

The Promotion of Peace and Inclusiveness in Sierra Leone: An Engine for Sustainable Development, Access to Justice and Strong Institutions

Joseph Davies

1. Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Business & Entrepreneurship, Ernest Bai Koroma University of Science and Technology, Makeni, Sierra Leone

Abstract: Peace and inclusiveness are contraptions for sustaining the development of a country through the right to justice for citizens and non-citizens of a given state from the luxury of commitment of strong institutions. Sierra Leone, over the years, has suffered tremendous political instabilities that have delayed mainly the country's overall development. A country of 16 ethnic groups has been governed since independence by Prime Ministers and Presidents from the two major political parties, the APC and SLPP. Elections statistics over the years have shown that the SLPP and APC has most of their supports and membership based on ethno-regional lines in Sierra Leone. Therefore, successive governments have only prioritized the share of national resources and particularly employment opportunities based on political patronage, ethno-regional, and party lines to the disenchantment of the other ethnic groups and regions with little or no political support. Therefore, this paper seeks to evaluate the causes and effects of promoting peace and inclusiveness on the country's sustainable development socially, economically, and politically. The paper used specifically secondary data and employed descriptive statistics in the presentation of data. One of the significant findings is that, apart from the endemic corruption and bureaucracy at high offices in successive governments, political instability, and the deficiency of inclusiveness in the governance arrangements of Sierra Leone is one of the critical factors responsible for the segregation in the dispensation of justice and weak institutions in the country.

Keywords: Inclusiveness, Justice, Peace, Political instability, Political patronage, Sustainable development, Strong institutions.

INTRODUCTION

Sierra Leone is a very small country situated along the West Coast of Africa, neighboring Guinea in the Northeast and Liberia in the South. Sierra Leone has a population of about 7 million people with vast arable land for agriculture. The country has tourism potentials and a growing extractive industry employing thousands of young people who cannot acquire jobs in government and the service industry in the private sector. However, Sierra Leone practices political democracy. The country is governed by a national constitution that guides the management and administration of the state by the legislative, Executive, and Judiciary arms of government and ensures its people's freedom and liberty.

Sierra Leone was devastated by a civil conflict that started in 1991 and continued until 2002 (Bellows & Miguel, 2006). In 2002, the country usher in peace after 11 years of brutal civil conflicts that reversed the country's economic gains and left indelible scars on the body and minds of the people. The war broke out in 1991 in the country during the period of Brigadier Joseph Saidu Momoh as President of the Republic, who succeeded

President Siaka Proben Stevens in 1985. Brigadier Joseph Saidu Momoh introduced multiparty democracy that saw many political parties participating in the politics and governance of the country. In 1992, young military officers toppled Brigadier Joseph Saidu Momoh and Capt. Valentine E. M. Strasser became Head of State of the Republic of Sierra Leone. In a palace coup, a few years later in governance, Capt. Valentine E. M. Strasser was toppled from power. Afterward, Brigadier Julius Maada Bio became Head of State for few months and handed over power to a democratically elected President, Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, a former United Nations Diplomat. Again, few years into Tejan Kabbah's rule, he was toppled by a military junta regime, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), led by Major Johnny Paul Koroma as the Junta Leader. Dr. Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah was reinstated as president through the help of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) that removed the military junta regime with a heavy onslaught in the capital of Freetown. Through many negotiations with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels and with the international community's intervention, the reinstated president signed a peace Accord in 2002. If the Accord is effected fully, the nation will gain many benefits from the peace process (Bangura, 1998). This peace agreement signed in Lomé saw massive socioeconomic and political developments in the country. Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma, a former insurance chief executive, succeeded Dr. Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah as president of Sierra Leone through the general elections of 2007.

THE PROMOTION OF PEACE AND INCLUSIVENESS IN SIERRA LEONE

National Peace and Cohesion

The first ever peace conference in Sierra Leone was the Bintumani I and II held in 1996 to bring in national peace and social cohesion urging a negotiation between the NPRC and RUF for national stability. The Bintumani II conference was urged by civil society advocates referred in international relations as non-state actors with the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) to settle for a multi-party general election that will install a civilian government and consolidate national peace and cohesion. Elections before peace was the demand of civil society advocates as against peace before elections, which was the demand of the NPRC. However, through negotiations and the strong intervention of the international community elections before peace was held in 1996 at the Bintumani Conference Center at Aberdeen, Freetown. Thereafter, Dr. Alhaji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah a democratically elected president of the 1996 presidential pools started peaceful negotiations with the leader of one of the major warring factions, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) through the help of the international community for a cease-fire and an end of the long decade senseless war in the country. Consequently, these negotiations brought about the Lomé Peace Accord in 1999 that led to the end of the almost 11 year's civil carnage in 2002. In January 2002 President Kabbah formally proclaimed the end of Sierra Leone's 10 year civil conflict (Baker & May, 2016). The massive countrywide jubilation that received the signing of the Accord should be regarded as a strong pointer of the basic unity of Sierra Leone as well as the enduring resolve of majority of the people to have an end to what they have from the outset truly considered as a meaningless war (Bangura, 1998).

There are early indicators, though, that political violence in Sierra Leone is on the rise (Kars de Bruijne, 2020). Therefore, maintenance of national peace and cohesion is one of the greatest achievement of any country and the fruit of it is national achievements in

all aspects of development. Social cohesion tolerates institutional solutions to avoid involvement in conflict (Allouche & Jackson, 2019). The socio-economic development of any nation on earth depends largely on national peace, cohesion and inclusiveness and above all the strategic commitment of heads of government to uphold national peace, cohesion, and inclusiveness in all facets of governance.

Elections are means of getting people into important offices or positions of responsibilities in governance of countries, organizations and societies and it is a way of holding people accountable of their stewardships. Sierra Leone has had four mostly free and fair elections since 2002, plus two that led to peaceful shifts of power to opposition parties (Lavali & M'Cormack-Hale, 2023). There had been four peaceful elections after the end of the civil conflict, in 2002, 2007, 2012 and 2018 in Sierra Leone (Ministry of Youth Sierra Leone, 2019). However, in political and liberal democracies the opposition parties have the freedom to criticize government and hold them accountable for their actions and inactions in the governance of the state. Therefore, these days the issues of democracy are becoming more complex in developing countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia, oppressing and suppressing opposition members of political parties have become the modus operandi because they want to stay longer in power or rig future elections to keep themselves in power. Much as the international community is frowning against oppressive regimes, they still have not done much to hold governments accountable for their gross actions and inactions in dealing with the oppositions in political democracies.

Holding governments accountable is an important aspect of the consolidation and maintenance of national peace and cohesion but the question here is “are the institutions strong and sincere?” The answer for the most part is ‘no’ because most of these institutions are headed by individuals who are cronies, associates and sympathizers of the very governments who appointed them in to offices. In most cases, governments who wants their misdeeds shredded in secrecy and an embellished image could buy the Human Rights Commission (HRC), civil societies and even the media as in the case of Sierra Leone where reports of the HRC, civil societies and the media are generally skewed in favour of the government of the day. It is obvious that, in most developing countries in Africa and even the West, organizations that should be seen to be independent usually take sides because of their institutional or personal interests, which has no political guarantee of the future peace, security and national cohesion of these countries. Apart from the intervention of the international community and other international non-state actors, the national civil society organizations, media, and the opposition parties have great responsibilities to hold governments accountable in order to maintain national peace, unity and inclusiveness for social, political, and economic prosperity. No doubt, the pressure of civil advocates brought about the Bintumani III conference from the 23rd-25th May 2019 that discussed national dialogue for the consolidation of democratic governance for the country’s peace and national cohesion after the general elections in 2018.

Inclusiveness in Governance

Over the years, inclusiveness in the governance system of Sierra Leone like other democratic countries has been a topical issue and a critical one as well in determining national cohesion based on tribe, region, and political alliance. From the appointment of cabinet ministers to the appointment of people in Ministries, Department and Agencies (MDAs) has usually been

done by successive governments based on political and regional inclination. The amount of Sierra Leoneans who believe that the government treats members of their ethnic group unjustly has also increased compared to 2020 (Lavali & M'Cormack-Hale, 2023). In most cases Sierra Leoneans from regions other than the regions where the political party in governance have its major supports have been summarily dismissed or fired from their jobs to give way for political supporters or tribes men and women to get employment in strategic areas of government. Historically, and even today Sierra Leone remains, a mixed political order (Herbert M'cleod and Brian Ganson, 2018). It is also important to note that, inclusiveness in governance is not only about the involvement of people in the governance structure of the state it is also about the rate of involvement of the women and youths who are the most vulnerable, in the political and decision making affairs of the state.

Women's Participation in Politics and Decision Making

In Sierra Leone, women constitute about 50% of the total population and women's participation in politics and governance in the country is gradually improving though at a terribly slow pace. The participation of women in governance in Sierra Leone is about 38% and women's organizations like the 50-50 Group are campaigning for increase participation of women in politics and governance of the state. Women demanded for the one-third minimal representation in all key public decision-making processes (UN WOMEN AFRICA, 2019). However, it is important to note the participation of women in politics and decision-making has not only attracted international development partners, but it has also taken a center stage in the establishment and promotion of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Globally, women's participation in governance and decision-making is not only considered as a human right issue but also a step forward in the development agenda of democratic nations around the world.

There is high inequality gap in Sierra Leone and year-on-year the gender gap continues to widen in employment, access to finance, access to justice, education, politics, decision-making etc. Furthermore, Sierra Leone has extremely high levels of gender inequality and comes last in the UNDP's Gender Development of 2007/2008 ranking (Clare Castillejo, 2009). It is a fact that most women in Sierra Leone are deprived from holding traditional offices based on their religions or as their traditions, dictates and most of these women lived in the rural communities of the country. Nonetheless, a good number of these rural women are in most cases isolated from the development framework of the country save for the aid assistance rendered by international and local based non-governmental organizations on the areas of health care, water and sanitation, handouts to facilitate farming etc. It is important to acknowledge that women and children suffered the most during the last civil conflict in the country hence their involvement in politics and decision-making will help them carve a future as meaningful citizens of the country. From 2009, Rainbow Centers in the eastern region of the country (Kono ad Kenema) and Freetown in the West have assisted over 14,616 women and girls, who have experienced violence from both sexual and close partner (M'Cormack-Hale, 2018). Women and girls throughout Sierra Leone experience obstacles at every stage of justice (Sarah Maguire, 2012). Geographically, women living in the northern part of Sierra Leone where the Muslim religion is predominant play little role in decision-making and traditional governance compared to women in the

South and Eastern part of the country like Moyamba where women performs chieftaincy roles.

However, the role of civil society organizations on the promotion of gender issues is very important in the governance framework of Sierra Leone and other developing countries where the roles of women in politics and governance are not appreciated. Civil society has unquestionably delivered the greatest space for promoting gender equality matters and had the most influence in changing gender customs (Clare Castillejo, 2009).

Youth's Participation in Politics and Decision Making

The youth population in Sierra Leone accounts for about 35% of the total population and a great demographic dividend for the country. Eight out of every ten people in Sierra Leone are under the age of 35 (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). However, youth participation in politics and governance has improved over the years in party politics, activism and other awareness raising activities in the promotion of the issues of justice, human rights, employment, education, health care, gender, and environment and so on. Youth participation in governance developments has slowly increased over the years (Hamiru Harry Massaquoi, 2019). Between 2007 and 2018, there was a snail-paced rise in youth representation in governance (Hamiru Harry Massaquoi, 2019). Furthermore, the establishment of the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Youth Commission in 2007 by the government of Sierra Leone was a giant step in promoting youth inclusiveness in decision-making and governance of the country.

The rate of youth unemployment in Sierra Leone continues to surge every year and so is the level of violence and drug abuse destroying the future of the youths who are majority of the population in the country. Youth sidelining signifies a constant reason of conflict in Sierra Leone today, as well as the nature of the matter offers sufficient opportunity to involve civil society organizations and the youth themselves in peace building (Lawrence, 2014). Another main activity to avoid instability and conflict will be to concentrate on the young people of Sierra Leone, particularly their high level of unemployment as well as low degree of education and their view of inequality (OECD Report, 2010). The youths they say are the future of nation building and prosperity and thus their involvement in national politics and decision-making is crucial for the future development of society. The majority of youths in Sierra Leone are vulnerable during electioneering periods in the country; they are used by some politicians to do their dirty jobs of violence and disruption of pools and are dumped by these politicians afterward. These militarized youths are mainly comprised of former combatants and non-combatant citizens (Kallon, 2021). Youths play one of the most-discernable roles in political campaigns in Sierra Leone (Travis Lupick, 2012). Therefore, non-governmental organizations like World Food Programme (WFP) have made significant efforts in giving supports to the youths of Sierra Leone to discourage them from violence and promote their peaceful political participation in the politics of the country. Violence tainted all previous elections, with young people frequently behind instances owing to high levels of unemployment besides the high levels of political propaganda and prejudice (World Food Programme, 2018). For this reasons, the activities to support disconnected young people are at the core of the WFD Sierra Leone Programme (World Food Programme, 2018). Nevertheless, the World Food Programme (WFP) and other non-state actors like civil societies plays extremely critical role in bringing young

people including disable youths in participating in the political space of the country that have long been dominated by political veterans. Most of the engagements with young people by non-state actors are usually done through youth conferences that trained them on negotiations and discourage them from drug and violence political campaigns. Even though most of these conferences may not attract all the youth population of Sierra Leone, they are very crucial since youth ambassadors are normally chosen there to promote messages of peace, political tolerance and deliver action plans to promote youths' agenda in the politics and decision-making space of the country. There is an acceptance that the times when young people could be encouraged to violence with alcohol or money are things of the past (Restless Development , 2018).

In most developing countries youths are used as tools to escalate conflicts and these youths sees conflicts as a way of making their voices heard and their emotions felt by policy and decision makers. The 11 years brutal civil war in Sierra Leone had even child soldiers used as fighting force to resist government forces in territories under rebels' control, which is an indication of the vulnerability of the youthful population in time of political or civil conflicts. Eleven years of overwhelming civil conflict exposed youth in Sierra Leone to diverse forms of trauma (Angela McIntrye and Thokozani Thusi , 2003). Therefore, the government of Sierra Leone should continue its efforts in promoting youth empowerment programs and participation in national and traditional governance. Ever since the end of the war and signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement in 2002, the government of Sierra Leone started, instituting decentralized methods of governance, together with a streamlining of the chieftaincy system to make sure more youth participation (Barrett Alexander, 2012).

Access to Justice

The judiciary in Sierra Leone has been soiled over the years with corruption and unfair practices in the dispensation of justice to the citizens and non-citizens of the country. Judges as well as lawyers have been investigated in several corruption scandals while at the same time international development partners through flagship programmes are helping the country reform its judicial sector. One of the primary barriers inhibiting access to Sierra Leone's justice systems, both formal as well as informal, is cost (Dale, 2008). Majority of Sierra Leoneans are of the view that justice is an expensive commodity to get on the shelves of the judicial system in the country. Some Sierra Leoneans will tell you, "you get the money you get justice" and this corruption scandal could be prominent in all areas of the judicial system in Sierra Leone, starting from the traditional level, the chiefs to the formal level, the police, on to the magistrate and higher courts of the country. While additional study desires to be done to determine how this view translates into practice, there is a likelihood that opinions of unfairness may lead less affluent or connected people to avoid pursuing justice against their more influential counterparts (Dale, 2008). Therefore, the United Nations Development Programme should intensify its attention on the Local Courts and Court Chairpersons as they perform important roles in the resolution of dispute in Sierra Leone (Richard H. Langan II, 2016). Some schools of thoughts are of the opinion that the lack of justice and corruption in the sector is one of the factors that led to the eleven years of civil carnage in the country. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) report acknowledged a lack of access to justice as a main cause of the 11-year civil war (Richard

H. Langan II, 2016). Sierra Leoneans trying to access justice through the country's intricate legal system are faced with many barriers (Pamela Dale, 2007).

While there is still a complain of the lack of access to justice or fair trial of cases in the courts, the government of Sierra Leone through the assistance of international development partners have made tremendous efforts in decentralizing the justice sector so that people in rural communities can have access to lawyers and the magistrate courts at close proximities. The UNDP is one of the international development partners that have helped the government of Sierra Leone introduced mobile courts across the country. The United Nations Development Programme supported mobile circuit courts for the High Court and Magistrate Courts of Sierra Leone in the South and East of the country (Richard H. Langan II, 2016). Much as decentralization cannot be adequate in the reform process of the justice sector, the Ministry of justice and development partners are organizing lots of training sessions and workshops to refresh the skills and ethical standards of law officers to strengthen their capacity and for professional standards. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) findings also acknowledged that reform of the justice sector is vital to the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone (Richard H. Langan II, 2016).

Delay in the paneling or calling up of cases especially critical matters for hearing in the Sierra Leone courts is a cause for concern. At present while the prisons are full beyond capacity against international correctional standards every day files of unheard cases continues to pile up at the courts and suspects continues to languish for extended periods in remands. At certain instances you hear people saying "dem nor see me file" or "me file don loss." This is usually a tactic of court clerks to delay matters unduly in the courts and get the defendants in misery and loss of hope. Therefore, justice is not only a fundamental concept of ethics it ensures the goodwill and peace of the country.

Therefore, the justice sector should always remain to be professional in handling matters of national interest and should not be seen taking sides especially on politically motivated matters. It is a fact that the president appoints the head of the judiciary and so it pleases him/her to serve the interest of the president or the government of the day and not the state regardless that most of these positions have secured tenure and their integrity matters.

Strong Institutions

It is a concept of government that the three arms of government must be independent in terms of their operations all gearing towards the effective governance of the state. Sierra Leone is a Constitutional democracy with three distinct branches of government (United Nations Development Programme, 2021). However, it is not the case in developing countries where the executive arm of government takes absolute control or dominance over the other arms, the legislator, and the judiciary. Very poor countries have states that are weak of or averse to provide necessary public goods for instance, the execution of law, order, education, as well as infrastructure (Acemoglu, Chaves, Osafo-Kwaku, & Robinson, 2014). Thus, the independence of institutions is usually in theory as certain decisions needs expressed or implied approval or directives from the executive arm that have absolute control over who becomes head of public institutions in the country, "absolute power corrupts absolutely." Political interference happens when politicians interfere with the

managerial and administrative matters of a public institution for instance, planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting as well as budgeting and the apportionment and use of public funds (Bangura, 2023). There had been situations in Sierra Leone where directives or appointments of heads or executive officers of some public institutions were given by the office of the President through the Secretary to President with the usual statement “It has pleased His Excellency the President of the Republic of Sierra Leone to appoint you ...” to individuals. These directives do not only undermines the administration of public institutions, but it also makes them weak and has to depend on approvals from the State House or other superior authorities to take some decisions relevant for their smooth running. In theory and practice, the appointment of staff at the executive, management and middle management levels of public institutions is the responsibility of the Board not the President; the president can only appoint Chairpersons and some Directors of Boards of public institutions to manage the administrative aspects of such institutions in the interest of the state.

Consequently, this abysmal or maladministration approach in the appointment of heads of public institutions by successive governments in Sierra Leone is not only making institutions weak, but it is also making their decisions biased against the very people whose interest and welfare they should be protecting. Moreover, for institutions to be strong government across developing countries, we should promote the independence of these institutions, making them free from political meddling in their operations and decision-making processes. Evidently, most public institutions in Sierra Leone are having inflated wage bills and a good amount of their revenue going towards staff costs year-on-year due to the rise in political patronage appointments and promotions to high offices. An insistent problem in Sierra Leone's governance situation has been partisan appointments within the civil service (Bangura, 2023) patronage politics weakens the merit-based recruitment as well as promotion arrangements, compromising the competence and capability in the civil service. Largely, the moral and performances of public institutions in Sierra Leone are dwindling because most of these political appointments of people in to positions who do not have the competencies (square pegs in round holes), only make matters worse. During the period of the All People's Congress from 1968 to 1992, the apparatus of government as well as resources of Sierra Leone were employed to back the benefit of a fairly small number of people rather than that of the citizens (Kpundeh, 1994) an approach of patronage flourished under this governing party principally since membership of specific groups was a more suitable qualification for position than a person's actual competences.

Accordingly, to ensure strong institutions in Africa and developing countries like Sierra Leone, governments should provide genuine support and strategic commitments in making the necessary policy shifts or reforms of these institutions. Therefore, this could be one of the reasons the International Monetary Fund (IMF) promoted the issue of structural adjustments like privatization in Latin America in the early 1980s. As bureaucracy and red tapes increase in high places of government, the operations of state owned institutions becomes complex and unprofitable. Again, research has it that most privatizations done in developing countries are threaten by political risk factors such as interference and had been in the interest of politicians whose desire is to score cheap political points. To sustain peace in such a country and sustain upward sustainable development path emphasis must be on strengthening institutions (Claire Flynn-Byrne, 2018).

METHOD

Below are presentations of relevant time series data relating to the issues of demography, good governance, political inclusion, access to justice and peace in Sierra Leone spanning from 2006 to 2020. The trend line in Figure 1 below indicates that the population of Sierra Leone is increasing at an exponential rate and as at 2020; the population of the country is over 7 million inhabitants. However, as mentioned earlier, this population is made up of people from different ethnic groups and regions of the country whose contributions to national peace, cohesion and development are paramount.

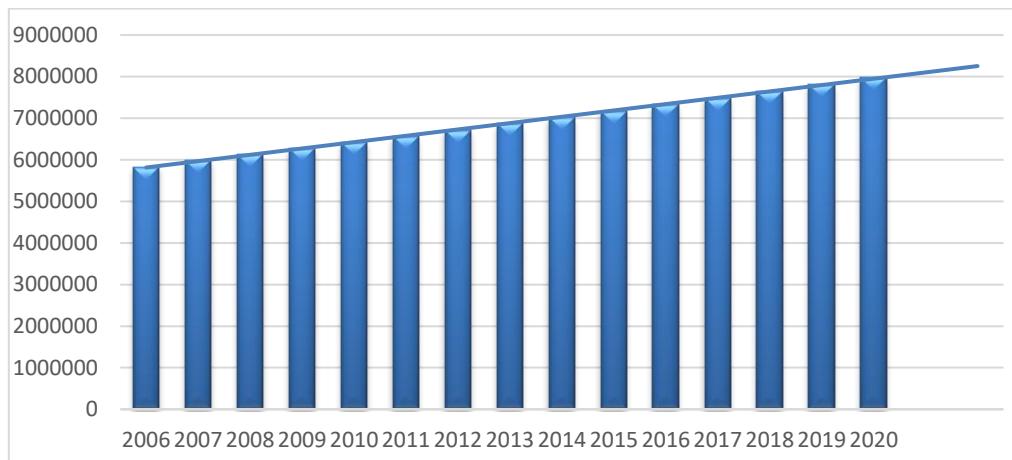


Figure 1: Total Population in Sierra Leone

Source: World Bank Databank

Figure 2 below shows that, 56% of the population of Sierra Leone ages 15 - 64 are female accounting for more than half of the population of the country. The trend of the data indicates that female population in the country will continue to increase over time and as such, the government has a responsibility to do policy reforms that will accommodate more women in the development agenda of the country.

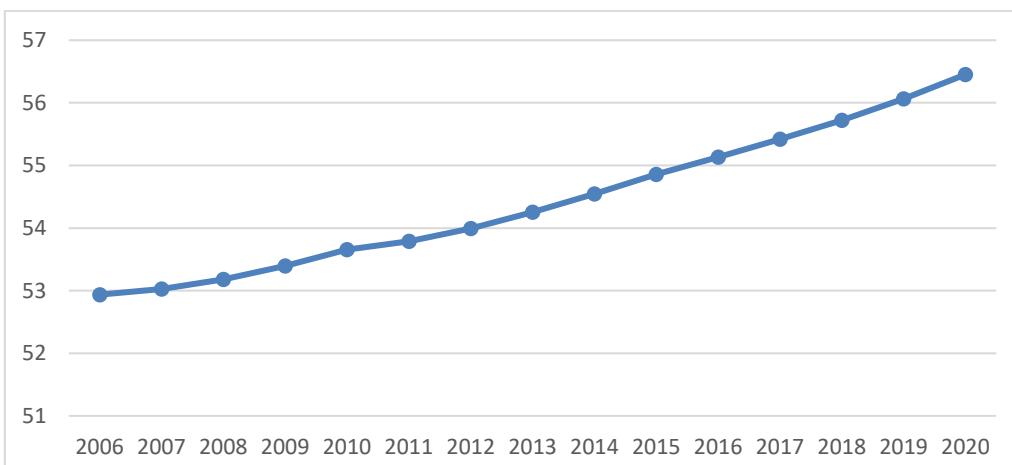


Figure 2: Population Ages 15-64, Female (% of female population)

Source: World Bank Databank

The data in Figure 3 below shows a comparative growth rate between female and male population in Sierra Leone. It indicates that, the female population though decreasing at nominal rate over the years, comparatively is still higher than the male population by 1% of total population in the country in 2020. Therefore, the female population of the country is about 3995746 compared to 3981239 of male population in 2020.

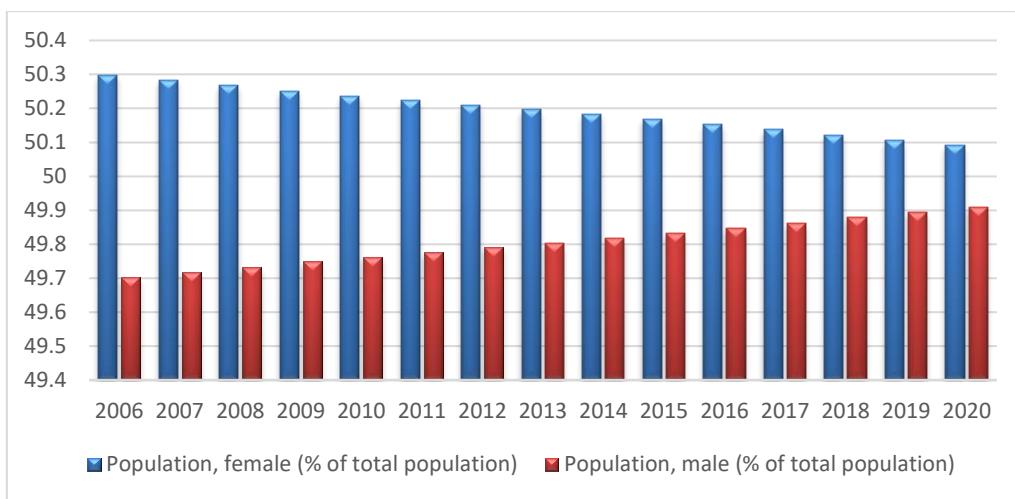


Figure 3: Female and Male Population (% of Total Population)

Source: World Bank Databank

Figure 4 below shows a comparative analysis of the female labour participation rate for ages 15-24 of Guinea, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The time series data indicates that Liberia was doing comparatively well compared to the other countries while Sierra Leone had a participation rate of 33% ahead of Nigeria with 30% in 2019. However, the data indicates that there is less participation of young female in the labour force of Sierra Leone compared to even our immediate neighbors Guinea 47.8% and Liberia 53.16%.

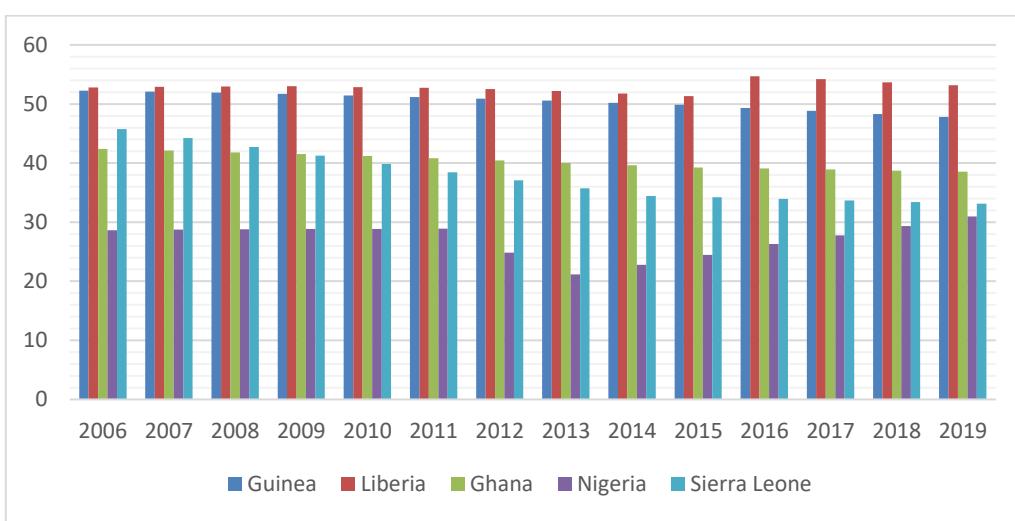


Figure 4: Female Labor Force Participation Rate for Ages 15-24

Source: World Bank Databank

Figure 5 below shows the female labour force participation rate as a percentage of female population ages 15 and above of Guinea, Liberia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The data sequence shows a similar flow as in figure 4 above for 2019 with Liberia still leading while Sierra Leone 57% is still ahead of Nigeria with the least 48%.

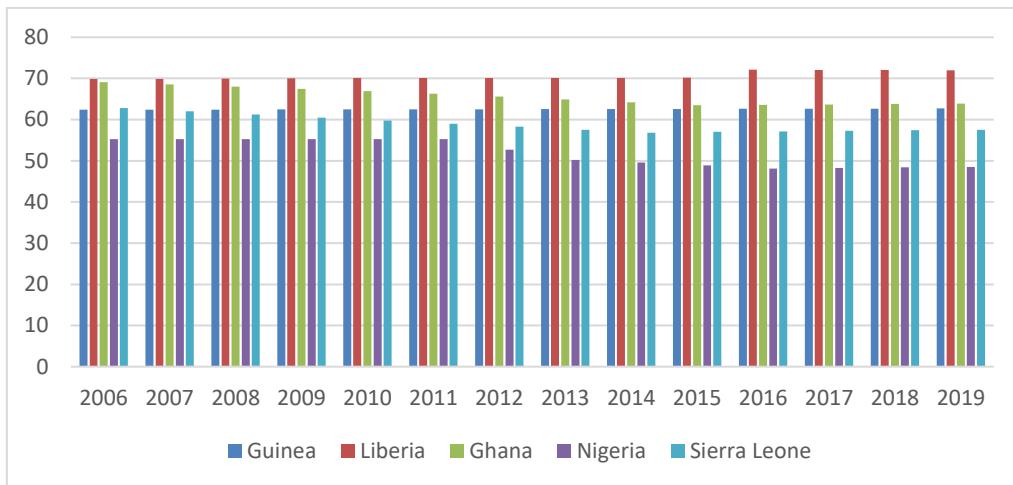


Figure 5: Female Labour Force Participation Rate as a Percentage of Female Population Ages 15 and above

Source: World Bank Databank

Figure 6 below shows the rate of female employment in agriculture, industry and services as percentage of female employment in Sierra Leone. It shows that female employment in industry is on record low at 1% since 2006 to 2019. Employment in services gradually increasing over the years and was at 47% in 2019 while employment in agriculture reduced at a decaying rate over the years although still higher than industry and services at 51% in 2019.

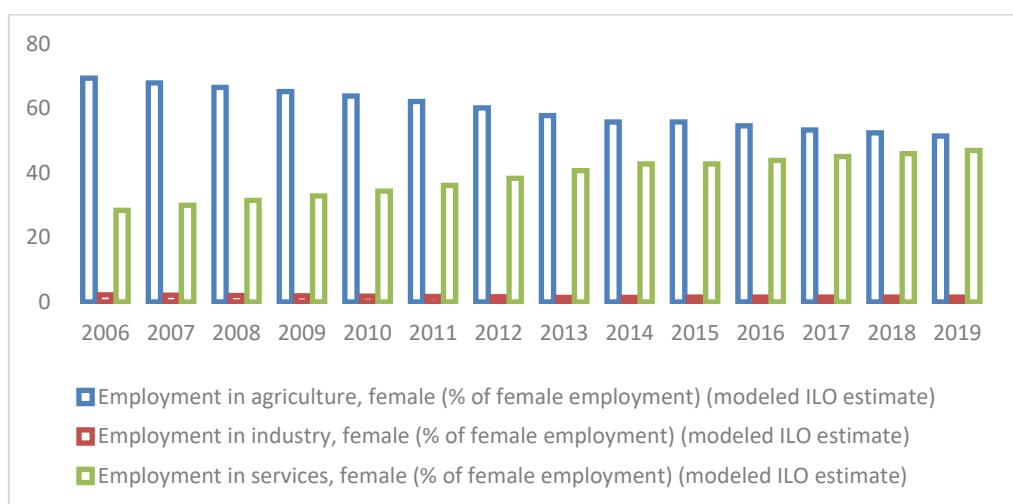


Figure 6: Female Employment in Agriculture, Industry and Services as Percentage of Female Employment in Sierra Leone

Source: World Bank Databank

Figure 7 below shows data of contributing family workers of male and female as percentage of both male and female employment in Sierra Leone. It shows that the rate of female self-employed workers as percentage of female employment is higher than male contributing workers as percentage of male employment by 2% in 2019 compared to 2013 and 2014.

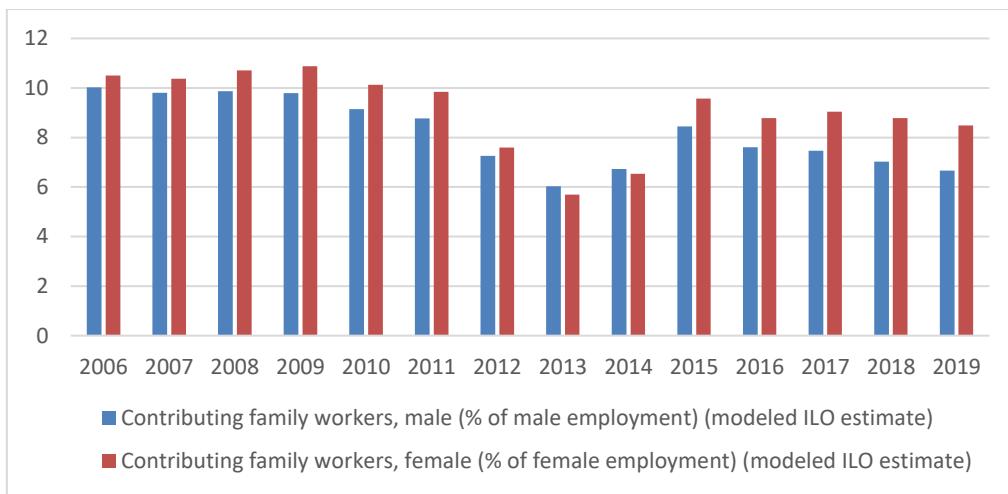


Figure 7: Contributing Family Workers of Male and Female as Percentage of both Male and Female Employment in Sierra Leone

Source: World Bank Databank

Figure 8 below shows female wage and salaried employment as percentage of female employment in Sierra Leone. Figure 8 indicates that the trend of female wages and salaried increased in 2012 and 2013 until it started decreasing in 2014 and a sharp decrease in 2015 with a slight increase of 3% in 2016 and 4% in 2019.

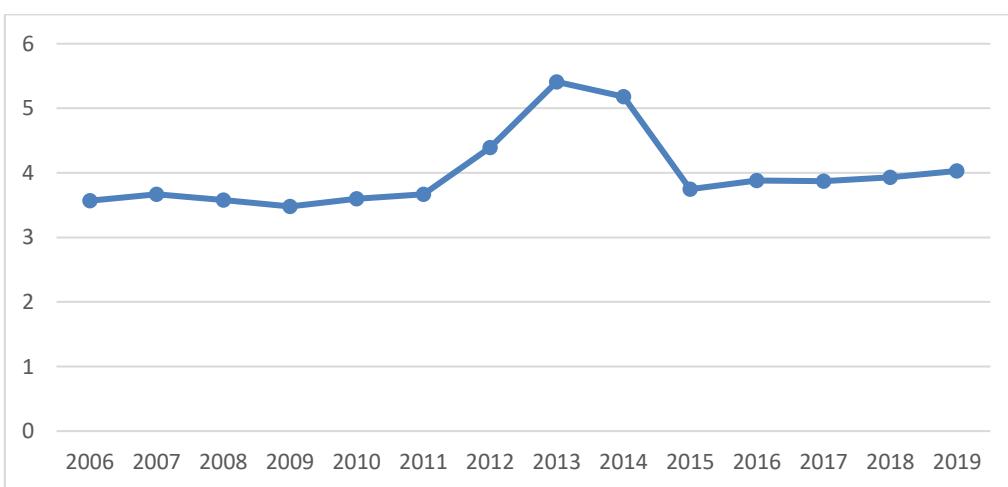


Figure 8: Wage and salaried workers, female (% of female employment)

Source: World Bank Databank

Figure 9 below shows how laws and regulations affect women's opportunity in Sierra Leone. It shows that there has been a 3% favorable increase in 2019 from 2009 with 63%. However, this increase is an indication that the laws and regulations of the country are gradually improving in relations to the economic opportunities of women in the country.

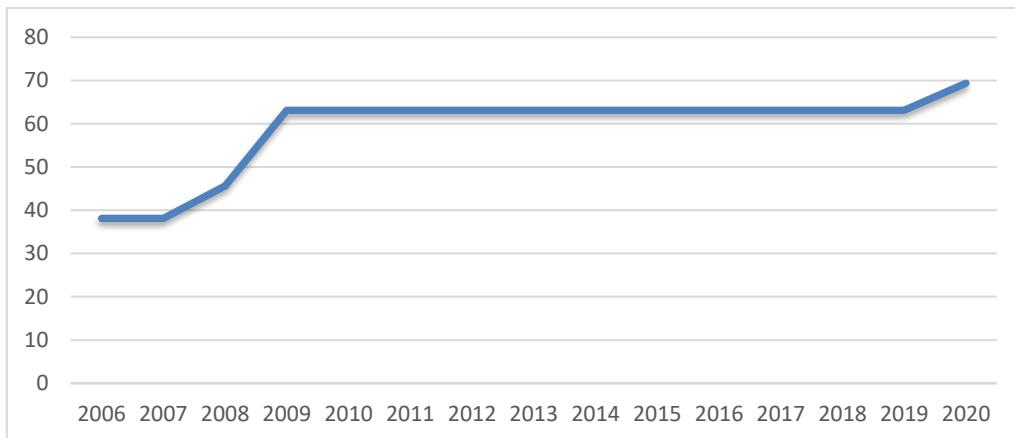


Figure 9: Women Business and the Law Index Score (scale 1-100)

Source: World Bank Databank

Figure 10 below indicates data on literacy rate of female youth as percentage of females ages 15-24 for 2018 in Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The data in figure 10 shows that Sierra Leone has low literacy rate of female youth of 62% compared to 68% for Nigeria and Ghana with 92% in 2018.

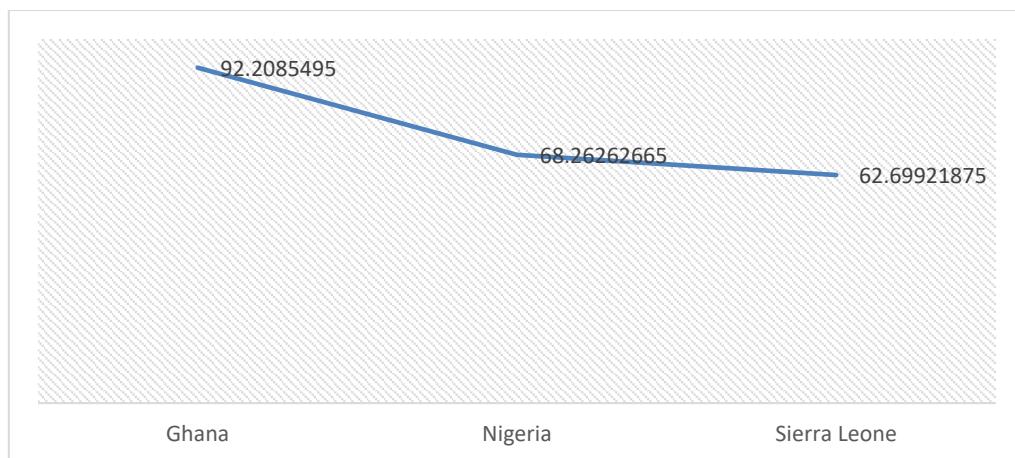


Figure 10: Literacy rate, youth female (% of females ages 15-24)

Source: World Bank Databank, 2018

The Data in figure 11 below shows the literacy rate of total youth as percentage of people between the ages of 15-24 in Sierra Leone for 2018. It shows that Sierra Leone has the lowest literacy rate of youth compared Ghana and Nigeria with 40% and 32% respectively.

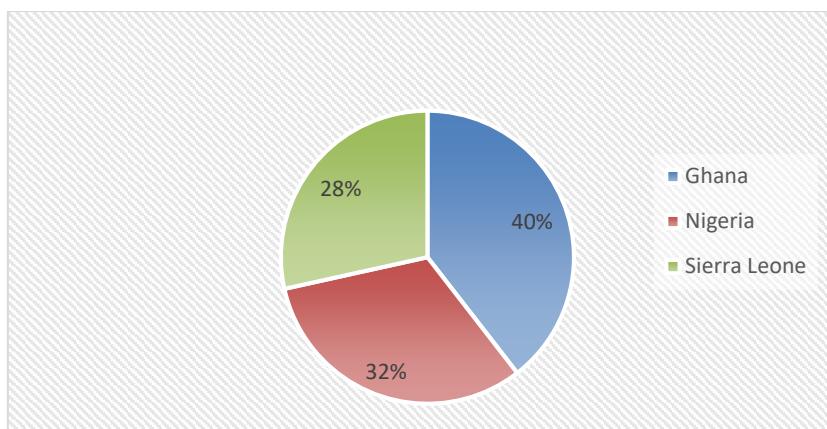


Figure 11: Literacy rate, youth total (% of people ages 15-24)

Source: World Bank Databank, 2018

Education is not the only route to success in Sierra Leone. Some young people felt that becoming skilled or developing a business was more important than being educated, and that you don't have to go to university or complete your education to have a good life (Restless Development , 2018). On the other hand, Table 1 below shows data on the number of rape cases reported by selected Sierra Leone Police - Family Support Units (FSUs) in Sierra Leone in 2015 and the outcomes of these cases. It indicates that out of the 47 cases reported only 17 were charged to court while 22 were still under investigation, 5 of the cases were kept in view, 4 of the rape suspects at large and zero convictions were made.

Table 1: Numbers of cases of rape reported by selected SLP-FSUs in 2015 and outcome

*Compiled by Evaluation based upon SLP-FSU reports						
District	Cases of rape reported	Charged to court	Under investigation	KIV	Suspect at large	Conviction
Kabala	1	1				0
Kamakwie	1	1				0
Magburaka	2	2				0
Makeni	2	2				0
Mile 91 Police FSU	1	1				0
Mongo	1	1				0
Panlap	2	1		1		0
Bo West	7	2	4		1	0
Bo East	6	1	3	1	1	0
Rutile	1			1		
Pujehun	0					
Malema	1		1			
Mattru	0					

Moyamba	1		1			
Southern Region	15	4	7	2	2	0
Kambia	0					
Lungi	0					
Lunsar	0					
Masiaka	6		6			
Port Loko	1	1				

Source: Evaluation Report UNDP Sierra Leone (Irish Aid) Improving Rule of Law & Access to Justice Programme (2013-2014, NCE 30th June, 2015)

Table 2: Sierra Leone Social indicators

	2010	2015	2020
Population growth rate ^g (average annual %)	2.6	2.2	2.1
Urban population (% of total population)	38.9	40.8	42.5 ^b
Urban population growth rate ^g (average annual %)	3.7	3.3	...
Fertility rate, total ^g (live births per woman)	5.6	4.8	4.3
Life expectancy at birth ^g (females/males, years)	47.8 / 46.2	52.3 / 50.5	54.8 / 53.2
Population age distribution (0-14/60+ years old, %)	43.0 / 4.8	41.9 / 4.7	40.3 / 4.6
International migrant stock ^h (000/% of total pop.)	79.1 / 1.2	58.8 / 0.8	54.3 / 0.7 ^b
Refugees and others of concern to UNHCR (000)	8.6 ⁱ	1.4	0.4 ^b
Infant mortality rate ^g (per 1 000 live births)	122.1	97.1	80.8
Health: Current expenditure (% of GDP)	10.9	20.4	13.4 ^a
Health: Physicians (per 1 000 pop.)	~0.0	~0.0 ^j	...
Education: Government expenditure (% of GDP)	2.6	2.7 ^k	4.6 ^a
Education: Primary gross enroll. Ratio (f/m per 100 pop.)	... / ...	116.9 / 115.3	114.7 / 110.8 ^c
Education: Secondary gross enroll. Ratio (f/m per 100 pop.)	... / ...	36.5 / 41.6	41.1 / 42.5 ^a
Intentional homicide rate (per 100 000 pop.)	2.5	1.7	...
Seats held by women in national parliaments (%)	13.2	12.4	12.3 ^l

Source: United Nations Data

RESULTS

Results from the descriptive analysis above indicates the following:

1. There is a 1% increase in female over male population in Sierra Leone.
2. Young female labour force participation rate is decreasing and stood at 33% in 2019
3. Female employment in industry is on record low at 1% since 2006 to 2019

4. Female employment in services is gradually increasing over the years and was at 47% in 2019
5. Female employment in agriculture reduced at a decaying rate over the years and at 51% in 2019
6. Female self-employed workers as percentage of female employment is higher than male contributing workers as percentage of male employment by 2% in 2019
7. There is a slight increase of 3% in 2016 and 4% in 2019 of female wage and salaried workers.
8. There is a 3% increase in the rate of laws and regulations that affect women's opportunity in Sierra Leone
9. The literacy rate of total youth as percentage of people between the ages of 15-24 in Sierra Leone is decreasing and stood at 28% in 2018.
10. There was zero (0) convictions of the 47 rape cases reported by selected SLP-FSUs in 2015 in Sierra Leone.
11. Women's participation in governance in Sierra Leone is still low at 38%
12. Seats held by women in national parliament is 12.31% in 2020

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Regardless of the support of international development partners like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Department for International Development (DeFID), Justice Sector Development Programme (JSDP) etc the issues of peace, inclusiveness and access to justice remain noticeably big challenges in Sierra Leone as the gaps that remain in these areas needs urgent political commitment for their closure. However, the focus of Sierra Leone's international developments partners such as UNDP should continue to advocate for good governance and seemingly decentralization of the Justice sector in tandem with the Justice Sector Reform Programme (JSRP). The Peace Building Fund (PBF) developed for Sierra Leone by the United Nations (UN) in 2010 focusing on youth empowerment, Democracy and Good Governance, Justice and Security, Capacity Building and Public Administration and support to improve on the production of energy should be maintained to ensure medium to long-term development of the major component, which is democracy and good governance. The inequality gaps that exist in the socioeconomic space; democracy and governance plus access to justice in Sierra Leone, is a cause for concern and if the trend continues, may increase the level of fragility in the country. For example, the UNDP conducted a fragility evaluation and found out that access to justice in Sierra Leone was on the decline compared to recent years. Furthermore, it is obvious that the legislative reforms in the justice sector have been done in a snail pace and legislative drafting capacity of law officers at the justice department seems to be low.

CONCLUSION

National peace and cohesion is a road map to the socioeconomic development of developing countries alas very few countries in sub Saharan Africa and the Sahel regions are upholding

the basic tenets of democracy, good governance, and rule of law. However, a global peace index report has shown that Sierra Leone dropped 12 places from the 2018 global peace index ratings and reports from international development partners highlighted an upward trend in the country's fragility. Besides much as there are more efforts from international development partners and the government of Sierra Leone to improve youth's and women's empowerment, there is also need to reduce the inequality gaps in governance and access to justice for all Sierra Leoneans. Therefore, to achieve all these, international development partners should continue to support legal reforms in the justice sector especially the decentralization of justice sector in all regions and districts in the country. The issues of youth and women in decision-making and political participation should be given serious attention in order to improve the quota of youth and women's participation in the governance and politics of the country. Finally, the government of Sierra Leone should strive extremely hard to hold the country together through inclusive participation in governance of the country of all Sierra Leoneans regardless of tribe, political affiliation, or region.

REFERENCES

Angela McIntyre and Thokozani Thusi . (2003). CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN SIERRA LEONE'S PEACE-BUILDING PROCESS. *African Security Review*, 12(2), 1. Retrieved September 4, 2021

Acemoglu, D., Chaves, I. N., Osafo-Kwaako, P., & Robinson, J. A. (2014). Indirect rule and state weakness in Africa: Sierra Leone in comparative perspective. In *African successes, volume IV: Sustainable growth* (pp. 343-370). University of Chicago Press.

Allouche, J., & Jackson, P. (2019). Zones of peace and local peace processes in Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. *Peacebuilding*, 7(1), 71-87.

Baker, B., & May, R. (2016). A sustainable peace? Sierra Leone. In *Ending Africa's wars* (pp. 221-238). Routledge.

Bangura, I. An Assessment of the Impact of Politics on Public Service Administration in Sierra Leone: Case of the Civil Service in Sierra Leone.

Bangura, Y. (1998). Reflexions on the Sierra Leone Peace Accord. *African Journal of International Affairs*, 1(1), 57-78.

Barrett Alexander. (2012, October 2). A HISTORY OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN RURAL SIERRA LEONE. *YOUTHPOLICY.ORG*. Retrieved September 4, 2021

Bellows, J., & Miguel, E. (2006). War and institutions: New evidence from Sierra Leone. *American Economic Review*, 96(2), 394-399.

Claire Flynn-Byrne. (2018, August 9). Sierra Leone: Government and CSOs work together to promote peace and cohesion after elections. *Reliefweb*, 1. Retrieved September 6, 2021

Clare Castillejo. (2009, June). Women's Political Women's Political Women's Political. Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior (FRIDE), 1. Retrieved September 2, 2021

Dale, P. (2008). Access to Justice in Sierra Leone: A review of the literature. paper commissioned by the World Bank's Justice for the Poor.

Hamiru Harry Massaquoi. (2019, November 19). Youth Participation and Inclusion: A Problem of Political Leadership. Retrieved September 4, 2021, from MINDS: <https://minds-africa.org/youth-participation-and-inclusion-a-problem-of-political-leadership/>

Herbert M'cleod and Brian Ganson. (2018, April). The underlying causes of fragility and instability in Sierra Leone. Commission on State Fragility, Growth and Development, 5. Retrieved September 6, 2021

Kallon, E. V. (2021). Youth displacement, peacebuilding, and ethnoregional-neopatrimonial politics: The case of post-war Sierra Leone. ASC-TUFS Working Papers, 1, 66. Retrieved September 4, 2021

Kars de Bruijne. (2020, December). WHEN EMERGING DEMOCRACIES BREED VIOLENCE: SIERRA LEONE 20 YEARS AFTER THE CIVIL WAR. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) , 5. Retrieved September 6, 2021

Kpundeh, S. J. (1994). Limiting administrative corruption in Sierra Leone. *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 32(1), 139-157.

Lavali, A., & M'Cormack-Hale, F. (2023). Ahead of election, should Sierra Leoneans be worried about social cohesion?

Lawrence, M. (2014). United Nations Peace Building in Sierra Leone—Toward Vertical Integration?

M'Cormack-Hale. (2018). Secret Societies and Women's Access to Justice in Sierra Leone: Bridging the Formal and Informal Divide. *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development*, 7(1), 2. Retrieved September 5, 2021

Ministry of Youth Sierra Leone. (2019). Report of the joint assessment mission on youth at risk in Sierra Leone. Freetown: Ministry of Youth Affairs .

OECD Report. (2010). Monitoring the Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations. Freetown: OECD. Retrieved September 6, 2021

Pamela Dale. (2007, September). Barriers to Justice in Sierra Leone. *Justice for the Poor*, 1(4), 1. Retrieved September 6, 2021

Restless Development . (2018, February). The State of Youth: Sierra Leone. Restless Development, 8.

Richard H. Langan II. (2016). Evaluation Report UND Sierra Leone (Irish Aid) Improving Rule of Law and Access to Justice Programme. Freetown: UNDP. Retrieved September 5, 2021

Sarah Maguire. (2012, September 30). An Assessment of Women's and Girls' Access to Justice Across Sierra Leone to inform the Important Phase of the ASJP. *Access to Justice and Peace*, 4. Retrieved September 6, 2021

Travis Lupick. (2012, November 2). Youths used as 'pawns' in Sierra Leone polls. Retrieved September 4, 2021, from Aljazeera: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2012/11/2/youths-used-as-pawns-in-sierra-leone-polls>

UN WOMEN AFRICA. (2019, June 11). Women of Sierra Leone present a unified position for the National Peace and Social Cohesion Dialogue Conference (BINTUMANI III). Retrieved September 6, 2021, from UN WOMEN AFRICA: <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2019/06/women-of-sierra-leone-present-a-unified-position>

United Nations Development Programme. (2021, May 12). Mainstreaming Youth Participation & Inclusion into Local and National Decision-Making. Retrieved September 4, 2021, from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP):

<https://www.sl.undp.org/content/sierraleone/en/home/presscenter/articles/2021/mainstreaming-youth-participation---inclusion-into-local-and-nat.html>

World Food Programme. (2018, February 25). Inclusive elections: promoting youth political participation in Sierra Leone. Retrieved September 4, 2021, from World Food Programme (WFP): <https://www.wfp.org/2018/02/25/inclusive-elections-promoting-youth-political-participation-in-sierra-leone/>