph Humper, [chairman], Justice Laura Marcus-Jones [Deputy], Dr. John Kamara and Sylvanus Torto) and three internationals (Louise Sooka [South Africa], Ajaaratou Satang Jow [Gambia] and Dr. William Schabas [Ireland]).

Section 6 of the TRC Act 2000 tasked the commission to investigate the historical records of violations and abuses of human rights relating to the armed conflict in Sierra-Leone; respond to the needs of victims; to promote healing and reconciliation and to prevent the repetition of the violations and abuses suffered.

The SLTRC's statute reflected lessons learned from earlier truth commissions. It was given a three-month preparatory period for logistical and administrative matters so that these would not eat into its official life-span, a deadline of one year, with the possibility of a six-month extension, broad investigatory powers including subpoena and search and seizure, and the government was required to implement its reforms. It explicitly recognized the need to hear women's voices and to explore the role of children as both victims and perpetrators (Dougherty, 2004).

The commission finally closed its doors and submitted its final report in October 2004 which concluded that corruption, poverty, and lack of human rights were the root causes of the Sierra-Leone civil war.<sup>7</sup>

### **3.3 Success and Challenges of the Sierra-Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SLTRC)**

This section is the core of the analysis. It seeks to address the lessons from the Sierra-Leone Truth Commission by way of examining some of its successes and challenges.

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<sup>7</sup> Visit: [http://www.sierraleonetr.com/index.php/view-report-text-vol-2/item/volume-two-chapter-two?category\\_id=20](http://www.sierraleonetr.com/index.php/view-report-text-vol-2/item/volume-two-chapter-two?category_id=20) for more details of the findings of the commission.

### **3.3.1 Success of the SLTRC**

The international involvement of the Sierra-Leone Truth Commission was very significant and worth commending. The hybrid composition of the truth commission clearly showed that the truth and reconciliation council learnt from earlier truth commissions especially that of the Guatemalan and Haitian commissions which allows for national familiarity and international expertise (Dougherty, 2004). The combination of both local and international expertise did not only ensure to a large extent, transparency and objectivity in the process but provided a great opportunity to combine both internal and external knowledge for effectiveness and fair procedures towards its mandate of investigating and identifying the perpetrators of past human rights abuse during the armed conflict. Sierra Leone also represented UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) the first substantial undertaking in support of a transitional justice mechanism anywhere in the world. Two other UN groups were deeply involved in the workings of the SLTRC were UNDP and UNAMSIL (UN mission in Sierra Leone). Because OHCHR is based in Geneva, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UNAMSIL (the UN peacekeeping force) acted as its in-country implementing arms. UNAMSIL also provided logistical assistance to the SLTRC, and its human rights and public information sections played particularly valuable roles in supporting and promoting the commission's work. These active gatekeeper roles of these international bodies were on the whole beneficial; not only was the depth of their collective involvement unprecedented, but they also made available resources that would otherwise have been non-existent. But that was not without its problems. The OHCHR was apparently not keen in sourcing for funds and it was also accused of hard-handedness. An unintended impact was that the Sierra Leone government used

the involvement of OHCHR as an excuse for not sourcing for funds on its own (Frempong, 2005).

A remarkable achievement of the commission was the public hearing and high publicity of its proceedings. Public hearings are important aspect of the truth telling process. They have the potential of galvanizing public interest and removing the possibility of further denial of the central facts of history (Hayner, 1999) cited by Frempong (2005). Migyikra (2008) argued that the commission saw public hearings as integral to the achievement of the mandate of the commission because in an illiterate society public hearings are more accessible and comprehensible to the public at large than a lengthy written report. The first public hearings was broadcast live on national radio and subsequent ones had half-hour summaries presented on radio and national television which allowed the proceedings to be followed by the population (Frempong, 2005). The thematic hearings allowed the commission to gather information related to its mandate task to investigate and report on the antecedents and context of the civil war (Migyikra, 2008).

Another success of the commission was the greater participation of civil society organizations and traditional authorities which made for ownership of the process (Frempong, 2005). For example the civil society played a central and very positive role in helping to craft the terms regarding the mandate and composition of the commission (Migyikra, 2008). They also played a crucial role in the sensitization of the public for greater participation. The coalition of human rights groups-the National Forum for Human Rights (NFHR) was instrumental in the sensitization exercise as well as the appointment of the commissioners, together with other civil society groups like the Inter-Religious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCSL). It must be emphasized that to a large extent, the open and transparent nature of appointment facilitated the civil society

involvement and in effect local ownership. The involvement of the chiefs was good not only because they still had significant social and political roles to play in the lives of particularly rural Sierra Leoneans, but also it later facilitated the adoption of traditional modes of reconciliation. In a number of instances outside the capital, the TRC commissioners held reconciliation ceremonies at the conclusion of their hearings at which traditional rites were adopted to ‘cleanse’ the crimes away (Pham 2004) cited by Frempong (2005).

Finally, the commission paid special attention to women and children who are the most vulnerable in armed conflict situations. The three female commissioners helped to address female issues especially with regards to sexual abuse which otherwise would not have been possible. This provided greater opportunity for female victims in their truth telling since they had trust in their fellow women and thus could not hide anything away from them. This eventually contributed to the effective truth telling of the process. Children were equally given special attention in the whole process. UNICEF developed rules to govern children’s participation, and the experience did not seem to be difficult for those who testified (Dougherty 2004: 47). The commission ensured accordingly that children were integral part of the stakeholder groups. This child-friendly version of the report is perhaps the most outstanding feature of the SLTRC. The process leading to that - at the request of Sierra Leonean children themselves - is quite interesting. In a war that so much affected children, as victims and also perpetrators, having a version that they can read and understand augur well for the future (Frempong, 2005).

### **3.3.2 Challenges of the Sierra-Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission**

The simultaneous operation of the Sierra Leone Special Court (SLSC) posed a huge challenge to the commission. This dual approach to transitional justice has the advantage of comprehensiveness but it created several problems for the TRC in particular. Indeed, it became a love-hate affair. Apart from the competition for resources for which the SCSL had the upper hand, the two institutions did not have clear rules to govern their interactions. There were unresolved questions for example about whether the SCSL had primacy over the SLTRC, or the two were equal, complementary institutions (Frempong, 2005). The Special court introduced some unfortunate comparison: it got off to a quick start and operated efficiently, it had more resources and high profile suspects which made the commission TRC toothless (Migyikra, 2008). This plagued proceedings and activities of the commission in diverse ways. Sesay (2007) argued that perpetrators and other witnesses were not sure of the consequences of appearing before the commission since the court was trying those accused of war crimes and as a result did not tell the whole truth.

Also, there were also the obstacles of making the wider public aware of and knowledgeable of the commission. Sierra Leone's illiteracy rate is estimated at about 80%, so written material needed to come in a picture version. The lack of a single lingua franca meant translating materials into several different local languages. The use of radio, the most effective communications tool in Sierra Leone, was occasionally hampered by a lack of knowledge about the location of small FM radio facilities in the hinterlands. During 1999 and 2000, security concerns generally placed areas under RUF/AFRC control out of reach. Travel outside of Freetown was very difficult due to the extremely

poor state of most roads, and during the rainy season was virtually impossible (Migyikra, 2008:79).

Frempong (2005) identified serious mismanagement and staff recruitment problems as a challenge to the work of the commission. The interim secretariat experienced difficulties in providing the necessary administrative and operational support. These problems came into sharper focus with a July 2002 review by the UNDP, which found that roughly one-third of the commission's personnel were "unqualified or redundant" and that "the hiring process was seen as politically driven." A full-fledged staffing crisis commenced on October 4, when the contracts of the commission's staff expired without a permanent secretariat in place, leaving it with a two-person staff. Reviews of new applications came to a halt when two of the international commissioners raised questions about the fairness of the process (Dougherty, 2004). This it is argued raised questions regarding the credibility, competence and reputations of the commission making it unattractive for international donor support.

The commission was also faced with time and resource constraints. A survey by Sesay (2007) on whether the commission had adequate time to carry out its activities revealed that significant majority 65.1% were of the opinion that the time devoted to the activities of the commission was not enough. Resource constraints limited the commission's reach and forced it to cut back on the number of victim statements that it could receive as well as the amount of time spent on public hearings (Hayner, 2004). This affected the ability of the commission to work within the time frame and as a result was unable to meet the original October 2003 deadline for its final report but had to run for a six month extension.

Funding truth commissions is very challenging and the case of Sierra Leone was not different. From the beginning, the SLTRC operated under a cloud of inadequate funding. OHCHR estimated the SLTRC needed close to \$10 million for 12 months of operation, with additional funds required for the start-up phase. Although this is not out of line with the budgets of other TRCs, early donor response was very weak. The SLTRC inauguration ceremony was delayed for a month to July 2002 because a mere \$1.1 million had been pledged. Over the summer of 2002 the budget was slashed to \$6.5 million, which necessitated cuts in staffing and program activity even as the sensitization campaign was getting under way. The SLTRC's troubled performance did much to harm donor willingness to contribute. By May 2003, the funding situation was so grave that the UN Office of High Commissioner of Human Rights (OHCHR) was again forced to trim the budget, down to \$4.5 million. Several weeks later only \$2.3 million had been received of the \$3.7 million pledged. Several factors can account for the scarce funding: poor fundraising efforts by OHCHR and the commission itself; donor fatigue; competition for funds with the SCSL, established in January 2002; and the SLTRC's unimpressive start. Generally truth commissions are funded by their national governments, but the Government of Sierra Leone was not in a position to offer much support; it donated \$97,000 and a building for the Secretariat. Regardless of who is to blame for the lack of funding, the SLTRC's work suffered as a result (Dougherty, 2004).

### **3.4 CONCLUSION**

From the above analysis the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (SLTRC) provides an important lesson in assessing the whole process involved in the activities of truth commissions. No wonder it followed the lessons of its predecessors especially the South

Africa Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The establishment of the commission was a legitimate course and the country needed it for its post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building process.

The establishment of a truth commission however, only makes an impact on the society when its recommendations are effectively implemented. The implementation of the recommendations of truth commissions has remained a challenge for most transitional states across the continents. The need for greater political will to incorporate the recommendations of commissions in government policies is a very crucial causal explanation for assessing the immediate and delay impact of truth commissions on the promotion and protection of human rights and democratization process in transitional states. In fact although it is the primary responsibility of the state to effect the recommendations, civil societies have an important role of putting pressure on the government to achieve such objective.

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