

conciliation resources

Submission to the UN Peacebuilding Commission on the 'Sierra Leone Compact'

Conciliation Resources' submission to the UN Peacebuilding Commission: Comments on the first draft of the 'Sierra Leone Compact' for the 'Sierra Leone Framework for Cooperation', 25 October 2007

Conciliation Resources is an international NGO working to prevent violence, promote justice and transform conflict into opportunities for development. CR has worked with partners in Sierra Leone since 1995. CR's headquarters are in London and maintains offices in Freetown, Bo and Kenema.

This submission to the UN Peacebuilding Commission was made in two parts: the narrative assessment below and suggested drafting amendments (not included here).

Youth employment and empowerment

We welcome the focus on youth and the explicit recognition of the need to promote youth empowerment and inclusion. We believe that promoting youth inclusion and empowerment, including young women, should be **mainstreamed into all the sectoral reforms, policies and programmes** outlined in the Compact.

We believe the analysis in para 12 should also note the specific circumstances of **young male and female ex-combatants** and the ongoing challenges of an **incomplete reintegration and reconciliation process**, with many ex-combatants remaining alienated from their home communities. This creates barriers to their socio-economic and political integration and leaves them vulnerable to illicit activities and violence. Additional efforts are needed to research the scope of these issues and to address the psychosocial and practical problems revealed.

We note most of the remedies outlined in paras 13 and 14 focus on employment. Yet efforts to address the complex and longer-term challenge of social and political marginalization need to be based on the assumption that youth are a vital resource for the country's future. The National Youth Policy is currently weak relative to the scale of the challenge. It is crucial to foster a range of **initiatives that build young peoples' confidence and allow them to make a positive contribution**. This should involve strengthening youth organizations and initiatives and other processes that promote social reconciliation and political empowerment and participation. Youth also need employment that raises self-esteem – something unlikely to be furthered through low-skill, low-status temporary jobs such as street cleaning. Delivering such support effectively is, however, very labour and resource intensive. It involves training and mentoring that goes far beyond

distributing small grants. The Ministry of Youth and Sport will need extensive capacity building and should be encouraged to work closely with civil society in delivering such support.

Justice and security sector reform

Para 16 notes that the Government is undertaking legal and constitutional review. We believe that these processes should be explicitly on the agenda of this Compact and therefore recommend a new section on **legal and constitutional reform**.

Furthermore, the Law Reform Commission is set to address highly sensitive issues that are systemic factors for conflict in Sierra Leone, such as the **land tenure system**. This is not only a major factor in rural development but is also the source of significant boundary disputes at the familial, community, and inter-chieftaincy levels [1]. Such reform may be key to long-term sustainable peace and development but could also be the catalyst for further conflict. While the Law Reform Commission is included as a GoSL commitment in para 25ii, we believe that support and additional resources – including for consultation, research, dialogue and comparative learning from similar reform processes elsewhere – should also be a priority for the UN Peacebuilding Commission.

We welcome the comprehensive approach to justice sector reform presented in para 17 and would suggest the addition inclusion of support for existing **community-based mediation and peace monitoring systems** [2], which have already made a valuable contribution to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in some parts of Sierra Leone [3].

Further attention in Para 18 should be given to recognizing the role of civil society in security sector reform and, in particular, to promoting policy dialogue between the government, the Office of National Security and civil society to jointly analyse security concerns and ways to address them, as well as promoting more effective civilian oversight.

Capacity-building

While we broadly agree with the analysis in para 21, it is important to note the indigenous initiatives for peacebuilding that developed during and since the war. The strategy should therefore be based, in part, on **building on the capacities that exist** – including in community mediation and peace monitoring – and seeking to learn from and replicate some of the more localized and homegrown skills base.

Furthermore, there is also need to examine the capacities of external agencies to assess whether they are able to effectively and sensitively support Sierra Leonean peacebuilding and development. In some cases an overly

bureaucratic approach and lack of local knowledge may hinder efforts.

Notes

1. See Hanson–Alp, Rosalind. 2005. *Who has control of the land?: understanding customary land tenure system in Sierra Leone*. Unpublished report for CARE–Sierra Leone.
2. These are mediation and transitional justice initiatives with deep roots in local communities.
3. See Conciliation Resources “A path to peace: community peacebuilding in southern Sierra Leone” [available to view online](#)