



PRECIOUS RESOURCES:

Adolescents in the Reconstruction of Sierra Leone





Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
122 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10168-1289

tel. 212.551.3111 or 3088
fax. 212.551.3180
wcrwc@womenscommission.org
www.womenscommission.org

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Mission Statement

The Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children works to ensure that refugee and displaced women, children and adolescents are given protection, encouraged to participate, and have access to humanitarian assistance. Through a vigorous and comprehensive program of advocacy, supported by extensive research and technical expertise, the Women's Commission serves as an expert resource and works with governments, United Nations agencies, international and local nongovernmental organizations, and donors to improve the lives of displaced women and children. The Women's Commission is an affiliate of the International Rescue Committee.

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This report was principally researched and written by Jane Lowicki, senior coordinator, and Allison A. Pillsbury, project manager, Children and Adolescents Project, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children. Amir Haxhikadrija, consultant to the Women's Commission and leader of the first participatory study conducted in Kosovo in 2000, was also a principal researcher, provided writing contributions and edited the report. The section on Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration was researched and co-authored by Binta Mansaray, Women's Commission protection partner in Sierra Leone, and additional analysis was provided by Courtney Mireille O'Connor, consultant. For the Findings and Recommendations sections, research and analysis was carried out by the Women's Commission and two teams of adolescent researchers and adult research advisers in the Freetown and Makeni regions of Sierra Leone. In Freetown, the research team was coordinated by a Youth Coordination Group (YCG) comprised of four local NGOs: Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA), Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) - Freetown branch, Independent Youth Forum (IYF) and the Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organization (SLYEO). The Makeni research team was coordinated by a YCG comprised of three local NGOs: Makeni Union of Youth Groups (MUYOG), Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CDHR) and Civil Society Movement (CSM), and was facilitated by Caritas-Makeni. A total of 51 adolescent researchers and 17 adult research advisers were involved. This report was edited by Mary Diaz, Binta Mansaray, Diana Quick and Sarah Spencer of the Women's Commission; Maha Muna, UNIFEM and formerly with the Women's Commission; Courtney O'Connor; Katie MacLennan; Dr. Gail Furman and the YCGs. The survey data and graphs were prepared by Katie MacLennan, adapting a database designed by Sarah Bermeo.

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**Participatory Research Study with Adolescents and Youth in Sierra Leone
April – July 2002**

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I. INTRODUCTION

Young people in Sierra Leone are standing on a divide, with one foot still planted in the mire of a bloody decade-long war from which they are just emerging, and the other slowly edging its way toward the more secure ground of a newly established peace. They hesitate, contemplating the move, unconvinced that what lies ahead is better than where they have been. Memories of the brutal war that began in 1991, in which they played a major part, make them wary of promises of safe, solid ground ahead. Their experience of adult manipulation and betrayal make them distrustful. Moreover, the choice of committing to peace is not theirs alone. It is also up to the adults on whom the young people of Sierra Leone depend — government, communities, families and international agencies — to make sure that peace for young people means more than the end of armed conflict.

Following Sierra Leone's independence from British colonial rule in 1961, politicians preached well-being for all, but the country remained one of the world's poorest, and few young people could find ways to create change. For decades, all young people hoped for was the fulfillment of their basic rights - a chance to go to school, to get health care, to find jobs, to participate in the life of their communities, to be respected and listened to by politicians and to live without insecurity. But the political system was undemocratic, and resources and power remained in the hands of a few. They saw the children of government officials attending expensive private schools while most of them lived with few comforts and could not afford to go to school at all.

In the 1970s, students rode a wave of change that was sweeping across parts of Africa, in part inspired by the writings of Moammar Gadhafi, and protested Sierra Leone's dictatorial and repressive one-party system under the All People's Congress political party. They called for reforms that would lead to better education for young people and a better standard of living for all. They believed that Sierra Leone, rich with natural resources - diamonds, bauxite, titanium - and plush with beautiful coastal waters and verdant, fertile countryside - could and should provide for everyone. But their modest hopes and dreams exploded into years of brutal civil war.

In 1991, some of the former student protesters who had survived violent government retaliation abandoned the course of non-violent change and began a military revolt against the Sierra Leone government. They gained tactical and financial strength from young fighters involved in civil war in neighboring Liberia, who were part of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia rebel group and used Sierra Leone's riches to support their war. Led by Foday Sankoh, they became the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone (RUF), inducing a new generation of disillusioned young people who had no food, no prospects and few alternatives, to join a "Movement" against the government.

But the changes young people hoped for were quickly lost amid a protracted and bloody war. Youthful impetuosity and few support structures made for easy manipulation of young people by adults on all sides advancing their own personal and political ambitions. They turned young people's own words and dreams against them, and Sierra Leone was destroyed at the hands of adolescents and youth.

Both the RUF and the local pro-government Civil Defense Forces (CDFs) were sustained by the thousands of new, malleable young recruits whom they attracted with their rhetoric or captured by force and successfully indoctrinated. Boys and girls were taken from their families, trained and turned into fighters, sexual slaves, cooks and porters. Undergoing training rituals that made them believe they were invincible, these young recruits became instruments of terror that spread across Sierra Leone. On both sides, they killed, maimed and abducted, committing gross atrocities. Girls were brutally raped, sexually mutilated and enslaved by the RUF. Hundreds of thousands of young people ran from their homes, but they found little safety as refugees and internally displaced persons.

At the same time, despite their bravado and the wholesale destruction of the country, young people had not let go of their original dreams of security, education, work and a meaningful life. They wanted an end to the war and to believe that they had fought or survived for something. After several failed attempts at peace, the Lomé Peace Agreement was signed in 1999, and today, in 2002, a reasonable level of security has come to their communities. Some government and international programs have begun to help with reconstruction, reconciliation and support for young people. But these programs are far too few and limited.

In the northern town of Makeni, the former headquarters of the RUF, hundreds of young ex-RUF fighters are left without the riches promised by their commanders; they have little access to education, no jobs and nowhere else to go. Sexual violence endured by girls during the conflict has proliferated into widespread sexual exploitation — engendered by peacetime poverty and post-conflict despair.

Under pressure to forgive and move on, young people remain hesitant; in many cases their anger and resentment are growing. They are not being heard, and their rights are not being observed by politicians. Education and health care are as elusive as they were a generation ago. Young Sierra Leoneans see a peace that has not brought well-being to society, but has further enriched those who plundered its resources.

Yet, despite their exhaustion, mistrust and disappointment, young people desperately want to take the step toward a sustainable peace. They know they are the most precious resources Sierra Leone has today - more precious than the diamonds for which so many people were killed. The war could not have been fought without them; likewise, the peace cannot be made without them.

PARTICIPATORY STUDY WITH ADOLESCENTS IN SIERRA LEONE

From April to July 2002, the Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (Women's Commission) conducted a research study on the situation of adolescents and youth in the western and northern regions of Sierra Leone — mainly in and surrounding Freetown and Makeni. The principal researchers and respondents were Sierra Leonean adolescents and youth. The results of this collaborative work are presented here. While this report faithfully represents the findings of all of the researchers, unless otherwise attributed, the views expressed here should be considered those of the Women's Commission. Additional reports of the research findings produced solely by the adolescent researchers are available from the Women's Commission.

This research project is the third in a series of four participatory studies with adolescents conducted by the Women's Commission. The first was in Kosovo, the second in northern Uganda, and the fourth will be in Asia, focused on Burmese refugees. The studies provide an in-depth look at the experiences of adolescents affected by war and persecution and the

international and local responses to their situation. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR's) *Guidelines for the Protection and Care of Refugee Children* and its *Guidelines on the Prevention of Sexual Violence*, the United Nations *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* and the Convention on the Rights of the Child are used as guiding principles in this work. Reports and recommendations from these studies will be shared with program and policy decision-makers to address concerns raised in each site covered. They will also contribute to wider international efforts to improve services and protection for refugee, internally displaced, returnee and other adolescents affected by armed conflict and persecution.

This study in Sierra Leone builds on the ongoing advocacy work of the Women's Commission with and for adolescents in the region. In 1997, the Women's Commission produced a report, *The Children's War: Toward Peace in Sierra Leone*, identifying devastating human rights abuses against children and adolescents and the abduction of and violence against girls. In 1999, the Women's Commission conducted a capacity-building project linking local women's groups with international humanitarian agencies. Binta Mansaray, a field-based protection partner for the Women's Commission in Sierra Leone, who provides on-the-ground monitoring, advocacy and technical advice to key policymakers and assistance providers, has advanced this work in the past year. To date, her work has focused mainly on identifying gaps and proposing remedies concerning the sexual exploitation of girls, the rehabilitation of former combatants and others similarly "separated" during the conflict — particularly girls — and the protection and promotion of the rights of internally displaced and returned refugee women and children.

A delegation from the Leadership Council for Children and Armed Conflict, a joint initiative of the Women's Commission and the International Rescue Committee (IRC), visited Sierra Leone's eastern and western regions to support the needs and rights of war-affected children in April 2002. This work has been followed by advocacy efforts to increase targeted assistance for young people in Sierra Leone. The Women's Commission is also a member of the Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium, which, through its partners, is working in Sierra Leone to improve and promote comprehensive reproductive health care through the provision of

direct services and advocacy activities.

The western and northern regions of Sierra Leone are the focus of this study, and while many of the findings are universal to all young people in Sierra Leone, further research and distinct responses to adolescent and youth concerns in the eastern and southern regions are urgently needed. Violence in West Africa has not abated, and interventions to address and prevent war in Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and throughout the region are imperative.

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wan Salone! — One Sierra Leone! This is the message that many young people in Sierra Leone are sending to their communities and the world today. Over 600 adolescents and youth interviewed in the western and northern regions of Sierra Leone in April and May 2002 describe a long history of manipulation and abuse of young people in Sierra Leone that has fractured and divided them. To achieve lasting peace, they insist that history must not be repeated. To eliminate instability and degradation in their communities and everyday lives, young people themselves must put aside their differences and unite in a common cause to rebuild their broken lives and a broken Sierra Leone.

These young people see the decade-long war in Sierra Leone as fundamentally about adolescents and youth — their issues and their involvement. Rebel groups, which some young people joined as a last resort in their struggle to change the political system, perverted the cause of non-violent student activists, who had championed reform, dragging young people into the conflict and compelling them to commit atrocities against each other and their communities. Young people on both sides of the conflict became perpetrators and victims of the war, while the spoils of war, diamonds especially, remained controlled by adults who had no intention of fulfilling young people's rights.

Three years since the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement in 1999, young people say they remain traumatized by their war experiences. They are angered and desperately frustrated that relief and rehabilitation efforts have not substantially improved their lives. This frustration has exacerbated the divisions among them and aggravated competition for scarce resources and attention to their suffering, fur-

ther hindering their own recovery and ability to forgive one another.

International institutions chronologically define children as human beings under 18 years of age, adolescents as between 10 and 19, youth as 15 to 24 and young people as 10 to 24.¹ While terms used in this report do reflect these definitions, concepts regarding the developmental stages of life are socially and culturally bound and are further explored in the Sierra Leone context in this report. The names of adolescents and youth used in this report have been changed for their protection and privacy.

ther hindering their own recovery and ability to forgive one another.

While young people feel divided by their experiences in war and increasingly by those in peace, the concerns they share are strikingly the same. Regardless of age, gender, location and experiences with fighting forces, young people are concerned about a lack of educational opportunities, poverty, a lack of health care, employment and other basic necessities. These are the same issues young activists had spoken about generations before and that youth organizations speak out about today. Young people also feel victimized and marginalized by adults, repeatedly indicting the government of Sierra Leone in particular for dismissing their concerns and neglecting their capacities.

Young people call on the international community — especially the government of Sierra Leone and United Nations agencies — nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and their communities to place young people's concerns and their capacities at the center of recovery efforts. Recognizing that they were at the center of the war, they believe they must be at the center of peacemaking and reconstruction. Without better support and respect for their rights, young people will become more angry and disaffected, and are likely to become a major source of new unrest.

FINDINGS

With overwhelming consistency, adolescents and youth cite lack of educational opportunities, poverty and lack of health care as their top concerns. These are followed closely by lack of shelter/food/water/

clothing, unemployment, and lack of parental/family/home care. This grouping of concerns paints a picture of young people's conception of their lives as bereft of basic care and bereft of the basic means to care for themselves.

Young people issue a common call for the equitable sharing of Sierra Leone's resources. They also underline the importance of education as a key solution for young people, providing them with a sense of hope and purpose and concrete skills to earn a livelihood.

EDUCATION

Adolescents say that lack of educational opportunities is their number one problem and name formal schooling and skills training as the main solution. Without education, many feel hopeless and at times turn to more destructive behaviors.

Young people believe that full reconstruction of the education system, largely destroyed during the war, is critical to building peace in Sierra Leone. They report that many schools are barely functioning, particularly in rural areas, with few scholastic materials, little classroom furniture and inadequately trained teachers. They also say that even if primary education is free, costs, such as for uniforms and school supplies, remain out of their reach. Access to secondary education is, for many, even more unattainable, as there are fewer schools and costs are higher. Fewer girls attend school than boys, whose education is prioritized when family resources are limited.

Adolescents are also concerned about livelihood education in the form of skills training or apprenticeships. Education programs, they say, are an important component of reintegration for former adolescent soldiers, but must be attached to job opportunities in the future. Young people are calling on decision-makers to make education accessible to all and to continue and expand programs that help former combatants enter formal and vocational education and that offer rapid education catch-up classes for the years missed.

LIVELIHOOD

Poverty and unemployment are among young people's top concerns. The few skills training programs available are under-resourced and ill equipped. Sierra Leone's economy is so poor, young people have difficulty using the skills they learn. Hoping to find better economic opportunities, they are flocking to

already-overcrowded urban areas, and some communities are glutted with young people trained in the same skill. Unable to earn a living, many girls are turning to commercial sex work, and some boys are turning to crime. Others try their luck prospecting in diamond mines, away from family and in easy reach of former rebel commanders. Idle and frustrated young people, overall, may easily become fodder for continued instability.

Eighty-five percent of Sierra Leone's economy is agricultural, and former refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are going home to farms that have not been worked in years, lacking implements and skilled farmers. Many adolescents never learned to farm, are uninterested in farming and are seeking skills they consider to be more exciting. To be revived, this much-needed industry must be made more attractive for young people.

Young people say that they need micro-credit, income-generating support and start-up capital to put their skills to use. They maintain that decision-makers must begin to make more strategic choices about involving them directly in reconstruction and development efforts. This would include skills assessment and training programs directly linked to their involvement in rebuilding. The community would both get the skills it needs from young people and have a larger stake in recovery efforts, now directed and implemented by outsiders.

HEALTH

Adolescents are acutely concerned about their health. The war has ravaged health and other infrastructures, and Sierra Leone stands among the lowest of all countries for many human development indicators. Young people were directly targeted in the conflict, and those who survived continue to struggle with war wounds, including amputations. Adolescents also report a lack of fresh, clean water and poor sanitation in camps and rural areas. They express strong concerns about a variety of diseases spread under these conditions, including malaria, diarrhea, tuberculosis and other respiratory infections.

Access to reproductive health care is a critical problem for adolescents. Compounding the problem, young people reveal extremely little knowledge about basic health issues, including prevention of HIV/AIDS. Most disturbingly, adolescents stated repeatedly their disbelief in the existence of many

diseases, especially HIV/AIDS. Girls, especially, continue to experience sexual violence and exploitation and are forced into early marriages. They are at high risk of contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS, and of unwanted and dangerous pregnancies. Girls also have higher estimated infection rates than boys. They have experienced more sexual violence and exploitation than boys and are less likely to be in school where health information might be conveyed.

Adolescents rarely visit health clinics and hospitals, reporting that they are either non-existent or too costly; many young people normally see traditional healers, often ingesting toxic herbs that make them sicker. Health care providers need to offer young people better information about and access to free or very low cost health care. They must also find ways to make services easier to use, for example, by ensuring confidentiality.

PROTECTION

Gender-based Violence

A sexual violence and exploitation scandal involving refugee and internally displaced children and adolescents in West Africa, in which aid workers and UN peacekeepers were implicated, sparked long-needed international attention to the issue. Women's Commission and adolescent research confirm that sexual exploitation is widespread, affecting young people beyond those who are IDPs and former refugees. Young people identify poverty, feelings of worthlessness and pressure from parents as key inducements into prostitution, as well as the large presence of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) soldiers, whom they name as principal customers, along with other adult males and male youth. Although mainly girls are affected, boys are involved in smaller numbers; their numbers are less known because discussion of male victimization is more taboo than that of girls.

Numerous other forms of gender-based violence are also taking place according to the young people. Many girls describe ongoing trauma and health problems resulting from rape and sexual enslavement suffered during the conflict. Girls also voice concerns about being forced into marriages or marrying younger than they would like to due mainly to economic pressures. They also voiced strong concerns about forced initiation into traditional secret societies for women, where female genital mutilation

is performed on young girls. New international initiatives to address gender-based violence are underway, but the implementation and monitoring of outcomes, as well as the involvement of young people and communities in prevention and care for survivors are critical to their success.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Program

Young people say enormous gaps in the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program have left many who were involved with fighting forces without support and have contributed to additional child protection problems. Many girls who were formerly with fighting forces feel that the DDR did not adequately address their concerns and instead focused on boys who were directly involved in fighting.

Those formerly with the rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) (see Glossary), are especially angry about the situation and threaten a return to fighting. As promises of reintegration services are not met, they say they feel lied to and desperate for support. Those between 18 and 25 years old are particularly marginalized, without help reunifying with family and returning home. Some young people remain with their former commanders and "bush husbands," still afraid to leave; others have turned to commercial sex work and/or are living on the streets, involved in crime and drug use.

Refugee and IDP Returns

Returning refugees and IDPs suffer from gaps in the coordination of humanitarian aid. Some families are becoming separated: elderly members may be unable to make the journey back, and young people may remain behind in order to attend school. Refugees and IDPs return to communities with little infrastructure, few services in place and minimal reintegration support to help them rebuild their lives. Refugees and IDPs also need support negotiating with former rebel fighters, who are occupying the houses of the formerly displaced as the rebels themselves often have little ability to pay rent or return home.

Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Mechanisms

Young people register knowledge about and interest in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the general amnesty granted combatants in the war and the Special Court for trying crimes committed in the war. But they are confused about how these

mechanisms will bring justice, forgiveness and healing to Sierra Leone. They want to know how participating in the TRC will improve their lives, and former RUF child combatants are against children being tried before the Special Court. Overall, young people are willing to forgive what happened in the war if the lives of *all* children, adolescents and youth are improved through comprehensive education, livelihood and health support.

Child Protection Efforts

While a Child Protection Network led by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) addresses many key child protection concerns, researchers found that child protection efforts more broadly are fragmented and need to be streamlined. Many entities have responsibility for different aspects of child protection, but these activities require increased coordination to create a more holistic approach to fulfilling the rights of all young people. Communities are currently confused by a variety of packages of support available to certain categories of vulnerable people, creating competition among them and confusion as to where to turn for aid.

PSYCHOSOCIAL

The war's end declared no victors and no vanquished. Yet many young people describe themselves as the losers. Many express feelings of competition over scarce resources and argue about who has suffered most. Despite these feelings of division, young people reveal many shared concerns.

Virtually all young people surveyed share a sense of victimization and marginalization. They express a deep mistrust of adults, especially in government, and believe they have been used and manipulated in the conflict and continue to be used in politics. Despite the fact that they have spoken out strongly as combatants and as youth activists, they believe their concerns are not being heard and that they have no voice in making decisions that affect them.

Case studies and interviews also reveal an overwhelming preoccupation with wartime experiences and an urgent need to reconcile these experiences along the journey to forgiveness and healing. Young people employ a range of coping strategies to endure their circumstances — seeking control and sustenance in their lives through commercial sex work, asserting their strength through criminal activity, escaping their circumstances with drug use. Many

more psychosocial programs are needed, including those that support changes in community attitudes to support young people's recovery, particularly those surviving sexual violence.

Young people maintain that people in positions of power often indoctrinate adolescents to achieve their own "selfish" desires, and then "dump them at the end of the day without being given any responsible roles to play."

— Makeni research team report, Sierra Leone, 2002

PARTICIPATION — YOUNG PEOPLE'S CAPACITIES MUST BE SUPPORTED

The research conducted by the adolescents confirms the abilities of young people to work successfully in partnership with adults. The participation of young people in activities that affect them must go beyond consultation to support their leadership and ideas.

Adolescents and youth consistently report an enormous feeling of exclusion from decision-making and lack of trust in adults acting on their behalf. The large number of youth-run organizations in Sierra Leone is testament, however, to the commitment and desire of young people to participate in shaping the recovery of their society. Young people participated in destroying Sierra Leone in the war; this is an urgent call to the adult world to engage young people in the constructive redevelopment of their communities in peacetime. Young people say this is best done through efforts that support and develop their capacities and that allow them to play a direct part in decision-making, project implementation and evaluation. Young people from all sides of the conflict — rebel and pro-government forces, civilians and youth activists — must work together to take action for a unified Sierra Leone.

COORDINATED, HOLISTIC RESPONSES NEEDED

Young people's reality of marginalization is confirmed by a fragmented approach to support by government and international actors. Despite a prolifer-

ation of national and international initiatives which focus on young people, none offers a clear coordinated approach to support young people's rights in all reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts. For example, education planning is not directly linked to the identification of skills needed in infrastructure reconstruction activities.

"Child protection" initiatives addressing "vulnerable groups" find support relatively swiftly, while support to young people through broader reconstruction efforts is far less focused and lags behind. Limited attention to the status and concerns of young people in legislative initiatives as well is demonstrated by the long debate over a draft National Youth Policy and a slow-moving children's bill. Young people remain discouraged that neither Sierra Leone's laws and institutions, nor international and local agencies, are able to support their rights effectively and cohesively.

Sierra Leone's civil society youth organizations lack the support they need to provide leadership to fill the gap. Youth organizations representing groups outside main cities find it hard to become part of decision-making circles. Girls and young women are particularly underrepresented in youth organizations, with few females in positions of leadership. Some donors have initiated programs that attempt to increase the direct involvement of local youth from all sides of the conflict in programming to address their protection

and other problems holistically. But more efforts are needed.

Young people believe the road to a better, more peaceful life lies in their ability to find ways to cut through their differences and take action together. Achieving this will require identifying what kind of society they envision building, what rights they seek to uphold and what avenues they can utilize to attain their dreams. These avenues will involve partnerships with adults that replace manipulation and abuse with support for their unity and strength.

"It is clear that despite a tenuous peace, the so-called solutions to these problems are bound to explode if special consideration is not given to the welfare of adolescents and young people, a very crucial human resource. Sierra Leone stands central among countries whose socio-economic and political structures have been battered."

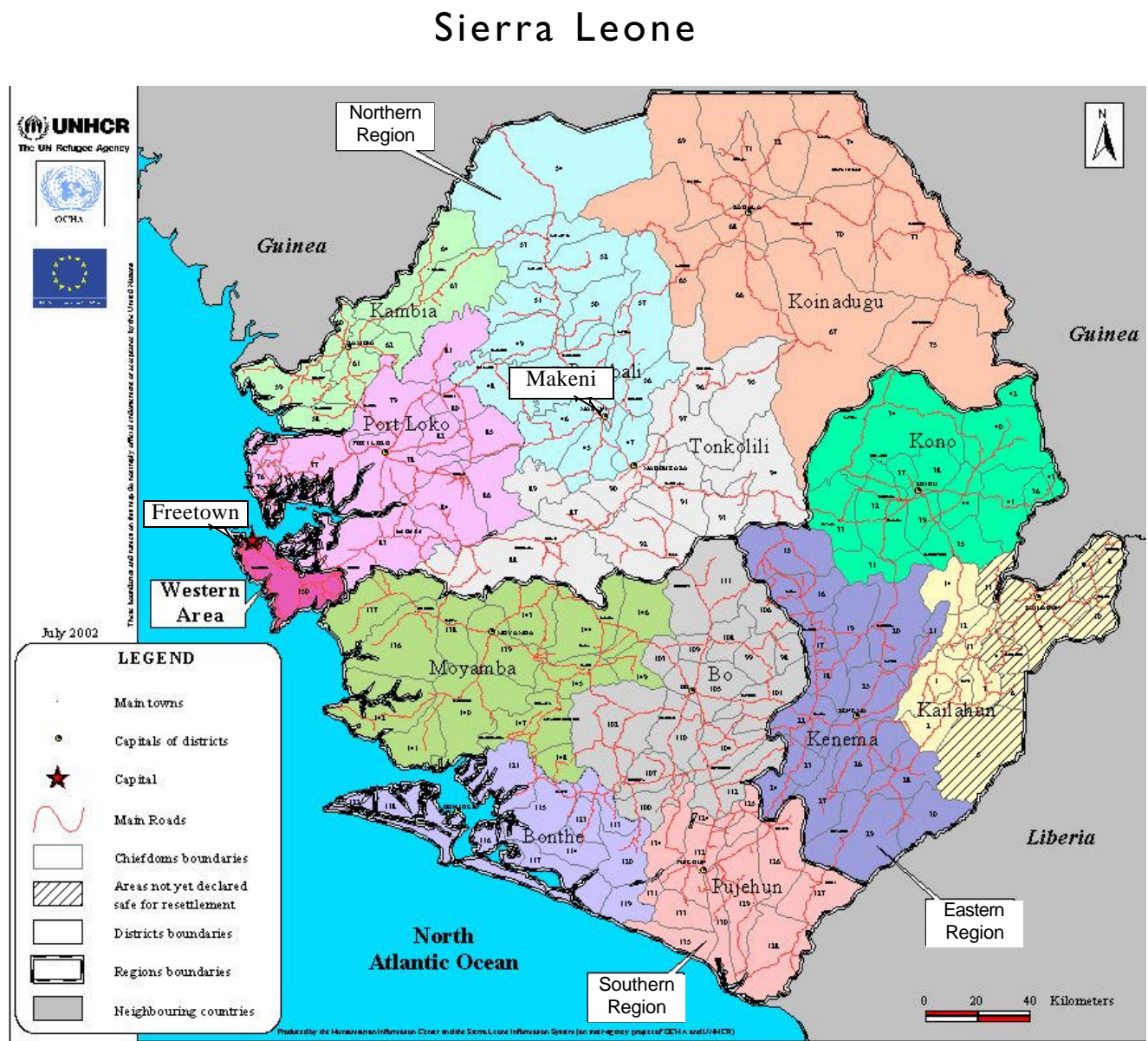
— Freetown research team report, 2002

Key Recommendations

- **Full reintegration** — The International Community and the government of Sierra Leone must recognize adolescents and youth as Sierra Leone’s most precious resources, crucial to reconstruction and peace building. They must increase their support for the reintegration and recovery of all adolescents and youth, with targeted, holistic protection and assistance programs that address multiple needs and vulnerabilities, reduce competition among former child soldiers and other young people and support their capacities, including those of girls and women. These efforts must specifically address gaps in the formal DDR process and facilitate family reunifications.
- **National policies and legal frameworks** — The government of Sierra Leone must improve national policies and legal frameworks that protect children, adolescents and youth. Young people should be actively involved in decision-making, monitoring and enforcement of these tools for protection, which will help to decrease the marginalization that fueled the conflict. The government should pass the proposed National Youth Policy, enact a Child Rights law, eliminate gender discrimination under the law and streamline governmental and humanitarian approaches to child and adolescent protection and assistance. The National Commission for War-Affected Children should evolve into a focal point for advocacy, coordination and monitoring of all child-, adolescent- and youth-focused initiatives nationwide. Donors must support capacity building for government and civil society youth structures to ensure the success and sustainability of this work.
- **Education and livelihood** — The government of Sierra Leone and donors must respond to adolescents’ call for education as the linchpin of their recovery from war and must make the reconstruction of formal and non-formal education systems and the promotion of young people’s livelihood a priority. Adolescents must have access to both primary *and* secondary education, as well as vocational and other skills training, and equal access for girls must be assured. The government and key development organizations must immediately identify critical skills needed for the development and reconstruction of Sierra Leone, fund and link skills training for adolescents and youth to these activities and employ young people to undertake the needed tasks.
- **Gender equality and reproductive health** — The international community and the government of Sierra Leone must take strong steps to ensure the rights of girls, end gender-based violence and improve reproductive health care for adolescents. Steps taken by the UN Interagency Standing Committee to prevent the sexual violence and exploitation of children and adolescents must be implemented and enforced, and more services – especially health care, education, counseling and jobs – must be made available to survivors, mainly girls. Former girl soldiers passed over by the DDR should be identified and supported as part of holistic approaches to addressing girls’ protection and assistance. Adolescent-friendly reproductive health services should be made available throughout Sierra Leone and should include information about preventing unwanted pregnancy and STIs, including HIV/AIDS. Youth-led community-based advocacy initiatives that promote gender equality should be supported.

See also Recommendations section.

III. MAP



Sierra Leone is made up of four regions: three provinces (Eastern, Northern, Southern) and one area (Western) and has a system of local tribal councils. There are twelve districts² that are further divided into 150 chiefdoms.

IV. ADOLESCENCE AND YOUTH: A COMMUNITY IN CRISIS

DEFINING ADOLESCENCE IN SIERRA LEONE: TEENS OBSCURED BY FOCUS ON YOUTH

Adolescent and Women’s Commission researchers asked young people and adults to discuss the question, “Who are adolescents in Sierra Leone today and what is their role in society?” Overall, they had little understanding about the meaning of adolescence, which is not generally a term or age group recognized in their society.



Attention to the needs, rights and capacities of Sierra Leoneans between the ages of 10 and 19 has been eclipsed by a focus on younger children and older youth.

Adolescence, or the population between the ages of 10 and 19, as defined by both UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), is not a population that has received attention in Sierra Leonean society. Within a cohesive traditional society, there may be little need to adopt the largely western concept of “adolescence.” However, the war in Sierra Leone, the ensuing social, economic and cultural upheaval and the threat of HIV/AIDS — all of which are leaving young people of this age group separated from their families, and often, in the case of girls, unmarried heads of households — has brought this population to the foreground. Because there is no firm concept of adolescence, this important age group of 10- to 19-year-olds has fallen through the cracks. They

have been fighters in the conflict as well as victims, and their adjustment needs special attention.

Young people and others in Sierra Leone instead focus on “youth,” which is defined within their culture as those in their older teens, twenties and thirties. There is also a general recognition of “children” as under the age of ten. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the WHO define youth as those between the ages of 15-24 and young people between the ages of 10-24. Young people between the ages of 10 and 19, termed adolescents by the Women’s Commission for the purposes of this report, describe themselves as either children or youth. Humanitarian programs tend to use these same groupings. This wide definition precludes a focus on the specific needs of adolescents, leaving a large gap in the knowledge about and attention to their specific concerns, problems and strengths.

Sierra Leonean young people aged 10-24 constitute 31 percent of the total population. Of that percentage, adolescents between the ages of 10 and 14 make up over half. Other estimates assert that youth, defined as those between the ages of 15 and 35 years old, currently make up 45 percent of the population, and that children, defined as those below 15 years, made up 44 percent of the population in 1995. The median age of the population of Sierra Leone is 17.9.³

YOUTH IS A BROAD CULTURAL CONCEPT

Krio, one of the local languages in Sierra Leone, uses different words to identify human beings in different stages of life. Children are *small pikin*; adolescents are *young pikin*; youth are *young boys and girls* or *big boys and girls*; and an adult is a *big man*, *big woman* or *big posin*. While some experts assert that “adolescence” exists in Sierra Leone, “youth” or “children” are much more common cultural con-

cepts and, as a result, younger adolescents are generally thought of as children and older adolescents are thought of as youth. Even when asked specifically about adolescents, young people responded in terms of youth and children. However, a few young people and humanitarian workers did articulate a concept of adolescence, grouping it between the ages of 12 and 20.

In Sierra Leone, youth, including the upper age limit of adolescence, is defined by fluid chronological and cultural categories. The means by which a young person transitions from child to youth to adult, or child to adult in the case of most girls, varies with their achievements, age, marriage or initiation into a secret society. The vast majority of young people told researchers that youth begins between the ages of 15 and 20 and ends between the ages of 30 and 35.⁴ One expert explained youth's broad age limit, with its five-year leeway on either side, by saying: "Youth is a mind set: if you think you are a youth, you are. There is little other classification — you are either a youth or an elder."⁵ Another pointed to "a cultural age hierarchy that dictates that older people call those younger than them a youth."⁶

Within Sierra Leonean culture, the transition from youth to adult also depends on the success achieved by the individual. Thus, the wide age range encompassing youth today can be partially explained by the difficulty in attaining educational, economic, social or political success in a country whose economy has drastically declined during the past 30 years. Asked how you become an adult, one young person said, "After you have finished your education, you are an adult."⁷ Another said that young people transfer into adulthood when they are able to earn an income and take care of themselves.⁸ Many young people agreed that if a person doesn't have a job, or, to a lesser extent, an education, they are still considered a youth, even if they are past 30 years old. In this way, viewing someone as an adult or elder is a compliment; it often has more to do with accomplishment than age.

The terms adolescence and youth refer mostly to boys in Sierra Leone. This is in large part because girls are considered children until they are married, when they become women. This is especially true in rural areas where the usual age for marriage is between 12 and 15,⁹ although they do not necessarily accrue the same respect as older women. The passage from child to woman also occurs when girls are initiated into a traditional women's secret society, the *Bondo* (*Sandii* in Mende) society, which often takes

place between the ages of seven and 14. The process involves a girl undergoing a ritual, including female genital mutilation. It is estimated that between 80 and 90 percent of girls in Sierra Leone participate in these initiations. Despite criticism lodged by adolescent respondents, entry into secret societies has traditionally clearly marked their passage into adulthood, making girls ready for marriage and respected as adult women by other women. Non-members of the secret societies are considered to be children, and are often not accepted as adults by society.¹⁰

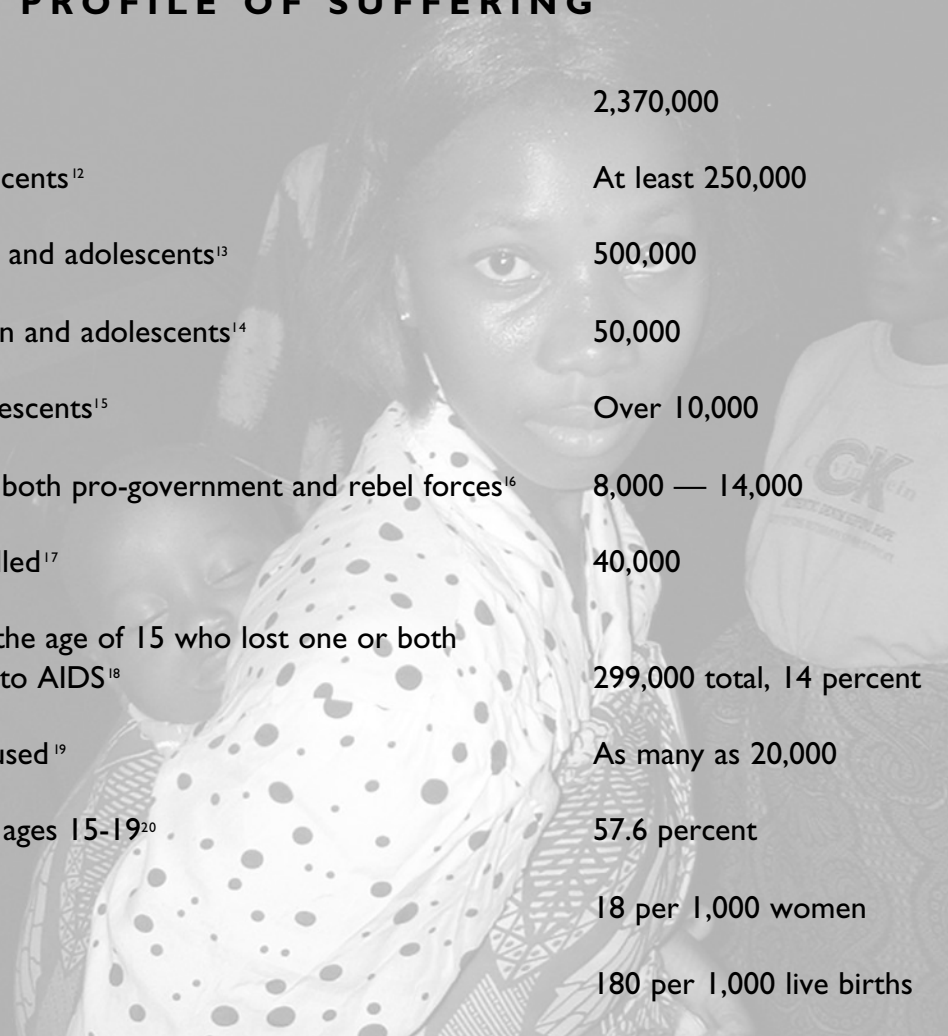
THE EFFECT OF THE WAR ON PERCEPTIONS OF YOUTH

"The oppressive situation of the Sierra Leonean youth coupled with the sense of marginalization [before the war] opened a window of opportunity for the rebel movement to recruit vast numbers of adolescents and young people at the very start of the civil war, a factor that actually fueled the conflict."

— Freetown adolescent research team report, 2002

In the 1990s, thousands of youth played a key role in instigating the decade-long conflict in Sierra Leone. All warring factions deliberately targeted civilians, with adolescents and youth disproportionately devastated by the brutal war. They were recruited by fighting forces, in contravention of the laws of war and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to carry out the fiercest parts of battle. Adolescents and youth were both victims and perpetrators of mass maiming, killing, assault and rape. The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in particular targeted and abducted disenchanted adolescents and youth for voluntary and forced recruitment. As a result, young people have been exposed to experiences that defy all social and cultural norms in Sierra Leone. The parts played by adolescents and youth in the war and the direct effects it has had on their lives have dramatically changed their role in society. Some, particularly ex-child combatants, experienced more power than is traditionally normal or accept-

SIERRA LEONEAN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS: A PROFILE OF SUFFERING



Total population under 18 ¹¹	2,370,000
Refugee children and adolescents ¹²	At least 250,000
Internally displaced children and adolescents ¹³	500,000
Maimed or tortured children and adolescents ¹⁴	50,000
Abducted children and adolescents ¹⁵	Over 10,000
Child combatants, including both pro-government and rebel forces ¹⁶	8,000 — 14,000
Children and adolescents killed ¹⁷	40,000
Number of children below the age of 15 who lost one or both parents during the war due to AIDS ¹⁸	299,000 total, 14 percent
Raped and/or otherwise abused ¹⁹	As many as 20,000
Percentage of married girls, ages 15-19 ²⁰	57.6 percent
Maternal mortality rate ²¹	18 per 1,000 women
Infant mortality rate ²²	180 per 1,000 live births

able for young people. After assuming adult roles during the war, many young people now refuse to comply with policies and programs that do not recognize their voices and ideas in the creation and implementation of programs and policies that affect their lives.

Many other adolescents also suffered human rights violations during the war, and some now face homelessness and crushing poverty, while lacking parental support, education or jobs. Some young people now head households with as much responsibility as any adult, and they demand to have their voices heard, even though this was not traditionally acceptable.²³ At the same time, these adolescents still need, and are asking for, adult guidance and respect, and opportunities to continue their education or earn a livelihood.

Policies and programs addressing youth concerns have responded to the fluid age range of youth: The National Youth Policy draft and the Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace Program define youth as between the ages of 15 and 35; UNICEF Sierra Leone works with youth between the ages of 12 and 24 and the Christian Children's Fund defines youth as between the ages of 18 and 35.

Because so many young people in their twenties and thirties missed out on schooling during the war and because there are so few opportunities today, many people in their thirties and forties are unskilled and unemployed, remaining youth in the eyes of society.

Thus, the war and the accompanying lack of education and livelihood opportunities for young people have further widened the chronological definition of youth to include those aged 35 or even 40. Many young people said that people in their thirties are “still hanging on” or making up for their youth that was “wasted” during the war. An ActionAid official working with young people agreed, saying that youth is “anyone who missed out on their youth because of the war. If someone got to live their youth, they are able to move onto adulthood.”²⁴ The UNAMSIL Child Protection Adviser noted that more adolescent girls are newly perceived as youth because the war left so many female adolescents and youth as child mothers without husbands, families or jobs.²⁵

YOUTH WANT A ROLE IN MOVING BEYOND THE LEGACY OF MANIPULATION

“After the war, they [youth] were being neglected by elders and government members. They can only talk to them when they need their help in the case of election time. They did not have any freedom, abusing their rights as a citizen of this land. These are some of the things that can lead a country to war. They are the future leaders of tomorrow.”

— Secondary school teacher, Cline Town

As fighters and survivors of the war, many young people took on leadership and adult roles. They are now resisting returning to traditional roles where their views are not respected and they have little power in society. Young people want to work for the reconstruction of their communities.

However, many reported that adults, and politicians in particular, are hindering their attempts. They feel neglected by elders and deeply mistrust politicians, who they say have manipulated them for their own ends, especially during election time. Adults working with young people often agreed, saying that the culture does not allow the free flow of communication between the leaders and youth. Instead, they said

that youth are considered “inferior elements.”²⁶ Another elaborated in this way: “From time immemorial, the crude and intolerable culture of our country and tradition of our forefathers [have] not been accommodating enough for youth to vent their minds. Such strands of mentality are so stuck in the minds of most adults and elders that even at this modern time not much room is given for youths to break out their problems. On the whole, adults and elders look scornfully and disregard the views of youths. They usually say where the elders discuss, the younger [youth] should keep off.”²⁷

Young people blame the lack of response on their severely limited role in politics and decision-making. They maintain that people in positions of power often indoctrinate adolescents to achieve their own “selfish” desires, and then “dump them at the end of the day without being given any responsible roles to play.”²⁸ Young people are asking the government to include them and their ideas in the rebuilding of their society. The government of Sierra Leone, and politicians in particular, must take immediate steps to incorporate young people’s rights into their daily work. This should include making the adolescent- and youth-serving ministries more responsive to young people’s voices and enacting legislation to protect their rights. Government officials should also prioritize education and skills training with practical applications for young people through development initiatives that account for their rights and capacities.

Many young people have a strong sense of their own capacity and potential. In answering the question, “What is the role of adolescence and youth in socie-



Young people want to move beyond marginalization to real participation in society. Here they came together to support non-violence among youth during the May 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections.

ty?” one young person said: “They normally build up the nation, correct mistakes and put things into their actual position. We also share our views to elders and we replace them in positions.”²⁹ Another explained: “We the youth are important. We are the future leaders and we also remember about the problems that are occurring in this country.”³⁰ Young people spoke of their determination to work in their communities to influence changes that will improve their lives.

“The youths are the leaders of tomorrow. If the government can provide them with necessary training and education, I believe they will be equipped enough to take up some of the important positions in society when the elders would have retired or died. The emergence of a youthful society who are better trained and well informed about their country’s socio-political and economic situation catalyzes rapid development and efficiency of labor.”

— Primary school teacher, Brookfield

United Nations, NGO and government agencies should capitalize upon these positive sentiments and build young people’s capacities by funding adolescent-focused, gender-balanced programs that involve young people in decision-making processes and program design, development and implementation. Adolescents must not be eclipsed by youth in these efforts. Both adolescents and youth can play a critical role in advancing chances for peace in Sierra Leone, and their important contributions should not be overlooked.

V EDUCATION: A LINCHPIN FOR PEACE AND RECOVERY

HIGHLY POLITICIZED TOP CONCERN AND SOLUTION

Regardless of location, gender, age and experiences during the war, adolescents regard education as their top priority — they cite it as their major concern and educational opportunity as the key solution to poverty and a range of problems they face. (See Survey Results section.) This prominence of education in the thoughts of young people reflects both the politicization of education in the conflict and its force as a healing power.

Education has long been highly politicized in Sierra Leone. Student protesters in the 1970s criticized government officials for failing to make free, quality education available to all children and adolescents and cited government officials’ practice of sending their own children to expensive private schools as clear evidence of their corruption and disinterest in the welfare of all of Sierra Leone’s children. The RUF rebel group consistently invoked the government’s failure to provide free education as a rallying cry against greed and corruption, attracting many young people into their “Movement.” One young ex-RUF combatant said: “The ‘big men’ don’t care about the young people in this country. They only care for their own family and send their own abroad to study...and the youth really suffer.”³¹ Yet, while in power in Sierra Leone’s northern region, the RUF leaders not only failed to provide free education to all, but combatants also looted and destroyed schools in many areas in Sierra Leone, fueling political flames in the opposite direction.

Today, the failure to provide adequate skills training programs and full educational support to former combatants as part of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration program fuels feelings of political and socioeconomic marginalization among former rebel fighters. (See Protection section for details.) At the same time, many non-combatant young people who cannot access education resent educational support targeted for former fighters; they see themselves as the real victims and deserving of support. One adolescent dropout in Makeni said, “For some people, like the ex-combatants, education is free, but for some of us, it is not.”³² These young people also express



Adolescents say that the lack of infrastructure, classroom furniture, educational supplies and trained teachers prevent them from getting a quality education, which is critical to building peace in Sierra Leone.

feelings of exclusion resulting from insufficient education. Without it, all young people feel that adult decision-makers believe them to be “ignorant” and do not take them seriously. Many illiterate young people also lack the self-esteem needed to advocate effectively for their concerns, and divisions between adult decision-makers and youth widen.

Adolescents and youth say their desire for education reflects practical needs. They are longing for better, more stable lives. They want to share in the bounty of Sierra Leone and to be an integral part of a society that supports and cares about their well-being. Young people believe education will and should lead to improved livelihood for themselves and thus improved stability for entire communities. They want to contribute to the peaceful economic development of the country and be treated as fully participating citizens of Sierra Leone. One adolescent living in an orphanage in Freetown said, “We need government to help us have enough logistics to learn...and we are going to feel good because we will not be neglected in the society.”³³ A “ghetto boy” living in Carlington, Makeni, said, “We need equal rights and social justice, a proper monitoring system of government officials, improved agricultural systems, better education and technological opportunities and improved social amenities.”³⁴

Without education and improvements in their socioeconomic well-being, healing from the pain of the war is more difficult. (See Psychosocial section.) Young people say it also exacerbates feelings of division among them, can lead to further conflict and

has driven some into commercial sex work and crime. One adolescent boy in Makeni said, “Dropouts...contribute to the increase in rebels in this country.”³⁵ Another youth reminded researchers, “A boy was once in school before he lost his father, and without anyone to care for him he joined the RUF to safeguard his life.”³⁶ For young people, the availability of educational opportunities to all sectors of society will answer their feelings of marginalization and will be the litmus test for the achievement of peace and the protection of children and adolescents.

INACCESSIBLE AND INSUFFICIENT EDUCATION LEADS TO LOW ENROLLMENT

Young people object to both the lack of access and poor quality of their education. Many factors, such as high costs, distant facilities, gender discrimination, destroyed education infrastructure, inadequate learning materials and lack of qualified teachers and administrators, keep them out of school entirely or prevent them from getting the education they have a right to. In addition, Sierra Leone’s prewar school enrollment was already low: only 59 percent of children were enrolled in school.³⁷

In Sierra Leone, primary education lasts for six years; primary school is generally attended by children and adolescents between the ages of six and 12. Primary is followed by secondary education, which is divided into two three-year cycles: junior secondary school, for 12- to 15-year-old adolescents, and senior secondary school, for 15- to 18-year-old adolescents. Ninety percent of schools are mission-run schools, with government-paid teachers.

According to the United Nations Human Development Report 2002, Sierra Leone is “on track” in ensuring that children complete grade five but lags “far behind” in ensuring children complete primary education. Only 43 percent of boys and 40 percent of girls have access to primary school, and in

1990, 22 percent of males and 12 percent of females of relevant age were in secondary school, and 1.3 percent of both males and females were enrolled in tertiary education.³⁸ The combined primary, secondary and tertiary gross enrollment is now 27 percent, and adult literacy is at 36 percent.³⁹ There are significant regional disparities, with access to education and the quality of services lowest in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. Enrollment ranges from 75 percent in the Western Area to only 28 percent in the Northern Province.⁴⁰ Moreover, while there has been significant improvement in literacy in urban areas, with literacy close to 60 percent in the Western Area, there has been a decline in rural areas. The literacy rate is as low as 7 percent in the Northern Province.⁴¹ One positive development is that 2001-2002 school year enrollments into the first year of primary school is in excess of 222,000 pupils, a 200 percent increase over the 1990-1991 figure, and that the gender gap is closing.⁴²

While some programs specifically support education for former combatants, only a small number have been able to take advantage of them. UNICEF reported in February 2002 that 17 percent of formally demobilized children and adolescents had benefited from education programs sponsored for their reintegration.⁴³ Some others outside these programs may also be in school or skills training courses, but comprehensive statistics are not available, and the numbers are still likely to be low. Former combatants accessing skills training courses describe them as inadequately resourced and insufficient for supporting their full reintegration. (See also Protection section.)

WAR-DEPLETED SCHOOLS

Students, parents, school officials and representatives from organizations supporting education in Sierra Leone said repeatedly that many schools are starting from zero. As of November 2001, only 1,500 of the country's 2,676 primary schools were operational.⁴⁴ The situation is the worst in the Northern and Eastern Provinces; for instance, in Kailahun (Eastern Province), the sole secondary school was opened only in April 2002 after being destroyed in 1996.⁴⁵ In addition to school structures, furniture, latrines, teaching and recreational supplies, textbooks and other basic scholastic materials have been depleted, and in many cases, so has the quantity of qualified teachers and school administrators.⁴⁶ Young people in formal or non-formal schooling say that there are no

seats to sit on or desks to write on, no paper, pens or pencils, no textbooks or grade books and no sports equipment. Those in skills training especially lack facilities for practical learning.

In a displaced persons camp in Freetown, young people noted the lack of "blackboards, tables, chairs and notebooks for the school children."⁴⁷ One teacher in Makeni said that many students have to "sit on the floor" and that instructors have nowhere to keep what supplies they do have.⁴⁸ One ex-combatant youth in a skills training program in Makeni said, "We are supposed to sit two on one bench, but we sit six on one bench."⁴⁹ Former combatants enrolled in skills training state major frustrations with significantly under-resourced programs, leaving them inadequately trained and without the tools needed to carry out their trade. (See Protection section.)

This lack of scholastic materials and other supplies keeps many students who cannot afford to buy their own from attending school. One orphaned adolescent working on the street in Makeni said, "We want to go to school, but we don't have any school materials."⁵⁰ It also places additional economic burdens on parents already stretched financially. But many parents are dedicated enough to their children's education to provide additional support for schools instead of waiting for the government to resurrect the system. In Makeni, teachers and parents pooled resources to construct new benches for schools, in one instance paying 1,000 leones (about US\$0.45) each for a total of 100 benches.⁵¹

For many schools, the only support has come through education programs for former child combatants that are designed to maximize benefits to the entire community. The Community Education Investment Program (CEIP) provides packages of supplies to schools in exchange for enrolling ex-combatant children and adolescents. At St. Joseph's Primary School in Makeni, head teacher Fatu Kanu said that because their school has taken in eleven ex-combatant children, they have finally received much-needed supplies that benefit all students.⁵²

EDUCATION UNAFFORDABLE

Although the government instituted free primary education by waiving school fees for students in September 2001,⁵³ in reality, many young people say they are still unable to go to school or participate in other educational opportunities. They cite high costs

for transportation, school uniforms and scholastic materials as key barriers.

Competing responsibilities also keep many adolescents out of school. With little family income, they are often forced to find work instead, or to work to pay for their younger siblings' education. For many, the choice is of securing a meal or attending school. Teen parents are in an especially difficult position, with responsibility for providing for their own children. Many are also faced with the priorities of reconstructing their homes and revitalizing their farms, which make attending school during regular school hours all but impossible.

One adolescent girl now working in a saloon in Makeni said, "Education in the community is not easy because it is too expensive." Another said, "We cannot go to school because of poverty, so, we decided to take a job to provide education for our children."⁵⁴ And a displaced adolescent in Freetown said, "My parents cannot provide school fees toward my education, and there is no job facility for them to assist me."⁵⁵

In addition, some claim that education officials are corrupt, asking for payments from students, which also increases their costs. All of these costs are often too much for Sierra Leoneans to afford given highly limited livelihood opportunities for parents. An Anti-Corruption Commission is investigating allegations of school authorities extorting money from parents and students with impunity. A Freetown newspaper reported in August 2002 that a local school was reportedly demanding 5,000 leones (US\$2.44) from each pupil before the school authorities would issue National Primary School Examination Results and Report Cards.⁵⁶ Some parents paid the fee, and those who refused did not receive their children's results. These and charges from other areas are under investigation.

If they complete primary school, for many young people, secondary school and vocational and skills training are even more financially burdensome and out of reach. (See Livelihood section.) They cited the age of 15 as a pivotal time for children to drop out of school, especially girls, corresponding generally to the age after the completion of primary school and, for some, junior secondary school. Many dropouts become idle and have a severely limited support system, forcing many into prostitution and criminal activities. (See Protection section.)

While costs may vary slightly, the educational sup-

plies and uniforms for primary school, where tuition is free, can run as high as 250,000 leones (US\$120) a year. There is a steep increase in expense from primary to junior secondary school, for which tuition and supplies cost between 400,000 and 500,000 leones (between US\$195 and \$240) a year for government schools and 600,000 to 700,000 leones (US\$295 to \$350) for private schools. Senior secondary school costs 700,000 leones (US\$350) a year, as does the University of Sierra Leone.⁵⁷ These expenses, particularly for secondary school and university, are largely prohibitive in a country where the estimated annual per capita income was US\$140 in 2001.⁵⁸

Without School, Paths Into Trouble Emerge

At 11 years old, Paul was forced to quit primary school in Class 4 when his father, a minister, died. His mother did not have enough money, and "was not capable of furthering my schooling," Paul said. His mother took Paul to learn mechanical engineering from his uncle, but after a few months, he left when his mother found him a job paying 90,000 leones (US\$44.00) monthly. "While in that job," Paul said, "I found myself in the middle of a court case and was found guilty. I lost the job and was at home doing nothing except thinking about my father and the job that I lost. I decided to go to one of the provinces and become a diamond miner. After six months, I returned back with nothing I had hoped for. At home, I joined with some bad boys who were armed robbers as they were going out for their night's work. The police caught us immediately, and we were sent to jail by the court for seven years. I was released after four years and am now home again with nothing to do. I want to know what better programs can be put in place for adolescents and youth like me."⁵⁹

TEACHING RESOURCES STRAINED

The education system is suffering from a shortage of teachers. Again, considerable regional disparities exist: the teacher to pupil ratio ranges from 1:23 in the Western Area to 1:82 in the Eastern Province.⁶⁰ In April 2002, the government was short approximately 1,000 teachers and will be short an estimated 3,000 in 2003 and 7,000 over the next five years. Teachers working in refugee camps in Guinea are available to fill many of these vacancies, but the government of Sierra Leone has been reluctant to recognize their qualifications, citing concerns about maintaining standards. Those trained as part of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) school system, serving refugees in Guinea, are participating in a distance learning course to fill any gaps in their qualifications, and those who are qualified but lack the paperwork to prove it are also being assisted.⁶¹

Some qualified teachers inside Sierra Leone are displaced and are receiving mandatory salaries from the government but are not in service. At the same time, others in service are frequently not remunerated for their work or receive their pay late. Teachers in general receive low salaries; junior teachers on average earn 66,000 leones per month (about US\$30), and senior teachers earn 297,000 leones per month (about US\$135). Teachers in service lack adequate teaching materials and endure difficult teaching conditions, with severely limited facilities. In addition, UNICEF and students said that the content of their education is not always relevant to their lives and that there is a high level of inefficiency in school management.

Young people are acutely aware of the consequences. As one orphaned adolescent said, “Our teachers are not paid on time, and sometimes they are not paid.”⁶² Another adolescent said that because of this, “...they do not teach effectively.”⁶³ In general, adolescents and teachers said that this creates poor learning environments and a brain drain, where teachers are attracted to opportunities in other countries for better pay.⁶⁴ Some teachers have also not returned home since the war’s end, remaining in Freetown for a better livelihood and not yet prepared to invest in the reconstruction of their homes and communities, which are in ruins. Many come from the most destroyed areas of Sierra Leone — Kambia, Kono and Kailahun.

Teachers have few resources of their own to supplement scholastic materials in school, and students are

afraid their teachers will no longer be willing to continue their work. A primary school girl in Makeni told researchers that her teachers are not satisfied because the government holds onto their salaries without paying them. “To encourage them to teach us,” she said, “we share our lunch with our teachers.”⁶⁵

LESS ACCESS IN RURAL AREAS, ESPECIALLY TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

“Those in big towns have access to education, not us,”⁶⁶ one rural youth told researchers. For adolescents living in rural areas, schools are often too far away to attend, especially secondary schools. Those who wish to go to secondary school must find funding either to attend boarding school or pay for transportation back and forth from home each day. Again, these costs are exorbitant and impossible for most Sierra Leoneans, and rural adolescents and youth are at a particular disadvantage. While reaching secondary schools in busy Freetown is also very difficult for many students, there are more secondary schools there in general.

In York district in the Western Area, adolescents can attend classes one through six, but the nearest secondary school is ten miles away. Although adolescents also believe education to be better in the towns, they do not have enough money for transportation. They ask for more secondary schools to be constructed in rural areas and that free transportation be provided for young people living a prohibitive distance away.⁶⁷

In Makeni, a representative of the Inspectorate Office for the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS), told researchers that all of Bombali Chiefdom has 265 primary schools, most of them operated by religious groups, and 20 secondary schools, the majority located in Makeni town. Not all of these institutions are yet functional. Bombali also has several technical and vocational training centers, most in or near Makeni town, and before the war had a tertiary institution — Makeni Teachers College — which has operated in Freetown since the conflict. Thus, if young people seek secondary or tertiary education, most must be able to reach Makeni town to access it.⁶⁸

GIRLS' EDUCATION

Girls report particular difficulties entering and staying in school due to widespread gender discrimination. Sixty percent do not attend primary school, and 88 percent do not attend secondary school.⁶⁹

Girls say that when families have few resources, parents prioritize boys' education over girls'. They also say that girls are often not expected to go to school at all, and instead are expected to tend the house and prepare for eventual marriage. Girls who are in school and either get pregnant or married are expected to quit school. Although the legal framework exists for the continuation in education of pregnant girls, it is rarely enforced. Girls who were formerly abducted by the RUF and are now adolescent mothers say they have particular difficulty entering school given their responsibilities caring for their children and due to the stigmatization they encounter in school. In addition, girls' enrollment is lowest in the north, at only 25 percent, where there is a strong perception that their education is inconsistent with the teachings of Islam.⁷⁰

Without education, girls have fewer opportunities to learn livelihood and other skills and receive basic health information. Many say that lack of educational opportunities, linked to lack of livelihood, is leading them into prostitution in large numbers. This prostitution is at times condoned and encouraged by their parents. (See Protection section.)

A Makeni teacher said of adolescent girls in need of primary education: "Some are really big in school and refuse to go because they are too ashamed. They are afraid and say they just want to get married. They need counseling."⁷¹ Adolescents say community sensitization is needed to promote girls' education. Some suggest a poster campaign and seminars for parents, stressing the importance of education for both girls and boys. Some suggest, too, that education officials should be required to ensure that as many females are in school as males at all levels.

The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) is dedicated to addressing girls' education problems in Sierra Leone. During the war and in recent years, it provided emergency programs as a stopgap for girls, including formal education, vocational training, counseling, medical care, recreation and a variety of other services. Thousands of girls have benefited from the work, including many who suffered sexual violence or are child mothers. Today, FAWE continues to provide formal education and



Fewer girls than boys attend school, and those caring for children have an especially difficult time overcoming stigmatization and balancing their other responsibilities.

psychosocial care to girls, and advocates for their education and protection.⁷²

Literacy Lightens Up A Life

Mary, 16, lives in Freetown. She says she "[had] never been to school growing up. I wanted to go, but any time I told my parents this, they discouraged me, saying that school is only for males. They had money for fees, but I still could not go, and instead, I usually did housework and cooking. I often felt left out of social activities, especially because I could not go to any educational programs. One day, a friend advised me to attend an adult literacy class offered by FAWE. At first, I was not happy to be there, but as time went on, I believed I could make it because I was actually learning to read and write. Now, I am very happy. I feel very well, like there is a bright light, and I wish that education could be spread throughout my community, irrespective of age or sex."⁷³

EDUCATION FOR IDPS AND FORMER REFUGEES

Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) are beginning to return in large numbers to their home communities. Children and adolescents among them are encouraged to enter school upon return, placing added stress on education institutions that are still far from up and running. Approximately 89 percent of adolescents who participated in the Women's Commission and adolescent researcher study said they had been displaced, and 20 percent were former refugees. While they share educational facilities with local communities, they say access is not guaranteed, again due to high costs, competing responsibilities and gender discrimination. They also say that classes are overcrowded, and point to a lack of learning materials and basic facilities.

Many refugees who fled Sierra Leone to neighboring Guinea had access to formal primary education through a successful and highly-regarded program run by the IRC. Bolstered by a strong education, many returnees are going home wanting more, especially in rural communities where educational opportunities are most bleak. Like refugee teachers returning home, the qualifications they achieved in exile are being questioned by the government and require resolution. Some still in exile are having difficulty gaining access to the West African Examination Council (WAEC) exams they are required to take to complete secondary school as WAEC rules insist the exam must be taken in their home country. At the same time, many young refugees return lacking years of formal education, as well as training in agricultural farming, which they would normally have learned from their families. Education providers are challenged to meet both sets of needs to ensure the recovery of these communities.

Many IDP and former refugee adolescents told researchers that they value education so highly, they are willing to separate from their families in order to receive it. For example, former refugees in the Jui temporary settlement near Freetown said they would be staying behind to complete the school year while their relatives went back to their homes. They were not sure where they would live or how they would find food, but they were determined to complete their academic year. Similarly, reintegrating former child soldiers expressed worry about being reunited with family members prior to completing skills training courses or formal education classes. (See Protection section.)

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS IN SCHOOL

Although United Nations figures place formal education enrollment at 27 percent overall, and young people interviewed agreed that their access to education is low, 70 percent of the adolescents who answered the survey conducted by adolescent researchers said they were currently attending school. As the research teams did not deliberately focus on interviewing more in-school than out-of-school adolescents, it is not clear what kind or quality of education they were in. This high figure might represent young people's participation in poorly resourced, makeshift schools in their communities. It might also represent participation in skills training classes or occasional attendance in education activities. Furthermore, these enrollment figures hide the disruption in education that many adolescents have experienced, and it is estimated that 500,000 children are significantly older than the normal age for the class that they are attending.⁷⁴ Given the state of the education system, however, their engagement in some form of education activity is a testament to their desire to learn.

SPECIFIC EDUCATION INTERVENTIONS

Despite the many challenges that remain in reconstructing Sierra Leone's education system, the Sierra Leone government, UNICEF, a host of NGOs and community members have worked hard to prioritize its rehabilitation. They have begun work in areas almost immediately after they have been declared secure and have kept the politicized nature of the endeavor in mind. NGOs have also worked to increasingly link education and protection efforts, and believe that government personnel especially need substantial training on the protective aspects of education for children and adolescents and on school administration and governance in general.

The World Bank is providing Sierra Leone with a US\$20 million loan for the rehabilitation of the education system, and the government of Sierra Leone is focusing on raising the minimum baseline standard for education. The focus is mainly on revitalizing primary education, not secondary or tertiary education. This is important work but does not sufficiently address the predicament of adolescents and youth, who have missed out on their education and are feeling marginalized. In addition, while the African

Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank will be building a total of 700 schools across the country within the next five years, 600 of them will be primary and only 100 will be junior secondary schools.⁷⁵ Again, the focus is overwhelmingly on primary at the expense of secondary school.

Josephus Williams, Director of the Youth Division of the MEYS in April 2002, said that “the government cannot absorb the number of school leavers,” and that more avenues for skills development and economic opportunity for adolescents and youth must be developed. “The government is challenged to move from talk to action,” he said, and it focuses on the creation of “productive activities for youth.” Given the vast needs in Sierra Leone, however, he said that “no amount of funding will be enough to fully address the youth of this country” and that the government is emphasizing the “systematic rehabilitation of the education system”⁷⁶ to increase opportunity for as many young people as possible.

A range of education interventions has been initiated, including education for former combatants; accelerated learning; school reconstruction; material supplies; teacher training and certification initiatives; the

development of teacher and parent associations; student certifications; school feeding; education for the disabled; and education for girls, including child mothers and the sexually abused. Again, despite these efforts, many more young people need to be reached in order to fulfill their right to education and begin to alleviate their feelings of marginalization.

Education on health and other issues for young mothers should continue. Access to education for returning refugees and IDPs should continue, and more should be done to ensure the continuity of education for young people who are still displaced or are reintegrating. Young displaced students who do not want to return until they have finished their terms need protection and assistance. The same holds true for reunifying families. Skills training should be connected to reconstruction and development needs. Parental involvement in education is critical, and communities should not wait for the government, especially because programs will end, and they will need to keep going.

National Education Initiatives

The Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools (CREPS) program compresses the six-year primary curriculum into three years, enabling over-age, out-of-school children and adolescents to return to the formal system in the right age group.

The Community Education Investment Program (CEIP) provides materials to schools in exchange for accepting former child soldiers and waiving their enrollment and tuition fees. As of November 2001, UNICEF, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) and NGO partners (Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI, an Italian NGO), the IRC and Caritas) had extended CEIP to over 130 primary and secondary schools in all districts except Kono.⁷⁷ Schools can choose from one of four CEIP packages that benefit the entire school, not just the students who are former child soldiers. One package, for example, includes exercise books, pens, pencils and sharpeners, and another is a recreation kit, including footballs, inflating kits, volleyballs, a net and whistles.⁷⁸

The Training and Employment Program (TEP) is designed to assist those who complete skills training in finding jobs and to distribute start-up tool kits. TEP and other education programs are especially good in that they benefit both the overall population and specific groups. Having said this, it still appears that some groups are favored over others, and community-based skills training initiatives for the broader community should be supported.

The Rapid Response Education Program (RREP) supports the re-entry of IDP and refugee returnee children between the ages of 10 and 14 into the formal primary system through a six-month program focusing on numeracy, literacy, trauma healing, peace education and health.

ACCELERATED EDUCATION

Many young people have missed years of education due to the conflict and cannot easily step back into formal learning environments. Some feel they are too old, too tall or otherwise physically mature to sit in classes with younger students and say they would be ashamed to do so. Adolescent mothers have particular difficulties re-entering the school system, as they are normally expected to quit school upon marriage or pregnancy. Adolescents also find it difficult to spend the required amount of time finishing a full course of primary school, given other family and emerging adult responsibilities.

Despite these barriers, some say they would gladly confront these difficulties if they had the financial

means, childcare or other support to do so. One adolescent girl who was abducted by the RUF and is now a child mother said, “I would like to go to school, I don’t mind about my height.”⁷⁹ Adolescents facing large gaps in their education would benefit from accelerated learning opportunities in order to catch up with primary school years and continue their studies into secondary school and beyond. Those who cannot or choose not to attempt formal schooling also need targeted livelihood interventions.

The government has undertaken accelerated learning programs, implemented by NGOs. They include CREPS and the YouPac, a literacy and life-skills program for out-of-school adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18. (See International Response section and information box in this section.)

VI. LIVELIHOOD: YOUNG PEOPLE NEED SKILLS AND JOBS

BLEAK ECONOMY LEAVES ADOLESCENTS WITH FEW LIVELIHOOD OPTIONS

Sierra Leone’s conflict was rooted in high unemployment and lack of economic opportunity. Feelings of political and economic marginalization and uneven distribution of resources led many, particularly youth, to participate in the conflict against the government. These conditions remain true today, as the war worsened the country’s already bad economic situation. Unemployment is as high as 80 percent,⁸⁰ making it difficult for anyone, let alone adolescents and youth, to earn a livelihood. Sierra Leone was ranked the least developed country in the world among 173 countries in the United Nations 2002 Human Development Index. In 2000, the gross national income per capita was US\$140, compared to US\$34,870 in the United States.⁸¹ Although real GDP increased by 3.8 percent in 2000 against a population growth rate of 2.6 percent, this followed a cumulative decline of 25 percent during 1997-99 and approximately 66 percent since 1970.⁸²

“Youth constituted about 95 percent of the fighting forces because they finally let loose. They are a long-neglected cohort; they lack jobs and training, and it is easy to convince them to join the fight. Therefore, youth have to be given attention and made useful in their communities, such as through learning basic skills. Idleness could lead again to war.”

— Christian Children’s Fund official,
Freetown

Youth in their early twenties interviewed for this study were more concerned about employment than adolescents under twenty. While both adolescents and youth ranked poverty as their second top concern, adolescents ranked unemployment as their fifth highest, whereas youth ranked unemployment as their fourth highest concern (tied with lack of shelter/food/water/clothing). Moreover, youth gave their concern about unemployment a significantly higher average ranking than adolescents. (See Survey

Results section.) Nevertheless, concern about the dearth of livelihood options is widely shared among both adolescents and youth, many of whom are forced to turn to prostitution, begging, street crime and drugs in order to survive.

HIGH COSTS AND LIVELIHOOD NEEDS LIMIT EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Adolescents are often forced to forgo education to earn a livelihood. However, young people said that the jobs that are available pay them too little. While they need and request skills training and micro-credit, the majority have no access to either. As one adolescent girl told researchers, “We face a lot of problems in hairdressing because of poverty. We cannot be trained for the job and also we have no material to do this work.”⁸³

Notwithstanding free primary school tuition, the costs of educational materials and uniforms for primary, and especially secondary schools, which do require tuition costs, are too great for the majority of impoverished adolescents. In addition, adolescents living in rural areas outside of Freetown told researchers that school is available for children under 15, but not for those who are older. While a small number of girls are fortunate to be sponsored by groups such as the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the majority have no such help. Consequently, adolescents and youth, particularly in rural areas but also in cities, work in fields or markets rather than attend school.

ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH FIND INSUFFICIENT LIVELIHOOD SOLUTIONS

“Our main problem is the lack of jobs.”

—Adolescent trader, Makeni

Adolescents and youth perform a variety of jobs, and many are forced to have several jobs at once, including selling wares in the markets, farming, gardening and gathering food, wood, scrap iron and stones in the bush. Others are cobblers, fishers, brick makers or bread bakers. Regardless of the number of jobs they perform, young people say that they barely make enough to survive and have nothing left to invest in their future.



Sierra Leone’s poverty and bleak economy force many adolescents, like this mango seller near Makeni, to work rather than go to school.

With farmers constituting 85 percent of the population before the war, agriculture and livestock rearing are the most common forms of livelihood in Sierra Leone.⁸⁴ However, much of the agricultural area has been devastated by years of war. Especially in Kono and Kailahun districts, where the majority of the displaced are from, the farmland is overgrown as the result of as many as 11 years of disuse. The Ministry of Agriculture had planned for agencies to provide seeds and tools to 50 percent of the vulnerable, but due to lack of funding, they can provide services to only 20 to 30 percent.⁸⁵ Moreover, as refugees in Guinea, many young Sierra Leoneans did not learn to farm and went to school instead. As a result, some of the returning adolescents and youth do not know how to farm. Others are more interested in livelihood opportunities that are available in cities. Adolescents and youth returning to farming areas will need support; the international community must ensure that they are provided with seeds and tools as part of their resettlement package.

One rural youth explained, “We lack tools, and because we haven’t any fertilizer, it is difficult for our crops to grow well.”⁸⁶ Another young person, living in Tombo, a village outside of Freetown, stated: “We live by subsistence farming, so it is hard to make money. We need fishing equipment and want to start a business, which would create jobs for others.”⁸⁷ These same sentiments were expressed by countless other adolescents and youth who wanted opportunities to expand on their present work through skills training, income-generation and micro-credit. “The main problem that affects us is



Adolescents and youth are engaged in a variety of livelihood activities, such as farming, but say that they are not making enough money to meet basic needs or invest in their future.

poverty,” said a female youth working in the Makeni market place. “We want to trade but we don’t have money.”⁸⁸ To remedy their poverty, young people are asking for skills training and small loans to invest in income-generation activities, such as blacksmithing, carpentry, tie dyeing, batik and dress making, tailoring, soap making and weaving.

However, the obvious caveat is the bleak economy in Sierra Leone, leading to a dearth of practical livelihood opportunities. For example, girls who had learned soap making pointed out that they are barely surviving. Furthermore, many young ex-combatants were trained in skills that are useless in their rural communities. (See Protection section.)

At the same time, while the agricultural tradition of Sierra Leone dictates that farming must be a priority and needs to be made more attractive to young people through access to supplies, training and micro-credit, adolescents want more diverse options. Defining what jobs are needed is essential, as idle adolescents and youth, once trained, grow frustrated and angry without work. In addition to helping young people and their families survive, skills training that leads to productive livelihood increases psychosocial well-being and reintegration. For instance, the chairman of Grafton war-wounded camp teaches weaving to adolescents, which he says “keeps them busy and helps them heal.”⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the adolescents at the war-wounded camp said that their weaving doesn’t earn them enough money, because no one has money to buy the goods.

Adolescent-headed Households Overlooked

One particularly overlooked group is adolescents who head households, many of whose parents and siblings were killed or separated from them during the war. An especially vulnerable subset of this group is young mothers who are trying, with limited skills and resources, to raise children. Not only do these girls face the same dearth of livelihood options as other adolescents, but if their children were fathered by RUF fighting forces and born in the bush, they and their “rebel babies” are at times ostracized by their families and communities. Adolescents asserted that the problem of adolescent-headed households has increased, as UNAMSIL peacekeepers, like Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) forces before them, leave many uncared for babies in their wake, and girls become the sole breadwinners in their families.⁹⁰

Poor Livelihood Options Lead to Commercial Sex Work and Street Life

“I went out to the street to be a prostitute to get money... just to get money to eat and to give to my parents.”

— Marie, age 17, Makeni

Because of extreme poverty, the dislocation of families and the breakdown of social structures during the war, many girls, and some boys, are engaging in prostitution and sex in exchange for economic and other benefits. Adolescents and professionals working with them told researchers that commercial sex work has become rife in Freetown and Makeni, both of which are along main transportation routes, have large numbers of UN peacekeepers and, in the case of Freetown, international humanitarian officials. (See Protection section.) Others are begging and living on the streets and turning to crime and drugs.

SOLUTIONS

Adolescents are asking for basic assistance through skills training, income-generation and micro-credit to be self-reliant, to facilitate their psychological, social

and economic reintegration and give meaning to their lives. One NGO official working with adolescents explained that in order for peace to be sustained, adolescents and youth need to feel they have a stake in the overall success of their community: “If we can improve their skills, so that youth have assets, then they will be less likely to destroy. They didn’t have sympathy for what they destroyed because they didn’t own anything themselves.”⁹¹

Therefore, programs that incorporate skills training and income-generation into holistic reintegration efforts for adolescents and youth, like the Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace (YRTEP) program, Skills Training and Employment Generation (STEG) and Skills Training and Employment Promotion (STEP) programs, should be duplicated elsewhere. (See box.) Other NGOs offer-

ing skills training for war-affected adolescents, such as the German agency Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ), and local youth NGOs that assist adolescents, youth and youth groups, such as the Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA) and the Youth Movement for Peace and Non-Violence, should be supported in their work. Furthermore, groups working with commercial sex workers to provide them with non-formal education, counseling services and skills training, including the Irish NGO GOAL, the American Refugee Committee (ARC), War Child and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), should be supported and their work should be expanded into rural areas. In addition, across the board, livelihood programs need to link skills training with access to credit, savings and investment.

A Successful Holistic Training Program For Adolescents And Youth

World Vision Sierra Leone’s (WVSL) Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace (YRTEP) Program has been particularly successful at engaging young people in a way that creates a ripple effect of learning and livelihood and takes into consideration a wide range of relevant national needs. For example, some youth facilitators, who receive stipends for training and then train other youth on education and reintegration issues, have pooled their stipends to invest in their communities. One group, for instance, created a fishing community, another set up a poultry farm and a third set up an FM radio station so that the YRTEP learning modules could reach the entire community over the air.

However, some adolescents and youth who participated in the program remarked that to move from learning to action, WVSL needed to create more opportunities for youth to market what they had learned, for example, through skills training centers and on-the-job training. Fred Goba, WVSL program manager, explained: “We had hoped that after the training the community would use their new skills from YRTEP to solve their problems together by using the resources within their community. However, there was always the question of ‘what next’ from the participants, who wanted more.”⁹² In response, World Vision developed a directory of agencies that youth could submit proposals to, but then requests followed for training on how to write proposals. While this does show dependency, as asserted by World Vision, it also illustrates the desire among youth for more training and resources that lead to employment. In addition, it reveals a contradiction between the needs and desires of young people and the vision of some humanitarian agencies of what youth need.

Therefore, the US Office for Transition Initiatives (OTI), taken over by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) Guinea/Sierra Leone, is funding a Skills Training and Employment Generation (STEG) and Skills Training and Employment Promotion (STEP) program, implemented by Christian Children’s Fund in the north and WVSL in the east and south. These programs will capitalize on the gains of YRTEP by training and employing the youth to work together on civic programs. For example, one STEG project is bringing together ex-combatants and community youth to work on the rehabilitation of a four-kilometer stretch of road, and STEP’s public works are focusing on road and bridge rehabilitation, as well as markets, farm-to-market roads, training centers and micro-grant projects that have potential for immediate economic multiplier effects. Unfortunately, these programs are not funded for every community where YRTEP has been implemented; this follow-up work needs urgent funding.⁹³



Youth groups that support small-scale livelihood initiatives like this tailoring training in Freetown run by The Youth Movement for Peace and Non-Violence need capacity building and support.

There is some positive news for the economy: The African Development Bank recently approved debt relief on 80 percent of the country's debt obligations, which will help the government to set aside additional resources for poverty reduction by promoting good governance, improved social services delivery, a revived economy and a consolidation of the peace process.⁹⁴ The government reports that it will also focus on improving living standards for the most vulnerable Sierra Leoneans, such as returned refugees and war victims, by providing them with income-generating opportunities and better social services. A new report ordered by the government of the United Kingdom states that if the diamond

industry is developed and regulated transparently, it could employ between 10,000 and 15,000 people.⁹⁵ In addition, the Sierra Leonean government is offering oil and gas companies the opportunity to bid for leases on offshore areas to develop the country's petroleum reserves.⁹⁶ While this could be a positive development in reviving the country's economy, given the roots of poverty and conflict in economic marginalization, the revenue from this and other development initiatives, especially those related to diamond mining, must prioritize improving infrastructure and social services in Sierra Leone.

In addition, in order to ensure long-term stability, the government must address widespread corruption, inadequate and ineffective adolescent and youth participation in government and a destabilizing concentration of wealth among a small minority of the Sierra Leonean population. It must also take the needs and capacities of adolescents and youth more seriously, helping them to find practical employment as well as education. The government and key development organizations must immediately identify critical skills needed for the development and reconstruction of Sierra Leone and train adolescents and youth in these skills. As one adolescent parent said: "I think teenagers have to be hard working so that we can earn enough to support ourselves, our family and children and to improve the country. But before we can push the country to a higher level, the government must construct more institutes, schools and job facilities."⁹⁷

VII. HEALTH: MYTH VERSUS REALITY

The United Nations 2002 Human Development Index lists Sierra Leone as the least developed country in the world and reports that it lags behind other countries in reducing the number of people suffering from hunger and malnutrition, infant mortality rates and gender disparity. Life expectancy has recently dropped to 38.9 years from 42.⁹⁸ In addition, Sierra Leone suffers from a destroyed health care system and an exodus of skilled health workers, which has exacerbated already high levels of disease and disability; a war legacy of gender-based violence; unwanted pregnancy; and sexually transmitted infec-

tions (STIs), including HIV/AIDS. For adolescents and youth, all of these health problems are compounded by a lack of education on health issues, particularly reproductive health, and myths about health and health care; that free or low-cost health services are not available, for example, and that HIV/AIDS does not exist.



Because they lack access to purified water, adolescents collect water from dirty streams, rivers or wells that are often far from their homes.

MALNUTRITION AND BASIC HEALTH NEEDS NOT MET

“Everybody is fighting for himself in order to survive in the camp because they can’t provide food for us.”

— Ishmael, Internally Displaced Camp, Freetown

While there is abundant data showing the impact of malnutrition on children under five years old, little is known about adolescent malnutrition. Adolescents, particularly the most vulnerable — disabled, orphaned, living or working on the street, female heads of households, refugees and internally displaced — said that they often had enough food for only one meal a day and adolescents participating in the research listed “lack of shelter/food/water/clothing” as their fourth highest concern. Recently returned adolescent refugees reported that, as refugees, they often lacked food and water, and once they returned home, were given an inadequate two-month food ration. Many reported selling the ration

to supplement their UNHCR travel allowance, which is often insufficient for the distance from their camp to their home. In addition, many adolescents lack proper housing, and those that do have a home have limited or no access to electricity and heating, especially in rural areas.

“The market stalls are our sleeping place.”

— Joseph, 16, street boy

As a result, many children and adolescents have to beg on the street, and adults report that their children suffer from dysentery because of the high concentration of cornmeal in their deficient food rations.⁹⁹ The UNAMSIL Child Protection Adviser reported that the worst-off children and adolescents are those living in newly opened areas, such as Kailahun and the northern region, that neither government nor humanitarian services have reached. A dearth of funding also prohibits many agencies from providing enough agricultural inputs to vulnerable families who return home.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, as many farms were neglected during the war, to avoid further shortages of food and water, returning communities should be provided training as well as agricultural assistance in the form of seeds and tools to promote self-reliance and livelihood.

IMPURE WATER, POOR SANITATION AND SPREADING DISEASE

Adolescents told researchers that water and sanitation needs are acute in many communities, particularly in IDP camps and areas where refugees have recently returned home. Insufficient and poor toilet facilities in most of the communities have forced people to use street corners, back yards and drainages as toilets and also for the disposal of solid waste. In addition, 97 percent of all water treatment facilities are inoperative due to the conflict and most areas lack pipe-borne and purified water.¹⁰¹ As a result, adolescents rely on water from streams, rivers or wells, which is often dirty and far from their homes, for drinking, cooking and bathing. For instance, in Tombo, a village outside Freetown, adolescents said that the absence of clean water and pumps compels them to use dirty stream water. Another adolescent living in Makeni reported that

there are no wells in his area. “We only fetch water from our swamps, which is not pure for drinking,” he said.¹⁰²

These sentiments are supported by United Nations statistics: In 2001, only 34 percent of the population had access to safe water and 12.5 percent to adequate sanitation facilities.¹⁰³ Adolescents living in IDP and war-wounded camps reported an especially high level of unsanitary conditions, including in the communal cooking areas. One adolescent explained, “There are flies everywhere, especially in the food.”¹⁰⁴

These poor sanitary conditions, combined with overcrowding and multiple population movements, have exacerbated the presence of water-borne and infectious diseases affecting adolescents, such as diarrhea, malaria, tuberculosis, pneumonia and other acute respiratory infections, cholera, dysentery and typhoid fever, resulting in higher levels of morbidity and mortality.¹⁰⁵ In order to reduce the chances of contracting these diseases, adolescents recommended that drainage and solid waste disposal sites be improved, and communities be provided with pit latrines, protected hand pump wells and pipe-borne water. Although adolescents did not usually name STIs as key health concerns, medical professionals said that many adolescents do have STIs and are suffering from their effects.¹⁰⁶

LIMITED ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE AND MEDICINE

Prior to the war, less than half the population had access to basic health services, and even fewer now have access due to the destruction of many health facilities.¹⁰⁷ “The northern region experienced a complete collapse of the state health structure,” according to Chris Day, Médecins Sans Frontières — Holland (MSF-H) in Makeni.¹⁰⁸ In 2001, only 38 percent of peripheral health units and 70 percent of the district hospitals throughout Sierra Leone were functioning.¹⁰⁹ NGOs have endeavored to pick up some of the slack, often under dangerous conditions. In Makeni, under RUF control, MSF-H restarted the hospital, providing the only clinical medical care available to the population, which continues to be expanded today. Much effort in the area of health has been directed at children under the age of five, with little attention to health care access for adolescents and youth. This leaves them with minimal access to health information and services, including reproductive health. Young people participating in the research listed “lack of health care” as their third highest concern. (See Survey Results section.)

“My best friend is called Fatima. She is sixteen years of age and doesn’t have money to go to the hospital. When she went to the clinic hospital, people always requested too much money and the doctors and nurses didn’t even give her sufficient medicine or treatment. Fatima told me that she is straining. She wants the government to build a hospital for the community and for it to work with NGOs like CCYA to find qualified doctors and nurses so that these doctors and nurses will [give her and others] real treatment.”

— Binta, age 17, Freetown

Almost all adolescents said that they lacked access to medical facilities and treatment for common health problems, including diseases such as malaria, diarrhea and cholera; severe coughs and acute respiratory problems, particularly among those living along dirt roads that are used as major transport routes; and cuts, aches and pains from farming, cutting sticks and logs and carrying heavy loads long distances to and from the market.

Young people living in rural areas said that clinics lack doctors and trained staff, and hospitals are so far away that transport is needed, but is too expensive. According to the World Health Organization, there are only 7.3 doctors for every 100,000 people; comparatively, there are 279 doctors for every 100,000 people in the United States.¹¹⁰ Adolescents assert that the few clinics that are running demand exorbitant amounts of money that they cannot afford to pay, and they contend that this has “claimed a lot of lives.”¹¹¹ One young person explained, “There is only one nurse in town, and the clinic lacks medicine, and what they have is expensive.”¹¹² Furthermore, adolescents reported that hospitals specializing in care for children and adolescents are either difficult to come by or not available. Others remarked that dental care is rare and expensive.

Adolescents call for additional health centers, trained medical personnel and inexpensive or free medicine,

as well as preventive medicine, as do NGOs such as MSF and Marie Stopes International (MSI). In Makeni, MSF-H charges 500 leones (about US\$0.27) per visit to outpatients five years old and above and 200 leones (about US\$0.10) per visit to those under five. These charges were only levied earlier this year to deter frivolous trips to the hospital, and patients can still receive free medicines and other care.¹¹³ But there is also a serious lack of communication from the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and/or humanitarian agencies to adolescents and youth about the cost of health care. In fact, many clinics and hospitals are offering free or very low cost services, as are NGOs like MSF and MSI. These services must be more widely publicized to young people and made as adolescent-friendly as possible to ensure that they will feel comfortable using them.

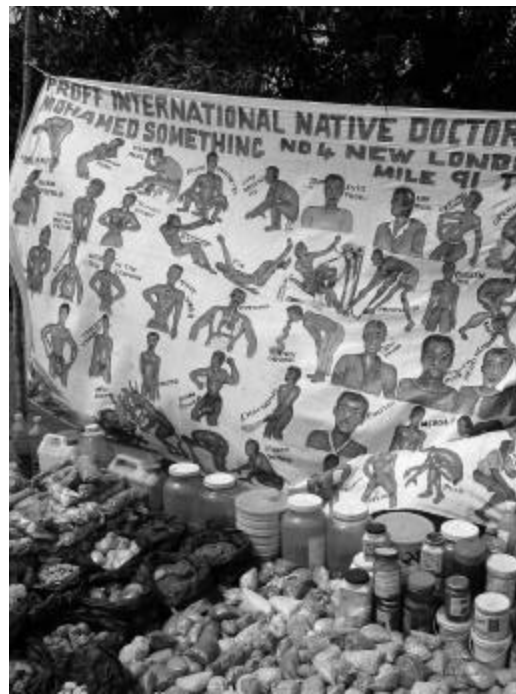
YOUNG PEOPLE RELY ON TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Even if they are able to get to clinics and hospitals, adolescents said that there is a severe shortage of medicine and equipment, particularly in IDP camps.¹¹⁴ Adolescents living in the Grafton war-wounded camp said they worry about getting HIV/AIDS through used syringes, since the clinic in the nearby IDP camp doesn't have enough new needles. Because medicine is both expensive and scarce, many adolescents use native herbs or traditional remedies. "We have no hospital, we only pray to God. In my village if you are sick your parent will give you palm leaf," said one young person.¹¹⁵ Another said: "When you are sick, we take the branch leaf to get well."¹¹⁶

We have a hospital, but there is no medicine.

— John, 15, Makeni

While traditional medicines can alleviate some health problems, MSF-H in Makeni reports many toxic effects. "People are turning to traditional medicine, but the oral history of these traditions has been disrupted, and a lot of this knowledge has been lost," said Chris Day, MSF-H. "Many patients come into the hospital having ingested toxic herbs and die. Some are OK, but many are not."¹¹⁷



Without access to, or money for, professional medical care, including medicine, many adolescents rely on traditional medicine, like that being offered by this "international native doctor" in Freetown.

DRUG USE

Many adolescent combatants during the war frequently used or were forced to use a variety of intoxicating substances, including alcohol, marijuana, glue, diazepam, cocaine and brown-brown,¹¹⁸ to ensure they would become "crazy" in battle. One adolescent explained: "I became mad if I took too many drugs. I didn't care about things when I took drugs."¹¹⁹ Other adolescents report that the idleness and uncertainty that they faced during the war and since make them vulnerable to the temptations of drugs. Some say that drug use has increased since the end of the war, especially among street children and commercial sex workers. However, programs that target drug abuse are few and are aimed at prevention, not treatment or rehabilitation for adolescents and youth who are already addicted.¹²⁰ Adolescents also say that their peers using drugs need skills training and income-generating projects to further their recovery and harness their energy for the good of the community.

Donors and NGOs should look toward the example of Community Action Against Drug Abuse (CAADA), a refugee youth group in Guinea. CAADA members believe that many adolescent refugees are using drugs because of their unspeakable experiences during the war and are raising awareness

about drug abuse through community discussions, role playing and peer counseling. However, CAADA, like other youth groups, needs more material support to provide alternatives to young people.¹²¹

DISABLED YOUNG PEOPLE NEED MORE SUPPORT

During the 1996 Sierra Leonean presidential election campaign, one slogan was: “Let’s put our hands together to create a new future.” In order to punish people for voting in the elections and to inflict terror, the RUF perpetrated mass amputations. There were even special units devoted to cutting off hands, whose members received a promotion when they returned with bags of hands.¹²² UNICEF and NGOs assert that as a result of the war, more than 1,000 people — including many adolescents — had limbs forcibly amputated.¹²³ Physicians for Human Rights asserts that for every surviving amputee, three perished from infection, shock and loss of blood due to lack of medical care.¹²⁴ Although this terror tactic has received much international attention, war-wounded, or those who endured either severe machete lacerations or permanently debilitating gun-shot wounds, have received far less attention although their number greatly exceeds that of amputees; it is estimated that approximately 2,500 people are war-wounded.¹²⁵

Amputee and war-wounded adolescents report that they are often treated like they are not human and are denied opportunities because of their disability. One 11-year-old said: “We don’t see ourselves as children that have a future. We are neglected in our schools, homes and communities.”¹²⁶ Most lack prosthetics that would allow them to lead more self-sufficient lives and many lack quality education and materials, particularly access to upper primary and secondary school. Adolescents in the Grafton war-wounded camp, for example, all expressed a desire to go to secondary school and university, but complained that there were no classes above level four in their camp and that the nearest was two miles away and too expensive. One adolescent said: “Even in the primary school at the war-wounded and IDP camp, we lack learning materials, like chalk and desks. But I want to learn so that I won’t end up on the street.”¹²⁷ The chairman of the Grafton camp asserted that it received no UNICEF assistance and too little from NGOs. In addition, amputees and war-wounded young people worry that they will not be able to marry, as many believe they are “no longer sexually useful.”¹²⁸



Adolescents who were wounded and suffered amputation during the war face the same problems as other adolescents but have additional obstacles reintegrating, getting an education and earning a livelihood.

While a number of NGOs, such as Handicap International, Cause Canada, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) and MSF, are working with amputees and war-wounded to facilitate their resettlement and reintegration, too little attention is focused on the specific needs of adolescents. (See International, National and Local Responses to Adolescent and Youth Concerns section.) Moreover, existing programs should be more holistic, dealing with multiple needs and solutions. Like most adolescents, those who are war-wounded and amputees proposed solutions that include better education and more sponsorships for secondary school. In addition, they expressed a desire for livelihood opportunities, health care and better sanitation in their camps.

LACK OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION AND SERVICES

Under customary law in Sierra Leone, which is commonly supported, the age of consent for marriage and sex is 14. Often, in rural settings, as soon as a girl menstruates she is married by her family.¹²⁹ Once married, girls face social pressure for early childbirth and large families.¹³⁰ In addition, war and the ensuing social disintegration have exposed rural and urban adolescents to sex, both by choice and by force, with little knowledge about reproductive health, including HIV/AIDS.

While NGOs such as MSI, American Refugee

Committee (ARC) and Planned Parenthood Association of Sierra Leone (PPASL) are providing reproductive health services to young people, there is a lack of awareness about such services among adolescents, especially those living in IDP camps. Displaced young people, who were aware of such services, believed that the services were only for married or older people. They also cited embarrassment, the location of clinics and the resultant transport costs and perceived negative attitudes of staff towards young people as barriers to the use of reproductive health services. To remedy this, young people must be included in designing reproductive health services and activities; they can provide insight into what opening hours, locations and modes of delivery best suit their peers. Services and outreach activities for internally displaced camps should be improved and better coordinated, and youth-friendly services must be more widely publicized. This could include developing a series of information leaflets about key topics of interest and contact details for clinics offering services to young people, which could be given out in camps and used as information resources.¹³¹

THE DANGERS OF ADOLESCENT PREGNANCIES

Adolescent rape, before, during and after the war, prostitution and early and unprotected sex have increased the number of unwanted pregnancies and unwanted children. The young age at which girls give birth coupled with the lack of prenatal care and health facilities have led to maternal and infant mortality rates that are among the highest in the world: for every 1,000 births, about 195 infants die before their first birthday, compared to only seven in the United States.¹³² In addition, 18 out of every 1,000 women and girls who give birth die due to pregnancy or childbearing complications each year.¹³³ Another reason for these high rates is that up to 85 percent of girls and women give birth at home, often in unsanitary conditions and assisted by local women who may not have formal training or access to basic equipment.¹³⁴

Married or unmarried, adolescent girls who bear children suffer from severe gynecological problems, including vesicovaginal fistula (VVF), an opening between the bladder and the vagina that leads to incontinence.¹³⁵ This condition, which particularly affects girls who were also gang raped, has resulted in the perception that the girls are dirty, and they are socially isolated, even by their families and, if married, by their husbands. There are few skilled doc-

tors who can perform the appropriate reconstructive surgery, and its cost is prohibitive for most girls. As a result, young women reported that they were taking traditional medicine that was causing additional reproductive health problems, such as sharp uteral pains and a hardened abdomen.¹³⁶

A CULTURE OF SILENCE AND MYTHS LEAD TO LOW CONDOM USE

Given that many adolescents are sexually active, knowledge about reproductive health is especially important. Yet, by their own testimony and NGO reports, adolescents receive very little reproductive and sexual education and have limited and ineffectual knowledge about reproductive health. In addition, cultural traditions prevent parents from discussing sex with their children, resulting in a culture of silence regarding reproductive health issues.

Few young people use or believe in the benefits of condoms. According to the Central Statistics Office, only 5.7 percent of urban Sierra Leoneans and 2.5 percent of rural dwellers have used condoms.¹³⁷ Youth leaders reported that at least 90 percent of adolescents do not use condoms and that many popular myths discourage their use. For instance, one myth holds that condoms are unsafe and will break during intercourse, causing serious infection to girls. Another asserts that a man cannot enjoy sex with condoms, and yet another holds that condoms do not work as protection against STIs, including HIV/AIDS. Moreover, at 200-300 leones (US\$0.10-0.15) each, condoms are too expensive for the average teen. An American Refugee Committee survey of adolescents aged 15-24 in Port Loko found that only a quarter of the youth had ever used a condom and fewer than 10 percent of youth knew three sources of condoms.¹³⁸

Girls expect boys to buy condoms but reported that “boys don’t like to wear condoms, and it is hard for us to convince them.”¹³⁹ However, ARC found that female youth are more likely than male youth to refuse to use condoms when the subject is raised by a partner, some believing that wearing a condom makes them feel like a prostitute rather than being in love. The need to educate female youth in particular on the importance of condom use is urgent. In addition, health care providers should ensure easy and widespread condom distribution keeping in mind that the most common sources of condoms for male youth are NGOs and partners or friends, while girls

most often go to government health facilities, friends and partners.¹⁴⁰

Apart from adolescent condom use, other groups that include adolescents, such as commercial sex workers, or groups that are having sex with adolescents, such as the military, lack access to condoms



Despite educational signs like this one in Makeni, myths and a lack education about reproductive health have meant that the majority of adolescents do not use condoms for safe sex or even believe some STIs, including HIV/AIDS, exist.

and/or have poor histories of using them. Commercial sex workers tell NGOs that they want easier access to condoms. Furthermore, the ARC survey found that only 60 percent of the military had ever used a condom. While condom use and knowledge about HIV/AIDS were higher among UNAMSIL respondents, who will ultimately leave the country, it was lower among Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and Civil Defense Force (CDF) soldiers, who are Sierra Leonean and will stay. Both of these groups must be targeted more for educational programs and be provided with condoms and voluntary testing.

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION ENDANGERS GIRLS' HEALTH

Female genital mutilation (FGM), or female genital cutting (called female circumcision by the adolescents), is a widespread social and cultural practice in Sierra Leone, with many estimates placing the number of girls affected as high as 80-90 percent.¹⁴¹ It is generally practiced by all classes, including the educated elite,¹⁴² all ethnic groups and both Christian and Muslim tribes, with the exception of Christian Krios in the western region.¹⁴³ An initiation rite marking girls' passage from childhood into womanhood, FGM is performed on girls between the ages of

seven and 14 years,¹⁴⁴ depending on their tribe. The extent of the cutting varies from tribe to tribe and may include the removal of the clitoral hood, the clitoris and/or the labia.¹⁴⁵ Sierra Leoneans who live abroad sometimes bring their daughters back to Sierra Leone to participate in initiation rites that include this procedure.¹⁴⁶

FGM may cause extreme physical and psychological damage, and in Sierra Leone it is generally performed without the use of anesthesia.¹⁴⁷ The short-term health consequences include severe pain, shock, hemorrhage, acute urine retention, infection, intermittent bleeding, abscesses, small benign tumors of the nerve, ulceration of the genital region, injury to adjacent tissue of the urethra and failure to heal.¹⁴⁸ Hemorrhage and infection can cause death. Long-term effects include damage to the urethra resulting in urinary incontinence, recurrent urinary tract infections, pelvic inflammation, reproductive tract infections resulting from obstructed menstrual flow, kidney damage, infertility, cysts, sexual dysfunction, including painful sexual intercourse, and difficulties with childbirth.¹⁴⁹ More recently, there has been concern over the possible transmission of HIV due to the use of one instrument in multiple cuttings, as well as lasting damage to the genital area, which could increase the risk of HIV transmission during intercourse.¹⁵⁰

In Sierra Leone, the practice is still a taboo subject and not open for public debate in newspapers, radio and television stations. This has meant that no comprehensive study could be carried out to document the incidence of FGM, including its health and other risks.¹⁵¹ The few adolescents who did speak about their experience spoke of the pain of FGM as well as pressure to join the secret *Bondo* society. (See Protection section.) There are signs of change, however. In late July 2002, the subject surfaced in the press after a 14-year-old girl in Freetown bled to death six hours after being initiated into the society and undergoing FGM.¹⁵² A few days later, police arrested 10 women in connection with the incident, and while criminal charges are unusual, six other women suspected of being involved in the death of another girl are being sought.¹⁵³

Some NGOs have initiated discussion about FGM and its health problems within educated circles and among doctors, midwives, nurses, teachers, students and journalists. In the face of opposition from the secret societies and the *soweis*, who perform the cutting, local and international NGOs, such as the National Committee of the Inter-African Committee

on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, the Sierra Leone Association on Women's Welfare and the IRC, have organized educational activities about FGM.¹⁵⁴ Deriving their primary income and authority from this practice, the *soweis* are understandably resistant to change.¹⁵⁵

Programs to address FGM must treat the practice not as an isolated issue but as part of a comprehensive, holistic program focusing on the larger issue of girls' and women's health, human rights, education, economic and social issues. Toward that end, the government, NGOs and UN agencies should look towards examples of successful field interventions elsewhere, including a project in Kenya involving girls in alternative rites of passage that meet many of the same socio-cultural needs as traditional cutting ceremonies¹⁵⁶ and the Ending Female Genital Mutilation project in Guinea, which combined local advocacy with strong statements against the practice by respected Guinean women and politicians.¹⁵⁷

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS, INCLUDING HIV/AIDS, POSE NEW THREAT TO YOUNG PEOPLE

NGOs working with adolescents and youth report a high incidence of STIs, like syphilis and gonorrhea, especially in young women. They documented that a majority of the girls who were subjected to repeated rape, and especially those who have undergone FGM, were exposed to STIs — most commonly pelvic inflammatory disease, but also HIV.¹⁵⁸ In addition, the widespread mobility of soldiers increases girls' risks of contracting STIs, as even during peacetime, young men in the military have STI rates two to five times higher than civilians. During armed conflict, the infection rates can be 50 times higher.¹⁵⁹ Adolescent researchers, as well as the ARC survey in Port Loko, found that young people's knowledge of other STIs, while higher than of HIV/AIDS, is very low.¹⁶⁰ Although few young people are aware of it, STIs and other diseases like tuberculosis increase the likelihood of contracting HIV/AIDS.

“Sexual violence has left most of us with STDs and we are asking the government, NGOs and any other help we can get to please help us with medical facilities.”

— Nancy, teen mother, Makeni

Culture and Conflict Contribute to the Spread of STIs, Including HIV/AIDS

There are many existing socio-economic and cultural factors that heighten the vulnerability of adolescents, especially girls, to STIs, including HIV/AIDS, in Sierra Leone. They include early marriage for girls, polygamy, lack of reproductive health education and traditional practices that involve the use of skin piercing instruments and contact with blood, such as tattooing, tribal marks, ear and gum piercing, male and female circumcision, and traditional contraceptive methods. These factors also include a higher level of female illiteracy and poverty, longstanding and entrenched gender inequities, including the role of men as the decision-makers and a high level of gender-based violence, including rape. These vulnerabilities are compounded by boys', girls' and women's lack of reproductive health information and services, as well as the fact that boys and men do not like to wear condoms, and girls may discourage their use.¹⁶¹

The impact of the war has only worsened adolescents' vulnerability and contributed to the spread of STIs, including HIV/AIDS. The main factors include:

- Multiple population displacements
- Lack of medical treatment due to debilitated health and other social sector support systems
- Widespread use of rape and other forms of gender-based violence as a weapon of war
- Social disintegration, including the dislocation of families and the breakdown of social structures, leading to adolescents having sex, and economic destitution forcing girls to engage in sex in exchange for economic and other benefits
- Intravenous drug use¹⁶²

In addition, during armed conflicts around the world, the widespread mobility of combatants, foreign troops and peacekeepers, some from countries

where HIV/AIDS is more prevalent, as well as business people, truck drivers, extension workers and others, contributes to increased infection rates among girls.¹⁶³

Conflicting HIV/AIDS Prevalence Rates

There are conflicting statistics as to the HIV prevalence rate in Sierra Leone. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) 2002 national prevalence survey initially found an HIV rate of 4.9 percent among people of reproductive age (12-49), with a range of 6.1 percent in Freetown and 4 percent outside of Freetown.¹⁶⁴ However, the findings are being reevaluated and some suggest that the figure might be significantly lower.¹⁶⁵ Others assert that it is higher: a United Nations report estimated that the percentage of adults living with HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone at the end of 2001 was 7 percent.¹⁶⁶ A five percent rate indicates a full-blown epidemic, and experience from other countries, particularly those in conflict situations, has shown that once the HIV/AIDS prevalence exceeds 5 percent, there will be an exponential increase, sometimes as high as 50 percent annually.¹⁶⁷ The vulnerability of girls is strikingly higher than for boys: a United Nations report estimates that the percentage of adolescents and youth, aged 15-24, living with HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone is between 4.9 and 10.2 percent for young women and 1.6-3.4 percent for young men.¹⁶⁸ Traditionally high-risk groups have an astoundingly high prevalence: a 1997 survey of commercial sex workers indicated a prevalence rate as high as 70 percent, and testing in a military hospital from 1998-2000 revealed a 67.8 prevalence rate.¹⁶⁹

Lack of Adolescent Concern, Knowledge and Education About HIV/AIDS

Adolescent and Women's Commission researchers found an extremely low level of knowledge and concern among adolescents about the causes and consequences of HIV/AIDS. Researchers met with young people in focus groups who said that whole communities had no information about HIV/AIDS or STIs, but that they need it. Other focus groups that did know about HIV/AIDS generally only knew about transmission through sex.

A United Nations report also states that less than 25 percent of adolescents between the ages of 15 and 19 in Sierra Leone could name the three main ways of protection.¹⁷⁰ The ARC survey of adolescents and

youth in Port Loko found that while three-quarters of those surveyed knew that HIV could be transmitted through sex, only six percent of females and seven percent of males were able to correctly cite three routes of transmission, while only five percent of females and four percent of males could identify three ways of avoiding AIDS.¹⁷¹ UNICEF officials said that knowledge is lowest among out-of-school youth.¹⁷²

The decade of conflict destroyed most of the health and other social sector support systems, making matters worse. The ARC survey found that only two percent of females between the ages of 15 and 24 had been tested for HIV/AIDS, and only nine percent knew a place to get tested.¹⁷³ While international NGO and UN representatives pointed out that there is free testing at the Ministry of Health and Sanitation hospital in Freetown, young people did not know this, pointing to a lack of communication between those offering services and adolescents. The result is that the majority of those infected are unaware of their condition and likely to transmit the virus to new uninfected individuals. However, CDC teams say that people want to know their status,¹⁷⁴ and ARC reported that once one girl was diagnosed with HIV, other adolescents began to believe the disease existed. When testing does become widespread, there will be an enormous need for counseling services as well as treatment.

While youth groups asserted that adolescents are very much concerned about the existence of the disease,¹⁷⁵ recent statistics say otherwise: 58 percent of male youth and 65 percent of females aged 15 to 24 in Port Loko reported being worried "only a little or not at all" about becoming infected with HIV. This lack of concern among female youth is particularly distressing considering that estimated AIDS rates are higher among female youth than male youth in Sierra Leone and are rising most rapidly among African young women.¹⁷⁶ Concern about becoming infected with HIV was low even among vulnerable groups such as commercial sex workers, with only 22 percent reporting that they worried a lot about getting AIDS. In addition, only nine percent of commercial sex workers could cite three or more routes of transmission, and only five percent could name three or more ways of avoiding AIDS.¹⁷⁷

Compounding the problem and closely connected to the lack of knowledge is the widespread denial among young people, as many as 85 percent, according to youth leaders, of the existence of HIV/AIDS.¹⁷⁸ Many young people say that AIDS

really stands for “Americans’ Intent/Idea to Destroy/Discourage Sex.” The depth of this denial is illustrated below in some responses by young people when questioned about HIV/AIDS.

A: *I don’t believe in this sick.*

Q: How do you prevent this sick?

A: *You the husband have to satisfy your wife.*

— Young ex-combatant, Makeni

A: *I’ve never heard of anyone with AIDS in Sierra Leone. Youth don’t really worry about it.*

— Adolescent girl, Freetown

A: *I don’t believe about AIDS and HIV because I do not meet it in my family.*

— Young ex-combatant, Makeni

Q: How can HIV/AIDS be prevented?

A: *Control sexual activities by stay with one partner. There is no use to get condom. It creates room for fornication and immorality.*

— Police officer, Freetown

Q: Do you know of any sickness called AIDS?

A: *No. I only heard people talking about it over the radio, but have never seen a victim.*

— Teen parent, Freetown

A: *I don’t believe in the idea of AIDS because I see it as the American idea to discourage sex.*

— Boy in secondary school, Makeni

A: *I don’t believe in the existence of AIDS because I’ve never seen a machine that can testify on someone who had got AIDS that this person has AIDS.*

— Boy in secondary school, Makeni¹⁷⁹

Government’s Critical Role in Addressing HIV/AIDS among Young People

The denial is bolstered by the national government, which, according to a UNICEF representative, has been “in denial about HIV/AIDS and the problems that it causes. It is claiming that the rate is at 2.3 percent, whereas UNICEF is maintaining that the rate is over 6 percent.”¹⁸⁰ JoAnna Van Gerpen, UNICEF’s representative in Sierra Leone, recently stated that the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone is rapidly overtaking malaria as the number one health problem.¹⁸¹ The first cases of HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone were reported in 1987. Preoccupied with a war that twice overran the capital, the government of Sierra Leone remained quiet on the issue and had no national AIDS policy until December 2001.¹⁸²

If AIDS is to be contained in Sierra Leone, the government must change its attitudes and programs must be drastically increased and cut across all sectors, addressing the socio-economic causes and effects. The government recently initiated a multi-sectoral policy that, on paper, targets youth.¹⁸³ The National HIV/AIDS policy for Sierra Leone specifies its interest in ensuring that “particularly the young know what to do to avoid infection” and “empower young people with HIV/AIDS-related information for behavior change.” This policy asserts that institutions and committees on HIV/AIDS should include youth representatives. Finally, it articulates the government’s responsibility to ensure that all programs are developed and implemented for the “prevention and protection from HIV/AIDS/STI of vulnerable groups, with a special focus on youth...”¹⁸⁴ The government must follow its intent with actions, by developing protocols and programs to implement these policies in a way that includes the active participation of young people.

Solutions

Regardless of the current controversy over the HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Sierra Leone, intensive advocacy efforts must be undertaken to increase knowledge about the dangers of the disease and change attitudes and behaviors to prevent its further spread. In order to develop effective programs for adolescents, the results of the CDC’s national Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) survey and the Sierra Leone’s government’s Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Adolescent Survey Report, completed in April 2002, should be widely released and the findings should form the basis of advocacy and programming.¹⁸⁵ Existing programs, such as the World Bank’s Sierra Leone HIV/AIDS Response Project (SHARP), which includes funding for community and civil society initiatives, should ensure that young people are actively involved in developing programs and policies.

PPASL and UNICEF are training adolescents on peer education, HIV/AIDS and life skills in the Western Area, and ARC, like PPASL, is educating adolescents about reproductive health, safe sex and condom distribution and supporting health clubs and training centers with peer educators and counseling.¹⁸⁶ These peer education programs should be supported further to include non-formal learning and vocational training, ensuring that girls, rural youth and young people who are not in school and/or are illiterate are

included. Programs should also focus on HIV/AIDS information and on services and skills development for girls and women throughout the country who have experienced gender-based violence and exploitation. United Nations peacekeepers and uniformed personnel need to be further educated. A positive step in awareness raising is the government's encouragement of the media's mobilization against

HIV/AIDS, targeting youth against early and unprotected sex.¹⁸⁷ In addition, a national awareness raising campaign focused on young people's knowledge and life skills development should be immediately implemented,¹⁸⁸ as should a school curriculum addressing reproductive and sexual health education.¹⁸⁹

VIII. PROTECTION: FEW RESOURCES, MANY CATEGORIES OF VULNERABILITY

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PROTECTION EFFORTS FRAGMENTED

A common means of approaching child and adolescent protection¹⁹⁰ in humanitarian emergencies and reconstruction efforts is to target the “most vulnerable” populations, while trying to provide interventions that promote the rights and well-being of the majority. In Sierra Leone, this approach has significant pitfalls. After nearly a decade of especially brutal armed conflict, virtually everyone in the country can be categorized as vulnerable in some form or another. But as specialized organizations have plunged in to establish and address tiers of child and adolescent vulnerability,¹⁹¹ support for the wider population and the rehabilitation of institutional support structures have lagged far behind. Overall, protection efforts are fragmented; confusion and competition are dividing rather than uniting communities over the use of very limited resources.

Needy young people and their families vie for recognition as one or more of the many vulnerable categories for whom “special packages” or assistance plans have been designed — returning refugees, new Liberian refugees, former combatants, internally displaced persons in camps, “separated children” and other groups. Many others do not fit in these groups, but face very pressing problems. For example, young people displaced to urban centers have experienced terrible insecurity or have lost property, family, livelihood and education opportunities. These young people are often neglected and resent not receiving specialized care.

While traditional local support systems are reduced to skeletons, a proliferation of national structures

and organizations to address child protection (the National Commission for War-Affected Children, the MSWGCA, the Ministry of Youth and Sport, a potential Commission on the Rights of Children, UNICEF, the Child Protection Network (CPN),¹⁹² and more (see Glossary)) have added to increasing bitterness among young people and confusion over who is responsible for their support. Protection and assistance efforts are not streamlined in a way that promotes a holistic approach to young people across government and humanitarian structures.

Specific child and adolescent protection and assistance must be incorporated within a comprehensive framework of recovery that is widely inclusive and does not stigmatize or exclude any particular group. More ways must be found to help young people access support, minimize social conflict over the provision of assistance and protect against the misuse of systems. The following are areas of particular concern to such efforts.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND EXPLOITATION

In early 2002, the release of a draft study by UNHCR and Save the Children UK (STC-UK) on the subject of sexual violence and exploitation of refugee children in West Africa exploded into an international scandal. The report, *Sexual Violence and Exploitation: The Experience of Refugee Children in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone*, included accusations by children and adolescents in refugee and IDP camps of sexual exploitation and violence against them by mainly locally hired aid workers, as well as United Nations peacekeepers and other males with authority and/or resources.¹⁹⁴

*Physicians for Human Rights estimates that approximately 50,000 to 64,000 IDP girls and women were sexually assaulted during the war.*¹⁹³

* * *

Of an estimated 4,500 children abducted in Sierra Leone following the 1999 invasion of Freetown, 60 percent were girls, the majority of whom suffered repeated acts of sexual violence.

— Olara Otunnu, UN Special Representative for the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict

The findings of adolescent researchers¹⁹⁵ support many of the claims made in the study that gender-based violence, including the sexual exploitation of young people, especially girls, is extremely widespread. Researchers also documented female genital mutilation (FGM) and early and forced marriage as key problems facing girls. (See also Health section.) They said that poverty and traditional sex discrimination combined with inadequate or non-existent humanitarian assistance and response mechanisms fuel the violence.

RAMPANT PROSTITUTION

Adolescents, youth and adults told researchers that “prostitution,” which they define as the exchange of sexual services for money, goods or other benefits, is rampant in Sierra Leone. The vast majority of the more than 600 adolescents and youth interviewed said they could identify individuals involved in prostitution, including, in many cases, themselves.¹⁹⁶

Forms and Causes

Prostitution takes several forms and crosses a wide spectrum of groups and individuals, including IDPs, Liberian refugees, teenage mothers, former combatants who are unemployed and without benefits, orphans, students and the extremely poor. Although most prostitutes are females, some say

that males become involved “by homosexuals.”

In general, they work in almost every possible setting, from saloons and discos to UNAMSIL bases, along roads, on beaches and boats, in private homes. Customers are mainly adult males, including UN peacekeeping troops; international workers; local men, including those working with humanitarian organizations; youths and others. Adolescent researchers talked to teenage girls who openly solicit customers in the local dance and drinking venues of Makeni. They dance provocatively before the crowd and approach individual males. These young women do not associate at all with the more “professional” prostitutes who work principally among the UN peacekeepers near their base in Makeni, viewing them as competition. As for the women working near the UNAMSIL base, one said: “We do not have a leader. Everyone is a leader. We do not have to advertise. Men know we are here, and they come, although sometimes it is slow, and sometimes they do not pay.”¹⁹⁷

Young people cited poverty as the main cause of prostitution. One girl said, “I do it just to get money to eat and to give to my parents.”¹⁹⁸ A former combatant adolescent girl in Makeni told researchers, “No one provides for us, which is why many go into prostitution. This is why I go myself.”¹⁹⁹ Other prostitutes in Makeni said, “We would be ready to stop everything if we had money to go to school, but there’s no money, nothing.”²⁰⁰ One adolescent girl interviewed in Freetown said, “My friend is called Fatu. She is 16. She told me that when she is sick...unless she goes and does her prostitution for money to buy drugs, she has nobody to take care of her.”²⁰¹

UNAMSIL Troops Are Principal Customers

A UNAMSIL spokesperson in Makeni stated that solicitation of prostitutes by UNAMSIL soldiers stationed there does not take place. Prostitutes, however, spoke in detail about the sexual services they have provided to the peacekeepers. “That mat you are sitting on right now,” a young woman said to researchers, “that’s what we do it on. They come from there [pointing toward the Nigerian Battalion 11 base] at night, and we sleep with them on the floor in this house. UNAMSIL also calls on us, and we go there. They give us things to eat for sex. This is why we stay here. They call us at night, and we get something to eat.... Some do ‘men to men,’ too.”²⁰⁵ The young women interviewed affirmed that girls under 18 years old are involved in this prostitution. An 18-year-old prostitute said, “I started this when I was 17.”²⁰⁶

Other girls and women left with no home or family to return to, travel significant distances together to service UNAMSIL troops based in different towns. For example, all the women and youth participating in a focus group of prostitutes in Makeni were from somewhere else in Sierra Leone, including Lungi in the western region, effectively having become internally displaced again. One said: “I lost my parents in the war. We decided to group ourselves together and come here. We’re not happy now.” Another concurred: “We have no houses to go back to, no nothing. We pray to God for opportunity and better conditions.”

Almost all the former combatant girls interviewed by the Women’s Commission in Peacock Farm, a neighborhood on the outskirts of Freetown, in the fall of 2001 were involved in commercial sex work. They also cited “bad friends,” “pressure from parents” and growing desensitization to sexual exploitation and violence among the population as causes of prostitution. A police officer in Freetown believes adolescents are led to prostitution because of “broken homes and discontent minds.”²⁰²

Ex-combatant and other girls associated with fighting forces articulated their own powerlessness and fears of becoming involved in prostitution. “I was abducted,” said one. “After disarmament they told us we would get allowances every month. But we don’t see any improvements.... I don’t want to be a prostitute. How do they expect me to live?”²⁰³

Another said: “This country is full of so many resources, but they squander everything for themselves. They don’t care about the adolescents, now they are turning to prostitution.”²⁰⁴

Consequences

The consequences of this exploitation are deep and widespread. Many young people expressed profound concern that prostitution is so pervasive that it dramatically impedes their ability to have more normal relationships. One young man from Makeni said: “I approached a well-dressed woman for a regular date one day, and she coldly asked me what I would give her for it. There is no free love anymore in Sierra Leone.”²⁰⁷

Young people also cite low self-esteem, hopelessness and shame, disease, an inability to marry, unwanted teen pregnancy and poverty for the children of child mothers as consequences of prostitution. In Makeni, a group of young women prostitutes live constantly

with isolation and rejection. They are looked down upon by other members of the community for their work, even though many girls and women are doing the same thing in other areas of the town. “We are not liked in the community. They treat us poorly... sending stones against us, and some are calling us *kolonkos* [meaning prostitutes],” one said.²⁰⁸

They also worry about contracting illnesses. Though skeptical about AIDS, they still express concern. “The men don’t agree to use condoms. If we have one, they will not use it.” Some problems they cite are “high blood pressure, malaria, stomach pain, appendicitis, gonorrhea and pregnancy — men will not take responsibility for the baby.”²⁰⁹

The normalcy with which prostitution is now viewed might explain why adolescents ranked it relatively low in their survey of top concerns. This stands in stark contrast to their openness in discussing the subject and indicates some breakdown in the tight cultural taboo surrounding it. Some adolescents feel this is because they have nothing left to lose; others are anxious to see it addressed; and others still want to discuss it because sexual activity in general is intriguing and on their minds as their own sexuality emerges. A UNAMSIL human rights officer pointed to the normalcy of years of wartime violence: “People got things through violence and it was the same for sexual abuse. This has led to amazing levels of tolerance [of this violence.]”²¹⁰

Addressing the Problem

In the face of numerous challenges, efforts are underway to address the problem of prostitution. Makeni Chief of Police Sisko pointed to the absence of any clear law against prostitution. One statute penalizes the “harboring of a child under 18 under a roof,” he said, and perpetrators can be arrested for “indecent exposure,” but arrests are “infrequent, apart from on the beaches of Freetown.”²¹¹ Furthermore, the age of consent in Sierra Leone is 14.

A second challenge is monitoring the behavior of peacekeepers and humanitarian workers, ensuring they work to prevent sexual violence and exploitation. In the wake of the scandal involving refugee and IDP children, a task force was established by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)²¹² to address prevention and monitoring. Mandated “to make recommendations that specifically aim to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian personnel and the misuse of humanitarian assistance

for sexual purposes,” the newly created Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises developed a plan of action, including new codes of conduct and core principles on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.²¹³ (See Appendix.) Ensuring implementation and monitoring of these commitments must be the next step.

Few NGOs are focused on working to educate and provide services to commercial sex workers or those who buy their services. Those that are, such as GOAL, Planned Parenthood, UNFPA and Marie Stopes International should be supported. Programs should be expanded into rural areas, as much of the focus until now has been on the urban centers, and should be holistic, incorporating counseling, skills training and access to credit, as well as reproductive health information and services.

UNAMSIL’s Human Rights Office has made efforts to address prostitution and sexual violence. In Makeni, for example, it is working with students in schools that have formed human rights working groups and each month discuss a different set of rights. Human Rights Officers also work directly with the UN peacekeepers on the challenging task of prevention. “Children under 18 are being used for sex by peacekeepers, and you do not have too many complaints about it from families or others,” a UNAMSIL Human Rights Officer in Makeni said. “Every time a battalion is deployed, they get training on human rights from us,” she said. “We stress the issue of complying with UN standards with them. However, the code of conduct for peacekeepers requires ‘respect for women,’ and it’s not clear whether this message is effective.”²¹⁴ UNAMSIL’s Child Protection Office will also be working to bring UN agencies together on compliance with the new IASC code of conduct principles.

Organizations with specific child protection mandates, including UNICEF and UNHCR, are among those required to implement the new core principles. UNICEF has had a project for survivors of sexual violence in place for some time, and UNHCR had begun work on the issues as well, prior to the recent scandal.

International and local organizations focused on child protection must continue to work together with local community groups to raise issues about sexual violence and exploitation with young people and identify solutions. Religious and youth groups should be brought further into the fold of these discussions. Any groups carrying out work on the reha-



Adolescent researchers, including some who are child mothers themselves, report that girls are especially concerned about unwanted pregnancy and early and forced marriage. With limited job and education opportunities, many girls also fear being forced into prostitution to support themselves.

bilitation of justice and law enforcement systems must tackle these issues head on, so that all civilians have full protection from sexual exploitation under the law in line with international standards. Since the problem disproportionately affects girls, gender issues must be central to all of these initiatives.

RAPE, SEXUAL SLAVERY AND BEARING THE CHILDREN OF CAPTORS

The Ongoing Impact of Wartime Violence

Interviews with young people confirmed their experiences as witnesses and/or victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence committed during the war.²¹⁵ The impact of these experiences continues to affect their lives, especially those who care for the children born as a result of captivity and sexual enslavement by the RUF. Some of these young mothers participated as adolescent researchers for this study and together with other members of the research teams interviewed other survivors, who provided direct testimony about their experiences. NGOs, human rights organizations, United Nations agencies and others have also substantially documented widespread acts of sexual violence committed during the war. As noted above, Physicians for Human Rights puts the number of female IDP who have suffered war-related sexual assaults in the Sierra Leone war at 50,000 to 64,000.²¹⁶ Factoring in younger adolescents and those who were not IDPs or who were refugees, the number would likely skyrocket.

Survivors of this violence nurse wounds that have not and will not heal and relive the memories of their trauma. While many have been accepted by their families and communities, some girls are shunned and ridiculed, and many former sexual slaves are called “rebel wives.” Many face harsh difficulties finding jobs, education, health care and marriage partners, adding to their trauma.

The impact of this violence has cut a wide swath through the lives of all adolescents and youth in Sierra Leone. Girls, especially, disclose ongoing fears of sexual violence, and many believe this violence has desensitized young people to such a degree that they see it as simply unavoidable and inevitable. Support for survivors of wartime sexual violence is therefore an ongoing need through counseling, training, health care, job services, community advocacy, protection from further violence and more. Work to prevent further violence and allay the fears of young people is also an urgent priority.

The Question of Current Sexual Violence

The extent of ongoing sexual violence, including rape, in Sierra Leone is not fully known. Interviews revealed no direct testimony of acts of sexual violence recently being committed against adolescents, but secondary sources attest to its taking place. Chief of Police Sisko in Makeni told researchers that only one rape case had been reported to police in recent months, involving an adult woman. He stated that reporting of such cases is not common “due to stigmatization...if young girls get raped here, they will hardly get married, and so they suffer in silence. It is not like in big towns where there are different groups to help. However, the Forum for African Women Educationalists is working on this here.”²¹⁷

UNHCR and STC-UK’s recent report also asserts that “reliable data on how many children are affected by sexual violence and exploitation within the Mano River states still remains rare.”²¹⁸ The report cites fear of stigmatization, reprisal, collusion of authorities and lack of awareness about justice and other services as some of the barriers to seeking legal and other remedies. One young person told adolescent researchers that young drug users rape girls when

they are high. “They [were] not aware of what they were doing because at that time they have been drugged,”²¹⁹ he said. Others said that sexual violence continues for some girls and women who remain with their “bush husbands.” One ex-combatant said, “Some of our leaders take our wives at home and have sex with them. After having sex they start to talk about them and call them prostitutes.”²²⁰

Addressing the Problem

Some survivors of wartime sexual violence described a helpful and healing response by their families and communities, feeling that they are on the road to recovery. One teen mother in Freetown said: “I am a victim. It was during the course of the war. I was really brutalized, but thank God, I am alive. I am associating myself with friends and people that really encourage me.”²²²

Young people proposed many ways to deal with the impact of sexual violence and prevent further abuses. Fundamental are family and community support and acceptance for survivors. One teen parent said that community members should talk with survivors and “tell them not to be shy to say what had been their past experiences.”²²³ Others said that communities need to step in and shame the perpetrators. Persons caught committing rape should be “scandaled to the nation” and “arrested by the policemen.”²²⁴ Survivors need “treatment by doctors” to return to “your correct mood again,” some said, and others support counseling and the provision of education and job skills for survivors.²²⁵

Boys Recall Wartime Sexual Violence

Many adolescent boys register ongoing concern about rape. Adolescent boys in Freetown even ranked concern over rape slightly higher than adolescent girls did. Many recall instances of boys being forced by rebels to rape girls or family members, sometimes including other males. Some also report cases of females raping males during the war. An example cited several times by different groups of participants involved a case of female RUF fighters luring men into an encampment in Makeni. Once cajoled inside, the females allegedly forced each man to have sex consecutively with several females. If they refused or could not keep up, they were supposedly beaten or killed. One youth says, “The RUF did it at Cemetery Road that time when they arrived in Makeni. The methods they used is to call on you like giving you food to eat, and when you go there you are going to be raped by a group of women.”²²¹

Child survivors of sexual violence ultimately have few protections under Sierra Leonean law. The age of consent is 14; few rape cases are reported and even fewer are tried. Legal systems are barely functioning and procedures are not “child friendly.” The UNHCR and STC-UK report states that a “child taking a rape case against an adult would be expected to appear in court and testify...in front of the assailant....”²²⁶ In IDP or temporary settlement camp settings, few mechanisms function well to respond supportively to young people’s claims of violence with follow-up protective services.

The IASC plan of action spells out a detailed approach, with a timeline, to improve coordinated protection against sexual violence and exploitation, including using the core principles mentioned above, which include response and disciplinary procedures. (See Appendix.) The plan includes: conducting situation analyses and assessments of need, identifying key areas of risk; addressing the manner of camp governance, the delivery of humanitarian services, and the need to improve accountability to beneficiary populations; and emphasizing the provision of basic services to survivors.²²⁷ Coordinated follow-through on these activities among communities, service providers and governments that is closely linked with increased community activism on the issues is critical to improved prevention and response. The response must not only focus on former refugees and IDPs in Sierra Leone, but also on the wider population.

FORCED SECRET SOCIETY INITIATIONS — FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

As discussed in the Health section, virtually all young people, NGO representatives and others stated that FGM perpetrated against young girls is widespread in Sierra Leone as part of the initiation rites of the traditional *Bondo* secret society. (See Health section.) Because of its highly sensitive and taboo nature, adolescent researchers thought hard about how to approach the topic. Afraid to appear disloyal to their oaths of secrecy, those who are part of a secret society and wish to speak about the subject, must do so discretely. Even politicians are careful not to offend members of the society, and have supported the building of initiation centers or “bushes” in various parts of the country. Health and human rights advocates trying to reduce FGM have faced the wrath of *Bondo* secret society supporters; the Minister of Foreign Affairs, leading demonstrators

against anti-FGM advocates, presented a petition to the president, threatening to, “sew up the mouths of those preaching against Bondo.” In reply, the president said he himself was “from a traditional background” and pledged his support.²²⁸ There is no law in Sierra Leone prohibiting FGM.²²⁹

When the topic was raised, it provoked strong responses among young people. Most respondents, male and female, said that the practice is usually forced upon girls at a young age, and most agreed that it needs changing. “I was about 10,” said one adolescent girl, now 18. “They just take you and do it. It’s not by choice. It was very painful. It’s still painful today,” she said, gesturing to the area between her legs. “I can feel sexual feelings in my breasts, but nowhere else,” she continued. “My daughter will *not* join.”²³⁰

Another girl said, “Normally people are forced into *Bondo*. But if you are not well off, they will not force you. Society members eat three times a day. It all involves money. If you are not able to pay, you are not forced.”²³¹ She stated that secret society members rely on new sources of income and other contributions to improve the well-being of the group, which involves parties and other activities. This, she explained, leads to forcing new members to join. Others, however, stated that even poor girls can be subjected to the practice. In either situation, parents are pressured to spend precious resources on the activities, including the purchase of expensive ceremonial clothes, to avoid community embarrassment over an inability to pay. At times, they must even pay the women to return their daughters to them, who are effectively held for ransom, as secret society members refuse to release them before circumcision and payment.

One person interviewed indicated that initiation into the traditional society is seen by elders as a curative for what they perceive as girls’ “bad sexual behavior.” One adolescent girl told how she went to live with a boyfriend to get money for her school fees. She became pregnant twice, both times seeking an abortion, and then became a prostitute. As a result, her grandmother attempted to have her initiated into the “*Bondo* Nature Society.” She said, “[my] mother sent men to [my] grandmother so that they can take [me] to the bush, and finally they succeeded.”²³² Despite sentiments against the practice, initiation has positive effects for some girls, as it makes them acceptable in the eyes of their community and eligible for marriage, having upheld the traditions of the culture.²³³ In addition, a number of the female ex-

combatants sought membership in the traditional society as a form of self-protection and evidence that they were reintegrating into society.²³⁴

Young people require additional information about the health risks related to female circumcision, and safe spaces to discuss the subject openly. These discussions must ultimately include parents and senior members of the *Bondo* society, who must be convinced to find different, safer ways to initiate young women into adulthood that do not involve the mutilation of their bodies. A legislative response banning the practice would also support its cessation. One young person said simply, “The solution is to tell our parents to stop condoning this traditional society.”²³⁵

MARRIAGE: EARLY, FORCED AND NEVER

Views on the ideal time for marriage vary. Many adolescents interviewed put the desired or appropriate age at 17 or 18 years of age or “after university studies.” Whatever the scenario, however, young people are in a state of flux and confusion about marriage possibilities.

Girls surveyed voiced strong concerns about being forced into marriages at a young age. On average, they are twice as concerned about it as boys. (See Survey Results section.) Most said these young marriages happen between the ages of 13 and 15 mainly due to poverty. With little economic support, girls and their parents are turning to males with more resources to care for them. Some early marriages also occur as a result of teen pregnancy. Although many fathers skirt responsibility, some pregnant girls are compelled to marry the father of the child. Other girls described traditional initiation rites leading to forced or early marriage. When girls emerge from their initiation they are presented to their community as eligible for marriage, and many are married immediately.

While some were concerned about being pushed into marriage, others worried they might never marry. Former female RUF abductees with “RUF” scarred on their bodies, rape victims, single child mothers, those with diseases, sex workers and others believe their marriage prospects are grim. Adults confirmed this view. Many boys said they might like to marry but that they need to put it off for economic reasons.

THE DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION (DDR) PROGRAM

“They lied to us that they would give us everything we wanted if we handed in our weapons. They promised us skills training, allowance and jobs, but nothing happened.”

— Adolescent boy, Waterloo Interim Care Center, Freetown, October 2001

“If I knew that this was what life would turn out to be, I would have stayed in the bush.”

— Formally demobilized adolescent girl, Peacock Farm, Freetown, October 2001

The DDR program in Sierra Leone is touted as one of the most successful demobilization efforts in history — it accomplished its principal goals of disarming and demobilizing thousands of ex-combatants on all sides of the conflict, including children (see Demobilization statistics chart). It quickly increased security in Sierra Leone, an essential prerequisite for peace. In the face of limited resources, a fluctuating security situation and destroyed infrastructure, UNICEF, Child Protection Agencies (CPAs) and the government of Sierra Leone provided demobilization services, including reunification, to approximately 6,900 children and adolescents. These are just first steps, however, toward significantly raising the bar of success in such efforts. Interviews with more than 300 adolescents, youth, women and men formerly associated with fighting groups in Sierra Leone reveal very serious gaps in the program and provide strong lessons learned.²³⁶

The DDR made a distinction between “ex-combatants” and those recruited to serve for other purposes, which made it especially hard for girls and women leaving armed groups to find reintegration support. Some who were eligible for formal demobilization were unable to access the program, and still others who did formally demobilize found the support they received to be grossly incomplete. Overall, while the two “Ds” in DDR have been completed,

young people say that the “R” — the reintegration essential to uniting these components to construct recovery, reconciliation and a new beginning — remains distinctly lacking.

These and other gaps described below are contributing to deep feelings of injustice, neglect, anger and desperation among those formerly involved with fighting groups, as described more in the Psychosocial section. Many feel more stressed in post-conflict Sierra Leone than during the war as part of the fighting forces. Many youths formerly with the RUF especially, feel extremely angry and call the DDR programs “totally inadequate.” They believe they have been “lied to” and threaten a return to fighting as the result of “promises not being kept.”

In addition to undermining the peace process, the gaps in the DDR program are also contributing to further protection problems. Many children, adolescents and women left behind by the DDR face a range of new, serious problems, including: an inability to provide for the children they bore while in captivity with armed groups; the experience of strong negative stigmatization within their communities and families; migrations to urban areas in search of work; becoming homeless “street kids;” using drugs and committing crimes; and becoming involved in commercial sex work.

Some CPAs also describe frustration and concern over the limitations of the DDR. They identify strong needs to address additional child and adolescent protection problems, while continuing to support those they have already begun to serve.

MAJOR GAPS IN THE DDR

- **The initial “cash for weapons” approach to DDR rendered many young people and women ineligible for formal demobilization.**

Between the May 1999 ceasefire, the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement in July 1999 and the official start of the third phase of the DDR program in November 1999, many young people took the opportunity to quickly get away from their commanders. Some of those who “spontaneously demobilized and reintegrated” in this way later had trouble accessing the formal demobilization process, especially girls and women.

When the process began, individuals were required

to turn in a weapon to UNAMSIL authorities in order to “disarm.” Many of those who left for home spontaneously did so without a weapon and thus could not meet this requirement. Many commanders also collected weapons from captives to be later

When DDR Works Well

At St. Edward’s Secondary School, former combatants between the ages of 18 and 21 who have gone through the DDR program have been accepted to and are attending school. The National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR) has facilitated their acceptance by covering their fees and providing them a monthly allowance. Most importantly, a caring Sierra Leonean guidance counselor gives them support. She affectionately calls them “my boys.” The principal of the school embraces them as his own, showing them tenderness and understanding. Students model themselves after the teachers and principal. As a result, the former combatants feel accepted and do not want to return to the bush. Although some are stigmatized in their communities, they believe they can cope because the school provides a sanctuary. They are hopeful beyond their bullet wounds, trauma and illnesses. They express optimism about the future and praise the school authorities.²⁴⁰

parceled out by them as patrimony to chosen recipients — mainly males. The one-person, one-weapon approach was later changed, and group disarmament was instituted. This involved commanders providing UNAMSIL and NCDDR lists of former combatants to be disarmed. Groups would then disarm together, and weapons would be turned in jointly.

Many women and girls were excluded from formal demobilization as others rushed in for assistance. Had those who spontaneously returned home arrived with weapons, they would have raised suspicions among those who received them. But arriving without them created further barriers to receiving care. Desperate for help, some of these young people left home again to try and get weapons in order to comply. One adolescent girl in Peacock Farm said, “...three of my friends have gone back to Kono...they said they are going to get weapons and disarm.”²⁴¹ Others felt they could not go back and approach commanders for help or to be placed on

The DDR: Goals and Functions

ORIGINS AND PURPOSE

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) in Sierra Leone has taken place in roughly three phases, each interrupted by a resurgence of violence, between 1998 and 2002. The first phase began in 1998 when ECOMOG ousted the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) military regime and the government of Sierra Leone gained control. While rebels surrendering to ECOMOG were demobilized, efforts were curtailed by another wave of violence beginning in January 1999. The Lomé Peace Agreement of July 1999 heralded a second, more elaborate phase of the DDR that began in October 1999 and focused on the collection and destruction of surrendered weapons and the demobilization of ex-combatants prior to reintegration into civilian life. After another resurgence of violence, a third phase began in May 2001 and was concluded in January 2002, prompting a formal declaration of the war's end. Approximately 72,490 former combatants were demobilized, including 6,845 children. The closing date for the Multi-donor Trust Fund administered by the World Bank, which covers ongoing reintegration costs, is February 28, 2003.

PARTNERS

The National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR)²³⁷ governs the DDR, overseeing the work of the government of Sierra Leone, UN and RUF members. Under Article XVI of the Lomé Peace Agreement, UNAMSIL (then UNOMSIL) and ECOMOG serve as a neutral peace keeping force responsible for disarming all combatants. UNAMSIL also monitors the process and provides security. Special provisions for children in the DDR were seen as necessary, and there are thus two streams of the DDR, one for persons under 18, another for adults 18 years and older. Article XXX of the Lomé Peace Agreement, on child combatants, calls on the international community, UNICEF and others to pay particular attention to the issue of child soldiers and address their special needs. UNICEF thus continues its work with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), the NCDDR and the Child Protection Network (CPN) to "support programs for the demobilization, care, protection and reintegration of children associated with the fighting forces."²³⁸ The MSWGCA coordinates policy and monitors all actors in this area, and Child Protection Agencies (CPAs)

involved in the CPN deliver services directly to the young people, with technical assistance, logistical support, funds and training from UNICEF.

PROCESS AND PROVISIONS

During the most recent phase of the DDR, individuals and groups presented themselves to UNAMSIL disarmament posts and surrendered their weapons and military clothing. Each was provided with an identification card. This card later served as proof of eligibility for services provided under the DDR.

Children and adolescents were provided immediate care in Interim Care Centers (ICCs),²³⁹ which met their food, clothing, shelter, water, medical care, recreation and counseling needs. Family members were traced and prepared for the return of their children, and reunifications followed. Local child protection committees assisted in this process. Where families were untraceable, alternative care, such as foster care, was arranged. Widespread advocacy and sensitization was undertaken to support this work, as were a variety of psychosocial activities with families, communities and children.

Education and skills training were also offered to the young people in the ICCs and upon return home. The young people were assisted in returning to formal education, and those between 15 and 17 had the option of formal education or vocational training. They were also offered monthly allowances to cover educational and other reinsertion expenses, and some will also have educational assistance opportunities in future years. Two key educational and livelihood support programs initiated were the Community Education Investment Program (CEIP) and the Training and Employment Program (TEP). Through CEIP, materials are provided to schools in exchange for accepting former child soldiers and waiving their enrollment and tuition fees. TEP is designed to assist those who complete skills training in finding jobs and to distribute start-up tool kits.

Demobilization for adults was more "fast-track," where 300,000 leones (approximately US\$143) reinsertion allowances ("Transitional Safety Allowances") were distributed rapidly, and adults could choose to return home or go elsewhere immediately and seek services. Skills training accompanied by monthly stipends was also offered to adults through NCDDR, and smaller numbers also entered formal education.

demobilization lists by them. Instead, they waited for other opportunities that never materialized.

In the end, the total number of children, adolescents and adults formally demobilized was over 150 percent of the number originally anticipated, yet, the number of females among them remained extremely low (about 7.5 percent of the total, see chart, “Demobilization Figures”). Without additional support, girls and women who provided services to fighting forces will continue to be stigmatized and debilitated in their recovery, and their contributions to reconstruction and rehabilitation will be further diminished.

Thus, even if these girls were to be addressed through programs for separated children as described below, few were able to access the services. Although no specific initiative was announced by the time of the research project, UNICEF protection officers said they were looking at those who were separated, demobilized and reunified, who were not combatants, and were following up on care and protection for sexually abused and demobilized.²⁴² Young people and CPAs welcome accelerated attention. Caritas-Makeni, responsible for coordinating assistance to demobilizing children in the north, started a street and working children’s program in 2002. Caritas-Makeni’s Maurice Ellie said the project was started because “most children were left out during disarmament and demobilization. As a result, most have been left out of reintegration efforts, and many are on the streets with no parental care.”²⁴³ By April 2002, the project was working with 161 children, including nearly 40 girls who were part of the RUF, orphans or without familial support.

- **DDR was largely gender-blind and did not take into sufficient consideration the varied roles women and girls played among fighting forces and thus did not adequately provide for their specific DDR-related concerns and rights.**²⁴⁴

Many girls and women who were formerly with fighting forces say that DDR services neither recognized nor took into consideration the many non-combatant roles they played. Yet these “marriages” are nothing more than a forcible provision of services to the armed elements. Many said that the Sierra Leone government and the international community have given a secondary status to those recruited to serve fighting forces, mainly females, focusing instead on “ex-combatants” — those who took direct part in the hostilities.²⁴⁵ Few women and girls volunteered to

fight in the war, but a large number were abducted, forced into combat and subjected to gang rape, repeated rape, sexual slavery and other violence by their captors;²⁴⁶ they were also used as cooks, porters and other forms of military support. In Sierra Leone, this slavery is euphemistically called “jungle marriage,” “bush marriage” or “AK-47 marriage.”²⁴⁷

At first, it was impossible for an individual to demobilize through the DDR without surrendering a weapon, and later, commanders were asked to name and attest to an individual being a combatant in their fighting force. As discussed further in the next section, these approaches barred many females from formal demobilization who had spontaneously demobilized or were discriminated against by their commanders, or “bush husbands.” DDR planners failed to adequately anticipate the number of females expected to demobilize and instead viewed them largely as “dependents” of the male demobilizing soldiers. Thus, little was done to fully account for them.

Despite their distinct experiences within the fighting forces, no comprehensive programs existed to help girls and women make considered decisions about their “AK-47 marriages.” Apart from a handful of micro-credit schemes targeted at women serving with the fighting forces, no comprehensive approach or programs existed to support them. They were



Despite serving with the fighting forces during the war, many girls and women have been left out of DDR services because they were considered non-combatants.

offered little additional protection should they opt out of, or manage to escape, these circumstances.

The following box illustrates the huge discrepancy between male and female combatants and those serving the fighting forces:

DEMOBILIZATION FIGURES ²⁴⁸	
(Numbers of combatants demobilized between 1998 and February 18, 2002)	
Child and adolescent boys	6,316
Child and adolescent girls	529 = 7.7 percent of children
Adult males	60,769
Adult women	4,876 = 7.4 percent of adults
Total demobilized	72,490

DIFFERENCES IN THE DEMOBILIZATION OF CHILDREN

The approach to demobilizing children held more opportunities for girls and boys who were not formally demobilized as combatants than adult women. In its lead role facilitating DDR for children under 18 years old, UNICEF went beyond the “combatant” delineation and planned to serve both “an estimated 5,400 child ex-combatants and 5,000 camp followers from the fighting forces.”²⁴⁹ In this way, girls, a significant portion of this latter population, were recognized more explicitly than adult women who were not formally demobilized. This meant that children and adolescents who were not formally demobilized as ex-combatants but had otherwise served with the fighting forces would be identified as separated children and could ostensibly find help making the transition back to civilian life through this holistic approach to child protection.²⁵⁰ A UNICEF program specifically assisting girl survivors of sexual violence was also included in this work.

Where such services were well provided, the transition back into community life was greatly eased, but a high number fell through the cracks, and their journeys home have been extremely difficult.²⁵¹ One adolescent girl living in Peacock Farm, said: “I was abducted and [spent] nine months with the rebels. When I came back they have been inviting us to meetings, but they just talk and don’t do anything for us. We have suffered, and they have not helped us...they skip us when it comes to benefit.”²⁵² According to

UNICEF, only a small percentage of the predicted caseload of “camp followers” and others associated with the fighting forces had been assisted by the end of 2001.

UNICEF reported that by December 2001, basic services were provided to 2,312 separated children in four demobilization centers and 14 ICCs, including 312 girls. Of these, approximately 1,500 were demobilized child soldiers, and the remaining were a combination of “camp followers” and unaccompanied children (including separated children among returnees from Guinea).²⁵³

Without a consistent, explicit focus on the rights of girls and women, NCDDR tacitly condoned, or at best dismissed, the violence girls and women suffered and contributed to their trauma and diminished self-esteem. It made their reintegration, often with small children to care for, even more difficult, as many were shunned as “rebels.”²⁵⁴ Since rape is often a taboo subject in Sierra Leone, failure to confront the issue perpetuates a culture of silence that exacerbates an already difficult recovery from these crimes. Advocacy and community sensitization work focused on preparing families and communities for their return and creating sympathy for them rather than stigmatization has only scratched the surface of what is needed.

Women and girls who served in fighting forces need additional support in confronting both the trauma of their experiences and the prejudice now foisted upon them. Without this support, their ability to participate fully in the post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation of Sierra Leone, as well as their own recovery, has been greatly diminished despite an explicit call in the Lomé Peace Agreement to prioritize their involvement.²⁵⁵ Beyond what government, United Nations and other organizations can do, communities must be directly involved in these issues, like those related to gender-based violence. As society has endured dramatic assaults and changes, community attitudes must change with them and will ultimately hold the answers to successful reintegration.

- **Reintegration programs for children and adolescents are under-funded and incomplete.**

More than 72,000 people went through disarmament and demobilization — more than twice the original 33,000 anticipated.²⁵⁶ As the numbers swelled, however, donor contributions did not swell with them. Disarmament and demobilization were emphasized and proceeded at a rapid pace, with adults reintegrated on a “fast track,” and children reunified as quickly as possible. As this rapid movement was prioritized, community-based reintegration programs and other local support structures have not been able to keep pace with demand. UNICEF and CPAs worked valiantly to reunify young people with family and get programs running to support them, but the work is far from complete. Many young people are feeling greatly let down and often very angry about the process.

The northern town of Makeni was the RUF headquarters in the latter years of the war. While the DDR representative in Makeni told the Makeni adolescent research team that reintegration benefits have been the same across Sierra Leone, DDR service providers and young recipients interviewed there said that cutbacks have become common. DDR service providers told researchers that the programs had been reduced from six months to three months and that they had not received the funds required to run the programs. As a result, materials needed for the courses were unavailable. One young mother lamented angrily, “First the programs were nine months, then six months, now three months. Tailoring in three months! I have three kids. It’s one week and all we’re living on is mangos. When we get up in the morning, we don’t have anything. We only want schooling. Now, we don’t have anything.”²⁵⁷

A representative of a local NGO in Makeni told researchers the following story: In the fall of 2001, NCDDR “gave us the go ahead to register a lot of ex-combatants who were roaming the town with no food. [The ex-combatants] were angry with the government about this. So, we started to register them and work on numeracy, civic education, counseling and trauma healing. But NCDDR didn’t supply us the equipment we needed to do tie dye, tailoring, hair-dressing and metalwork, so we started on our own without materials.” He continued, “In other areas, reintegration activity lasts for six months, but here they say three months and 60,000 leones for each ex-combatant (US\$29.33) at the end of each month.” At the time of the research, the NGO had not been paid and reported that the NCDDR said it would only pay for three of the five months worked.²⁵⁸

Former combatants enrolled in skills training or in formal education also complained that monthly stipends promised them had not been paid for several months, and there were few materials to practice or learn a trade in their skills training courses. Few see any clear job prospects. One ex-combatant adolescent boy now in school in Makeni said of the DDR, “No, it is not effective because they don’t buy us material for our school and only gave us 300,000 leones (US\$146.69).”²⁵⁹ Another spoke of discouragement: “There is no quality education. Education is not just academic,” he said. “[We need] vocational training and materials to help us, but we don’t get this.”²⁶⁰

Stories were similar in the western region. One adolescent girl in Freetown, who was with the rebels for two years, said: “When we disarmed, they promised to teach us skills to enable us to be gainfully employed. It is three years since then. I was pregnant. I had the baby here....DDR has come, agencies have come, but we haven’t seen anything. They come with new stories every day. That is why we have decided we are not coming for meetings anymore.”²⁶¹ Some girls facing these problems have returned to the bush, and others threaten to, although at times their commanders are no longer interested. Like so many, they feel trapped, with few choices.

Researchers also learned about abuses of the system by former combatants. “It is true that the programs are not always functioning well, but there are other issues, too,” said youth leader Ngolo Katta, of a situation he encountered in Port Loko in the north. “Some show up for their monthly stipend, but they don’t actually come to class. Then they complain about not getting the money, but they need to come to class in order to qualify to continue to receive payments.”²⁶³

Researchers also found that the Community Education Investment Program (CEIP) was not yet fully functioning in all areas. (See Education section.) According to UNICEF’s child protection officer, Donald Robert Shaw, the program was up and running in 2001, with a goal of catering to 2,000 children and adolescents. Many beneficiaries were identified in that time, but some needed to wait until September 2002 to begin their studies; it is likely another 2,000 will be targeted in 2003.²⁶⁴ At the time of the research in Makeni, Daniel Mye-Kamara, CEIP project officer for Caritas-Makeni explained that while successful, CEIP still has a ways to go in a short time before becoming fully functional. “Of those demobilized since 1999, about 20 percent are in the first year of the program,” he said. “It’s func-

An Unclear Future

Binta, 18 years old and from Makeni, was captured by the RUF in 2000:

“When they take you to the rebels, they give you a gun and train you to shoot and fire. I was trained, and I had a gun, but I was afraid to use the gun. [I especially didn’t like] the sound.

“I finally got free when Brimah [her captor] left the rebels to go to Liberia and fight. I knew I was pregnant because my period stopped. I went to my uncle’s in Freetown in June 2001. I was accepted, as he knew it was not my fault. After two months, he told me, ‘Go beg it from your parents.’ [Meaning, go back and approach your family and see if they will accept you.] My mother accepted me in Makeni. That was August 2001. My daughter was born at home with my mother in February 2002.

“Regarding the DDR, I was 17 then. I gave the weapon, which I still had. They gave me a yellow form, drinking buckets, soap and a brush and slippers. I was in the DDR camp in Makeni for three days. I got an ID card, but I was not given any money. At the time, there were plenty of people there — over 100. In January, I registered for a job. Four months have passed, I haven’t received any money, and I’m strained with my child. I am taking a weaving and dying class, which I like, but I have no job. I would like to go to school, I don’t mind about my height. My mother says, ‘Education is better than silver and gold.’ But we lack money [for education, especially]. My mother is tired and has no money. I have two brothers, five sisters and my child. My father died in the SLA in Liberia.”²⁶²

tioning in some districts, not all...But so far, it is a great success...Schools have not had materials for many years...After UNICEF, communities will need to take further action.”²⁶⁵ Thus, while CEIP is an extremely important mechanism for drawing former combatants back into society, it is not yet filling the gap for all of those who could be eligible.

- **Reintegration programs are not in sync with the overwhelming economic and social recovery needs of Sierra Leone and of individual families; livelihood skills acquired through DDR are often useless, hindering family reunification and community acceptance processes.**

Even when functioning well, DDR programs are not

enough to ensure the reintegration of former combatants in an environment of widespread devastation and poverty. Refugees and IDPs are returning home for the first time in large numbers, and their communities themselves are struggling to begin life over again. In this environment, and as infrastructure redevelopment takes significant time, communities are not fully prepared to take in those returning from fighting forces. As a result, young former combatants and others previously involved with fighting forces feel pressure to return home with something to offer. Many also simply need to be occupied, to ease the difficult transitions from positions of responsibility within the “bush hierarchy” of fighting forces to no positions in particular in civilian life. Adolescents and youth do not feel they have years to wait for assistance and a better life. They want and need to take action immediately.

*Reintegration Program Data as of February 18, 2002*²⁶⁶

Of the 6,845 children and adolescents formally demobilized, 1,133, or 17 percent, benefited from reintegration programs. Of the 1,133, 843 were registered for CEIP and 290 were enrolled in skills training programs.

In this context, young people and members of their communities voiced several concerns. For example, the skills training offered through DDR is often not immediately useful to the young people. Local economies are not up and running, proper tools to accomplish their tasks are not available, and in many cases, family reunification has been prioritized over completion of their studies. Some young people were in the middle of courses in ICCs when their families were identified, and they were quickly reunited. Once back home, they needed to start all over again. Young people suggested this problem could have been avoided by delaying reunification for several weeks.

The majority of young people surveyed in Sierra Leone rank lack of education opportunities as their highest concern; thus, interrupting their skills train-

ing is particularly disturbing to many of them. They then have less to show upon return home, and lose hope that they are finally on a path of renewal. In such circumstances, it is easy to remember their life while part of fighting forces, when many had better access to food and other items on demand.

Combined with the shame often cast upon them by civilian communities, many wonder whether leaving the fighting forces has actually been worth it.

- **Youth roughly between 18 and 25, who may have been forced into the fighting as children, enter the adult DDR track without sufficient support for return to their home communities, reunification with family or local integration.**

Youth between the ages of 18 and 25 are in particular crisis, especially those who were with the RUF. Most were abducted into fighting forces as children, yet ironically cannot receive the support they need because they have “aged out.” Unlike those under 18, they receive little, but desperately need assistance reunifying with family, securing housing and intensive re-education about civilian life. Without this, hundreds are displaced, even ghettoized. Their RUF association causes them to be rejected by communities who accepted or supported those from other fighting forces during the war. As refugees and IDPs return home and want their houses back from RUF members who occupy them, pressure is also on the youth to find somewhere else to go. As these and other pressures grow, they become increasingly angry about their situation and fixated on the failure of the government, other authorities and former commanders to keep promises made to them.

One former RUF youth in Freetown said: “As far as I am concerned, they have not kept their promises. They just gave me money and then they abandoned me and said you are on your own. You can do whatever you want with your money...they said they would give us the opportunity to be educated and they would teach us trade...and they would offer us medical service. But when you are sick, they don’t even want to know about you. Here, nobody cares about me. We are just sitting here doing nothing.”²⁶⁷

As the former headquarters of the RUF, the Makeni region poses a particular challenge. Hundreds of youth formerly associated with the RUF who originate from other towns in Sierra Leone feel they are unable to return home. Some also squandered the 300,000 leones (US\$149.69) they were originally given making trips to the diamond mines with their

former commanders, to their home towns or other familiar sites that did not work out. Compelled back to their points of demobilization, few sources of support are available to promote their reintegration. Their situation is further worsened by skills training programs that do not produce jobs. One youth said, “The youth suffered a lot in this revolution and now we are disarmed, but we are living in different homes and the owners are asking us to pay rent. But we don’t get any money. The promises are not kept, and we cannot pay the rent.”²⁶⁸

Youth and civil society organizations in Makeni are aware of these gaps for the 18- to 25-year-olds and the risks they pose to stability. They are attempting to work with international organizations and local groups, including tribal councils, to pave the way for these ex-combatants to return to their towns of origin. They want to undertake community sensitization and reintegration work that would allow former combatants from Makeni who are now in other towns to return home and those currently in Makeni to return home to other towns. In the meantime, some former RUF combatants say they earn a living doing odd jobs, such as transporting goods with wheelbarrows or carrying water, while others say they have no support whatsoever and that the women among them are even forced into prostitution. Police officers also report having to step in to help resolve disputes between former fighters occupying the houses of returning IDPs and refugees.

- **Some young people remain with their commanders, unable to leave without additional support; some have become “street kids” and commercial sex workers.**

Without support, many young people formerly with fighting forces are facing new protection problems. Some are commercial sex workers and others are living on the streets. Still others are known to remain with their former rebel commanders, unable to leave without further support. Caritas-Makeni reported that many young people who did not make it through disarmament still live with commanders who never officially released them. “They don’t even think of running away,” said Maurice Ellie of Caritas-Makeni. “They tell us they won’t go ‘because they [their commanders] will kill us.’”²⁶⁹ Many of those identified so far in the north are originally from southern and eastern Sierra Leone.

The full number of young people eligible for DDR or with related needs that were not adequately covered

by the program and are experiencing new protection problems is unknown. Some CPAs, including Caritas-Makeni, are doing assessments in their areas of coverage to identify young people in need of assistance or protection as a result of having fallen through the cracks of DDR. Whether or not a “retroactive DDR” is feasible or advisable, more must be done to identify young people still in need of release from fighting forces and to address both those requiring ongoing reintegration support and those who have yet to be targeted.²⁷⁰

MOVING BEYOND DDR AS A SECURITY AND PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTION

Thus far, DDR has been effective in providing a needed carrot to those being asked to disarm, demobilize and commit to peace. The symbolic destruction of weapons, family reunification and initial support in steps toward a new life have all been critical to paving the way to security and peace. However, gaps in the DDR, combined with the limitations of its education, livelihood and community advocacy programs, have left young people angry and disappointed. The DDR thus far, then, appears to have been more an initial critical security and psychosocial program seeking to address immediate needs than a reliable reintegration mechanism. Without additional follow-through, the discontent that is already breeding among those formerly with fighting forces will spread.

Donors and decision-makers must understand that for many young people formerly with fighting forces, the enticement to demobilize and try peace came largely through the promise of acceptance and support in reintegration — that life would be better in post-conflict Sierra Leone. If many begin to feel more marginalized, the seeds of unrest will be sown again. Thus, legitimate promises made to former combatants must be kept and those who were in service to fighting forces must receive immediate attention. The Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone states, “The successful reintegration of former child combatants and other children separated from their families requires a long-term approach and commitment,” with particular attention “given to children bypassed by the formal disarmament process.”²⁷¹ However, as stated above, support to the wider community must also keep pace to bridge differences between the groups and prevent future disaffection due to deprivation.

CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS AND TRUTH, JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION MECHANISMS

Do young people know about amnesty and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)? Do they know about the Special Court? What are their feelings about them? Should young people involved in the fighting in Sierra Leone be punished before the law for their actions? Should communities forgive those who committed crimes against them?

These are some of the questions adolescent researchers decided to ask their peers. Responses reveal a definite awareness of the pardon and amnesty granted all combatants and collaborators involved in the war and the existence of the TRC and the Special Court. Young people are confused, and some are greatly concerned, however, about how these mechanisms function together and whether they will actually help bring about lasting peace through reconciliation and forgiveness.

PARDON AND AMNESTY

The negotiation of a general pardon and amnesty in the Lomé Peace Agreement was key to ending the war. It grants an “absolute and free pardon and reprieve to all combatants and collaborators in respect of anything done by them in pursuit of their objectives, up to the time of the signing of the present Agreement.”²⁷² The agreement declares no winner in the war and takes steps to integrate warring parties into the government and begin a process of power sharing. It provides combatants with a concrete promise of acceptance into society. While the amnesty was tough for many Sierra Leoneans to swallow given the breadth and nature of rights abuses committed during the war, it clearly set Sierra Leone on a path to peace through forgiveness and reconciliation.

THE TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

Addressing this dilemma, the Lomé Peace Agreement also mandates the establishment of the TRC “to create an impartial record of violations of human rights and humanitarian law”²⁷³ committed between 1991 and the signing of the Agreement. It aims to “address impunity, help the victims, promote healing and reconciliation and prevent a repetition of the abuses.”²⁷⁴ The Commission is an impartial body, not attached to the government. In the belief that “coming out into the open to tell the

truth about what actually happened can heal the victim and liberate the perpetrator,” the Commission will make invitations to victims and perpetrators (including children and adolescents) to come forward and tell their stories.²⁷⁵

THE SPECIAL COURT

Responding to a request from the government of Sierra Leone and the international outcry over the amnesty granted and its mockery of international standards, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1315 on August 14, 2000, initiating the formation of a Special Court for Sierra Leone. The court will prosecute “crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law” perpetrated by “persons who bear the greatest responsibility”²⁷⁶ for these acts. The jurisdiction of the Special Court ultimately supercedes that of the amnesty granted, and it also allows for the prosecution of children should they be deemed among those “bearing the greatest responsibility.”

While all young people interviewed believe that everyone must try to commit to peace, many former RUF child combatants feel betrayed, angry and confused by the creation of the Special Court. “The Special Court is not really justice. They are targeting only ex-combatants in the RUF,”²⁷⁷ said one ex-combatant young woman in Freetown. Some wonder why the TRC and the Special Court are necessary if they are already supposedly being forgiven for what happened. “If everything is being forgiven, why do we need to talk about it? The war is over, a commission is not needed,”²⁷⁸ an adolescent ex-combatant boy said.²⁷⁹ Still others feel child combatants should not be tried before the Court because they were forced into the war, regardless of their actions during it. “We don’t want the Special Court to be operated.... We have been killing and cutting hands, but [it was] not our willingness,”²⁸⁰ another ex-RUF boy said.

WHAT’S IN IT FOR US? — THE RISKS OF RAISING EXPECTATIONS

Overall, young people are not clear about exactly how these mechanisms function together. They ask how the Special Court can try people for crimes committed during the war when an amnesty has already been granted. They also want to know how information shared with the TRC will be used. They are very practical in their approach given their expe-

riences and the struggles they face daily. Most bluntly, they ask, “What’s in it for us?” When they actually have time to think about the topics, they want to know how these endeavors will improve their lives. They are tired of being taken advantage of, let down and do not want to be traumatized and disappointed again.

Thus, a strong awareness-raising and outreach effort is needed for truth, justice and reconciliation mechanisms to function in Sierra Leone. Already underway, these efforts must cover more ground. Young people, including the membership of the CCYA, are also involved in getting information to other young people about it.

It needs to be made clearer what the ex-combatants will get from their participation besides reliving a terrible memory. The experience could be traumatizing for young people and women, and after they speak out, they will need support that most are not getting now. First, their communities must accept them. This acceptance must come from a community base of support and basic understanding of the process. Friends and family members must support one another, accept those who will serve as witnesses to the TRC and use the process for themselves, without waiting for someone else to make it meaningful to them. Young people across the “victim-perpetrator” divide must be drawn into this process together for it to be effective. There must be mechanisms in place to receive those who have spoken out and to help them process the experience so that it becomes transformative. TRC results should be followed by further community discussion of results.

Most importantly, if and when young people do participate, the TRC will need to listen to them carefully. As hundreds of adolescents told their peers as part of this study, the TRC will undoubtedly hear that a way forward lies in justice being lived out through the equitable sharing of resources in recovery and reintegration efforts. This, they do not believe, is currently happening. Another element of success will involve creating tangible outcomes that result from witnessing the process of the TRC.

Most young people, in fact, are focused more on the immediate needs of reintegration than the workings of the TRC or the Special Court. This includes securing basic necessities, as well as reconciling themselves to forgiving and moving on. One adolescent said, when asked about feelings of revenge: “I don’t need anything [as long as] the government provides

for me, my school facilities or my job. And for the ones who have done [this to me], I will leave them to God.”²⁸¹ Another said, “Since there is peace now, we must forgive and reconcile with them.”²⁸² Another said, “On top of my heart [I forgive the perpetrators] because of peace, but deep down inside my heart, I will never forget what they did to me and my family.”²⁸³

FOCUS ON ADDRESSING CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN AND GENDER-BASED CRIME

The inclusion of children among those who could be tried by the Special Court calls into question fundamental beliefs about the protection of children under international law, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and related juvenile justice mechanisms. One must ask if the Court is in reality focused on prosecuting adult “ring leaders,” and will likely not try children for crimes, why are children included among those who could be brought to justice in the first place? Does including them diminish the State’s responsibility in protecting them from recruitment into an armed group, whether or not they “chose” to join or were forced? Should a 14-year-old adolescent abducted from school, made to take drugs, forced into combat and told to kill or be killed, be tried for these actions? Should not the Special Court alternatively try the government of Sierra Leone, the international community and other adult groups and individuals for their failure to protect thousands of children from recruitment in the first place, which led to the crimes? At the same time, if there remains a belief that, regardless of prerequisite circumstances and age, an individual must be held responsible for his or her actions before the law, are there other juvenile justice mechanisms that might be better employed?

Both the TRC and the Special Court most importantly provide opportunities to expose and, in the case of the Special Court, prosecute crimes committed *against* children and those that are gender-based. Since its formation, the TRC has said that it will pay special attention to what was done to children and women and would take a sensitive approach to involving them in testimony. Similarly, the Special Court can and should highlight crimes against these groups, particularly focusing on the systematic recruitment of children into fighting forces as combatants and as sex slaves and the sexual violence systematically perpetrated against girls and women.²⁸⁴

ADOLESCENT CRIME AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

No comprehensive statistics are available on crime in Sierra Leone, including crime committed by adolescents and youth. Young people and law enforcement representatives, however, confirm that adolescents are involved in criminal activities, and name theft and the sale, possession and abuse of drugs, among other offenses. They believe these crimes stem mainly from poverty, lack of parental care and desensitization to violence as a result of the war.

“Street boys” interviewed admitted to stealing in order to survive. One said, “We get our money through stealing.” Another said, “We are stealers and gamblers because there is no one to take care of us.” These young people live on the streets of Makeni. Freetown police told researchers that drugs are “the order of the day in entertainment centers: marijuana, brown-brown, alcohol.”²⁸⁵

Sierra Leone’s judicial system is not fully functioning, and facilities in some areas are just being reconstructed. The police department is in the process of retraining and being reequipped. In this state of transition, the procedures for the treatment of juveniles in the legal system have been difficult to implement. In Makeni, for example, there are no separate cells for juvenile offenders and no juvenile court in Port Loko (the nearest court), making it necessary for these cases to be heard in Freetown. Temporary police office facilities have only recently been established in Makeni, and the officers improvise, for example, by holding juveniles and women offenders in the hallway, separate from adult male offenders.²⁸⁶ Juvenile justice issues are just one area of major judicial reform that needs to take place in Sierra Leone to establish respect for the rule of law and adequate protection under the law for Sierra Leoneans.

A big challenge facing law enforcement officials in their work with the adolescent and youth population is building trust. Young people have lost faith in authority and do not fully believe the police will respect their rights. Although research participants expressed this mistrust, some also noted they are recognizing positive changes in the police force. Even ex-RUF combatants in Makeni, who are full of mistrust for government authority, stated that they see improvements in the police force since the end of the war. Among other things, they say they are better equipped and seemingly more professional. However, many among them believe rumors spread about

police abusing former RUF members who are incarcerated. In response to this, Makeni Chief of Police Sisko flatly declared “this is a lie,” and UNAMSIL human rights officers monitoring the treatment of prisoners report no recent police violations. The police’s approach to the citizens of Makeni has been generally non-confrontational, which has greatly increased opportunities for trust building in this former RUF stronghold.

REFUGEE AND IDP RETURNS

The war in Sierra Leone produced over 500,000 refugees, who fled mainly to Guinea and Liberia, and over 1.2 million IDPs.²⁸⁷ As peace efforts progressed in 1999 and as pressure grew within Guinea in 2000 for Sierra Leonean refugees to repatriate, thousands began to make their way home despite ongoing insecurity in parts of Sierra Leone and serious problems during the journey. In April 2002, IDP and former refugee adolescents and youth living in or out of camps in Sierra Leone described deprivation and violence against them during the war and continued deprivation and lack of protection in recent months and years. While their returns have been deemed “voluntary,” in reality they have faced enormous security, political and socio-economic pressures in their attempt to return home.²⁸⁸

INADEQUATE SUPPORT FOR FORMER REFUGEES AND IDPs

In 2001, approximately 200,000 refugees remained in asylum countries.²⁸⁹ Those whose returns from Guinea are facilitated²⁹⁰ by UNHCR follow a route that takes them to Guinea’s capital Conakry and then to various sites in Sierra Leone. Many have gone to transit centers, interim care centers for separated children, temporary settlements or host communities, where they have awaited further resettlement to their home areas when they are declared secure, or to other sites.²⁹¹ Many refugees also make it to transit points in Guinea or to Sierra Leone spontaneously, with very limited or no assistance.

In 2001, close to 250,000 registered IDPs were living in overcrowded camps or with host communities, and an estimated half million more unregistered IDPs were living in war-ravaged villages.²⁹² Returns of registered IDPs are coordinated by UNOCHA under a Resettlement Strategy developed by the government of Sierra Leone “to support the resettlement



Without assistance, thousands of IDPs left Mile 91 on foot in April 2002 to return to Makeni, where some waited weeks without shelter, food, pure water or onward transportation and experienced major health problems.

and reintegration of internally displaced, refugees and ex-combatants with their dependents back into their communities, strengthen their livelihood security and promote reconciliation.²⁹³ Unregistered IDPs are not entitled to targeted resettlement assistance under the Strategy.²⁹⁴

Although the streams of support to each group are distinct, UN agencies have tried to minimize differences between the assistance refugee returnees and IDPs receive. Young returnees and IDPs both told researchers the assistance packages are grossly inadequate. The majority are returning home to eastern and northern areas to *nothing* — no homes, jobs, schools or medical facilities and land that has not been tilled for years. Yet their resettlement packages do not include seeds or tools to get a head start on the planting season, and they receive only a two-month food ration. They are also supposed to be fully informed of their options and resettlement conditions and receive transportation to a place “in close proximity” to their area of resettlement, non-food items and a four meter by five meter piece of plastic sheeting for shelter.²⁹⁵

POORLY COORDINATED RESETTLEMENT ASSISTANCE TO IDPs

The stark reality of IDP returns was immediately evident in Makeni in April 2002, as hundreds who had walked 50 kilometers from the IDP camp Mile 91 waited outdoors for days for assistance under hot sunshine in the town’s sports stadium and town hall. Given confusing information, they left the camp on

foot expecting to be met by local National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) officials with support packages and instead were completely without food, shelter, water, latrines or transportation.²⁹⁶ Their paperwork was disorganized, and determinations of who was or was not eligible for assistance were slow. MSF-H representatives working locally responded to the emergency by trucking in drinking water and providing emergency medical services. They and hospital nurses told researchers that several of the pregnant women who had made the difficult journey had to be hospitalized. Even when food and non-food items were finally provided, the IDPs still faced the need for ongoing transportation, and some were forced to sell their rations to pay for the rest of their journeys home. The most vulnerable elderly and infirm left behind at Mile 91 were promised no additional support.

Former refugee adolescents told researchers they were tired of waiting in transit centers, with limited provisions, that their departures had been frequently rescheduled and that transportation to their final destinations would not be provided, leaving them with additional costs to bear.²⁹⁷ MSF documented many incidences of incomplete and uncoordinated support around the country, especially regarding the treatment of IDPs, in a report highly critical of the resettlement process. It contends that refugees and IDPs in reality have little choice about their returns given the insecurity and deprivation they felt they could no longer endure in Guinea and the Sierra Leone government's planned closure of IDP camps in June 2002 with no other offers of assistance.²⁹⁸

UNHCR and Sierra Leone government officials acknowledge the shortcomings of the process and among other things call on the international community to provide more resources for resettlement and reconstruction, including support for government capacity building.

RESETTLING ADOLESCENTS: EDUCATION, LIVELIHOOD AND PROTECTION

The majority of the adolescents and youth interviewed were currently or had been displaced or refugees, or a combination. Thus, the concerns expressed by young people in this report are mainly theirs. Unregistered IDPs felt they would have more difficulties going home than those receiving assistance leaving camps, despite problems with the resettlement process. However, all worried about their

education being disrupted by poorly coordinated returns that would not allow them to complete school terms or training courses. Many said they were even willing to become separated from their families in order to finish their studies.

Some young people interviewed said they had already returned home from Guinea or an IDP camp but were forced to leave again in search of work because of lack of assistance. Some former refugee girls and women said they became involved in commercial sex work for their survival and have traveled to other parts of Sierra Leone to provide services to UNAMSIL troops. Adolescent researchers also met Liberian refugee adolescent girls involved in sex work.

Thousands of young people were abducted and numerous others lost or became separated from families during the conflict. In the process of return, these separated young people are to receive protection and care from UNICEF and CPAs. Given the prevalent conditions, however, it is not clear that child protection systems are functioning effectively along resettlement routes. Many separated children and adolescents did get assistance in ICCs along with former combatants and separated children who were not displaced or former refugees. Female adolescent heads of household will likely have difficulty reclaiming family land, as women cannot own property in Sierra Leone. Separated adolescents still need to be identified and targeted to ensure their human rights, including family tracing and access to assistance packages.

IX. PSYCHOSOCIAL: MOVING BEYOND MANIPULATION AND ABUSE

The Lomé Peace Agreement in 1999 ushered in new hopes and opportunities for reconciliation and coexistence. But three years later, young people are struggling with deep feelings of anger, disappointment and an enduring sense of what they call “marginalization.” Although no victor was declared, young people on all sides of the conflict feel that they are the vanquished. They see themselves as victimized by a peace that misrepresented itself and is not substantially improving their lives. Some of the most distressing and self-defeating manifestations of this mood are increasing divisions, resentment and competition among young people over scarce resources.

A CRITICAL TRANSITION: FINDING COMMON GROUND AMIDST DEEP DIVISIONS

ADOLESCENTS AND YOUTH ARE PROCESSING WAR TRAUMA

Young people are at a point of critical psychosocial transition.²⁹⁹ The new peace is calling on them to move on from the war, and they are eager to do so, but as they do, they are preoccupied and haunted by the brutal world of deprivation and abuse they have known for the past ten years, which has not yet fully changed.

Everyone has lost something — an arm, a leg, a home, property, family, school and job opportunities, respect and acceptance in their communities, their health, a discernable future. Many are still experiencing displacement and sexual violence and exploitation. Some are afraid of being confronted by those who harmed them in the past, and others are afraid of being confronted by those they harmed. Many try to alleviate the pain of the abuses they endured in silence, with drug use, crime and commercial sex work. Others are living on the street without support, and some remain with former fighting forces. At the same time, they contemplate recon-

ciliation and dream of a stable peaceful future where they are cared for and their rights are respected.

LACK OF PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE CONTRIBUTES TO DIVISIONS

Despite much excellent humanitarian work, protection and assistance schemes continue to fall far short of fulfilling the rights of most young people and alleviating their burdens. They find comparisons to their wartime and present situations confusing. They ask themselves repeatedly a number of disturbing and conflicting questions: Why did they fight in the war, and why did they agree to this peace and turn in their weapons? Were they used and manipulated by their commanders, or were they fighting for a just cause? Why are some of their families rejecting them, and how can they reconcile? Why are they not getting the help they need, and who can they turn to?

Disappointed in the lack of support from those who manage the peace, they turn on each other in blame and resentment. They see limited assistance parceled out to vulnerable groups — former child soldiers, refugees, IDPs, small children, amputees and others — and feelings of competition increase among them. They are extremely frustrated and increasingly bitter, often stewing over considerations of who has suffered more, who is getting more and who deserves more.

Haunted by Thoughts of His Family Destroyed

“My family and I were about to go to pray the morning of January 6, 1997, when the rebels entered Freetown,” said John, 18. “We were shocked by the sounds of firing. We didn’t know what to do or where to run, so we sought safety by hiding under the bed. After three days we were crying for food, and two of my brothers died. On that very day, the rebels entered our house and commanded us to come out of our hiding place, including my parents. As we got out, they told me to get to bed with my mother. I refused, and they immediately killed my mother and took me outside. They put my hand on a rock and cut it off. When they finished, they burned the house and took my younger sister. I still do not know where she is. Up until now, it makes me sick to think about all this.”³⁰⁰

Blame is a constant preoccupation. When one person says, “You got aid and I didn’t,” a second meaning is heard and implied: “You were the perpetrator and I was the victim, so why wasn’t I considered over you?” Or, the other way around, “You may think I’m the perpetrator, but you don’t understand that I’m really a victim, and I have special needs that no one seems to care about.”

As young people formerly with fighting groups feel they are discriminated against in the provision of aid, others feel ex-combatants have received too much attention. “Everyone is concerned with making the ex-combatants comfortable,” one youth said. “What about the *victims*? My dad and my older sister were brutally murdered by the rebels. My older sister was the breadwinner in the family, and my younger brothers and sister are left with nothing. Ex-combatants go for DDR money, and the rest of us are left idle, without hope.”³⁰¹

In another example, one former adolescent RUF fighter said: “The CDFs committed atrocities against the RUF here in [Makeni]. And now they have come to secure their villages. We won’t ever get packages to be able to go back home to farm.”³⁰² Some civilian adolescents and youth also resent assistance and attention going to former CDFs, who abused the rights of many civilian young people in the conflict. “They stole from us, abducted us and accused us of being rebels,” one adolescent said.³⁰³



Many adolescents and youth are still haunted by their war experiences.

COMMON GROUND

Despite the festering divisions felt by young people, in reality, they share largely the same concerns and ideas

for solving their problems. With few exceptions, most young people perceive themselves to be the “real victims,” no matter which side they were on.

Manipulated and turned against one another by adults in the conflict, and feeling ignored or betrayed by the promises of the peace process, it is difficult for them to see beyond their personal suffering now. They say that only when young people begin to be treated equally and get the care they need will forgiveness and healing occur.

Young people face an enormous challenge to come together, effectively to create “wan salone” — one Sierra Leone — and address their problems constructively together, to repair the divisions among them and the divisions within Sierra Leone. Adolescents and youth revealed many common themes and concerns relating to their psychosocial well-being, despite their differences.

SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE DESPITE DIFFERENCES

- Young people in Sierra Leone are simply not okay. They are masters of coping, but across the board, are crying out for support.
- At a point of critical transition, they are processing their war experiences and seeing in the stark light of an uncertain peace the war’s very brutal and real effects on their lives. In virtually every one of the more than 100 case studies conducted by researchers, young people interviewed chose to discuss mainly their wartime experiences. This demonstrated a great need for them to voice what happened to them during the war, to better understand and come to terms with these events as they journey to move beyond them.
- Their transition to healing and peace is thwarted by deep feelings of victimization and marginalization whichever side of the war they were on, whether or not they fought in the war, and whether or not they perpetrated violence.
- The vast majority of the more than 600 adolescents and youth interviewed believe that adults, especially those in government, do not consider their views and rights, and that “injustices” are committed against them.
- Successful support to young people through this transition will depend on the ability and willingness of decision-makers and caretakers to deal with the concrete symptoms of their marginaliza-

tion and support their direct, constructive involvement in their own recovery.

- Young people compete over resources and over who has suffered more. They are challenged to identify the common threads in their struggle and come together peacefully to achieve their mutual goals.
- With minimal variation, adolescents and youth consistently name the same top concerns on the adolescent concerns survey. (See Survey Results.) These choices represent the main symptoms of the young people’s marginalization, and they are directly linked to solutions to improve their lives — principally education and livelihood opportunities — they recommended in focus groups.
- Despite their frustrations and struggles, young people are uniformly committed to giving peace a chance.

“WE ARE MARGINALIZED”

Young people frequently term the major source of their unhappiness, or feelings of being vanquished and victimized, as “marginalization.” They say the root of this marginalization is “injustice,” which they find in a wide variety of conditions and sources.

MISTRUST OF GOVERNMENT AND ADULT AUTHORITY

Young people describe deep feelings of mistrust of government and the adult community in general. While they name many supportive individuals and relationships, they regularly point to adult-run systems that do not care for them, do not include them and cannot be trusted. They believe the government pays limited attention to their concerns and involves them in decision-making only when it is politically opportune. Those who were involved with rebel fighting forces wonder why some of their former commanders no longer support or even take an interest in them.

For many, boys especially, who were part of a strong, hierarchical authority structure within the RUF, transition to civilian life is particularly tenuous. They had become takers in the war and are now reduced to being passive recipients — often with nothing to receive. Although RUF leaders agreed to the peace and were integrated into government and security forces, young people associated with them are slow to trust governmental structures and per-

ceive them as biased against them. This is especially the case in Makeni, which has virtually become a ghetto for former RUF youth with nowhere to go. As assistance is slow to come to the north of Sierra Leone, they equate this with a deliberate attempt to marginalize them.

As a result, many continue to look back and remember at least having received a level of respect and sustenance within the structure of the RUF. Many have been so manipulated and brainwashed by the adults who used them that they are unable to fully confront the contradictions in the rights violations they endured within military forces, as targets of armed groups, and now as civilians. They do not know whom to trust. To these and other young people, keeping promises is critical to their well-being and an ability to build trust.

The following excerpts from interviews with adolescent RUF participants show their discouragement and anger at the behavior of the current authorities (see box “Unkept Promises to Youth Could Lead to Further Unrest” on next page). They give credence to the temptation to look nostalgically on their not-so-distant former lives as fighters.

Like the former fighters, civilian adolescents highly mistrust the government and other adult authority, believing the government does not take their best interests to heart when making decisions and does not involve them. They also believe that adults in general discount young people’s opinions, intelligence and worth to society.

Young people say repeatedly that politicians are “greedy and selfish.” They believe that adults “do not consider us...because of our age and our sex,” and “...adolescents are considered to be inferior.”³⁰⁵ These sentiments represent a widespread disaffection from government and adult structures that are decidedly undemocratic and not youth-friendly in the eyes of young people. Even though urban adolescents and youth have better access to information and decision-makers than young people in rural areas, their opinions on this subject are no less strong than in other areas of the country.

Basic Needs Not Met

Because humanitarian assistance has not dramatically improved young people’s lives overall, all young people share strong feelings that their basic rights are not being met. They believe they are excluded by

humanitarian assistance programs or that social welfare systems in general benefit a privileged class. They repeatedly assert that they lack basic services, saying that the “selfishness and greediness” of those in power is evident in young people’s inability to “go to school,” or to have “good schools and good health care.” They say that “the ‘big men’ send their children to the good schools, but they don’t care about us,” and “this country is rich, but we see none of the benefits of its resources.” Whether young people were formerly with fighting forces of any stripe, IDPs, former refugees or others, they repeat the theme of inequitable sharing of resources in Sierra Leone as central to their problems.

Adolescents Speak Out but Are Not Heard

Many young people feel marginalized because they feel they “have no voice” in decisions or activities that affect their lives. Ironically, however, young people have spoken out in the loudest ways imaginable, as fighters and community activists, and still they are not being heard. They were the main fighters, forced to take up arms and fight for a vision imparted to them. This vision was, however, corrupted by misplaced violence, drugs and new levels of greed. Others took up the cause non-violently, becoming highly organized at protesting and community-based activism. Yet, these same young people feel unable to control and shape their lives and their communities. Those who fought have learned that violence has not

Unkept Promises to Youth Could Lead to Further Unrest

Q: “Why did you fight this war?”

A: “I joined this revolution to fight the corruption of this country, and now, we don’t see nothing so far. We don’t get money, no food, no nothing. We suffer. We turn idle. We have no machines. We need practical training, [they] promise[d] but they say it’s not forthcoming. How can we work without them? We fought a senseless war.”

Another said, “I disarmed and was promised assistance, but so far, I haven’t received anything. In this country, if you are poor you stay poor; if you are rich, you stay rich.”

Q: “What is the cause of the problems you face?”

A: “Poverty is the major cause of disputes between us....The politicians come and tell us their focus is youth, but it’s all slush. When they get power they tell them [youth] they’re foolish and give them no respect. Instead of looking at our age group, they look at small girls.”

An adolescent boy adds, “After politicians have gained power, they kick us out. If we had money and a job, we’d expect a salary, and we’d have clothes to put on. That would prove I’m a young man.”

Yet another said, “They do not use politics for development or education.”

Q: “Can there be peace in Sierra Leone?”

A: “I don’t see this peace as anything that will solve the problems of the country unless they develop the northern region. They just concentrate on [other] areas and leave the northern part of the country, so, how can they teach peace?”

Another said: “I took up arms because of selfishness, greed and discrimination by [President] Kabbah.... For us, lasting peace is to keep promises.... There are no improvements now, because the promises are not forthcoming... if [they are] not, and they call us, we will come back [and fight], we are ready.”

Another said: “There is no peace yet in Sierra Leone. All was promised, but nothing is forthcoming. They must disarm and release our leader. We are looking to see what the government will do. It was only Foday Sankoh [the rebel leader] who lived for us; if he’s not released, we’ll join our colleagues in Freetown.... They are still killing Temne in Kono, and the government isn’t doing anything.”³⁰⁴

gotten them what they want, although in the short term it has had more immediate results (you need it, you take it or you force someone to submit to your requests — no more waiting around). Activists have learned that non-violence has many pitfalls and can be very slow without real leverage, especially as others are waging violent war.

Family Care Structures at Times Unsupportive

Young people regularly expressed common concerns about a lack of care or love from parents and other family or guardians and about mistreatment, particularly within polygamous families. One adolescent said, “Children of polygamous parents don’t get enough love or basic needs, so they don’t respect their parents.”³⁰⁶ Some former child combatants who were separated from their families during the war and forced to fight believe that their parents had abandoned them. While efforts are made to reunite young people with their families, their time at home is not always nurturing. Among other things, young people state that parents often encourage and condone their daughters’ participation in prostitution as a means of earning money for the family. Many young people also feel they cannot return home at all, fearing they will not be accepted due to their actions or the abuses they suffered during the war or that they will be violently harmed through acts of vengeance. In the eastern province, however, the IRC has begun to use video equipment to reunite former child soldiers with their families. They use the equipment to tape and show messages from former combatants to the family, and the family can send taped messages back. So far, family members have been excited to welcome the young people home, which underscores the importance of ongoing reunification and reintegration services to break down barriers to adolescents returning home.

THE CHALLENGES OF ADJUSTING TO PEACE

EX-RUF COMBATANTS

The young people who served with the RUF face some of the biggest psychosocial challenges of reintegrating into a peacetime society. They have faced so many layers of rights abuses and have been so psychologically and physically manipulated, they are left with extremely contradictory and confusing feelings about their

wartime experiences. They carry with them the double trauma of forced recruitment and victimization and their commission of violent acts, struggling without tools to reconcile them.

The differences between the experiences of adolescents who spontaneously demobilized and went home to family and those who went through the DDR program are not fully known. It might be the case that most young people fared well through both routes. However, many young people interviewed said that those who received support through the DDR, with care and counseling in ICCs, family tracing and reunification and education opportunities are in many ways doing better than others who did not receive this care. The under-18s who have made it into school with DDR support are feeling more settled and hopeful than older adolescents and youth who are not in school or are in classes ill equipped to train them and where allowances are not being paid. (See Protection section.) Moreover, as sensitization work for forgiveness and reconciliation has reached only limited pockets of the country, many former fighters who are accepted by their own families are still taunted and called “rebels” by others in the community. With no place to turn and still highly traumatized by their experiences, some have ended up living on streets, taking drugs and stealing alongside other disaffected young people. Others threaten angrily a return to war if “promises are not kept.”

CIVIL DEFENSE FORCES

Caritas-Makeni’s Psychosocial Supervisor, Osman Kamara, told the Women’s Commission: “At first, it was hard for many former child soldiers to readjust. In the bush, they were commanders, and they still wanted to be like this and have an edge over elders. They were recalcitrant and stubborn. But with recreation, storytelling, counseling, schooling, vocational training, and discussions about peaceful coexistence, most are doing better. A constructive approach has been to involve both former combatants, separated children who did not fight in the war, and other young people in the same activities to avoid a one-sided reintegration. Many former child soldiers show signs that they are still suffering from trauma, for example, wetting their beds and becoming engaged in stealing and other destructive activities.”³⁰⁷

In contrast, those with the government Civil Defense Forces (CDFs) (see Glossary) have been relatively better reintegrated into communities that supported their



The Sierra Leone Army and UNAMSIL troops at times sponsor sporting events to foster reconciliation and non-violence. As rival high school groups played tug-o-war in Makeni, RUF members and SLA soldiers prepared for a soccer match against one another.

participation in the conflict. But they are still not trusted by all civilians, as CDFs also committed atrocities not only against RUF fighters, but against civilians, including adolescent boys, whom they accused of collaboration with RUF forces.

Overall, for ex-combatants, the DDR represented an agreement to end the war in exchange for a place in the community and a governance system with amnesty and services. As these services increasingly falter, many believe the peace agreement has been violated and feel manipulated and used. Thus, DDR intended as a psychosocial intervention is incomplete without a full commitment to substantive reintegration.

Without the guarantee of full reintegration in exchange for disarmament and demobilization, and without the opportunity for a substantially “better life,” young people are extremely confused, angry and highly volatile, likely to turn back to their former leaders. A big wooden placard of a smiling Foday Sankoh, former head of the RUF (see Glossary), stands firmly posted in the center of Makeni town, and

young people regularly rallied for his release from prison and for the RUF Party during the presidential election campaign in April 2002.

GIRLS

Girls and young women have endured especially difficult transitions out of the RUF. Many who have managed to return to their communities, sometimes with children, have faced rejection and stigmatization and have been branded “rebels” despite their involuntary involvement with the

group. At times, they (and boys) are physically

Converted to the Cause

Abdul is now 19 and stays in Makeni. He said: “When the war started in 1991, my mother was killed by a stray bullet, and our family was divided due to the fighting. The rebels captured me in Buedu, and the older members trained me for nine months. I was given a gun, and I joined the Small Boys Unit, which had around 1,000 members between the ages of six and 15. There was also a Small Girls Unit with hundreds of [members]. [At first] we were not sent to the front line, and we mainly provided food and drinks for older fighters — the guns were more for our protection. In 1993, I experienced my first gun exchange with ‘Momo’ soldiers in Rotifun. I was there until 1997, when I entered Freetown with other RUF and fought the Nigerian troops. I took a home there...for nine months until we were drifted out by Nigerian troops...and we withdrew to Kono. In December 1998, I attacked Makeni with other RUF soldiers. We fought for five days, and I ended up staying in one house where I had three ‘girlfriends.’ My father and I plan to go back to Bujedu, but I do not feel safe enough yet because of possible retaliation. I stayed with the RUF for so long fighting for free education, free medical care and to stop the suffering of young people. I think Foday Sankoh will be released and will help the ex-combatants as he understands our problems best.”³⁰⁸

AN ADULT IN MAKENI REMEMBERS THE SMALL BOYS UNIT

“I remember my first contact with the Small Boys Unit in Makeni. They came to our street at six o’clock in the morning and asked all of us who were not with the RUF to line up and told us to push their car — there was no fuel at that time due to the conflict. We were forced to push their car for four miles while they were seated inside.”³⁰⁹

scarred with the letters “RUF” that they have difficulty hiding or removing. Programs available to those formerly with the RUF and other armed groups have helped, but many have not received any attention. They have received little counseling and support negotiating their “bush marriages” or recovering from the sexual and other violence they endured. Many have turned to commercial sex work for economic survival and because they are trapped in a cycle of self-blame, degradation and feelings of worthlessness. Girl sex workers in Freetown desperately criticized NGOs for not paying attention to their needs, saying they just “come and talk and then nothing ever happens.”³¹⁰

Girls and NGO workers also report that many girls and women remain with their “bush husbands,” frightened to leave or compelled to stay for a variety of reasons. Caritas — Makeni’s Osman Kamara said: “Most girls remain attached to ‘bush husbands’ even if they have gone through an ICC. While engaged in activities at ICCs, if their ‘bush husbands’ came around, the girls

would increasingly do things with them outside the ICCs.”³¹¹

Chris Day at MSF-H in Makeni also said that in the initial phases of demobilization, “Girls fiercely protested being separated from their ‘bush husbands.’ They were extremely worried about their husbands’ reaction. If demobilization did not work out, they were likely afraid they had few other options.”³¹² At the same time, some adolescent mothers interviewed who had gotten away from their “bush husbands” and found support from their families said they did not want to be with these men anymore. Interestingly, however, they said they would take

money from them to help support their children.

The two descriptions in the box below are compelling examples of the trauma experienced by many girls.

YOUNG PEOPLE’S COPING STRATEGIES AND PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES

Young people in Sierra Leone developed a variety of coping strategies to get them through the war, both physically and emotionally. Some strategies are more constructive than others, but they all serve a valuable purpose in the quest for survival: love, longing for family, safety, respect and some measure, often illusory, of control. When the strife is over, the healthy needs and positive attributes in even the most destructive and injurious of these strategies, can be used to help young people turn their lives around. If they are not, the healing and future of

The Laughing Stock of Her Community

Ruth, now 19, recalls the day Freetown was attacked on January 6, 1997. “I was 14 on that day when the rebels attacked Freetown. They captured and raped me in front of my parents who could not say anything about it because they were afraid. When they finished with me, they left the house and ordered us not to move. After about five days, they re-entered the house and gave my parents 5,000 leones (US\$2.44) as my bride price. Those rebels took me to their camp and gave me as a wife to one of the commanders by the name of So-So-Blood. When the commander was not around, the other rebels forced me to bed. I had no other option, and I became pregnant. On March 3, 1999, So-So-Blood was killed [and I escaped]. When I finally gave birth I was unable to know the biological father of the baby, and I became the laughing stock of my community.”³¹³

ESCAPED WHEN SHE HAD THE CHANCE

Jariatu was 10 when she was captured by rebels in Freetown. “They took me to the rebel base with many other captured people, especially young girls like me,” she said. “They forced me to go to bed. Most of us were raped by more than one rebel. Some could not get through the pain, but I was lucky to survive. The rebels who took me gave me weapons and trained me because I was very active. But when I was 12, I became pregnant. Due to poor medical treatment, I was unable to give birth to a healthy child, and I lost the baby. I was the most senior woman. I was responsible for the cooking. One day I was asked to prepare food when we heard heavy bombardment from the government soldiers. All of the rebels ran to safety, including the commanders. I was the only one left outside, and I managed to escape.”³¹⁴

young people become extremely tenuous.

COPING STRATEGIES

Rationalization and Belief — Used as principal combatants in the Sierra Leone war and systematically trained to fight under the watchful eyes of their commanders, and often with the support of their communities, many young people came to believe in their mission and their own power. Local communities lauded young people's involvement in CDFs and dressed them in traditional clothing, ritualizing their battles, even convincing them that they were impervious to bullets. RUF recruits were told they were becoming part of a Movement, a revolution, so that they were no longer "abducted" but rather had "joined" the RUF. Mixing drug use into the equation, young people on both sides felt they were fighting for a higher cause, rationalizing their acts as they committed them. Asked in interviews and focus groups about these acts, they often respond with simultaneous contradictions. They were powerful soldiers fighting for a cause and the acts they committed were forced upon them. In reality, the opposing roles of captive and warrior were both real parts of their experiences. To become whole human beings, they need to look to both explanations to understand their experiences.

Criminal Activity: Might Makes Right/Asserting Power and Strength — As the concept of "might makes right" ruled the wartime period, many young people engaged in stealing and looting as a matter of course and the daily siege that constituted their normal life. Today, without livelihood possibilities, positive support for change or a functioning police structure, many young people still depend on stealing as a way of life. Sexual violence, another form of asserting power — derived in part from a lack of control — was widespread in the conflict and continues as social protections, including cultural norms prohibiting such behavior, have broken down and as young people feel out of control in other areas of their lives.

Prostitution/Survival/Need for an Illusion of Control — Young people say that girls and women especially turned to prostitution in large numbers before and after the war. Many resorted to prostitution mainly out of necessity, describing their inability to find support without submitting to the power of males who control resources. Loss of self-esteem and hopelessness have also driven girls to prostitution, compelling them to place their lives at risk or otherwise confirm their feelings of degradation and

worthlessness. Some believe that the proliferation of commercial sex work is a direct result of sexual violence perpetrated against girls and women in the war, perpetuating a state of mind and an explosion of willing customers, including peacekeepers. Less is known about boys' participation in prostitution and the social taboos about discussing it.

Using Drugs/Self Medication — "Ghetto boys" described how they forget their troubles by smoking marijuana and taking other drugs. (See Health section.)

Remaining with Fighting Forces/Loyalty/Need for Protection, Security, Family — Some young people consider their peers and adults who have been a part of fighting groups to be the only family they have known, their main source of support and resources, and that remaining with them will bring the security they long for. Some former RUF fighters have followed their one-time commanders to diamond mines in search of their fortunes. Others remain with former fighting forces in demobilized areas because they are afraid to return to their hometowns and feel more secure remaining in the relative safety and community of others who understand their experiences. Many girls and women who were sexually abused and enslaved during the conflict insisted on not being separated from their "bush husbands" during the conflict, deathly afraid of a life of ostracism and isolation in their communities.

Early Marriage/Economic Security/Need for Protection and Family — Young people say that girls especially are marrying younger in order to find economic sustenance and survival. This may also be connected to initiation into traditional societies, which may reintroduce them to the community following rape or other violations. Such options may be well received by young girls, with few resources or other options. Marriage might also provide young girls with a sense of belonging and a reestablishment of tradition.

TURNING COPING STRATEGIES INTO PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITIES

Young people are also taking steps to turn their lives around and begin again with constructive activities that they believe will recreate a world of stability for them.

Going to School or Getting Training — Education and training is key to psychosocial well-being, accord-

ing to young people, who named it their top concern. It provides them with structure, purpose, skills for the future, integration within the community, identity, hope and more. Of all those in service to armed groups, whether combatants or not, young people who were able to return to formal education through CEIP or other means appeared to be coping the best with the transition back to civilian life. In their crisp, clean school uniforms, in class with other young people, they have a physical place to be, they are integrated into the community, and they have positive goals in sight. While there are still many tensions in school, hope for the future and mutual support can help young people endure these problems.

Working — Young people need and want to work, to be responsible for themselves and to meet their own basic needs. Their ability to take an active part in improving their lives while learning and achieving something raises their self-respect and respect for others. Young people also say they need to “keep busy” or be involved in activities that distract them from other, more negative behaviors and that offer them hope.

Participation in Advocacy and Youth Group Activities — As noted elsewhere in this report, Sierra Leone is rife with youth groups. They are a source of great strength and provide an active role in civil society for young people, although too often they feel their voices are not being heard. Former fighters drawn into groups with civilian young people can offer their skills, contribute and turn their coping strategies into more constructive forms of protest and social change. Girls and young women, especially, need assistance in beginning their own organizing efforts and building leadership among male-dominated youth groups. All of Sierra Leone appears to appreciate radio shows conducted by or pertaining to young people’s issues, which currently occupy about 50 percent of UNAMSIL radio’s programming.

Recreation and Creative Activities, Including Music, Dance and Art — Girls and boys enjoy sports, especially football for boys and volleyball for girls. They say it takes their minds off their troubles, provides opportunities to work out feelings of aggression, and learn team work. Sports have been an effective tool to calm inter-school warring in Makeni and have fostered goodwill between the ex-RUF and the SLA through, for example,

exhibition matches. All players, especially girls, require more materials and organized play. Packages of recreation materials to schools are extremely important, but community-based recreation should also be developed. All Sierra Leoneans, especially young people, enjoy music. They listen to the radio and to tapes they hear in market places. Songs that deliver messages of peace and health are unifying and informative forces. Dance groups also exist, which provide opportunities for young people to come together and work through their feelings and ideas with peers and teachers, and also provide a source of pride and entertainment to their communities.

Peer Relationships — Young people rely on their friends to support them through the difficult times. Some young people are also involved in sexual relationships, which provide them with a level of support. However, many young people identified these relationships with growing cynicism, viewing them as transactions rather than as based on love. They pointed to the ills of early marriage, pregnancy and the transmission of disease.

Taking Care of Others — Young people watch and care for their siblings, younger and older, and parents and elders, which distracts them from their own troubles and provides them with a meaning to live.



At Peace Links’ Art Beats Center (above) and through other youth group activities, young people use creative activities to heal themselves and their communities.

ENSURING YOUNG PEOPLE'S PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING: KEEPING PROMISES AND INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN PEACE BUILDING

The improvement of young people's psychosocial well-being will depend upon an ability to build trust between young people and adults. This building of trust in turn will require keeping promises made to all young people in the Lomé Peace Agreement and other national and international standards. It will require concrete interventions to alleviate poverty, reunify separated children with family, create education and livelihood opportunities and provide counseling, traditional rituals and other support mechanisms to young people, especially those who remain especially traumatized by their war experiences.

Young people must also be directly involved in the recovery and reconstruction of their communities. They need more targeted help making the transition to peace, and their contributions must be seen as essential. If not, they will continue to feel vanquished, marginalized and "different" from others they believe are doing better than they are or appear to have more control over their lives. The risks in not placing adolescents and youth at the center of decision-making are a return to violence, a further degradation of their rights and hopelessness for all of Sierra Leone.

Some positive psychosocial interventions that are holistic, community-based and connected to life skills and livelihood include World Vision's Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace Program and Skills Training and Employment Promotion project, Christian Children's Fund's Skills Training and Employment Generation project, War Child's creative workshops and the IRC's therapeutic and educational programs for former combatants. (See Livelihood and International Response sections.) However, more needs to be done; interventions must be expanded to unite young people and address their feelings of marginalization so that they can become productive members of society. In addition, programs must transition from working for young people to working with them to enable them to take matters into their own hands so that they can advocate, listen to and respect each other and reduce differences among themselves.

Donors and decision-makers must understand that for these young people, the enticement to demobilize and try peace came largely through the promise of acceptance and support in reintegration so that life would be better in post-conflict Sierra Leone. Adolescents' trust in the reintegration and reconstruction process will only be built through the just rule of law and the keeping of promises. In particular, decision-makers must ensure that the reintegration process greatly improves opportunities for livelihood and education.

X. SURVEY RESULTS: EDUCATION, POVERTY AND HEALTH CARE ARE TOP CONCERNS

Adolescent researchers chose to survey the top concerns of their peers, older youth and adults as part of their methodology. At the end of their focus group sessions or individual interviews, they invited research participants to rank their highest concerns from a written list the adolescent researchers devised. (See Methodological Materials for sample survey.) The results of the surveys helped researchers understand the relative importance of the issues they discussed in the focus groups. As described below, their findings were highly consistent across locations and sub-groups: lack of educational opportunities, poverty and lack of health care highly outweigh other adolescent concerns.

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

CONSISTENCY OF CONCERNS

Adolescent researchers created the survey in their training and practice sessions. Although the Makeni and Freetown teams worked separately, they formulated virtually the same survey. This reinforces a high level of consistency in the concerns held by young people in the northern and the western regions. Differences arose in the wording of only two categories. The Freetown team surveyed young people's concern over "teen pregnancy," while the Makeni team surveyed "unwanted pregnancy." In another category, Freetown surveyed concern about "rape,"

while Makeni chose to survey the broader category of “sexual violence.” In the charts and tables showing combined results of the two teams, both versions of these two categories are represented due to their similar nature, but should be read with these differences in mind.

LANGUAGE ISSUES

The surveys themselves were written in English, and adolescent researchers chose not to further translate them into *Krio*, *Temne* or other languages. They felt that many young people they interviewed would have low literacy skills and would be unable to read their native languages well enough to warrant multiple translations. In the end, surveys were often administered verbally, with researchers translating and explaining the full range of survey choices before the process of ranking them began. This practice likely also led to a range of interpretations, and thus, lack of consistency of the wording, but does not appear to have skewed the findings given the consistency of the responses.³¹⁵

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

In addition to providing their age, gender and location of their focus group, survey participants were asked to circle “Yes” or “No” in response to six demographic questions:

- Attending school?
- Formerly a refugee?
- Currently displaced?
- Formerly with fighting forces?
- Formerly displaced?
- Formerly with Civil Defense Forces?

Although the survey was anonymous, this additional information allowed researchers to find out more about the background of each survey participant and track any related trends in the concerns cited. Note that the question “Formerly with the fighting forces?”³¹⁶ was specifically meant to inquire whether or not the respondent had been associated with the RUF rebel group in any capacity — forcibly or voluntarily recruited, abducted for a short or long period, combatant or non-combatant, and the like. Similarly, those who checked “yes” in response to “Formerly with CDF?” could have had a variety of experiences with these fighting groups. Thus, it can-



Adolescent researchers developed their own questions to ask focus groups of their peers, including these former child soldiers in Regent, outside of Freetown.

not be assumed that all who answered yes to either of these two questions were “ex-combatants.”

SURVEY PARTICIPATION

The vast majority of concerns surveys were completed during 46 focus groups held in Makeni and at least 35 held in Freetown. Researchers in Makeni collected 418 surveys, and those in Freetown collected 409, for a total of 827 adolescent, youth and adult survey respondents.³¹⁷

Of this total, adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 completed 436 surveys in all: 171 surveys in Freetown and 265 in Makeni. The average age of adolescents participating in the survey in Freetown was 15.6, and in Makeni, it was 16.1 years, with a combined average age of 15.8 years.

Youth between the ages of 20 and 24 turned in 181 surveys, and adults 25 years old and above filled out 194 surveys. The average age of the youth was 21 years, and 38 for adults. Twelve children under 10 also completed surveys. They averaged 8.4 years old.

A total of 213 female and 217 male adolescents participated in the study. Female and male youth numbered 75 and 96, respectively, and 102 female and 83 male adults completed surveys.

(See also Tables 1 - 4.)

Concerns Surveyed

Adolescents were asked to rank their top ten concerns from among the following 20 categories assembled by the adolescent research teams. The Makeni survey differed slightly from the Freetown survey in two categories. Makeni language used shown in brackets:

- Lack of health care
- HIV/AIDS and STDs
- Drug abuse and addiction
- Being disabled (loss of sight, hearing, limbs, etc.)
- Early and/or forced marriage
- Prostitution
- Teen Pregnancy [Unwanted pregnancy]
- Rape [Sexual violence]
- Lack of educational opportunities
- Unemployment
- Lack of shelter/water/food/clothing
- Poverty
- Being displaced
- Being orphaned
- Lack of parental/family/home care
- Violence and insecurity
- Adolescent crime, delinquency and vandalism
- Reintegrating into society after war
- Trauma and psychological problems because of war
- Neglect by elders and government/lack of participation in decision-making

Table 1: Adolescent Survey Observations (10-19 Years Old)

Team	Female	Male	Gender Not Available	Total
Freetown	84	81	6	171
Makeni	129	136	0	265
Total	213	217	6	436

Table 2: Youth Survey Observations (20-24 Years Old)

Team	Female	Male	Gender Not Available	Total
Freetown	49	40	7	96
Makeni	26	56	3	85
Total	75	96	10	181

Table 3: Adult Survey Observations (25 Years Old and above)

Team	Female	Male	Gender Not Available	Total
Freetown	77	50	3	130
Makeni	25	33	6	64
Total	102	83	9	194

Table 4: Average Age of Respondents

Group	Average Age Females	Average Age Males	Average Age Combined
Children	8.2	8.75	8.4
Adolescents	15.5	16.2	15.8
Youth	20.9	21	20.9
Adults	40.3	34.6	37.5

EXCLUSIONS

Eight surveys received from adolescents in Makeni and seven from adolescents in Freetown were not included in the final survey analysis due to incomplete or indecipherable responses. In addition, gender information was not available for six of the respondents. Thus, **findings of the surveys completed by adolescents are based on a total of 421 adolescent observations from both Freetown and Makeni combined,**³¹⁸ representing 203 girls and 212 boys.

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

Of the total number of adolescents for whom data was available:

292 (70 percent) were in school at the time of the survey;

85 (20 percent) were formerly refugees;

372 (89 percent) were or are currently displaced;

79 (19 percent) were with fighting forces;

18 (4 percent) were with CDF.

Refer also to accompanying Charts and Tables (pages 70-79) for the following sections.

ADOLESCENT TOP CONCERNS

Participants were asked to rank their top ten concerns from a list of 20 choices that had been compiled by the adolescent researchers. Participants were instructed to mark their top concern with 10, their next highest concern with 9, and so on, down to number 1. (See Methodological Materials for sample survey.)³¹⁹

“LACK OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES,” “POVERTY” AND “LACK OF HEALTH CARE” RANK TOP THREE

Adolescents consistently named “lack of educational opportunities” and “poverty” their top two concerns. “Lack of educational opportunities” scored the highest on average (7.8 out of a possible 10) when the Freetown and Makeni responses were combined. Makeni respondents gave “lack of educational opportunities” a slightly higher average ranking score (7.97) than Freetown respondents did (7.64). “Poverty” scored a close second on average (7.3), with Makeni ranking poverty slightly higher (7.8) than Freetown (6.9).

NO DIFFERENCES BY GENDER IN TOP CONCERNS

Breaking down the survey results by gender across Makeni and Freetown, the same results are observed. Girls and boys both rank “lack of educational opportunities” as their first concern and “poverty” as their second highest concern. The only variation occurred among girls in Makeni, who ranked poverty (7.67) slightly higher than “lack of education” (7.47).

OTHER TOP CONCERNS

Adolescents ranked “lack of health care” their third highest concern on average (scoring 6.8). “Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing” came in fourth (at 5.8), and “unemployment” (3.8) and “lack of parental/family/home care” (3.5) came in fifth and sixth, respectively. Only slight differences occurred between the Freetown and Makeni responses, with adolescents in Makeni ranking “unemployment” slightly higher than “lack of parental/family/home care” and Freetown adolescents doing the reverse.

YOUTH TOP CONCERNS

Youth between 19 and 35 were asked to take the same survey as young people between the ages of 10 and 19. They were asked to rank what they perceive to be adolescents’ main concerns, rather than their own. Given the varied definitions of the stages of childhood in Sierra Leone, it is highly likely that the 20- to 24-year-olds who took the survey interpreted adolescence to include themselves. Thus, their responses should be viewed with this overlap in mind.

YOUTH CONCERNS SIMILAR TO ADOLESCENTS’

Youth between 20 and 24 years old also ranked “lack of education” and “poverty” as the top concerns of adolescents, giving them identical average rankings (7.0 out of a possible 10). “Lack of health care” came closely behind in third (at 6.7), and “unemployment” and “lack of shelter/food/water/clothing” also received identical rankings for fourth (5.2). Notably, however, youth gave a significantly higher average ranking to “unemployment” than adolescents did (5.2 compared with 3.8).

ADULT TOP CONCERNS

Adults were also asked to take the same survey as the adolescents and youth with the understanding that they should rank what they perceive adolescents' main concerns to be, not their own. Unlike the 20- to 24-year-olds, however, the majority of adults 25 and over followed these instructions. Thus, adult responses represent their thoughts about adolescent problems.

ADULT PERCEPTIONS OF ADOLESCENT CONCERNS SIMILAR TO ADOLESCENTS'

Adults in Freetown and Makeni also gave "lack of educational opportunities" and "poverty" the highest average scores. However, adults perceive poverty (scoring 7.2) to be a bigger concern for adolescents than lack of education (scoring 6.7). Adults also ranked adolescents' next highest concerns as "lack of health care," "unemployment" and "lack of shelter/food/water/clothing."

CHILD TOP CONCERNS

The small number of children under 10 years old participating in the survey also ranked "lack of educational opportunities" highest. Their second through fifth concerns, in descending order, were: "lack of shelter/food/water/clothing," "poverty," "lack of health care" and "lack of parental/family/home care."

DISTINCTIONS AMONG CHILD, ADOLESCENT, YOUTH AND ADULT CONCERNS

Although adolescents, youth and adults consistently name the same top five concerns for adolescents, there are several notable differences.

ADOLESCENTS RANK THREE TOP CONCERNS HIGHER THAN YOUTH AND ADULTS

Adolescents rank the following three categories of concern higher than youth and adults:

- "lack of educational opportunities" (7.8 for adolescents, 7.0 for youth and 6.7 for adults);
- "lack of shelter/food/water/clothing" (5.8 for ado-

lescents, 5.2 for youth and 4.8 for adults);

- "lack of parental/family/home care" (3.5 for adolescents, 2.7 for youth and 2.6 for adults).

YOUTH AND ADULTS RANK ONE TOP CONCERN HIGHER THAN ADOLESCENTS

Youth and adults rank the following categories of concern higher than adolescents:

- "unemployment" (3.8 for adolescents; 5.2 for youth and 4.9 for adults).

YOUNG CHILDREN RANK TWO CONCERNS HIGHER THAN OTHER RESPONDENTS

The eight children under 10 from Freetown and the four from Makeni rank two categories significantly higher than adolescents, youth and adults:

- "lack of educational opportunities" (9.8 for under-10s; 7.8 for adolescents.; 7.0 for youth; and 6.7 for adults);
- "lack of shelter/food/water/clothing" (7.3 for under-10s; 5.8 for adolescents.; 5.2 for youth; and 4.8 for adults).

SECOND TIER CONCERNS INCLUDE A GENDER DIVIDE

Beyond the top six concerns ranked by adolescents, (drawing average ranking scores between 7.8 and 3.5), a second tier of concerns emerged related broadly to insecurity, health and psychosocial recovery (drawing average ranking scores between 1.0 and 2.3). Amid these remaining 14 categories a few trends emerged.

ADOLESCENTS RANKED TWO OF THESE CATEGORIES LOWER THAN ADULTS

- "Drug abuse and addiction" (1.2 for adolescents, 1.8 for youth and 2.2 for adults);
- "Prostitution" (1.9 for adolescents, 2.4 for youth and 2.9 for adults).

SIGNIFICANT GENDER DIFFERENCES

Girls and boys ranked the general category of "vio-

lence and insecurity” similarly (1.9 and 2.1 respectively). Girls voiced somewhat higher concern over “being displaced” than boys (2.3 and 1.8 respectively). And boys ranked “neglect by elders and government/lack of participation in decision-making” somewhat higher than girls (2.6 and 2.1, respectively). Boys also expressed more concern over “trauma and psychological problems because of war” and “drug abuse and addiction” than girls (1.5 and 0.8 in the first instance and 1.3 and 0.9 in the second).

Most notably, however, girls are significantly more concerned *on average* about sexual violence and exploitation and related problems than boys. Girls ranked “early or forced marriage” and “unwanted/teen pregnancy” twice as high as boys (2.1 vs. 1.1 in the first instance and 2.0 vs. 1.0 in the second). Girls also ranked “prostitution,” and “sexual violence/rape” as substantially higher concerns than boys (2.3 vs. 1.5 for the former and 1.4 vs. 0.8 for the latter). Importantly, the major differences in

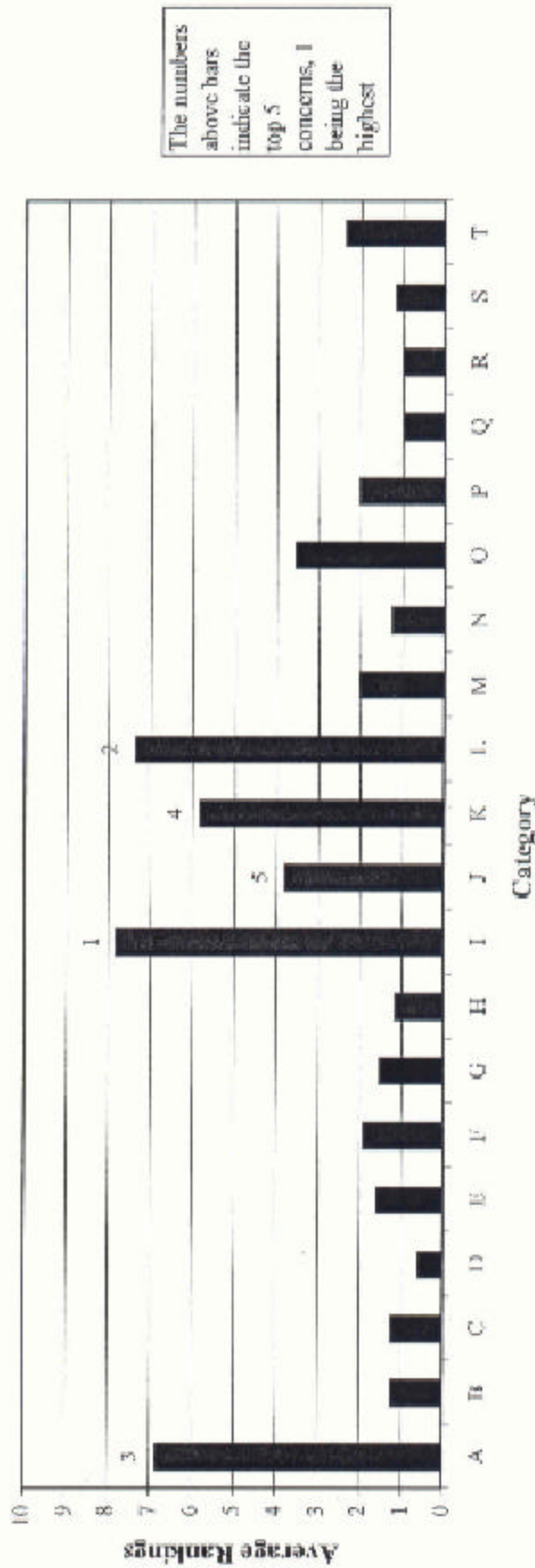
these rankings occurred in the Makeni responses. In Makeni, girls ranked these four categories double and sometimes three times as high as boys. By contrast, in Freetown, girls and boys responded to three of these categories very similarly, the exception being “early or forced marriage,” with girls in Freetown still being more than twice as concerned about this than boys. Boys in Freetown, however, actually ranked concern over “sexual violence/rape” slightly higher than girls.

OTHER SMALL DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES

Findings did not reveal significant differences between respondents who were in or out of school, formerly refugees, displaced, formerly with fighting forces or CDFs. However, as would be expected, concerns about displacement received a higher ranking in Freetown, where more displaced persons were interviewed.

Top Concerns of Adolescents in Freetown and Makeni

Average Rankings from Survey Results



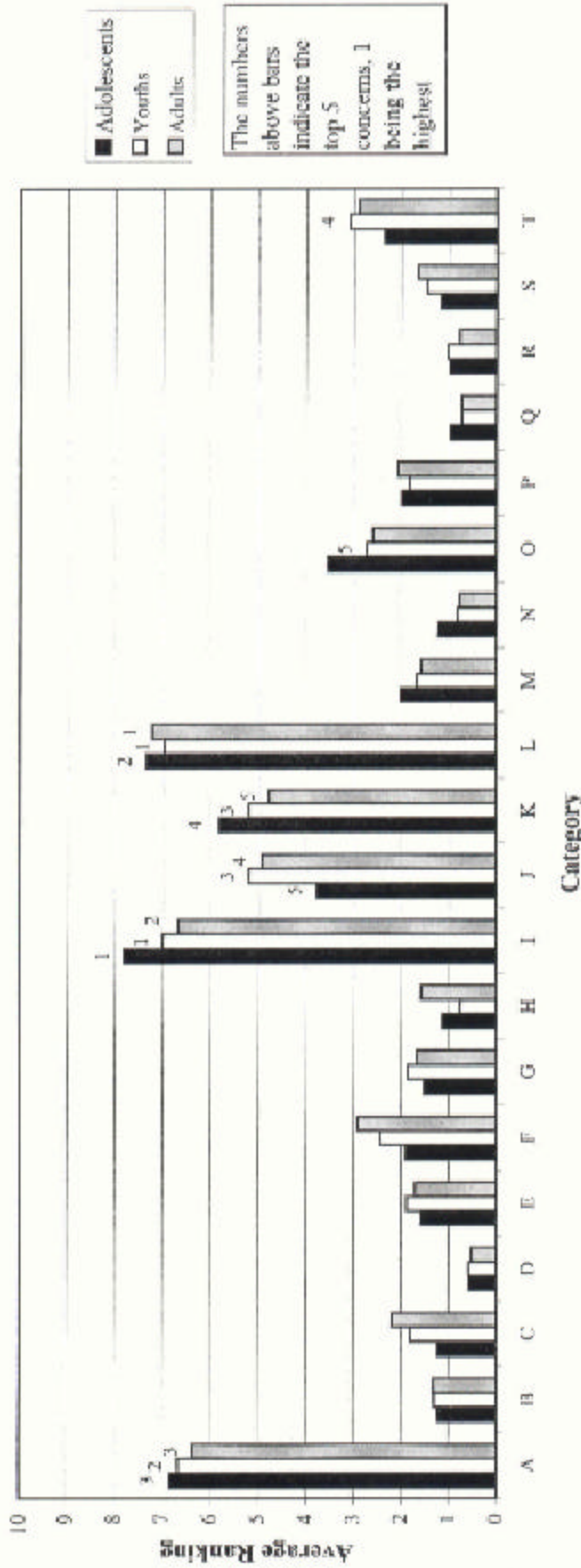
Based on 421 observations, including 257 adolescents from Makeni and 164 adolescents from Freetown.

Note: The highest possible ranking is 10, signifying the highest level of concern. Adolescent respondents were 10-19 years old and averaged 15.9 years of age. Makeni and Freetown surveys varied slightly in categories G and H. For Makeni, G=Unwanted pregnancy and H=Sexual violence. For Freetown, G=Teen pregnancy and H=Rape. All remaining categories were identical between the two groups.

Category Key

A=Lack of health care, B=HIV/AIDS and STDs, C=Drug abuse and addiction, D=Being disabled (loss of sight, hearing, limbs, etc.), E=Early or forced marriage, F=Prostitution, G(Makeni)=Unwanted pregnancy, G(Freetown)=Teen pregnancy, H(Makeni)=Sexual violence, H(Freetown)=Rape, I=Lack of educational opportunities, J=Unemployment, K=Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing, L=Poverty, M=Being orphaned, N=Lack of parental/family/home care, O=Violence and insecurity, Q=Adolescent crime, delinquency, and vandalism, R=Reintegrating into society after war, S=Trauma and psychological problems because of war, T=Neglect by elders and government/lack of participation in decision making.

Top Concerns of Adolescents, Youth, and Adults Surveyed in Freetown and Makeni Average Rankings from Survey Results



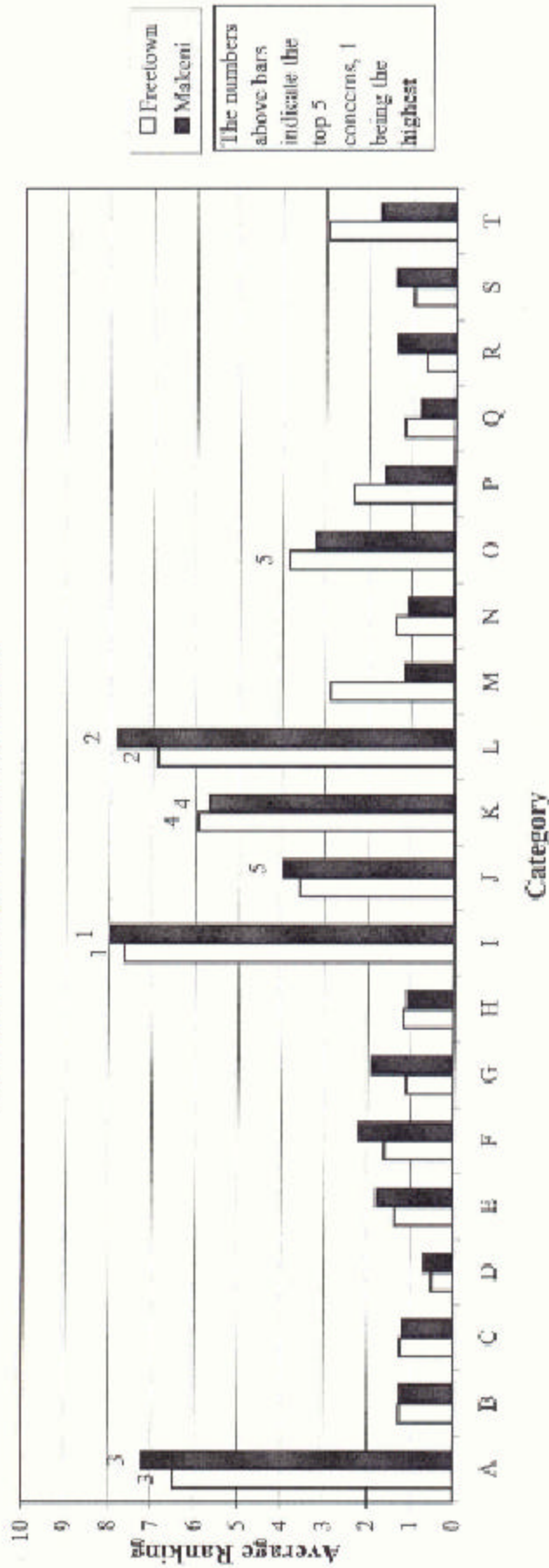
Based on 784 observations, including 421 adolescents, 175 youths, and 188 adults.

Note: The highest possible ranking is 10, signifying the highest level of concern. Adolescent respondents were 10-19 years old and averaged 15.9 years of age. Youth respondents were 20-24 years old and average 21 years of age. Adults were 25 years old and above and averaged 37.6 years of age. Makeni and Freetown surveys varied slightly in categories G and H. In Makeni, G=Unwanted pregnancy and H=Sexual violence. In Freetown, G=Teen pregnancy and H=Rape. All remaining categories were identical between the two groups.

Category Key

A=Lack of health care, B=HIV/AIDS and STDs, C=Drug abuse and addiction, D=Being disabled loss of sight, hearing, limbs, etc.), E=Early or forced marriage, F=Prostitution, G(Makeni)=Unwanted pregnancy, G(Freetown)=Teen pregnancy, H(Makeni)=Sexual violence, H(Freetown)=Rape, I=Lack of educational opportunities, J=Unemployment, K=Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing, L=Poverty, M=Being orphaned, N=Being displaced, O=Lack of parental/family/home care, P=Violence and insecurity, Q=Adolescent crime, delinquency, and vandalism, R=Reintegrating into society after war, S=Trauma and psychological problems because of war, T=Neglect by elders and government/lack of participation in decision making.

Top Concerns of Adolescents Surveyed in Makeni v. Freetown Average Rankings from Survey Results



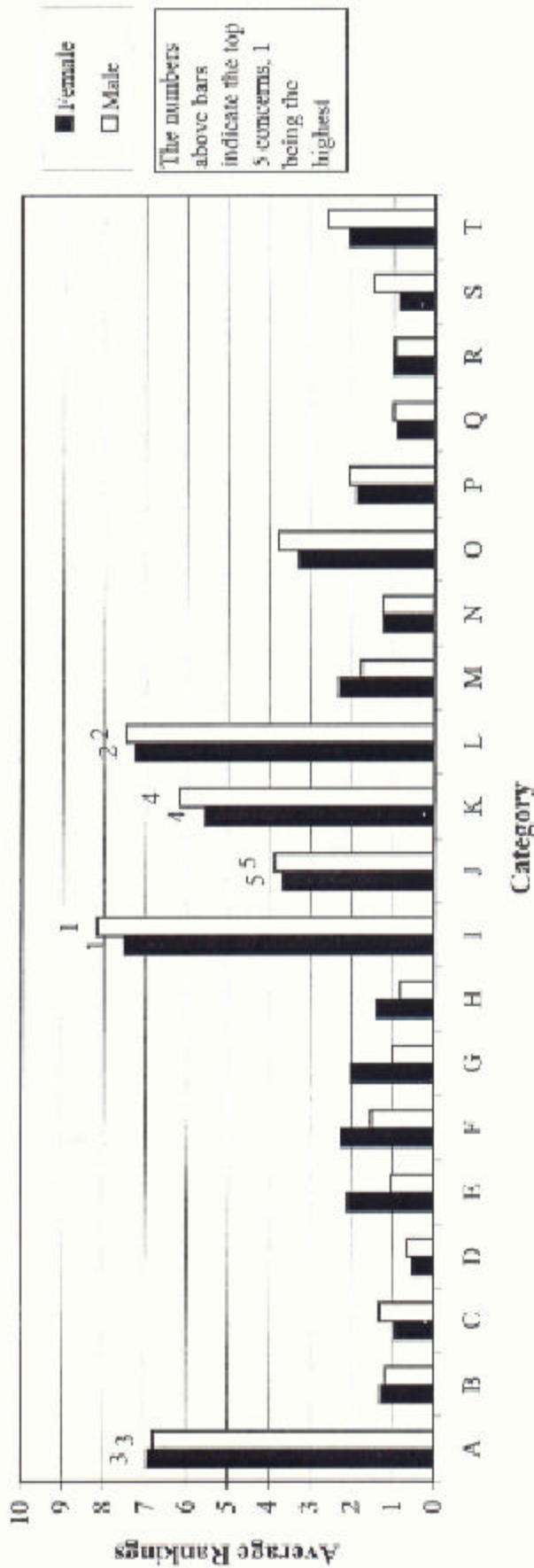
Based on 421 observations, including 257 adolescents from Makeni and 164 adolescents from Freetown.

Note: The highest possible ranking is 10, signifying the highest level of concern. Adolescent respondents were 10-19 years old and averaged 15.9 years of age. Makeni and Freetown surveys varied slightly in categories G and H. For Makeni, G=Unwanted pregnancy and H=Sexual violence. For Freetown, G=Teen pregnancy and H=Rape. All remaining categories were identical between the two groups.

Category Key

- A-Lack of health care, B-HIV/AIDS and STDs, C-Drug abuse and addiction, D-Being disabled (loss of sight, hearing, limbs, etc.), E-Early or forced marriage, F-Prostitution, G(Makeni)-Unwanted pregnancy, G(Freetown)-Teen pregnancy, H(Makeni)-Sexual violence, H(Freetown)-Rape, I-Lack of educational opportunities, J-Unemployment, K-Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing, L-Poverty, M-Being displaced, N-Being orphaned, O-Lack of parental/family/home care, P-Violence and insecurity, Q-Adolescent crime, delinquency, and vandalism, R-Reintegrating into society after war, S-Trauma and psychological problems because of war, T-Neglect by elders and government/lack of participation in decision making.

Top Concerns of Adolescents Surveyed in Freetown and Makeni Average Rankings by Gender from Survey Results



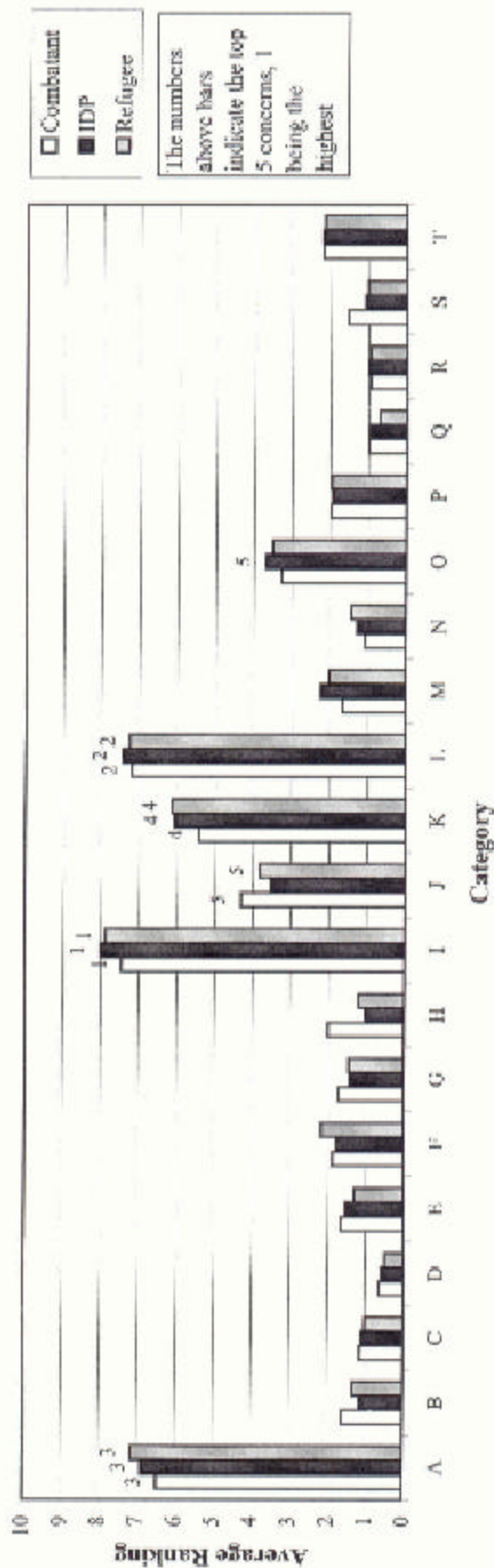
Based on 415 observations, including 203 female and 212 male adolescents.

Note: The highest possible ranking is 10, signifying the highest level of concern. Adolescent respondents were 10-19 years old and averaged 15.9 years of age. Makeni and Freetown surveys varied slightly in categories G and H. In Makeni, G=Unwanted pregnancy and H=Sexual violence. In Freetown, G=Teen pregnancy and H=Rape. All remaining categories were identical between the two groups.

Category Key

A=Lack of health care, B=HIV/AIDS and STDs, C=Drug abuse and addiction, D=Being disabled/loss of sight, hearing, limbs, etc.), E=Early or forced marriage, F=Prostitution, G(Makeni)=Unwanted pregnancy, G(Freetown)=Teen pregnancy, H(Makeni)=Sexual violence, H(Freetown)=Rape, I=Lack of educational opportunities, J=Unemployment, K=Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing, L=Poverty, M=Being displaced, N=Being orphaned, O=Lack of parental/family/home care, P=Violence and insecurity, Q=Adolescent crime, delinquency, and vandalism, R=Reintegrating into society after war, S=Trauma and psychological problems because of war, T=Neglect by elders and government/Lack of participation in decision making.

Top Concerns of Adolescent Combatants, IDPs, and Refugees Surveyed in Freetown and Makeni Average Rankings from Survey Results



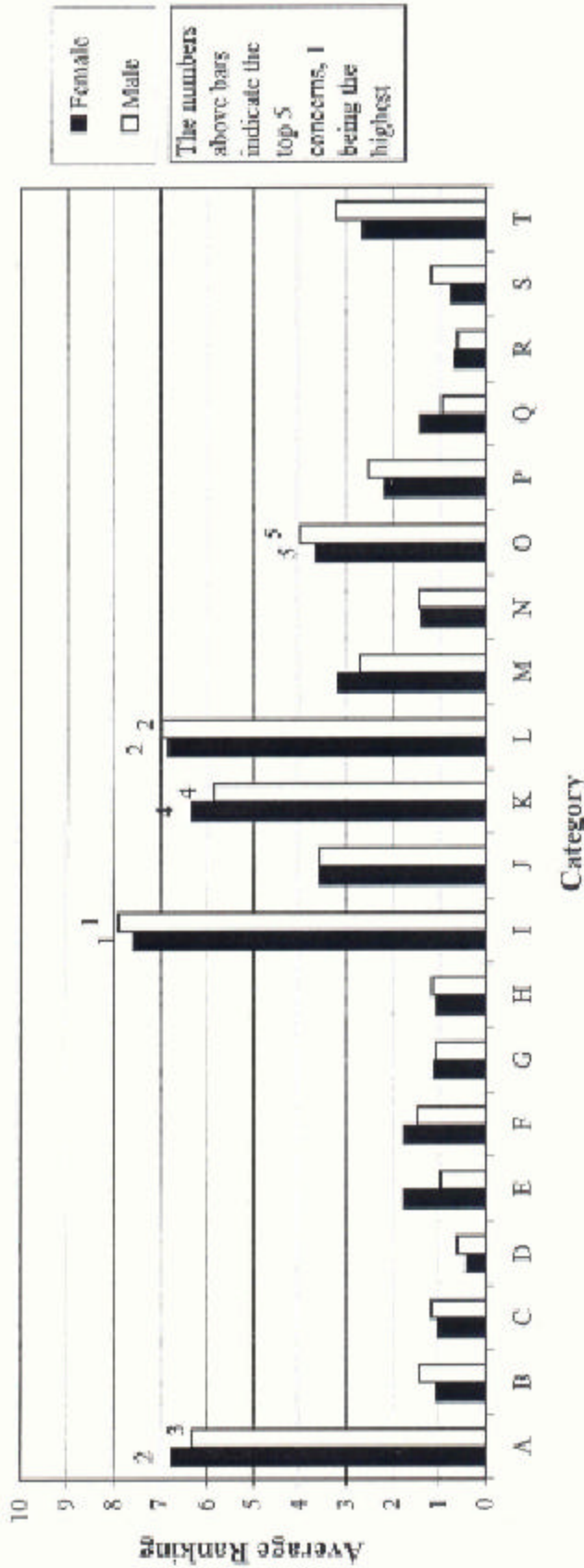
Based on 546 observations, including 89 adolescents identified as combatants, 372 identified as IDPs, and 85 identified as former refugees.

Note: The highest possible ranking is 10, signifying the highest level of concern. Adolescent respondents were 10-19 years old and averaged 15.9 years of age. Makeni and Freetown surveys varied slightly in categories G and H. In Makeni, G=Unwanted pregnancy and H=Sexual violence. In Freetown, G=Teen pregnancy and H=Rape. All remaining categories were identical between the two groups.

Category Key

- A=Lack of health care, B-ILIV/AIDS and STDs, C=Drug abuse and addiction, D=Being disabled, loss of sight, hearing, limbs, etc.), E-Early or forced marriage, F-Prostitution, G(Makeni)=Unwanted pregnancy, G(Freetown)=Teen pregnancy, H(Makeni)=Sexual violence, H(Freetown)=Rape, I=Lack of educational opportunities, J=Unemployment, K=Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing, L=Poverty, M=Being orphaned, N=Being displaced, O=Lack of parental/family/home care, P=Violence and insecurity, Q=Adolescent crime, delinquency, and vandalism, R=Reintegrating into society after war, S=Trauma and psychological problems because of war, T=Neglect by elders and government/lack of participation in decision making.

Top Concerns of Adolescents Surveyed in Freetown Average Rankings by Gender from Survey Results



Based on 158 observations, including 80 female and 78 male adolescents.

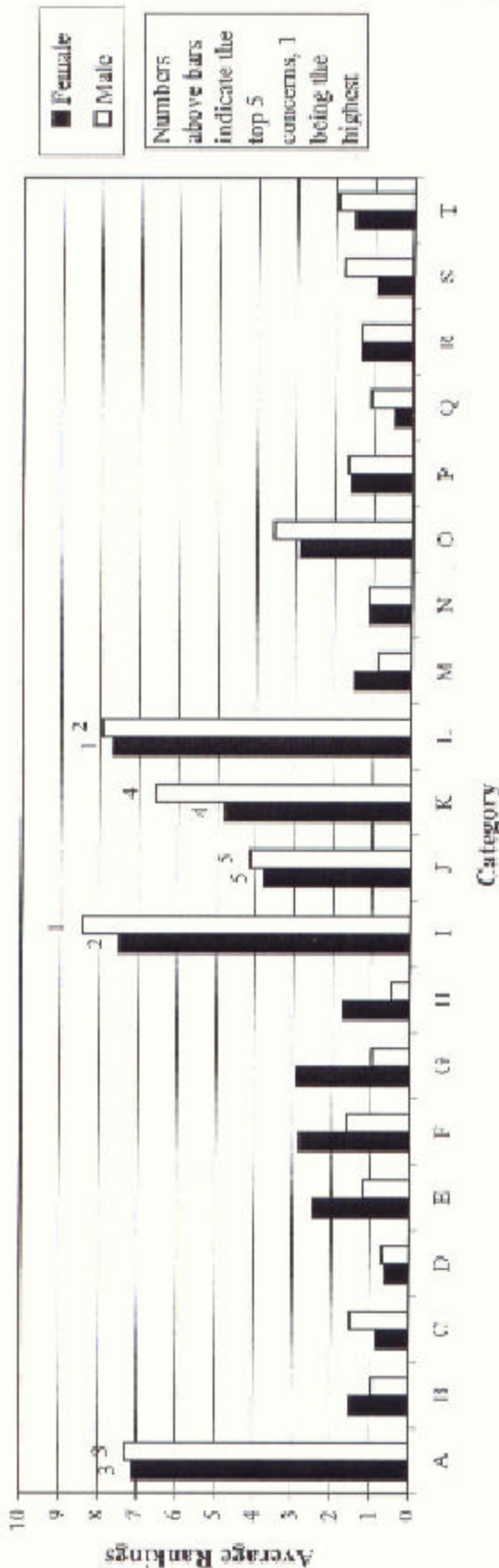
Note: The highest possible ranking is 10, signifying the highest level of concern. Adolescent respondents were 10-19 years old and averaged 15.6 years of age.

Category Key

A=Lack of health care, B=HIV/AIDS and STDs, C=Drug abuse and addiction, D=Being disabled (loss of sight, hearing, limbs, etc.), E=Early or forced marriage, F=Prostitution, G=Teen pregnancy, H=Rape, I=Lack of educational opportunities, J=Unemployment, K=Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing, L=Poverty, M=Being displaced, N=Being orphaned, O=Lack of parental/family/home care, P=Violence and insecurity, Q=Adolescent crime, delinquency, and vandalism, R=Reintegrating into society after war, S=Trauma and psychological problems because of war, T=Neglect by elders and government/lack of participation in decision making.

Top Concerns of Adolescents Surveyed in Makeni

Average Rankings by Gender from Survey Results



Based on 257 observations, including 123 female and 134 male adolescents.

Note: The highest possible ranking is 10, signifying the highest level of concern. Adolescent respondents were 10-19 years old and averaged 16.1 years of age.

Category Key

- A=Lack of health care, B=HIV/AIDS and STDs, C=Drug abuse and addiction, D =Being disabled (loss of sight, hearing, limbs, etc.), E=Early or forced marriage, F=Prostitution, G=Unwanted pregnancy, H=Sexual violence, I=Lack of educational opportunities, J=Unemployment, K=Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing, L=Poverty, M=Being displaced, N=Being orphaned, O=Lack of parental/family/home care, P=Violence and insecurity, Q=Adolescent crime, delinquency, and vandalism, R=Reintegrating into society after war, S=Trauma and psychological problems because of war, T=Neglect by elders and government/lack of participation in decision making.

Top Concerns in Freetown by Age Group and Gender Average Rankings from Survey Results

Table 7

	Number of Observations	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
All																					
Under 10	8	5.3	0.8	0.0	2.4	0.1	0.0	1.1	2.1	9.6	2.1	7.0	6.6	4.1	0.5	5.0	3.9	1.4	0.1	0.6	2.3
10 to 19	164	6.5	1.2	1.2	0.5	1.4	3.6	1.1	1.2	7.6	3.6	5.9	6.9	2.9	1.4	3.8	2.4	1.2	0.7	1.0	3.0
20 to 24	91	6.3	1.2	2.1	0.5	2.2	2.7	1.9	0.9	6.4	5.1	4.9	6.6	2.1	1.2	2.8	1.9	0.8	0.8	1.1	2.4
25 and Above	125	6.8	1.5	2.0	0.9	1.7	1.7	1.9	0.9	5.8	5.1	6.3	7.3	1.6	1.2	3.0	2.0	0.7	0.9	1.6	2.2
Female																					
Under 10	0	4.3	1.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	1.2	1.5	10.0	1.8	8.2	7.5	5.3	0.3	5.0	4.0	1.8	0.2	0.3	2.3
10 to 19	80	6.8	1.1	1.0	0.4	1.7	1.7	1.1	1.1	7.6	3.6	6.3	6.8	3.2	1.4	3.7	2.2	1.4	0.7	0.8	2.7
20 to 24	46	6.8	1.0	1.9	0.4	2.3	2.4	1.8	1.0	6.0	4.7	5.3	7.0	2.1	1.3	3.2	1.6	1.2	0.7	0.9	3.4
25 and Above	72	7.3	1.1	1.8	0.9	1.6	1.3	1.6	1.3	5.9	4.6	7.2	7.8	1.5	1.4	3.2	2.2	0.4	0.6	1.9	1.3
Male																					
Under 10	2	8.0	0.0	0.0	0.5	0.0	0.0	1.0	4.0	8.5	3.0	3.5	4.0	0.5	1.0	5.0	3.5	0.0	0.0	1.5	2.0
10 to 19	78	6.3	1.4	1.2	0.6	0.9	1.5	1.1	1.1	7.0	3.6	5.8	7.0	2.7	1.4	4.0	2.5	0.9	0.6	1.2	3.2
20 to 24	39	5.6	1.3	2.3	0.7	2.0	2.9	1.6	0.6	6.8	5.6	4.5	6.2	2.3	1.0	2.3	2.4	0.5	0.9	1.4	3.8
25 and Above	50	6.0	2.1	2.2	0.9	1.6	2.2	2.2	0.3	5.8	5.9	5.0	6.5	2.0	1.0	2.4	1.8	1.1	1.1	1.3	3.4

Note: The highest possible ranking is 10, signifying the highest level of concern. Number of observation totals in the "All" category do not equal "Male" plus "Female" because in some cases gender were not reported.

Category Key

A=Lack of health care, B=HIV/AIDS and STDs, C=Drug abuse and addiction, D=Being disabled (loss of sight, hearing, limbs, etc.), E=Early and/or forced marriage, F=Prostitution, G=Teen pregnancy, H=Rape, I=Lack of educational opportunities, J=Unemployment, K=Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing, L=Poverty, M=Being orphaned, N=Lack of parental/family/home care, O=Violence and insecurity, P=Adolescent crime, delinquency and vandalism, R=Struggling into society after war, S=Trauma and psychological problems because of war, T=Neglected by elders and government/lack of participation in decision-making.

Top Concerns in Freetown and Makeni by Age and Gender
Average Rankings from Survey Results

Table 5

	Number of Observations	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
All																					
Under 10	42	5.1	0.6	0.4	2.1	2.7	0.9	1.7	1.1	9.8	1.1	7.3	6.2	2.9	1.3	3.1	1.9	1.4	2.3	1.1	2.1
10 to 19	421	6.8	1.2	1.2	0.6	1.6	1.9	1.5	1.1	7.8	3.8	3.8	7.3	2.0	1.2	3.5	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.2	2.3
20 to 24	175	6.7	1.3	1.8	0.6	1.9	2.4	1.9	0.8	7.0	5.2	5.2	7.0	1.7	0.8	2.7	1.8	0.7	1.0	1.4	3.1
25 and above	188	6.4	1.3	2.2	0.5	1.7	2.9	1.7	1.6	6.7	4.9	4.8	7.2	1.6	0.8	2.6	2.1	0.7	0.8	1.7	2.9
Female																					
Under 10	9	5.2	0.8	0.5	1.2	3.6	1.2	2.1	0.8	10.0	0.9	7.6	7.1	2.7	0.2	3.2	2.0	0.9	2.4	0.3	2.5
10 to 19	203	6.9	1.3	0.9	0.5	2.1	2.3	2.0	1.4	7.5	8.7	5.6	7.2	2.2	1.2	3.3	1.9	0.9	1.0	0.8	2.1
20 to 24	72	7.0	1.1	1.5	0.5	2.3	2.5	2.2	0.9	6.3	4.7	5.5	7.1	2.1	0.9	2.5	2.1	1.0	0.8	1.2	2.6
25 and Above	97	6.8	1.5	1.7	0.9	1.7	2.2	2.4	1.8	6.1	4.5	5.9	7.7	1.3	1.0	3.0	1.8	0.4	0.5	2.2	1.6
Male																					
Under 10	3	5.0	0.0	0.0	4.8	0.0	0.0	0.5	2.0	9.3	1.5	6.3	3.5	3.8	4.5	3.0	1.8	3.0	2.0	3.3	1.0
10 to 19	217	6.8	1.2	1.3	0.7	1.1	1.5	1.0	0.8	8.2	8.9	6.2	7.4	1.8	1.3	3.8	2.1	1.0	1.0	1.5	2.6
20 to 24	95	6.4	1.5	2.0	0.6	1.6	2.4	1.5	0.6	7.3	5.6	4.9	6.8	1.6	0.8	2.7	1.9	0.6	1.2	1.6	3.5
25 and Above	82	6.4	1.5	2.8	0.6	1.4	2.9	1.7	1.0	6.0	6.4	4.5	7.1	1.2	0.6	2.0	2.2	0.9	1.2	1.6	3.3

Note: The highest possible ranking is 10, signifying the highest level of concern. Number of observations totals in the "All" category do not equal "Male" plus "Female" because in some cases gender data were not reported. Makeni and Freetown surveys varied slightly in categories G and H. In Makeni, G=Unwanted pregnancy and H=Rape. All remaining categories were identical between the two groups.

Category Key

A=Lack of health care, B=HIV/AIDS and STDs, C=Drug abuse and addiction, D=Being disabled (loss of sight, hearing, limbs, etc.), E=Early or forced marriage, F=Prostitution, G(Makeni)-Unwanted pregnancy, G(Freetown)-Teen pregnancy, H(Makeni)-Sexual violence, H(Freetown)-Rape, I=Lack of educational opportunities, J=Unemployment, K=Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing, L=Poverty, M=Rape, displaced, N=Being orphaned, O=Lack of parental/family/home care, P=Violence and insecurity, Q=Adolescent crime, delinquency, and vandalism, R=Reintegrating into society after war, S=Trauma and psychological problems because of war, T=Neglected by elders and government/lack of participation in decision making.

XI. ADOLESCENT RESEARCHERS LEAD THE STUDY: METHODOLOGY AND LESSONS LEARNED



During the three-day training, adolescent researchers worked with adult research advisers to develop interviewing and communication skills.

Adolescents were the principal researchers and leaders of this study, with youth and other adults supporting and facilitating their activities. This section provides detail on how the study worked, including:

- How adolescent researchers, adult research advisers and youth coordination groups were identified
- The content of their training
- How they developed their methodology

- How they carried out their research
- Lessons learned about process and participation

The approach to the work in Sierra Leone was similar to that conducted with adolescents by the Women’s Commission in Kosovo (2000) and northern Uganda (2001), and interesting patterns in outcomes have begun to emerge. Thus, some of the language used to describe the process is from earlier

Central to the approach of this study is a belief in adolescents’ right to participate in the decisions that concern them.³²¹

Adolescent participation in this study and adult support for this participation took several principal forms:

- **Adolescents were:** lead researchers, advocates and research participants, who were interviewed by the research teams.
- **Adults were:** advisers to the adolescent researchers, research coordinators, advocates, supporters and research participants, who were interviewed by the research teams.

FREETOWN RESEARCH TEAM

27 Adolescent Researchers
8 Adult Research Advisers

Coordinated by Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA); Forum for African Women Educationalists-Freetown (FAWE); Independent Youth Forum (IYF); Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organization (SLYEO)

Regions Covered

Freetown (city); **Mountain Region** (Regent, Leicester, Gloucester); **Western Rural** (York, Tombo); **Western Urban** (Waterloo, Grafton, Hastings)

MAKENI RESEARCH TEAM

24 Adolescent Researchers
9 Adult Research Advisers

Coordinated by Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CDHR); Civil Society Movement (CSM) and Makeni Union of Youth Groups (MUYOG)

Regions Covered

Makeni town and surrounding villages

reports with information specific to Sierra Leone inserted, as are important lessons learned that warrant reprinting for a new audience. Lessons learned that are especially distinct to the Sierra Leone experience or had not been covered in previous reports are also given emphasis here.³²⁰ A final report comparing the findings from each site, plus a fourth site, will outline more precisely patterns that emerged in the research process and overall lessons learned.

partner in the north, assisting with the organization

THE RESEARCH TEAMS

Fifty-one Sierra Leonean adolescents living in Freetown and Makeni, Sierra Leone, participated as “adolescent researchers” in this study. They were the principal researchers, in collaboration with the Women’s Commission. They designed and shaped their methodology, organized and conducted the research, and analyzed and reported their findings. They will go on to conduct advocacy based on these findings with the Women’s Commission, adult advisers and youth coordination groups involved in facilitating their work, and other interested groups and individuals.

The young people worked on two separate teams, one in Freetown, known as the Freetown team, and one in Makeni, known as the Makeni team, with 27 and 24 adolescent researchers respectively. Seventeen adults serving as “research advisers” assisted them in their responsibilities — eight on the Freetown team and nine on the Makeni team.

of research teams and follow-up advocacy.

A total of seven local NGOs coordinated the work of the two teams — four in Freetown and three in Makeni. Each of these two groupings formed a “youth coordination group” (YCG). Thus, one YCG assisted adolescents and adults carry out the work in Freetown, and another facilitated those in Makeni. These entities acted as sub-grantees of the Women’s Commission and administered the research project funds. Six of the seven organizations were youth-run NGOs.

The Women’s Commission and the IRC offices in Freetown and Caritas-Makeni in Freetown and Makeni provided invaluable support to the project, each offering insight into conceptual approaches and issues to be addressed. The local Women’s Commission office assisted especially with the organization of the research teams, and the IRC played an important role in providing financial accounting support. Caritas-Makeni was a strong collaborative

KEY OBJECTIVES

The objective of the teams' work was to identify and investigate key issues facing adolescents in their communities and to identify solutions for these concerns. The results of their work will be used for advocacy purposes, to bring international, national and local attention to adolescent and youth concerns in Sierra Leone and the surrounding region. Their recommendations will inform decisions made about programs and policies implemented in Sierra Leone, including strengthening current efforts and implementing new pilot projects for young people that *involve* young people. It is also hoped that the process will inspire young people and provide them with ideas about ways they can take action on their own behalf, with or without help from adults. (See below for more on what adolescent researchers identified as their reasons for undertaking this work.)

IDENTIFYING RESEARCH LOCATIONS AND PARTNERS

FINDING THE YOUTH COORDINATORS

Having received positive responses from adolescents, local and international NGOs, UN agencies and others working in Sierra Leone about potential interest in, and the feasibility of, conducting the study, representatives of the Women's Commission traveled to Sierra Leone in March 2002 to identify partners and locations to carry out the work. The local Women's Commission office also helped identify a number of Freetown-based youth organizations and many adolescents who expressed interest in becoming involved. In turn, direction from these youth groups and additional guidance from Caritas-Makeni led to local groups being identified in Makeni, Bombali Seborra Chiefdom.

In both regions, given the very large number of youth organizations functioning in Sierra Leone, the young people decided to ask umbrella youth organizations to represent them as the YCG for each area. They held discussions and decided that the Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA), Independent Youth Forum (IYF) and the Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organization (SLYEO) should work together as the YCG in Freetown. The Forum for African Women Educationalists-Freetown Branch (FAWE) was also included in this YCG to expand the direct participation of women and girls

in the coordination function, since most youth organizations are led by males. In Makeni, the YCG comprised the Makeni Union of Youth Groups (MUYOG), the Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CDHR) and the Civil Society Movement Sierra Leone (CSM-SL). (See International, National and Local Responses section for more information about these and other local groups.)

The original concept of a YCG involves a single youth organization facilitating the work of one research team. In the case of Sierra Leone, these YCGs had a double challenge: carrying out the work *and* doing it as part of a coalition, with the inputs of many groups to balance. This, however, was deemed the best way forward by the young people themselves. With great savvy, the groups also made the decision from the outset to, as much as possible, use the project to strengthen youth advocacy networks throughout Sierra Leone and carry the outcomes to other parts of Sierra Leone.

CHOOSING THE LOCATIONS

With resources enough to concentrate on two sites only, Freetown and Makeni were chosen for several key reasons. The issues presented by the sheer number of people traveling through and living in and around the capital in a range of circumstances — in camps, villages, urban settings, as returning refugees, as IDPs, etc. — presented compelling reasons for focusing on Freetown. In addition, having local groups involved in this area in close proximity to major governmental, UN and other decision-makers would facilitate follow-up advocacy work. Furthermore, local umbrella groups based in Freetown could provide national representation for adolescents and youth in other parts of Sierra Leone and could potentially carry out follow-up work with young people in other areas.

After much debate, Makeni was chosen as the second site. At the time, the north had received little attention compared with other parts of the country and was just opening up to larger numbers of NGO and other actors, while the east of Sierra Leone especially was drawing significant attention. The northern region had IDP and returning refugee issues to be addressed and faced particular challenges making the very recent transition from being the headquarters of the RUF. Freetown-based youth organizations also felt that involving and supporting youth groups in the north was particularly needed given the unique upheaval experienced under the RUF's control.

CHOOSING ADOLESCENT RESEARCHERS AND ADULT ADVISERS

After detailed discussions, the Women's Commission left the new Youth Coordination Group partners in March with basic guidelines and mutually agreed upon criteria for selecting adolescent researchers and adult research advisers according to terms of reference (TOR) for each function. The YCGs had a month to organize themselves and the teams in order to begin research in April.

Diversity was a key criterion for choosing adolescent researchers. While no one person can fully represent an entire group, attention was paid to ensure the representation of a wide range of experiences and perspectives of young people. This gave researchers good opportunities to learn from one another and their adult advisers, so that their ideas for eventual outreach would be comprehensive.

In both areas, YCGs used youth and women's group networks to identify and choose adolescent researchers. YCGs provided these groups and other key community people, such as headmasters, with the adolescent researcher TOR. Nominations were received and narrowed down by the YCGs and other young people, according to the criteria.

Ultimately, adolescent researchers were of both sexes, aged from 14 to 22 years. They included: child mothers; those formerly with the RUF; those formerly with the CDF; internally displaced; former refugees; former commercial sex workers; adolescents living in or out of camps and in town or in villages; those orphaned by war; students and out-of-school youth; working youth; adolescents with disabilities; a young tribal chief; and youth activists (e.g., part of a youth organization).

A strong effort was made to limit the number of experienced youth activists on the team while reaching out to more marginalized young people. Thus, some adolescents on the team were also representing their youth groups and would be able to bring their experiences back to the group, and others were learning about being part of a group activity for the first time.

Adult advisers were chosen in much the same way. They included both males and females with a commitment to and/or experience working with young people. They were respected members of the community, including parents and teachers.



Adolescent researchers from both teams submitted their own design for the research team T-shirts and voted for the winner. Here, an adolescent researcher displays the winning design for the Makeni research team.

In both cases, an effort was made to identify participants from neighborhoods where the teams intended to carry out research. While the teams did not limit themselves to conducting research in areas where team members resided, in some places this facilitated logistics and increased the potential for follow-up discussion in these areas.

DESIGNING, ORGANIZING AND IMPLEMENTING THE RESEARCH

Each team participated in a three-day training, where Women's Commission researchers and local professionals guided them through a process of identifying their purpose as a team, learning about research methodologies and developing and practicing their methodology.

The Women's Commission provided a framework for the researchers, suggesting a few general questions to guide their work: "What are the main problems of adolescents in Sierra Leone, and what are some solutions?" and "Who are 'adolescents' and 'youth' in Sierra Leone today?"

First, the teams worked together to decide for themselves why these questions would be of interest to them and to develop statements of purpose. Then they spent a day-and-a-half identifying and developing detailed questions about related topics for discussion with their peers. (See Methodological Materials in the Appendix for sample questions developed.)

The Makeni team's statement of purpose was: "We are conducting this research in order to find out more about adolescents' problems and identify solutions and recommendations for subsequent implementation, so that future generations will not face such problems."³²² And the Freetown team asserted, "We are undertaking research as a team to investigate the problems facing adolescents and young people in Sierra Leone, identifying solutions and advocating to the policymakers and the community for the betterment of young people."³²³

In the second half of the training, the teams learned about, shaped and practiced different research methods. Following a suggestion made by the Women's Commission, the teams chose to undertake a combination of focus group discussions, individual case studies and a survey of top adolescent concerns, which they designed and tested themselves. (See Survey Results section and Appendix for Methodological Materials.)³²⁴ They practiced leading discussions and taking detailed notes, incorporating interviewing ethics agreed upon in the training. As the final activity of the training, researchers devised a detailed research plan, deciding whom they wanted to speak to, where and how they would organize themselves. (See Who Was Interviewed?) They also designed team T-shirts, which they would wear while researching. After the training, the teams conducted their research for roughly three weeks, followed by a week of analysis and two weeks of drafting a short team report.

Focus groups and surveys were carried out by smaller groups of the larger research team and included two to four adolescent researchers, accompanied by one adult research adviser. The adolescent researchers in these small groups took the lead explaining the project to participants, posing questions, generating dialogue, taking notes and administering the survey. Following the sessions, the adolescents wrote up summaries of the overall findings of the sessions. Adults acted as guides, helped the young people to organize themselves and endeavored to intervene only when needed. Adolescent researchers acted individually to invite research participants to be interviewed separately for case studies. These interviews at times lasted several hours, following which the adolescent researchers wrote written reports of their case studies.

Each focus group/survey session aimed to involve no more than eight to ten people to provide ample opportunities for individuals to speak. Sessions were

conducted in the language of choice of the participants, mainly *Krio* in Freetown and *Temne* or *Krio* in Makeni.³²⁵ Although the length of the sessions varied, in general the groups spent an hour and a half talking in the focus groups and then half an hour filling out the concerns surveys. Attendance at the sessions was voluntary for participants, and they were informed that their testimony might be used in printed reports, but that their identities would be kept confidential for their protection. Photographs and video were taken and published only with the verbal agreement of the research participants.

EXPERIENCE, MOTIVES AND IMPACT OF PARTICIPATION

THE ADOLESCENT RESEARCHERS

The experience was undoubtedly the most interesting and meaningful to the adolescent members of the research teams, who met hundreds of research participants and learned about a wide range of concerns firsthand. The research team members worked together for many weeks, were excited to get out into their communities and engage with others and felt a huge sense of accomplishment. As with the two previous Women's Commission studies, the more the adolescents worked at it, the more enthusiastic, creative and dedicated they became to doing a good job.

Overall, the researchers on both teams enjoyed getting to know one other and the adolescents they interviewed. They confronted their fears of leading discussions and speaking in front of others and met new challenges with growing confidence and excitement. They also worked through disagreements about the process and supported one another's progress. With no promises that their efforts would produce desired outcomes, the process instead showed the young people the potential value of research and advocacy, of hope and of confidence in themselves and others.³²⁶ All of these skills and experiences are useful to other areas of their lives.

Given their excitement for the project and the skills and confidence they developed, the adolescent researchers are likely to undertake more activities, individually, in groups and or with adults. In effect, they form energetic, knowledgeable nuclei for further youth-led community-based action. Also, the NGOs that coordinated the research all possess enormous experience and determination to build on

the results of the study. They are already taking action to further engage the young researchers in follow-up endeavors according to the young people's motivations. These organizations have the capacity to receive and manage funding from donors to carry out projects with young people, which some have done for years, and stand ready and eager to take on more endeavors.

RESEARCH TEAM PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRES

Unlike in the Kosovo and northern Uganda studies, the Sierra Leonean adolescent researchers were asked to fill out a written questionnaire prior to beginning their work. The exercise was mainly intended to gauge how much past research experience the young people had had; how they felt about youth participation and any experiences they had of it; and what concerns and expectations, if any, they had about the project. In the future, as follow-up reporting and advocacy progress, the team members will be asked to fill out additional questionnaires to understand what impact participation in the project and follow-up work has had on their lives over time and their opinions about the outcomes.

The researchers were asked six questions, including how they found out about the research; if they had ever conducted research before; if they believe the views of young people are taken seriously by adults, including by politicians, and why or why not; if they ever voice their opinions about young people's problems and if so, how and to whom; and what fears and hopes they have about undertaking the study. (See Appendix for sample Research Team Participant Questionnaire.)

Young People Feel Marginalized From Government

Forty adolescent researchers and six adult research advisers filled out questionnaires. The adolescents' responses revealed:

- a low level of research experience
- strong beliefs that the views of young people are not taken seriously by adults, especially within government
- strong experience expressing their views to a variety of audiences
- few fears about undertaking the study

- high hopes of doing a good, effective job

These young people feel they speak out and are eager to do more to shape their communities, but that few listen to them. Reflecting the responses that they would hear later in interviews with their peers, despite the legacy of youth activism in Sierra Leone and their experiences of responsibility in a variety of roles in the conflict, the researchers felt they and their concerns are marginalized from those who have the power to affect their lives.

Young people said things like:

"They [adults and other leaders] feel the views of young people are meaningless and [that the young people] have no idea about government and higher institutions."

"Adolescents are considered to be inferior in society."

"The authorities...do not think of the young ones."

"They [think] young men have no education about government."

"They feel that adolescents have no better things to say in the community. People think their opinions are useless."

"For us in Sierra Leone, elders or leaders do not consider us better people because of our age or sex."

"The government [doesn't take us seriously] because of greed and selfishness."

"They do not recognize the rights of adolescents in Sierra Leone."

"Adults, politicians come to young people and [we] tell them something, and [they are] not able to do anything at the end of the day."³²⁷

They also said, over and over:

"The government needs to pay attention to young people's needs and demands."

"The government should support and pay attention to young people's views."

"Young people have opinions that are good and useful to the government."

"The youth should have a say."

"I would like the Women's Commission, UNICEF and other children's associations to pay attention to young people."

Young People Speak Out

About three-quarters of the adolescent researchers said they voice their opinions about the problems of young people. They do this in a variety of ways, mainly through conversation with a wide mix of listeners: parents, friends, teachers, NGO workers, elders, other youth and religious leaders. They also said they speak out in other ways: creatively, through art and drama presentations, through media work and organized groups (youth, religious and others).

While the majority listed that they had not had research experience before, some had. It involved work within their youth groups and with other NGOs and government-sponsored projects. One had done research on primary health care issues for one day. Another had done research related to child tracing and reunification and the identification of orphans with Child Protection Sierra Leone in 2001 (this person was part of Peace Pals Network, too). A third had worked on a research project related to the TRC and the Special Court in Freetown. A fourth said she did regular research as part of her youth organization's work on creating reconciliation with the rebels. She asked individuals their views about the reconciliation process.

Few Fears About the Research

All but three adolescent researchers registered having "No!" fears about undertaking the research, and great happiness about being part of the group. One wrote, "I have no fears of the research because anywhere I go, I will go there with peace." Of those who did register concerns, one worried about being able to coordinate research activities with her school schedule, especially if long distance travel was to be required.³²⁸ Another was concerned about this being the first time he undertook research and wondered whether it would be successful; he did not want to be disappointed. A third was concerned that the study be properly managed, that compensation be distributed fairly and that rating the researchers be done fairly.³²⁹ (Note that researchers were not rated as part of the process.)

Through the research, many hoped to learn more and continue to speak out more effectively and make changes in Sierra Leone. They said:

"I most hope to accomplish development and [better] decision-making in this country."

"I hope I will have more wisdom and ideas from the

research program."

"To be successful."

"To be a good questioner [discussion leader] in the research."

"To gain knowledge that will help me in the future...and be able to...solve young people's problems."

"To learn more about adolescent problems and even about myself."

"I hope to accomplish more knowledge and to do more personal research and to also teach others in my country and beyond."

"To see the research be properly done, learn more about the problems faced by our youth and meet the needs of the deprived youth."

"I hope to accomplish the promotion of young people's rights and capacities."

"I hope to produce the necessary document that is needed from me by the Women's Commission...and to receive a reward in the form of compensation for the work when done."

"To learn more about researching."

"To find ways to solve the problems of adolescents."

"I hope to accomplish this research so that I will be able to pass on this message to teach our fellow brothers, as we are the future leaders of tomorrow."

"Through this research, I want to be able to know exactly what passed during this war and the problems facing young people."

"To disseminate the information in relation to the research."

"To increase funding for adolescent programs."

ADOLESCENT RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

The hundreds of adolescents who participated in the research³³⁰ had a very different participatory experience in the research process than their peer researchers. The collective impact of their participation is potentially large, but its immediate impact on their individual lives is small.

As respondents, they had opportunities to express their thoughts and opinions for roughly one to five hours through the survey, group discussions and

individual interviews. They also received a commitment that their views would be included among the findings of the study. Beyond this, the researchers basically came and went, and the participants will receive no other feedback until the teams return with reports of their findings some months later. They may hear radio shows and participate in future community discussions that focus on the issues they raised. Together, their contributions form a useful, powerful voice representing the experiences of thousands that can be used by decision-makers to target programming and policies for young people. However, unless these young people become animated and supported to act as a result of this work within their local communities, their individual participation will remain limited.

For broader adolescent participation to occur and for additional support to come to young people already engaged in meaningful activities for youth, strong efforts are needed to spread the words and ideas of these participants and generate concrete interventions that involve and impact many more young people. The same holds true for the adults involved in work with young people, and a challenge remains for all — locally and internationally — to keep young people's active input and leadership at the center, not at the periphery, of efforts on their behalf. When merely consulted, young people must continue to be informed of the outcomes of their efforts as much as possible and be engaged more substantively.

ADULTS INVOLVED IN THE PROJECT

Adults in Sierra Leone adapted very quickly to their role as guides and facilitators in the service of the young people's leadership. Their role was to keep the young people generally on track and help them to organize themselves. They mostly intervened in their conversations and decision-making only when necessary or requested. Their support was especially important in the following areas:

- ensuring that the logistics of the teams' movement operated smoothly, including double checking that all equipment and materials needed were prepared by the YCGs;
- greeting other adult members of the community upon arrival to conduct the focus group sites

and intervening with these adults if they sought to encroach on the proceedings;

- providing helpful suggestions about how to phrase questions and pursue relevant follow-up questions;
- helping the young people administer the written concerns survey;
- assisting and supervising the researchers' production of reporting paperwork for each research session, including research summaries, etc.
- instilling confidence in the young people.

The six adult research advisers who filled out research team participant questionnaires, all from Makeni, gave similar responses to the young people. They, too, believe government officials and other adults give little credence to the views of young people. They were eager to participate in the research, learn new things and support the resolution of young people's concerns. Two of the six expressed concerns about being able to cope with the research schedule; the others stated no fears or concerns about being involved.

Two of these six adults had also had previous research experience. One did research work on infant mortality with UNICEF in Makeni in May 1997. The other did research on foster children with Plan International in 1983.

Adult research participants were very animated in their responses overall and generally approved of the activity. As described in other sections, many of them considered themselves to be youth, too, in a variety of ways, and thus could relate to the topics as issues of real concern.

YOUTH COORDINATION

The two YCG entities did a remarkable job bringing young people together and implementing the project in both areas. Each faced distinct challenges in their different environments. The Freetown team faced a potentially vast territory of neighborhoods and circumstances to cover, with big city transportation costs and logistics to contend with. Makeni was challenged by limited infrastructure, including the near complete absence of vehicles, no electricity, no telephones and a potentially vast rural territory to cover. In both situations, the youth coordinators creatively used resources to make the most of project

budget and time limitations. The Freetown team, however, ultimately faced more constraints due to choices made about coverage.

The Freetown team would have benefited from a more specific division of the research team members into the four different areas of coverage chosen by the group — Mountain Region, Freetown (city), Western Rural and Western Urban. Had six researchers (three boys, three girls) living near one another in each of these areas been chosen to work together intensively in their region, limited resources might have been gone further and other logistics might have been facilitated. Instead, researchers came from all around the regions and regularly had to travel large distances to complete the work, creating great communications challenges and major cost and time pressures. The positive tradeoff was the ability of young people to travel around to many different communities, perhaps more than in the other scenario. However, the drawbacks were a substantial resource crunch and cumbersome communication and scheduling.

Despite these factors, the coordinators, adult advisers and adolescent researchers showed enormous enthusiasm in sticking to their vision of covering as much as possible in the way that they did, which showed tremendous personal dedication to the overall objectives of the activity. Given the expense of travel to a central point, the YCG collaborating organizations also worked hard to choose common meeting points and times at their various offices where researchers would gather to plan, report and regroup as necessary.

The Makeni team managed to arrange use of one or two vehicles regularly amid the slim pickings available, and provided generally smooth transportation to focus group sites throughout the region. The three coordinating organizations also shared office space with a common meeting area, which provided researchers with an easy and youth-friendly access point. Although some had long distances to travel, most researchers were able to walk to this meeting point, dedicating time to get there and back home, even if it was a long distance. The existence of a bicycle association run by youth in the center of the town also facilitated relatively inexpensive transportation for the team members. In this scenario and despite the absence of telephone communications, the young people were able to spend a great deal of time with one another, the coordinators and the adult advisers in the office, regularly reviewing their

work and carefully producing their reports.

The coalition approach to the YCGs worked extremely well in each site, mainly due to the dedication and commitment of the leaders of the groups. They shared a common vision and treated one another with respect and made democratic decisions among themselves and the adolescents about management of the project. A handful of individuals shouldered enormous burdens when responsibilities for implementing the many project tasks could likely have been delegated to additional members of their and other groups, particularly to the female members. Nonetheless, both groups did a superb job helping the young people organize their visits, have the equipment they needed, analyze and report on their findings, liaise with community officials and the Women's Commission, manage project finances and much more. Their dedication stretched well beyond the timeline of the project and has invested their groups in following up on the work through joint advocacy efforts and related project development. Both the Freetown and Makeni teams coordinated with one another throughout the project to effectively build one team moving forward.

MORE LESSONS LEARNED

ABOUT LANGUAGE

At the outset of the study, the issue of language barriers between communities, the Women's Commission and other actors in the project appeared fairly straightforward. Many Sierra Leoneans speak English and many speak *Krio*, providing common threads of communication within and across cultures. However, as the research moved forward, the issue of language and communication became much more complicated.

What is the usual, extremely challenging process when cultures collide of finding common ground in words, facial expressions, modes and ceremonies of communication had multiple layers of difficulty for the young researchers when conducting research. Although the young people were free to communicate in whatever language they chose, their own language skills had limitations that greatly affected their work.

In Sierra Leone, young people do not learn how to read and write English or local languages until they are in school, and learning to read and write in the

XII. INTERNATIONAL, REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL RESPONSES TO ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH CONCERNS

local language starts after English. However, the devastation caused by the war was so vast that the educational system was destroyed, and learning has been greatly delayed or lost. The researchers were left juggling their linguistic talents.

While taking notes word for word was already an alien practice for most of the young researchers, they were forced to do so in English during their focus groups because they did not know how to write well in their own native languages. They were effectively interviewing people verbally in one language and attempting to simultaneously translate their responses into the written form of another, in which they also possessed limited skills. This process took enormous courage for the young people, who ran the risk of feeling extremely incompetent or despondent about their abilities. Instead, they used it as an opportunity to improve their skills and worked extremely hard to find ways to get beyond these barriers.

The teams ultimately relied a great deal on tape recorders when conducting interviews, much more so than researchers in Kosovo or Uganda did during previous studies. The Sierra Leonean researchers at times had trouble with the peevish technology, plagued by weak batteries and poor quality cassette tapes, and they spent hours reviewing the tapes and transcribing. They also spent extra time carefully interviewing people for case studies, taking down their stories slowly as they made the linguistic transition. The interviewees were similarly patient with the process.

Each training had translation provided so that both English and *Krio* could be understood, but related documents were all provided in English. They were not translated into other languages because the young people felt their ability to read English was likely as good as their ability to read *Krio* or *Temne*, if not better. As also described in the Survey Results section, the surveys were similarly not translated out of English because researchers felt the communities would not likely read them any better than the English version. Thus, verbal translation of the survey to each respondent was frequently required and ultimately very effective in conducting the exercise.

The language issues the teams faced also highlight an

overall set of barriers young people face in having their messages heard by adults who have the power to affect their lives. If they face stereotypes of being uneducated and incompetent to provide valuable opinions, not being able to successfully express themselves in writing or verbally is a great impediment to stepping forward to do so. Papers, policies and pronouncements from any source are ultimately very challenging for young people to understand without good communication skills, leaving them at a great disadvantage, as well as impeding constructive societal change.

These communication barriers can be addressed through good, thorough translation by people who are able to remain objective and who understand different cultural approaches to language and meaning. They can also be addressed through the use of non-written or visual means, such as radio or creative expression. But ultimately, children's and adolescents' right to quality education must be ensured to minimize the disadvantages that come with limited language and communication skills.

ABOUT “ADOLESCENTS?”

While the Women’s Commission does not approach any of the adolescents studies it conducts with a preconceived notion of what “adolescence” is in communities in conflict, coming to a common working understanding was difficult at first when setting up the project. While the Women’s Commission was generally aiming to engage young people between the ages of 10 and 20 to be researchers, we remained open to different needs and definitions of who adolescents are when assembling the research teams. In Sierra Leone, trying to focus youth groups on actual teenagers as the main adolescents in question was difficult.

As described in the Adolescence and Youth section, the teenagers were not immediately identified as youth or as children and were somewhat lost in between. Thus, we ultimately had to reject propositions of “adolescent researcher” teams as comprised mainly of young adults in their mid-twenties. There was no particular objection to this stipulation by the youth organizers, just not an immediate understanding of the interest in the younger ones. Subsequently, the actual ages of the adolescent researchers have also been difficult to pinpoint. Many have changed by several years over the course of the study as ages were asked and provided by the young people for a variety of purposes.

It is not clear if the young people were concerned that to be a certain age would not permit their participation in the project. If so, this would fit neatly into the culture of concern over categorizing vulnerability that is sweeping Sierra Leone. Regardless, the “older adolescents” might have been chosen to participate on the teams because they are, in fact, in the same situation as somewhat younger adolescents would be in other countries, given their loss of education and other services for their development. In the end, the teams surveyed a wide range of age groups, as detailed in the Survey Results section.

The civil war in Sierra Leone has taken thousands of lives, mostly in the adolescent and youth age groups. Many young people were split into factions during the conflict and others took on adult responsibilities without proper support. It is urgent that the government develop the political will to give this group the attention it needs and deserves by implementing and monitoring adolescent- and youth-specific policy. The international community must also design, implement and fund holistic projects with the active involvement of adolescents and youth to enable them to acquire the skills necessary to lead useful and meaningful lives.

NATIONAL FRAMEWORKS: UNFULLFILLED PROMISES

The Lomé Peace Agreement recognizes “the imperative that the children of Sierra Leone, especially those affected by armed conflict, in view of their vulnerability, are entitled to special care and the protection of their inherent right to life, survival and development, in accordance with the provisions of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.”³³¹

Yet, according to many young people, this imperative and many other policy commitments remain largely unheeded. In different ways, they told researchers again and again that youth have been marginalized since independence in 1961, and yet “90 percent of the campaigners before elections are [were] youth,” helping to get politicians elected, including through voter intimidation and violence. They say that young people continue to let themselves be “used” by politicians because it gives them something to do; without education, some assert that “youth don’t have a mind of their own.” Despite their work in getting votes for politicians, once parliament is in session, young people say that “politicians forget about the youth.” Young people want to be partners in society-building, not instruments of violence. Given this legacy of manipulation, one youth leader asked, “How are the politicians going to prepare the youth of today to be the leaders of tomorrow?”³³²

This question, widespread among young people, has been woefully unanswered by the government. Despite the massive rights violations young people suffered during the war and the central role they played in the conflict, the government has been slow

to enact policies that articulate child, adolescent and youth rights and respond to their desire to play a productive and active role in rebuilding their society.

The 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement was the first peace accord to recognize the effects of war on young people and include in its provisions specific directives on their protection and assistance. Article XXX articulates the government's responsibility to pay "particular attention to the issue of child soldiers," including addressing their special needs during DDR processes. Article XXXI, focused on education and health, provides that the "government shall provide free compulsory education for the first nine years of schooling (basic education) and shall endeavor to provide free schooling for a further three years. The government shall also endeavor to provide affordable primary health care throughout the country." These provisions led some young people to believe that their voices would be important in post-conflict Sierra Leone. One person said that: "The formation of the Lomé Peace Agreement shows that the youth are considered important by the elders."³³³

Sierra Leone is also party to several key international human rights and refugee conventions, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.³³⁴ A number of national bodies have also been established to deal with war-affected children. They include a Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA), a National Commission for War-Affected Children, a Ministry for Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and a Ministry of Youth and Sport (formerly the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports). There is also a well-established Child Protection Network, which is led by UNICEF with the strong participation of local and international NGOs and focuses on the protection of specific groups of war-affected children and adolescents.

Despite stated commitments to prioritizing children's and adolescents' concerns and the existence of a number of governmental and humanitarian entities to address them, there is a vacuum of action in establishing national policies, passing legislation and implementing programs for adolescents. The ministries are weak, understaffed and suffering from brain-drain, the objectives of the National Commission are unclear and the National Council for Children is basically defunct. There is also competition among them for limited resources, which

intensifies compartmentalization of child and adolescent issues and creates a dangerous scenario where children and adolescents are falling through the cracks of bureaucracy and politics. Girls are particularly affected. Despite the programs and policies developed for former child combatants, for example, the government has not yet developed a comprehensive plan of action to assist "bush wives" and RUF followers who were not formally demobilized. Few of the rights to protection and assistance articulated in these conventions have been legislated into national policy and implemented on the ground. Without targeted support, the potential of young people to contribute to further unrest is high. UNICEF and NGOs are shouldering much of the child protection effort, and there is a real danger that when they scale down their operations and leave, many services will collapse. Therefore, they must work to build ministerial and local NGO capacity to take on long-term responsibility. (See Protection section.)

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR WAR-AFFECTED CHILDREN AND THE NEED FOR A STRONG FOCAL POINT ON CHILDREN

In 1999, Olara Otunnu, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, proposed the establishment of a time-bound national mechanism to focus on war-affected children and ensure their welfare in national priority-setting, policy-making and resource-allocation while government ministries were not functioning well enough to do so. In April 2000, the government of Sierra Leone agreed to establish a National Commission for War-Affected Children,³³⁵ which was not formally launched until September 2001. Intended to focus on children up to the age of 18, the commission will also take into consideration the concerns and needs of youth under the age of 25, as many of them were children under 18 during the war.³³⁶ The commission will report directly to the parliament and president and be independent from the MSWGCA. Neither the executive director, who is a political appointee, nor the 12 commissioners, have real child protection or assistance experience, and United Nations officials fear that the commission "will need a lot of hand-holding."³³⁷

The delay of over two years in establishing the commission has meant that it was not able to play a role in DDR and the reintegration of children after the Lomé Agreement, as many had envisioned.³³⁸ Moreover, the goals of the commission remain



A large number of youth groups offer activities to young people but need more capacity building and material support. Here, adolescents came together through Bone Sufferer youth group in Freetown to clean their surroundings.

unclear: its purpose has ranged from ensuring that the concerns of children are legislated nationally, funded, internationally known, focused on the DDR process, or even operational, in terms of programming for war-affected children.³³⁹ Moreover, the commission threatens to create a duplicate structure competing for funds and influence with government ministries. Another concern is its use of the term “war-affected” in its name three years after the Lomé Agreement. First, all children in Sierra Leone are war-affected; second, it compartmentalizes children and adolescents into categories which in turn worries those young people who feel they do not fit into one category or another but who still need support; and third, it diverts attention from the desperate need for an approach that promotes unity and reflects a transition to peace rather than continuing to dwell on the war. In these ways, the commission may have outlived its purpose before it has even begun.

At the same time, many adolescents stressed that the government needs to do a better job ensuring their rights and called for a stronger policy and a clearer focal point for coordinated action. While there is a draft bill on children’s rights, it has not yet been adopted by the government, and one UNICEF official called it a “total disaster.”³⁴⁰ The attorney general of Sierra Leone maintains that when it is adopted, a new commission will be needed to monitor compliance with the bill. If such a Child Rights Commission is established, two national commissions on children would exist simultaneously. United Nations officials suggested that after three years, the

Commission for War-Affected Children could be brought under the purview of the ministry and take on the role of monitoring compliance of the Child Rights Bill, rather than creating a new commission for monitoring now. Should a child rights bill pass, the government will need to determine a clear monitoring entity that is well-resourced and does not duplicate efforts.³⁴¹

A NEW MINISTRY OF YOUTH AND SPORT

A significant change took place after the May 2002 elections: the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) broke up into two entities: the Ministry of Youth and Sport (MYS) and the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST). Before this, youth leaders said that youth concerns were eclipsed by MEYS’s focus on education. Youth leader Ngolo Katta declared that, with this movement of youth issues into its own ministry, “a wind of change is underway.”³⁴² Youth groups have since been invited to meetings with Dennis Bright, the Minister for Youth and Sport, and there are new opportunities to move forward policies and programs for youth at the national level. One such policy is the National Youth Policy, first drafted in 1995 and revised in 2001, for which adolescents and youth resoundingly expressed their support. The draft defines youth as “any person between the ages of 15 and 35.”³⁴³ The draft is now in parliament for approval, and as of the printing of this report it had not yet been approved. It is urgent that this document be approved immediately.

“I don’t care about politics. Politicians are liars. They make promises for jobs and education to youth but then they forget about us. They are only in politics for their pockets, to enrich themselves and their family. My job is my politics. I care for my mother, the government doesn’t.”

— Samai, age 20, Freetown

The vacuum of action at the national level in passing legislation on the rights of children, adolescents and youth has resulted in widespread disillusionment about the government and politics among young people. Young people repeatedly expressed their

Youth Groups that Constituted the Coordinating Groups of this Participatory Research Project

- *The Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA)* works toward the empowerment of youth through effective coordination of youth activities. The center enhances the capacity of youth groups through out the country, 400 of which are CCYA members, and promotes and protects the rights of youth.
- *Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organization (SLYEO)* works to increase the capacity of young people and their opportunities for self-development, thus making them responsible for their own development. Established in 1995, SLYEO has developed a youth and community network and advocates for youth participation in national development, as well as national structures that respond to youth needs.
- *Independent Youth Forum (IYF)* is dedicated to promoting youth unity and effective participation in Sierra Leone. Toward that end, IYF coordinates over 200 member youth organizations and builds the capacity of youth leaders and organizations through education and leadership training.
- *Center for Democracy and Human Rights (CDHR)* conducts public education and training on various issues affecting youth, including human rights, civic education, the TRC and domestic violence. They also record human rights abuses and perform counseling.
- *The Makeni Union of Youth Groups (MUYOG)* was created by bringing three separate youth groups together in 1995, and now has 36 member groups. Among other things, MUYOG organizes education for children and town cleaning, and wants to focus on leadership training, micro-credit, civic education for young people and facilitating reintegration of adolescents and youth.
- *Civil Society Movement Sierra Leone (CSM-SL)* is a national umbrella organization that coordinates activities among members. CSM-SL undertakes awareness-raising activities and events, as well as training workshops on issues such as human rights, education and development.

desire for a role in national decision-making and society-building, but said that they feel marginalized by politicians. Without such policies on youth and children's rights, including clear ways for young people to participate in their implementation, feelings of marginalization where young people felt they "were not able to affect government policies," and could "not take place in any decision making process," will continue.³⁴⁴ It is essential that the commission and ministries work with young people in a participatory and constructive way, involving them in decision-making and program implementation, offering them internships and more. The National Commission should also lend its voice in support of a War Victims Fund for additional support to children and adolescents as planned in the Lomé Agreement. Young people said clearly that political patronage must not "support bogus youth-serving institutions" or "corruption."³⁴⁵

A REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

In April 2002, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)³⁴⁶ Protection Unit began its work advising its 15 member states on how to imple-

ment the Accra Declaration on War-Affected Children in West Africa (April 2000)³⁴⁷ and harmonize child protection policies within West Africa. The special adviser for child protection, who is backed up by two child protection officers, should also take up the provisions of the declaration that commit member states to "involve young people as participants and advocates in the movement for the protection of



While there are some good programs for adolescents, more need to include child mothers, adolescent heads of household and rural adolescents.

war-affected children, including developing children-to-children networks within West Africa” and develop specific programs to provide information, education and communication materials on child rights.³⁴⁸

YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

There is an enormous number of youth groups and associations throughout Sierra Leone, concentrated especially in Freetown. Researchers found a strong desire among young people to organize in informal or formal youth groups and associations. Youth leaders point to Sierra Leone’s strong tradition of youth organizing, in particular since the late 1970s, when the All People’s Congress (APC) began to rule Sierra Leone as a one-party system (see Glossary). Within this system, youth were effectively mobilized and organized into organizations and structures that were controlled by the government. Youth believe that these young people were used and manipulated by politicians and that their work on behalf of the APC, including inciting violence, earned them only empty promises. At the same time, young people — mainly students — began to organize themselves in protest against the totalitarian political system, forming very structured and well-organized groups. Youth leaders explain that such systems were good “soil for growing” youth structures. They realized that, as elders and politicians neglected them, there is power in numbers and that by coming together, they would have a better chance to have their voices heard.

The desire and motivation to participate in youth activities remains strong among young people in Sierra Leone today. In fact, youth leaders assert that 1,000 youth associations exist. Although there is overlap between various types of groups, depending on their activities, purpose, structure, funding and membership, most youth groups can be categorized in the following ways (see Appendix for chart):

YOUTH GROUPS FOCUSED ON ONE ISSUE OR LOCATION/COMMUNITY

These groups makes up the vast majority of youth organizations in Sierra Leone. Issue-oriented groups bring together young people concerned with a common problem and work together to overcome it. An example is the Sickle Cell Victims Association in Freetown, whose mission is to help children and young people suffering from this illness, or the Peace Pals Education Network, which advocates for better

education focused on peace. Location-oriented youth groups bring together young people from one community to work for a common purpose, such as to generate income by farming, cleaning, bicycle renting, and the like, or to organize sport or cultural activities. In general, the impact of the location-focused groups does not go beyond the borders of their neighborhood or community, and the main beneficiaries are members of that organization, for example, by earning money or enjoying a sport or cultural event. The vast majority of these groups are underfunded and get by through membership donations.

YOUTH GROUPS CREATED BY AN INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE OR SUPPORTED BY AN INTERNATIONAL DONOR

These youth groups comprise the smallest and most privileged category of youth associations in Sierra Leone. While issue-oriented like some in the above category, they are distinct because they were created by an international initiative, such as a conference, and/or supported by an international donor. As a result, these groups, such as Talking Drum Studio, the Independent Youth Forum, the Arts Beat Center of Peace Links and Children as Peace Builders, are well structured, funded and equipped. Members are often well-educated young people who help make these groups more professional and successful than others. Members also have more opportunities to travel abroad to broaden their knowledge and represent young people from their country in national, regional and international forums.

YOUTH UMBRELLA GROUPS

Youth umbrella groups are coordinated by strong and devoted young activists who work to provide youth organizations with technical expertise or help them obtain funding. These groups have often grown out of a local initiative to bring smaller groups together to have a stronger voice. The Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities (CCYA) and the Makeni Union of Youth Groups (MUYOG) are examples of youth umbrella groups. Although they are not as well funded as groups created by an international initiative, these groups are very professional and because they represent a large number of young people and have well-developed structures, their ability to attract donors is greater than issue-oriented and community-based groups.

Most youth groups are extremely active and say that

they need more funding to carry out their work, as well as training in human and financial resource mobilization. Other challenges include lack of mobility due to expensive and insecure travel. They want to work more with international NGOs, government ministries and UN agencies and receive capacity building from them, but assert that these groups infrequently respond to their proposals or ideas.

NGO PROGRAMMING FOR ADOLESCENTS

There are dozens of international and national NGOs working in Sierra Leone, many focusing on children and youth, and a few programming for adolescents. Again, the focus is largely on either children or youth. The need for youth programming is specified in the 2002 United Nations Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Sierra Leone, which recognizes that the underlying tensions in the Mano River region are fuelled by “unemployed and mostly illiterate youth who are vulnerable to recruitment by state and non-state actors in the region, who turn them into some of the most brutal perpetrators of violent acts.”³⁴⁹ In particular, one UNICEF official remarked that since UNICEF, the primary agency for children, focuses on younger children, “youth depend on NGOs.”³⁵⁰

Still, there is much room for improvement in programming. Even when a program does target young people, the tendency is to work *for* them rather than *with* them. Programs need to be more participatory. Actively involving adolescents and youth in the development of programs and policies that affect them will ensure that young people take ownership of their development and will increase the effectiveness of the programs. This may decrease the likelihood of adolescents and youth returning to violence to destroy their own positive future. NGOs working with adolescents agreed that programs tend to neglect adolescents in rural areas as well as girls, especially child mothers and heads of households. NGOs also agreed that a major gap affecting their programs for young people is lack of funding. While researchers were not able to evaluate programs, the following are some highlights of local and international NGO programs that focus on or include adolescents in their programming for children and/or youth:

- In order to reverse years of marginalization and exploitation and support young people’s empower-

ment, **World Vision Sierra Leone’s (WVSL) Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace (YRTEP)** program targets youth. Developed with Management Systems International, YRTEP is a nationwide, non-formal education initiative for ex-combatant and non-combatant youth, aged 15-35, including resettled refugees and those displaced by the war.³⁵¹ YRTEP focuses simultaneously on reintegration of war-torn communities and remedial education for youth bypassed by schooling for nearly 10 years. Young people are trained in reintegration orientation and counseling, life-skills training, vocational counseling, agriculture skills development, civic education and functional literacy. They then teach what they have learned, in the form of five modules, to other youth.

Since March 2000, almost 50,000 war-affected youth and ex-combatants in over 2,000 sites have participated in YRTEP. The program includes a second track called Education for Nation-Building, a nationwide non-formal education initiative for public and private sector leaders. The program’s success in bringing together divided communities has led to its extension beyond the planned two years and an expansion into newly opened areas. Youth involved in YRTEP told researchers that the program develops real reconciliation and leadership skills but said that they need more help in using their new skills for further livelihood development. WVSL and YRTEP’s funder, OTI/USAID, have responded to this criticism with a **Skills Training and Employment Promotion (STEP)** program that focuses on skills development, employment, cooperation, dialogue and psychosocial support.³⁵²

- While the Sierra Leone government was in exile in Guinea, **Conciliation Resources** and **UNICEF-Sierra Leone** formulated a **Youth in Crisis (YIC)** project to better address the needs and concerns of youth. **ActionAid** began work on the project in 1998. It was one of the first projects to see youth in a positive light, not only focusing on their destructive power.³⁵³ YIC undertook participatory research with young people in the Western Area, Bo and Kenema to investigate how they defined their problems and solutions. The recommendations formed the basis of ActionAid programs enabling youth to acquire education and skills to realize their potential, attain meaningful livelihood and contribute positively to society. The programs, implemented between 1999 and 2002, focused on skills and on-the-job training, recreation, private enterprise, income-generation and youth sen-

sitization and mobilization on key youth issues, including peace-building and health. ActionAid is now following up on this project, researching the impact of policies and programs for adolescents in West Africa in order to enhance youth involvement in development processes. In addition, ActionAid was involved in the **Never Again Campaign**, which was led by ex-combatants to ease the reintegration of former child soldiers into society through dialogue focused on sharing experiences and reconciliation.³⁵⁴

- Building upon its involvement in the Youth in Crisis Project, **Conciliation Resources’ (CR) Springboard: Youth in Progress** project focuses on community “social animation,” reconciliation and rehabilitation. Its aim is to strengthen youth clubs and provide support for recreational activities and life skills for 14- to 25-year-olds in the southern, eastern and western regions. CR also supports community-based peacemaking initiatives that involve young people. At the regional level, CR has begun working with national and international collaborative networks, including youth groups, to promote and consolidate peace constituencies in the Mano River area, covering Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.³⁵⁵
- The **Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)** has many education initiatives that benefit adolescents, from the **Rapid Response Education Program (RREP)** to the **CEIP** program. Most recently, NRC has developed a **YouPac** for 14- to 18-year-olds, who have had no, or very little, schooling. The YouPac will provide these adolescents with a ten-month program of literacy, numeracy and life-skills to help them become functionally literate and increase their self-reliance and chances of employment. NRC will cooperate with the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), ActionAid and young people in its adaptation on the ground. NRC is also training primary and lower secondary school teachers, building and rehabilitating schools and assisting returnees and IDPs, including child soldiers, adolescents and war-wounded, through rehabilitation projects.³⁵⁶
- **Christian Children’s Fund (CCF)** supports youth clubs involved in agriculture and livestock production and is implementing the **Skills Training and Employment Generation (STEG)** project, which is a follow-up to WVSL’s YTREP program, to increase the social reintegration of ex-combatants and war-affected youth through community-based strategies of skills development, employment and psychosocial support. CCF’s project, **Sealing the Past and Facing the Future**, offers traditional cleansing rituals to sur-

vivors of gender-based violence, many of whom are adolescents, as well as STI treatment, skills training and loans for income-generating activities. In addition, CCF’s other programs for children benefit adolescents through non-formal primary education, educational materials and teacher training. CCF has child centers and child well-being committees in 19 project communities in the northern and eastern provinces of Sierra Leone and provides psychosocial interventions for children and adolescents affected by ongoing violence.³⁵⁷

- The **Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)** provides multi-faceted education support to vulnerable girls and young women, including sponsorships, non-formal education and life skills, counseling for victims of gender-based violence and skills training for employment. FAWE also influences policy to address the challenges facing girls.
- **Caritas-Makeni** supports emergency and development projects in agriculture, micro finance, HIV/AIDS, peace building and human rights, child protection, reconstruction and resettlement and community capacity building in Sierra Leone. With a strong focus in child protection and children’s rights, it served as the key implementing agency for the DDR in the northern region and providing care to many young people left out of the formal demobilization process.
- The **International Rescue Committee’s (IRC)** several children-related programs account for 75 percent of the NGO’s US\$7 million budget in Sierra Leone.³⁵⁸ The psychosocial support program ensures that the psychological and educational needs and rights of children and adolescents living in displacement centers are met through broad-based healing, formal and informal education and recreational activities. Their education program provides formal schooling, textbooks and other instructional materials. The IRC also provides shelter, health and psychosocial care for children and adolescents being disarmed and demobilized and reunites families from Sierra Leone who were separated during the war, including identifying foster families for children who are orphaned. IRC provides reproductive and sexual education classes, which include topics such as contraception and STIs. Furthermore, their gender-based violence aid and prevention program provides support to survivors of sexual violence through counseling, facilitating medical care and advocating for legal action if needed.³⁵⁹
- The **American Refugee Committee (ARC)** is

strengthening HIV/AIDS prevention and has launched an HIV/AIDS education program to increase knowledge about the disease and about ways to prevent transmission. ARC is targeting adolescents, as well as commercial sex workers, in Port Loko and the surrounding Maforki Chiefdom in this work. Adolescents are involved through health clubs, peer education and games, and ARC has developed a curriculum for adolescents in and out of school. Apart from providing condoms, ARC encourages people to seek treatment for STIs as a way to reduce transmission of HIV. In addition, ARC's **Regional Reproductive Health Initiative** is strengthening the capacity of its West Africa programs to deliver reproductive health services to adolescents for HIV/AIDS prevention through educating host governments and local partners about reproductive health needs and increasing access to services, information and family planning supplies.³⁶⁰

- **Marie Stopes International's (MSI)** health center in Freetown supports sexual and reproductive health outreach to adolescents, as well as trained youth educators who undertake information, education and communication activities in schools and colleges, IDP camps and through links with other NGOs who work with young people. It is expanding these services to Port Loko, and like the health center in Freetown, will include services for STI treatment, postnatal and antenatal care. In partnership with other NGOs and the government, MSI is also developing its capacity to fully integrate and provide medical and psychosocial responses to women and young girls who have suffered sexual violence, including those abducted during the conflict.³⁶¹

- Adolescents are actively involved in the reproductive health-focused work of **Planned Parenthood Association of Sierra Leone (PPASL)** through peer counselor training and skills training. Currently, PPASL is conducting training workshops on peer education, HIV/AIDS and life skills for 250 adolescents from 15 communities and 10 schools in the Western Area. The adolescents then sensitize peers in their respective communities and refer them to PPASL's three **Youth Information Centers** in Freetown. In these centers, young people can gather, play games and learn about reproductive health information. Each center also has a Youth Health Center where young people can obtain, in a confidential and adolescent-friendly manner, reproductive health information, STI testing, free pregnancy tests and referrals for free HIV/AIDS testing.³⁶²

- **Childreach/Plan International's RapidED** program allows children and adolescents to acquire basic learning skills by completing primary and informal education, helps them cope with the fear and trauma caused by violence and displacement and emphasizes peaceful conflict resolution.³⁶³

- **Cause Canada's (CC) Rehabilitation and Reintegration for War Amputees and Children Impacted by the War** project in Greater Freetown/Waterloo, Kenema and Bombali districts offers psychological counseling and vocational training for children and adolescents, particularly former combatants, orphans and those physically or psychologically handicapped. CC also sensitizes children to the need for reintegration, and offers counseling and vocational training, including carpentry, tailoring, weaving, soap-making and welding. These skills assist in the economic recovery of their communities and help smooth the reintegration process as they become contributing members of their villages.³⁶⁴

- **Search for Common Ground's (SCG)** media program supports **Talking Drum Studio (TDS)**, a multimedia radio programming studio whose programs include *Golden Kids News*, which engages children as producers, reporters and actors who identify issues for and about children and advocate on their behalf, and *Atunda Ayenda* (Lost and Found), a drama series that facilitates a discussion on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process through a story about two ex-combatants who are best friends. SCG also partners with local groups to host the annual **Bo Peace Carnival**, where secondary school troupes and youth groups perform plays around issues concerning adolescents and youth.³⁶⁵

- **GOAL's** community-based **Street Children's project** in Freetown provides food, formal and non-formal education, skills training, health care and recreational activities for over 400 street children, ranging in age from 10 to 17. GOAL is also in its second year of working with sexually abused women and girls. It provides health care, counseling and non-formal education to over 200 commercial sex workers, half of whom are aged under 18 and many of whom were with the fighting forces during the conflict. GOAL has incorporated health education, including HIV/AIDS prevention, into these programs; its mobile health unit visits the commercial sex workers weekly and distributes condoms and reproductive health information.³⁶⁶

- In the Northern and Western regions, **War Child**

works with adolescents aged 12 to 15 in creative workshops that provide a safe and empowering space. The workshops aim to speed up the reintegration of war-affected children, such as former child combatants and child mothers.³⁶⁷

- The local NGO **Women in Crisis** has set up two drop-in shelters where women and girls who were sexually abused during the conflict or are commercial sex workers can learn basic life skills such as reading and mathematics, earn a living sewing and making crafts and have a place to talk about their problems and pray together. They also learn how to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS and receive treatment and care for STIs and other support.³⁶⁸

In addition to these NGOs, many others work with children and adolescents through and are part of the Child Protection Network, including Family Homes Movement, COOPI, Caritas-Kenema, Christian Brothers, Save the Children (UK), Don Bosco, Catholic Relief Services, the Catholic Mission, Adventist Development and Relief Agency and Leonet.

INTERNATIONAL DONORS

Seventy percent of Sierra Leone's national budget comes from international aid.³⁶⁹ While donors reassured the government of Sierra Leone and humanitarian agencies of their continued commitment to relief and recovery early in 2002, United Nations agencies are facing a shortfall of funding.³⁷⁰ All programs are facing difficulties in raising funds; however, programs that are explicitly for child protection appear to receive funds more quickly than other programs that are nonetheless essential to adolescents, including more participatory empowerment and health programs. The most recent United Nations Inter-Agency Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) for Sierra Leone illustrates this, as child protection programs are funded at the expense of adolescent health and education needs. For instance, UNICEF's request in the 2001 CAP for US\$2.85 million to support its Child Protection and Child Rights sector has been fully funded for US\$3.37 million. This is in sharp contrast to the lack of funding UNICEF has received for its Youth Participation and Empowerment project, requested in the same CAP, which will improve knowledge, attitudes and practices of young people between the ages of 12 and 25 with respect to reproductive health, peace, human rights and economic survival. As of November 23, 2001, this project had

zero funded out of the requested US\$368,000. In addition, the Breaking the Silence on HIV/AIDS project, which aims to increase the ability of 1.7 million adolescents to prevent HIV/AIDS through peer education, mass media and testing and counseling facilities, had received only 39 percent of its requested US\$580,000.³⁷¹

The United States government was the largest single donor to the UN Consolidated Appeal for Sierra Leone in 2001, providing approximately 54 percent of the total contributed. However, USAID and the U.S. embassy both feel that since September 11, 2001, their impact in Sierra Leone has been compromised due to the redirection of funding to Afghanistan.³⁷² The next largest humanitarian donor, the United Kingdom, which ranks first in development assistance to Sierra Leone, provided 10 percent of the total contributed and the European Union's humanitarian arm, ECHO, provided approximately 9 percent (not including contributions to UNHCR and ICRC). Other major donors providing humanitarian assistance include Sweden, Japan, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway and Germany.³⁷³ Below are highlights of international funding to programs and policies that include adolescents. This list is not exhaustive.

- The **United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Guinea-Sierra Leone**, which assumed responsibilities for the **Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI)**-funded programs in March 2002, is funding the Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace Program (YRTEP). OTI conceived the project and approached Management Systems International (MSI) and World Vision Sierra Leone (WVSL) about the project, which focuses on reintegrating war-affected youth into society, supporting the reconciliation process, and rebuilding the physical infrastructure damaged during Sierra Leone's conflict. OTI/USAID has also funded the Christian Children's Fund (CCF) and WVSL to follow up on the gains of this program by implementing, respectively, Skills Training and Employment Generation (STEG) and Skills Training and Employment Promotion (STEP). Both NGOs received US\$950,000 over two years for this follow-up. USAID also contributed US\$1.9 million to the World Bank Multi-Donor Trust Fund for payments to ex-combatants who have disarmed. In addition, OTI/USAID is supporting the communications program of Search for Common Ground Productions (Talking Drum Studio) on demobilization, reconcilia-

tion and reintegration, and media and distance learning in support of OTI's non-formal education program. OTI also supported election education activity by Talking Drum Studio to promote youth participation in elections.³⁷⁴

- Within USAID, the **Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (DCOF)** is supporting the Reintegration of War-Affected Children program in Sierra Leone. This funds the IRC for \$1,590,571 (2000 to 2003) to facilitate the reintegration of war-affected children and youth within the Interim Care Centers (ICC), IDP centers and their communities in Bo District and the Eastern Province of Sierra Leone. DCOF also gave UNICEF US\$1.5 million (1999 to 2001) for reuniting and reintegrating unaccompanied children with their families and communities; developing long-term arrangements for unaccompanied children who cannot be reunified with their families and communities; ensuring that unaccompanied and other vulnerable children have access to basic education, primary health care and safe water; strengthening the capacity of the Child Protection Network; and producing a compendium of best practices on interim care, reunification and reintegration of war-affected children.³⁷⁵

- The **U.S. State Department, Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (BPRM)** supports the American Refugee Committee's and UNICEF's adolescent and youth reproductive health programs in Sierra Leone and recently approved US\$1 million for UNHCR's work to provide greater protection from sexual exploitation to refugees in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. BPRM also supports education for Sierra Leone refugees, including the IRC's programs in Guinea.³⁷⁶

- In 2001, the **European Commission (EC)** earmarked 15.5 million euros (US\$14.25 million) to meet the needs of refugees, IDPs and host communities in Sierra Leone and Guinea; 11 million of which were marked for Sierra Leone. The EC also gave some 2 million euros to support children and women affected by the war and amputees.³⁷⁷

- The **British Department for International Development (DFID)** co-funds Conciliation Resources' 'Youth in Progress Project' in Kenema, as well as Community Reintegration Projects in Port Loko, Kambia and Makeni. While DFID does not have specific programs dealing with adolescents, it attempts to mainstream issues relating to youth throughout its security (including support to the

police, security sector reform and the reintegration of ex-combatants), governance, budgetary support and humanitarian relief programs.³⁷⁸

- In late 1999, the **Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)** gave 4.5 million Canadian dollars (US\$2.8 million) for humanitarian aid and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers back into society. It also gave 500,000 Canadian dollars (US\$315,000) to Cause Canada in assistance to help war-affected children and adolescents reintegrate into their communities. In 2000, the Canadian government committed 250,000 Canadian dollars (US\$157,000) to support the establishment of the Commission for War-Affected Children. Canada is also funding, along with Norway, the ECOWAS Child Protection Unit, and has a special envoy to Sierra Leone.³⁷⁹

- In 2001, the **Japanese government** gave nearly US\$200,000 to the World Bank-administered **Multi-Donor Trust Fund**, including US\$31,837 for skills training for former child soldiers, disadvantaged youth and sexually abused girls and women; US\$11,982 for training in self-help skills for abducted girls; US\$13,920 for girls and women who were abused by the rebels to receive training for self-sufficiency; and US\$5,635 for rebuilding primary schools for returning refugee children.³⁸⁰

- In order to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, the **World Bank's (WB) Sierra Leone HIV/AIDS Response Project (SHARP)** will help the government organize a response to the disease. The project components include capacity building and policy and program coordination, multi-sector responses to HIV/AIDS prevention and care; health sector responses to HIV/AIDS, STI and other opportunistic infection management; and community and civil society initiatives and the private sector. Emphasis will be placed on prevention among youth and ex-combatants. Costing over US\$14 million over four years, over 50 percent of SHARP resources will be allocated for community-based initiatives for HIV/AIDS prevention and care. Launched in 2001, SHARP hopes to be operational by June 2002. In addition, the World Bank funded US\$250,000 of the **Youth in Crisis Project**; is supporting the **National Commission for War-Affected Children**, through the Debt Initiative for Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC); and has designated 25 percent of an estimated US\$42 million each to primary education and health projects as part of a national poverty reduction and development project.³⁸¹

- The **Refugee Education Trust** has provided US\$24,000 for six months of vocational training workshops for roughly 1,650 adolescent refugees, returnees and IDPs between the ages of 14 and 18 in Bo, Pujehun and Kenema districts through its funding to the NGO Enfants Réfugiés du Monde.³⁸²
- **Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA)** promotes good governance, basic freedoms and citizens' empowerment, in part by supporting local youth groups like the CCYA and the IYF.
- **Commonwealth Youth Program (CYP)**, gives Youth Service Awards between 1,000- 3,000 British pounds (US\$1,556 - 4,670) to projects for self-, community or national development to enable young people to contribute to the development of their society, including in Sierra Leone. The CYP also pro-

vides micro-credit for youth economic development projects through the Youth Ministries. It also sponsored the 2001 Africa Regional Forum that brought together young women and men to discuss HIV/AIDS, strengthen youth capacity in fighting HIV/AIDS in Africa and increase communication among the National Youth Representatives of the Youth Forum.

- **Village AiD Project UK (VA)**, a British-based NGO that enables African rural communities to drive positive and sustainable changes in their life. VA has provided support to local youth NGOs in Sierra Leone, through, for example, the help of the Diana Princess of Wales Memorial Fund to enable the SLYEO to establish a program to combat youth marginalization in 50 communities in the Northern region.

XIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

- The **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** is working with children, adolescents and youth in the areas of health and nutrition programs; improving access to clean water and sanitation; education, particularly for those who have been out of the traditional school system; and psychosocial programs for children who have been traumatized, abused and neglected. UNICEF also leads the **Child Protection Network**, which focuses on the protection of specific groups of war-affected children and adolescents, including former child soldiers, and has funded the activities of the NGOs that participate in the network, such as the IRC. UNICEF helped established the **Youth in Crisis Project** in 1998 and has been supporting PPASL's Youth Centers and peer education on HIV/AIDS, though its 2001 country strategy eliminated its Youth Development Program, shifting its focus away from youth overall to youth within the HIV/AIDS division, in which the target ages are 10-25. In addition, UNICEF's **Meeting the Participation and Rights of Adolescents** project, which aims to empower adolescents through skills training and awareness raising, is vastly underfunded.³⁸³
- The **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** is focusing on adolescents through its work with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) on a school-based Population/Family Life Education project, which will introduce sexual reproductive

health information into the upper primary and lower secondary school curriculum. However, the project has been stalled and is unlikely to be piloted within the next year. UNFPA is also piloting a program that gives 250 commercial sex workers, some as young as 11, access to reproductive health education and services health in the Western Area. In addition, UNFPA has given funding and technical guidance to the Women in Crisis Movement Center since 2001.³⁸⁴

- In facilitating the return of Sierra Leonean refugees and IDPs to their places of origin, the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)** provides assistance through NGOs focused on the rehabilitation of schools, health care, family tracing and reunification of separated children, income-generating activities and programs to support survivors of gender-based violence. It also provides protection and care to Liberian refugees within Sierra Leone. However, UNHCR's severe funding crisis in 2002 forced it to decrease its protection operations, leaving gaps in refugee protection and care.³⁸⁵
- The **United Nations Foundation** donated US\$1.1 million to UNICEF to demobilize child soldiers in Sierra Leone, particularly for interim care facilities, family tracing and reunification.³⁸⁶
- The **United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone's**

(UNAMSIL) Civil Affairs Division has identified areas that need urgent humanitarian aid, raises funds for specific organizations, helps in the simultaneous disarmament of rival fighting groups and identifies projects to help sexually abused women and girls and ex-combatants.³⁸⁷ UNAMSIL's Trust Fund has contributed grants to child protection projects, including US\$45,000 to three community-based organizations in Bo to train war-affected women and girls along with ex-fighters, in crafts and to build a culvert. UNAMSIL has also given funds to the IRC for farm training for ex-child combatants and to Caritas-Makeni for skills training.³⁸⁸ UNAMSIL contingents also work to rebuild schools and other structures that benefit children and adolescents in the communities in which they work. In addition, a new child protection adviser (CPA) will begin in September 2002, aided by another CPA, and Radio UNAMSIL has decreed that 50 percent of the program time (not total time) will be devoted to children and youth.³⁸⁹

young people to remedy the conditions that encour-

aged young men and women to take up arms against

A POSITIVE OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE DEPENDS ON THE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

In November 2001, a 14-year-old former child soldier, Alhaji Babah Sawane, addressed the United Nations Security Council as it considered the issue of children and armed conflict. This was the first time that a child was invited to address the Council, and it underscored the importance of involving children and adolescents in decisions that directly affect them. Alhaji appealed to the Council to increase funding for reintegration process, warning of the potential dangers of leaving thousands of young men with little to do. "I ask this body on behalf of all the children of Sierra Leone to do all they can to bring our sad story to an end," said Alhaji. Not long afterwards, on July 12, 2002, President Alhaji Ahmed Tejen Kabbah formally opened Sierra Leone's parliament in Freetown and promised to improve the population's welfare through improvements in food security and agriculture, provincial power supply, safe water supply, health care, education, decentralization and the general rehabilitation of roads.³⁹⁰

the government.

These promises must be followed through, and young people must have a stake in them. While the war was declared officially over on January 18, 2002, much more needs to be done for and with

“It is clear that despite a tenuous peace, the so-called solutions to these problems are bound to explode if special consideration is not given to the welfare of adolescents and young people, a very crucial human resource. Sierra Leone stands central among countries whose socio-economic and political structures have been battered.”

— Freetown research team report, 2002

Notwithstanding their deep concerns, adolescents and youth also expressed cautious optimism about the future of their country and a strong determination to have a role in making it a better place. For this to happen, programs and policies must actively involve adolescents and youth in the reconstruction of their country, and the government must be more responsive to their ideas and needs. These actions will allow young people to take ownership of their development and will increase the effectiveness of reconstruction and recovery efforts, while decreasing the likelihood that adolescents and youth will violently destroy what they have stake in.

The majority of the following recommendations were generated by Sierra Leonean adolescents and require a range of actors to respond, including the government of Sierra Leone (GOSL); donor governments; UNAMSIL and other UN actors; international and local NGOs; and local communities, including young people.

EDUCATION AND LIVELIHOOD

- The GOSL, World Bank and donors must ensure that current efforts to increase the minimum baseline standard for education do not focus solely on the reconstruction and rehabilitation of formal primary school structures. Formal secondary schools, skills training, accelerated and distance learning courses and other forms of education must be supported to ensure that adolescents’ right to education is fulfilled. Life skills should be incorporated into all of these efforts. Education in a variety of forms for all young people must be seen as essential to peace, stability and reconstruction.
- In addition to support for school reconstruction, donors and NGOs should provide students with school supplies, uniforms and transportation. Without these necessities, young people cannot attend school. Young people in rural areas in particular need schools in their communities and/or transportation to schools nearby.
- The GOSL, donors and program implementers must end the gender gap in education access and ensure that all education efforts emphasize and support the full and equal inclusion of girls, especially adolescent heads of household, child mothers, separated girls (without family or other caregivers), commercial sex workers, married girls, former child soldiers who were unable to formally demobilize and others. The GOSL should confront barriers to girls’ education and implement policies and incentives where necessary to increase their access and promote girls’ education through public awareness campaigns. Support to the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) should be increased to promote additional community-based action for girls’ education.
- UNICEF should assist communities in forming more teacher, parent and student associations that can act quickly to resolve local education issues when government structures lag behind.

- The GOSL should continue to collaborate on and support initiatives undertaken by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and other NGOs to address the massive teacher shortage. Refugee teachers should be helped in confirming their certifications and every effort should be made to ensure that eligible teachers can take certification exams in a timely manner. The GOSL and its district education partners should utilize the teacher survey created by the IRC to match returning refugee teachers with schools in need of teaching staff.
 - As part of increased support for reintegration, donors and UNICEF should extend the Community Education Investment Program (CEIP) to all areas of Sierra Leone and expand the eligibility for inclusion under the program.
 - The GOSL should undertake a countrywide analysis with key development and local youth organizations to identify critical skills needed for development and reconstruction; donors should fund skills and on-the-job training programs linked to these needs; and implementers should employ adolescents and youth to undertake the tasks.
 - Donors should support and expand programs that incorporate formal education, skills training and income-generation into holistic reintegration efforts for adolescents and youth, like the Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace (YRTEP), Skills Training and Employment Generation (STEG) and Skills Training and Employment Promotion (STEP). Such programs should be linked to skills training with access to credit, investment, tools, technical advice and support. They should involve young people in both rural and urban areas and should respond to the specific situation of adolescent commercial sex workers, heads of household, beggars, street children and drug users.
- UNAMSIL radio should be used to convey this information during broadcasts geared toward adolescents and youth, and any adolescent-friendly health projects should be identified.
- The GOSL, through the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, should facilitate the construction and renovation of health centers, especially in rural areas. More medical personnel should be recruited and trained to work with adolescents and their specific health problems, and medicines should be made more widely available.
 - Adolescents and youth should be trained as community health volunteers to support medical staff.
 - Health providers should ensure adolescents are accessing care and should establish adolescent-friendly services that are confidential, low-cost and include reproductive health services. Programs should make sure to reach in- and out-of-school young people, survivors of gender-based violence and commercial sex workers. The community and civil society initiatives component of Sierra Leone's HIV/AIDS Response Project (SHARP) should ensure that programs and protocols are developed for young people.
 - Education and health professionals working in Sierra Leone should develop reproductive health education programs for non-formal learning and vocational training, targeting young people who are not in school, particularly rural youth and girls.
 - Donors should fund a reputable youth-focused organization to develop a nationwide magazine for adolescents and youth addressing health and relationship issues to provide an alternative to sources of disinformation currently available to young people. Such a publication could be modeled after Straight Talk, read by young people in Uganda. Peer education programs for rural and illiterate youth should also be supported, using, for example, a picture-based youth-friendly approach for illiterate youth.
 - The GOSL, through the Ministry of Health and Sanitation, should facilitate the improvement of water and sanitation in the communities. More latrines should be constructed and safe water sources established in urban and rural areas.

HEALTH

- The Ministry of Health and Sanitation should work in collaboration with NGOs and UN agencies to break down myths about health issues and health services through broader public education campaigns, providing basic information, including services offered by schools, clinics, hospitals and others, including costs. Among other means,

- Donors should support the GOSL and NGOs in providing increased assistance to disabled and war-wounded adolescents, especially those who suffered permanent disabilities such as the amputation of limbs. A national program for construction and provision of prostheses should be funded, together with a system of rehabilitation services specifically tailored for these beneficiaries.
 - The GOSL and NGOs should work with communities to implement comprehensive programs addressing girls' and women's health, human rights, education, economic and social issues. Among other topics, girls and women should be given information about reproductive health care and the health risks and human rights abuses related to female genital mutilation.
 - The GOSL, UNICEF, UNAIDS, WHO, donors, youth and other community groups should undertake intensive advocacy and public awareness efforts to increase knowledge about the dangers of STIs, especially HIV/AIDS, and how to prevent their spread. The GOSL should also develop protocols and programs to implement the youth-specific elements of the national AIDS policy in a way that includes the active participation of young people.
 - The results of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control's national Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) survey on HIV/AIDS conducted in Sierra Leone and the Sierra Leone government's Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Adolescent Survey Report, both completed this year, should be released widely, and the findings should form the basis of advocacy and programming.
- should ensure that member states involve young people as participants and advocates in the movement for the protection of children and adolescents. The adviser should develop specific programs to provide information, education and communication materials on child rights.
- Donors should support the capacity building of civil servants and other governmental staff at all levels, increasing their practical knowledge of child and adolescent rights and protection and basic skills in carrying out their work.
 - Recognizing that almost all young people are vulnerable in some way, work must be balanced to address the recovery of *all* young people, without stigmatizing or excluding any group and minimizing competition among them, while maximizing the protection and care of all.
 - The GOSL must strengthen national legal frameworks to protect the rights of children and adolescents and should immediately pass the proposed National Youth Policy, enact a Child Rights law and eliminate gender discrimination under the law. The GOSL and others working on judicial and legislative reform should make a priority improvements on protection from sexual violence and exploitation and forced marriage under Sierra Leone law. They must also work to ensure women's right to own property.
 - The GOSL should ensure equal access to education, livelihood opportunities and property ownership for girls to help prevent sexual exploitation.
 - The GOSL must implement strategies to end the widespread sexual exploitation of children in Sierra Leone. Laws should be enacted to criminalize the purchase of sexual favors from children in exchange for money or benefits, to ban forced marriages and to establish an age of consent that discourages early marriage. Enforcement of such legislation should be accompanied by broad-based awareness raising campaigns and protection and services, including legal assistance and counseling, to be made available to girls and women who choose to pursue cases before the law. These efforts should be guided by research conducted by Lawyers Centre for Legal Assistance regarding the legal status of women in Sierra Leone.
 - The GOSL should avoid a confusing, costly and

PROTECTION

- Affirming the strong work and role of UNICEF and the Child Protection Network, the GOSL should undertake an aggressive campaign with a wide range of governmental, United Nations, NGO and community actors, including local child protection committees, to promote an increased emphasis on child and adolescent rights and protection within all humanitarian assistance and reconstruction interventions.
- ECOWAS's Special Adviser for Child Protection

ineffective duplication of structures and either support the evolution of the National Commission for War-Affected Children as a body responsible for monitoring the fulfillment of children's and adolescents' rights in Sierra Leone or create a National Commission on Children for this purpose when the War-Affected Children's Commission's mandate is completed. To this end, the National Commission for War-Affected Children should make its objectives clear, ensuring that it works with government ministries and UNAMSIL Child Protection Advisers in a constructive and complementary way, minimizing confusion among competing structures working on behalf of children and adolescents.

- In the case of refugees, UNHCR, and in the case of IDPs, UNOCHA and the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA), should ensure that refugee and IDP returns to their home communities are fully voluntary, that communities and individuals are informed of their options for assisted returns and that returns are carried out safely, with protection and assistance en route according to international standards. Additional transportation should be provided to returnees facing longer journeys.
- The GOSL and donors must ensure that returnees, including adolescents and youth, have immediate access to community-based reconstruction and rehabilitation support programs. Seeds, tools, additional food stocks and plastic sheeting should be provided as standard start-up assistance.
- Donors must supply UNHCR and the GOSL with sufficient resources to carry out repatriation and resettlement work and should closely monitor its implementation, with attention to local coordination, governmental capacity and child protection issues.
- Separated children within returning refugee or IDP communities and within the general population must continue to be identified and assisted with family tracing programs and access to protection and assistance, including foster care, education and livelihood opportunities.
- The GOSL and local community actors should increase efforts to educate adolescents and youth about the objectives and functions of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC).

Discussions about the function of the TRC through mobile outreach teams should take place among local groups, tribal councils, religious leaders, adolescents, youth and others representing all sides of the conflict. These mobile outreach teams must take care to listen and respond to young people's concerns about the TRC. Should children and adolescents agree to participate, their identities as witnesses should be secured and their stigmatization minimized by ensuring community support for them following their testimony.

- The Special Court for Sierra Leone should not try young people who committed crimes as children as part of the fighting forces in Sierra Leone. Instead, it should focus on prosecuting adults for crimes committed against children, adolescents and other civilians during the conflict, including gender-based violence.
- The GOSL and the international community should establish and support a Special Fund for War Victims as stipulated in Article XXIX of the Lomé Peace Agreement. Organizers should seek direct input from community groups, including adolescents, on what rehabilitation activities the Fund should prioritize, given the generalized level of victimization felt by the population of Sierra Leone.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

- The GOSL and all its ministries should ensure that girls and women benefit to the same extent as boys and men from rehabilitation and reconstruction programs and that they are directly included in such planning, as mandated by the Lomé Peace Agreement. Donors should monitor the gender balance in planning and implementation of recovery efforts.
- The National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR) and child protection agencies (CPAs) should undertake a gender analysis of the needs of girls and women, especially those involved in the conflict and in commercial sex work. The analysis should address their reproductive health needs, the risks of forced marriage, sexual slavery, female genital mutilation and other gender-based violence. It should incorporate the results into post-conflict reconstruction

priorities and the design and implementation of post-conflict programs. NCDDR, NaCSA, UNICEF and other key actors must work together to secure additional funding for this work.

- The GOSL, UN agencies, NGOs and communities should ensure that the trauma of gender-based violence is dealt with in a culturally and gender-sensitive manner, offering girls and women medical treatment and reproductive health care, psychosocial support, economic opportunities, community advocacy and protection from further violence.
- The GOSL, international organizations and civil society actors should work to sensitize communities about children's and women's rights, and to protect women and girls from discrimination and violence. In particular, safe spaces must be created for young people, health officials, communities and others to discuss the practice of female genital mutilation as practiced in Sierra Leone. Parents and members of the women's secret societies must be included in these discussions and convinced to find different, safer ways to initiate young girls into adulthood.
- Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) organizations, their partners and other groups should continue to implement core code of conduct principles and a plan of action on prevention of and protection from sexual violence and exploitation in humanitarian crises and post-conflict reconstruction. Coordinated follow-up on implementation and monitoring of these efforts that is closely linked with increased community activism on the issues is critical to improved prevention and response.

DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILIZATION AND REINTEGRATION (DDR)

- Donors must increase support for the reintegration of former child and youth soldiers and other young people beyond the completion of DDR programs currently supported by the World Bank-administered Multi-Donor Trust Fund that ends in February 2003. Holistic protection and assistance programs should be supported that build young people's capacities, address multiple needs and vulnerabilities and reduce competition over resources among former child soldiers and other

young people. Special attention should be paid to girls and young women who spontaneously demobilized and did not receive support under the DDR program. Addressing the rights of girls and young women formerly with fighting forces who did not formally demobilize should be a priority.

- The GOSL, UNAMSIL and the World Bank should solicit an independent assessment of the DDR, including a detailed gender analysis and recommendations for follow-up in the reintegration phase. This should be achieved with the direct input of children and adolescents. It should include recommendations for gender awareness and child protection concerns for future demobilization processes in the region and elsewhere.
- Donor support should be directed to youth groups and networks for collaborative work focused on increasing community acceptance of former child and youth soldiers, with a special emphasis on girls. Young people who were successfully reintegrated should be directly involved in these efforts.
- NCDDR, NaCSA, UNICEF, CPAs and other stakeholders should involve children, adolescents, youth and women directly in peace building and reconciliation efforts. They should be supported to lead community sensitization initiatives and program assessments, planning and monitoring in these areas.
- NCDDR, NaCSA, UNICEF and CPAs should assist youth and other community groups in addressing the reintegration concerns of many demobilized 18- to 25-year-old youth who were abducted into fighting forces as children but who are not receiving the support they need because they have "aged out" of programs targeting children under 18. These youth require increased support for family reunification, relocation and intensive re-education about civilian life. As much as possible, child-focused organizations should also expand existing programs to address youth rights.
- Donors, NCDDR and UNICEF should improve the quality and continuity of training and educational opportunities for ex-combatants. They should integrate them into family reunification activities so that young people reintegrating into their communities are not forced to quit these programs mid-stream.

- Keep the promises made to reintegrating children, adolescents and adults and the organizations serving them by ensuring resources are fully available and that stipends are paid on time.
- Donors should encourage and support child protection agencies providing reintegration services to those formerly with fighting forces, ensuring that local authorities and local organizations manage more funds to build their capacity, autonomy and effectiveness.

PSYCHOSOCIAL

- The GOSL, the international community and local organizations should expand psychosocial interventions that address the trauma stemming from direct involvement with fighting forces, including gender-based violence, and from other types of victimization. These interventions should focus on ensuring young people's coping strategies are constructive and limiting their reliance on activities that may be injurious and limiting over time.
- Decision-makers must recognize education, livelihood, health care and participation opportunities as essential to young people's psychosocial recovery and should ensure that programs are carried out in a holistic manner, accounting for the multiple pressures and needs facing young people.
- The Ministry of Youth and Sport should work with groups supporting recreation in schools to expand organized recreation and team-building activities to community-based centers, including through youth groups, allowing a wider range of young people to participate in these activities and expanding opportunities for community-initiated events.
- The GOSL, including NaCSA, NGOs and civil society organizations should identify and train key community members, such as teachers and other educational leaders, community elders, religious leaders, local health care workers, and adolescents and youth, as point people who can consistently respond to the psychosocial needs of reintegrating children and adolescents. This could be undertaken through local child protection committees.
- Donor governments, decision-makers and policy-

makers must support trust-building efforts between the GOSL, adolescents and youth. They should ensure that all promises made to young people in the Lomé Peace Agreement and other post-war interventions are carried out to their fullest extent with young people's direct involvement. Community discussions should be held throughout Sierra Leone about the roles of government, community, international, adolescent and other actors to air concerns and pave a path to mutual understanding.

ADOLESCENT AND YOUTH PARTICIPATION

- The GOSL, including politicians and key ministries, must take immediate steps to incorporate young people's needs and rights into their daily work. This should include making adolescent- and youth-serving ministries more responsive to young people's voices through consultation and by enacting legislation to protect their rights. Policies and programs should be developed, implemented and monitored in a more participatory way, working with rather than for young people. While ministerial staff at the local level are stretched, better collaboration will result in a wider and deeper impact of interventions, as young people invigorate local responses.
- The Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, the Ministry of Youth and Sport, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the National Commission for War-Affected Children should find creative and constructive ways to involve young people and their organizations, by offering them internships, for example, as well as programming and monitoring partnerships. Consultations with young people by the new Ministry of Youth and Sport should continue and be replicated by other ministries in a process of trust building and open collaboration.
- Donors should fund youth organizations directly, and international NGOs, government ministries and UN agencies should work with them on programming and capacity building. Priority should be given to holistic programs for adolescents that address the range of education, livelihood, psychosocial, participation, health and protection rights.

- Youth organizations should promote the active participation and leadership of female members. They also should continue to facilitate constructive collaboration between youth throughout Sierra Leone and internationally, offering alternatives to war and suggesting solutions to problems facing adolescents and youth.

XIV. APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

SIERRA LEONE: GLOSSARY OF KEY PLAYERS AND OTHER BASICS

FIGHTING FORCES, THEIR LEADERS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

All People's Congress (APC), a political party, governed Sierra Leone from 1977 as effectively a one-party regime. Its exclusionary politics prompted student protests for governmental reforms the beliefs and goals of which were ultimately co-opted and corrupted by the leaders of the Revolutionary United Front.

Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) was formed by government soldiers who ousted newly elected President Kabbah in a May 1997 coup. It invited the RUF to join the government as the AFRC/RUF and continued systematic murder, torture, looting, rape and destruction of economic systems until its ousting in February 1998 by the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG).

Civil Defense Forces (CDFs), community-based fighting forces comprised of tribes across Sierra Leone, were allied with the government forces against the rebel insurgents. They used children as part of their fighting forces, often engaging them in rituals to make them believe they were impervious to injury and forcing them to commit human rights abuses.

Diamonds — “Diamonds, bauxite, titanium,” young people begin to list as they explain the many ways in which warring parties fought for control of their country's natural resources. Perhaps more than any other factor, profits from the illegal sale of diamonds financed and thus sustained the brutal war and socio-economic destruction in Sierra Leone.

Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), first established in Sierra Leone in 1990, was the Economic Community of West African States' military contribution to fighting off the rebels in collaboration with the Republic

of Sierra Leone Military Forces (the SLA). The majority of the ECOMOG forces were supplied by Nigeria. It eventually took the CDFs under its umbrella.

The Green Book, a manifesto by Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi, preached revolutionary Pan-Africanism and inspired student activists in Sierra Leone in the 1970s and early 1980s to counter the policies of the APC. The book claims that people have rights to accommodation, food and property and should not be allowed to accumulate wealth beyond individual needs. RUF founders adapted these calls into their revolutionary rhetoric.

Alhiji Ahmed Tejan Kabbah is the current president of Sierra Leone. First elected in February 1996, then overthrown in an AFRC coup in May 1997, he was reinstated with the help of ECOMOG in 1998 and re-elected in May 2002. He is the leader of the SLPP.

Major Johnny Paul Koroma is the former leader of the AFRC. He subsequently became the chairman for the Commission of the Consolidation of Peace (CCP) until the May 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections, when he became a member of parliament.

Joseph Saidu Momoh is the former army chief who succeeded Siaka Stevens as president of Sierra Leone and leader of the All People's Congress (APC), beginning in 1985. He and the APC were ousted by junior officers frustrated by lack of governmental support for their struggle against rebels in Sierra Leone's eastern forest region, who on March 23, 1991 had begun what would become nearly 10 years of insurgency.³⁹¹

National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), a Liberian rebel group formed by former soldiers of then Liberian President Samuel Doe's army, served as current Liberian President Charles Taylor's vehicle to power. It set the tone for the Sierra Leone conflict, as former NPFL recruits and Liberian refugees infused the RUF rebel movement with their youth-centered terror tactics.

Revolutionary United Front (RUF), a rebel group, also known as “the movement” of Sierra Leone,

launched a military campaign against the government of Sierra Leone beginning in 1991, as well as a campaign of terror against Sierra Leonean civilians for nearly a decade. The RUF killed, maimed, forcibly recruited and sexually abused and enslaved thousands of children and adolescents.

Revolutionary United Front Party (RUF), evolved out of the RUF, which agreed to transform the group into a political party as part of the peace agreement. Members of the RUF were apportioned positions within the government of Sierra Leone.

Foday Saybana Sankoh, leader of the RUF, was given a status equivalent to that of a vice-president of Sierra Leone as a result of the Lomé Peace Agreement and is currently in jail in Sierra Leone on charges relating to a firebomb that took place outside his home in Freetown.

Sierra Leone Army (SLA) is the principal military force of the government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) that fought the RUF with support from ECOMOG, CDFs and other groups. Today's SLA includes retrained RUF fighters.

Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP), a political party, was first banned under the APC and re-formed in 1991 following a referendum on multi-party democracy. It was and remains the leading political party within the government of Sierra Leone. Its supporters were principal targets of the RUF during the war. Government forces under its watch also recruited and used children in combat.

Charles Taylor is the current President of Liberia and leader of the NPFL. Taylor's push to overthrow Samuel Doe's government in Liberia fueled the war in neighboring Sierra Leone from its start. In the hopes of destabilizing Sierra Leone's support for international peacekeeping efforts in Liberia, he encouraged and supplied the RUF. Violent instability continues along the Sierra Leone-Liberia border today.

ACTORS AND INITIATIVES IN RECOVERY FROM THE WAR

Child Protection Network (CPN) is a group of over 25 United Nations agencies, government ministries and international and local NGOs established in 1996. It is chaired by the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) and works to promote and secure the provision of protection and care to children affected by the war,

especially those in the fighting forces. It also promotes coordination among social welfare actors in Sierra Leone, encouraging standardized approaches. **Child Protection Agencies (CPAs)** represented in the CPN are principally responsible for delivering services to children and adolescents.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program supports the disarmament, demobilization, care, protection and reintegration of children associated with the fighting forces as mandated especially by Articles 16 and 30 of the Lomé Peace Agreement. The reintegration component is supported and implemented by UNICEF in partnership with the NCDDR, MSWGCA and the CPN. The primary objective of the DDR program has been the consolidation of security and facilitation of the socio-economic reintegration of ex-combatants into civil society. The disarmament and demobilization elements of this program ended formally in January 2002, when peace was officially declared. Only the reintegration component of the program continues.

Lomé Peace Agreement was signed in Lomé, Togo on July 7, 1999 by Republic of Sierra Leone President Ahmad Tejan Kabbah and Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone leader Foday Sankoh, marking a commitment to end more than eight years of hostilities. The Agreement lays out all of the provisions for peace, such as cessation of hostilities; governance; pardon and amnesty for combatants and collaborators; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration for former combatants, including children; and humanitarian assistance and human rights.

Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) is a government ministry responsible for policy, coordination and monitoring of all child protection actors in Sierra Leone and chairs the CPN.

National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA) is a governmental agency that evolved from the National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NCRRR). The mandate of NaCSA remains the same as that of the former NCRRR, with the exception that NaCSA mainly focuses its activities in the northern and eastern provinces. NaCSA is responsible for the overall planning, programming, coordination, supervision and monitoring of all humanitarian, reintegration, resettlement and reconstruction work resulting from the civil war.

National Commission for Disarmament,

Demobilization and Reintegration (NCDDR) is a high-level policy body that was appointed, following democratic elections in Sierra Leone in 1998, to address DDR issues. Its original members were GOSL ministers and the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Representative, but eventually also included the RUF in its governance of the DDR program.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was mandated by the Lomé Peace Agreement in Article XXXVI to help “address impunity, break the cycle of violence and provide a forum for both the victims and perpetrators of human rights violations in the conflict to tell their story, get a clear picture of the past in order to facilitate genuine healing and reconciliation.”

United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the UN peacekeeping force in Sierra Leone, had its first incarnation when established by the UN Security Council in 1998 as the UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL) sending military and human rights observers to Sierra Leone. Following the Lomé Peace Agreement in 1999, the Security Council authorized a 6,000-member peacekeeping force — UNAMSIL — with authority to use “deadly force” if needed. It assists the GOSL in carrying out the provisions of the Lomé Peace Agreement, especially in providing security and implementing disarmament and demobilization. It now has 17,500 military personnel, including 260 military observers, in Sierra Leone.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is the United Nations organization principally responsible for the protection and care of refugees. In Sierra Leone, its primary mission is to facilitate and promote the voluntary return of Sierra Leonean refugees and internally displaced returnees, to monitor security and living conditions within Sierra Leone, to promote the enactment of national legislation and the adoption of administrative procedures for refugee issues, and to provide assistance to newly arriving Liberian refugees. No one organization has principal responsibility for internally displaced people in Sierra Leone.

United Nations Children's Fund in Sierra Leone (UNICEF SL) is the lead child protection agency in Sierra Leone and provides CPAs in Sierra Leone with technical assistance, logistical support, funds and training. In 1993, it initiated a Child Protection Program to address the needs of separated children and today works closely with UNAMSIL, MSWGCA and CPAs to implement the DDR.

War Victims Fund was called for in Article XXIX of the Lomé Peace Agreement and, with support from the international community, was meant to be established by the GOSL for programs for the rehabilitation of war victims. Young people who were not involved in the fighting forces are frustrated that this fund has not become operational, although it remains unclear how victims would be classified.

BASIC FACTS ON SIERRA LEONE

COLONIAL HISTORY

Sierra Leone was a British colony and won its independence on April 27, 1961.

Population³⁹²

- Sierra Leone's population is estimated to be between 4.5 and 5.5 million, up from 4.1 million in 1990 (the wide discrepancy in estimates is due to the lack of a national census since 1985). A 1985 census showed the town of Makeni as having 12,000 people, and Freetown, the capital, as home to an estimated 550,000. A UN-sponsored census is scheduled for January 2003.
- Estimates of the population of adolescents and youth vary: Over 44 percent of the population of Sierra Leone is under the age of 14 according to the CIA; other estimates assert that youth, defined as those between the ages of 15 and 35 years old, make up 45 percent of the population, and that children, defined as those below 15 years, made up 44 percent of the population in 1995.
- According to the United Nations Youth 2000 Profile, the median age of the population of Sierra Leone is 17.9.

LOWEST HUMAN DEVELOPMENT STATISTICS IN THE WORLD³⁹³

- Of 173 countries ranked, Sierra Leone placed last on the United Nations' Human Development Index.
- The estimated per capita income in Sierra Leone is US\$140 per year.
- Sierra Leone has the worst life expectancy rates (38 years on average), the lowest adult literacy rates and the highest percentage of total population living on less than US\$1 per day in the world.
- Natural resources include diamonds, titanium ore, bauxite, iron ore, gold and chromite.

POPULATION MOVEMENTS³⁹⁴

During the War

- During the war, nearly half of the entire population of Sierra Leone was displaced internally or became refugees outside the country's borders.

Today

- 185,000 Sierra Leoneans were refugees and asylum seekers at the end of 2001.
- 40,000 Sierra Leonean refugees remain in camps in Guinea and over 30,000 remain in camps in Liberia.
- Sierra Leone currently hosts upwards of 15,000 Liberian refugees.
- 247,590 people remain registered as internally displaced in Sierra Leone.

TRIBES AND LANGUAGES³⁹⁵

- There are 16 tribes in Sierra Leone, each with its own area of dominance, although all tribes can be found in each chiefdom, district or province.
- Official language: English, but it is limited to literate minority.
- Other languages: *Mende*, principal vernacular in the south; *Temne*, principal vernacular in the north; *Krio*, English-based Creole, spoken by the descendants of freed Jamaican slaves who were settled in the Freetown area, a *lingua franca* and a first language for 10 percent of the population but understood by 95 percent.

APPENDIX II

METHODOLOGICAL MATERIALS

SURVEY of top adolescent concerns

Age: _____ Sex (circle): Male/ Female Location: _____ Date: _____

Attending school? (circle): Yes/ No Currently displaced? Yes/No Formerly displaced? Yes/ No

Formerly a refugee? Yes/ No Formerly with fighting forces? Yes/ No Civil Defense Forces? Yes/ No

Please read the following list of issues carefully and rank your top ten concerns, beginning with number 10 as your biggest concern. If you are not an adolescent, please rank the top 10 concerns that you believe adolescents face in Sierra Leone.

For example, if your biggest concern is adolescent crime and vandalism, mark a number 10 next to that category. If your second biggest concern is being a refugee and/or internally displaced, mark number 9 next to that category, and so on, using numbers 10 through 1.

Concerns:

- _____ Lack of health care
- _____ HIV/AIDS and STDs
- _____ Drug abuse and addiction
- _____ Being disabled (loss of sight, hearing, limbs, etc)
- _____ Early and/or forced marriage
- _____ Prostitution
- _____ Teen pregnancy (Makeni survey read Unwanted Pregnancy here)
- _____ Rape (Makeni survey read Sexual Violence here)
- _____ Lack of educational opportunities
- _____ Unemployment
- _____ Lack of shelter/food/water/clothing
- _____ Poverty
- _____ Being displaced
- _____ Being orphaned
- _____ Lack of parental/family/home care
- _____ Violence and insecurity
- _____ Adolescent crime, delinquency and vandalism
- _____ Reintegrating into society after war
- _____ Trauma and psychological problems because of the war
- _____ Neglect by elders and government / lack of participation in decision-making

Themes and Questions Developed by Freetown Adolescent Research Team for Focus Groups

Remember: you are RESEARCHERS investigating youth problems and solutions, NOT giving your opinions on problems or solving the problems of the youth you talk to.

General focus group timeline:

- 1 hour spent talking about adolescent/youth problems
- 1/2 hour (30 minutes) talking about solutions to problems and possibilities for peace
- 1/2 hour (30 minutes) for administering the SURVEY of top ten concerns

Focus Questions:

- What are the biggest problems you and other young people face in Sierra Leone and what are some solutions to these problems?
- How does one become an adult in Sierra Leone? What is “adolescence” or “youth”? Describe it.

These are sample questions you developed in the training workshop. These are not the only questions you might want to ask. In all of the following categories, ask if there are differences in the experiences of boys and girls, and ask for solutions to all of these problems, including ones that adolescents can affect.

Education:

- Do you go to school? If so, how often do you attend school? If you do not attend school, why not? Would you like to?
- Are there schools in your area? What is a/ your classroom like? Are there basic learning materials in your school? If not, what are you lacking?
- Is there anything you'd like to change about your curriculum? Are there any subjects you would like to know more about? Do you think your education will help you in the future?
- Do you have trained and qualified teachers in your school? If not, how could the teachers teach better? Are teachers paid on time?
- Do you have access to vocational training? If so, what kind? Is it useful? If not, what kind would you like?

Health:

- When you are sick, what do you do? Have you ever been to a doctor? If so, why? Describe the most common health problems or diseases facing you and other adolescents.
- Are there health facilities/ hospitals in your area? How far is the nearest health center or hospital? Is the health center/hospital clean? Are there enough qualified doctors and nurses? Have they treated you properly? Is there enough medicine? Can you afford treatment and medicine?
- When you have a problem, what do you do? Do you have someone to talk to about your problems or stress? If so, who do you talk to? Can problems be solved through counseling? Is it necessary to get counseling for your problems? If so, do you have access to counseling or other support and does it help you? Is there anything bothering you? If so, what is it?
- What is the average age that adolescents have sex? Have you ever heard of HIV/AIDS or other STDs? Where did you get this information? Have you ever seen someone affected by HIV/AIDS? Do you believe in the existence of HIV/AIDS? If no, why not? How is this deadly virus passed on? How can you prevent it? Do you take care to prevent it?

- Do you know anyone who takes drugs? If so, what kind? Do you smoke? Drink? Do any other drugs? If so, where do you get these items? Why do you/ other adolescents take these drugs? What are the effects of drug abuse and addiction on adolescents?

Gender Issues:

- Are you married? If so, did you get to choose your partner? How old were you when you got married? If you didn't have a choice, why not? How do you feel about this marriage? What future plans do you have for your marriage?
- If you are not married, would you like to get married? What is the best age for marriage? How do you feel about mixed marriages between different tribes?
- Do you know anyone who has been raped? If you do know of a rape, how did it happen and what were the consequences for the victim and the rapist? What is the difference between rape and sex by choice? Do you know anyone who has raped someone? If so, what happened? Were they aware of what they were doing? Were they punished? What do girls or boys who were raped need to recover?
- What leads adolescents into prostitution? What are the effects of prostitution? Are only girls prostitutes? If not, who else is? Who uses the services of prostitutes? Do any adolescents involved in prostitution have the consent of their parents?
- Do you know of any adolescent mothers? If so, did they get pregnant by choice? Do boys/men take responsibility for the baby? What are the problems of adolescent mothers? Can they go to school? Access health care?

Socio-Cultural Factors:

- Who takes care of you at home? What type of home/family background do you have? Do you get love from your parents or caregivers? Are you encouraged at home? Is home care adequate? How could it be better? Is there anyone to teach you good manners and courtesy to others? Can you rely on brothers and sisters at home? Do you take care of others?
- Are you an orphan? If so, how did you become an orphan and what are your problems? Who takes care of you? How old were you when you became an orphan? How do you feel?

Socio-economic Factors:

- How many meals do you eat a day? Do you get a balanced diet? Is water available in your area? Where/ how do you manage to get water? What is the quality of the water?
- How do you get money? Are you able to work/ have a job? What is your or your family's income versus your monthly costs?
- What kind of house do you live in? Please describe it. Do you have what you need? If not, what else do you need?
- What are the causes of poverty? How does poverty affect adolescents in Sierra Leone? How can you/ other adolescents help to decrease poverty?
- Why are some young people begging on the street? How does it affect their lives?

Violence, Crime and Related Human Rights Violations:

- Do you feel safe? Where do you feel most safe? Is there anywhere you would be afraid to go to? How is security in your community? When and why does violence occur in your community?
- What types of violence have you been exposed to? Do you know what rights you have? Have your rights been abused? If so, how and by whom? What can you do about these violations?
- Who causes the violence/crime in your community? Are adolescents involved in that? If so, how? Do young

people carry weapons? If so, what kind, where and why? Are adolescents victims of violence/crime in your community? Have you or do you know others who have been arrested for no reason? How can this violence be stopped?

Violations of Rights During the War, Effects of the War and Prospects for Peace:

- How has the war affected you and other adolescents? Were your rights violated during the war? Do you feel like a victim or a perpetrator (or both), and why? Have you forgiven a perpetrator? What do you need in order to forgive? Do you want revenge or need compensation for crimes committed against you? What does justice mean to you? Have you heard of the Lomé Peace Accord or the provision for war victims in the accord?
- Were you a combatant in the conflict? Were you abducted? If so, what was your experience? Do you think it is OK to be forced to fight in an armed conflict? Do you have problems now because of those experiences? Have the reintegration efforts (for ex-combatants) been successful? Have you been provided a job? Education? Are you engaged in something? Do you have any problems interacting with members of your community?
- Do you have any problems you can't solve? Have you lost anyone? What happened? Were they important to you? How do you feel? Do you have mental problems from the war?
- What do you think caused the war? Do you think these problems have been corrected? Has the war really ended? What will it take to keep peace?

Concept of Adolescence, Young People's Role in Society and Generation Gap:

- What does "adolescence" and "youth" mean in Sierra Leone? How do you become an adult? What is the role of adolescents and youth in society?
- Do you think the youth are important to the future of your community/society? Why or why not? Are you considered important in your community and/or society by adults and elders? Why or why not? Are you able to express your views and share problems with adults and elders? If so, what are their responses? Do you feel adolescents and elders communicate well? Please explain. Do you have respect for elders? Do you get advice from elders and do you wish you had more? Are adolescents being neglected? If yes, why do you think so? What do you suggest to solve this problem?
- Do you think young people can affect policies? If yes, give reasons. If no, give reasons. Have you ever put across your problems to a policy body? If yes, what was the outcome? Have you taken part in any decision-making process? Were your views accepted? Have you ever been asked to contribute to the solutions of adolescents' problems? What kinds of communication systems do you have in your area? Are you able to use them?
- Do you feel you have any positive role models in your community? Is there anyone you especially admire, and why? What gives you hope, and why? Name the qualities that make a positive role model.
- Are you interacting with other youth or different groups? If yes, how are you interacting with them? If no, why not?

RESEARCH TEAM PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: _____ Age: _____

1) How did you find out about the research study?

2) Have you ever conducted research before? If so, when, what kind of research and with whom?

3) Do you feel the views of young people in Sierra Leone are taken seriously by adults, including politicians?
(check one)

_____ yes _____ no

If yes, who takes them seriously and why?

If no, why not, and who would you most like to pay attention to young people's concerns?

4) Have you ever voiced your opinions about problems young people face? If so, to whom? Check all that apply below:

_____ No, I normally do not express the concerns of young people to anyone in particular.

_____ Yes, to:

If yes, how do you do this? Through:

_____ my parents

_____ conversation

_____ my teachers

_____ creatively, through art or

_____ my friends

drama presentations

_____ NGO workers

_____ media work

_____ Elders

_____ organized groups (youth,

_____ Religious leaders

religious, school, etc.)

_____ Government officials

_____ other _____

_____ Others: (please specify): _____

5) Do you have any fears about undertaking the study? If so, what are they?

6) What do you most hope to accomplish by being involved in this research study?

APPENDIX III

TASK FORCE ON PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES

CORE PRINCIPLES OF A CODE OF CONDUCT

Humanitarian agencies have a duty of care to beneficiaries and a responsibility to ensure that beneficiaries are treated with dignity and respect and that certain minimum standards of behavior are observed. In order to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, the following core principles must be incorporated into agency codes of conduct:*

- Sexual exploitation and abuse by humanitarian workers constitute acts of gross misconduct and are therefore grounds for termination of employment.
- Sexual activity with children (persons under the age of 18) is prohibited regardless of the age of majority or age of consent locally. Mistaken belief in the age of a child is not a defense.
- Exchange of money, employment, goods or services for sex, including sexual favors or other forms of humiliating, degrading or exploitative behavior is prohibited. This includes exchange of assistance that is due to beneficiaries.
- Sexual relationships between humanitarian workers and beneficiaries are strongly discouraged since they are based on inherently unequal power dynamics. Such relationships undermine the credibility and integrity of humanitarian aid work.
- Where a humanitarian worker develops concerns or suspicions regarding sexual abuse or exploitation by a fellow worker, whether in the same agency or not, s/he must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanisms.
- Humanitarian workers are obliged to create and maintain an environment which prevents sexual exploitation and abuse and promotes the implementation of their code of conduct. Managers at all levels have particular responsibilities to support and develop systems which maintain this environment.

* Different considerations will arise regarding the enforcement of some of these principles for humanitarian workers hired from the beneficiary community. While sexual exploitation and abuse and the misuse of humanitarian assistance will always be prohibited, discretion may be used in the application of the principles regarding sexual relationships for this category of humanitarian worker.

APPENDIX IV

**SAMPLE OF YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN FREETOWN,
SIERRA LEONE***

Name of the Organization	Contact address and phone number	Membership / Contact Person	Year of establishment and registration	Activities
1. Peace Links	14 Williams St. Freetown	50 members, 10 to 25 years old. John Condor Allio, Director mob: 030 208 259 tel: 222 552	1990	Art Beat Center, Training for ex-combatants (drama, art, music, dancing).
2. Youth as Peacebuilders	FAWE offices, Freetown	25 members (13 boys and 12 girls), 18 to 30 years old. Jofwi Vambo, VP	2000 Registered with Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS)	Awareness programs for peace and tolerance through workshops, Drama and other performances; Counseling for adolescents.
3. Peace Pals Education Network	30 Pake St. Brookfield, Freetown	600 (boys and girls) from regions Bo, Moyamba, Pujahun, 7 to 18 years old. Desmond Tulay	2000 Registered with Ministry of Social Welfare, Children and Gender Affairs	Peace awareness trainings; Advocating for scholarships for poor children; Reporting orphan cases to other NGOs and GOSL
4. Sickcell Victims Association	CCYA office 55 Campbell St.	55 members (35 girls and 20 boys), 2 to 27 years old. Sullay A. Kamala Coordinator/President	2001 Registered with MSWCGA	Searching for scholarship for their members; Skills training.
5. Youth Organization for Peace and Development (YOFPAD)	2 Freetown Rd. York (Rural District)	60 members (boys and girls), including 20 ex-combatants, 15 to 30 years old. Hassan Kargbo, Pres.	2000 Registered with MEYS	Cleaning (fundraising); Started a pre-school program in York; Training in brick making.
6. Bone Suffer Organization		102 members (70 boys, 32 girls), 5 to 35 years old.	2000	Agriculture (growing pigs as a fundraising); Cleaning (fundraising); Environmental activities.
7. Explicit Organization	48 Mac Donald Street, Freetown	40 members (25 boys and 15 girls), 15 to 20 years old Reginald Decter, Pres.	2001 Registered with MEYS	Sports activities
8. Sandos Generation	2 Alfred Street Freetown	15 members (boys only), 12 to 18 years old. Ibrahim Alusine Bangura, President	1997	Sports activities

Name of the Organization	Contact address and phone number	Membership / Contact Person	Year of establishment and registration	Activities
9. Teenatex Cultural Theatre	18 O' Neal Street Freetown 222 394	35 members (15 boys and 20 girls), 18-27 years old. Christina Williams, mbr.	1999	Cultural and artistic events.
10. ASPA Cultural Group	Waterloo Displaced Camp	50 members (25 boys and 25 girls), 8 to 20 years old. Sahr J. Komba, member	2001	Cultural activities; Sports activities; Preservation of the traditional culture

SAMPLE OF YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN MAKENI, SIERRA LEONE*

Name of the Organization	Contact address and phone number	Membership / Contact Person	Year of establishment and registration	Activities
1. Friends of the Earth	Makeni Town Hall	25 members 17 boys and 8 girls Samuel Augustin Turay President	1998 Registered with MUYOG	Social Activities; Agricultural activities (fundraising).
2. Rescue Line	3 Mabenta Rd. Makeni	100 boys and 12 girls. Sheik Tejan Sie, vice-president	2000 Registered with Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports	To promote Islam among youth and organize Islamic-oriented activities; Organize sport activities.
3. Friends of Creation	Makeni Town Hall, Conference Room	25 registered members (they pay membership) Samuel Turay Junior, President	1999 Registered with Makeni Union of Youth Groups (MUYOG)	Promote social activities, performance, shows; Agricultural activities, rice farm.
4. Central Bicycles and Hondas	PZ Independent Square	86 members (2 girls and 84 boys) Osman Jalloh Coordinator/President	2001 Registered with MUYOG	Renting bicycles and motor bikes (They own 28 motorbikes and 16 bicycles)
5. Young Generation	Vocational training center 14 Sylvanus St. Makeni	20 members, 15 boys and 5 girls (all ex-combatants)	2002 Members of MUYOG	The only youth group formed by ex-combatants which is in support of SLPP

* The organizations listed here are by no means the only adolescent and youth organizations in Freetown or Makeni. Instead, they are those with which the Women's Commission had an opportunity to meet.

ACRONYMS

AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council	DFID	The British Department for International Development
APC	All People's Congress	EC	European Commission
ARC	American Refugee Committee	ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Office
BPRM	Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (U.S. State Department)	ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
CAADA	Community Action Against Drug Abuse	ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
CC	Cause Canada	FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations
CCF	Christian Children's Fund	FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
CCP	Commission of the Consolidation of Peace	FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
CCPC	Community Child Protection Committees	GOSL	Government of Sierra Leone
CCYA	Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities	GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
CDC	U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
CDF	Civil Defense Force	IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
CDHR	Center for Democracy and Human Rights	ICC	Interim Care Center
CEIP	Community Investment Education Program	ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency	ICVA	International Council of Voluntary Agencies
CPA	Child Protection Agency	IDP	Internally Displaced Person
CPN	Child Protection Network	IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
CR	Conciliation Resources	INGO	International Nongovernmental Organization
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child	IOM	International Organization for Migration
CREPS	Complementary Rapid Education for Primary Schools Program	IRC	International Rescue Committee
CSM-SL	Civil Society Movement Sierra Leone	IYF	Independent Youth Forum
CSW	Commercial Sex Worker	KAP	Knowledge, Attitude and Practice Survey
CYP	Commonwealth Youth Program	MEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
DCOF	Displaced Children and Orphans Fund (USAID)	MEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration		

MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières	STC	Save the Children
MSI	Marie Stopes International	STC-UK	Save the Children United Kingdom
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs	STEG	Skills Training and Employment Generation
MUYOG	Makeni Union of Youth Groups	STEP	Skills Training and Employment Promotion
MYS	Ministry of Youth and Sports	STI	Sexually Transmitted Infection
NaCSA	National Commission for Social Action	TEP	Training and Employment Program
NACP	National AIDS Control Program	TOR	Terms of Reference
NCDDR	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration	TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
NCRRR	National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation	UNDP	United Nations Development Program
NFTRN	National Family Tracing and Reunification Network	UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
NGO	Nongovernmental Organization	UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia	UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
NRC	Norwegian Refugee Council	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	VVF	Vesicovaginal Fistula
OSIWA	Open Society Initiative for West Africa	WAEC	West African Examination Council
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives	WFP	World Food Program
PPASL	Planned Parenthood Association of Sierra Leone	WHO	World Health Organization
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder	WVSL	World Vision Sierra Leone
RREP	Rapid Response Education Program	YCG	Youth Coordination Group
RSG/IDPs	Representative to the Secretary General on IDPs	YIC	Youth in Crisis
RUF	Revolutionary United Front	YRTEP	Youth Reintegration Training and Education for Peace Program
RUFP	Revolutionary United Front Party		
SC	Security Council		
SCHR	Steering Committee on Human Response		
SHARP	Sierra Leone HIV/AIDS Response Project		
SLA	Sierra Leone Army		
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party		
SLYEO	Sierra Leone Youth Empowerment Organization		

XV • ENDNOTES

- 1 Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) considers children to be “every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.” International organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) categorize adolescents chronologically as stipulated. The Women’s Commission report *Untapped Potential, Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict*, 2000, p. 10, states that adolescence overall is defined chronologically, as pertaining to certain ages; functionally, as a process during which individuals make a critical transition from childhood to adulthood; and ultimately by its cultural and societal context, which vary widely.
- 2 Districts include: Northern Province: Kambia District, Koinadugu District, Bombali District, Port Loko District, Tonkolili District; Southern Province: Bo District, Pujehun District, Moyamba District, Bonthe District; Eastern Province: Kono District, Kailahun District, Kenema District; Western Area.
- 3 *Young People and HIV/AIDS: Opportunity in Crisis*, UNICEF, UNAIDS, WHO, 2002, p. 42. (2001 demographics); *Preliminary Report on HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone*, Situation Analysis (compiled by the retreat held at Elly’s Guest House, Goderich, Freetown, April 13-16, 2001), April 2001. Freetown (13-16 2001), April 2001; ActionAid, Youth in Sierra Leone paper presented at CODEP roundtable, April 2001; CIA, “Sierra Leone;” United Nations, *Youth 2000 Profile*, World Population Prospects, 1996.
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- 5 Women’s Commission interview, United States Agency for International Development, Freetown, April 11, 2002.
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- 9 *Preliminary Report on HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone*.
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- 14 *Country Profile: Sierra Leone*, BBC News, news.bbc.co.uk.
- 15 USCR, “Country Report: Sierra Leone.”
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 *Children on the Brink 2002: A Joint Report on Orphan Estimates and Program Strategies*, UNAIDS, UNICEF and USAID, July 2002, www.usaid.gov/pop_health/aids/Publications/docs/childrenbrink.pdf.
- 19 Physicians for Human Rights USA, *War Related Sexual Violence in Sierra Leone*. 2002, www.phrusa.org.
- 20 Population Reference Bureau, *Sierra Leone*. www.prb.org.
- 21 World Health Organization. www.who.int/disasters/cap2002/countries/Sierra-Leone.doc.
- 22 UNICEF, *Statistics: Sierra Leone*. www.unicef.org.
- 23 Women’s Commission interview, Freetown, April 17, 2002.
- 24 Women’s Commission interview, ActionAid, Freetown, April 8, 2002.
- 25 Women’s Commission interview, UNAMSIL, Freetown, April 10, 2002.
- 26 Freetown research team interview, Brookfields, April 16, 2002.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 Makeni research team report, Sierra Leone, 2002.
- 29 Freetown research team interview, Technical School, April 17, 2002.
- 30 *Ibid.*
- 31 Women’s Commission and Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 18, 2002.
- 32 Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 17, 2002.
- 33 Freetown research team interview, Freetown, April 8, 2002.
- 34 Makeni research team interview, Carlington, April 18, 2002.
- 35 Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 24, 2002.
- 36 Makeni research team interview, Masongdo, April 19, 2002.
- 37 IDP Project, *Sierra Leone: Access to Education is Low*, Global IDP Database, November 2001, www.idpproject.org.
- 38 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Education indicators, UNESCO Statistical Yearbook, 1996.
- 39 UNICEF, *Girls Education in Sierra Leone*, www.unicef.org/programme/girlseducation/action/cases/sierra_leone.htm. See also: United States Fund for UNICEF, Sierra Leone Alert, 2001, www.unicefusa.org/alert/emergency/sierraleone; “Country’s Life Expectancy is 38!,” *Concord Times*, Freetown, July 30, 2002. The adult literacy figure represents a reduction in illiteracy among adults.
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- 41 Big Ben, “Science and Technology Minister, Dr Alpha Tejan Wurie — On The Subject of Literacy,” Interview published in *Sierra Leone Live*, Freetown, July 25, 2002.
- 42 Big Ben, “Re-opening of Schools in Sierra Leone,” *Sierra Leone Live*, Freetown, September 3, 2001.
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- 46 United States Fund for UNICEF, *Sierra Leone Alert*.
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- 50 Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 24, 2002.
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- 57 Women's Commission telephone interviews with CCYA and SLYEO, September 18 and 24, 2002.
- 58 World Bank, Sierra Leone Data Profile.
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- 60 IDP Project, *Sierra Leone: Access to Education is Low*.
- 61 Women's Commission interview, International Rescue Committee, March 2002.
- 62 Freetown research team interview, Freetown, April 8, 2002.
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- 66 Makeni research team interview, Makump Barray Bombah, Sebor, April 18, 2002.
- 67 Women's Commission and Freetown research team interview, York, April 2002.
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- 70 *Ibid.*
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- 72 Women's Commission interview with FAWE-Secretariat representative, Freetown, March 13, 2002.
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- 77 UNICEF, *UNICEF Humanitarian Action: Sierra Leone*, Donor Update, November 23, 2001.
- 78 Women's Commission interview, Caritas-Makeni, Makeni, April 16, 2002.
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- 84 Refugees International (RI), *Food Security for Sierra Leonean Returnee Communities in Jeopardy*, Refugees International Bulletin, April 19, 2002.
- 85 *Ibid.*
- 86 Makeni research team interview, Rural Youth, Makump Barray Bombah, April 18, 2002.
- 87 Women's Commission and Freetown research team interview, Tombo, April 18, 2002.
- 88 Makeni research team interview, Bai Sehbora Market Place, Makeni, April 21, 2002.
- 89 Women's Commission interview, Grafton War Wounded Camp, Grafton, April 13, 2002.
- 90 Women's Commission interview with local youth groups, Freetown, April 15, 2002.
- 91 Women's Commission interview, Christian Children's Fund, Freetown, April 12, 2002.
- 92 Women's Commission interview, World Vision, Freetown, April 5, 2002.
- 93 USAID Sierra Leone, *Annual Report (Parts III-VII) FY2002*, February 2002. See also: UNOCHA, *Sierra Leone: Humanitarian Situation Report*, June 30, 2002.
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- 95 Department for International Development, *Sierra Leone's Diamond Industry Should Be the Mainstay of the Economy but is Mired in Corruption. A New Report Says it Could be an Engine for Development*, Press Release, February 24, 2002.
- 96 UNOCHA, *Sierra Leone: Humanitarian Situation Report*, July, 31, 2002.
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- 98 "Country's Life Expectancy is 38!," *Concord Times*, Freetown, July 30, 2002.
- 99 Binta Mansaray, *Field Assessment on Food Security*, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, Freetown, June 10, 2002.
- 100 RI, *Food Security for Sierra Leonean Returnee Communities in Jeopardy*.
- 101 United States Fund for UNICEF, *Sierra Leone Alert*.
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- 103 UNICEF, *Sierra Leone: Humanitarian Appeal for Children and Women, January-December 2001*, www.unicef.org/emerg/SierraLeone.htm#Humanitarian%20Appeals.
- 104 Women's Commission interview, Grafton War-Wounded Camp, Grafton, April 13, 2002.
- 105 Makeni research team report, 2002. See also: UNICEF, *Sierra Leone: Humanitarian Appeal for Children and Women, January-December 2001*.
- 106 According to UNICEF, malaria is one of the leading health problems in Sierra Leone; in fact, in the first four months of 2000, malaria was the leading cause of morbidity in Sierra Leone, accounting for 49 percent of the total disease burden. UNICEF, *Sierra Leone: Humanitarian Appeal for Children and Women, January-December 2001*.
- 107 *Preliminary Report on HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone*.
- 108 Women's Commission interview with Chris Day, MSF-H, Makeni, April 11, 2002.
- 109 UNICEF, *Humanitarian Appeal for Children and Women, January-December 2001*.
- 110 World Health Organization, *WHO Estimates of Health Personnel Physicians, Nurses, Midwives, Dentists and Pharmacists*, Sierra Leone statistic from 1996, www3.who.int/whosis/health_personnel/health_personnel.cfm.

- 111 Makeni research team report, 2002.
- 112 Women's Commission and Freetown research team interview, Regent Town, April 16, 2002.
- 113 Women's Commission interview with Chris Day, MSF-H, Makeni, April 15, 2002.
- 114 Women's Commission interview, Grafton War-wounded Camp, April 13, 2002.
- 115 Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 16, 2002.
- 116 Makeni research team interview, Makeni, May 3, 2002.
- 117 Women's Commission interview with Chris Day, MSF-H, Makeni, April 15, 2002.
- 118 Brown-brown is a mixture of cocaine and gun powder that is poured into cut veins.
- 119 Women's Commission and Freetown research team interview, Regent Town, April 16, 2002.
- 120 Women's Commission interview, UNICEF, Freetown, April 16, 2002.
- 121 UNOCHA, *Guinea: Young refugees team up against drug abuse*, IRIN, UNOCHA, May 21, 2002.
- 122 "Sierra Leone: Amputees" (Interview with Corinne Dufka, Human Rights Watch), Radio Netherlands, 2000, www.rnw.nl/humanrights/html/amputees.html.
- 123 UNOCHA, *Sierra Leone: Website set up for war-amputees*, IRIN, UNOCHA, July 4, 2002. Other groups estimate a higher number of amputees: the chairman of Aberdeen amputee camp in Freetown states 3,000 and the Youth Ambassadors For Peace fact sheet on Sierra Leone suggests that as many as 10,000 children were deliberately maimed during the conflict. ICRC and Handicap International estimate that there are about 1,000 amputee survivors.
- 124 *Ibid.*
- 125 Cause Canada, *Community Rehabilitation And Re-Integration Of War Amputees And Children Impacted By War*, www.cause.ca/projects/SLcs-a.html.
- 126 Makeni research team report, 2002.
- 127 Women's Commission and Freetown research team interview, Grafton War-wounded Camp, April 13, 2002.
- 128 *Ibid.*
- 129 Women's Commission interview, UNICEF, Freetown, April 16, 2002.
- 130 *Preliminary Report on HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone*.
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- 132 International Planned Parenthood Federation, *Country Profile: Sierra Leone*, International Planned Parenthood Federation, 2002, ippfnet.ippf.org/pub/IPPF_Regions/IPPF_Country_Profile.asp?ISQCode=S. Source for U.S. statistic: UNDP, *Human Development Report 2002*.
- 133 World Health Organization. www.who.int/disasters/cap2002/countries/Sierra-Leone.doc
- 134 Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), *Women's safe delivery in Sierra Leone*, CIDA Update, September 2002, www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/newsro-e.htm.
- 135 Kikelomo Bello, *Vesicovaginal Fistula (VVF): Only to a Woman Accursed*, www.idrc.ca/books/focus/773/bello.html. See also: Emedicine, *Vesico-vaginal Fistula*, October 24, 2001, <http://www.emedicine.com/med/topic3321.htm>. Apart from extreme gender-based violence such as gang rape, VVF is more likely to occur in cultures that encourage marriage and conception at a young age, often before full pelvic growth has been achieved; where chronic malnutrition limits pelvic dimensions; and where obstructed labor may be protracted for days or weeks due to a lack of qualified health care professionals or access to medical facilities during childbirth.
- 136 Women's Commission interview, Njaiama, Nimikoro, Kono, April 16, 2002.
- 137 Pan African News Agency, Freetown, August 8, 2002.
- 138 American Refugee Committee (ARC), *ARC Strengthening AIDS Prevention in Port Loko*, Baseline Survey Report: HIV/AIDS/STI KAP Survey among Commercial Sex workers, Military and Youth in Port Loko, Sierra Leone, RHR Consortium Monitoring and Evaluation Program, September 2001.
- 139 Women's Commission interview, Freetown, April 13, 2002.
- 140 ARC, *ARC Strengthening AIDS Prevention in Port Loko*.
- 141 Women's Commission interview, Freetown, April 15, 2002: U.S. Department of State, 1998 Human Rights Report: Sierra Leone, 1998.
- 142 U.S. Department of State, *Sierra Leone: Report on Female Genital Mutilation*.
- 143 USAID, *Female Genital Cutting: The Facts and the Myths*, FGC Symposium (June 3, 1999), Inter-Agency Working Report on FGC, 1999.
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- 145 Women's Commission interview, American Refugee Committee, Freetown, April 18, 2002. See also: U.S. Department of State, *Sierra Leone: Report on Female Genital Mutilation*.
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- 148 USAID, *Female Genital Cutting*. See also: "Female Genital Mutilation Election Issue in Sierra Leone," Afrol.com News, Misanet.com, May 11, 2002, www.afrol.com/News2002/sil010_fgm_elections.htm; Amnesty International, *Female Genital Mutilation: A Human Rights Information Pack*.
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- 151 Women's Commission interview, United Nations Population Fund, Freetown, April 17, 2002.
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- 154 U.S. Department of State, *Sierra Leone: Report on Female Genital Mutilation*. IRC has included female secret society groups in educating communities on topics such as domestic violence, STIs, including HIV/AIDS, and gender in Bo and Kenema. The National Committee of the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children and the Sierra Leone Association on Women's Welfare (SLAWW) have initiated educational activities about the harmful health effects of FGM. In addition, SLAWW has established an alternative employment opportunity project and programs on the health problems associated with the practice for excisors.
- 155 Women's Commission interview, United Nations Population Fund, Freetown, April 17, 2002.
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- 157 UNOCHA, *Guinea: World Bank reports decrease in new cases of FGM*, IRIN, West Africa Weekly Roundup, December 14, 2001. This project has reduced the amount of FGM among girls through the work of a women's rights NGO as well as the outspokenness

- of top government officials and Guinea's First Lady.
- 158 Jeanne Ward, "Sierra Leone," *If Not Now, When? Addressing Gender-based Violence in Refugee, Internally Displaced and Post-Conflict Settings, A Global Overview*, The Reproductive Health for Refugees Consortium, 2002, p. 36. See also: Amnesty International, *Rape and Other Forms of Sexual Violence Against Girls and Women*, New York, 2001; Physicians for Human Rights, *Widespread and Systematic Rape of Girls in Sierra Leone*, 2002, www.phrusa.org/research/children/sierra_leone.html.
 - 159 *Young People and HIV/AIDS*, UNICEF, UNAIDS, WHO, 2002, p. 22.
 - 160 ARC, *ARC Strengthening AIDS Prevention in Port Loko*.
 - 161 *Preliminary Report on HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone*. See also: Commonwealth Youth Program, *Africa Regional Youth Forum: HIV/AIDS and Young People: The Realities and Challenges for Africa*, Workshop Report, Sierra Leone Country Representation, April 2001; H.E. Mr. Allied Ibrahim Kanu Ambassador, Statement at the Twenty-sixth Special Session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS, United Nations, June 27, 2001.
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 - 165 Women's Commission interview, Geneva, September 17, 2002. The CDC prevalence survey was conducted in April and May 2002.
 - 166 *Young People and HIV/AIDS: Opportunity in Crisis*, UNICEF, UNAIDS, WHO, p. 42. See also: United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *Communities in Crisis at High Risk of AIDS, Experts Stress: New survey finds war-torn Sierra Leone on brink of epidemic*, UNFPA press release, July 16, 2002, www.unfpa.org/news/2002/pressroom/sierraleone.htm. See also: Pan African News Agency (PANA), Freetown, August 8, 2002.
 - 167 *Preliminary Report on HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone*.
 - 168 *Young People and HIV/AIDS: Opportunity in Crisis*, UNICEF, UNAIDS, WHO, p. 42. The report estimates that 22,000- 45,000 females and 7,000- 15,000 males were living with HIV/AIDS at the end of 2001.
 - 169 *Preliminary Report on HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone*. The report recognizes that these statistics have limitations, including incompleteness; nonetheless, they show that HIV/AIDS is increasing at an alarming rate. The commercial sex worker rates are from military and police records.
 - 170 *Ibid*. Source: UNICEF/Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), Measure DHS, 1999- 2001, pp. 14-15. The three main ways are Abstinence, Be faithful and Consistent condom use.
 - 171 ARC, *ARC Strengthening AIDS Prevention in Port Loko*.
 - 172 Women's Commission interview, UNICEF, Freetown, April 16, 2002.
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 - 174 Women's Commission interview, ARC, Freetown, April 18, 2002.
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 - 182 James Astill, "War injects AIDS into Sierra Leone: Two out of three soldiers could be infected with the virus, according to a United Nations report," *Mail & Guardian*, May 21, 2001. Until the policy was put in place, only a single National AIDS Coordinating Committee existed. With support from the World Health Organization and other UN agencies and organizations, the Ministry of Health established a National AIDS Control Program Secretariat in 1986.
 - 183 H.E. Mr. Allied Ibrahim Kanu, Ambassador, Statement at the Twenty-sixth Special Session of the General Assembly on HIV/AIDS.
 - 184 Government of Sierra Leone, *National HIV/AIDS Policy*, December 2001.
 - 185 Kent Page, *Flesh to Flesh — Dust to Dust: HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone*.
 - 186 Women's Commission interview, UNICEF, Freetown, April 16, 2002. Also: Women's Commission interview, American Refugee Committee, Freetown, April 18, 2002.
 - 187 Saidu Kamara, "Journalists Schooled On HIV/AIDS," *Standard Times*, Freetown, April 2, 2002. The workshop was organized by the National AIDS Control Program.
 - 188 Women's Commission interview, UNICEF, Freetown, April 16, 2002. According to UNICEF, this campaign will be undertaken by UNICEF and the Ministries of Youth and Health.
 - 189 Women's Commission interviews, UNICEF and UNFPA, Freetown, April 16, 2002. While it has not yet been piloted and UNICEF has stopped supporting the project, UNFPA and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports are still collaborating on a curriculum that introduces sexual reproductive health information into the upper primary and lower secondary school.
 - 190 International protection involves efforts to ensure the range of human and humanitarian rights of individuals and communities as established under international law and reflected in national law and regional agreements. Among others, these include the right of children and adolescents to be safeguarded from armed conflict and of refugees not to be forcibly returned to the country from which they have fled persecution. Governments have the primary responsibility for ensuring the protection of their citizens, refugees and others within their borders, and nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations, communities and individuals, including young people, all have important roles to play. For more information on the protection of refugees, refer to *Protecting Refugees, A Field Guide for NGOs*, produced jointly by UNHCR and its NGO partners. See also *Guidelines for the Protection and Care of Refugee Children* from UNHCR, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the *Summary of International Treaties Pertaining to Children Affected by Armed Conflict*, UNICEF NGO Sub-Working Group on Children in Armed Conflict.
 - 191 Child protection mechanisms in Sierra Leone, led largely by UNICEF in collaboration with a Child Protection Network, have focused especially on the issues of separated children — unaccompanied minors, orphans, former combatants and others.
 - 192 As reported by UNICEF, the MSWGCA chairs the CPN, which was established in 1996 and is made up of more than 25 UN agencies, government ministries and local and international NGOs. Members of the CPN include Family Homes Movement, COOPI, Caritas-Makeni, Caritas-Kenema, Christian Brothers, International Rescue Committee, Save the Children (UK), GOAL, Don Bosco, World Vision International, Catholic Relief Services, the Catholic Mission, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Christian Children's Fund, Leonet, Youth for Christ and

- Freetown City Council. Caritas-Makeni was the CPA responsible for DDR work in the northern region of Sierra Leone, and COOPI took responsibility for the western region.
- 193 *Report of The Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in Humanitarian Crises*, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, June 13, 2002, p. 1.
- 194 Save the Children UK (STC-UK) and UNHCR, *Sexual Violence and Exploitation: The Experience of Refugee Children in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, Report of Assessment Mission Carried Out from October 22 to November 30, 2001*, January 2002.
- 195 The environment for such discussions was highly sensitive given the international scandal, and researchers were careful not to place young people providing testimony at any additional risk. Prior to undertaking their interviews, adolescent researchers and their adult advisers discussed carefully why they felt these issues were important to investigate and what they felt the most appropriate ways to raise the topics would be. Among other things, they never showed up in a community unannounced to conduct interviews, nor did they pressure respondents to discuss topics they were resistant to. The topics were raised as just some of many discussed. They conducted mostly same-sex interviews, and did not pose questions to focus groups that elicited direct testimony of personal experiences in front of their peers. They committed themselves to confidentiality and were prepared to make referrals to young people for additional support following interviews if necessary. They focused on solutions, not just problems, and more.
- 196 It is important to note that “prostitution” is the term used by adolescents themselves and is therefore used in this report, despite its growing unpopularity and replacement among advocacy groups with terms as “sexually exploited” or “prostituted” youth.
- 197 Women’s Commission and Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 17, 2002.
- 198 Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 23, 2002.
- 199 Women’s Commission and Makeni research team interview with adolescent former combatant girl, Makeni, April 18, 2002.
- 200 All citations in this paragraph: Women’s Commission and Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 17, 2002.
- 201 Freetown research team interview, Freetown, April 2002.
- 202 Freetown research team interviews, Freetown, April 22 and 29, 2002.
- 203 Adolescent research team interview, Sierra Leone, April 2002.
- 204 *Ibid.*
- 205 Women’s Commission and Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 17, 2002.
- 206 *Ibid.*
- 207 Women’s Commission interview, Freetown, April 19, 2002.
- 208 Women’s Commission and Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 17, 2002.
- 209 *Ibid.*
- 210 Women’s Commission interview, UNAMSIL, Makeni, April 15, 2002.
- 211 Women’s Commission interview, Makeni, April 2002.
- 212 The IASC is comprised of both members (FAO, OCHA, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, WFP, WHO) and standing invitees (ICRC, ICVA, IFRC, InterAction, IOM, SCHR, RSG/IDPs, UNHCHR and the World Bank).
- 213 *Report of The Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation*, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, June 13, 2002, p. 1.
- 214 Women’s Commission interview, UNAMSIL, Makeni, April 15, 2002.
- 215 The Geneva Conventions of August 12, 1949 and the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions prohibit rape in both international and internal conflicts. The Convention on the Rights of the Child further protects children and adolescents from “all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse” in Article 34.
- 216 *Prevalence of War-Related Sexual Violence and Other Human Rights Abuses Among Internally Displaced Persons in Sierra Leone*, reprinted JAMA, January 23/30, 2002, Vol. 287, No. 4, p. 520.
- 217 Women’s Commission interview, Makeni, April 2002.
- 218 STC-UK and UNHCR, *Sexual Violence and Exploitation: The Experience of Refugee Children in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone*, p. 31.
- 219 Freetown research team interview, Freetown, April 16, 2002.
- 220 Makeni research team interview, Makeni, Sierra Leone, April 17, 2002.
- 221 Women’s Commission and Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 19, 2002.
- 222 Freetown research team interviews, Freetown, April 12-13, 2002.
- 223 Freetown research team interviews, Freetown, April 12-13, 2002.
- 224 *Ibid.*
- 225 Freetown research team interview, Freetown, April 16, 2002.
- 226 STC-UK and UNHCR, *Sexual Violence and Exploitation: The Experience of Refugee Children in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone*, p. 38.
- 227 *Report of the Task Force on Protection from Sexual Exploitation*, Inter-Agency Standing Committee, Plan of Action, June 13, 2002.
- 228 “Female Genital Mutilation Election Issue in Sierra Leone,” Afrol.com News, Misanet.com.
- 229 U.S. Department of State, *1998 Human Rights Report: Sierra Leone*.
- 230 Women’s Commission interview, Makeni, April 25, 2002.
- 231 Women’s Commission interview, Makeni, April 18, 2002.
- 232 Freetown research team interview, Freetown, April 23, 2002.
- 233 *Female Genital Mutilation: A Human Rights Information Pack*, Amnesty International.
- 234 U.S. Department of State, Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women’s Issues, *Sierra Leone: Report on Female Genital Mutilation*, on June 1, 2001.
- 235 Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 17, 2002.
- 236 The section on DDR is based on research conducted by the Women’s Commission Children and Adolescents Project team working with the two adolescent research teams in Freetown and Makeni, as well as that conducted by Binta Mansaray, Women’s Commission Protection Partner in Sierra Leone. The adolescent research teams worked mainly in April 2002 and included interviews with 48 former child soldiers in designated “ex-combatant” focus groups — 42 in Makeni, including 31 males and 11 females; 6 in Freetown, including 4 males and 2 females. Approximately 108 (47 females and 61 males) additional young people formerly associated with fighting forces were also interviewed, as were 53 (14 females and 39 males) formerly associated with Civil Defense Forces. Ms. Mansaray’s research was conducted in October 2001 in Freetown. The interviews involved at least 41 females and 14 males.
- 237 UNICEF, *Programme for Demobilisation and Reintegration of Child Combatants in Sierra Leone, January - December 2001*. This high-level policy body was first appointed by the government of Sierra Leone following democratic elections in 1998 and was originally made up of key ministers and the office of the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Representative.
- 238 *Ibid.*, direct citation p. 2; other information pp. 2-4.
- 239 During the interim care phase, a premium was placed on swift reunification or placement in alternative care, ideally in less than six weeks. It is important to note that while ICCs mainly served formally demobilized children and adolescents, UNICEF and the CPAs also used them to support other “separated children,” including those abducted by armed forces, or “camp followers,” who were not formally recognized as combatants.
- 240 Women’s Commission interview, St. Edward’s Secondary School, Murray Town, October 2001.

- 241 Women's Commission interview with a spontaneously demobilized and reintegrated adolescent girl formerly with the RUF, Peacock Farm, Freetown, October 2001.
- 242 Women's Commission interview, UNICEF, Freetown, April 23, 2002.
- 243 Women's Commission interview, Caritas-Makeni, Makeni, April 25, 2002.
- 244 Article 39 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child provides that "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts. Such recovery and reintegration shall take place in an environment which fosters the health, self-respect and dignity of the child."
- 245 Uniquely, UNAMSIL and the government of Sierra Leone use the term "combatants" to describe the parties to the conflict in Sierra Leone — an internal armed conflict. See: United Nations, *Thirteenth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, S/2002/267*, March 14, 2002. This definition creates a gray area in the treatment of those recruited to serve fighting forces but not necessarily to take direct part in hostilities. International humanitarian law has traditionally distinguished between combatants in international armed conflict and those who take a direct part in hostilities in internal, "non-international," armed conflict. Normally, actors in a civil war are referred to as "parties," "members of government forces," "insurgent force members," etc. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (ratified by Sierra Leone on May 16, 2002) does not use the term "combatant," and instead uses "members of armed forces," thereby recognizing various forms of responsibilities therein. The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (not yet ratified by Sierra Leone) does not use it either, instead referring to "recruiting" and "tak[ing] direct part in hostilities." Definitions drafted for use by the International Criminal Court (ICC) include "persons in service to combatants (military or armed groups or elements): persons who - voluntarily or involuntarily — provide food, shelter or sex, or medical, religious or other, similar goods or services, to military or armed groups or elements (combatants)." See: Footnote 42 of "Finalized draft text of the Elements of Crimes," and accompanying text, *Report of The Preparatory Commission for the International Criminal Court, PCNICC/2000/1/Add.2*, March 13-31, 2000, June 12-30, 2000. The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, uses the term "child soldiers" to include all children seeking protection under the Optional Protocol, which goes beyond those who take direct part in hostilities to include others recruited to serve these forces, for example, as porters, cooks, housekeepers, sex slaves, etc. See: Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *Child Soldiers*, www.un.org/special-rep/children-armed-conflict/fsoldiers.htm. According to *The Civilian Character of Asylum: Separating Armed Elements from Refugees* (UNHCR, Global Consultations on International Protection, EC/GC/01/5 February 13, 2001, paras. 9-10), "International law does not define fighters in an internal armed conflict because of the reluctance of States to confer a formal 'combatant' status upon those whom they consider as rebels and insurgents." UNHCR, however, defines and applies the term "armed element" for purposes of separating military elements from civilian populations.
- 246 The Women's Commission, while not ignoring the very specific nature of the justice and rehabilitation requirements of such victimization, nonetheless includes this category of children, adolescents and women affected by armed conflict under the "others recruited to serve these forces" rubric of "child soldiers." (See Endnote 224.) As such, they should be fully accounted for in demobilization and reintegration programs.
- 247 Girls and women forced to be "wives" of armed elements in Sierra Leone and elsewhere in the world often perform both combatant and other services, including as the cook, housekeeper and sex slave. Those performing the last three roles are referred to as "wives" and the owner-slave relationship into which they are sold, bartered or otherwise transferred as "marriage."
- 248 NCDDR, "Status of Reintegration Activities for Discharged Ex-combatants," February 18, 2002. Cited in unpublished research by the Women's Commission, 2002.
- 249 UNICEF, *Programme for Demobilisation and Reintegration of Child Combatants in Sierra Leone, January - December 2001*, p. 5.
- 250 It also meant that the ICCs established to serve the demobilizing child soldiers could also be, and were, used to serve other separated children, such as those among returning refugees and IDPs.
- 251 Some women who spontaneously demobilized, reintegrated well, and new efforts in the East to reunify girls with their families are showing a strong willingness to have the young people come home with their children. As affirmed by the Women's Commission's research, however, this does not happen in every case and girls may continue to be stigmatized by the wider community. Further research is needed on how communities and service providers define successful reintegration and which factors contribute to achieving this success.
- 252 Women's Commission interview, Peacock Farm, Freetown, October 2001.
- 253 UNICEF, *Programme for Demobilisation and Reintegration of Child Combatants in Sierra Leone, January - December 2001*, pp. 13-14. Thus, "camp followers" were only a portion of the 812 separated children served who were not formally demobilized. UNICEF also reports that its program to address sexual abuse victims supported 231 (including 223 girls) cases in 2000, along with those identified in 1999. According to the report, "support included counseling and medical services for 212 newly registered cases and education and skills training for 585 cases. Support for reintegration into primary and secondary schools was provided to 340 of which 244 were child mothers. Skills training and income-generating support was provided to 195. Fifty girls received training on basic business principles and bookkeeping."
- 254 This was especially difficult for girls returning from the RUF into areas that had been terrorized by the group.
- 255 The Lomé Peace Agreement supports the call for a strong role for women in post-conflict reconstruction. Article XXVII, paragraph 2 states, "Given that women have been particularly victimized during the war, special attention shall be accorded to their needs and potentials in formulating and implementing national rehabilitation, reconstruction and development programmes, to enable them to play a central role in the moral, social and physical reconstruction of Sierra Leone."
- 256 This is according to the World Bank-administered Multi-Donor Trust Fund Report, progress report number 8, December 31, 2001. As of that date, a total number of 69,681 had been disarmed; 65,813 were demobilized; 62,952 discharged; and among those disarmed were 6,683 child combatants. The program anticipated that 45,000 ex-combatants, including an estimated 15,000 RUF, 15,000 CDF, 13,000 AFRC and ex-SLA and 2,000 paramilitary groups, would go through the program, with a total of 5,400 children among them all. As of December 31, 2001, 22,496 RUF (150 percent of the original estimate), 36,450 CDF (243 percent), 8,964 AFRC/ex-SLA (69 percent), 1,771 paramilitary (89 percent) and 6,683 child combatants (124 percent) participated, which is 155 percent of the original estimate.
- 257 Women's Commission and Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 2002.
- 258 Women's Commission and Makeni research team interview, Rural Integrated Communities Development Organization (RICDO), Makeni, April 18, 2002. At the time of the interview, RICDO had 213 students, 173 of them former combatants.
- 259 Makeni research team interview, St. Francis Secondary School,

- Makeni, April 25, 2002.
- 260 Women's Commission and Makeni research team interview with former combatant youth, Makeni, April 18, 2002.
- 261 Women's Commission interview with a formally demobilized adolescent girl, Peacock Farm, Freetown, October 2001.
- 262 Women's Commission interview, Makeni, April 25, 2002.
- 263 Women's Commission telephone interview, Director of the Center for the Coordination of Youth Activities, Freetown, August 2002.
- 264 Women's Commission interview, UNICEF, Freetown, April 23, 2002.
- 265 Women's Commission interview, Caritas-Makeni, Makeni, April 16, 2002.
- 266 NCDDR, *Status of Reintegration Activities for Discharged Ex-combatants*, February 18, 2002.
- 267 Women's Commission interview with a formally demobilized young woman, Peacock Farm, Freetown, October 2001.
- 268 Women's Commission interview, Makeni, April 2002.
- 269 Women's Commission interview, Caritas-Makeni, Makeni, April 25, 2002.
- 270 UNICEF also reports that donors are resistant to retroactive DDR and any focus on a "fix" might be "counterproductive" to the well-being of children and adolescents in the short and long runs. Women's Commission interviews with UNICEF, Freetown, March and April, 2002.
- 271 *Fifteenth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone*, United Nations Security Council, S/2002/987, September 5, 2002, para. 47. See also paragraphs 48 and 49 related to children and adolescents.
- 272 *Peace Agreement Between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone*, Article IX, para. 2, Lomé, Togo, July 7, 2002.
- 273 *20 Questions and Answers on the TRC*, flyer produced by "a TRC Sensitization program."
- 274 *Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC)*, www.sierra-leone.org/trc.html.
- 275 The TRC can summon current or former government officials and others to testify and will adopt measures to safeguard those who testify, including approaching testimony from women and children in ways that respect their dignity and minimized retraumatization. As a result of this process, the TRC will make recommendations on the rehabilitation of victims of human rights abuses. In August 2002, due to budget cutbacks, the TRC was forced to delay activities and public hearings until November 2002. See: *Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and 20 Questions and Answers on the TRC*.
- 276 First citation: United Nations, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1315, August 14, 2000, www.un.org/docs/scres/2000/res1315e.pdf; second citation: Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Sierra Leone on the Establishment of a Special Court for Sierra Leone, Article 1, www.un.org/docs/sc/reports/2000/915e.pdf.
- 277 Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 16, 2002.
- 278 Women's Commission interview with former RUF child combatants, Makeni, April 2002.
- 279 Women's Commission interview, Makeni, April 2002.
- 280 Makeni research team interview, St. Francis Secondary School, Makeni, April 25, 2002.
- 281 Freetown research team interview, Cline Town, Freetown, April 16, 2002.
- 282 Makeni research team interview, St. Francis Secondary School, Makeni, April 24, 2002.
- 283 Freetown research team interview, Cline Town, Freetown, April 16, 2002.
- 284 Other commissions, including the Human Rights Commission and the Commission on War-Affected Children, should also prioritize these issues.
- 285 Freetown research team interviews with Sierra Leone Police Force, Congo Cross, Freetown, April 22 and 29, 2002.
- 286 Young people 17 years old and above are treated as any other person under the law in Sierra Leone.
- 287 *Sierra Leone Resettlement Strategy, Enabling the displaced to rebuild their lives back in their communities with safety and dignity*, NCRRR, Revised October 2001, p. 4.
- 288 *Protecting Refugees, A Field Guide for NGOs* states "refugees must be able to return in safety and with dignity." Returns in safety must ensure conditions of "legal safety... physical security... and material security, including access to land or a means of livelihood." Returns in dignity mean "in practice, that refugees must not be manhandled; that they can return unconditionally and that if they are returning spontaneously, they can do so at their own pace; that they are not arbitrarily separated from family members; and that they are treated with respect and full acceptance by their national authorities, including having their rights fully restored." *Protecting Refugees, A Field Guide for NGOs, UNHCR and its NGO partners*, 1999, pp. 60-61.
- 289 *Plan of Operation, Voluntary Repatriation and Reintegration of Sierra Leonean Refugees*, UNHCR, September 2001, p. 5.
- 290 According to UNHCR, "'Facilitation' involves protection and assistance measures aimed at refugee-induced voluntary repatriation in situations where UNHCR cannot encourage such repatriation, but is respecting the strong desire of refugees to return voluntarily. Although facilitation is often considered solely in relation to 'spontaneous' self-movement, UNHCR's facilitation of voluntary repatriation may also involve a fully organized operation or a semi-organized one, and this may in some cases involve transport assistance." *Plan of Operation*, UNHCR, September 2001, p. 16. See this document also for a detailed description of the preconditions which must be met before UNHCR will promote voluntary repatriation in Sierra Leone, versus facilitate it.
- 291 *Plan of Operation*, UNHCR, September 2001. In the fall of 2001, temporary settlements in safe areas included Jembe, Gerrihuh and Bandajuma in Bo district and Taïama in Moyamba district. Transit centers near Freetown included Jui, Lumpa and Waterloo, and host communities included 21 villages in Lokomassama in Port Loko district and 31 villages in Barri Chiefdom in Pujehun district.
- 292 *Ibid*, p. 9.
- 293 *Sierra Leone Resettlement Strategy, Enabling the displaced to rebuild their lives back in their communities with safety and dignity*, NCRRR, Revised October 2001, p. 4. Thus, the Strategy attempted to address these streams of resettlement holistically and states a commitment to supporting a "standardized resettlement process to avoid inter- and intra-community tensions and to community-based, integrated resettlement, reconstruction and rehabilitation that includes resettling IDPs, displaced returnees, repatriating refugees, ex-combatants and their dependents and resident populations."
- 294 *The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, OCHA, February 2000, serve as an international standard to guide governments as well as international humanitarian and development agencies in providing assistance and protection to IDPs. Principle 18 states that "All IDPs have the right to an adequate standard of living. At the minimum, regardless of the circumstances, and without discrimination, competent authorities shall provide IDPs with and sure safe access to: essential food and potable water; basic shelter and housing; appropriate clothing; and essential medical services and sanitation," ensuring the "full participation of women in the planning and distribution of these basic supplies." Principle 28 states that "Competent authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to establish conditions, as well as provide the means, which allow IDPs to return voluntarily, in safety and with dignity, to their homes or places of habitual residence, or to resettle voluntarily in another part of the country. Such authorities shall endeavour to facilitate the reintegration of returned or resettled IDPs." Principle 16 also allows that "All

- IDPs have the right to know the fate and whereabouts of missing relatives,” which is especially important to separated children and adolescents.
- 295 Non-food items include, per household regardless of size, two cook pots, five plates, five cups, five dining spoons, two cooking spoons, one knife, one lantern, one bucket/jerry can, two mats, two blankets and four soaps.
- 296 UNHCR leads the refugee repatriation and reintegration efforts, and IDP returns are coordinated by OCHA. These processes are also guided by the Resettlement Strategy originally formulated by the NCRRR, which became NaCSA. NaCSA is responsible for assuring protection and assistance to IDPs, choosing agencies to run IDP camps. District-level NaCSA offices were not fully up and running in all places at the time of the research, further hindering effective resettlements. Different implementing partners are responsible for providing portions of the assistance package, for example, WFP is the major provider of food, and IOM provides much of the transportation. At times, needed supplies were out of stock, further complicating the process.
- 297 Regardless of the seriousness of the gaps in repatriation and resettlement assistance, it should be noted that efforts by international groups are also appreciated by many. For example, some former refugee young people in the Jui transit center stated they believed UNHCR had ultimately “helped them a lot.”
- 298 *Populations Affected by War in the Mano River Region of West Africa: Issues of Protection*, Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières, May 2002.
- 299 As described in the Women’s Commission report, *Untapped Potential, Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict* (2000), ‘psychosocial’ can be defined as follows, “The term ‘psychosocial’ underlines the close relationship between the psychological and social effects of armed conflict, each the one type of effect continually influencing the other. By ‘psychosocial effects’ is meant those experiences that affect emotions, behavior, thoughts, memory and learning ability and how a situation may be perceived and understood. By ‘social effects’ is meant how are defined the ways in which the diverse experiences of war alter people’s relationships to each other, in that such experiences change people, but also the experience through death, separation, estrangement and other losses. ‘Social’ may be extended to include an economic dimension, as many individuals and families becoming destitute through the material and economic devastation of war, thus losing their social status and place in their familiar social network.” Dr. Mike Wessells, a professor at Randolph Macon University and expert on the psychosocial effects of armed conflict on children, further comments that the meaning of “psychosocial” varies according to cultural context.
- 300 Freetown research team interview, Freetown, April 8, 2002.
- 301 Women’s Commission interview, Makeni, April 12, 2002.
- 302 Women’s Commission and Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 18, 2002.
- 303 Women’s Commission interview, Makeni, April 25, 2002.
- 304 Women’s Commission and Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 2002.
- 305 Freetown and Makeni Research Team Participant Questionnaires, Freetown and Makeni, April 2002.
- 306 Women’s Commission and Freetown research team interview, Tombo, April 18, 2002.
- 307 Women’s Commission interview with Osman Kamara, Psychosocial Supervisor, Caritas - Makeni, Makeni, April 15, 2002.
- 308 Women’s Commission interview, Makeni, April 17, 2002.
- 309 *Ibid.*
- 310 Women’s Commission interview, Freetown, October 2001.
- 311 Women’s Commission interview with Osman Kamara, Psychosocial Supervisor, Caritas - Makeni, Makeni, April 15, 2002.
- 312 Women’s Commission interview with Chris Day, MSF-H, Makeni, April 15, 2002.
- 313 Freetown research team interview, Freetown, April 8, 2002.
- 314 *Ibid.*
- 315 Concern categories were deliberately mixed up on the page so that potentially predictable top concerns were not grouped in any one place on the list. The distribution of responses throughout the list of choices across survey location and sub-group shows respondents went through a considered process before making choices. Note also that the small groupings of research team members (about four attended each focus group) changed regularly, so no one or two researchers were administering the survey all the time.
- 316 The phrasing of this question was specifically designed by the adolescents to connote a commonly known reference to the RUF. They made this doubly clear to the survey participants in their instructions to them before filling out the survey forms.
- 317 For the purposes of the survey, the terms “adolescent respondent” are used to describe survey participants between the ages of 10 and 19. The word “youth” is used to describe those between 20 and 24. “Adult” is used to describe survey respondents who were 25 and older. Using these terms in this way is for the purposes of clarity only, and is not meant to negate or confuse other uses of these terms, where adolescents are also youths and youths are also adults, etc.
- 318 A total of four youth and six adult surveys were also excluded from final analysis due to incomplete data.
- 319 In order to calculate averages, any choice that was not ranked by a respondent (i.e., was not ranked 10 through 1) was given a value of zero.
- 320 Readers are referred to the two previous reports from the Women’s Commission for more information on overlapping findings: *Making the Choice for A Better Life: Promoting the Protection and Capacities of Adolescents Affected by Armed Conflict in Kosovo* (January, 2000) and *Against All Odds: Surviving the War on Adolescents, Promoting The Protection and Capacities of Ugandan and Sudanese Adolescents in Northern Uganda* (September, 2001), www.womenscommission.org.
- 321 Article 12.1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child states that “States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.” Article 13.1 of the CRC states, “The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child’s choice.” Text provided in this box is reprinted from Women’s Commission, *Against All Odds: Surviving the War on Adolescents*.
- 322 Makeni research team statement of purpose developed in Makeni training, April 12, 2002.
- 323 Freetown research team statement of purpose developed in Freetown training, April 6, 2002.
- 324 The focus groups provide an overall qualitative look at the range of issues of concern to adolescents and details about these concerns. The case studies provide a more detailed look at specific issues uncovered, and the surveys help identify the relative importance of the range of issues described.
- 325 *Krio* is the language of the Krios in Sierra Leone and among all tribal languages is the one most widely spoken by people of different tribes. *Temne* is the native language of the Temne tribe, residing mainly in Sierra Leone’s northern region. Displacement has led to people of many different tribes being spread to different parts of Sierra Leone, and thus, Krio was also used in interviews in the north.
- 326 The only promises made to the research team members by the Women’s Commission were that: the study itself would last four

- to six weeks; they would participate in a three-day training; they would receive payment for their work, but any additional involvement in follow-up activities would be voluntary; it would be a learning experience; they would be able to make recommendations for action, and their findings would be published in individual team reports and in a Women's Commission report, which they could use in the manner of their choice; and that the Women's Commission would work with them on follow-up advocacy activities.
- 327 These and the quotes in the two sections below are from Research Team Participant Questionnaire responses, Freetown and Makeni, April 2002.
- 328 Researchers set their own schedules and only did sessions when they were available. Each researcher had to participate in a minimum of four focus group sessions and produce two case studies. Many ultimately decided to do more than this.
- 329 This researcher was under the false impression that they were being rated and paid accordingly. Instead, every young person and adult adviser was to be paid the same amount for completing the research activities according to their terms of reference.
- 330 As noted earlier in this section, some parts of the text are taken from previous adolescent studies, with minor alterations to them. This is one such section, as is the accompanying chart Adolescent Participation: Some Lessons Learned. They are borrowed from Women's Commission, *Against All Odds: Surviving the War on Adolescents in Northern Uganda*.
- 331 Lomé Peace Agreement, Peace Agreement between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front of Sierra Leone, Lomé, Togo, July 7, 1999.
- 332 Women's Commission interview, Youth Movement for Peace and Non-Violence, Freetown, April 18, 2002
- 333 Makeni research team interview, Makeni, April 27, 2002.
- 334 United Nations, *Human Rights Instruments: Charts of Ratification of International Instruments*, International Labor Organization and UNESCO, esa.un.org/socdev/unyin/country3e.asp?countrycode=sl. Sierra Leone ratified the CRC on June 18, 1990, the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict on May 15, 2002, and the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol on May 22, 1981.
- 335 Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *Sierra Leone sets up National Commission for War-Affected Children*, Press Release, Freetown, April 29, 2000.
- 336 Women's Commission interview, UNAMSIL, Freetown, April 10, 2002.
- 337 Women's Commission interview, UNICEF and Office of the Special Representative for the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, New York, August 13, 2002.
- 338 *Ibid*.
- 339 Women's Commission interview, UNAMSIL, Freetown, April 10, 2002. See also: Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, *Sierra Leone sets up National Commission for War-Affected Children*; UNOCHA, *Sierra Leone: Humanitarian Situation Report 01-31 Jul 2002*, July 31, 2002.
- 340 Women's Commission interview, UNICEF, New York, August 13, 2002.
- 341 *Ibid*.
- 342 Women's Commission telephone interview, New York, August 2002.
- 343 ActionAid, *Paper on Youth in Sierra Leone*, presented at the Conflict, Development and Peace Network (CODEP) roundtable, "What Are the Youth in Sierra Leone Saying?," April 25, 2001.
- 344 Freetown research team interview, Technical School, Freetown, April 17, 2002.
- 345 Freetown research team report, Sierra Leone, 2002.
- 346 ECOWAS is a regional group of 15 countries that was founded in 1975 to promote economic integration in all fields of economic activity, social and cultural issues.
- 347 The Declaration calls on member states to establish an office within ECOWAS for the protection of war-affected children in the sub-region and to review the activities of ECOWAS in the protection of war-affected children in the region.
- 348 ECOWAS, *Accra Declaration on War-Affected Children in West Africa*, April 2000.
- 349 UNOCHA, *2002 Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Sierra Leone*, November 28, 2001.
- 350 Women's Commission interview, UNICEF, Freetown, April 16, 2002.
- 351 Youth are defined as 15-35, but numbers are changed to include older people as well. Women's Commission interview, USAID, Freetown, April 11, 2002.
- 352 Women's Commission interview, World Vision Sierra Leone, Freetown, April 5, 2002. See also: Women's Commission interview, USAID, Freetown, April 11, 2002; USAID/Sierra Leone, *Annual Report (Parts III-VII) FY2002*.
- 353 Women's Commission interview, Norwegian Refugee Council, Freetown, April 8, 2002. The Ministry of Youth Education and Sports later joined the project.
- 354 Women's Commission interview, ActionAid, Freetown, April 8, 2002. The ActionAid representative defined youth as "anyone who missed out on their youth because of the war." See also: ActionAid, *Paper on youth in Sierra Leone*.
- 355 Women's Commission interview with youth group leaders, Freetown, April 8, 2002. See also: Conciliation Resources, *Annual Report, 2000*.
- 356 Women's Commission interview, Norwegian Refugee Council, Freetown, April 8, 2002. See also: *YouPac*, draft unpublished document, shared with Women's Commission by Norwegian Refugee Council, 2001.
- 357 Women's Commission interview, Christian Children's Fund, Freetown, April 12, 2002. See also: InterAction, *Disaster Response: Efforts of Interaction Member Agencies in West Africa*.
- 358 This number is based on IRC-Sierra Leone's fiscal year 2002 budget.
- 359 Women's Commission interviews, International Rescue Committee, Freetown, April 3 and 14, 2002.
- 360 Women's Commission interview, American Refugee Committee, Freetown, April 18, 2002. See also: American Refugee Committee, *Field Offices: Sierra Leone*, www.archq.org/sierra_leone.shtml.
- 361 Interview with Sam Guy, Marie Stopes International, email, September 19, 2002.
- 362 Kent Page, *Flesh to Flesh — Dust to Dust: HIV/AIDS in Sierra Leone*. Women's Commission interview, UNICEF, Freetown, April 16, 2002. See also: UNICEF, *UNICEF Sierra Leone, Situation Reports*, January 29 -February 11, 2002; February 12 - 18, 2002, March 11-18 2002 and March 26- April 8, 2002.
- 363 Childreach, *Sierra Leone*, www.childreach.org/plan/sleone.html. See also: InterAction, *Disaster Response: Efforts of Interaction Member Agencies in West Africa*, August 2002.
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Women's Commission for
Refugee Women and Children

122 East 42nd Street
New York, NY 10168-1289

tel. 212.551.3111 or 3088
fax. 212.551.3180

wcrwc@womenscommission.org
www.womenscommission.org