AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PEACEBUILDING EFFORTS OF THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION IN SIERRA LEONE

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ABSTRACT

Undertaking sustainable reconciliation in conflict societies has been a major concern in attaining lasting peace in many African countries. There are traditional institutions that have long been considered customary systems and valuable instruments for addressing different forms of conflict in Africa. But in the modern conflict world, different forms of institutions are designed to serve as a central mechanism in conflict resolutions, peacebuilding, peace-making, and peacekeeping. Sierra Leone, for instance, which experienced intense violent conflicts from 1991 to 2001, has evolved diverse conflict resolution mechanisms. These include reconciliation, negotiation, and to some extent reintegration. Amongst these integrated frameworks, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) stood out. The TRC was conceived as a key instrument that facilitated the reconciliation process. As a framework, the TRC targeted the victims, who were afforded the opportunity to express their concerns, particularly the atrocities committed against them and their loved ones in the course of the war. The paper thus examined the role of TRC and the challenges thereof in the sustenance of peace and stability in Sierra Leone. The data obtained through in-depth interviews and documents are analyzed qualitatively. The paper argues that sustainable peace and stability can only be achieved in divided societies through negotiations and reconciliation.

Keywords: Negotiation, Reconciliation, Peacebuilding, Challenges

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Introduction:

If there is anything Sierra Leone needs today more than anything else, it is peace and reconciliation (President Kabbah, 1st October 1997).

The past is an argument and the function of truth commissions, like the function of honest historians, is simply to purify the argument, to narrow the range of permissible lies (Micheal Ignatieff, 1996).

At the onset of the 1990s, reconciliations and negotiations had been legitimately considered as part of strategies for peace-making in conflict societies. Recently, the methods have practically reached the pinnacle position as effective and most influenced measures used by United Nations and other international organizations and states in settling conflict and disputes amongst divided societies. Generally, in the post-conflict period, peacebuilding is becoming complex overtly in exceedingly alienated areas or communities where wars were fought in affairs associated with religious and ethnic grounds. For instance, Rwanda and Angola witnessed ardent crises tantamount to genocide. At the end of the first phase of the war, peace-builders and peacebuilding activities failed to provide the needed actions. As a result, both countries slide back into violence. In Angola, the war continued for many years, while Rwanda not only experienced the resurgence of the war but genocide erupted (Paris, 2004).

In post-conflict societies, multiple measures are usually put in place to avoid the reoccurrence of the conflict and to further facilitate rehabilitation, reintegration, and redevelopment of conflict. However, rapid achievements on that largely depended on the conflict dynamics and the institutions built to tackle conflicts in volatile societies. Likewise, ethnic and religious-related violence tends to prove extremely complex in resolving. Nevertheless, in every society, values and traditions are extremely paramount and equally are the innermost statue for communities to esteem. Before the introduction of modern institutions and techniques for conflict prevention and settlement of disputes, traditional customary systems were widely functional in negotiations and reconciliations amongst conflicting parties. But in modern conflict management, negotiation has pushed above the

customary systems. In certain situations, both are being acknowledged in societies that are too accustomed to traditional and religious institutions. Every conflict is thus unique in its context. Accordingly, post-conflict societies evolve more appropriate mechanisms that best suit their context (Lederach, 2013).

In Africa, transitional justice mechanisms are mostly conceived to respond to various kinds of human rights abuses perpetrated by actors in violent conflicts as part of the process of peacebuilding. Many of these arrangements, particularly in Africa in the past two decades had significantly facilitated truth recovery through the instrumentality of the truth commission and the criminal justice system, usually in the context of special courts, which has both domestic and international outlook (Sooka, 2006). For instance, in post-conflict Sierra Leone assortment of strategies was introduced and implemented to facilitate enduring peace and security in the country that experienced one of the most vicious conflicts in world history. One of the most accepted techniques used in negotiation was the establishment of a specialized (TRC) in the aftermath of the conflict in 2001 as one of the resolutions of the Lome Peace Agreement. The Commission served as the only mechanism which could be regarded as a form of transitional justice system available when peace was restored in Sierra Leone (Berewa, 2011). The success of TRC was particularly anchored on the functionality and effectiveness of other peacebuilding activities in the country. The commitments of the government and international organizations in the implementation of agreements were equally paramount in achieving real peace and stability. Similarly, the strength of religious and traditional institutions influenced the success of TRC *vis-à-vis* the sustainability of its activities.

Thus, in assessing the role of TRC, particularly in Sierra Leone, the paper argues that effective and efficient reconciliations and negotiations are underlined by practices in combining both traditional and modern processes of peacebuilding. The use of the traditional approach is driven by the customs and values of Sierra Leone and the modern sophisticated by the intervention of different international actors. These combined translates into the success of the TRC towards

sustainable peacebuilding. Thus, the main objective of the study is to highlight the role of TRC and the challenges thereof in the sustenance of peace and stability in Sierra Leone.

Research Methodology: Qualitative Approach

In the course of this research, qualitative approach was used in data collection and analysis. Qualitative methods have played a major role in political science: from the study of individuals and groups inside the formal political institutions to the political attitudes and behaviours of people or outside it. Qualitative research focuses on investigating the behaviour, motivations, desires, attitudes, beliefs, choices and opinions of persons or group of persons. It is concerned with understanding of the actor's opinion, perspective and insights. Its orientation is to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups from the point of view of those being studied (Atkinson, 2017). There were other advantages of qualitative research, which necessitated the adoption of the approach in the collection and analysis of data in this study. In the first place, qualitative approach emphasised the analysis of words and images as against numbers as obtained in quantitative approach. Given the nature of the phenomenon under review, which centred on views, experiences and opinions of some foreign policy actors in the country, the use of qualitative instrument was indispensable. The emphasis on unstructured interviews enhanced the preference of qualitative approach in the conduct of this research. It is the only approach that helped in capturing views, opinions, emotions and experiences of people involved in peacebuilding mission in Sierra Leone. In this study, the following categories of respondents were interviewed. They include:

(i) Staff of ECOWAS in Nigeria and Sierra Leone;
(ii) Staff of Federal Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria and Sierra Leone;
(iii) Staff of Sierra Leone Embassy in Nigeria;
(iv) Sierra Leone Military and Police Officers involved in the conflict;
(v) Ex-rebels fighters and Rebels Leader (RUF);
(vi) The Victims of the War;

(vii) Civil and Human Rights Organizations in Sierra Leone;
(viii) Staff of United Nation Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

In the course of this research, therefore, a case study design was adopted. It enabled the researcher to conduct a detail analysis of the phenomenon of TRC in Sierra Leone in terms of its causes, strategies, successes and challenges. Therefore, the data collected from interview, observations and other sources were analysed using qualitative data analysis method. Hence, data gathered from both documentary sources, interviews and observations were analysed with the use of content analysis. Data from documentary sources were scrutinised to identify relevant information that supported the analysis of the issues being investigated.

Background to Sierra Leonean Conflict:

At the end of the 20th century, the world had witnessed rising of new modes of armed violence, which changed the pattern of conflict from the conventional conceptions of modern warfare. During the 1990s, civil wars have become a common pattern of violent conflicts, particularly in Africa (Raleigh, 2010). Sierra Leone is amongst the countries that experienced ferocious conflicts for more than a decade which claimed thousands of lives of innocent civilians. Sierra Leone is a small country compared to its neighbours in the West Africa region, roughly the size of the Republic of Ireland. The country gained independence from the British in 1961 with a very promising foundation (Hirsch, 2001). The country was very rich in mineral resources and tourist attractions. Partial control of political institutions, internal defence, and industrial units was handed down to the elite nationalist at independence. The transfer of power entailed little conflict between the African elite, the grassroots indigenes, and expatriate officials (Asangna, 2017).

However, the causes of the civil war are still debatable. Though, bad governance, poverty, inequality, and tribalism were largely attributed as the reasons behind the violent conflict. But many scholars in the area of conflict and conflicts resolutions have remained unsatisfied with the obtainable explanations in the literature on the genesis of the conflict. Most

researchers argued that bad governance and corruption alone could not explain the basis and triggers of the war. They argue that the magnitude of atrocities committed during the civil war could also be associated with the barbaric nature of the people and societies concerned. The genesis did not emerge in the 1990s, but it has been reflected through many years before the independence of Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone suffered from a civil war between 1991 and 2002. Over half of the population was displaced, an estimated 50,000 Sierra Leoneans were killed, and thousands were victims of amputation, rape, and assault. The civil war in Sierra Leone engulfed all 149 chiefdoms of the country (Voors, et al, 2017).

In the early 1990s, Sierra Leone was engulfed in a vicious civil war, which was fuelled by the activities of the renowned rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) which fought three successive governments. At the beginning of the war, the contagious effect of the civil war in Liberia was adjudged to be the immediate cause. This was mainly because of the activities and extensive roles of foreign mercenaries in the country and private militias. Political experts believed that the struggle for political power and control over the country's natural resources, particularly diamonds, has been central to Sierra Leonean civil war. The main victims, however, were mainly the civilian population targeted by the RUF fighters' brutal crackdown, looting, and rapes (Bundu, 2001). For instance, the country inherited a multi-party system of government from the British immediately after independence in 1961, during which Sir Milton Margai, of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), served as the first Prime Minister of the newly independent country. Milton was widely recognized for his genuine efforts to build a united Sierra Leone and his promotion of good governance principles. After his death, precisely in 1964, Albert Margai, his brother, took over power and drastically drifted towards dictatorship and corruption in Sierra Leone (Olonisakin, 2008). Bangura argues that:

> Personally, I will not accept the theory that the war was caused by diamonds. Diamonds facilitated the prosecution of the war. The positive factors are found in bad governance, the arrogance of power, the collapse of the state machinery, lack of accountability, and the

> disaffection and dissatisfaction on the part of the populace especially the youths (Bangura, 2013).

Sierra Leone's troubled history reflects a familiar pattern in post-independent Africa; a brief experiment in democracy in the early 1960s was replaced by the prolonged one-party civilian government and/or military rule. This created a breeding ground for the vicious pattern of official corruption and mismanagement, flawed electoral process, and violence that led to many years of sustained public distrust, the virtual collapse of the education system, and the creation of a generation of young men and women who became the RUF's rank and file (Kanu, 2016). The politics of favouritism and nepotism was embarked upon by Albert Margai's rule, whereby, only members of his ethnic group, Mende benefited from government, which quickly reinforced the division of the Sierra Leone party system along ethnic lines (Barewa, 2011). The decades of vandalism and corruption triggered large groups of youth to join the rebellion. The civil service was littered with cronies and APC loyalists, many of whom were employed solely as a reward for previous acts of assistance to the party, albeit sinister or unpatriotic ones (Asangna, 2017). Elderd Collins argues that:

> The RUF waged war against a system that was not working in the interest of the people. A country where education and health facilities were dormant, people were dying and everything was just because of privileges. If you have not been in contact with those in power or you are not financially strong, you cannot survive. So there were dark days in Sierra Leone and the people of this country were crying, and if there is no war in Sierra Leone, this country would not have been stable enough. That's why war needs to be fought (Collins, 2013).

The near institutionalized systemic corruption since the 1980s evidenced by lack of accountability and transparency provided the fertile grounds for the emergence of violent rebel groups; exclusionary politics,

subversion of rule of law, rural neglect leading to ethnic and regional grievances, extreme centralization, economic decline, and high unemployment. President Momoh failed to revive the deteriorating economy, which had become heavily dependent on mineral resources rather than cash crops. By then, the country's supply of iron ore had depleted, while large-scale diamond smuggling had begun. The state treasuries were looted to feed the political patronage, which in turn shored up the regime while control of natural resources was reportedly left in the hands of a few individuals. The impact of this pattern of governance trickled down the system. As a result, the state treasury was nearly emptied. A measure of last resort, unpaid civil servants engaged in massive looting of office equipment as alternative means of livelihood (Mohammed, 2018).

From its inception, diamond and mineral resources and specifically, related government corruption was central to the RUF's political agenda. Throughout fighting the civil war, however, they shifted from being an abstract target of political rhetoric to a source of crude finance through expropriation and theft, and ultimately the target of ambitious sustained revenue generation. Underlying these changes in rebel resources strategies were shifts in the military balance of power that shaped the RUF's territorial control and objectives related to diamonds and other minerals (Marks, 2019).

Sierra Leone's prolonged war has been responsible for the worsening living conditions of the people and the pervasive deterioration of the country's social and economic assets. The war was also responsible for the destruction of the economy and exacerbated the decay physical infrastructure and social facilities of the country. The economy was almost on the brink of total collapse by enormously undermining the productive capacity of the economy of country (Kabbah, 2010). The Sierra Leone civil war was disastrous not only to the country but to the entire West African sub region. The civil war gave birth to a huge refugee crisis in the sub region where neighbouring countries bear the brunt by accommodating a large population of displaced persons as refugees. It is estimated that Nigeria hosted more than 500,000 refugees from Sierra Leone during the civil war. Sierra Leonean refugees are still in the country despite the official

closure of the Camp by the Nigerian government in 2007. In addition to these repercussions, civil war in Sierra Leone influenced the sudden rise in the defence budgets of neighbouring countries, the spread of dreadful diseases, the production and trafficking of illicit drugs, and arms trafficking across the region. Nigeria alone is estimated to have spent more than $10 billion on peacekeeping and enforcement missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia (Mohammed, 2015). Similarly, large numbers of illegal arms in West African countries particularly in Nigeria were smuggled from Sierra Leone and other conflict areas in Africa. These implications were among other factors that led international communities to intervene in the Sierra Leone conflict.

Approaches to Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone

Peacebuilding has been referred to as a comprehensive pattern of conflict management, which evolve as a system involving many actors across a wide range of areas of conflict prevention, peace-making, peace-building, and peacekeeping (Zelizer, 2013). In 1975, John Galtung as one of the founders of the field of peace studies played a key role in developing the concept of peacebuilding and outlined three broad approaches to conflict interventions that correspond with the stages of conflict: peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding. The concept of peacebuilding begin to have a large-scale impact in 1992 when the then United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali advised the international community through his work "An Agenda for Peace," to shift their focus from peacekeeping to conflict prevention and peacebuilding (Zelizer, 2013). The period corresponds with the vicious conflicts in Africa largely in Sierra Leone.

Thus, peacebuilding is largely connected to conflict transformation which is normally employed to handle conflicts which are deep-rooted and protracted, caused by structural issues. There are several distinctive features of conflict transformation. The major component of conflict resolution is peacebuilding process. It takes note of structural problems in an environment as the rooted causes of conflicts, especially power asymmetry and injustice like case of Sierra Leone. This stage requires long periods of time to build peace in a long-lasting and highly intense between-

frame of intergroup conflict situation (Jun, 2018). The stage involves setting of mechanism for discussions and dialogue, which mostly necessitate for the establishment of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

***Figure 1**: Approaches to Peacebuilding*



Source: (IIPS, 2022).

Thus, strategic peacebuilding connects people and groups on the ground aims not only to resolve conflicts, but to build societies, institutions, policies, and relationships that are better able to sustain peace and justice (IIPS, 2022). The approaches were mostly applied in resolving the conflict in the country as part of immediate grounds for the implementation of strategies for peacebuilding. Sierra Leone, in particular, is experiencing a range of efforts from the international community as sort of strategies for the sustenance of peace and stability obtained. United Nations, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), United Kingdom, United

States of America, and Nigeria are continuing to play dominant responsibility in rebuilding Sierra Leone. For instance, Nigeria singlehandedly launched military intervention with the view of achieving peace, security, and stability in Sierra Leone.

The underlying assumption of the peacebuilding framework in Sierra was the logic of "implementing an operational checklist, predetermined to fix and streamline various institutions and processes without tackling underlying political dynamics (Ljungkvist & Jarstad, 2021). For instance, after the civil war in Sierra Leone, the Nigerian government and other international communities have continuously supported the country in many ways as part of peacebuilding efforts. The strategies and approaches were formed depending the circumstances and nature surrounding the affected environments. The peacebuilding approaches adopted in Sierra Leone are not much different from other conflict-divided societies. For example, the operational activities of peacebuilding that evolved after 1998 in Kosovo, East Timor, and Sierra Leone had moved gradually in the direction of the IBL strategy. The operations devoted more attention and resources to the construction process more gradually and deliberately than in previous missions (Paris, 2004). In Sierra Leone construction and rehabilitation turned out as standing techniques in rebuilding the country. Nigeria in particular played a unique role in achieving these objectives. Danjumma (2011) noted that:

> The Nigerian contingent of ECOMOG was tasked to restore peace and democracy to that country. Again it took the sweat, blood, and finances of Nigerians to create a basis of orderly governance in Sierra Leone before the United Nations got cajoled by its Secretary General to at least relieve Nigeria of the financial burden. Even when ECOMOG gave way to the United Nations peacekeepers, four Nigerian battalions had to stay back and are still in Sierra Leone to carry on the yeoman's job of disarming the combatants. At the expense of being termed immodest, let me assert that, till today, it takes the Nigerian contingent to garrison the various flash-points and that no disarmament takes place until the

> Nigerian soldiers are there. Participating in ECOMOG for Nigeria is a continuation of the country's Afro-centric foreign policy. Indeed, Nigeria has pursued the creation of regional and sub-regional organizations as a means of pooling efforts and resources for the achievement of enduring political and economic goals (Danjuma, 2011).

Not only Nigeria, but other countries around the world equally participated in the struggle for lasting peace and security in Sierra Leone. The formation of the TRC by international organizations after the conflict was part of peacebuilding efforts and restorative justice. The formation of the Commission has been an important approach in a country like Sierra Leone that witnessed brutal conflicts. In the past, a similar Commission has been established in South Africa after the apartheid in 1990. The establishment of the Commission was championed by the UN and was part of peace agreements signed at different levels of the conflict.

In 2014, the United Nations Integrated the Peacebuilding Missions in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), which concluded more than half a decade of operations in the post-war country. As the first client state of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (UNPC) in June 2006, Sierra Leone graduated from the UNPC agenda to become the first success of the yet embryonic UN peacebuilding architecture (Lawrence, 2014). Thus, Sierra Leone experienced different approaches to dealing with post-conflict challenges, ranging from negotiation, reconciliation, reintegration, and rehabilitation.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Insights

Truth commissions are public institutions with non-judicial powers. They are bodies set up to investigate a series of human rights violations in a particular country that experienced war and conflict (Hayner, 2003). Thus, truth, justice, and reconciliation are crucial elements in building sustainable peace based on respect for human rights, particularly in countries that have been engulfed with internal violent conflicts. There is however a lot of public ignorance about the TRC. Since its inception scholars expressed doubt about its desirability. For instance, in Sierra

Leone, some argue that without the TRC many victims were ready to forgive and forget (International Crisis Group, 2003). However, the 1999 Lome Peace Accord, provided for the TRC to reflect on issues of impunity and provided opportunities for both victims and perpetrators of human rights violations to share their experiences as a measure of dealing with the root causes of the war (Sirleaf, 2013:16). The Peace Accord offered a blanket amnesty to all combatants in exchange for demobilization and peace (Shaw, 2015). Thus, most of the truth commissions were created mainly to help restore dignity to victims of war and perpetrators as well as to promote the virtue of truth-telling.

Establishment and Objectives of TRC

Truth Commissions are bodies established to investigate and report human rights abuses over a certain period of time in a particular country or in relation to a particular conflict. Truth Commissions are not created in a vacuum; they are established in states that have endured violent conditions and where human rights have been systematically and gravely violated. Sometimes they are set up in countries where there have been wars or transition from an authoritarian regime to democratic rule, and where there are overwhelming rebel groups such that the judicial system is not capable of dealing with the consequences of the past (Shaw, 2005). In July 2002, six month after the Sierra Leone eleven-year-long civil war was officially over, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was inaugurated. As described in the Truth and Reconciliation Act of 2000 truth telling was to be the primary means by which the TRC pursued the five goals of its mandate "to create and impartial historical record of violations and abuses-------to address impunity, to respond to the needs of victims, to promote healing and reconciliation and prevent a repetition of the violations and abuses suffered (Shaw, 2005). In Sierra Leone, the peace agreement provided for a Commission Act to address impunity, break the cycle of violence, and facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation as well as measures for the rehabilitation of victims of human rights violations (ECOWAS, 1999). AZAPO (1996) asserted that:

> The Truth and Reconciliation Act seeks to address this massive problem by encouraging survivors and

> dependants of the tortured and the wounded, the maimed, and the dead to unburden their grief publicly, to receive the collective recognition of a new nation that they were wronged, and, crucially, to help them to discover what in truth happened to their loved ones, where and under what circumstances it happened, and who was responsible (ECOWAS, 1999).

In early 2000 the Act was promulgated by the Government of Sierra Leone as one of the prescriptions of the Lome Peace Accord of July 1999 (ECOWAS, 1999). The major objectives of the TRC are: to create an impartial historical record of violations and abuses of human rights; facilitate the enactment of international humanitarian law related to the armed conflict in Sierra Leone; address impunity; respond to the need of victims; promote healing and reconciliation; and prevent a repetition of violations and abuses suffered (ECOWAS, 1999). Similarly, the Commission was also required to consider the needs of the victims and address them in the reconciliation procedure that victims would only be reconciled through methods that provided some benefits to them, for example, peace and assurance that there would not be a recurrence of atrocities (Barewa, 2011). Moreover, the TRC was vested with extensive investigative powers, including the issuance of summons and subpoenas, which are similar to the powers of judicial authorities (ECOWAS, 1999).

Generally, the Commission was aimed at fulfilling the right to truth, which is enshrined in a number of international instruments, notably the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Law (United-Nations, 2013). The success of the truth commissions is largely connected to the framework and strategies adopted in operations. The cooperation of international institutions, perpetrators, and victims are the central mechanism of the commission's achievements.

The framework of Operation and Action

The TRC in Sierra Leone was designed to commence operations within 90 days of the agreement, and submit its report and recommendations within a year. The Commission's statute reflected lessons learned from earlier truth commissions specifically in South Africa. The Commission was given a three–month preparatory period for logistic and administrative matters for the smooth take-off and completion within the official life span. It was empowered with broad investigatory powers including a subpoena, search, and seizure, and the government was required to implement its reforms. It explicitly recognized the need to hear women's voices and explore the role of children and both victims and perpetrators (Dougherty, 2004).

The involvement of International organizations in the operational activities of the TRC is generally seen as critical to its success. For instance, in Sierra Leone, local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights activists not only pushed for the creation of the Commission but also maintained interest during the delay in its establishment. They helped with important tasks in its operations and actions such as sensitization and enlightenment. The international community was also deeply involved and brought to take responsibility for the Commission's operations (Dougherty, 2004). Nigeria and United Kingdom were amongst the key actors in the establishment and sustenance of the Commission in Sierra Leone.

Moreover, international agencies like the United Nations Office of Higher Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) played an unprecedented role in every phase of action, operation, and development of the Commission (HCHR, 2022). Part of the activities, undertaken by the agency was writing the statute, direct funding appeals, and control of 95% of the Commission's budget. It equally helped in carrying out a public campaign and conducted preliminary identification of the Commission's staffing and logistic requirements and provided technical and administrative support for its operations (HCHR, 2022).

Equally, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) also provided logistics assistance to the Commission. The human rights and public

information sections played a particularly valuable role in supporting and promoting its operations. Similar to the arrangement in Haiti and Guatemala, the Sierra Leone TRC had a mix of international and national commissioners, which provided "national familiarity and international expertise to complement one another (Dougherty, 2004). In keeping with a desire to ensure the broadest possible measure of participation, a public nomination process was adopted to identify possible national Commissioners (Hayner & Ash, 2002). However, unlike previous truth commissions, SLTRC was constrained by the existence of a contemporaneous transitional justice institution, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, which was to prosecute "those most responsible" for the war and its accompanying abuses despite the Lome amnesty. These two institutions were however weak as they did not have clear rules or roles to govern their interaction (Schabas, 2003). Thus, their operations had been marred by lots of successes and challenges. Much attention has been paid to the difficulties experienced in the operational activities of the Commission compared to all successes recorded.

Achievements and Challenges:

Like many other institutions, the Commission was designed to achieve definite targets of identifying and addressing problems emanating from the conflict in Sierra Leone. The Commission's activities ranging from testimonies and reconciliation had made a significant impact in post-conflict Sierra Leone. The processes implemented during the activities of the commission are vital for the democratic future of Sierra Leone. This is a result of its potential to create a cadre of non-partisan individuals committed to human rights and rule of law. The TRC in Sierra Leone has empowered the country to assume roles in building democratic institutions, such as the human rights commission, electoral bodies, and gender commission.

Furthermore, the outcomes of the commission's activities provided crucial frameworks for debates about violence and repression, and helped foster the development of stable institutions (Shaw, 2005). Specifically, TRC had a positive impact on state-building. For instance, Sierra Leone has achieved one of its fundamental objectives: creating an impartial historical

record of the civil war (Goldman, 2005). It revealed a "wider truth", based on the broad participation of both victims and perpetrators. As part of its mandates, the Commission also paid special attention to sexual abuses and the experience of children in armed conflict, as required (TRC Act, Clause 6 (2)(a)). The recommendations made by the Commission really helped the government of Sierra Leone to provide the basis for reviewing policies, which assisted in stabilizing post-conflict Sierra Leone.

The Commission was very clear as to what the government needs to improve based on its findings. For instance, it recommended that the judiciary be strengthened and the rule of law institutionalized, including a review of laws and rules governing public emergencies. It also advocated fostering democracy by providing the atmosphere for the evolution of strong parliament as well as a credible and transparent electoral system. It stressed the need for the creation of a transparent and accountable regime in which the citizens are entitled to know about the financial transactions of senior officials and government spending on amenities (Goldmann, 2005). In addition to that, the SLTRC made a significant contribution to nation-building through its program called "A National Vision for Sierra Leone (TRC, Report). It also provided the framework for the broad participation of the citizens in the determination of the kind of society envisaged for the people of Sierra Leone (Goldmann, 2005).

This program has not only helped in understanding the focus of the citizens of the country but it generated confidence in the Sierra Leone government and the international community in rebuilding the war-torn societies. It also helped in restoring the dignity of the war victims. Finally, the Commission's process statement jamboree and the public hearing generated prevalent interest and participation, thereby fulfilling in large measure its mandated mission of providing a public forum for victims and perpetrators to narrate their stories (Dougherty, 2004). Despite the achievements documented by TRC, it has faced numerous problems and challenges during and after the operations, particularly in the implementation of its findings in rebuilding Sierra Leone.

The SLTRC was adopted in 2000, but its full activities began only in the second half of 2002. Difficulties in the internal organization of the Commission unnecessarily delayed its smooth take-off (Africa-Week, 2004). These difficulties and challenges initially undermined the credibility of the commission and its funding as well. At inception, there was a budget of US$ 10 million for the commission; but poor donor response eventually forced the TRC to work with a reduced budget of US$ 4 million, a negligible amount compared to the US$ 30 million annual budget of the Special Court (Goldmann, 2005).

In addition to these challenges, the Commission was overwhelmed by grave mismanagement of funds and staff selection in its preparation for take-off. The interim secretariat also experienced difficulties in providing the necessary administrative and operational support to the Commission. These challenges were mainly identified after the UNDP's report that indicated about one-third of the Commission's personnel were incompetent and redundant and that the selection procedures were politically manipulated. The crisis had its consequences on the efficiency of the commission. It damaged the reputation of the Commission in the face of many donors, who were unwilling to support a dysfunctional institution. It also delayed the commencement of statement-taking and forced the Commission to reduce its activities (Dougherty, 2004).

Similarly, inadequate funding forced the Commission to adopt limited time (one week) in each province for public hearings, which was regarded as far too little time for a thorough investigation. Locals across the country were frustrated by the limitations available to them, as were commissioners. As a result, reconciliation efforts were left to the localities because the Commission has limited time and no funds to offer (Dougherty, 2004). In this regard, the outcome of the Commission is still considered unscientific and forgery. The essence of the justice system was to provide an intensive appraisal of the whole scenario, anything short of that is tantamount to the total neglect of the justification of the setup.

The delay further heightens the fear of ex-combatants of persecution from the international community and the Sierra Leonean government. For instance, because of the administrative impediment, the Commission's activities coincided with the proceedings of the Special Court established

which grounded the fear of most ex-rebels that the TRC could be a strategic instrument for the Special Court of Sierra Leone. Generally, ex-combatants were almost entirely uncomfortable with the TRC, suspecting that the information they provided to the Commission would be used against them at the Special Court (Shaw, 2005).

Similarly, people were divided about the Commission in both urban and rural communities, and in many places, they collectively refused to participate out of fear of retaliation by perpetrators; government reprisals; and concerns arising from the concurrent operation of different transitional justice mechanisms (Shaw, 2005). Approximate 350 people testified at the public hearings of SLTRC. In the end, more than 800 people appeared before the commission (ECOWAS, 1999). The limited participation of the people in the public hearings arose from the seeming lack of confidence and trust in the Commission to assist with the restoration of dignity to victims. For example, the majority of the victims' sto were never publicly acknowledged. The Commission's management of public hearings also frustrated the ability to assist with the restoration of justice and dignity to war victims in Sierra Leone (Sirleaf, 2013).

One of the greatest challenges affecting the peacebuilding mission in Sierra Leone is the failure of TRC to provide comprehensive information on state and nation-building as widely expected when the Commission was inaugurated. Similarly, implementation of the recommendations of the Commission has been slow and ineffective. For instance, the establishment of a reparations programme and a special fund for war victims was not implemented as recommended. Successive governments have not also given due priority to the Commission's recommendations, which also depleted the interests of the international community for continuous support (Caulker, 2012). Eldered Collins argues that:

> The Truth and Reconciliation Commission initiatives have been a failure. As I am talking to you, some people (ex-combatants) up to now have not gone back to their various homes because they have not been able to reconcile with their people. Lots of promises were made to the ex-rebels in order to confess at the Commission, but in the end, nothing was done. The majority of them are

> still fighting for survival. Conditions that forced them to arms against their government are still mingling around them (Collins, 2013).

Accordingly, many ordinary people in Sierra Leone remain skeptical about the Commission. Truly, many people, especially in the countryside are barely aware of the commission in the first place. Thus victims and perpetrators across the country and particularly at the community level live uneasily next door to each other, without any significant opportunity for meaningful acknowledgment or reconciliation (Caulker, 2012). However, different issues are beyond the powers and jurisdiction of the Commission. Even though the TRC provided a perceptive list of recommendations, there is no guarantee of the political will, financial resources, or even the administrative capacity to implement the recommendations. For instance, on so many occasions Sierra Leone government has been accused of selective justice and lack of commitment to the implementation of Commissions findings, or is only interested in aspects that are more favorable to the interests of the ruling class. The poor handling of the Commission's recommendations has particularly contributed to the general challenges of peacebuilding in the country.

Conclusion:

Building peace and promoting sustainable development in post-conflict situations has been a major challenge in the post-cold war years in Sierra Leone. A significant number of armed conflicts relapse shortly after the peace processes supposedly end them. The costs of such failures in building sustainable peace include increased human displacement, damaged infrastructures, weak governance institutions, and illegal arms trafficking, illicit commodity flow like a diamond as in the case of Sierra Leone, transitional crime, and even terrorist activities. Post-conflict reconstruction was very imperative in postwar situations where internal cohesion is questionable. Peacebuilding at the country level has always been a difficult endeavor in light of the strong injunctions against external intervention in the affairs sovereign of states. The revised international agenda for conflict prevention, humanitarian intervention, transitional

administration, and post-conflict reconstruction is yet to be adopted and implemented by major stakeholders.

The main aspect of peacebuilding in Sierra Leone revolves around the deployment of peacekeepers and diplomats under the umbrella of the United Nations undertaking disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-fighters; judicial and security sector reforms; economic adjustment and reform conditionalities to facilitate development aid and assistance package; and election. For instance, the judicial reform led to the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Special Court. The TRC's recommendations are also considered to be part of the pillars of peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. Although such a commission is often considered to be a compromise to justice, situated somewhere between the close examination of evidence foundational to retributive justice and the failure to examine the past which characterized impunity. The commissions allow the identification of the guilty and innocent, the victim and the perpetrators, without the new pain of punishment, and this is theorized to create restorative justice and healing (Asangna, 2017). It also offers proper solutions for the actualization of peace and security, particularly in the case of Sierra Leone.

In Sierra Leone the challenges of peacebuilding are enormous, considering the number of issues and strategies being implemented to enhance the prospects for peace and security. Since the exit of the United Mission in Sierra Leone, the level of interest and commitment to peacebuilding was effectively reduced. Thus, peacebuilding was largely interpreted mainly in the context of reconstruction in post-conflict societies. In the case of Sierra Leone external largely influenced the evolution of the reconciliation process and procedures, the national government, however, manipulated the course of action to consolidate its power base. Accordingly, relations between and among diverse political, cultural, and socio-economic groups in the post-war period remain tense, controversial, and hostile to peace just in the pre and wartime in Sierra Leone. Thu the peacebuilding framework in Sierra Leone was built on the philosophy of "implementing an operational checklist that involves efforts at fixing institutions and processes, without tackling underlying political dynamics" (Sooka, 2006).

The general framework of peacebuilding in West Africa has been largely determined and influenced by the domestic and international priorities of the actors involved in the intervention, who are mainly African actors. The impacts of the involvement were alienated from the interests of the masses in post-conflict societies. Thus, the international community must always make realistic strategies in achieving their goals in peacebuilding in the war torn-societies, explicitly in making the institutions designed to achieve sustainable negotiation, reconciliation, and reintegration and to ensure that donor support is used as a mechanism for holding governments accountable. In other words, these mechanisms of control by foreign donors are meant to also ensure that the recommendations offered by transitional bodies, such as the TRC in Sierra Leone, are implemented because of their involvement in the oversight of the peace process.

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