



Country Risk and Vulnerability Assessment

SIERRA LEONE

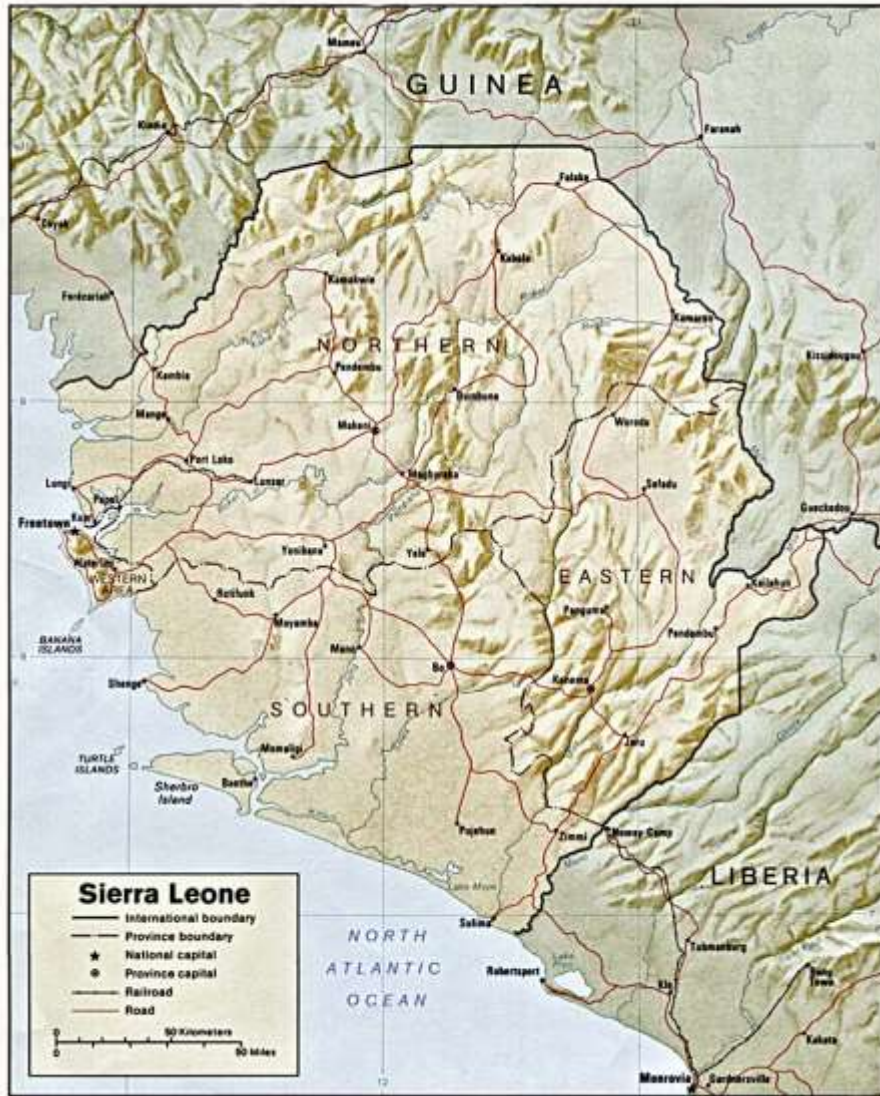
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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACLED	Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project
ACP	African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States
ADR	Alternative dispute resolution
AfDB	African Development Bank
AFRC	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
APC	All People's Congress
AU	African Union
CCC	Central Coast Clique
CDF	Civil Defense Forces
CDEED	Complaint Discipline and Internal Investigations Department
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
CRA	Conflict Risk Assessment
CRD	Community Relationship Department
CRVA	Country Risk and Vulnerability Assessment
CSC	Cattle Settlement Committee
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DFID	United Kingdom Department for International Development
DISEC	District Security Committee
DPA	ECOWAS Directorate of Political Affairs
DPKRS	ECOWAS Directorate of Peacekeeping and Regional Security
ECG	Eastern Coast Gang
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOWARN	ECOWAS Early Warning and Response Network
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ECPF	ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework
ENCISS	Enhancing the Interaction between Citizens and State in Sierra Leone
EWD	ECOWAS Directorate of Early Warning
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FGM/C	Female genital mutilation/cutting
GANGO	Government assisted NGO
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographic Information System
GPI	Gender parity index
GSDRC	Governance and Social Development Resource Centre
ICAF	Interagency Conflict Assessment Framework
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFIs	International financial institutions
ILO	International Labor Organization

IMF	International Monetary Fund
IncReps	ECOWARN's Incident Reports
IPCB	Independent Police Complaints Board
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAB	Legal Aid Board
LPPB	Local Police Partnership Board
NEC	National Electoral Commission
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NRC	National Reformation Council
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ONS	Office of National Security
PROSEC	Provincial Security Committee
REWARD	Reacting to Early Warning and Response Data in West Africa
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SCSL	Special Court for Sierra Leone
SD	Standard Deviation
SiLNAP	Sierra Leone National Action Plan for the Full Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820
SitReps	ECOWARN Situation Reports
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SME	Small and medium enterprise
SNA	Stakeholder Network Analysis
SOD	Small Old Day
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	UN Mission in Sierra Leone
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

Message from the President of the ECOWAS Commission

The 15 Member-States of the ECOWAS Community represent a thriving region of the world, with a population of approximately 366 million and a rich human and topographical diversity. From the coastline to the mountain peaks of Fouta Djallon, across the Sahara and the mangroves of the Niger Delta, ECOWAS is home to diverse families, communities, and nations.

Over the last decade, the region has witnessed significant progress in lifting the standard of living for millions. However, along with the richness of natural resources, human capital and great opportunity, there are also challenges to contend with such as natural disasters, pandemics, ethno-sectarian tensions, and security threats caused by extremism and terrorism.

Global developments and changes such as advances in technology, human migration and climate change, have added new levels of complexity, presenting new challenges for strategic planning and preparedness as we look ahead to the future.

This is where Early Warning plays a critical role in helping ECOWAS to understand the changing dynamics so as to strengthen decision making and early response at the regional and national levels. The Country Risk and Vulnerability Assessments (CRVAs) serve as an important resource in this regard. These reports are useful for strengthening the ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework action plans as well as to serve as reference materials for an in-depth understanding of the human security dynamics in our Member States, and for our partners across the region.

I therefore invite national stakeholders, all ECOWAS institutions and our partners to make use of these reports for the entrenchment of peace and progress for the benefit of the Citizens of ECOWAS.

Jean-Claude Brou
President of the ECOWAS Commission

Statement from the Vice President of the ECOWAS Commission

ECOWAS takes pride in finalizing this CRVA report which aims to identify structural vulnerabilities, event driven risks and existing resilience factors in each Member State of the Community. Indeed, this is a remarkable feat towards boosting the African Peace and Security Architecture of the African Union, with ECOWAS setting the pace for the development of an African-owned data set that can be tapped into to enhance human security analysis and accurate forecasting to assist policymakers to make informed decisions on pressing issues in the region. This information can be used as a baseline for ECOWAS and its partners to inform early warning and response efforts, particularly in this time when Early Warning and Response Mechanism is being deployed at the National level.

The CRVA research leverages ECOWARN data—gathered by Field Monitors—to establish a country baseline for monitoring patterns and trends across human security pillars. By comparing ECOWARN data to other data sets, and complementing quantitative data with qualitative findings, the assessments also help the Early Warning Directorate of ECOWAS to gather more robust data that is rich, reliable and empirical. The resulting findings are more representative in terms of geography, time, and theme for each country and needs to be updated periodically.

ECOWAS will consolidate this achievement by applying the knowledge and skills embodied in the CRVA Manual. My conviction for this emanates from the fact that the training of all EWD staff in the development of the CRVA Index, which marks the climax of transfer of knowledge and skills from the USAID REWARD technical staff to ECOWAS, will allow ECOWAS to independently conduct future CRVAs. Already, the EWD has initiated a process to put to practice the defined methodological framework to conduct Regional Risk and Resilience Assessment in the Lake Chad Basin, thereby serving as the first pillar in implementing the decision of the joint ECOWAS and Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) to engage communities in peacebuilding processes.

We hope the Member States of our Community take ownership of this report and anchor development and peace initiatives upon it, in addressing the risks and vulnerabilities in their communities. As we decentralize Early Warning and Response to the ECOWAS countries, the Commission stands ready to accompany each Member States in the implementation of the actionable recommendations embodied in the CRVA report.

Finda Koroma
Vice President, ECOWAS Commission

Preface

The ECOWAS Early Warning Directorate has made giant strides in the practice of data driven early warning, through the qualitative and quantitative analysis of incidents and situations from multiple sources, with the added benefit of original data generated through the ECOWARN system. Indeed, the Center's state-of-the-art technological tools places it at a vantage position to monitor and analyze risks and vulnerabilities in the ECOWAS region, cutting across the key areas of human security.

ECOWAS has played, and continues to play, a critical role in the monitoring of threats to human security across the region including the Sahelo-Saharan, Mano River, Gulf of Guinea, Lake Chad and Senegambia conflict systems to improve response for the prevention and management of conflict escalation.

Beyond a narrow focus on violent conflict alone, and consistent with its mandate to promote the socioeconomic and political integration of the sub-region, ECOWAS applies a human security lens with a view towards enhancing the well-being of the population in accordance with the ECOWAS Vision 2020. Thus, this report highlights risks, structural vulnerabilities and resilience factors across five dimensions (demographic, economic, security, governance and rule of law) at the national and sub-national levels.

Each CRVA report represents a myriad of perspectives and experiences from affected stakeholders including community leaders, civil society, administrative officials, security agents, traditional and religious leaders, just to mention a few. In this way, the CRVA report serves as a strategic document to provide an overview of the human security challenges in each ECOWAS member state as well as the social and institutional resilience factors that can help manage those challenges.

We hope that this report will be useful for strategic planning in addressing issues of human security as well as to provide insights to a multitude of stakeholders including policy and decision makers in the public and private sectors for conflict-sensitive engagement within the region.

Dr. Abdou Lat Gueye
Director, ECOWAS Early Warning

Executive Summary

From 2016 to 2019, ECOWAS collected quantitative and qualitative data in Sierra Leone to better understand the structural vulnerabilities that may exist, and how those vulnerabilities affect the everyday lives of individuals and communities. This research was done in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID)'s Reacting to Early Warning and Response Data in West Africa (REWARD) project, as part of a broader assessment of the entire West African region. As part of this process, a series of Focus Group Discussions and interviews were conducted in November 2017 in Sierra Leone to contextualize the findings and to learn more about resilience factors that mitigate risk and promote human security. The purpose of this report is to summarize these insights and perspectives, so that national stakeholders can build on their successes, and also to serve as a baseline for ECOWAS's monitoring of patterns and trends. The report provides an overview of national and subnational vulnerabilities, risks, and resilience factors, as well as conclusions and recommendations.

The CRVA was conducted by ECOWAS to update and expand upon the Conflict Risk Assessment (CRA) 2013-2014 country reports. To better understand the sub-national patterns and trends, the research design began with a desktop study involving a social network analysis based on a survey of peace and security actors in the country and a scoping of experts to be consulted during the fieldwork. This was followed by a Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis of patterns and trends in escalation dynamics and a quantitative analysis of relative structural vulnerabilities by country and human security pillar.

In Sierra Leone, moderate levels of vulnerability were found in the areas of Population/Demographics, Economics/Resources,

and Politics/Governance, while less vulnerability was found in Rule of Law and Security.

Challenges included demographic and migration pressures, youth unemployment, environmental degradation, natural resource management, and regional disparities in infrastructure and service provision. Perceptions of corruption, ethnic and regional divisions, tensions ahead of election periods, and criminality and land-based conflicts were also identified as negatively impacting human security in Sierra Leone.

However, there were also strong social and institutional resilience factors for effective dispute resolution and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. NGOs, civil society organizations, women's groups and the media have played important roles in awareness-raising, advocacy and peacebuilding initiatives. Government programs to increase access to justice and community-police partnership structures have also proven to be effective in mitigating risks and vulnerabilities identified in this report. The collective memory of the country's 11-year civil war has also come to be a powerful societal deterrent to violent conflict.

The following report aims to provide an overview so that regional and national stakeholders can have a clear picture of the challenges faced by the country, as well as the capacities that can be leveraged and built upon for the promotion of sustainable human security in Sierra Leone.

Though risk/incident data naturally fluctuates and may therefore have changed since the publication of this report, the structural vulnerabilities are reflective of medium- and long-term trends. These reports focus on the identification of structural vulnerabilities and resiliencies, and how they may impact upon events and developments as they occur.

Introduction

Research Process

The CRVA assesses structural vulnerabilities, event-driven risks, and social and institutional resilience factors according to five human security pillars as identified by ECOWAS in a 2016 scoping paper.¹ The pillars are: 1) Economics and Resources, 2) Politics and Governance, 3) Population and Demographics, 4) Rule of Law, and 5) Security. Findings in this report describe how risks flow from vulnerabilities in the context of Sierra Leone both within and across the five pillars. In recognition of the fact that violent conflict has underlying social, economic, political, and security drivers but expresses itself differently depending on the context, a holistic human security framework was used in this assessment, and will be used for the CRVAs in all ECOWAS member states. Furthermore, the analysis also breaks out gender considerations and external factors as cross-cutting issues that need to be

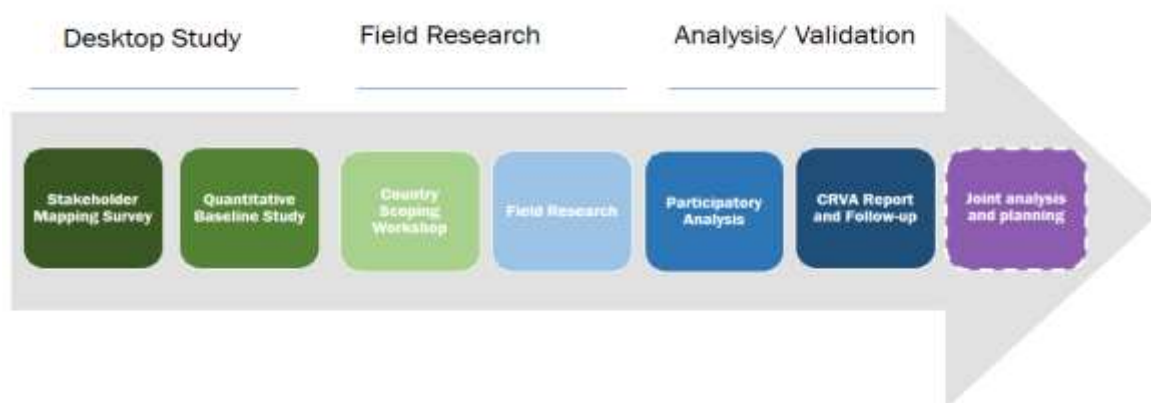
understood for effective early warning, planning and response.²

The research was conducted in three main phases: Desktop Study, Field Research, and Analysis and Validation.

Phase 1: Desktop Study

The Desktop Study included a preliminary assessment of structural vulnerabilities, event-driven risks, and social and institutional resilience factors.

For the assessment of structural vulnerabilities, the research used data from dozens of sources, including ECOWARN Situation Reports (SitReps). Drawing on these pre-existing data sets,³ a CRVA Index was created to measure the relative levels of vulnerability across five human security dimensions in Sierra Leone.



¹ The EWD Scoping Paper was developed by ECOWAS to help inform the CRVA process, with the human security pillars identified based on best practice approaches such as ECOWARN guidelines and the New Zealand Agency for International Development (NZAID) framework.

² EWD Scoping Paper on “Risk Assessment of Five ECOWAS Pilot Countries: Côte d’Ivoire, Mali, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, and Burkina Faso”

³ Data sources used in the development of the CRVA Index include Global Integrity, the Economist Intelligence Unit, the

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Transparency International, Freedom House, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Database, World Bank, the Center for Security Studies ETH Zurich, Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, Political Terror Scale, United Nations Refugee Agency, Uppsala University, UN Statistics, and Institute for Economics and Peace.

For the assessment of event-driven risks, event data, including from ECOWARN's Incident Reports (IncReps), was triangulated against data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) to estimate the locations and type of conflict issues at the sub-national level over time. Using multiple sources allowed for cross-validation, the filling of gaps, and the ability to identify trends in indicators and sub-indicators using queries and key word searches.

For the assessment of social and institutional resilience factors, a survey was deployed to all of ECOWAS's in-country contacts to learn more about the peace and security actors working to manage and reduce risks and vulnerabilities in the country. Respondents (including representatives of religious institutions, public sector actors, civil society, youth groups, and development actors, among others) were also asked to name organizations that they have partnered with in the last two years on issues of peace and security. Data was then uploaded to a Stakeholder Network Map for quantitative analysis and to identify leverage points, spheres of influence, and social capital. Based on this analysis, key technical experts were identified and were contacted for the next phase of the research.

Phase 2: Field Research

The Field Research began with a scoping workshop in Abidjan. Using the Stakeholder Network Map, highly networked technical experts were convened in a workshop to validate the initial desktop findings and suggest a way forward for the qualitative analysis in the field. The Scoping Workshop was also used to tailor and sensitize the broader research questions and the Key Informant Interview (KII) and Focus Group Discussion (FGD) instruments and questionnaires based on local context. Additionally, the Scoping Workshop also served to attain references and contacts for key actors and stakeholders in the field who would be consulted over the course of the next two weeks during the KIIs and FGDs. Thus, the desktop study

phase informed the research questions that needed further context and validation in the field, as well as the sample of respondents to be engaged (what was asked, where, and to whom).

A team of experts and researchers then conducted an in-country assessment between November 1 and November 10, 2017 with participants from the districts of Bo, Bombali, Kenema, Kono, and Western Area/Freetown. The team traveled to the various hotspots identified in the desktop study and validated in the scoping workshop to interview key stakeholders affected by violence and with knowledge of local context and capacities. This team included representatives from the ECOWAS Directorates of Early Warning (EWD), Political Affairs (DPA) and Peacekeeping & Regional Security (DPKRS), as well as participants from USAID and affiliated experts. The KIIs and FGDs conducted during this in-country assessment collected qualitative data and information regarding various perspectives on structural vulnerabilities, event-driven risk factors, and social/institutional resilience factors relating to the different conflict issues across the country. These transcripts have been collated, streamlined to reduce repetition and vagueness, and categorized under headings for analysis and prioritization during Phase 3.

Phase 3: Analysis and Validation

After the quantitative, GIS, and survey data was validated and contextualized in the field, and the qualitative data was collected, organized and summarized, this report was drafted and was then validated by ECOWAS and USAID. This report will serve as a baseline and resource for more targeted early warning products and analysis/planning towards strategic and operational prevention of human insecurity within the country of Sierra Leone as well as associated conflict systems more broadly.

Terminology and Conceptual Definitions

In this CRVA report:

“Vulnerability” is defined as any structural factor that has the potential to be a conflict driver. These can include such things as youth unemployment, poverty, inequality, climate, patronage, demographic factors, etc.

“Risk” is defined as any event-driven factor that has the potential to be a conflict trigger. Risk factors can include specific controversies or events such as disasters or elections that may occur.

“Resilience” is defined as any social or institutional factor that has the potential to help mitigate or manage risks and vulnerabilities. These include political, cultural, and community leadership with significant social capital to influence conflict dynamics in a constructive way, including public sector, private sector, religious institutions, civil society, opinion leaders, development workers, etc. Resilience factors can include institutions that play a stabilizing role in the short, medium, or longer term.

The CRVA analysis was conducted according to the framework depicted in the figure below, whereby event-driven risk factors flow out of the structural vulnerabilities (per the red downward arrow) while social and institutional resilience factors mitigate and prevent those risks and vulnerabilities (per the green upward arrow).

For ECOWAS, this framework is useful in that it is aligned with the existing ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF), which is a strategic tool to strengthen the human security architecture in West Africa. Key to the ECPF are the categories of **“Operational Prevention,”** or measures applicable in the face of crisis, and **“Structural Prevention,”** or measures that ensure that crises do not arise or re-occur. The CRVA framework is aligned with the ECPF such that identified Vulnerability Factors are to be mitigated by Structural Prevention measures, and Risk Factors are to be mitigated by Operational Prevention measures. This alignment is important for the utility and actionability of this report by users in West Africa.



Literature Review

A Human-Centric Approach to Early Warning

In academic literature, the human security lens to conflict early warning is a change from the more state-centric approaches that were in vogue throughout the 1980s and 1990s. Historically, early warning was focused on prevention and mitigation of conflict between states. In the post-Cold War period with a surge in intra-state conflict, early warning was focused on identifying the drivers and impacts of civil conflict on states. At that time, analysis focused on terminology of state “collapse” and “failure,” emphasizing impacts to neighboring countries or regions, and perpetuating a comparative paradigm of poverty and limited economic growth and conflict in contrast to more developed countries.⁴

However, as a more interconnected human and global security approach emerged in the 2000s, conceptions of state fragility and conflict analysis evolved in both development aid and policy approaches. As the Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC) describes, “At a very broad level, fragility is the result of a dynamic interplay between internal factors (including violent conflict, poverty, economic and structural conditions, weak formal institutions), and external factors (including international political economy, regional and global insecurity).”⁵ While not discounting the role of the state as a key vehicle for managing and preventing conflict, the human-centric approach looks first and foremost at the impact of demographic, economic, political, and security conflict drivers on individuals and communities as well as the role that a wide variety of social and institutional factors play in preventing

conflict. Thus, the human security framework provides a holistic approach to understanding different threats that affect individuals’ lives, whether this is through conflict, health, food, environment, or other social, political or economic factors.

The United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security outlines a human-centric approach to security in five principles: 1) *People-centered*, with a focus on protecting basic human freedoms; 2) *Multi-sectoral*, encompassing a broad understanding of threats and causes of insecurity; 3) *Comprehensive*, taking into account different types of individuals’ security from economic to social; 4) *Context-specific*, emphasizing the need to analyze specific conflict contexts and root causes of insecurity; and 5) *Prevention-oriented*, highlighting locally tailored risk prevention and mitigation measures through early warning mechanisms.⁶ This focus on cross-cutting issues and situation-specific analysis and response are central to the CRVA process and broader objectives of integrated conflict early warning and response by ECOWAS and its partners. For the CRVAs, this involves identifying conflict risks, vulnerabilities and resiliencies across the human security pillars of Population and Demographics, Politics and Governance, Security, Economics and Resources, and Rule of Law.

Many indices and development frameworks have emerged for measuring resilience and fragility, from the Fund For Peace’s *Fragile States Index*⁷ to the African Development Bank (AfDB) and World Bank’s *Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA)*⁸ and Mo Ibrahim Foundation’s *Index of African Governance*.⁹ Today, leading international development actors and multilateral

⁴ “Defining and measuring state fragility: a new proposal”, Ferreira, I., The Annual Bank Conference on Africa, June 2015

⁵ “Topic Guide on Fragile States”, Mcloughlin, C., Governance and Social Development Resource Centre (GSDRC), August 2009

⁶ “Human Security in Theory and Practice”, Human Security Unit, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United Nations, January 2009

⁷ Fragile States Index, The Fund for Peace

⁸ Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA), World Bank and African Development Bank (AfDB)

⁹ Ibrahim Index of African Governance, Mo Ibrahim Foundation

agencies such as the United Nations, the World Bank, and the AfDB have also produced strategies, practice areas, and tools, which seek to address the drivers of fragility. The AfDB, for example, has a 2014-2019 Strategy for *Addressing Fragility and Building Resilience in Africa*, with a focus on building member state capacities and focusing on “fragile situations rather than fragile states alone.”¹⁰

As the AfDB Strategy notes, however, “there is no single solution and no predefined ‘toolbox’ for addressing fragility.”¹¹ Older academic and policy conceptions of “state failure” used analysis centered on “traditional, state-centric conceptions of security that focused primarily on the safety of states from military aggression,” as outlined in a 2009 paper by the United Nations Human Security Unit. Newer models of analysis have taken on a broader human security lens, which was in “response to the complexity and the interrelatedness of both old and new security threats – from chronic and persistent poverty to ethnic violence, human trafficking, climate change, health pandemics, international terrorism, and sudden economic and financial downturns. Such threats tend to acquire transnational dimensions and move beyond traditional notions of security that focus on external military aggressions alone.”¹²

Thus, a human-centric approach, as opposed to a state-centric approach, is important for analyzing risks and vulnerabilities to society for robust early warning and response mechanisms. Human security provides a holistic approach to understanding different threats which affect individuals’ lives, whether through conflict, health, food, environment, or other social, political, or economic factors. As such, the CRVAs seek to draw upon the more dynamic and interrelated aspects of risk and vulnerability, which look at capacities and

pressures within a society with a view to identifying structural vulnerabilities, resiliencies and risks across key human security pillars. As defined by the United Nations General Assembly, “human security is an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood, and dignity of their people.”¹³ This approach is also in line with the ECOWAS Vision 2020 which seeks to promote peace, prosperity, and cohesion across the region,¹⁴ and includes a focus on strengthening many human security aspects within member states.

Research Questions

Based on the initial desktop findings, the team developed a set of framing questions broken out by the five human security pillars. These framing questions were not asked verbatim in the field, but rather informed the design of KII and FGD instruments. These instruments included simple, open-ended questions intended to prompt a discussion where respondents could express their opinions, experiences, and perceptions about the ways in which they had been impacted by vulnerabilities, risks, and resilience factors in Sierra Leone.

Population and Demographics: To what extent do environmental threats (e.g. deforestation, natural disasters and pandemics) undermine human security in the region? What medium or long-term impacts do events like the Ebola crisis and the mudslide have on politics, economy, and social cohesion? What role do women play in social, economic, and political life? What role do youth play in social, economic and political life? How prevalent is the phenomenon of child labor? Is a disproportionately large population of disenfranchised youth putting a strain on urban resources or public services? To what extent are

¹⁰ “Addressing Fragility and Building Resilience in Africa, 2014 – 2019”, AfDB

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² “Human Security in Theory and Practice”, Human Security Unit, OCHA, United Nations, January 2009

¹³ General Assembly resolution 66/290, October 2012

¹⁴ ECOWAS Vision 2020: Towards a Democratic and Prosperous Community, ECOWAS, June 2010

adverse climatic conditions affecting food security and security in general? How effective is family planning in terms of access and policy? How prevalent is early marriage? What role has migration (both internal and emigration) played in social and economic life?

Economics and Resources: To what extent has volatility in commodity prices negatively impacted the most vulnerable groups? Has this been a driver of food insecurity or conflict? Are there regional disparities or disparities between urban and rural areas in terms of service provision? What role does natural resource management (including mining) and land tenure play in social cohesion? What role do illicit economic activities play in the local and national economy? What role do the extractive industries (particularly oil and mining) play in the economy? Are resources and benefits from the extractives sector distributed equitably? What role do women play in the economy? What role do youth play in the economy? To what extent have the effects of climate change impacted the economy and food security?

Politics and Governance: In light of the fact that the 2012 election was the first one without UN assistance since the civil war, what are the prospects for a peaceful election in 2018? To what extent does ethnicity determine political affiliation in Sierra Leone? What are the implications of that, regarding social cohesion and equitable development? To what extent do perceptions of corruption and nepotism in government erode the legitimacy of state institutions and the electoral process? What role do women play in politics and decision-making? What role do youth play in politics and decision-making? What role do civil society groups, the media and social movements play in politics?

Rule of Law: To what extent is the judiciary independent of the executive? What role does the judiciary play as regards questions of justice and impunity? Is there access to justice and legal services throughout the country? Is there reliance

on alternative/traditional dispute resolution mechanisms? To what extent do communities rely on police and security forces to provide justice? To what extent are women's rights protected in practice?

Security: What role do the security forces play in managing or worsening political unrest and criminality? Are they legitimate, representative, and professional? Are there other conflict drivers such as land disputes, succession or inheritance, or resource competition? What role do communities or non-state actors play in security provision? Are there political, communal or sectarian tensions that could pose a threat to security? To what extent have illicit markets (e.g. drug trafficking) contributed to issues of criminality and violence? Are there cross-border, maritime, or transnational threats? To what extent is Sierra Leone able to meet the needs of refugees and IDPs?

Description of the Sample

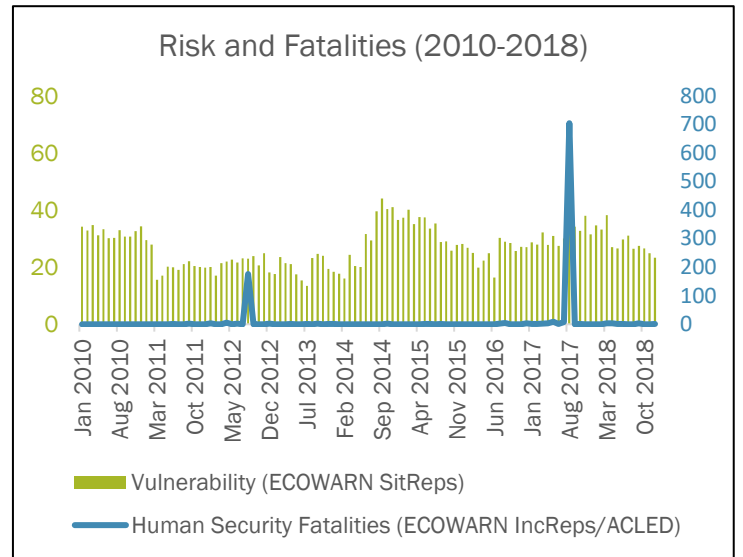
Data collected and analyzed for this research included hundreds of ECOWARN SitReps, ECOWARN IncReps, ACLED event data, and a scoping survey, as well as transcripts and notes from FGDs and KIIs in the field. Other sources, integrated to form a vulnerability index (the CRVA Index), included Global Integrity, the Economist Intelligence Unit, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, Transparency International, Freedom House, Mo Ibrahim Foundation, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Database, World Bank, Bertelsmann Stiftung Transformation Index, Political Terror Scale, United Nations Refugee Agency, Uppsala University, UN Statistics, and Institute for Economics and Peace. A complete breakdown is included in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

ECOWARN data shows relatively low levels of structural vulnerability (as measured by taking an average of each month's SitReps scores) from 2010 to 2017. It also shows low levels of escalation dynamics with the notable exceptions of a spike in cholera-related fatalities in August 2012 and a massive mudslide that killed hundreds in August 2017.¹⁵ The spike in mudslide-related fatalities coincides with the highest levels of vulnerability during the period as measured by an overall SitReps score of 50.23/100 for that month. Unsurprisingly, when disaggregated by pillar, the SitReps show an even higher level of vulnerability in August 2017 with regards to social drivers (65.25).

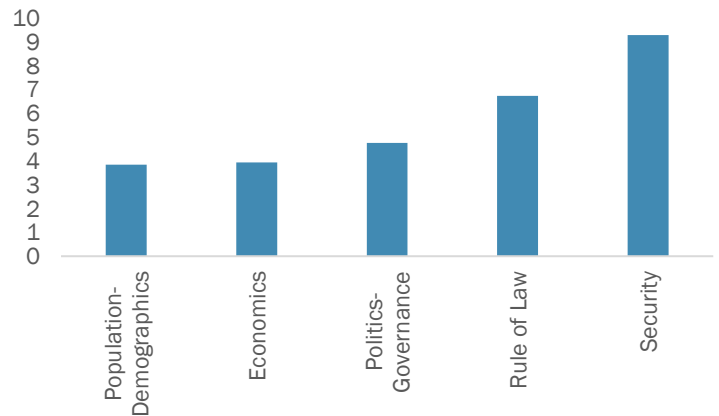
Corroborating ECOWARN's findings that violence and political tensions are relatively low in Sierra Leone, the CRVA Index indicates that in Sierra Leone, the pillars for Security and Rule of Law are quite resilient, while there is significant vulnerability in the Population & Demographics and Economics & Resources pillars.

Event data from ACLED and ECOWARN shows hotspots, patterns, and trends at the sub-national level. These include political protests, tensions between political groups, land-based conflicts, and crime in the Western Area around Freetown; protests and strikes in the Northern Province; political tensions and protests in the Southern Province; and land-based tensions, political tensions, and protests in the Eastern Province



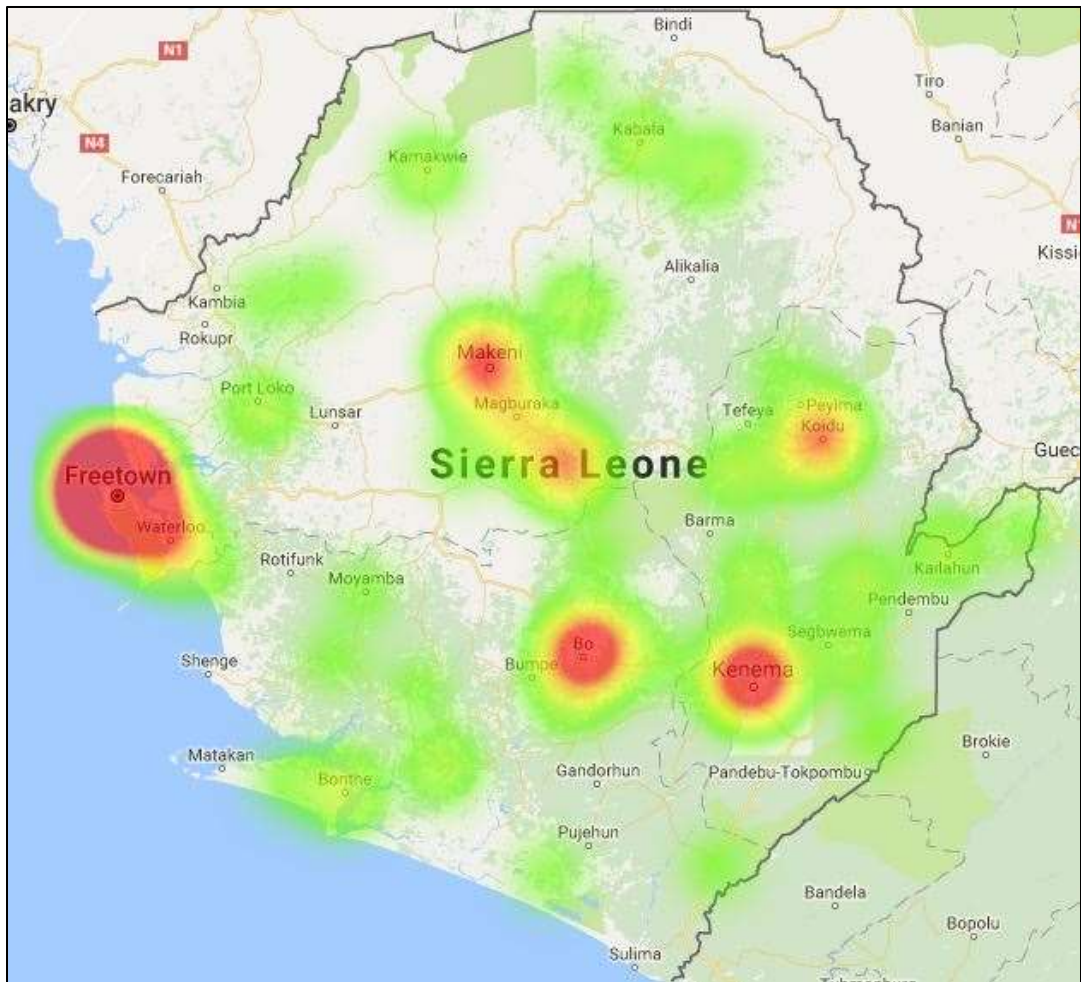
The graph above shows the trends in escalation dynamics layered against structural vulnerability. The y axis on the left (0-80) shows the level of vulnerability, with a score of over 60 reflecting higher levels of vulnerability. The y axis on the right (0-800) shows the number of fatalities, excluding Ebola-related fatalities, by month as a result of social, economic, political, and security factors.

Relative Vulnerability by Human Security Pillar for Sierra Leone



In the graph above, the lower the score in the y axis (0-10), the more vulnerable the Human Security Pillar.

¹⁵ "Sierra Leone mudslides 'kill more than 1,000'", Al Jazeera, August 2017.



The heatmap above shows hot spots of human security incidents from 2015 - 2018. These hot spots informed the field research planning.



The map above shows the locations where fieldwork was conducted in November 2017.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

This report seeks to layer, triangulate, and juxtapose quantitative, GIS, and qualitative data in a way that is accurate, meaningful, and representative. However, limitations to this analysis include the two-year date range for the event and GIS data and the seven-year date range for the ECOWARN SitReps. If there are conflict cycles that fall outside those parameters, there will be constraints on the ability to analyze those patterns in this report. Furthermore, this research sought to ensure representativeness of the sample of stakeholders engaged through KIIs (25 prominent individuals) and FGDs (16 focus group discussions). To the extent that these stakeholders were representative, they added vital contextualization and validation of the desktop research.

Scope and limitations also apply to the use and purpose of the study. The CRVA reports support the objectives of ECOWAS Conflict Prevention Framework (ECPF). In particular, the CRVA reports identify vulnerabilities across the human security pillars in order to inform structural prevention. Structural prevention, as defined in the ECPF, comprises “political, institutional (governance) and developmental reforms, capacity enhancement and advocacy on the culture of peace.” While this report can also be used to inform operational prevention, which includes “early warning, mediation, conciliation, preventive disarmament and preventive deployment using interactive means such as good offices and the ECOWAS Standby Force,” it seeks primarily to identify the key areas of structural vulnerability at the national and sub-national levels for strategic planning by ECOWAS and other partners in the peace and security space. However, inasmuch that operational prevention can be informed by patterns and trends in the event-driven risk factors highlighted in this report, the CRVA should serve as a baseline analysis of dynamics that are closely monitored over time. Thereby, in addition to informing strategic planning on structural

vulnerability issues, the CRVA will also inform early warning products such as weekly, monthly, and quarterly situation reports that inform analysts and potential responders as to heightened conflict risk across one or more indicators, and propose recommendations on response. The CRVA reports can also be used as a foundation to inform more detailed case studies around identified risks, vulnerabilities and resiliencies for a country of interest or concern.

While many reports that seek to identify structural vulnerabilities and resilience factors focus almost exclusively at the national level, ECOWAS seeks to support a more decentralized early warning and response infrastructure across the region. As such, the CRVA reports also take into consideration dynamics at the sub-national level. These sub-national factors are critical to consider as they help analysts and potential responders understand the context in which specific events (risks) are occurring, which may be markedly different from the national context. A mapping of sub-national level risks, vulnerabilities, and resiliencies can also help inform strategies for engaging at the local level for structural prevention. In particular, as defined by the ECPF, taking “measures to ensure the crises do not arise in the first place or, if they do, that they do no re-occur.”

Finally, as also noted in the ECPF, conflict in West Africa tends to be highly interconnected, which often leads to cycles of violence that cross borders and can keep countries emmeshed for decades. The CRVA reports, covering all fifteen member states of ECOWAS, are also useful in helping to inform and understand the dynamics of specific regional conflict systems, such as those that occur across the Mano River and Sahel. These regional conflict systems are influenced and interconnected not only historically and culturally, but also share many of the same structural vulnerabilities that give rise to risks and the eventual outbreak of violence, decade after decade. Thus, the CRVA reports present an opportunity to view not only the specific national and sub-national factors that lead

to structural vulnerability and heightened risk, they also help highlight the nature of regional conflict systems, and the need for a holistic and systemic lens in both analysis and response.

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Country Background

In 1787, British philanthropists established the Province of Freetown as a colony for freed slaves on the coast of Sierra Leone. In 1808, the Province of Freetown became a Crown Colony and in 1896 the British declared the rest of the country to be a Protectorate.¹⁶ The colonial government instituted a dual system of governance: direct rule in Freetown and the surrounding area, and indirect rule in the rural provinces by dividing the Protectorate into chiefdoms and empowering “Paramount Chiefs.”¹⁷ As a result, colonial resources were concentrated on Freetown and its residents, who were predominantly Krio (descendants of the freed slaves), and significant disparities in education, development, and identity developed between Freetown and the rest of the country.

Sierra Leone gained independence from Britain in 1961 under the leadership of Prime Minister Sir Milton Margai. Following Margai’s death in 1964, his brother, Sir Albert Margai, succeeded him as Prime Minister. Elections were held in March 1967, and Siaka Stevens of the All People’s Congress (APC) was elected Prime Minister. Within hours, Stevens was placed under house arrest by the military, led by Brigadier David Lansana. A coup d’état by senior military officers followed several days later, resulting in the formation of the National Reformation Council (NRC). In April 1968, there was another coup d’état, which returned Stevens to the position of Prime Minister and restored civilian rule.¹⁸

Stevens served as Prime Minister from 1968-1971, and in 1971 was elected President. During his tenure, Stevens moved Sierra Leone toward a

one-party state, and a 1978 referendum resulted in the APC becoming the only recognized political party.¹⁹ Stevens’ presidency was also marked by repression of political opposition, weak and under-resourced state institutions, corruption, and exploitation of the country’s vast mineral resources.²⁰ Stevens retired at the end of his term in 1985 and was succeeded by Major-General Joseph Saidu Momoh.

In March 1991, fighters from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), led by Foday Sankoh, invaded Sierra Leone from Liberia, where they received support from Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL). For the next eleven years, the RUF, later joined by the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), fought the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and the Civil Defense Forces (CDF), local militias aligned with the government, with devastating consequences for both civilians and infrastructure. The civil war, which lasted from 1991-2002, left an estimated 70,000 people dead and hundreds of thousands more injured, disabled and sexually abused.²¹ The war was particularly notorious for the brutal tactics employed by all parties to the conflict, including rape, mutilations, amputations, and the forcible conscription of child soldiers. While explanations for the causes and drivers of the conflict are varied and contested, prominent explanations include grievances among marginalized youth (stemming from the legacy of inequality and underdevelopment in rural Sierra Leone) and desire for control of the country’s lucrative diamond mines.²²

The process of ending the civil war was protracted and erratic, with the first attempt at peace talks

¹⁶ “Sierra Leone: History”, The Commonwealth

¹⁷ “The Causes of the Sierra Leone Civil War”, Jang, S., E-International Relations Students, October 2012.

¹⁸ “Elections and Coups in Sierra Leone, 1967”, Fisher, H., The Journal of Modern African Studies, December 1969.

¹⁹ “Constitutional History Sierra Leone”, Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance

²⁰ “The Causes of the Sierra Leone Civil War”, Jang, S., E-International Relations Students, October 2012.

²¹ “Evaluation of UNDP Assistance to Conflict-Affected Countries : Case Study Sierra Leone”, Kaldor, M. and Vincent, J., UN Development Programme

²² “The Causes of the Sierra Leone Civil War”, Jang, S., E-International Relations Students, October 2012.

taking place in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, in 1996.²³ Despite international military interventions from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the United Nations (UN), the next several years were marked by a series of ceasefires and peace accords, which were negated almost immediately by a return to violence. Brutal battles for control of Freetown in early 1999 marked a turning point in the war, as regional and international actors stepped up efforts to end the war, including the mediation of the Lomé Peace Accords in July 1999 and the formation of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).²⁴ With the assistance of UNAMSIL and the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), the government of Sierra Leone came to a settlement with the RUF, and in January 2002, Sierra Leonean president Ahmed Tejan Kabbah declared the war to be officially over.

In the post-war period, the government of Sierra Leone has focused on rebuilding and reforming the country's institutions and infrastructure²⁵ and has made impressive strides in preventing a return to violent conflict. Kabbah was re-elected president in 2002, and when elections were held again in 2007, Ernest Bai Koroma of the APC was elected president. Koroma was re-elected in 2012, in the first elections conducted without UN assistance since the end of the civil war.

In 2014, Sierra Leone's stability was threatened by an outbreak of the Ebola virus originating in neighboring Guinea. The virus spread quickly throughout the region, and by early 2016, Sierra Leone had reported more than 14,000 cases and nearly 4,000 Ebola-related deaths.²⁶ The epidemic disrupted the country's economy, schools, and development, and further undermined the already-weak healthcare system. As a result of the Ebola

outbreak, coupled with a simultaneous drop in iron ore prices, the Sierra Leonean economy saw a GDP growth rate of -20.6 percent in 2015.²⁷

²³ "Paying the price: The Sierra Leone peace process", Lord, D., Conciliation Resources, 2000.

²⁴ "History of the UN in Sierra Leone", United Nations Sierra Leone

²⁵ "It's been 25 years since Sierra Leone's brutal civil war. Here's what we know about helping communities recover.", Glennerster, R., The Washington Post, May 2016.

²⁶ "Ebola Situation Reports", World Health Organization

²⁷ "The World Bank in Sierra Leone: Overview", World Bank

National-Level Vulnerabilities, Risks and Resiliencies

Based on desktop research using the ECOWARN and ACLED data sets, surveys of peace and security actors in key regions in Sierra Leone, field research that included KIIs and FGDs, and participatory analysis by the CRVA field research team, the following national-level risks, vulnerabilities, and resilience factors were identified:

Structural Vulnerabilities	Population and Demographics <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Population growth• Rural to urban migration• High rate of youth unemployment• Internal migration to Freetown• Early marriage• Teenage pregnancy• Child labor• Limited access to women’s health services in rural areas• Cultural barriers to family planning including the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)• Inadequate access to quality public services, including education and healthcare• Poor urban planning
	Economics and Resources <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rural-urban divide and regional disparities in development and infrastructure• Price volatility• Reliance on exports• High prices of basic commodities• Rising cost of living• Undiversified economy• Child labor• Illicit economic activities, including drug trafficking• Environmental degradation and climate change
	Politics and Governance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Political polarization along ethnic and regional lines• Perceptions of corruption and lack of transparency among state institutions• Underrepresentation of youth and women in political decision-making• Weak governance of natural resources

- Poor application of decentralization policies
- Weak presence of the state at the local levels

Rule of Law

- Perceived lack of judicial independence
- Perceptions of corruption and bias within the justice system
- Lack of resources for the justice system
- Poor access to justice for vulnerable populations
- Clash between customary and official law around land tenure and ownership
- Gender-based discrimination within customary law

Security

- Perceptions of corruption and bias among security forces
- Inadequate resources for the security sector
- Lack of clarity around land tenure and ownership
- Porous borders
- Proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW)
- Legacy of the civil war, which has weakened state institutions and promoted the culture of violence

Event-Driven Risks

Population and Demographics

- Drug abuse
- Natural disasters
- Disease outbreaks
- Food insecurity
- Infant and maternal mortality
- Low provision of social services
- High rate of emigration

Economics and Resources

- Low rate of economic productivity
- Disease outbreaks
- Price volatility
- Rising cost of living

Politics and Governance

- Misinformation and hate speech on social media, especially during election cycles
- Poor delivery of basic social services
- Violence against political parties
- Discrimination against supporters of political opposition parties

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Rule of Law

- Incidents of corruption within the judicial system
- Tension from the lack of clarity around land tenure and ownership
- Incidents of mob justice

Security

- Criminality and illicit activities
- Land- and resource-based conflicts
- Tensions and violence during election periods
- Cross-border disputes

Population and Demographics

- Existence of growing civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs
- Traditional and religious leaders
- Culture of religious tolerance and practice of inter-faith marriages

Economics and Resources

- Microfinance programs and economic cooperatives to promote women's economic empowerment
- Actions of local, regional, and international actors to address food insecurity
- Remittances from migrants
- Cross-border trade
- Licensed small-scale mining

Politics and Governance

- Vibrant media
- Lessons learned from civil war as a deterrent to violent conflict

Rule of Law

- Legal Aid Board and initiatives to increase access to justice
- Existence of legal texts and normative frameworks on gender, equity, and women's rights
- Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (ADR)
- Reliance on traditional and religious institutions for conflict resolution
- Existence of regulatory framework on land use

Security

- Community-police partnership boards, Provincial Security Committee (PROSEC) and District Security Committee (DISEC)
- Security sector reform (SSR)
- The legacy of the UN peacekeeping operations and the UN Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL)

Population and Demographics (Most Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Population growth• High rate of youth unemployment• Internal migration to Freetown and rural-urban migration• Early marriage• Teenage pregnancy• Child labor• Limited access to family planning and women’s health services in rural areas• Cultural barriers to family planning including the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C)• Inadequate access to quality public services, including education and healthcare• Regional disparities in development and infrastructure• Poor urban planning
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Criminality and illicit activities driven by youth unemployment• Drug abuse• Natural disasters• Disease outbreaks• Food insecurity• Infant and maternal mortality

Vulnerabilities and Risks

Sierra Leone’s population is made up of around 16 ethnic groups, the largest of which are the Temne and the Mende, who each account for approximately a third of the population. Other groups include the Limba, Fula, Kono, Mandingo, and Krio, as well as several other smaller groups. The Temne and Limba groups live primarily in the north of the country, while the south is largely Mende. These regional and ethnic divides align with the political divide between the All People’s Congress (APC), whose supporters are largely Temne, and Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP), whose supporters mainly come from the Mende group.²⁸ During the fieldwork, participants reported

that there has been increased tension between ethnic groups in the lead-up to the 2018 elections.

According to estimates based on the 2004 census, approximately 78 percent of Sierra Leoneans practice Islam and around 21 percent are Christian, while the rest of the population practices other religions, including traditional indigenous religions.²⁹ Relationships between religious groups in Sierra Leone have historically been positive.³⁰ Fieldwork participants emphasized that there is widespread religious tolerance throughout the country and that religious leaders preach messages of peace.

²⁸ “BTI 2016 | Sierra Leone Country Report”, Bertelsmann Stiftung

²⁹ “The Future of World Religions: Population Growth Projections, 2010-2050”, Pew Research Center, April 2015.

³⁰ “All things happily to all men”, The Economist, May 2014.

Population growth and rural to urban migration were identified as key demographic vulnerabilities in Sierra Leone by fieldwork participants. Internal migration has resulted in significant population pressures in urban areas, especially Freetown. Interviewees emphasized the need for decentralization, stating that people migrate to Freetown for better education, more economic opportunities, and improved access to social services. Freetown's rapidly increasing population has resulted in the growth of slums, the construction of homes in disaster-prone areas, and water scarcity. Population growth has also driven environmental degradation, especially deforestation, and has put pressure on resources. Interviewees also highlighted vulnerabilities associated with migration to mining areas, such as Kono and Kenema, citing increases in food prices and increased pressure on already poor infrastructure and social services.

A key concern raised by fieldwork participants was Sierra Leone's large and growing youth population. The country has a population of around 7 million,³¹ with a large youth population. As of 2015, 42 percent of the population was below the age of 15.³² Low levels of education and high unemployment rates among youth are potential areas of vulnerability. Around 70 percent of Sierra Leonean youth are unemployed or underemployed, which may contribute to sentiments of alienation or dissatisfaction with government.³³ Fieldwork participants stated that a lack of employment opportunities for youth has led to increased criminality and the proliferation of youth gangs.

Teenage pregnancy and early marriage are common in Sierra Leone, with fieldwork participants attributing these phenomena to the prevalence of poverty. In 2013, 28 percent of girls between the ages of 15 and 19 were pregnant or had already given birth, and reports suggest that 44 percent of women were married by the time they

were 18 years old as of 2015.³⁴ Despite laws against early marriage, the practice is still common, especially in rural areas. When families cannot afford to financially support their children, they arrange for their daughters to be married early. Interviewees also discussed family planning, stating that it is accessible in many areas of the country, but that cultural and religious taboos sometimes deter women from utilizing these services. Fieldwork participants noted that family planning is less accessible in rural areas.

Child labor was cited throughout the fieldwork as an ongoing concern. Interviewees reported that children are engaged in activities such as mining, especially sand mining, road construction, petty trade, begging, and agriculture. Child labor hinders schooling, as many children work before or after school or drop out of school completely in order to provide income for their family.

"Teenage pregnancy is also taking place. Many school-going girls do not even complete their primary or secondary school because of teenage pregnancy. This is also caused by poverty and some parents cannot properly take care of their children. Now, when you visit the schools, you will notice the high number in their attendance, but as the academic year passes by the number drops."

- Local Government Representative, Kono District

Sierra Leone has a weak health infrastructure, with some of the world's highest rates of maternal and child mortality.³⁵ The country has 51 hospitals, but many of these are concentrated in the capital, Freetown. Many of the healthcare services in rural areas are provided by a network of community

³¹ "The World Bank in Sierra Leone: Overview", World Bank

³² "Population ages 0-14 (% of total)", World Bank

³³ "About Sierra Leone", UN Development Programme

³⁴ "Sierra Leone's Girls in the Aftermath of Ebola", Jackson-Garrett, D., Council on Foreign Relations, May 2016.

³⁵ "Sierra Leone", World Health Organization

health workers. With only four doctors per 100,000 people, the healthcare system in Sierra Leone is hindered by a lack of material resources and personnel.³⁶

The country's health infrastructure was further damaged by the 2014-2015 Ebola epidemic, which killed nearly 4,000 people in Sierra Leone.³⁷ Notably, the Ebola outbreak had a disproportionate effect on women, particularly those who were pregnant. Women were frequently caretakers of the ill, and many pregnant women avoided hospitals for check-ups due to fear of exposure to the virus.³⁸ The outbreak also contributed to a rise in sexual violence and teen pregnancies due to school closures, emergency curfews and quarantines, and economic pressures that left women and girls vulnerable to abuse.³⁹ In some communities, teenage pregnancy reportedly increased by 65 percent during the epidemic.⁴⁰ Other health concerns in Sierra Leone include tuberculosis, malaria, and HIV/AIDS, which had an adult prevalence rate of 1.3 percent in 2014.^{41,42}

Finally, fieldwork participants highlighted inadequate infrastructure and social services as ongoing vulnerabilities throughout the country. Interviewees reported poor road, water and sanitation infrastructure, as well as a lacking education system as vulnerabilities. In rural areas, electricity and water services are not reliable, and some villages lack water infrastructure completely.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Fieldwork participants identified several social and institutional resilience factors that help mitigate demographic vulnerabilities and risks in Sierra Leone. Interviewees highlighted social and cultural resilience factors, such as religious tolerance and

inter-ethnic marriages. Interviewees reported that religious leaders preach a message of peace and that traditional leaders have played a role in maintaining peace between ethnic groups.

Fieldwork participants highlighted the role of CSOs and NGOs in awareness-raising and sensitization campaigns around women's rights, healthcare, and family planning. Sensitization campaigns have also successfully decreased the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C). Additionally, welfare programs and awareness-raising campaigns have reportedly led to a decrease in child labor in the past five to ten years, though it remains an ongoing vulnerability. CSOs such as Mary Stopes and the Planned Parenthood Association – Sierra Leone have been effective in their work providing reproductive health education and ensuring access to family planning throughout the country.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ "Ebola (Ebola Virus Disease): Case Counts", Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

³⁸ "Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone", UN Development Programme, 2016.

³⁹ "Sierra Leone's Girls in the Aftermath of Ebola", Jackson-Garrett, D., Council on Foreign Relations, May 2016.

⁴⁰ "Assessing Sexual and Gender Based Violence during the Ebola Crisis in Sierra Leone", UN Development Programme, October 2015.

⁴¹ "Sierra Leone", World Health Organization

⁴² "UNAIDS and Sierra Leone: Country update", UNAIDS, 2016.

Economics and Resources (Second Most Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Price volatility• High prices of basic commodities• Reliance on exports• Undiversified economy• Rising cost of living• Child labor• High rates of youth unemployment• Illicit economic activities, including drug trafficking• Rural-urban divide and regional disparities in infrastructure and social service development• Environmental degradation and climate change
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Land- and resource-based conflicts• Food insecurity• Natural disasters• Disease outbreaks• Price volatility

Vulnerabilities and Risks

Sierra Leone’s economy is reliant on primary commodities – namely, agriculture and mineral exports such as diamonds, gold, bauxite, and iron ore – and the service sector. Around 60 percent of the labor force is engaged in agriculture, including fishing, the production of staple crops (such as rice and cassava) and the production of cash crops (coffee, cocoa, palm oil and cashew nuts).⁴³ The primary sector (agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and hunting) made up nearly two-thirds of Sierra Leone’s GDP in 2015.⁴⁴

During the field research, participants discussed the mining industry in Sierra Leone, stating that local communities see little economic benefit from the presence of international mining companies. The largest diamond mines are located in Kono, Bo, and Kenema districts. In these regions, interviewees noted that they have seen little to no economic benefit from these activities, citing poor

roads and water infrastructure, and deficient education and health systems. Furthermore, interviewees highlighted perceptions that only government officials and chiefs benefit from mining profits. Fieldwork participants also expressed concern about the negative environmental impacts of both legal and illegal mining, citing deforestation and water pollution.

“God blessed this country. If we knew, we would not have let people take them (natural resources). We must improve technical institutions and universities, so that we can keep our minerals in Sierra Leone.”

- Women’s Focus Group Discussion, Freetown

Economic productivity is undermined by the heavy reliance on primary commodities (which are subject to price volatility), a large informal sector,

⁴³ “Sierra Leone: Agriculture and Food Security”, USAID

⁴⁴ “African Economic Outlook: Sierra Leone”, OECD, 2015.

difficulty in accessing credit and financial services, and high rates of youth unemployment.⁴⁵ An estimated 70 percent of Sierra Leonean youth are unemployed or underemployed.⁴⁶ Fieldwork participants reported that many youth have begun street trading or riding *okadas*⁴⁷ as a source of income. Youth have also turned to drug trafficking and other illicit economic activities due to the lack of legitimate economic opportunities.

While Sierra Leone saw high rates of economic growth following the end of the civil war, due in part to government investments in infrastructure and iron ore production, the economy was severely impacted by the 2014-2015 Ebola epidemic and a simultaneous decline in iron ore prices.⁴⁸ As a result, the country recorded a negative GDP growth rate of -20.6 percent in 2015.⁴⁹ The Ebola epidemic also negatively impacted the delivery of social services, agricultural production, and cross-border and regional trade. Fieldwork participants reported that the country continues to experience lingering economic impacts from the Ebola outbreak due to the flight of investors, halted infrastructure development, and a loss of economic opportunities. In July 2015, the government introduced the “National Ebola Recovery Strategy for Sierra Leone,” which prioritized the restoration of key social services such as healthcare and education and support for the agricultural and private sectors, among other goals.⁵⁰ The economy is rebounding, and GDP growth is expected to reach 5.4 percent in 2017.⁵¹

Due to the population’s reliance on agricultural production, land tenure and natural resource management are critical issues in Sierra Leone.

Since independence, Sierra Leone has operated under a dual land tenure system – land in the Western Area is managed under statutory tenure stemming from British Common Law, while land in the Provinces is managed under customary tenure.⁵² Under customary tenure, rural land in Sierra Leone has been controlled by landowning families with Paramount Chiefs playing the role of administrator and arbitrator.⁵³ In the post-war period, migration and demographic shifts have contributed to an increasing number of land-based conflicts and illegal settlements in the Western Area.⁵⁴ In the Provinces, an increase in the number and scope of leasing agreements (for example, for agribusiness or mining) and disagreements over land sales and boundaries have also contributed to conflicts.⁵⁵ In March 2017, the Government of Sierra Leone introduced a new National Land Policy, which aims to introduce institutional and legal reforms, though the policy maintains the dual land tenure system for the Western Area and the Provinces.⁵⁶ Fieldwork participants reported that land tenure issues continue to be an ongoing vulnerability throughout Sierra Leone. Many interviewees stated that it is common for the same parcel of land to be sold to multiple people, which drives land conflict. Additionally, some participants reported perceptions that the Ministry of Land is corrupt and has falsified land documents.

Poverty remains widespread in Sierra Leone - about 78 percent of Sierra Leone’s population lives in multidimensional poverty while an additional 15 percent are at risk of falling into multidimensional

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ “About Sierra Leone”, UN Development Programme

⁴⁷ *Okada* is a local term for motorcycle taxis.

⁴⁸ “African Economic Outlook: Sierra Leone”, OECD, 2015.

⁴⁹ “GDP growth (annual %)", World Bank

⁵⁰ “Summary on the Ebola Recovery Plan: Sierra Leone”, World Bank, April 2015.

⁵¹ “The World Bank in Sierra Leone: Overview”, World Bank

⁵² “Final National Land Policy of Sierra Leone: Version 6”, The Government of Sierra Leone, August 2015.

⁵³ “Land tenure, food security and investment in postwar Sierra Leone”, Unruh, J. and Turray, H., Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006.

⁵⁴ “Final National Land Policy of Sierra Leone: Version 6”, The Government of Sierra Leone, August 2015.

⁵⁵ “Land and conflict in Sierra Leone: A rapid desk-based study”, UK Department for International Development, January 2013.

⁵⁶ “Sierra Leone: President Koroma Launches National Land Policy”, allAfrica, March 2017.

poverty.⁵⁷ In addition, nearly half of the population is considered food insecure.⁵⁸ There are significant disparities between urban and rural populations as well; for example, 74 percent of people living in urban areas have access to clean drinking water whereas, on average, about 35 percent of rural residents have access to safe drinking water.⁵⁹ Fieldwork participants reported that due to rapidly growing populations in urban areas, especially Freetown, water scarcity has become an increasing concern even for urban dwellers. Disparities in development and social services between rural and urban areas, and between Freetown and Western Area and the less-developed Provinces, has historically been a source of grievances and was a key driver of conflict in the civil war.⁶⁰ Additionally, some fieldwork participants expressed the perception that certain districts are marginalized in terms of infrastructure and social services for political reasons. For example, Kenema has historically been the stronghold of the opposition party, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), and the district suffers from poor road infrastructure, a poorly staffed education system, and an under-resourced healthcare system.

During the fieldwork, participants highlighted price volatility, low salaries, rising cost of living, and growing food insecurity as key economic vulnerabilities throughout the country. The installation of a toll on the main road in and out of Freetown was cited as a contributing factor to increases in commodity prices. Additionally, interviewees reported that food prices continue to increase, stating that the price of a bag of rice is now SLL 200,000 to SLL 250,000 (approximately \$26-\$32 USD), while the minimum wage is only

SLL 500,000. Food prices also reportedly increase during holidays and when people are fasting for Ramadan.

Significant disparities persist in the areas of education and employment for women and girls. While primary school enrollment rates for girls have increased, secondary and tertiary education rates for women and girls remain low.⁶¹ Only 16.8 percent of women ages 25 or older have at least some secondary education, compared to 29.7 percent of men.⁶² Sierra Leonean women work primarily in the informal sector, particularly in rural areas – an estimated 84 percent of women in rural areas and 63 percent in urban areas are engaged in the informal labor market.⁶³ With no labor protections and lower salaries, work in informal sectors leaves women more economically vulnerable.⁶⁴ In addition, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has expressed concerns that traditional customs on inheritance limit women's access to land and assets.⁶⁵ Fieldwork participants reported that women are crucial to the economy and are the primary providers in many homes. Women are most often engaged in petty trading and agriculture and often work multiple jobs to provide for themselves and their families.

Sierra Leone is vulnerable to the effects of climate change, as well as environmental degradation caused by mining, logging, agriculture, and other human activities. The environmental shifts brought on by climate change (including increased coastal erosion and flooding) risk having serious negative impacts on crop yields, impacting livelihoods and food security in Sierra Leone.⁶⁶ In addition, the

⁵⁷ "Human Development Report 2016: Human Development for Everyone", UN Development Programme, 2016.

⁵⁸ "Sierra Leone", World Food Programme

⁵⁹ "Sierra Leone: Analytical summary – The physical environment", World Health Organization

⁶⁰ "Infrastructure and Growth in Sierra Leone: Summary Report", African Development Bank

⁶¹ "Primary completion rate, female (% of relevant age group)", World Bank

⁶² "Sierra Leone: Human Development Indicators", UN Development Programme

⁶³ "CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: 57 Session (10 Feb 2014- - 28 Feb 2014)", United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights

⁶⁴ "Sierra Leone: Country Gender Profile", African Development Bank, October 2011.

⁶⁵ "CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: 57 Session (10 Feb 2014- - 28 Feb 2014)", United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights

⁶⁶ "Sierra Leone", UN Development Programme, Climate Change Adaptation

increased pressures stemming from population growth, dependence on wood for fuel and construction, the expansion of agribusiness, and mining activities are exacerbating current trends in deforestation, soil erosion, and landslides.⁶⁷ Sierra Leone is one of the countries with the “fastest acceleration of tree cover loss.”⁶⁸ In August 2017, flash floods and landslides on the outskirts of Freetown left nearly 500 people dead and forced the displacement of 10,000 people.⁶⁹

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Fieldwork participants identified several sources of social and institutional resilience that mitigate economic vulnerabilities and risks in Sierra Leone. NGOs and civil society organizations are involved in economic development initiatives. For example, interviewees highlighted CSO-supported microfinance initiatives as important in the promotion of economic empowerment for women and youth. Also, women have created economic cooperatives in some communities, which have been a source of economic resilience.

⁶⁷ “About Sierra Leone”, UN Development Programme

⁶⁸ “RELEASE: New Global Data Finds Tropical Forests Declining in Overlooked Hotspots”, World Resources Institute, September 2015.

⁶⁹ “Sierra Leone: Death toll from landslide nears 500”, Al Jazeera, August 2017.

Politics and Governance (Third Most Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Political polarization along ethnic and regional lines• Perceptions of corruption and lack of transparency among politicians• Underrepresentation of youth and women in political decision-making• Disparities in the distribution of infrastructure and social service funding along political lines• Weak governance of natural resources• Poor application of decentralization policies• Weak presence of the state at the local levels
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tension and violence during election periods• Misinformation and hate speech on social media related to the upcoming elections• Incidents of corruption

Vulnerabilities and Risks

In February 2017 President Koroma announced that local, parliamentary and presidential elections will next be held on March 7, 2018. During the fieldwork, participants expressed concerns related to the upcoming elections, including the potential for violence, voter fraud, and intimidation of opponents. Interviewees reported increasing tensions between the two main parties, the All People’s Congress (APC) and the Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP). Incidents of hate speech and the spread of misinformation on both social media and in traditional media sources have been an ongoing concern. Additionally, media sources, security forces and even some CSOs and NGOs have reportedly become highly politicized.

According to fieldwork participants, ethnicity, regionalism and tribal identities play a central role in political party affiliation. The APC draws support primarily from the Temne ethnic group, while the SLPP draws support from the Mende ethnic group. The Northern province of Sierra Leone is the political stronghold of the APC, while the Eastern province is the stronghold of the SLPP. According to interviewees, ethnic and regional identities can be sources of discrimination regarding

employment opportunities, development projects and other benefits.

Perceptions of corruption in government institutions continue to be a key concern, despite the establishment of the Anti-Corruption Commission and President Koroma’s pledge to address corruption. Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index ranks Sierra Leone 123rd out of 176 countries in 2016. In 2015, the government was strongly criticized for a report by the Auditor General that reported that 30 percent of funding dedicated to fighting the Ebola epidemic had been mismanaged. During the fieldwork, interviewees reported widespread perceptions of corruption within both local and national government and a lack of transparency. According to some fieldwork participants, politicians allegedly mismanage public funds meant for infrastructure development, social service development, and disaster relief.

Additionally, the government’s legitimacy is undermined by regional disparities in development and social service provision. Underdevelopment, a lack of infrastructure and inadequate services such as healthcare and education in rural areas have historically contributed to grievances and

perceptions of marginalization among rural populations. Fieldwork participants reported that political bias has led to uneven infrastructure development and provision of social services. For example, in Kenema district, the stronghold of the opposition SLPP, interviewees reported that road and water infrastructure is poor. Meanwhile in Bombali district, a stronghold of the ruling APC, the roads are well-maintained, and the district continues to receive development funds from the government.

Women remain largely underrepresented in decision-making and governance processes in Sierra Leone. Between 2007-2012, women comprised 13.5 percent of parliamentarians and 18.9 percent of councilors.⁷⁰ As of 2016, 14 out of the 124 seats (11 percent) in parliament were held by women.⁷¹ In addition, four of the 23 ministers are women. Civil society and women's groups have long advocated for a 30 percent gender quota in government; to date, this quota has not been implemented, although President Koroma has promised to enact legislation during his term. In addition, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has expressed concerns that the Chieftaincy Act restricts women's political participation at the local level, as women may not be eligible candidates for chieftaincy positions based on traditions.⁷² Several fieldwork participants reported that while women remain underrepresented, their role in political decision-making is slowly increasing as women vie for leadership roles. Interviewees noted that women face significant social and economic barriers to political participation, such as lack of funding for campaigns, harassment, and intimidation.

Fieldwork participants also reported that youth are underrepresented in political decision-making and

highlighted concerns that youth are vulnerable to manipulation by politicians, which could lead to violence in the lead-up to elections. The rise of youth gangs and their involvement in election violence was highlighted throughout the fieldwork, and participants emphasized the need for politicians to encourage peace during their campaigns.

The human rights situation in Sierra Leone has improved greatly since the end of the civil war in 2002, but reports of human rights violations still emerge from the country. After undergoing a UN Universal Periodic Review in 2016, Sierra Leone agreed to ratify several international human rights treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Convention against Torture, and CEDAW. However, during the review, Sierra Leone refused to legally prohibit female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C), to allow pregnant girls to attend school, or to guarantee rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people.

Additional human rights concerns include abuses by security forces, prolonged detention and poor prison conditions, human trafficking and forced labor, and gender-based violence (GBV). Human rights organizations also expressed concerns around the restrictions on civil liberties (including freedom of assembly and association) put in place during the Ebola epidemic.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Fieldwork participants identified several sources of social and institutional resilience that mitigate political vulnerabilities and risks in Sierra Leone. Women and youth participation in politics were

⁷⁰ "Sierra Leone: Country Gender Profile", African Development Bank, October 2011.

⁷¹ "Sierra Leone 2016 Human Rights Report", U.S. Department of State

⁷² "CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: 57 Session (10 Feb 2014- - 28 Feb 2014)", United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights

cited as resilience factors. Additionally, interviewees stated that women's groups and CSOs have played an important role in increasing women's participation in politics. NGOs and CSOs have also implemented sensitization campaigns to prevent violence leading up to the 2018 elections. Finally, interviewees emphasized that the memory of the 1991 - 2002 civil war will serve as an effective deterrent to widespread political violence in the lead-up to the 2018 elections.

Rule of Law (Fourth Most Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities

- Perceived lack of judicial independence
- Perceptions of corruption and bias within the justice system
- Inadequate resources for the court system
- Poor access to justice for vulnerable populations
- Gender-based discrimination within customary law
- Clash between customary and statutory law around land tenure and ownership

Risks

- Incidents of corruption within the judicial system
- Incidents of discrimination against supporters of political opposition parties
- Tensions from the lack of clarity around land tenure and ownership
- Incidents of mob justice

Vulnerabilities and Risks

According to the CRVA Index, Sierra Leone is least vulnerable in the area of Rule of Law, with a score of 6.74/10. However, fieldwork participants reported that the justice system in Sierra Leone continues to be hampered by a lack of judicial independence, perceptions of corruption, inadequate supplies and staffing, and poor access to justice for vulnerable populations.

Fieldwork participants broadly expressed the perception that the judiciary in Sierra Leone is not adequately independent. A common phrase used by interviewees was “orders from above,” demonstrating the belief that high-level political actors or the executive branch frequently influence or dictate the outcomes of court cases. Many respondents cited the dismissal of the former vice president, Samuel Sam-Sumana, by President Koroma (a decision which was subsequently upheld by the country’s Supreme Court)⁷³ as an example of the court system conforming to the wishes of the executive branch. Others expressed concern about the power of the president to appoint judges and the fact that the office of the

Attorney General and the title of Minister of Justice are held by one person, calling for a greater separation of powers. This lack of independence has, according to some fieldwork participants, resulted in a justice system that is biased toward the ruling party, resulting in unequal treatment and cases of arbitrary arrests of opposition supporters.

“Nowadays the equality before the law is a far remote notion. These days if you do not have the support of a highly-placed politician or influential person you do not have good justice.”

– Journalist, Kenema District

Corruption within the judiciary was also an issue raised by fieldwork participants, and many voiced the opinion that the justice system is biased toward the wealthy and politically connected. In a 2015 survey conducted by Afrobarometer, 47 percent of respondents said that “most” or “all” members of the judiciary were involved in corruption, and only

⁷³ “Sacked Sierra Leone VP takes case to ECOWAS Court”, Fofana, U., Politico Sierra Leone, October 2016.

32 percent said that they trust a court of law “somewhat” or “a lot.”⁷⁴

In addition, the effectiveness of the judiciary is undermined by inadequate equipment and supplies, and low salaries.⁷⁵ The lack of computerization within the system makes laws and regulations difficult to disseminate⁷⁶ and reduces popular access to the court system.⁷⁷ Fieldwork participants across the country reported that court processes are slow and frequently delayed, and that there is a significant backlog of cases. One interviewee in Freetown attributed this to the country having an inadequate number of lawyers and magistrates, while others saw processing delays as an intentional action designed to gain more money from disputants or to encourage people to drop cases. It was also noted that, in cases of rape or other forms of gender-based violence (GBV), processing delays effectively discourage many women from reporting incidents, contributing to further impunity and a culture of silence around these issues.

As a result of these shortcomings, fieldwork participants reported that many people turn to alternative forms of dispute resolution in civil cases or low-level disputes. Traditional justice systems – namely mediation by religious leaders, local chiefs, and Paramount Chiefs – function alongside the formal legal system, particularly in rural areas where courts may not be easily accessible. The Sierra Leone Police also offer mediation or alternative dispute resolution (ADR) options. However, interviewees noted that the credibility of these alternative mechanisms is undermined when chiefs and local leaders are perceived to be politicized.

Reliance on customary law or mediation by chiefs can also mean that women’s rights are not adequately protected in practice. As one civil society representative in the Bombali district described, “[Women’s] rights to talk are at times trampled upon [and] the women tend to be suppressed, and to a large extent the husband/men are given the right stand. In a normal court the women are better protected.” Despite the passage of several key pieces of national legislation relating to gender, women in Sierra Leone often face discrimination under customary law,⁷⁸ especially in divorce and inheritance cases.⁷⁹ The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has also expressed concern that the 2009 Chieftaincy Act disqualifies women as candidates for chieftaincy elections.⁸⁰ In addition, key protections for women are missing in Sierra Leonean law. For example, the law mandates equal pay but does not prohibit dismissal of pregnant workers on the basis of pregnancy.⁸¹ The law also does not prohibit Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGM/C), which is widely practiced (although a ban on the practice was put in place during the Ebola epidemic and remains in effect).⁸²

“Not everybody can access justice because they lack money and political power. [The] majority rely on the alternative justice system such as the traditional leaders and other cultural practices such as swearing to local gods.”

– Chairman, Youth Development Organization, Kono District

⁷⁴ “In Sierra Leone, perceived corruption rises, public trust and leaders’ job approval drop”, Thompson, L., Afrobarometer, June 2016.

⁷⁵ “Sierra Leone: Justice Sector and the Rule of Law”, Suma, M., Open Society Foundations, January 2014.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ “BTI 2016 | Sierra Leone Country Report”, Bertelsmann Stiftung

⁷⁹ “CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: 57 Session (10 Feb 2014- - 28 Feb 2014)”, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016: Sierra Leone”, U.S. Department of State

⁸² Ibid.

Despite this, women are fairly well-represented within the judiciary. As of 2014, 40 percent of judges and justices within the Superior Courts of Judicature were women.⁸³ In the Supreme Court, three of the five justices, including the Chief Justice, were women; the same ratio existed in the Court of Appeals.⁸⁴ However, only three of eleven judges on the High Court were women, and only two of eighteen magistrates were women.⁸⁵ Women also represented 16.3 percent of police personnel as of 2014.⁸⁶

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Vulnerabilities and risks such as labor protests and road infrastructure in the rural areas are mitigated through the efforts of government economic institutions and the private sector/business community, as well as through the activities of civil society organizations, including youth and women's groups.

⁸³ "Sierra Leone: Justice Sector and the Rule of Law", Suma, M., Open Society Foundations, January 2014.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

Security (Least Vulnerable Pillar)

Vulnerabilities

- Perceptions of corruption and bias among security forces
- Inadequate resources for the security sector
- Lack of clarity around land tenure and ownership
- Porous borders
- Proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW)
- Legacy of the civil war, which has weakened state institutions and promoted the culture of violence

Risks

- Criminality and illicit activities
- Land- and resource-based disputes
- Tensions and violence during election periods
- Cross-border disputes

Vulnerabilities and Risks

According to the CRVA Index, Sierra Leone is also least vulnerable in the area of Security, with a score of 6.74/10. While Sierra Leone has been relatively peaceful in recent years, fieldwork participants identified several ongoing security concerns. Notably, they cited instances of criminality (particularly armed robbery), drug trafficking, land-based disputes, insecurity from porous borders, and the risk of political tensions and violence during election periods. Criminality and illicit trade continue to flourish in Sierra Leone. Across the country, interviewees attributed the rise in criminality and the growth of illicit economies (such as the cultivation and sale of cannabis or drugs such as Tramadol) to poor employment prospects and economic pressures. The role of *okada*⁸⁷ drivers and youth gangs, known as “cliques”, in fostering insecurity and criminality were also noted.

Concern around the management of natural resources, specifically land, was prevalent among interviewees. Fieldwork respondents across the country reported that Sierra Leone’s complex system of land tenure with overlapping authorities

“The proliferation of cliques is not a new phenomenon. We have our own faction here in Freetown. There are certain places [where if] you go there in certain color clothes you are dead.”

– Judicial Official, Freetown

has contributed to disputes over land acquisition, management and boundaries.⁸⁸ Participants cited cases of multiple land sales and the re-appropriation and redistribution of land along political lines, as well as tensions within and between families arising from land inheritance claims. Pastoralist conflicts, which have been driven by concerns over the destruction of crops by livestock and access to grazing land, specifically along the Sierra Leone-Guinea border, were also highlighted. Several respondents also noted a protracted border dispute between Sierra Leone and Guinea over the border town of Yenga in the Kailahun district.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ *Okada* is a local term for motorcycle taxis.

⁸⁸ “Key Land Tenure Issues and Reform Processes for Sierra Leone”, Moyo, S. and Foray, K., UN Development Programme, September 2009.

⁸⁹ “Guinea-Sierra Leone ‘deal’ to end Yenga dispute”, BBC, August 2012.

The risk of political violence was also an issue raised by fieldwork participants, particularly ahead of the 2018 elections. Both the 2007 and 2012 elections involved violence between supporters of the APC and the SLPP.⁹⁰ According to respondents, the campaign period for the March 2018 elections has featured divisive political speeches, hate speech and hostile campaign slogans, which are invoking divisions across the country. Furthermore, the employment of youth and *okada* drivers as tools for political violence and intimidation were also identified as detriments to electoral stability.

The country's porous borders with Guinea and Liberia were also identified as a vulnerability. In the past, the region's porous borders have facilitated the free flow of weapons and soldiers during conflict, and interviewees noted that today a lack of border control contributes to sex trafficking and the proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW).

Security Sector Reform (SSR) in post-conflict Sierra Leone has contributed to the restoration of order and internal stability. However, interviewees reported a low level of confidence in the ability of the security apparatus – particularly the Sierra Leone Police – to effectively address security concerns. These feelings of mistrust primarily stem from widespread perceptions of political bias, corruption and a lack of adequate resources. Many interviewees cited cases of interference by politicians (“orders from above”), bias in favor of the ruling party, and abuses against opposition supporters during protests. Logistical deficiencies – such as a lack of vehicles, helmets, masks and other supplies – and inadequate staffing have also undermined community trust in the police and have raised concerns that security forces are unprepared for the 2018 elections and potential incidents of political violence.

⁹⁰ “Old Tricks, Young Guns: Elections and violence in Sierra Leone”, Africa Research Institute, April 2011.

⁹¹ “Female Combatants and the Perpetration of Violence: Wartime Rape in the Sierra Leone Civil War”, Cohen, D., World Politics, July 2013.

“Considering [the police], citizens regard them as enemies. There is therefore increased tension between the police and the people due to lack of confidence and trust. Sometimes the disproportionate manner in which they quell down crisis situations leaves the people with an impression of bias against them.”

– Media Representative, Kono District

The lack of confidence in the country's security sector has contributed to a reliance on alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (such as mediation by traditional leaders) and mob justice. As one youth participant in Bombali District explained, “They [police forces] are not trusted in most communities. This has increased mob justice. If a thief is caught at night for example he can be maimed or killed. This is because if they are taken to the police they will be released without recourse to justice.’

During the civil war, women in Sierra Leone played a significant role in the cycle of violence and insecurity. Heavily militarized, they functioned as combatants, accomplices, and perpetrators of injustices as well as victims of violence.⁹¹ However, SSR in post-conflict Sierra Leone included limited provisions for female representation and integration into the security forces. The benchmark for female recruitment in the police force, set by the 2002 National Recovery Strategy, was 15 percent.⁹² Although Sierra Leone successfully achieved this benchmark in 2007, having recruited 1,550 female police officers,⁹³ female representation in the security sector remains low. As of 2014, women represent 16.43 percent of

⁹² “A Review of Gender in Security Sector Reform: Bringing Post-Colonial and Gender Theory into the Debate”, Bendix, D., Free University Berlin, November 2008.

⁹³ Ibid.

police personnel.⁹⁴ Although some fieldwork respondents reported that efforts to recruit women had increased, others expressed that difficulties in reconciling long work hours with the demands of domestic responsibilities have undermined such efforts.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Fieldwork participants identified a number of social and institutional resilience factors that help mitigate security risks in Sierra Leone. Fieldwork participants particularly identified the role of religious leaders and community-police partnership boards, which work with police and communities to resolve disputes and address security concerns, in promoting peace. The Office of National Security (ONS) and the army, who were viewed as being more professional than the police, have contributed positively to the image of the security sector. Oversight structures, specifically the Independent Police Complaints Board (IPCB) and Complaint Discipline and Internal Investigations Department (CDIID), which possess investigative and prosecutorial mandates, respectively, were also highlighted as promoting accountability among the security forces.

Disarmament and SSR programs such as the decentralized Provincial Security Committee (PROSEC) and District Security Committee (DISEC), which were developed by the Office of National Security (ONS),⁹⁵ were also identified as being capable of addressing security concerns. In the Kono district, one respondent noted that similar structures have been formed in all of the district's fourteen chiefdoms. Fieldwork respondents in Bo also highlighted the effectiveness of community relationship managements structures, in particular the Community Relationship Department (CRD) and the Local Police Partnership Board (LPPB), in

addressing security related issues. Furthermore, in the Bombali district, one respondent cited that the establishment of a Cattle Settlement Committee (CSC) had proved promising for resolving farmer-herder conflicts. Finally, throughout the country, interviews highlighted the collective memory surrounding the destruction caused by the civil war – and that out of this was born a strong willingness to build peace and stability in Sierra Leone, with little appetite on any side to return to conflict.

⁹⁴ “Sierra Leone: Justice Sector and the Rule of Law”, Suma, M., Open Society Foundations, January 2014.

⁹⁵ “The Gradual Emergence of Second Generation Security Sector Reform in Sierra Leone”, Bangura, I., Centre for Security Governance, January 2017.

External Factors

Sierra Leone is actively engaged with a number of regional organizations, including ECOWAS and the AU, and is also involved with multiple international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), the African, Caribbean, and Pacific Group of States (ACP), the Commonwealth of Nations, and the World Trade Organization (WTO), among others.

In the area of economics, Sierra Leone is impacted by changes in global commodity prices and the activities of international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank Group. The World Bank, in coordination with the African Development Bank (AfDB) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), currently funds projects in the areas of health, energy, agriculture and poverty alleviation in Sierra Leone.⁹⁶ Sierra Leone is also the site of multinational mining operations.

While Sierra Leone has not experienced a terrorist attack within its borders to date, there are concerns around the potential for spillover from conflicts in neighboring countries or an influx of refugees, as was seen during the Liberian civil war. In addition, concerns have been raised about the potential for terrorist attacks in response to Sierra Leone's participation in peacekeeping missions, both in Somalia⁹⁷ and in Mali.⁹⁸ Furthermore, the country's porous borders facilitate cross-border smuggling, particularly of diamonds,⁹⁹ and flows of small arms and light weapons (SALW), as well as regional networks of drug and human trafficking.¹⁰⁰

As demonstrated by the 2014-2015 Ebola epidemic, the porosity of the region's borders also easily facilitates the spread of diseases.

Furthermore, regional patterns of migration affect Sierra Leone, as individuals are drawn to Sierra Leone from surrounding countries such as Guinea and Liberia.¹⁰¹ Conversely, highly skilled Sierra Leoneans continue to migrate to Europe and the United States in search of improved economic opportunities.¹⁰² Data indicates that as of 2000, the latest year for available data, 52.5 percent of tertiary-educated Sierra Leonean nationals were living abroad.¹⁰³

Finally, Sierra Leone is vulnerable to the effects of global climate change, as well as environmental degradation caused by mining, logging, agriculture, and other human activities. The environmental shifts brought on by climate change (including increased coastal erosion and flooding) risk having serious negative impacts on crop yields, impacting livelihoods and food security in Sierra Leone.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁶ "The World Bank in Sierra Leone: Overview", World Bank

⁹⁷ "Sierra Leone steps up security measures against terrorist attacks", DeVries, N., Deutsche Welle, August 2013.

⁹⁸ "Foreign travel advice: Sierra Leone: Terrorism", The Government of the United Kingdom

⁹⁹ "Mapping the Illicit Mineral Trade: Identifying the Illicit Supply Chain for Diamonds, Gold and Tantalum Across Contexts", Bromberg, M. et al.

¹⁰⁰ "2017 Trafficking in Persons Report: Sierra Leone", U.S. Department of State

¹⁰¹ "A Survey on Migration Policies in West Africa", Devillard, A., Bacchi, A, and Noack, M., International Centre for Migration Policy Development, March 2015.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ "Sierra Leone", UN Development Programme, Climate Change Adaptation

Gender Considerations

Over the past decade, the government of Sierra Leone has made positive strides to address gender inequalities by enacting and implementing key legislation. For example, in 2007, the government enacted the three “Gender Laws” – the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act, the Domestic Violence Act, and the Devolution of Estates Act,¹⁰⁵ as well as implementing a National Plan of Action to combat gender-based violence.¹⁰⁶ Additionally, in 2012, Sierra Leone began implementation of the National Action Plan for the Full Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 (SiLNAP), which focuses on sexual and gender-based violence, prosecution of perpetrators, participation in decision-making, and monitoring and evaluation.¹⁰⁷ However, despite these advances in legal protections, fieldwork participants reported that implementation remains incomplete in practice, and women and girls in Sierra Leone continue to face significant challenges in the social, political, and economic spheres. Gender disparities are particularly pronounced for women and girls in rural areas, who face higher rates of poverty, lower rates of education, and greater discrimination in politics and the legal system than women in urban areas.¹⁰⁸

A key issue discussed in detail by fieldwork participants was the role of women in political decision-making. While interviewees reported that women’s representation is slowly increasing, women remain largely underrepresented in decision-making and governance processes in

Sierra Leone. Between 2007-2012, women comprised 13.5 percent of parliamentarians and 18.9 percent of councilors.¹⁰⁹ As of 2016, 14 out of the 124 seats (11 percent) in parliament were held by women.¹¹⁰ In addition, four of the 23 ministers are women.¹¹¹ Interviewees further noted that women also remain underrepresented within political parties, and that when women do hold positions within political parties, they are often restricted to working within the party’s “women’s wing.” Civil society organizations (CSOs) and women’s groups have long advocated for a 30 percent gender quota in government, but to date this quota has not been implemented.¹¹²

Fieldwork participants also reported that, while women’s participation in politics is slowly increasing, this change has yet to reach traditional administrations or Paramount Chieftaincies in any meaningful way. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) has expressed concerns that the Chieftaincy Act of 2009 restricts women’s political participation at the local level, as women may not be eligible candidates for chieftaincy positions based on traditions, and interviewees confirmed this.¹¹³ Fieldwork participants reported that women who contest chieftaincy positions often face high levels of harassment and intimidation from men. As participants in the Women’s Focus Group Discussion (FGD) in the Kono district recounted, “Because men intimidate women using their secret societies (Poro), women have minimal role in national politics and governance in the district. In the last Paramount Chieftaincy election in the district, a woman who had the popularity was

¹⁰⁵ “Sierra Leone: Justice Sector and the Rule of Law”, Suma, M., Open Society Foundations, January 2014.

¹⁰⁶ “CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: 57 Session (10 Feb 2014- - 28 Feb 2014)”, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights

¹⁰⁷ “From Global Promise to National Action”, Amling, A. and O’Reilly, M., Inclusive Security, 2016.

¹⁰⁸ “CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: 57 Session (10 Feb 2014- - 28 Feb 2014)”, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights

¹⁰⁹ “Sierra Leone Country Gender Profile”, African Development Bank, October 2011.

¹¹⁰ “Sierra Leone 2016 Human Rights Report”, U.S. Department of State

¹¹¹ “Presidential Cabinet”, The Government of Sierra Leone

¹¹² “Advancing Women’s Development and Leadership Across Africa”, UN Sierra Leone

¹¹³ “CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: 57 Session (10 Feb 2014- - 28 Feb 2014)”, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights

refused the leadership. She was intimidated using the Poro society and she was forced out of the chieftdom.” In addition to harassment and intimidation, fieldwork participants highlighted cultural norms, low levels of education among women, and a lack of funding as key barriers preventing more women from getting involved in politics.

“With regards to traditional leadership for women, Kono has a zero tolerance of women leadership in the traditional administration. There is, however, a steady increase in their participation in politics due to sensitization.”

- Chairman, Youth Development Organization, Kono District

Within the judicial system, women continue to face systemic discrimination as well. While Sierra Leonean law includes some provisions for gender equality, the reliance on customary law means that, in practice, women’s rights are often dependent on traditional leaders and the ethnic group to which they belong.¹¹⁴ Women also face financial and social barriers in accessing the formal justice system due to discrimination, lack of information, and lower levels of education.¹¹⁵

Economically, women dominate the informal sector in Sierra Leone, with a majority of women working in agriculture or petty trade¹¹⁶ and often serving as the breadwinners for their families. Eighty-four percent of women in rural areas and 63 percent of women in urban areas are engaged in the informal sector.¹¹⁷ The low salaries and lack of labor protections in the informal sector generally leave women more vulnerable to poverty or exploitation. In addition, women’s economic advancement is

¹¹⁴ “Sierra Leone 2016 Human Rights Report”, US Department of State

¹¹⁵ “Sierra Leone: Justice Sector and the Rule of Law”, Suma, M., Open Society Foundations, January 2014.

¹¹⁶ “Sierra Leone Country Gender Profile”, African Development Bank, October 2011.

hindered by low levels of education and training, and they face barriers to accessing credit or financial services.¹¹⁸ A major issue raised by fieldwork participants was the fact that customary laws and practices often prevent women in Sierra Leone from inheriting land. Given the importance of agriculture to the Sierra Leonean economy, as well as to food security, barriers to land access and ownership have a negative impact on women’s economic empowerment.

“Access to land for mining activities and agricultural activities are solely the rights of men. In Kono district, inheritance of land is a taboo for women. This has affected the economic rights of women, hence their poor status in the district.”

- Women’s Focus Group Discussion, Kono District

To combat their economic marginalization, fieldwork participants across the country reported that women have taken advantage of microfinance initiatives. However, some noted that women have struggled with repaying these loans due to high interest rates and cited cases of women being arrested for non-payment. Women in the Kono district also reported that women in the district have established village saving schemes in which groups of women gather and combine money to fund economic projects or to cover the education and health needs of the group’s members.

Women’s economic empowerment is also hindered by the gender disparities that persist within the realm of education. While the ratio of girls to boys in primary school has improved, secondary school enrollment rates for girls remain significantly below

¹¹⁷ “CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: 57 Session (10 Feb 2014- - 28 Feb 2014)”, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights

¹¹⁸ “Sierra Leone Country Gender Profile”, African Development Bank, October 2011.

the rate for boys.¹¹⁹ Gaps in literacy rates also persist; as of 2015, the literacy rate for females age 15-24 was only 59.17 percent, compared to 75.79 percent for males age 15-24.¹²⁰ In April 2015, the government banned visibly pregnant girls from attending school and taking exams, a move which human rights groups criticized as violating the right to education.¹²¹

The issue of teenage pregnancy was a leading concern raised by participants in the fieldwork. Sierra Leone has a high rate of teenage pregnancy; according to the 2013 Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey, 27.9 percent of girls ages 15-19 have begun childbearing.¹²² Rates of teenage pregnancy are highest in the districts of Pujehun (48 percent), Kailahun (36.8 percent), and Moyamba (36.8 percent), and lowest in the Western Area Urban (15.5 percent).¹²³ Girls living in rural areas, in the lowest wealth quintile, or with no education are also more likely to have begun childbearing between the ages of 15-19.¹²⁴ Fieldwork participants noted that teenage pregnancy is a driver of school dropouts among girls, as well as higher rates of early marriage. Among women ages 20-49 in Sierra Leone, 47.9 percent were married before the age of 18, and 15.6 percent were married before the age of 15.¹²⁵

Fieldwork participants also reported that teenage pregnancy and Sierra Leone's relatively high fertility rate (5.7 children per woman in rural areas, 3.5 children per woman in urban areas)¹²⁶ is driven by an underutilization of family planning services. While family planning services are accessible in many communities, and CSOs such as the Planned Parenthood Association of Sierra Leone are

actively involved in sensitization and awareness-raising around reproductive and sexual health, fieldwork participants reported that many women lack adequate knowledge of family planning or are deterred by cultural and religious beliefs. As of 2013, only 22.1 percent of women in Sierra Leone reported using any form of contraception.¹²⁷

“The culture, religion and also rape contributes to teenagers having children. Most of the teenage mothers did not receive an education on sexual reproductive health. Parents are not teaching their children about sexual reproductive health and schools are not teaching either. Tradition plays a major role in behavior but there is also a lack of education.”

- Women's Focus group Discussion, Kenema District

Women and girls in Sierra Leone also continue to face domestic and sexual violence. Sexual violence was systematically used as a weapon of war during the civil war.¹²⁸ More recently, the Ebola epidemic increased levels of sexual violence as school closures, emergency curfews and quarantines, and economic pressures left women and girls vulnerable to abuse.¹²⁹ Although rape and domestic violence are criminalized under Sierra Leonean law, weak enforcement of these laws and low conviction rates have resulted in impunity for perpetrators.¹³⁰ Furthermore, fears of societal

¹¹⁹ “Sierra Leone Country Gender Profile”, African Development Bank, October 2011.

¹²⁰ “Literacy rate, youth female (% of females ages 15-24)”, World Bank

¹²¹ “Sierra Leone: Continued pregnancy ban in schools and failure to protect rights is threatening teenage girls’ futures”, Amnesty International, November 2016.

¹²² “Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey”, USAID, 2013.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ “Sierra Leone: Sexual Violence Widespread in War”, Human Rights Watch, January 2003.

¹²⁹ “Sierra Leone’s Girls in the Aftermath of Ebola”, Jackson-Garrett, D., Council on Foreign Relations, May 2016.

¹³⁰ “CEDAW – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: 57 Session (10 Feb 2014- - 28 Feb 2014)”, United Nations Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights

stigma or retaliation and the culture of silence around gender-based violence (GBV) contribute to low reporting rates.¹³¹ More than half (56 percent) of women ages 15-49 reported having experienced physical violence since the age of 15, and 10.5 percent of women reported having experienced sexual violence.¹³² However, given the culture of silence around GBV, it is likely that these numbers are much higher in practice. Female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C) is also widely practiced. The World Health Organization estimates that around 88 percent of women between the ages of 15 and 49 have undergone FGM/C,¹³³ although fieldwork participants reported that widespread sensitization campaigns have led to a decrease in the practice.

Despite these challenges, fieldwork participants broadly expressed that the position of women and girls in Sierra Leone is slowly improving. As noted above, the passage of the three “Gender Laws” and the implementation of the SiLNAP are important steps to promote and protect women’s rights within a legal framework. Institutions such as the Legal Aid Board and the Family Support Unit (a specialized unit of the Sierra Leone Police) are also reportedly important resources for improving women’s access to justice and preventing domestic and sexual violence. Sierra Leone’s vibrant network of CSOs and women’s groups have also played a critical role in advocating for women’s participation in politics and rights within the justice system, as well as raising awareness around issues such as family planning. Despite the many pressures facing women and girls, women in Sierra Leone are important economic, social, and political actors. When given adequate education, opportunities, and support, they can act as powerful contributors to a more peaceful and equitable Sierra Leone.

“Women play unique roles in society but [there is] no value attached. ...They are productive, reproductive and very important in our society. [They are in the] forefront in campaigns and events.”

- CSO Representative, Bombali District

¹³¹ “Sierra Leone 2016 Human Rights Report”, U.S. Department of State

¹³² “Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey”, USAID, 2013.

¹³³ “Sexual and reproductive health: Female genital mutilation (FGM): Prevalence of FGM”, World Health Organization

Sub-National Level Vulnerabilities, Risks and Resilience Factors: Observations by Region

Bo District

The Bo district is part of Southern Province, and borders the districts of Kenema, Tonkolili, Moyamba, Bonthe, and Pujehun. According to the 2015 Census, the district had a population of 575,478.¹³⁴ The primary economic activities are gold and diamond mining, trade and agricultural production of cash crops such as cacao, coffee, and palm oil.¹³⁵ The population of Bo is ethnically mixed, with large populations of the Mende, Mandingo, Fula and Temne ethnic groups.¹³⁶



Structural Vulnerabilities

- Perceptions of corruption and bias within politics
- Perceptions of corruption and bias within the judicial system
- Demographic changes, particularly population growth and migration
- Perceived bias in the distribution of social services and infrastructural resources, particularly along tribal, regional and political lines
- Inadequate provision of quality education and healthcare services
- Youth unemployment
- Child labor, early marriage, teen pregnancy
- Poor management of natural resources
- Rising cost of living, poverty
- Climate change and environmental pressures
- Perceptions of corruption and bias among security forces
- Inadequate resources for police and security forces
- Land-based disputes

¹³⁴ “2015 Population and Housing Census Summary of Final Results”, Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016.

¹³⁵ “District Profile: Bo – 11 December 2015”, OCHA Sierra Leone

¹³⁶ “Ethnic Groups of Sierra Leone”, Sierra Leone Information System

Event-Driven Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections and political campaigns • Criminality, particularly drug trafficking, armed robberies and smuggling • Gender-based violence (GBV) • Migration
Social and Institutional Resilience Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional and religious institutions, government-sponsored Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms and legal services in dispute resolution and increasing access to justice • Peace campaigns • Civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs • Memory of the civil war • Culture of religious tolerance

Population and Demographics

The key demographic issues discussed by respondents in the Bo district were child labor, early marriage, teen pregnancy, lingering reverberations from the Ebola crisis, and the nexus of youth unemployment and insecurity. Issues specific to women and girls were also noted during the fieldwork. Although some participants held that family planning practices were increasingly accepted due to sensitization and awareness-raising campaigns, enduring socio-religious norms and the lack of education were cited as challenges. In addition, women’s lack of inheritance rights regarding land was cited as an issue.

Fieldwork participants also reported that demographic changes, particularly population growth and migration, were further concerns. For interviewees, population growth has resulted in rising socio-economic hardships and environmental pressures. In particular, land competition, child labor, increased criminality, illicit mining, disease outbreaks, poor waste management, and flooding were cited. As a civil society leader in a key informant interview (KII) expressed, “This [population] increase is putting pressure on the available land space and social services. It is therefore a factor for land disputes, epidemics, flooding, deforestation and other illicit economic activities.” Respondents identified poor employment prospects, the existence of licit and

“The price of food commodities keeps rising. When people cannot afford food, there’s always going to be issues. The fluctuating prices have been drivers of protests and demonstrations.”

- KII with Journalist, Bo District

illicit mining opportunities, and the limited access to social services as the primary drivers behind migration. One interviewee noted, “Some of the youths are moving away from deprived rural areas to the capital city [or] regional headquarter towns, especially Makeni (headquarters of Northern region), that are favored politically in search of job opportunities and other social services including cheap electricity.”

Finally, respondents also expressed concern with the district’s social services structure, specifically the disparity in the government’s distribution of social services. Perceptions of bias in the distribution of social services, particularly along tribal, regional, and political lines, were prevalent. For interviewees, this disparity in the distribution of social services has undermined the district’s health and education sectors, resulting in a lack of well-trained staff and a lack of resources.

Economics and Resources

Perceived bias in the allocation and distribution of economic and infrastructural resources, inflation, the lack of diversified economic activities for youth and women, the vulnerability of women in business to gender-based violence, rising cost of living, the lack of a price control system, low salaries, the lack of support for subsistence farmers, the lack of an effective land tenure policy, and the impact of the toll road on commodity prices were highlighted as key economic concerns in the Bo district. As one participant in the Youth FGD explained, “The road toll is negatively impacting the prices of food items and other commodities transported from Freetown to Bo. The money the drivers pay on the Toll, in return increases the transport, and traders themselves increase the price in the market respectively.” Fieldwork participants also reported that the district continues to experience the lingering economic impacts of the Ebola Crisis, which led to the flight of investors, the collapse of businesses, and a loss of employment opportunities.

Another primary issue of concern that was identified during the fieldwork centered on one of the key economic sectors of the district: natural resources. Perceptions about the management of natural resources – specifically gold, diamond and rutile – were largely defined by feelings of mistrust. The poor management of natural resources, which was attributed to perceived bias in the distribution of natural resources along regional and tribal lines, lack of transparency, corruption, inequitable distribution of benefits, the lack of effective and appropriate enforcement of policies, and capricious mining policies, was viewed as a threat to stability. As a civil society leader noted, “Mining policies and agreements keep changing in favor of the ruling government as against the local communities. In most cases these policies or agreements are not kept to. These actions are therefore a recipe for chaos.” Both legal and illegal mining activities were also seen as being detrimental to the environment and the populace. Participants in the Youth FGD recounted how blasting operations by mining companies had

destroyed the land. Furthermore, respondents reported that government officials have ties to illegal mining operations.

Finally, the Bo district is also susceptible to climate insecurity, stemming from flooding, drought, and variations in rainfall patterns. Environmental degradation, often caused by illicit economic activities, was also identified as a vulnerability and a driver of food insecurity. For fieldwork participants, the lack of governmental response to incidents of flooding and the lack of protection by the Environmental Protection Agency were further risks. However, respondents identified relief efforts by NGOs as resilience factors. As one participant in the Women’s FGD cited, “Flooding over the years have affected the township of Bo and recently in 2017 there was one that affected communities and over 40 houses were destroyed. There was no response from government to assist the people of Bo. Only NGOs do come to the rescue of the people of the district.”

Politics and Governance

Addressing the upcoming 2018 elections in Sierra Leone, respondents highlighted several vulnerabilities in the electoral process. In particular, participants expressed concern around the potential for voter fraud, intimidation of opponents, perceived bias of media, indiscriminate arrests of opposition supporters, the mobilization of youth and gangs to carry out violence, party infighting, and the lack of an independent National Electoral Commission (NEC). Many respondents noted the organization of political parties along ethnic, tribal, and regional lines, and reported that political grievances around the provision of development and infrastructure are often conflated with ethnic and regional grievances. For example, one interviewee stated, “People in Bo are of the view that the continuous neglect and marginalization of the south full of Mende tribes is deliberate.” Furthermore, fieldwork respondents described how political speeches, hate speech,

and campaign slogans such as “Vote in your own” are furthering divisions in the district.

“The politics in Sierra Leone is based on tribe. Mendes are associated with SLPP and APC with Temne and Limba. Tribalism has played a role in politics since the days of our great fathers. During elections, a Mende resident in the north is not safe and Temne in the south, respectively.”

- Youth FGD, Bo District

Participants also described a pervasive climate of corruption in government, in which political elites were alleged to pursue their own self-interest to the detriment of local populations. One fieldwork participant explained, “It is highly believed now that politics is the fastest way to get rich. This is because politics gives you the opportunity to control public resources. And in exercising these duties, resources meant for the public find their way into the pocket of the few.” Also, the notion that the district had not experienced adequate infrastructural development, attributed to the current government’s perceived bias in the distribution of resources along regional, ethnic, and tribal lines, was widespread.

Fieldwork participants also expressed concern with the underrepresentation of youth and women in the political space. For participants, poverty, corruption, and the employment of youth as tools for political violence were undermining non-state initiatives to promote youth empowerment. Although interviewees noted that women continue to make pivotal contributions in politics through their engagement in mobilization and advocacy campaigns, they also maintained that such roles did not engender increased representation in decision-making positions. Respondents reported victimization, educational and financial constraints, and enduring socio-cultural norms as primary barriers. As one key informant interviewee

noted, “Women’s participation in politics is another issue in Bo. Many think women are not for public positions or leadership but to produce children.”

Finally, perceptions about the ability of civil society organizations and media in promoting good governance were mixed. Although some interviewees held that these institutions, through advocacy and sensitization campaigns, have contributed to the advancement of peace and the cultivation of an informed electorate, others maintained that their good governance initiatives have been ineffective. Notably, they cited a lack of independence, myopic initiatives, corruption, and financial constraints as undermining factors.

Rule of Law

Fieldwork participants described a general lack of confidence and mistrust in the judicial system, primarily stemming from a pervasive climate of impunity, political corruption, bias toward the wealthy, limited access to justice, improper handling of rape cases, and delays in the adjudication process. One participant in the Men’s FGD explained, “Delays in dispensing justice is a strategy used by the judiciary to suppress the poor.” Respondents also highlighted a lack of judicial independence, which was attributed to the judicial appointment process, politicization of the courts, and political interference. As an investigator in the police force stated, “The court system is supposed to be independent and should be independent, but politics interferes, nepotism interferes, and favoritism also interferes.”

“When you have money, you are a winner in the court system in Sierra Leone.”

- Religious Leader, Bo District

This lack of confidence in the judicial system has contributed to a reliance on alternative dispute resolution systems, such as mediation by

traditional and religious leaders. However, some respondents noted that these traditional institutions have been politicized, undermining their credibility and effectiveness.

Security

Key security threats identified by participants in the Bo district included land disputes, including cases of alleged land grabbing by multinational companies and multiple sales of the same land. Many interviewees attributed land disputes to the lack of an effective land policy. In addition, electoral tensions, the proliferation of youth gangs like the Central Coast Clique (CCC), and a rise in criminality were identified as major concerns for the local population. Interviewees noted instances of prostitution, armed robbery, abuse of drugs and pharmaceuticals such as Tramadol, and cross-border illicit economic activities such as smuggling, drug trafficking, and human trafficking. Finally, the role of *okada*¹³⁷ motorcycle drivers - mainly unskilled youth and ex-combatants¹³⁸ - in fostering insecurity was cited as a primary security concern. In particular, participants identified their engagement in crime, political violence, and political intimidation.

In the aftermath of the civil war, a British-led Security Sector Reform (SSR) program contributed to the restoration of order and internal stability.¹³⁹ However, deficiencies in the security sector remain. Although security forces were viewed by fieldwork participants as being generally present in local communities, the level of public trust and confidence in the security apparatus, specifically the Sierra Leone Police, was weak. Respondents identified corruption, complicity in criminal activities, instances of arbitrary and indiscriminate arrests, lack of neutrality, political interference, and perceived bias toward the ruling party as

reasons for their mistrust. Furthermore, operational challenges - including inadequate resources, a lack of well-trained and qualified personnel, and slow response times - were cited as undermining factors to effective policing. Poor police-community relationships were also highlighted. An interviewee specifically described how the fatal shooting of a Njala University student¹⁴⁰ during a peaceful protest in March 2017 has resulted in controversy and concerns about the abuse of human rights by security forces. However, community relationship management structures like the Community Relationship Department (CRD) and the Local Police Partnership Board (LPPB), although hampered by logistical deficiencies, were noted as resilience factors in the area of security.

The rebuilding of the Sierra Leonean security sector included limited provisions for female representation.¹⁴¹ To account for such gaps, efforts to enlist and recruit women have increased. However, challenges to such efforts persist. As an investigator in a KII explained, “The police are really trying to enlist women. However, there are constraints to women. There are two shifts of 12 hours which makes it hard for some married female police officers to meet their family

“Providing internal security to protect the life and property of citizens is now considered in the mind of the public as a secondary duty instead of primary.”

- Civil Society Leader, Bo District

obligations. So, there are a lot of broken homes. So, some officers are advocating for three shifts to remedy the issues.”

¹³⁷ *Okada* is a local term for motorcycle taxis.

¹³⁸ “Sierra Leone’s *okada* drivers: the challenges of informal reintegration”, Dallas, E., Peace Direct, May 2015.

¹³⁹ “United Kingdom-led Security Sector Reform in Sierra Leone”, Horn, A., Olonisakin, F., and Peake, G., Civil Wars, December 2006.

¹⁴⁰ “Breaking News – Sierra Leone district of Bo under siege – one student shot dead”, Thomas, A., Sierra Leone Telegraph, March 2017.

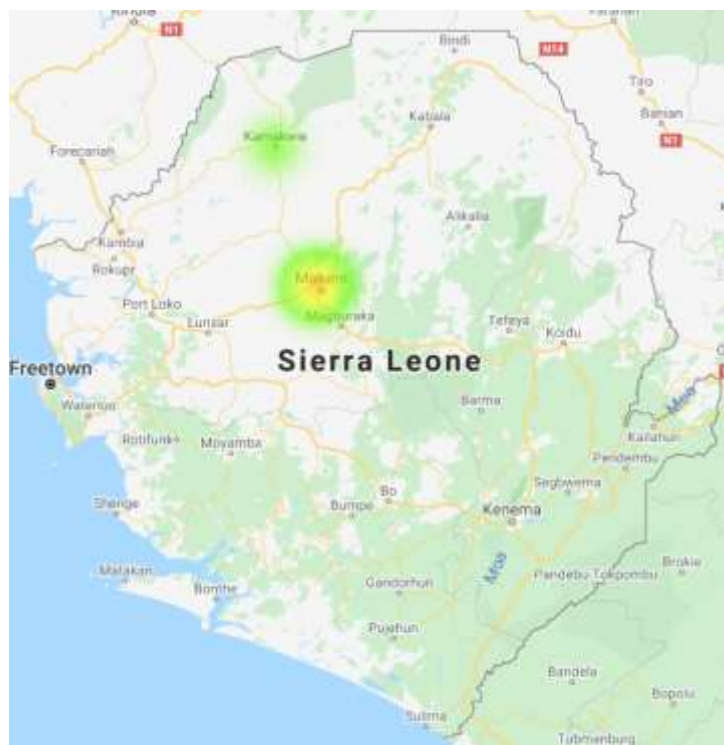
¹⁴¹ “Chapter 2: Security sector reform in Sierra Leone, Osman Gbla”, Institute for Security Studies, May 2007.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Despite the vulnerabilities and risks listed above, the Bo district has a number of social and institutional resilience factors that help mitigate these risks. Fieldwork participants particularly identified the important role of traditional institutions, NGOs, and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and legal services like the Legal Aid Board in dispute resolution and increasing access to justice. Community security initiatives and community relationship management structures, particularly the Community Relationship Department (CRD) and the Local Police Partnership Board (LPPB), were also identified as being capable at addressing the gaps in the security apparatus. A culture of religious tolerance, and peace campaigns carried out by media organizations were also viewed as positive resilience factors. Finally, the memory of the 11-year civil war was described as an effective deterrent to conflict.

Bombali District

The Bombali district is part of Sierra Leone's Northern Province and shares borders with the districts of Koinadugu, Tonkolili, Port Loko, and Kambia. The Bombali district also has an international border with the Republic of Guinea. As of the 2015 Population and Housing Census, the Bombali district had a population of 606,544.¹⁴² The Bombali district is home to Makeni, the largest city in the Northern Province. Primary economic activities in the district include agricultural production and livestock raising. The population is ethnically diverse, and the largest ethnic groups are the Temne and the Limba.¹⁴³ The Bombali district was a rebel stronghold during the civil war, and the area saw considerable fighting, displacement, and destruction of infrastructure.¹⁴⁴



Structural Vulnerabilities

- Overpopulation in urban areas
- High rates of teen pregnancy and early marriage
- High prices of commodities
- Poverty
- High youth unemployment
- Rural to urban disparities leading to internal migration
- Poor roads and infrastructure
- Child labor
- Political polarization along ethnic and regional lines
- Underrepresentation of youth and women in political decision-making
- Perceived lack of judicial independence
- Porous borders
- Under-staffed and under-resourced security forces

Event-Driven Risks

- Recruitment of youth for election violence
- Incidents of corruption
- Food insecurity
- Disinformation and hate speech in the media around elections
- Violent management of protests and demonstrations by the police

¹⁴² “2015 Population and Housing Census Summary of Final Results”, Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016.

¹⁴³ “District Profile: Bombali – 10 December 2015”, OCHA Sierra Leone

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

- Women advocating for peace and development
- CSOs promoting women and youth
- Legal Aid Board
- Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms
- Community policing schemes
- Inter-marriages and religious tolerance
- Awareness/memories of civil war serving as a deterrent to political violence

Population and Demographics

Fieldwork participants highlighted rising population numbers and overpopulation in urban areas as key demographic vulnerabilities. During the men's FGD, participants stated, "The population of the country is fast increasing and having adverse effects on the environment, jobs, housing, social amenities, and creating social crimes and social discontent." Interviewees reported that the increasing population has caused land competition and has led to the construction of housing in swamps and other areas that are prone to flash flooding and mudslides. Participants said that because of this, many people are "future victims" at risk of natural and manmade disasters. Population increases have also put pressure on the health, education and sanitation systems in urban areas such as Makeni. Schools have become unaffordable in some communities and health facilities are insufficiently equipped to service the local population and prevent disease outbreaks.

"The influx of people in the city leads to health hazards. There is poor sanitation. There is also the incidence of massive deforestation to fuel charcoal burning. The pressure for land is so high that even swamp areas and water ways are not spared for construction."

- Youth FGD, Bombali District

Fieldwork participants also reported high rates of early marriage and teen pregnancy as key vulnerabilities. Despite laws against the practice, participants stated that poverty is a major contributing factor to early marriage, especially in rural areas. When families cannot afford to financially support their children, they arrange for their daughters to be married early to relieve financial pressures. Teenage pregnancy was also identified as a vulnerability by participants. Interviewees stated that family planning is effective, free, and accessible in the Bombali district due to the work of CSOs, such as Mary Stopes and the Planned Parenthood Association of Sierra Leone. However, participants said that these organizations suffer from a lack of funding and resources and have difficulty reaching rural areas. Religious and cultural taboos were also cited as barriers to family planning use. During a KII, one participant stated that girls without adequate family support often end up in relationships and become pregnant.

The recovery of the health system in the region after the Ebola epidemic in 2014-2015 was further cited by some interviewees as an important ongoing concern. The last case in the Bombali district occurred on the 13th of September 2015.¹⁴⁵ The World Health Organization (WHO) and other international organizations are working with the government of Sierra Leone to strengthen early warning measures for Ebola and other diseases, as well as continuing to assist Ebola survivors.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ "From the ground up: rebuilding health systems in the wake of Ebola", WHO, February 2016.

Economics and Resources

Fieldwork participants identified the high price of basic commodities, such as food and fuel, as a key economic vulnerability. According to participants in the Youth FGD, “prices are skyrocketing daily.” During the women’s FGD, one participant stated that a bag of rice now costs SLL 240,000 to SLL 250,000, while the minimum wage is only SLL 500,000. Fieldwork participants reported that high prices contribute to rising rates of crime, prostitution, and child labor, as well as school dropouts when parents cannot afford school fees. Rising prices are also reportedly affecting the accessibility of healthcare.

According to a World Food Programme report, food insecurity in the Bombali district more than doubled between 2010 and 2015.¹⁴⁷ In 2015, 43.6 percent of households in the Bombali district had very poor food access, while 20.9 percent had poor access and 17.8 percent had borderline access.¹⁴⁸ In ten out of the 14 chiefdoms in the district, more than 50 percent of households faced food insecurity, and in six of those the number was over 70 percent.¹⁴⁹ The Ebola outbreak and the lack of freedom of movement was a major factor that led to increased food insecurity in the Bombali district and across the country during this period. According to fieldwork participants, rural to urban migration has also contributed to food insecurity. During the Youth FGD, interviewees stated that

“People generally do not have food security in the country. A majority of the people are hungry and lack resources to meet their daily needs and [are] highly vulnerable, especially in the communities and villages where they lack basic economic opportunities and infrastructures.”

- Men’s FGD, Bombali District

¹⁴⁷ “Sierra Leone – Comprehensive Food Security and Vulnerability Analysis, December 2015”, World Food Programme

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

people in the Bombali district, especially youth, have abandoned agriculture to move to Freetown. This has led to an increased reliance on rice imports.

According to participants, one cause of increased migration to urban areas is the disparity in resources available in rural areas, including quality health centers and schools. Participants in the Youth FGD highlighted this concern, saying “it is of urgent necessity to decentralize amenities so as to discourage the urge to move to the city.” Interviewees also stated that youth migrate to other areas to continue their education because not all levels or disciplines are available in some areas. Participants said the lack of support for youth who migrate to cities leads to higher dropout rates.

Interviewees related that women and youth play important roles in the local economy. According to participants, many women are the primary providers for their families and are involved in trade and development. However, interviewees reported that women are hampered by laws that prevent women from inheriting land. Fieldwork participants also reported high youth unemployment due to a lack of economic opportunities. However, some interviewees highlighted the positive role of youth as problem solvers, middle-men, and entrepreneurs.

Child labor was also cited as a major vulnerability in the Bombali district. According to statistical data from the Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey, 46.5 percent of children ages 5 - 11 and 71 percent of children ages 12 - 14 in the Bombali district were involved in paid and unpaid economic activities outside the home in 2013.¹⁵⁰ Interviewees reported that children are engaged in activities such as begging, selling goods and sticks

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ “Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2013”, USAID

for firewood on the street, and working in the agriculture, logging and mining industries.

Some interviewees also reported a rise in prostitution among children and youth. Child labor particularly hinders education, as many children work before and after school to provide income for

“Street trading is rampant. Children are brought from the rural areas and made to engage in what can equate to domestic slavery. The parents are promised good life and education for their children but upon reaching the capital they are made to sell for long hours on hungry stomachs. They are not even sent to school. They are maltreated each time they lose money.”

- Youth FGD, Bombali District

their family. During the women’s FGD, interviewees stated that interventions by CSOs, such as payment of school fees, have limited impact because many families rely on their children for income.

Participants also cited inequality in resource distribution and inadequate monitoring of industries such as mining and logging as key vulnerabilities. Interviewees particularly highlighted poor roads and inconsistent coverage by utilities such as electricity. Interviewees also reported perceptions that the government and traditional leaders are not held accountable for poor management of land and resources. For example, during the men’s FGD, participants stated that land tenure has become political, citing cases where families have pledged loyalty to the party in power to gain support to secure land.

Timber logging and mining were also identified by participants as contributing to environmental degradation and climate change. Deforestation due to logging was perceived to be changing weather patterns and adversely affecting

agriculture in the Bombali district. Interviewees reported that mining companies pollute water and harm the health of fishing and farming communities.

Politics and Governance

Fieldwork participants expressed differing opinions about the prospects for peace during the upcoming

“Looking at the social and economic discontents and frustration among the people, we foresee tension with respect to the upcoming election, but the experience of the past war has made an average Sierra Leonean to look beyond the frustrations and grievances as they would not want the country to be plunge into war or civil unrest.”

- Men’s FGD, Bombali District

2018 election cycle. Some interviewees stated that they are confident that the 2018 elections will be peaceful, citing improvements in inter-party relationships, peaceful elections in the past, and the increased participation of women and youth. Many participants said that memories of the civil war are still strong and serve as a deterrent to future political violence. Multiple interviewees said that politicians should speak to their supporters to promote peace before, during, and after the elections.

Other participants stated that they were apprehensive about the possibility of violence and highlighted political divisions along ethnic and regional lines as possible drivers of tension. According to the Men’s FGD, “The age-long political alignment and affiliation along ethnic, tribal and regional fault line remains a threat and vulnerability in Sierra Leone.” The northern part of the country, including the Bombali district, is the traditional stronghold of the ruling All People’s Congress (APC) party, and Makeni is the hometown of current President Koroma. Several interviewees

reported that party affiliation and ethnicity are sources of discrimination when applying for jobs in the country, citing perceptions that development projects and resources are distributed based on regional political support. Despite this, interviewees stated that intermarriage between people from different tribes has reduced inter-tribal and ethnic conflicts. Interviewees also reported that Makeni is generally a place that is tolerant of religious and political differences.

Fieldwork participants also reported perceptions of corruption as a key political vulnerability. During one KII, the interviewee stated, “The sad issue is that no institution is free of corruption.” Another interviewee reported that international donor funds for disasters, the Ebola crisis, and development projects were grossly mismanaged due to government corruption. Participants cited poor pay for civil servants as contributing to the rise in alleged solicitation of bribes by government officials to perform routine tasks. Interviewees also stated that political parties and tribes reportedly protect their own members who engage in corrupt behavior.

“Corruption will never be eradicated when prices are soaring, and the salaries are very low—what do you expect the civil servant to do? When civil servants are paid well, and they can afford to pay for their children’s school fees, that will minimize corruption—it will not be eradicated anyway.”

- Male Councilor, Bombali District

Fieldwork participants reported that the role of women in politics has begun to improve and that women are now vying for leadership roles in politics. During the women’s FGD, participants cited increases in women in political office at the local level, such as the Makeni Council, but also reported a shortage of women parliamentarians and Paramount Chiefs in the Bombali district and the Northern region. Despite some progress,

women continue to be disadvantaged in politics, and participation of women in rural areas has been slow to improve. Traditional gender norms limited financial backing for women candidates, and a lack of support for female candidates by other women were cited as additional barriers to women’s involvement in politics. At the same time, multiple participants highlighted the vital role women play in advocating for peace around elections and stated that this is a key resilience factor leading up to the 2018 election.

Fieldwork participants stated that many elders have a negative perception of the role of youth in politics. Interviewees highlighted concerns that youth may be recruited by politicians to engage in violence in the lead-up to the 2018 election. Interviewees cited the rise of youth gangs, unemployment, and alcohol and drugs among youth as risks and potential for triggers for violence around elections. However, other participants stated that youth are becoming more sensitized to promote peaceful elections and political participation.

“The mobilization of youth for political thuggery and election violence is a real issue across the country, including Makeni and unless this is urgently addressed, it will be a potential violent trigger for the forthcoming election.”

- Men’s FGD, Bombali District

Lastly, interviewees highlighted the role of civil society groups and the media in politics. Participants reported that civil society groups are critical to holding the government accountable, but that some were susceptible to influence and corruption by the government or political parties, and have lost their legitimacy. Additionally, multiple participants cited the important role of the media in educating the public about issues of concern. However, interviewees reported that traditional media and social media have also been used to

disseminate disinformation and hate messages. Other participants stated that media coverage needs to be expanded in rural areas.

Rule of Law

Fieldwork participants in the Bombali district reported a lack of judicial independence and effectiveness as key vulnerabilities. Interviewees stated that the judicial system is not independent and that judges receive directives from the politicians that appointed them. Several participants cited the dismissal of Vice President Sam Sumana as a case where the independence of the judiciary was in question.

Participants also stated that long court delays and fraudulent adjournment of cases contribute to a lack of trust in the judicial system. Interviewees reported perceptions that court decisions such as bail and the length of sentences depended on the influence, status, or wealth of the defendants or plaintiffs. Participants noted that when the judicial system cannot meet the needs of the poor, people were more likely to turn to mob justice.

Participants highlighted the work of the Legal Aid Board (LAB) as an important resilience factor. Multiple interviewees said that the LAB was effective in improving access to justice for those who cannot afford lawyers, need translations, or do not understand the court system.

Interviewees also highlighted the role of CSOs in pushing for justice in sexual assault cases. However, one interviewee reported that the LAB was being gradually overwhelmed by a backlog of cases.

Fieldwork participants also cited several alternative dispute resolution mechanisms that are perceived to be effective and trustworthy, including community initiatives and local community chiefs. Organizations that participate in alternative dispute resolution include the Village Youth

Committee, the Local Police Partnership Board, Access to Justice, and Timap for Justice (Stand for Justice). Interviewees also reported that section chiefs, town chiefs, and the Paramount Chiefs have intervened in civil matters to maintain peace. However, other participants mentioned that fees for arbitration by chiefs can sometimes be higher than court fees, and that local chief decisions are not always recognized as valid in neighboring communities.

“There is some progress by establishing the Legal Aid Board. If you have a case in court without a lawyer, the Legal Aid Board will provide a lawyer for you so through that you can access justice. Previously if you don’t have money to hire a lawyer then you will not get justice.”

- Male interviewee, Bombali District

Participants stated that there have been positive changes in the protection of women’s rights and that many organizations have been established to support women and women’s rights. Participants in a women’s FGD cited an increase in reports of sexual abuse cases due to the support of CSOs and women’s organizations. According to an interviewee, “Before, we’d say marry her because he has started, today we follow up to get him tried.” Some fieldwork participants reported that there have been cases when a woman’s right to be heard was suppressed in Paramount Chief courts, where customs and tradition have a larger influence, and that women’s rights are better protected in the official court system. Participants mentioned that the three Gender Acts in Sierra Leone, a group of laws passed in 2007 that raised the legal marriage age, strengthened women’s inheritance rights, and criminalized domestic violence, are upheld in court.¹⁵¹

¹⁵¹ “A Look at the Major Changes in the Three Gender Acts”, Kamara, H., Centre for Accountability and the Rule of Law-Sierra Leone, August 2016.

Security

Fieldwork participants stated that the security situation in the Bombali district is generally peaceful, without significant threats of conflict, and that there is a sense of security in the community. Interviewees reported that security committees, including the District Security Committee (DISEC) and the Provincial Security Committee (PROSEC), meet weekly to discuss security issues in the community. Participants also stated that there are effective community policing structures, including the Police Partnership Board, the District Youth Council, and a Women's Forum, which have enhanced security.

Though the Bombali district is largely peaceful, interviewees stated that there is a lack of trust in the police, which has led to a rise in mob justice. Participants reported that the police force is understaffed and lacks resources and equipment necessary to service the growing population. During one KII, the interviewee stated that police do not respond to calls quickly and that "even when a thief is caught and reported to the police, they are set free within days." Perceptions of corruption among police officers and problems with recruitment were cited as ongoing concerns.

Many interviewees highlighted a perceived lack of professionalism among the police and security forces when dealing with crowd management and protests. They stated that police had used forceful measures to quell protests that had led to fatalities in the past. Participants reported doubts about whether the police force is prepared for the

"The police have problem managing public events when it comes to agitation. We have recorded series of fatalities each time they have gone to manage demonstrations. People do not deserve to die because they protest. The right to protest is legal."

- Male Media Representative, Bombali District

possibility of violence and protests during the upcoming 2018 elections.

Additionally, fieldwork participants identified land and inheritance disputes as a potential trigger for conflict in the Bombali district. According to interviewees, land disputes often occur within families and can lead to court action, tension, and violence. One KII interviewee cited the ongoing problem of male-oriented customs and traditions that limit women's access to land in some communities. Cattle herders and crop farmers were also identified as groups that are often in conflict. During a KII, one interviewee stated that cattle farmers are mostly foreigners while crop farmers are indigenes, but that the chiefs often side with the cattle farmers, leading to suspicions of bribery. The government has established a Cattle Settlement Committee (CSC) to investigate disputes between cattle and crop farmers.

Porous borders between Sierra Leone and Guinea were also identified as a security vulnerability by fieldwork participants. Participants reported that there are no controls along the borders by security forces, leading to unchecked smuggling. Interviewees specifically cited the smuggling of timber, mined resources, and agricultural products. Participants also reported concerns about the movement of people across borders, citing issues such as foreigners allegedly coming into the country to vote during elections and the spread of disease across borders.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Participation by women and youth in politics and the economy was highlighted as a resilience factor in the Bombali district. Participants named multiple government institutions and CSOs working to promote women's rights and youth participation in politics. The National, District, and Village Youth Councils were cited by participants as increasing youth's voice in political decisions. During the women's FGD, interviewees cited women's groups, including an association called AQUA, that work to

bring women together from across the country in order to reduce ethnic and regional divisions and to promote the separation of political party affiliation from regional identity.

The Legal Aid Board was consistently highlighted by interviewees as a resilience factor in the area of Rule of Law. Many participants also cited community policing mechanisms and alternative dispute resolution institutions, including the Local Police Partnership Board, Access to Justice, and Timap for Justice (Stand for Justice) as contributing to a more effective justice system.

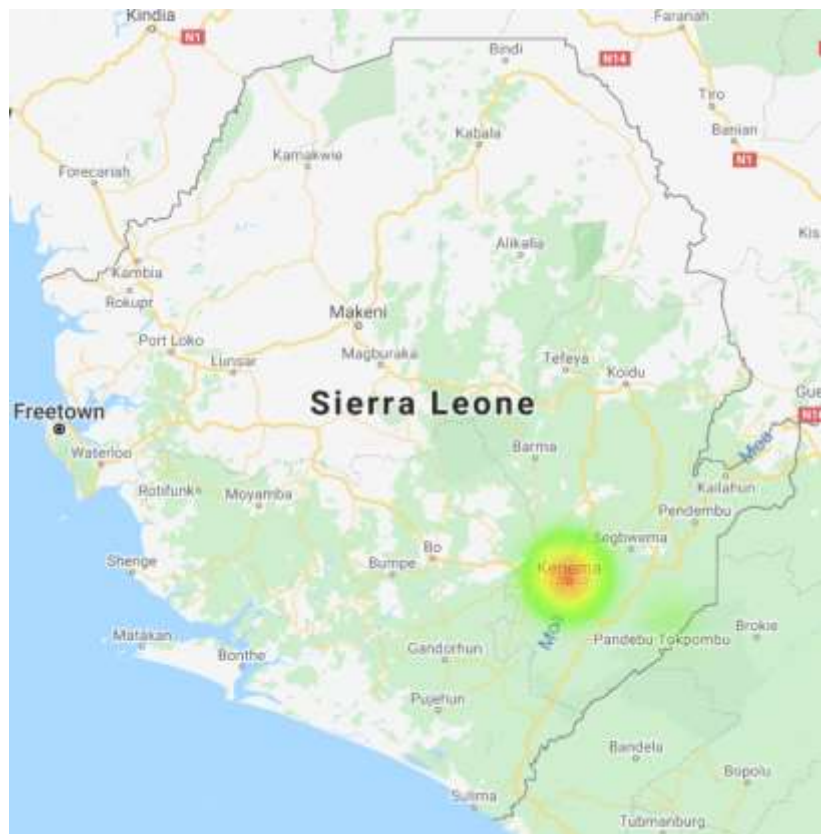
Inter-marriage and religious tolerance were also cited as resilience factors promoting peace among people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Additionally, participants stated that awareness of the history of the civil war is a resilience factor. According to a participant in the

men's FGD, "Sierra Leone has been able to remain peaceful because people do not want to experience war/civil unrest again. Memories of the past civil war are a major deterrent factor."

DRAFT

Kenema District

The Kenema district is located in the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone, and shares borders with the districts of Kono, Kailahun, Pujehun, Bo, and Tonkolili. The district also shares an international border with Liberia. As of 2015, the Kenema district had a population of 609,891.¹⁵² The capital of the district is the city of Kenema, which is Sierra Leone's third-largest city.¹⁵³ Key economic activities include agricultural production, as well as gold and diamond mining and logging.¹⁵⁴ The population is ethnically diverse, and the Mende make up the largest ethnic group in the district.¹⁵⁵ The Kenema district was one of the hardest-hit regions during the 2014-2015 Ebola epidemic, and reported 600 cases of Ebola between May 2014 and January 2015.¹⁵⁶



Structural Vulnerabilities

- Tensions and polarization between ethnic groups
- Population growth and rural-urban migration
- Low rates of family planning
- Inadequate infrastructure and public services
- Perceived bias and lack of transparency in allocation and use of development funds
- Child labor
- High rate of youth unemployment
- Environmental degradation
- Rising cost of living
- Political polarization
- Perceptions of corruption and lack of transparency among politicians
- Underrepresentation of youth and women in political decision-making
- Perceptions of bias and corruption in the judicial system
- Perceptions of political bias and corruption among the police
- Inadequate logistical capacity for police

¹⁵² "2015 Population and Housing Census Summary of Final Results", Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016.

¹⁵³ "District Profile: Kenema – 9 December 2015", OCHA Sierra Leone

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ "Factors Underlying Ebola Virus Infection Among Health Workers, Kenema, Sierra Leone, 2014-2015", Senga, M. et al., Clinical Infectious Diseases, August 2016.

Event-Driven Risks

- Tensions and violence ahead of the 2018 elections
- Disease outbreaks
- Natural disasters and flooding
- Food insecurity
- Criminality
- Land- and resource-based disputes

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

- Civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Microfinance initiatives
- Government initiatives in the areas of infrastructure development, disarmament, security sector reform, women's rights and access to justice
- Inter-religious coexistence and inter-faith marriages
- Experience of civil war resulting in a societal desire for peace

Population and Demographics

While the Kenema district is ethnically diverse, the Mende make up the largest ethnic group in the district.¹⁵⁷ Fieldwork participants reported that ethnic polarization is relatively high in the Kenema district, noting that ethnicity influences employment opportunities in the area. As one civil society leader described, "As long as you speak the same language, and are from the same ethnic group, that's all that matters. These bonds prevail over any other considerations." Since ethnicity broadly aligns with political affiliation in Sierra Leone, interviewees also reported that tensions between the Temne and Mende ethnic groups have increased in recent years in Kenema, particularly in the lead-up to elections, and expressed concern

around the rise in ethnic-based hate speech ahead of the 2018 elections.

Fieldwork participants also highlighted the impacts of population growth and migration in the city of Kenema. Kenema has reportedly seen an influx of workers from other parts of the country seeking employment in mining, as well as a strong trend of rural-urban migration among youth seeking job opportunities in the city. As a participant in the Men's Focus Group Discussion (FGD) described, "[A] majority of bike rides, petty traders, etc. are from villages around Kenema seeking a better life in the regional headquarter town of Kenema." Interviewees reported that the growth of the urban population has resulted in increased pressure on infrastructure and public services, as well as environmental degradation, decreased agricultural outputs and poor sanitation. Several interviewees noted that the city's poor sanitation and pressures on land increases the risk of diseases and the population's vulnerability to natural disasters such as flooding.

"Presently the animosity between the Mende and Temne tribes full of hate speeches is alarming. This is common among petty traders and market vendors in Kenema city."

– Men's FGD, Kenema District

¹⁵⁷ "District Profile: Kenema – 9 December 2015", OCHA Sierra Leone

“Since there has been an increase in population, it has affected agriculture in the area. People are building homes on reserved lands which is not allowed. In populated areas of town, homes are not well ventilated and there is a lack of proper sanitation facilities. There is no land for children to play and people are buried in the middle of town... These factors contribute to an unhealthy environment.”

– Women’s FGD, Kenema District

Population growth in the Kenema district is also driven by high rates of teenage pregnancy and a low prevalence of family planning. According to the 2013 Demographic and Health Survey, nearly one-third (32.2 percent) of girls ages 15-19 in the Kenema district have begun childbearing, and only 17.2 percent of women ages 15-49 in Kenema reported using any form of contraception.¹⁵⁸ Interviewees in the Women’s FGD reported that, although family planning services are available in the area, many women lack knowledge of contraception and family planning. As one participant explained, “Most of the teenage mothers did not receive an education on sexual reproductive health. Parents are not teaching their children about sexual reproductive health and schools are not teaching either. Tradition plays a major role in behavior but there is also a lack of education.” Other interviewees noted that religious beliefs and cultural practices often deter women from utilizing family planning services.

Early marriage is also reportedly a concern in the Kenema district. In Sierra Leone as a whole, 44 percent of women were married by the time they were 18 years old,¹⁵⁹ and the median age at first marriage among women ages 20-49 in Kenema district is 17.7 years.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ “Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2013”, USAID

¹⁵⁹ “Sierra Leone’s Girls in the Aftermath of Ebola”, Jackson-Garrett, D., Council on Foreign Relations, May 2016.

Economics and Resources

The economy of the Kenema district is largely dependent on agricultural production, as well as logging and gold and diamond mining operations.¹⁶¹ Despite the presence of international mining companies in Kenema and the importance of the mining industry to the national economy, fieldwork participants widely expressed the perception that local communities have not adequately benefitted from these operations in terms of infrastructure development. Interviewees noted that mining agreements are usually signed between the Sierra Leonean government and foreign companies with little community input, and that the resulting development funds are distributed directly to Paramount Chiefs or district councils. Several participants expressed concern around the diversion or mismanagement of these development funds and called for greater transparency in the allocation and use of mining proceeds.

“We don’t know what the chief is doing with proceeds from mining. It should be shared widespread and on the community radio stations.”

– Women’s FGD, Kenema District

In addition, as Kenema has historically been a stronghold of the opposition Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP), interviewees expressed the perception that the Kenema district has been marginalized in terms of infrastructure and social services due to political bias by the current government, which is dominated by the All People’s Congress (APC). Participants particularly highlighted the area’s poor roads, inadequate healthcare system, and a lack of staff and qualified

¹⁶⁰ “Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2013”, USAID

¹⁶¹ “District Profile: Kenema – 9 December 2015”, OCHA Sierra Leone

teachers in the district's schools. As one interviewee in the Women's FGD described, "If you go to some villages, there is only one teacher in the entire school. There is no access to clinics. School subsidies from the government are not being received or in some instances they get to the schools very late."

"Kenema has been systematically marginalized. Look at the state of the road infrastructure. There are no good roads. In terms of education (tertiary education) there is no university. Kenema is the regional headquarter for the Eastern region, it has the most diamonds. How do you reconcile this gap?"

- Civil Society Leader, Kenema District

Fieldwork participants also expressed concern around the region's high rate of youth unemployment, which has driven migration to the city of Kenema and other urban areas. Interviewees reported that many youth have turned to petty trade or riding motorbikes as a source of income, or are involved in drug trafficking or other forms of criminality. Poverty and unemployment have also reportedly contributed to cases of illegal gold mining and logging in the Kenema district. One participant in the Women's FGD reported that illegal gold mining is prevalent in the Komboi hills area in the north of the district.

Environmental degradation due to mining, logging, and population growth was also a pressing concern identified by fieldwork participants. As noted above, population pressures in urban areas have resulted in poor sanitation and inadequate urban planning, increasing vulnerability to flooding, erosion, and disease outbreaks. Pollution, soil degradation, and deforestation have also reportedly affected agricultural outputs, which has affected food security, access to clean water, and livelihoods in rural areas. However, the prevalence

of poverty in the region and the lack of alternative livelihoods has meant that efforts at environmental protection are often undermined by economic necessity. As one interviewee responded when asked about deforestation in the region, "How can you stop people from charcoal burning and logging when there are no alternative means of survival for them?"

Fieldwork participants also reported that the Kenema district has been experiencing a rising cost of living and inflation, which has affected food security. As participants in the Youth FGD reported, "The price of a bag of rice is double in price compared to a bag of rice three years ago. A bag of rice is now between SLL 200,000 to SLL 250,000, so for a family head with ten or above people to feed it is very difficult." Some participants blamed the rise in food and commodity prices on the toll road between Freetown and Kenema, as the tolls paid by truck drivers results in higher transportation prices and subsequently higher market prices.

Due to economic pressures, children in the Kenema district are vulnerable to child labor and abuse, particularly in mining areas. Participants in the Men's FGD reported that many of the children engaged in child labor are survivors of the 2014-2015 Ebola epidemic or recent natural disasters and must work to help provide for their families.

"Child labor is on the increase in the entire district. Children are engaged in mining activities and sand mining in the Tongo field areas. They are seen carrying heavy loads on their heads that hinder their growth."

- Youth FGD, Kenema District

According to the 2013 Demographic and Health Survey, the Eastern Province has the highest rate of child labor, and 56.2 percent of children ages

5-11 in the Kenema district were engaged in child labor.¹⁶²

Finally, women in the Kenema district are most often economically engaged in petty trading and agricultural production. Fieldwork participants reported that although women are able to own and buy land, they often face barriers to inheriting land as inheritance practices privilege male heirs. Women in the Kenema district have reportedly benefited from microfinance initiatives organized by civil society organizations (CSOs). However, several interviewees reported that women find it difficult to repay the loans on time, and this has resulted in cases of women being sent to jail due to non-payment.

Politics and Governance

As noted above, the Kenema district has been a stronghold of the opposition Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) since the end of the civil war. Fieldwork participants reported that polarization between political groups is high, and that political party affiliation is a determinant of employment and other opportunities. Interviewees also expressed the perception that the population's support for the SLPP has resulted in marginalization by the APC-dominated government in terms of infrastructure development and the provision of services.

Looking toward the 2018 elections, fieldwork participants expressed concern around the recent increase in political polarization and reported rise in hate speech between SLPP and APC supporters. Interviewees explained that the stakes for the 2018 elections are particularly high, as some SLPP supporters in Kenema believe that the 2012 elections were rigged, and the APC does not wish to give up power. Participants also noted that statements by President Koroma in which he reportedly said that "APC is going to hand over

power to APC," have worsened political tensions and fears of election rigging in the region.

"For me, I am a bit scared the way things are going with respect to the way political parties are putting their houses in order. The opposition SLPP wants to come back into governance and the ruling APC doesn't want to lose power. These two main parties want to win the election at all cost. So the issue of 'my party must win' is a very serious concern. Now the opposition said that the 2012 election was stolen (rigged)... This time round they will not tolerate any attempt to rig the elections. The ruling party may not want to lose with the fear that they will be chased with the Anti-Corruption Commission."

- Youth FGD, Kenema District

Interviewees also reported widespread perceptions of corruption among politicians and concerns around a lack of transparency in governance. As one civil society leader stated: "There is no proper reporting. The city council is opaque in the way it functions. The public does not know how it awards contracts." Other interviewees reported that politicians use their positions as a path for personal enrichment.

Youth are underrepresented in political decision-making, and fieldwork participants expressed concern around the vulnerability of youth to manipulation by politicians. However, participants in the Youth FGD reported that the formal representation of youth is slowly increasing and reported that there are young people who are part of the Kenema city council. Similarly, women remain underrepresented in political decision-making in the Kenema district, although their representation is reportedly increasing. One civil society leader reported that two members of the

¹⁶² "Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2013", USAID

Kenema city council and four members of the district council are currently women. In addition, participants in the Women's FGD reported that the APC recently elected a woman as a regional chair, and the Kenema Female Caucus has registered more than 35 women to run for various political positions in the 2018 elections.¹⁶³ However, interviewees noted that women continue to face significant societal and economic barriers to political participation, including a lack of funding for campaigns, intimidation and harassment, and cultural norms that place women in the domestic sphere. Participants in the Women's FGD reported that male secret societies are involved in harassing and intimidating women who are involved in politics, particularly regarding chieftaincy elections.

Rule of Law

Fieldwork participants reported a low level of trust in the judicial system, due to a perceived lack of judicial independence and allegations of bias toward the wealthy or politically connected. While the court system in Kenema is reportedly functioning, interviewees noted the slow pace of proceedings and the backlog of cases, with one participant reporting that cases are intentionally delayed in order to get money from disputants.

However, despite these shortcomings, the fieldwork participants noted the positive impacts of efforts to improve access to justice for vulnerable populations. Programs by the Sierra Leone Legal Aid Board, created by the parliament in 2012, as well as CSOs such as the Access to Justice Law Centre, were particularly cited.

Security

Key security concerns identified by fieldwork participants in the Kenema district include criminality and armed robberies, land disputes, and the potential for political violence ahead of the

2018 elections. Youth gangs, known as "cliques", are reportedly involved in criminality and cause violence by fighting amongst themselves. Cliques active in Kenema city include the Central Coast Clique (CCC), Small Old Day (SOD), and Eastern Coast Gang (ECG), among others.¹⁶⁴ Illegal smuggling also takes place across the porous border with Liberia.

Tensions around land are also a concern, particularly in mining areas. Fieldwork participants reported cases of land disputes between chiefdoms, such as the Tunkia and Koya, as well as disputes over inheritance and land demarcation. One interviewee recounted a case in 2013, in which a group of land surveyors working for a mining company entered a community and marked several spots without providing an explanation to the local community members. Several local residents assumed that these spots indicated mineral deposits and claimed ownership of the land parcels, leading to tensions and violence between communities. Other participants noted that land negotiations are managed by the chiefs, which can lead to grievances or a lack of clarity around land allocation decisions.

Fieldwork participants generally expressed a low level of trust in the district's police force, citing widespread perceptions of corruption and logistical constraints such as a lack of personnel and vehicles. In addition, interviewees expressed the perception that the police are biased toward the APC and influenced by politicians. Interviewees gave examples of arbitrary arrests or cases in which APC and SLPP supporters were treated differently, and stated that local communities "see the police as a tool used by the ruling government to silence the people of Kenema." As a result of this low trust, some local communities have organized community watch or vigilante groups to ensure security.

¹⁶³ "Sierra Leone News: Kenema Female Caucus hopes to elect women leaders", Kamara, A., Awoko, September 2017.

¹⁶⁴ "Sierra Leone News: Police arrest 3 Clique boys in Kenema", Moriba, S., Awoko, July 2016.

“During the health emergency as a result of the Ebola outbreak, the ruling party’s activities (i.e. an APC mini-convention) were at [a] variance with the regulations but the police never arrested them. But when SLPP supporters gathered at their party headquarter offices in Kenema to observe their 60th anniversary, they were arrested.”

- Men’s FGD, Kenema District

In the lead-up to the 2018 elections, the inadequate capacity of the security forces and perceptions of political bias have raised concerns among fieldwork participants about the ability of the police to respond to political violence or the potential for crackdowns by security forces in Kenema. Participants in the Men’s FGD noted that the recruitment of police officers from pro-APC areas “pose[s] a serious concern for citizens in Kenema. They are of the opinion that these sets of police will be used to rain havoc during the 2018 elections.”

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Despite the risks and vulnerabilities detailed above, fieldwork participants in the Kenema district identified numerous sources of social and institutional resilience that mitigate conflict in the area. CSOs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) reportedly play important roles in advocacy, civic education, mediation, and peacebuilding in the region. Several interviewees cited the example of the “My Vote, My Life” Citizens’ Manifesto, a document recently published by a coalition of CSOs in Sierra Leone that aims to promote peaceful and inclusive elections.^{165,166} One participant also

highlighted the work of the DFID-funded Enhancing the Interaction between Citizens and State in Sierra Leone (ENCISS) program, which involved the establishment of mediation committees in Kenema and early warning programs in towns along the Liberian border. CSOs and human rights organizations are also reportedly involved in providing oversight in the justice system and promoting access to justice. In the area of economics, interviewees noted the importance of CSO-supported microfinance initiatives in promoting women’s economic empowerment.

Fieldwork participants also identified government initiatives in the areas of infrastructure development, disarmament and security sector reform, women’s rights, and access to justice, as sources of resilience. The Legal Aid Board¹⁶⁷ was cited multiple times as playing an important role in improving access to justice for vulnerable and marginalized populations. One interviewee also pointed to the work of the Family Support Unit,¹⁶⁸ a specialized unit of the police, as positively contributing to the protection of women’s rights. Community police partnership programs were also highlighted by one interviewee as a source of resilience in the area of security.

Finally, interviewees noted a number of social and cultural resilience factors, namely religious tolerance, the practice of interfaith marriages, and memories of the civil war that deter a return to conflict. As participants in the Women’s FGD explained, “They remember the civil war and how destructive it was. People are scared, and they don’t want another war to start. The memories of the war have restrained the people.”

¹⁶⁵ “My Vote, My Life: Sierra Leone Elections 2018 Citizen’s Manifesto”, Institute for Governance Reform Sierra Leone

¹⁶⁶ “The Citizens’ Manifesto: a new hope for democracy in Sierra Leone?”, Brima, A., Peace Direct, November 2017.

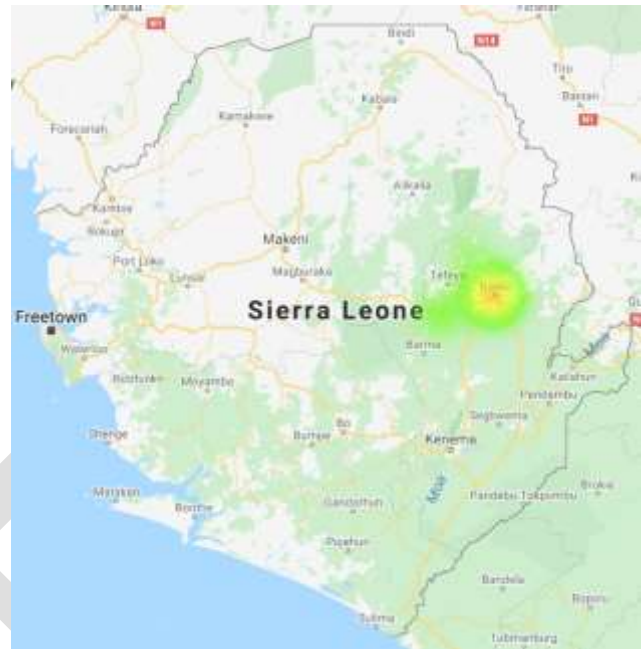
¹⁶⁷ “Funding for Legal Aid Board at Last: A Glorious Step Forward in the Implementation of the Legal Aid Act”, Kallon,

A., Centre for Accountability and Rule of Law, December 2014.

¹⁶⁸ “Sierra Leone: Family Support Units”, UN Women Global Database on Violence against Women

Kono District

Kono district is one of three districts in Sierra Leone's Eastern Province, with a population of 506,100 as of 2015.¹⁶⁹ It borders the districts of Kailahun, Kenema, Koinadugu and Tonkolili, as well as the Republic of Guinea and is one of the most ethnically diverse regions in Sierra Leone, with populations of smaller ethnic groups such as the Kono, Kissi, and Limba, as well as the Temne and Mende.¹⁷⁰ Kono is the country's largest diamond producer, and also includes gold mining and agricultural production. The region saw significant fighting during the civil war, in part due to the presence of the diamond mining operations.¹⁷¹



Structural Vulnerabilities

- Population growth and migration
- Teenage pregnancy and underutilization of family planning
- Early marriage
- Inadequate infrastructure and social services
- Environmental degradation and the effects of climate change
- Rising cost of living
- Poor management of natural resources
- Perceived inequality in the distribution of benefits from mining
- Perceptions of corruption in politics
- Underrepresentation of youth and women in political decision-making
- Perceptions of corruption and bias in the justice system
- Porous borders
- Inadequate resources and staffing for security forces
- Perceptions of corruption and political bias among the police

Event-Driven Risks

- Disease outbreak
- Natural disasters
- Political campaigns and 2018 elections
- Tensions with mining companies
- Corruption
- Land-based disputes
- Criminality

¹⁶⁹ "2015 Population and Housing Census Summary of Final Results", Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016.

¹⁷⁰ "Ethnic Groups of Sierra Leone", Sierra Leone Information System

¹⁷¹ "District Profile: Kono - 29 December 2015", OCHA Sierra Leone

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

- Civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs)
- Media and CSO campaigns for peaceful elections
- Provincial Security Committee (PROSEC) and the District Security Committee (DISEC)
- Culture of religious tolerance
- Societal aversion to conflict due to experience of civil war

Population and Demographics

As a region with significant mining and forestry activity, the Kono district has reportedly experienced an influx of migrant workers seeking employment, as well as a growing trend of rural-urban migration. While fieldwork participants did not report substantial tensions between migrants and local communities, the population growth in urban areas has reportedly driven up food prices and contributed to environmental degradation (primarily deforestation) and increased pressures on land and social services. Crowding in urban areas has also led to poor sanitation and an increase in the spread of diseases such as cholera.

A key concern raised by fieldwork participants in the Kono district was the prevalence of teenage pregnancy. As of 2013, 25.1 percent of girls ages 15-19 in the Kono district had begun childbearing,¹⁷² and the high rate of teenage pregnancy has led to an increase in school dropouts among girls. Fieldwork participants noted that family planning services are available in the district; however, cultural and religious norms and beliefs often deter women from utilizing these services. Among married women ages 15-49 in the Kono district, only 12.9 percent reported using any form of contraception, which is below the national average.¹⁷³ The Kono district also has an above-average total fertility rate: 5.8 children per woman, compared to the national average of 4.9.¹⁷⁴

Early marriage of girls was also identified as an issue in the district. Among women ages 20-49, the median age of marriage in the Kono district was 17.7 years, which is younger than the national average.¹⁷⁵ Fieldwork participants reported that early marriage is often driven by poverty, when

“Teenage pregnancy is also taking place. Many school-going girls do not even complete their primary or secondary school because of teenage pregnancy. This is also caused because of poverty and some parents cannot properly take care of their children. Now when you visit the schools you will notice the high number in their attendance but as the academic year passes by the number drops.”

- Local Government Representative, Kono District

families are unable to afford school fees or financially support their daughters.

Fieldwork participants also highlighted the region’s inadequate infrastructure and social services, citing grievances around roads, water and the health and education systems. As one religious leader in the Kono district described, “There is a water structure, but the flow of water does not come through. In Koidu, there is no pump. In the villages, there is no infrastructure. Electricity is not frequent, and it is unpredictable. In schools, there are no benches and all the social services are

¹⁷² “Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2013”, USAID

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

suffering. There are no proper qualified teachers in the school and this contributes to poor education. There is no furniture.” There are also reportedly disparities in access to services between rural and urban areas, which has contributed to migration. Several interviewees expressed the opinion that the Kono district’s inadequate infrastructure is due to political bias in the distribution of development funds by the current government, as many in the Kono district support the opposition Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP).

Economics and Resources

The Kono district is the country’s largest producer of diamonds, and is also home to gold mining and

“Teachers are teaching in a government school but are not on payroll. There are documentation problems and as a result of that, their names are excluded from the vouchers. They often wait to receive payment for two or more years. This affected more than 1,000 teachers and it is still happening. The community provides a small stipend to try to cover the teacher’s salary.”

- Women’s FGD, Kono District

the production of cash crops such as rice, corn, cassava, coffee, and palm oil.¹⁷⁶ Despite the importance of the mining sector to the Sierra Leonean economy, fieldwork participants in the Kono district broadly expressed that the presence of these operations has not adequately benefitted the region. Interviewees cited examples of poor roads and infrastructure, as well as deficiencies in the education and health systems. They also expressed concern about the management of the proceeds of mining contracts, which are often paid directly to the government or local chiefs rather than to local communities. As participants in the Youth FGD stated, “[The] proceeds of natural resources are skewed to benefit only the powers

¹⁷⁶ “District Profile: Kono – 29 December 2015”, OCHA Sierra Leone

that be (politicians and to some extent the chiefs) whilst the majority suffer.” The unequal distribution of benefits has, according to some interviewees, led to local communities engaging in illegal mining as a form of income. Illegal mining is reportedly common in the areas around Komoro in the Nimikoro chieftaincy.

Mining activity and population growth in the region has led to environmental degradation, particularly deforestation – which makes communities more vulnerable to natural disasters such as flooding, mudslides, or windstorms - and pollution of the water table. Interviewees noted that most mining companies in the area do not reforest affected areas. Mining has also impacted buildings and homes, with participants in the Women’s FGD reporting that “even when sleeping, they can sometimes feel the bed shaking from mining activity because the mining affects the ground and housing structures and causes cracking of the walls.” The region is also affected by climate change and changes in rainfall patterns, which have negatively affected agricultural outputs and food security in the area.

Due to economic pressures, children in the Kono district are vulnerable to child labor and abuse. According to the 2013 Demographic and Health Survey, the Eastern Province has the highest rate of child labor, and 51.2 percent of children ages 5-11 in the Kono district were engaged in child labor in some form.¹⁷⁷ In addition to denying these children the right to education, fieldwork participants reported that children working in the mines face significant health risks. As participants in the Women’s FGD explained, “Children are used for illicit mining and are victims of mining disasters. Little holes are dug into the earth and children are used to go underground to bring out the precious minerals. In the process, sometimes mudslides occur, and the children are buried under the mud. These accidents occur every now and then but hardly reported.” Young girls are also reportedly

¹⁷⁷ “Sierra Leone Demographic and Health Survey 2013”, USAID

subject to sexual violence and are victims of ritual killings in the district.

Women in the Kono district primarily participate in the informal sector through agriculture or as owners of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Women are reportedly able to access bank loans but struggle to make payments due to high interest rates. This can serve as a barrier to starting or maintaining a business. One participant noted that groups of women in the area will combine their funds to start a business, using the small profit to

“People believe that the mines in Kono are a major source of revenue to the country, but this is not reflected in the Kono district in the areas of development, healthcare, schools and road infrastructure. The community is neglected in the selections of the mining minister. Taxes from the mines are paid directly to the government and not the community.”

- Chairman, Youth Development Organization, Kono District

pay for needs such as school fees or healthcare for the members. Women in the Kono district are also unable to inherit land, which is a major barrier to their economic empowerment.

Finally, fieldwork participants highlighted the rising cost of commodities as a vulnerability factor, noting that increases in food and fuel prices negatively impact food security. One religious leader in the Kono district stated, “Prices are very high in the district and people are suffering. The cost of living in Kono is terrible. If you want to manage, you can’t live on SLL 50,000 daily. The cost of rice, fish and other goods are high. Some people go without food.” Many interviewees attributed the rising cost of living to a lack of government price controls.

Politics and Governance

Key governance concerns raised by fieldwork participants in the Kono district included pervasive

corruption, the risk of manipulation of youth by politicians, and the potential for violence during election periods. Interviewees reported widespread corruption among politicians and government institutions, citing examples of elected officials siphoning off relief aid and development funds intended for the district.

Interviewees also highlighted the importance of ethnic, regional and tribal identities in politics. Political affiliation in Sierra Leone roughly aligns with ethnic and regional identities, with the All People’s Congress (APC) predominantly drawing its support from the Temne group in the north and west while the SLPP has the most support among the Mende in the east and south of the country. Fieldwork participants reported that political affiliation, and therefore regional and ethnic identities, is a salient factor in the awarding of employment, development projects, and other benefits. As noted above, interviewees also expressed the belief that the Kono district’s inadequate infrastructure is in part due to corruption and political bias on the part of the current APC-led government. Due to the importance of ethnic and regional identities in politics, the dismissal of the former vice president, Samuel Sam-Sumana (who comes from the Kono ethnic group), by President Koroma has reportedly caused controversy in the district and contributed to tensions between the Kono and Temne ethnic groups.

Women also remain underrepresented in political decision-making in the Kono district. This underrepresentation is particularly pronounced in traditional institutions such as local chieftaincies and Paramount Chieftaincies. Participants noted that women who choose to stand in chieftaincy elections face harassment and intimidation, sometimes to the point of being driven out of the area. Women also face structural barriers to political participation, including high rates of illiteracy and a lack of financing. However, women’s groups and CSOs in the region are reportedly involved in raising awareness around

women's participation in politics, and many women are engaged in these organizations.

Similarly, youth in the Kono district are underrepresented in political decision-making. Fieldwork participants reported that youth are most often mobilized by politicians during campaign periods, but rarely hold meaningful political positions. Youth are often involved in violence during campaign and election periods. A participant in the Women's FGD recounted, "The youth are used as thugs by politicians who lure them into drug and alcohol abuse. The youths are

"There is an organized group called 'Power to Women', where they advocate for increased participation of women in politics. They lobby political parties to increase women's participation in politics. They have a radio talk show and they talk to men and women to see how women can be involved in politics."

- Women's FGD, Kono District

seen terrorizing people, especially women during elections. In the last elections in Koidu Town, [two youth] were actively engaged in election violence. They were arrested, and through political influence, they have been released and they are seen in the public bragging, an indication of being above the law."

Looking toward the 2018 elections, participants voiced concern about the potential for violence ahead of the elections. Many interviewees did not express confidence in the preparation or ability of the region's security forces to respond to violence. As one civil society youth leader stated, "The absence of adequate support to the police will surely affect police response negatively during the 2018 [elections]. If there is a riot, they can't respond in a timely way. Mobility and security is an issue for the upcoming election." Participants in the Youth FGD also noted that the stakes of the upcoming presidential election are particularly

high, as many supporters of the SLPP feel that the 2012 elections were rigged due to corruption in the National Electoral Commission (NEC).

Rule of Law

Fieldwork participants in the Kono district expressed a low level of trust in the justice system due to a perceived lack of judicial independence, corruption and bias toward the wealthy or politically-connected, and a lack of popular access to justice. Interviewees reported that judicial decisions, particularly in cases involving politicians or other elites, are influenced by "orders from above." In addition, some respondents felt that the courts are biased toward the ruling party (the APC) and cited cases of unequal treatment for supporters of the SLPP. The Supreme Court decision upholding the dismissal of the former vice president, Samuel Sam-Sumana, by President Koroma was viewed by some as an example of the court system conforming to the wishes of the executive branch.

Parts of the Kono district also lack access to the court system. One interviewee reported that the district has not had a high court judge for three years, meaning that people must travel to neighboring Kenema to access a high court. In addition, poor communities are also unable to afford legal fees, or the bribes that are often required, which effectively blocks access to the justice system for these populations. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and the Legal Aid Board, a government office which offers mediation services and provides low-cost lawyers and legal assistance, have reportedly improved access to justice for vulnerable populations. However, interviewees noted that their influence is generally restricted to low-level civil cases.

As a result of this low level of trust in the formal judicial system, fieldwork participants reported that many people choose to resolve disputes through mediation by traditional leaders or other alternative forms of dispute resolution.

Fieldwork participants also noted that, while women's rights are relatively well protected within the formal legal framework (e.g. with the passage of the three "Gender Acts"), the reliance on customary law means that women's rights in practice are often limited. For example, women are unable to inherit land under customary law and in some cases women are not given equal standing by chiefs when they mediate cases. However, CSOs were identified by fieldwork participants as playing an important role in raising awareness around issues of women's rights, and overall, interviewees expressed the sense that women's standing is slowly improving.

Security

Key security concerns identified by fieldwork participants include criminality and land disputes. Youth gangs, known as "cliques," and *okada*¹⁷⁸ drivers are often implicated in cases of criminality and armed robbery. Land is a source of conflict in the Kono district, and fieldwork participants reported cases of land grabbing and disputes over the sale of land to multiple people. Interviewees also noted instances of conflicts between farmers and herders along the Sierra Leone-Guinea border. Interviewees reported that the Kono district has experienced ethnic tensions between the Kono and Temne tribes in the past (including as recently as 2016); however, this was not raised as a pressing concern.

Border control was also an issue raised by fieldwork participants. The Kono district shares a border with Guinea, and interviewees reported that the country's porous borders have facilitated illicit flows of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) and smuggling of cigarettes, palm oil and drugs such as Tramadol. Inadequate control of the borders was viewed by many as a source of vulnerability in the district.

Participants also reported low levels of trust in the police due to widespread perceptions of

¹⁷⁸ *Okada* is a local term for motorcycle taxis.

corruption, political bias, and inadequate resources and staffing. Interviewees reported that police in the region often lack adequate vehicles and equipment such as masks and helmets, delaying their response times. The police also do not have adequate staff to cover the whole district. In addition, interviewees expressed the perception that the police are politically biased toward the APC and are influenced by politicians. As a result of these factors, fieldwork participants did not express confidence in the ability or willingness of the police to respond to potential violence in the course of the 2018 elections.

"Considering the [police], citizens regard them as enemies. There is therefore increased tension between the police and the people due to lack of confidence and trust. Sometimes, the disproportionate manner in which they quell down crisis situations leaves the people with an impression of bias against them."

- Media Representative, Kono District

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

Despite the risks and vulnerabilities detailed above, fieldwork participants in the Kono district identified a number of resilience factors that help mitigate conflicts. CSOs and NGOs play a key role in awareness-raising and sensitization around issues such as women's rights, healthcare, and peaceful elections. Participants in the Youth FGD particularly highlighted peaceful election messaging disseminated by local radio stations (Voice of Kono FM 98.0, Citizens Radio FM 107.5, Sierra Leone Broadcasting Cooperation FM 90.2) and the "My Vote, My Life" Citizen's Manifesto recently published by a coalition of CSOs.¹⁷⁹ The

¹⁷⁹ "My Vote, My Life: Sierra Leone Elections 2018 Citizen's Manifesto", Institute for Governance Reform Sierra Leone

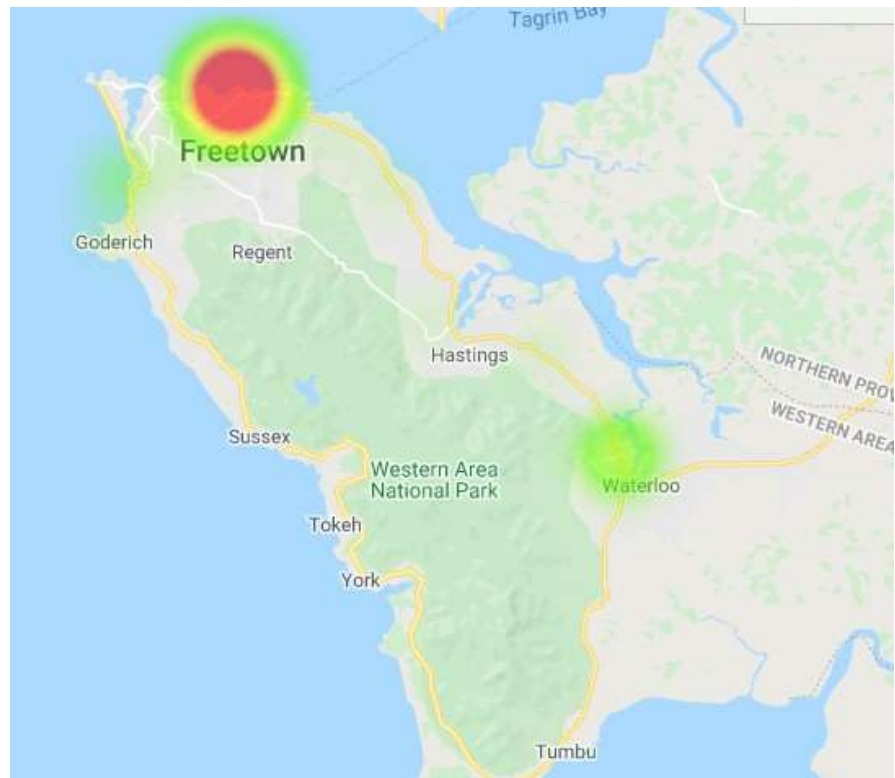
NGO Partners in Health¹⁸⁰ was also identified as providing critical healthcare services for pregnant and lactating women. In the area of security, the Provincial Security Committee (PROSEC) and the District Security Committee (DISEC), which were created to address security issues after the civil war, are a source of resilience. These bodies bring together a variety of stakeholders to discuss and address local security challenges. In addition, while the Sierra Leone Police were not viewed positively by interviewees, other security forces – particularly the Office of National Security – were seen as providing useful services. Finally, interviewees noted several societal sources of resilience, namely a culture of religious tolerance and a societal desire to avoid violent conflict due to the experience of the civil war.

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¹⁸⁰ “Sierra Leone: We help rebuild the public health system, which was decimated by an Ebola epidemic”, Partners in Health Sierra Leone

Western Area

The Western Area, a peninsula sticking into the Atlantic, hosts the capital of Freetown and also borders the Northern and Southern Provinces. Although it has the smallest land area at only 557 square kilometers, it is the third-most populous region, with an estimated 1,500,234 people as of 2015.¹⁸¹ The area is split into the Western Urban and Western Rural districts, with over two-thirds of the population in the former.¹⁸² Economic activities in the urban area include trade, salaried work, stone and sand mining, with agriculture and fishing in the rural area.¹⁸³ The main ethnic groups are the Temne, Mende, and Krio.^{184,185}



Structural Vulnerabilities

- Rural/urban migration
- Poverty
- Price volatility
- High youth unemployment
- Overcrowding in Freetown
- Construction of housing in disaster-prone areas
- Early marriage and teenage pregnancy
- Environmental degradation
- Political polarization along ethnic and regional lines
- Perceptions of corruption and bias in the judicial system
- Land tenure issues
- Porous borders
- Perceptions of political bias and corruption among security forces

Event-Driven Risks

- Natural disaster
- Disease outbreak
- Incidents of corruption

¹⁸¹ "Provinces of Sierra Leone", Statoids

¹⁸² "2015 Population and Housing Census Summary of Final Results", Statistics Sierra Leone, 2016.

¹⁸³ "Sierra Leone Livelihood Zoning Report", USAID, October 2016.

¹⁸⁴ "District Profile: Western Rural – 10 December 2015", OCHA Sierra Leone

¹⁸⁵ "District Profile: Western Urban – 12 October 2015", OCHA Sierra Leone

Event-Driven Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence related to the 2018 elections • Illicit economic activity and criminality • Food insecurity
Social and Institutional Resilience Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Micro-credit schemes • Civil society organizations (CSOs) • Inter-ethnic marriages • Religious tolerance • Religious and traditional leaders preaching messages of peace • Memories of the civil war have deterred violence • Legal Aid Board • Traditional/alternative justice mechanisms

Population and Demographics

Rural to urban migration is a significant issue in Sierra Leone and has resulted in significant population pressures in Freetown. Interviewees emphasized that “everything is in Freetown,” citing better schools, more economic opportunities, and access to social services as some of the main factors driving migration to the capital. As a result, slums have grown in and around Freetown and people have constructed houses in disaster-prone areas due to overpopulation and poverty. The population increase has put pressure on the environment and has caused increased deforestation. Additionally, overpopulation in the capital has led to sanitary and health problems, as well as congestion and water scarcity. Hospitals are under-resourced and do not have adequate staffing or supplies to service the population. During one Key Informant Interview (KII), a civil society leader noted that many nurses remain unpaid, despite instructions to put them on hospital payrolls during the Ebola epidemic.

Fieldwork respondents reported that youth are a vulnerable population in Freetown, citing increasing criminality, the growth of youth gangs and a lack of employment opportunities. Additionally, child labor was cited throughout the fieldwork as an ongoing concern. Interviewees reported that children are engaged in road construction, sand mining, selling water, and

fishing instead of attending school. During the Youth FGD, participants noted that child labor has decreased in the past 5-10 years because of sensitization campaigns and social welfare programs, but stated that it is still an ongoing concern.

Interviewees also cited early marriage, teenage pregnancy and lack of family planning as vulnerabilities in the Western Area. Some fieldwork participants reported that family planning is accessible, but sometimes not utilized due to cultural and religious taboos and a lack of education, especially in rural areas. Interviewees reported that poverty is a main driver of both early marriage and teenage pregnancy.

“Cases of early marriages and teenage pregnancy are on the increase across the country, and this is mostly due to the prevailing poverty in the land. The government has failed to deploy national resources to meet the needs of the people. So many families, due to abject poverty and economic hardship have given out their young girls for early marriages, especially to rich men.”

– Civil Society Leader, Freetown

During one KII, a community leader stated that it is not uncommon for a school-aged girl to be married

to an *okada*¹⁸⁶ driver, because he is able to provide some money for the girl's family.

Economics and Resources

Fieldwork participants cited the high cost of living, price volatility, and low salaries as key economic vulnerabilities in the Western Area. Interviewees reported that the price of commodities rises daily, leading to food insecurity. During one KII, a civil society leader noted that though the minimum wage was increased by the government, the price of goods also increased, making it difficult for people to afford food or save money. Food prices also reportedly increase during the holidays or when people are fasting for Ramadan. Several participants reported that many people struggle to eat a balanced diet, because the price of healthy food is high. The installation of a toll on the main road in and out of Freetown has contributed to rising prices, as it now costs more to transport goods. Furthermore, low salaries and increasing prices have led to increasing incidents of

“All security is related to human security. When someone is hungry, they will do anything for food.”

– Women FGD, Freetown

criminality and corruption, especially among youth. Land tenure issues were also discussed during the fieldwork. Interviewees stated that land grabbing is common and discussed perceptions that the Ministry of Lands allegedly has falsified documents and sold the same piece of land to multiple people. Fieldwork participants also reported that women and youth have difficulty purchasing land.

Youth were cited as an economically vulnerable population due to a lack of employment opportunities. Interviewees reported youth have difficulty accessing loans and therefore struggle to

play a role in the economy. During the Women's FGD, participants stated that youth struggle because many are expected to attend school and work a job at the same time. Additionally, interviewees reported that youth lack access to quality education that will provide them with the training to secure a job after school. During one KII, a community leader stated that youth have created some job opportunities for themselves, such as riding *okadas* or street trading.

According to interviewees, women are crucial to the economy and are the breadwinners in many homes. The majority of women in Sierra Leone work informally as petty traders. During the Women's FGD, participants stated that many women trade during the day and work a second job at night.

Fieldwork participants discussed the implications of the Ebola epidemic, stating that it halted infrastructure development and negatively affected the education system and the economy because people avoided coming to Sierra Leone. Additionally, interviewees discussed climate change and deforestation, stating that both have contributed to natural disasters, such as the August 2017 mudslide. During the Women's FGD, participants reported that money meant for other development projects has been diverted to disaster relief. Other interviewees stated that disaster relief funds never reach the victims of disaster due to misappropriation and alleged corruption.

Politics and Governance

Fieldwork participants addressed the upcoming 2018 elections in Sierra Leone, stating that the potential for widespread political violence is low, because people remember the violence of the 1991-2002 civil war. Despite this, fieldwork participants did report tensions between the two main political parties, the All People's Congress

¹⁸⁶ *Okada* is a local term for motorcycle taxis.

(APC) and the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). Interviewees highlighted social media as a concern, stating that there have been incidents of hate speech and false information. Fieldwork participants also reported that media sources have become highly politicized.

Interviewees stated that both ethnicity and regionalism play a role in political party affiliation. The northern provinces in Sierra Leone are typically aligned with the APC, while eastern provinces largely support the SLPP. During a Key Informant Interview (KII), a chief stated that the Mende ethnic group is typically aligned with the SLPP and the Temne ethnic group with the APC. During another KII, a community leader stated that politicians exacerbate ethnic divides during their campaigns. Interviewees also discussed the importance of political party dress codes, stating that red is the color of the APC and green is the color for the SLPP, relating that this has sometimes been a source of tension and violence. For example, if somebody wears the wrong color during a political rally, they are sometimes the target of violence.

“Party politics is taken almost as religion. The people take party affiliation too seriously. Even bosom friends can react very unfavorably when it comes to politics.

– Community Leader, Freetown

In addition to concerns about the upcoming election, interviewees cited weak political institutions, a lack of trust in government, and concern over distribution of resources as political vulnerabilities in the Western Area.

Interviewees emphasized perceptions of corruption as a key ongoing vulnerability with one interviewee stating, “Corruption is almost becoming a way of life.” During one KII, a community leader discussed perceptions of corruption within the electoral process, stating that

it can erode trust and lead to violence. Interviewees also reported that some politicians allegedly accept campaign money from various sources with the expectation that they will repay the money when in office, sometimes by offering government contracts to the donor. Interviewees also reported that government officials often allegedly fail to account how public funds are used. For example, both Ebola relief funds and international donor funds for the recent mudslide were reportedly mismanaged.

Interviewees stated that youth play an important role in politics but are also vulnerable to manipulation by politicians. During one KII, a community leader stated that politicians use youth for political gain, but do not fulfill promises made during campaigns. Additionally, some fieldwork participants highlighted concerns about youth who had fought during the civil war as child soldiers, stating that a lack of reintegration and few economic opportunities could trigger violent conflict in the lead-up to the 2018 elections. Alternatively, during another KII, a civil society leader stated that youth have been involved and active at the community level and have been appointed into the government as deputy ambassadors.

Rule of Law

Fieldwork respondents reported a lack of judicial independence, an under-resourced court system, and perceptions of corruption as key vulnerabilities in the Western Area. Specifically, interviewees stated that there is no separation between the Attorney General's office and the Minister of Justice, a presidential appointee. Additionally, long detention times and a lack of lawyers have undermined the effectiveness of the judiciary. Fieldwork participants also highlighted perceptions that those who have money or connections are favored in the justice system. Women have also historically been underrepresented in the judicial system. Interviewees stated that while there are

now gender laws, they have not been enforced and many women do not know their rights.

“There is no justice in Sierra Leone for the poor. Justice is for the rich and politically connected.”

– Civil Society Leader, Freetown

Interviewees stated that traditional justice mechanisms have been effective alternatives to the formal court system, but that politics has begun to undermine these methods. Despite these concerns, several participants reported that people largely have confidence in traditional leaders and traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, especially in rural areas. The police and the Legal Aid Board reportedly refer cases to these institutions. Interviewees also reported that a lack of trust in the justice system has occasionally caused people to revert to mob justice.

Security

Fieldwork participants reported that criminality, illicit economic activity, and land conflict are key security vulnerabilities in the Western Area. Interviewees also reported that security forces are perceived to be biased and corrupt, as well as under-resourced and underpaid. Low salaries for security forces has also reportedly contributed to the prevalence of corruption. Police are reportedly tied to political parties, rather than maintaining neutrality. Some interviewees also reported incidents of police brutality and collusion with criminals.

Illicit economic activity has also become a security concern, especially drug trafficking and illegal fishing. During one KII, a community leader stated that porous borders are the main cause of the prevalence of cross-border smuggling of illegal goods, especially from Guinea.

Fieldwork participants reported that conflict over land has been an ongoing security concern, stating that disputes are often triggered by the double sale of land. Interviewees also reported that the purchase of land by international companies has exacerbated land disputes. Inheritance issues have also been a source of conflict. During a Youth FGD, participants stated that in some communities, wives cannot inherit land, which has led to conflict between families.

Social and Institutional Resilience Factors

In addition to the risks and vulnerabilities detailed above, fieldwork participants identified social and institutional resilience factors in the Western Area. CSOs and NGOs were cited by many interviewees as resilience factors for their work on sensitization campaigns to prevent violence leading up to the 2018 elections. Interviewees emphasized that CSOs are only effective when they are neutral. One interviewee stated that Government Assisted NGOs (GANGOs) are hesitant to be critical of the government, but that there are still independent NGOs that have been effective.

In regard to the judicial system, the Legal Aid Board was cited multiple times as a resiliency. Interviewees emphasized its role in providing legal services to vulnerable populations. Interviewees also stated that the Police Partnership Board has been effective at working with police forces to encourage community policing. The Independent Police Complaint Board (IPCB) was also cited as a resilience, as it has provided a forum for people to report misconduct by police and security forces.

Additionally, interviewees cited inter-marriage between ethnic groups and religious tolerance as resiliencies. Traditional and religious leaders have played an important role by preaching peace and tolerance in their communities. Finally, fieldwork participants emphasized that the memory of the 1991 – 2002 civil war has been crucial in the prevention of conflict and that the majority of the population wants Sierra Leone to remain peaceful.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Sierra Leone is most vulnerable in the areas of Population & Demographics and Economics & Resources. During the fieldwork, many Sierra Leoneans expressed frustration at the unequal distribution of infrastructure, public services such as healthcare and education, and the benefits of mining operations. Stark disparities in services and employment between rural and urban areas have driven migration to urban areas, while inequalities between regions contribute to political grievances in the east and south of the country. These grievances, if left unchecked, risk becoming a potential source of violence.

Rampant urban population growth and the impacts of the mining industry have also contributed to serious environmental degradation, particularly deforestation. Sierra Leone is one of the countries with the “fastest acceleration of tree cover loss,”¹⁸⁷ making communities more vulnerable to natural disasters such as windstorms, flooding and mudslides. This vulnerability became tragically apparent in August 2017, when flash floods and landslides on the outskirts of Freetown left hundreds of people dead and forced the displacement of more than 10,000 people.¹⁸⁸

As the country moves toward elections in 2018 (the second held without UN assistance since the end of the civil war), polarization and tensions between political groups are on the rise, with reported incidents of hate speech and a spread of misinformation via social media. Managing the risks associated with the campaign period, carrying out credible and transparent elections, and ensuring a peaceful transfer of power will prove to be a crucial test for Sierra Leone’s democratic institutions and political parties. In addition to

managing the 2018 and future elections, the Sierra Leonean government must also address pervasive corruption and mismanagement within governance and rule of law institutions as well as the security forces. Combatting corruption and promoting transparency within these institutions is a critical first step to addressing many of the vulnerabilities and risks highlighted in this report.

While security was not identified as the most vulnerable area for the country within the human security pillars, there remain salient risk factors around criminality, land- and resource-based conflicts, and political violence. Local communities exhibit low levels of trust in the Sierra Leone Police, particularly in the east and south of the country, due to perceptions of corruption and political bias on the part of police forces. The police are also systemically under-resourced, with inadequate staffing and logistical constraints such as a lack of vehicles. Due to these shortcomings, there are legitimate concerns among Sierra Leoneans around the ability and willingness of the police to provide security to communities in a neutral and professional manner should violence break out around the 2018 elections.

However, in recovering from the country’s devastating 11-year civil war, Sierra Leone has demonstrated significant resilience, as shown by the fact that security is one of the country’s least vulnerable categories. These sources of resilience – including institutions such as community-police partnership boards, disarmament and SSR programs, and a collective memory of the war that serves to deter a return to violent conflict – will likely serve Sierra Leone well moving forward, if effectively leveraged. Sierra Leone’s vibrant

¹⁸⁷ “RELEASE: New Global Data Finds Tropical Forests Declining in Overlooked Hotspots”, World Resources Institute, September 2015.

¹⁸⁸ “Sierra Leone: Death toll from landslide nears 500”, Al Jazeera, August 2017.

network of civil society organizations (CSOs), NGOs and women's and youth groups are also a critical source of resilience thanks to their roles in advocacy, awareness-raising and service provision.

Looking to the future, Sierra Leone continues to face key challenges in reducing youth unemployment, combatting corruption, encouraging economic development, investing in infrastructure and services, and addressing gender inequalities. As Sierra Leone seeks to consolidate the gains of the last fifteen years, ensuring equitable and sustainable development and fostering strong and inclusive institutions will be critical for building a more stable and peaceful country.

Population and Demographics

- Invest in rural development to improve infrastructure and social services provision
- Support schools to standardize curriculums and ensure they meet national standards; ensure rural schools have adequate staff and supplies
- Support culturally sensitive programming to promote women's health services and family welfare
- Establishment of rehabilitation centers to address drug abuse
- Strengthen the implementation of the legal frameworks to address FGM and protection of women
- Encourage female education to empower them to advocate for positive social change including the eradication of harmful cultural practices to women's health and wellbeing

Economics and Resources

- Support and expand microfinance programs and vocational training to support women- and youth-led initiatives
- Support the regulation of environmentally detrimental practices surrounding large- and small-scale mining operations; support reforestation initiatives and strengthen environmental protection laws

- Strengthen land tenure legislation to protect local communities from forced displacement
- Ensure that contracts negotiated with international companies comply with social corporate responsibility processes established by the government
- Enforce development control and urban planning code
- Ensure that large-scale mining companies adhere to existing environmental protection policies
- Promote more transparency and accountability in the governance of extractive industries with emphasis on economic and social justice

Politics and Governance

- Deploy election observers to prevent conflict risks ahead of 2018 elections
- Engage stakeholders and officials to ensure free and fair elections and an inclusive electoral process
- Expand sensitization campaigns designed to prevent politically motivated violence
- Encourage women's political involvement and continue to advocate for a gender quota
- Empower community-based organizations to advocate for social, political inclusion of women and youth in decision-making
- Empower and fund local and community-based institutions to drive the process of development
- Sensitize government on the need to hold "*Les États Généraux*" on the governance of natural resources, particularly the mining sector. This is intended to work on creating a centralized system of governance and management of natural resources

Rule of Law

- Strengthen mechanisms of alternative dispute resolution as incentives for social cohesion

- Raise awareness around gender-based violence (GBV) crimes within the formal and traditional justice systems
- Support programs to raise awareness and protect victims of GBV
- Strengthen and expand programs to improve access to justice particularly for vulnerable populations

Security

- Support bi- and multi-lateral training assistance programs to enhance the institutional and organizational capacity of the security forces
- Create a partnership between CSOs, security forces and local communities to enhance cooperation and trust building on security matters
- Enhance the operational and institutional capacity of the police and military forces, including improved training
- Work with regional and international partners to address larger regional trends of insecurity and extremism
- Provide logistical support and training to security forces ahead of elections

Appendix A: Data Sample

Phase	Dimension	Source	Metric	Sample
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	ECOWARN	SitReps	750 reports
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, the agency/agencies mandated to organize and monitor national elections is/are protected from political interference	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, the agency/agencies mandated to organize and monitor national elections make/s timely, publicly available reports before and after a national election.	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	EIU Democracy Index	Electoral process and pluralism	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	EIU Democracy Index	Political Participation	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	EIU Democracy Index	Functioning of Government	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	IDEA	Average Voter Turnout Parliamentary	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Transparency International	Corruption Perception	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	BTI	Political and Social Integration	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Freedom House	Political Rights	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Mo Ibrahim Index	Personal Safety	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UN, ECOWAS, AU	Peace Operations	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	ACLED	Conflict Fatalities per capita	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UPPSALA	Presence/Conflict with Non-State Armed Groups	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)

Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	PTS	Political Terror Scale – Amnesty	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	PTS	Political Terror Scale – State	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	PTS	Political Terror Scale – HRW	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UNHCR	Refugees by country of origin per capita	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UNHCR	Refugees by country of origin (difference 2015-2014) per capita	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UNHCR	IDPs by Country of Asylum per capita	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UNHCR	IDPs by country of asylum (difference 2015-2014) per capita	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, the independence of the judiciary is guaranteed.	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, national-level judges give reasons for their decisions/judgments.	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, allegations of corruption against senior level politicians and/or civil servants of any level are investigated by an independent body.	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, the body/bodies that investigate/s allegations of public sector corruption is/are effective.	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	Global Integrity	In practice, the mechanism for citizens to report police misconduct or abuse of force is effective.	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	WB Human Rights and Law Report	% of Women on Constitutional Court	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	WB – Women, Business, and Law	Does the law mandate equal	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)

			remuneration for work of equal value?	
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	WB – Women, Business, and Law	Does the law mandate nondiscrimination based on gender in hiring?	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	WB – Women, Business, and Law	Is dismissal of pregnant workers prohibited?	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Gini coefficient	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Gini WYD	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Income Share Held by Highest 10%	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Population with Improved Sanitation (Urban-Rural Difference)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Population with Improved Water Source (Urban-Rural Difference)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UN Stats	Children under 5 moderately or severely underweight, percentage	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Depth of the food deficit (kilocalories per person per day)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Prevalence of Underweight, weight for age (% of children under 5)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	GDP per capita, PPP (current international \$)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UN Stats	Literacy, 15-24, Women	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	School enrollment, primary and secondary (gross), gender parity index (GPI)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Employment to population ratio, ages 15-24, female (%) (modeled ILO estimate)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UN Stats	Median Age	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)

Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Population Growth	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	UN Stats	Prevalence of underweight, weight for age, female (% of children under 5)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Maternal mortality ratio (modeled estimate, per 100,000 live births)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Contraceptive prevalence, any methods (% of women ages 15-49)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	World Bank Data	Life expectancy at birth, female (years)	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Vulnerability	WB – Women, Business, and Law	Percentage of women aged 20-24 years old who were married or in a union before age 18	15 (all ECOWAS member states normalized and scaled)
Phase 1: Desktop	Risk	ECOWARN	IncReps	98 (after reducing for duplicates and relevance)
Phase 1: Desktop	Risk	ACLED	Incidents	131
Phase 2: Field Research	Risk and Vulnerability	Focus Group Discussions	Broken out by Men, Women, and Youth	16
Phase 2: Field Research	Risk and Vulnerability	Key Informant Interviews	Prominent individuals and local experts, including gvt officials	25

Appendix B: Vulnerability Index

Index Data Sources

Based on the five human security pillars, a series of indicators were identified based on relevance and measurability. Data sources were then identified from recognized institutions such as the World Bank, United Nations, as well as universities, research institutions, and think tanks. A full list of data sources is attached in **Appendix A**. During selection and testing of the index, the availability of data was assessed to ensure an even distribution of scores.

Process: Calculating the Scores

The index is scored on a scale of 1-10, with 1 representing the highest level of vulnerability, and 10 the lowest level of vulnerability. Each raw data set is normalized and scaled, before being integrated into the indicator and pillar scores.

1. Normalization

An index, by definition, integrates and compares data sets with very different curves and distribution. As a first step, therefore, it is necessary to normalize the data so that it can be properly compared. Without framing the data within the context of the wider group of numbers, its meaning can become skewed. Therefore, the process of finding the mean and calculating the Standard Deviation (SD) of the data set, then using those elements to approximate a normal distribution, can be used to provide this meaning. The Gaussian normalization formula is outlined below.

Where μ is the mean

σ^2 is the variance

$$f(x, \mu, \sigma) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi} \sigma} e^{-\frac{(x-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}$$

SD is the quantity calculated to indicate the extent of deviation for a group of numbers as a whole. Normal distribution is then used to find how the variables are approximately normally distributed. In the context of this tool, it will help to understand where countries sit in relation to each other within the group distribution of a particular data set.

For raw data sets that have gaps (e.g. data is unavailable for some countries but not others), country data points are left blank. This ensures countries are not provided with an artificial score, where data does not exist.

2. Scaling

To create an index where countries are scored within a defined range, the data sets must be scaled so the scores can be integrated. This process of scaling transforms the normalized data into a number between 1 and 10, with 10 representing the lowest level of vulnerability. The below formula was applied to standardize

the distribution values from [min, max] to [MIN, MAX], matching the new scale of values both for the highest and lowest edges of the distribution.

$$X = MIN + \frac{(MAX - MIN)}{(max - min)} \times (x - min)$$

3. Aggregation

Each indicator may be made up of either one or multiple data sources. In cases where multiple data sets were used to make up the one indicator, the data sets were each scaled to preliminary index scores (1-10), as outlined in the above steps. The average was then taken of these scores to reach a final index score for that indicator. This process was repeated at the pillar level, first averaging, then scaling the indicator scores.

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Appendix C: Additional References

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Appendix D: Matrix of Vulnerabilities, Risks, Resilience Factors, and Recommendations by Human Security Pillar

SIERRA LEONE	VULNERABILITIES	RISKS	RESILIENCE FACTORS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Population & Demographics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Population growth; rural to urban migration - Early marriage; teen pregnancy; limited access to women’s health services and family welfare - Cultural barriers to family planning including the practice of FGM - Poor urban planning - Environmental degradation and climate change - Porous borders (smuggling) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Drug abuse - Natural disasters - Disease outbreaks - Food insecurity - Infant and maternal mortality - Criminality - Low provision of social services - High rate of emigration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existence of growing civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs - Traditional and religious leaders - Culture of religious tolerance and practice of inter-faith marriages - Microfinance programs and economic cooperatives to promote women’s economic empowerment - Community-police partnership boards, Provincial Security Committee (PROSEC) and District Security Committee (DISEC) - Legal Aid Board and initiatives to increase access to justice - Collective memory of civil war serving as a deterrent to violent conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Invest in rural development to improve infrastructure and social services provision - Support schools to standardize curriculums and ensure they meet national standards; ensure rural schools have adequate staff and supplies - Support culturally-sensitive programming to promote women’s health services and family welfare - Establishment of rehabilitation centers to address drug abuse - Strengthen the implementation of the legal frameworks to address FGM and protection of women through - Encourage female education to empower them to advocate for positive social change including the eradication of harmful cultural practices to women’s health and wellbeing

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existence of legal texts and normative frameworks on gender, equity and women’s rights - Actions of local, regional and international actors to address food insecurity 	
Economics & Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High rate of youth unemployment - Inadequate access to quality public services, including education and healthcare - Rural-urban divide and regional disparities in development and infrastructure - Undiversified economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Criminality - High rate of emigration - Low economic productivity - Reliance on export - Pandemics - Price volatility; high prices of basic commodities; rising cost of living 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remittances from migrants - Cross border trade - Licensed small-scale mining 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support and expand microfinance programs and vocational training to support women- and youth-led initiatives - Support the regulation of environmentally detrimental practices surrounding large- and small-scale mining operations; support reforestation initiatives and strengthen environmental protection laws - Strengthen land tenure legislation to protect local communities from forced displacement - Ensure that contracts negotiated with international companies comply with social corporate responsibility processes established by the government - Enforce development control and urban planning code - Ensure that large-scale mining companies adhere to existing environmental protection policies. - Promote more transparency and accountability in the governance of extractive industries with emphasis on economic and social justice

Politics & Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political polarization along ethnic and regional lines - Perceptions of corruption and lack of transparency among state institutions - Underrepresentation of youth and women in political decision-making - Weak governance of natural resources - Poor application of decentralization policies - Weak presence of the state at the local level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Misinformation and hate speech on social media especially during elections - Poor delivery of basic social services - Violence against political parties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Existence of growing civil society organizations (CSOs) and NGOs - Vibrant media as a positive force - Lessons learnt from civil war as a deterrent to violent conflict 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deploy election observers to prevent conflict risks ahead of 2018 elections - Engage stakeholders and officials to ensure free and fair elections and an inclusive electoral process - Expand sensitization campaigns designed to prevent politically motivated violence - Encourage women's political involvement and continue to advocate for a gender quota - Empower community-based organizations to advocate for social, political inclusion of women and youth in decision-making - Empower and fund local and community-based institutions to drive the process of development - Sensitize government on the need to hold "Les Etats Generaux" on the governance of natural resources, particularly the mining sector. This is intended to work on creating a centralized system of governance and management of natural resources
Rule of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Child labor - Illicit economic activities, including drug trafficking - Corruption; - Lack of resources for the justice system; - Access to justice - Gender-based discrimination within customary law - Clash between customary and conventional law 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Criminality and illicit activities - Perceived lack of judicial independence - Perceived partiality in the delivery of justice - Tensions as a result of lack of clarity around land tenure and ownership - Mob justice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal Aid Board and initiatives to increase access to justice - Alternative dispute resolution mechanisms - Reliance on traditional and religious institutions for conflict resolution - Existence of regulatory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen mechanisms of alternative dispute resolution as incentives for social cohesion - Raise awareness around gender-based violence (GBV) crimes within the formal and traditional justice systems - Support programs to raise awareness and protect victims of GBV - Strengthen and expand programs to improve access to justice

	<p>around land tenure and ownership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weak governance of natural resources 		<p>framework on land use</p>	<p>particularly for vulnerable populations</p>
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perceptions of corruption and bias among security forces - Inadequate resources for the security sector - Proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALW) - Legacy of the civil war which weakens state institutions and promoted the culture of violence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land- and resource-based conflicts - Tensions and violence leading up to the 2018 elections - Cross-border disputes - Existence of ex-combatants who have not been properly re-integrated into the society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Security sector reform - The legacy of the UN peace keeping operations/UN special court for Sierra Leone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support bi- and multi-lateral training assistance programs to enhance the institutional and organizational capacity of the security forces - Create a partnership between CSOs, security forces and local communities to enhance cooperation and trust building on security matters - Enhance the operational and institutional capacity of the police and military forces, including improved training - Work with regional and international partners to address larger regional trends of insecurity and extremism - Provide logistical support and training to security forces ahead of elections