Engendering peace or a gendered peace? The UN and liberal peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, 2002-2007

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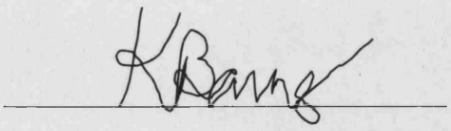

Karen Barnes

Abstract

The literature on gender, peace and security and the growing body of critiques of contemporary peacebuilding have developed largely in isolation from one another. Although there have been some recent attempts to make linkages between the two, specific feminist critiques of the liberal peacebuilding consensus are lacking. This is despite the potentially valuable contribution that such a merging could bring to our understanding of both the goals and the means through which peacebuilding is understood and practiced by the international community. Furthermore, applying the critiques of liberal peacebuilding approaches could also deepen the analysis and cast light on the way that the international community integrates gender issues into peacebuilding processes, and the inherent problems in their approach. This thesis will contribute to bridging this gap by drawing on both sets of literature, and through an in-depth case study of Sierra Leone, will assess the UN's efforts to integrate gender issues into its peacebuilding policies and programming from 2002-2007. The central argument of the thesis is that the international community's gender and peacebuilding agenda in Sierra Leone is based on liberal feminist assumptions which inherently limit and challenge the extent to which the UN has been able to bring about a positive transformation in gender roles and relations. By contrasting UN liberal peacebuilding with the locally-rooted and context-specific experiences and approaches of women's organisations and networks working for peace at the community and national levels in Sierra Leone, this thesis will argue that building on these informal activities may represent an opportunity for a more emancipatory and gender-sensitive form of peacebuilding.

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Abbreviations

50/50	Fifty-Fifty Group
AAI	ActionAid International
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
APC	All People's Congress
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery
CAPs	Consolidated Appeals Process
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CCSEA	Coordinating Committee on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
CDF	Civilian Defence Forces
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CG	Consultative Group
COOPI	Cooperazione Internazionale
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DACO	Development Aid Coordination Office
DAW	UN Division for the Advancement of Women
DDA	UN Department for Disarmament Affairs
DDR	Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration
DEPAC	Development Partnership Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DISECs	District Security Committees
DPA	UN Department of Political Affairs
DPKO	UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ECOMOG	ECOWAS Monitoring Group
ECOSOC	UN Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EO	Executive Outcomes
FSUs	Family Support Units
HLPR	High-level Panel Report
GA	UN General Assembly
GAD	Gender and development
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLB	Girls Left Behind Project
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
GTG	Gender Theme Group
GPPAC	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict
HIPC	Highly-indebted poor country
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
HRC	Human Rights Commission
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
IBL	Institutionalisation before liberalisation
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International non-governmental organisation
I-PRSP	Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
IR	International Relations
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IRCBP	Institutional Reform and Capacity Building Project
JSSR	Justice and Security Sector Reform

LAWCLA	Lawyers Commission for Legal Assistance
LAWYERS	Lawyers Yearning for Equality, Rights and Social Justice
LRC	Law Reform Commission
MARWOPNET	Mano River Women's Peace Network
MDAs	Ministries, departments and agencies
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFIs	Microfinance institutions
MLGCD	Ministry of Local Government and Community Development
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
NaCSA	National Commission for Social Action
NAPs	National Action Plans
NCDDR	National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
NCRRR	National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NEC	National Election Commission
NEWMAP	Network of Women Parliamentarians
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
NRS	National Recovery Strategy
OAU	Organisation for African Unity
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OGA	Office of Gender Affairs
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PASCO	Poverty Alleviation Strategy Coordination Office
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PBRS	Peacebuilding and Recovery Strategy
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office
PCS	Peace and Consolidation Strategy
PCHR	Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights
PPA	Participatory Poverty Assessments
PRSC	Poverty Reduction Steering Committee
PROSECs	Provincial Security Committees
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RSLAF	Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SC	UN Security Council
SCR 1325	UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
SGBV	Sexual and gender-based violence
SEA	Sexual exploitation and abuse
SLA	Sierra Leone Army
SLANGO	Sierra Leone Association of NGOs
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SLWMP	Sierra Leone Women's Peace Movement
SLWF	Sierra Leone Women's Forum
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
SSR	Security sector reform
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission

TSS	Transitional Support Strategy
TSTs	Transitional Support Teams
UN	United Nations
UNAMSIL	United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNDP SL	United Nations Development Program in Sierra Leone
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organisation
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNIOSIL	United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone
UNSG	United Nations Secretary-General
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
US	United States of America
WANEP	West Africa Network for Peacebuilding
WFP	World Food Program
WID	Women in development
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WIPNET	Women in Peacebuilding Network
WHO	World Health Organisation

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

This thesis tells the story of the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone, viewed through a gender lens. It seeks to make an empirical contribution to our understanding of how peacebuilding works in practice, and to widen the theoretical engagement on peacebuilding by bringing feminist approaches in from the margins. Peacebuilding seeks to restore democracy, provide security and create the conditions for peace and development. Rhetorically, there have been many commitments about how important gender issues are to these tasks. The reality, however, paints a less than perfect picture. This thesis is an attempt to capture some of this reality, hold it up against the rhetoric, and understand the deep gulf that lies between the two.

The literature on gender, peace and security and the growing body of critiques of contemporary peacebuilding have largely developed in isolation from one another. Although there are some recent texts (Pankhurst 2008; Porter 2008; Shepherd 2009) that have attempted to bring the two together, specific feminist critiques of the United Nations' (UN) 'liberal peacebuilding consensus' are lacking. To address this gap, this thesis uses the case of Sierra Leone to analyse and understand the UN approach to mainstreaming gender into peacebuilding processes. By asking feminist questions, this analysis also seeks to contribute to the critiques of liberal peacebuilding by offering a gender perspective on these issues.

1.1 Theoretical and methodological approach

This introductory section will lay out the theoretical and methodological approach of the thesis. It will begin by providing a very brief background to the nature of feminist approaches within International Relations (IR), given that this body of literature provides the theoretical foundation stones of this research.[1] Within this body of work, it will specifically set out the

[1] It is beyond the scope and focus of this thesis to comprehensively assess the contributions and challenges of feminist IR theory. For more on this issue, see Ackerly, Stern and True, 2006; Jones,

key elements and critiques of liberal feminist approaches, which will be picked up again in more detail in relation to the UN's approach to gender and peacebuilding in chapter 3. I will then set out the research agenda of the thesis, presenting some of the questions that have guided this research. It will conclude with clarification of the key definitions and terminology that will be used throughout the thesis, as well as a brief note on the methodology applied.

1.1.1 Feminist approaches to International Relations

The end of the Cold War, the increasing salience of 'identity politics', the insights feminist theory brought to other disciplines, and the emerging critiques of positivist approaches all gave momentum and voice to a feminist vision of international relations. Thus, the 1990s heralded a new era of feminist re-thinking of traditional international relations theory, concepts, and practice that exposed the problematic nature of some of the most fundamental assumptions of the discipline. Since then, feminist international relations has grown and developed into a rich body of work encompassing many different perspectives, theoretical backgrounds, and diverse understandings of international relations. Despite these advances, feminist literature remains on the fringes of IR theory, and the continued gender inequalities evident in the world indicate the many battles that still remain to be fought.[2]

Most fundamentally, feminists argue that there are different ways of seeing, knowing, and being that could lead to dramatically divergent interpretations of the world than those presented by traditional, mainstream international relations theory (Steans, 2003: 435-6). Sylvester argues that in the beginning, there was a perception that gender was not only absent from, but also completely irrelevant to the practice of international relations (2002). However, the seemingly gender-neutral concepts of IR masked deeply embedded masculinist assumptions, and ultimately lead to the naturalization of the gender inequalities and the

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2009; Shepard, 2009; Steans, 2006; Sylvester, 2002; Zalewski and Parpart, 2008; and *Millennium*, Vols. 17 (3) and 27 (4).

[2] Gillian Youngs makes the important point that although feminist IR is flourishing as a sub-field, its impact and integration within the broader field of IR has been, and remains, limited (2004, 75).

invisibility of women, preserving the system of patriarchy that governs both domestic and international relations (Tickner, 1997: 614). They suggested that the perceived 'irrelevance' of gender in fact hid a deeper bias towards male ways of knowing and being in the discipline (Sylvester, 2002: 161).

The slow engagement of feminist theorists with international relations, and the difficulties they have faced in engaging with the mainstream, has been the subject of much analysis (Steans, 2003; Wibben, 2004; Youngs, 2004; Zalewski et al, 2008).[3] Some of this resistance can be understood by summarising the three key claims of early feminist theorists in IR. First, they disputed the alleged gender-neutrality of IR and argued that gendered relations of power are relevant. Second, feminist theorists contended that these power relations usually favoured men, or at least a certain type of 'hegemonic masculinity'.[4] Although they conceded that some women are more powerful than others, and some are more powerful than men, feminist theorists made the generalisation that women tend to have less influence in social, economic, and political spheres, and that there was a gender-related structural explanation for this. Finally, feminists emphasised the gendered concepts underpinning the discipline. Feminist IR theorists therefore presented a challenge to the very core of the epistemology, ontology and methodology of the discipline.

Of all the feminist approaches to IR that have emerged[5], the one dominant within the UN and broader international community is that of liberal feminism.[6] This approach argues that

[3] See also the two special issues of *Millennium* that have focused on feminism, gender and international relations theory: Volume 17 (3), 1988; Volume 27 (4), 1998.

[4] Moving on from merely looking at the marginalisation and invisibility of women in the formal study and practice of international relations, feminist theorists also began to examine the role of men and masculinities in international relations, and thus more properly began to look at gender relations (Hooper, 2001; Zalewski and Parpart, eds, 1998 and 2008). It became clear that there were multiple masculinities and femininities in society, but that a particular version, known as the 'hegemonic masculinity', is dominant.

[5] There is a multitude of 'feminisms' stemming from the different political and epistemological biases of the respective theorists. Rather than talking about one 'feminist IR theory', the many different approaches to understanding the 'gender question in IR' should be recognised. The following useful definition of 'feminist' theory will be adopted and applied for the purposes of this thesis: "any theory or theorist that sees the relationship between the sexes as one of inequality, subordination or

women have the right to full and equal participation in all aspects of social, political and economic life, and that the major explanatory variable for the persistence of gender inequalities in contemporary society has been their exclusion from these spheres.

Liberal feminists focus predominantly on the public realm, and take what is often referred to as an 'add women and stir' approach. This implies that if women are brought into and are allowed to participate in the structures of international society, eventually the spill over effect of their involvement will lead to changes in attitudes and as a result, inequalities between men and women will disappear. However, this approach ignores the unequal power relations that would distort women's participation and fails to question the very structures into which women are being added and stirred around. Liberal feminists have also been accused of focusing exclusively on the public sphere and overlooking the important social dynamics and power relationships that exist in the private sphere. However, the two are arguably inter-related and as such, changes in the public sphere may actually shift and shape individual consciousnesses ultimately leading to transformations in gendered frameworks through cultural and social changes. Thus, liberal feminist theory may actually have a more far-reaching and radical impact than it would at first appear, and may include strategies that are more fundamental than the negative connotations of 'add women and stir' would suggest. This is something that will be returned to in chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis.[7]

Some theorists argue that given that women are not invested in the status quo due to their oppression, their perspectives could potentially be more valid and unbiased than men's who may have limitations on their objectivity as a result of their desire to preserve existing power relations. One of the key pitfalls of these approaches is that they run the risk of falling into

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oppression, that sees this as a problem of political power rather than a fact of nature, and that sees this problem as important for political theory and practice" (Bryson, 1992: 1).

[6] It is important to clarify that this does not imply that liberal feminism is the most widely accepted or respected strand of feminist theory within IR, but rather that it shapes and forms the basis for the gender equality-related policies of international organisations and governments.

[7] Zillah Eisenstein has defended what she terms the potential 'radical future' of liberal feminism (1981).

essentialist arguments where 'women' are lumped together into a single category that is assumed to be inherently more suited to interpreting the world than men. Women's knowledge and way of interpreting world then becomes privileged and the same problem is perpetuated.[8]

Over the past three decades, the international community has developed a particular approach towards the promotion of gender equality, and this also applies in the case of the UN's peacebuilding policy and practice. As a result, the principle of gender equality has become institutionalised within the international community's rhetoric and practice, and is now considered as a norm within the international standards of development, peace, and democratisation. This strategy, or 'agenda', reflects a particular way of looking at the issue of gender equality, and has emerged in response to a particular set of historical and political factors. This thesis will argue that the liberal feminist underpinnings of gender mainstreaming strategies have created a technical, Western-driven concept that cannot always be easily translated into other languages and contexts, and does not always create the space for truly transformative approaches to gender equality to emerge. Why this liberal feminist approach evolved will be traced out in more detail in chapter 3.

This very brief introduction has served to introduce the liberal feminist approach that will be returned to in more detail throughout the thesis. Building on the insights of feminist IR scholars, there is now a substantial body of literature that offers empirically-based accounts of the gendered nature and impact of conflict and peace processes, and the space that violent

[8] It is evident that feminist theory has developed in many directions over the past few decades, and the explanations given for women's oppression are multiple and complex. Other feminist theorists, most notably post-modern feminists in all their guises, level a more radical critique against contemporary society, arguing that women's ways of knowing and being have been excluded from the discourse of IR, and that claims of one universal truth are unsustainable and, in any case, undesirable. These theorists argue for a major re-conceptualisation of the discipline that would recognise difference, resist dichotomisation and 'self/other-ing', and destabilise the traditional male-biased nature of international relations practice and theory (Sylvester, 1994). This thesis focuses on liberal feminism as the key approach of the international community, and so it is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider all these approaches in detail. For a good overview of the different types of feminisms, see Sylvester, 2002; Tong, 1998; Zalewski and Parpart, 2009.

conflict can open up for the renegotiation or transformation of gender roles and relations (Afshar and Eade, eds, 2004; Anderlini, 2007; Meintjes, 2002; Turshen and Twagiramariya, 1998). These works make an important contribution to the theoretical literature on gender, peace and security by providing context-specific and empirical findings to support the claims being made by feminist IR theory.

These themes will be returned to in more detail in the next two chapters of the thesis, as well as being more explicitly analysed in relation to the literature and empirical analysis of peacebuilding processes. In chapter 2, I will illustrate the gaps in existing mainstream approaches to conflict and peacebuilding by drawing on the insights of feminist scholars who have questioned and analysed the different ways in which men and women are drawn into and affected by these processes. These points will be further developed in chapter 3, where I will illustrate the UN's liberal feminist approach to gender and peacebuilding in more detail.

A focus on both women and gender is necessary in feminist approaches to understanding international relations. The former leads to theorising about the nature of women's absence from the mainstream of the discipline and can highlight possible strategies for drawing them in and transforming predominant masculine structures in the process. The latter, meanwhile, ensures recognition of the relational, fluid, and contingent nature of gender categories, and allows for a deeper consideration of the power differentiations, gendered identities and varied experiences among, as well as between, groups of women and men (Youngs, 2004: 77). In order to gain a full picture of the complexities of the marginalisation and exclusion of women from dominant power structures and the multitude of gendered identities at play, it may be more relevant to focus on women specifically as opposed to the intersection of gender roles and relations, and vice versa. This thesis will therefore deploy both perspectives, recognising that each can cast a different light on the issues being analysed and discussed. However, given that I will be focusing on the UN's liberal feminist approach to peacebuilding, the

empirical research presented in chapters 5-7 will at times emphasise women over gender, reflecting the dominant discourse and practice.

1.1.2 Research agenda

Feminists have recently begun to make important contributions to critical security studies and rethinking about conflict and peace in the post-Cold War world (Hansen, 2000; Hoogensen and Rottem, 2004; Hoogensen and Stuvoy, 2006; Hudson, 2005; and Sjoberg, 2009). To exclude feminist insights is to exclude a powerful lens for deepening understandings of the power dynamics, gendered identities and inequalities that underpin contemporary conflict and the prospects for building peace. Peacebuilding policy and practice is increasingly taking into consideration the specific and differentiated needs of women and men in conflict-affected contexts, as well as the need for a gendered approach to the implementation of peacebuilding programmes. Nevertheless, assumptions are made that peace is a homogenous good and benefits everyone equally, and critical questions such as 'peace for whom?' are not asked often enough by academics or practitioners engaging in contemporary peacebuilding.

The UN's peacebuilding approach makes certain assumptions about what peace and security mean for people living in conflict-affected regions, and the processes by which they can be brought about. As will be explored in more detail in chapter 2, a 'liberal peacebuilding consensus' has emerged, exemplified by the UN's attempts to create stability and foster democratisation and marketisation in post-conflict countries over the last two decades. As the literature critiquing this liberal peacebuilding consensus demonstrates, such approaches are problematic in conceptual, practical and normative terms (Bellamy and Williams, 2005; Heathershaw, 2008; Newman, Paris and Richmond, 2009). Consequently, the peace they create may not be legitimate, inclusive or sustainable in the long-term. Applying a feminist analysis to liberal peacebuilding approaches can shed new light on these problematics, and

can help expose how these approaches can particularly marginalise and exclude women from the peacebuilding process, exacerbating their insecurity and deepening their lack of agency.

This research has been motivated by two inter-connected areas of enquiry. The record of the UN in mainstreaming gender into its peacebuilding activities has not been a particularly positive one, and the case of Sierra Leone is no exception. More than eight years after the end of the conflict, the peace in Sierra Leone is arguably not only an illusion in some ways, but it is also highly gendered. Whilst overt violence is no longer an immediate threat, political, economic and social insecurities remain widespread, particularly for women and girls. Nevertheless, gender issues have not visibly informed the UN's activities on the ground.

The first area of enquiry of this thesis is therefore to understand why the UN was not more successful in integrating gender into its peacebuilding activities, despite its rhetoric that indicates supporting gender equality is a priority. In parallel to the UN's efforts, or failures, women's organisations have led local initiatives and bottom-up efforts at building peace in Sierra Leone during and after the conflict. This thesis contrasts these activities with the UN approach to understand if they could offer a more emancipatory and holistic entry point for transforming gender inequalities and creating a more sustainable peace. By undertaking a feminist analysis of the UN's peacebuilding policies and programming in Sierra Leone, this thesis will seek to contribute to contemporary understandings of the discourse and practice of peacebuilding, and the gulf that lies between the UN and local actors.

Exploring the first more empirical area of research on gender and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone has lead to the second focus area of this research on what these findings imply for liberal peacebuilding as well as the liberal feminist approach to mainstreaming gender in these processes. The overview of the different bodies of literature on liberal peacebuilding and on gender, conflict and peace indicates that there are in fact many similarities and complementarities between these critiques. Understanding of issues such as the disjuncture

between external and local actors and top-down and bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding, the questions of whose knowledge and which issues 'count', and the problematic nature of the dominant discourse on peace and security could be deepened by applying a feminist lens. Similarly, using the critiques of the liberal peacebuilding consensus as an entry point could shed some light on the limitations of the UN's efforts to mainstream gender in its peacebuilding activities. This is therefore the second focus area of the thesis.

In summary, the central hypothesis of this thesis is that the UN's gender and peacebuilding agenda in Sierra Leone is based on liberal feminist assumptions which inherently limit and challenge the extent to which the UN has been able to bring about a positive transformation in gender roles and relations. Furthermore, the thesis will argue for a broadening out of how gender and peacebuilding are understood by contrasting UN approaches to gender mainstreaming with the locally-rooted and context-specific experiences and approaches of women's organisations and networks working for peace at the community and national levels in Sierra Leone. In line with Paris (2010), I also believe that there is a need to 'save liberal peacebuilding', and that despite its limitations, if applied with more critical reflection and greater recognition of the need to engage with and build on local approaches, it may still offer the best opportunity to assist countries emerging from conflict.

1.1.3 Definitions and terminology

The concepts of sex and gender are fundamental to any research that draws on feminist theory, and as such, merit some conceptual clarification here. In this thesis, sex is defined as the given biological differences between men and women's bodies. Gender, on the other hand, refers to the socially constructed roles, responsibilities and identities that influence the attitudes and behaviour of men and women, and which can vary between cultures and contexts. The term 'gender relations' describes the social relationships, including power dynamics, which exist between men and women. Thus, gender is not only the static difference between men and women, but as a concept it incorporates the patterns of subordination

between men and women that are influenced by power and ideology (Baden and Goetz, 1998: 19-38). These are "simultaneously relations of cooperation, connection, and mutual support, and of conflict, separation, and competition, of difference and inequality" (March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay, 1999: 18).

As a caveat to this conceptual clarification, it is necessary to point out that the terms 'gender', and 'feminism' are highly contested, and it can be difficult to arrive at a consensus on one meaning. Considering both women and gender is important, since while women must be made more visible in international relations theory and practice, it is also necessary to focus on the gender relations between men and women and the questioning of these socially constructed categories (Youngs, 2004: 77). Baden and Goetz point out that within the policy and activist context, 'gender' is an especially problematic concept:

> There is a disjuncture between the feminist intent behind the term and the ways in which it is employed such as to minimise the political and contested character of relations between women and men. A problem with the concept of 'gender' is that it can be used in a very descriptive way and the question of power can easily be removed (Baden and Goetz, 1998: 25).

Another term that will be used frequently throughout this thesis is 'gender mainstreaming', which has become the dominant approach to promoting gender equality within donor agencies, including those operating in post-conflict contexts. According to the definition put forward by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), gender mainstreaming is,

> The process of assessing the implication for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.[9]

[9] ECOSOC Resolution 1996/310: Mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the UN system. Substantive Session for 30 June- 25 July 1997.

Gender mainstreaming is therefore based on a certain understanding of gender roles and relations, a certain political, economic, cultural, and social context, and certain assumptions about the way that gender-related change can and should be brought about. In other words, gender mainstreaming characterises a particular way of knowing and encourages particular ways of being in development contexts, largely based on a liberal feminist approach to gender inequalities. Indeed, the contingent nature of definitions must be kept in mind, and the possibility of terms such as sex, gender, or mainstreaming being used, abused, and co-opted is a reality in post-conflict settings, as in any other development environments.

Thus, rather than simply being a straightforward issue of 'bringing women in' and making them count, the pursuit of gender equality involves multiple and contested ideas about both the means and ends of achieving it. Furthermore, the motivations and assumptions driving this agenda in post-conflict contexts merit some closer examination.

This thesis will also frequently use the terms 'post-conflict' and 'peacebuilding' in discussing both the evolution of the UN's approach to building peace as well as the case study of Sierra Leone. These terms are also problematic, implying that there is a finite end to violent conflict and encouraging one-size-fits-all approaches to countries that are emerging from civil war (Moore, 2000). As these concepts are unpacked in more detail in chapter 2, it will also becomes clear that they serve a discursive function for the international community, where terming a country as 'post-conflict' can also signal the opportunity to begin and solidify liberal peacebuilding interventions.

1.1.4 Methodology

There are many actors involved in defining, implementing and perpetuating the liberal peacebuilding consensus, and many of those same actors also, in theory, should be responsible for mainstreaming gender into their work. To compare all actors, with their differing mandates, structures and priorities, would indeed be an interesting research topic,

but would be far beyond the scope of what is possible in this thesis. As chapters 2 and 3 will show, the UN and its various agencies have played a defining role in setting the parameters of not only liberal peacebuilding but also the gender agenda within these processes. Whilst I could have focused on bilateral donors, international NGOs or other multilateral organisations, instead, I have chosen to focus on the UN for several reasons.

First, given that the UN is composed of different agencies, funds and programmes, it is able to play a role across the full range of peacebuilding activities covered by the security, governance and economic reforms addressed in this research. In particular, the UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), and subsequently the UN Integrated Office (UNIOSIL), were very important actors in supporting the peacebuilding process in the country. Second, at a policy level, the development of the gender and peacebuilding agenda was partly driven by and played out at the UN level, particularly following the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (SCR 1325) by the Security Council. This makes it the logical organisation to explore when looking at the degree to which the policy has turned in to practice. Finally, the UN's approach to gender and peacebuilding can be assumed to be broadly representative of a consensus, with most member states and other organisations adopting similar policies and procedures, and can therefore be considered as a representative case study.

To explore the limits of the UN's approach to gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding, I have chosen to use the single case study of Sierra Leone from 2002-2007. During any empirical research, a choice must be made between broadening or deepening the scope of work. In this case, I have chosen to carry out a deep analysis of one case, focusing in detail on the different aspects of peacebuilding policy and practice which has enabled me to draw conclusions and make comparisons between the security, governance and economic reform processes in the country. In sacrificing the breadth, the following chapters present a richer and more nuanced analysis than would have been possible in a multiple case study. However, at the same time

the findings and learning will be applicable to other contexts, because of the similarities in the type of gender mainstreaming and liberal peacebuilding approach that the UN adopts across the range of post-conflict contexts.

Sierra Leone is an instructive case study for this topic for a number of reasons. First, during the height of UNAMSIL's operations it was the largest peacekeeping operation ever, indicative of the major UN involvement in the country. Second, the timing of the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone dovetails with the period when the gender and peacebuilding agenda was beginning to take shape, and therefore it provides insight into the extent to which the headquarters-level rhetoric actually translated into concrete action on the ground. It also coincides with the timing of reforms of the UN's peacebuilding responses and architecture, and the evolution of the liberal peacebuilding consensus. Third, high levels of gender inequality permeate all aspects of political, economic and social life in Sierra Leone, and the conflict itself had specific gender-related elements, dimensions, impact and consequences. At the same time, women played a critical role in bringing about the end of the conflict, although much of their actions took place at the community level and went unacknowledged by the international community. It therefore follows that the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone was characterized by gender differences, and the evidence shows that men and women did not benefit equally from the process of security, governance and economic reforms that were launched following the conflict. The case of Sierra Leone is thus an interesting one in which to explore how the UN's peacebuilding efforts addressed and mediated these gender inequalities.

The time period that has been selected to limit the analysis in this thesis is the period from 2002 until 2007. This covers the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone from the official end of the conflict in January 2002, through the drawdown of UNAMSIL, and continuing until the second post-conflict elections in August 2007. This also includes the transition to UNIOSIL and the beginning of the Peacebuilding Commission's (PBC) engagement in the country, both

important elements of UN engagement in the consolidation of peace in Sierra Leone. By selecting this timeframe it is possible for my analysis to cover the full range of security, governance and economic reforms that were supported, and at times initiated by, the UN, as well as incorporating the first seven years after the adoption of SCR 1325.

Similar to Cohn's findings during her research on national security discourse, I have found that "my subject has been a moving target" (2006: 92). Some of the research design was clear from the beginning of the project, but at times a more opportunistic approach was adopted as the research progressed and new questions and areas of enquiry came to light allowing more flexibility and reflexivity (Baines, 2005: 144). Consequently, I have drawn upon a range of different methods that have included fieldwork in Sierra Leone, formal and informal interviews with policymakers in New York, London and Brussels, documentary analysis and participant-observation during four years working as a gender and peacebuilding specialist at International Alert.

The analysis in this thesis is based on over 100 personal interviews with UN, bilateral donors and Sierra Leonean government officials, academics and non-governmental organisations (NGO) representatives, as well as Sierra Leonean men and women who have been affected by the conflict and peacebuilding process in the country.[10] As noted above, I sought a balance in the characteristics and identities of the people interview for the research, in Sierra Leone and elsewhere. In Sierra Leone, I adopted the 'snowball sampling method' as the most appropriate and effective way to access individuals and organisations to whom I was perceived as an outsider. Through initial contacts with UNICEF officials and several women's activists I was introduced to an ever-widening group of people with whom I was able to discuss the issues pertaining to my research focus. This methodology was also well-suited to this research project given that I spent an initial period of five months followed by a further one month based in the country, allowing some key interviewees to get to know me over a period of time

[10] For a full list of interviews conducted, please see the appendix.

(Cohn, 2006: 100). As a result, I was able to interview a wide cross-section of individuals involved in the relatively small peacebuilding community in Sierra Leone, as well as others who existed outside of the gender and peacebuilding circle.

I adopted a semi-structured approach to the interviews to enable flexibility and to allow interviewees to focus on issues that they perceived as most relevant to gender relations and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. Some of these interviews were recorded if permitted, and where possible complete attributions have been made in the text. In some cases, interviewees asked to remain anonymous or provided their insights off the record and in the references are not attributed by name. The majority of interviews were conducted in Sierra Leone (Freetown, Bo, Kenema and Kono), during several separate trips to the country from 2005-2009.[11] Some interviews, observations and research were also carried out in New York, Brussels and London, and some in the context of workshops and seminars on gender and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. Whilst efforts were made to ensure diversity, representativeness and credibility across the various interviewees, as Cohn notes, "There was an 'I' who asked the questions, and inevitably, who I am shaped not only what I noticed and was able to hear, but also what people what [sic] would say *to* me and *in front of* me" (2006: 97). Some interviewees were quite open about discussing aspects of gender and peacebuilding, including their own personal experiences, whereas others were more guarded, although even in these cases their evasion of the topic was useful evidence of their attitudes and understanding of the issues under consideration in this thesis.

Clearly my own subjectivities, in particular the power dynamics between myself as the researcher and the subjects being researched have affected the research process itself (Ackerly et al, 2006: 7), but efforts were made to acknowledge and control these biases as much as possible. While those people encountered and interviewed during the course of my

[11] I lived in Sierra Leone from January-June 2005 and June-July 2006, and undertook several shorter trips in July 2007, January 2008 and March 2009. During the period February-May 2005 I was employed as a consultant with the UNICEF Child Protection team.

fieldwork may not be representative of the population as a whole, I sought to ensure a balance between men and women, those working within UN/NGO structures and the beneficiaries of or participants in their activities, women who were agents for peace, victims of violence or passive observers, women living in urban and rural settings, and those who were inside and outside of the specific dynamics of the Sierra Leonean context. This has generated a rich source of qualitative data that cuts across many of the issues and dynamics that are under consideration in this thesis.

The research in this thesis also draws on my experiences as a consultant with UNICEF Sierra Leone in the child protection section from February-May 2005 and at International Alert from 2006-2009, where I managed the gender and peacebuilding programme. These positions gave me the opportunity to work on these issues at a policy and practical level, that complemented my academic researcher's perspective. I carried out a number of focus group discussions and workshops on gender and peacebuilding issues in the course of this job, and these have been listed separately in the annex. They also constituted a valuable source of insight into the situation in Sierra Leone as well as gender and peacebuilding policy more generally. Some of these workshops and meetings involved UN actors, as well as women peacebuilders from other countries, which provided an opportunity to validate my findings across a wider range of contexts. This position of being a scholar researching these issues at the same time as being to some extent an 'insider' and part of the international community's efforts to integrate gender into peacebuilding has given me a unique perspective on these issues. There are tradeoffs in objectivity/subjectivity, depth of knowledge and emotional and physical proximity to the issues being researched associated with both these statuses, and I sought to maintain awareness of these issues throughout the research process (Smyth, 2005: 17-21).

To supplement the findings from my field research, I also carried out in-depth archival research and analysis of documents relevant to the processes of security, governance and economic reform in Sierra Leone. Many of these documents were passed on to me by the

interviewees or were obtained from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) archives held at Fourah Bay College in Freetown. I was then able to triangulate across the interviews, archival research and workshop discussions to identify trends or patterns pertaining to my research questions and focus, in doing so also reducing the selection bias, subjectivity or limited representativeness of my interview sample.

1.1.5 Measuring success

This thesis seeks to evaluate the extent to which gender issues were integrated into the UN's peacebuilding activities in Sierra Leone, and whether or not a more emancipatory approach to both gender mainstreaming and peacebuilding based on the approaches of women's organisations is possible. Therefore, a key challenge of the research is in identifying and measuring what constitutes either success or failure in this regard. Given that both peacebuilding and gender mainstreaming should be seen as processes rather than end goals, measuring success and failure can be problematic and unhelpful if it encourages a focus on discrete and technical factors.

Nevertheless, there has been a push towards demonstrating impact and results in terms of international peacebuilding interventions, particularly by the donors who are increasingly investing funds in this area (Bush, 2003: 39). Measuring impact can be challenging, not only because of the standard problems of measurement in the social sciences, but also due to other reasons such as difficulties in reaching consensus on the core elements of peacebuilding, the fact that changes at the societal level may only be noticeable after a very long period of time, and the issue of isolating impact to a specific dimension of a given peacebuilding intervention (Menkhaus, 2004: 4-8). The context-specificity of peacebuilding processes also poses a challenge to 'tick-box' approaches to evaluation or measuring success. Furthermore, few of

the existing evaluation or impact assessment methodologies incorporate indicators to measure gender-sensitivity.[12]

As will be repeatedly argued in this thesis, peacebuilding and gender mainstreaming are not problems to be solved, but transformational processes. Furthermore, the length of time required for these societal shifts to occur precludes, or at the very least makes difficult, a final judgement on either peacebuilding or gender mainstreaming in Sierra Leone given the limited time period of the case study. Clearly the cessation of armed violence or the existence of a policy on gender equality do not in themselves indicate the success of either process, but at the same time they can be useful indicators of progress towards more gender-sensitive and sustainable peacebuilding. As Paris points out, although establishing absolute success is difficult, most of the countries that experienced peacebuilding missions were better off than if there had been no international intervention (2010: 352). Therefore, in order to be able to respond to the research agenda laid out in this chapter, some attempt to clarify the meaning and criteria for success and failure is necessary.

Moser and Moser (2005) have proposed a three-stage framework for assessing the success and limitations of mainstreaming gender in international institutions. They identify the three stages as: adoption of gender-related terminology, putting gender-related policies into place, and implementation of these policies. This framework could be extended to gender and peacebuilding specifically, although I propose adapting it by including a fourth element of legitimacy, incorporating both input and output legitimacy (Keohane, 2006; OECD 2010),

[12] In April 2010, the Secretary-General presented a set of indicators on women, peace and security that were developed in response to increased calls for monitoring and accountability in implementation of the commitments of the UN and Member States on these issues. Similarly, some of the National Action Plans on SCR 1325 that have been developed by various governments include some efforts at measuring the success and impact of integrating gender issues into peacebuilding. These documents propose measures such as the number of women signatories to peace processes or represented in the police force and the allocation of financial resources to gender-related peacebuilding activities as indicative of the effective implementation of SCR 1325. Whilst useful, these indicators will not be used as the framework for assessing success and failure in this thesis, given that they focus on specific areas of activity or action rather than a holistic assessment of the sustainability and equality of peace as a whole.

since this is particularly relevant to peacebuilding interventions. These two terms are taken to encompass the extent to which the peacebuilding efforts incorporate and enable the participation of the local population (input or internal legitimacy) and the extent to which the efforts to mainstream gender in peacebuilding process have resulted in an improvement in the lives of the local population (output or external legitimacy). The data and insights gathered throughout the course of research for this thesis can be assessed against this framework, focusing the analysis on the extent to which gender issues have been incorporated into the discourse around peacebuilding, how the UN has incorporated gender issues into its policies and structures in Sierra Leone, how gender issues have been integrated into the security, governance and economic reform processes, and finally to what extent the liberal peacebuilding process can be seen as legitimate in terms of gender-sensitive local ownership in meeting the needs and engaging the participation of both men and women.

Documentary analysis will provide important insights about the evolution of the terminology and discourse around gender and peacebuilding (chapters 2 and 3), the policies and internal processes adopted by the UN agencies (chapter 5), as well as the evidence relating to the extent of implementation and legitimacy of these policies (chapter 6). This analysis will then be compared and contrasted with the findings from the fieldwork interviews, workshops and other observations in an iterative fashion, with each set of data providing material with which to make a judgement on success or failure against the framework outlined above. It is also important to recognise that the gender and peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone could be perceived as a success in terms of the liberal agenda, whilst still being a failure in terms of being legitimate and sustainable at the national and local levels. Contrasting the evidence in chapters 2-6 with the alternative terminology and approaches used by women's organisations in chapter 7 will therefore provide a further area against which to assess the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone, and will highlight ways in which some of the failures of the liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminist approaches could be addressed.

In the conclusion, which consolidates the analysis presented in the thesis, it will bepossible to determine which aspects of the liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminist approaches have been effective and could be retained. Furthermore, assessing the evidence against this framework may point to entry points for local actors to influence this success, and identify how women's organisations might be able to work with UN agencies in pursuit of a more sustainable, and successful, peacebuilding process.

1.2 Structure of the thesis

In this final section of the introduction, I will briefly map out the structure of the thesis. Chapter 2 begins by setting the scene for the UN's involvement in peacebuilding, providing a historical narrative of its evolution during the 1990s and 200s outlining the key characteristics of the liberal peacebuilding approach. This is followed by an overview of the liberal peacebuilding consensus and a discussion of some of the main critiques that have been levelled against it. The chapter then addresses a gap in much of the mainstreaming peacebuilding literature by asking some feminist questions of these processes. Doing so, I argue, helps to expose how women are marginalised and excluded from the process of building peace and security, and flags some of the issues that will be returned to later in the thesis.

In chapter 3, I turn to an analysis of how gender issues have been integrated into the UN's peacebuilding policy. While gender issues have been largely marginalised from liberal peacebuilding in both discourse and practice, a separate 'gender and peacebuilding agenda' has emerged, particularly since the adoption of SCR 1325. The chapter concludes by outlining the key pillars of the liberal peacebuilding consensus (justice and security sector reform, governance reform, and economic reform) from a gender perspective. From the evidence presented, I argue that although this separate agenda has brought some limited progress in recognising women's roles in conflict and peacebuilding, it has been inherently

limited due to its liberal feminist nature, which can be understood as an extension of the liberal peacebuilding model. Importantly, this may constrict the possibility of peacebuilding processes to support a transformation in gender roles and relations.

With chapter 4, the thesis turns from looking at the theory and policy underpinning gender and liberal peacebuilding to setting up the case study context of Sierra Leone. I present a brief overview of the conflict in Sierra Leone, highlighting in particular the gendered impact of the conflict and the arrival of the UN during the final years of the conflict from 1999-2001. The chapter also outlines in detail the role of women's organisations in bringing the violence to an end and mobilising for peace within their communities. The chapter ends by setting out some of the key themes that inform the remaining three chapter of the thesis, which provide an in-depth analysis of gender and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone.

Chapter 5 begins with an analysis of how gender issues figured in the UN's peacebuilding discourse in the country, as demonstrated through the key policy documents developed by the UN. These policies reveal the gendered assumptions and concepts that underpin the UN's peacebuilding work in Sierra Leone, and reveal the failure to integrate gender-related priorities into the policies guiding the security, governance and economic reform processes. The chapter continues with an analysis of the structures and mandates of the key UN agencies and programmes operating in Sierra Leone, providing further evidence of the failure to provide adequate staff, resources and operational support to mainstream gender in the peacebuilding process. The chapter will conclude by suggesting that the failure to prioritise the integration of gender into the peacebuilding policies and structures of the UN agencies in Sierra Leone is linked to the problematic aspects of both the liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminist approaches that they adopt.

Building on the assessment of how gender issues played into the peacebuilding discourse in Sierra Leone, chapter 6 considers the implementation of the UN's peacebuilding activities in

the areas of security, governance and economic reforms. The chapter looks not only at the different impact on men and women but also the extent to which these programmes influenced gender roles and relations. This chapter illustrates the limitations of the gender and peacebuilding agenda through the empirical findings which clearly show that none of the reform processes integrated gender effectively or systematically, and nor were they able to address gender inequalities in the social, political or economic spheres in a meaningful way. The UN's liberal feminist approach resulted in limited and ad hoc efforts to integrate women into gender-blind reform processes. Instead of recognising the critical and transformative elements of gender mainstreaming, it was reduced to a technical process, thereby doing little to challenge and address gender inequalities in post-conflict Sierra Leone.

One of the striking findings of this research has been the extent of informal activities being undertaken by women's organisations in Sierra Leone that exist alongside but are not supported by the UN-led peacebuilding process. Chapter 7 explores and analyses these informal peacebuilding activities in more detail, highlighting the type of peacebuilding work done by different local, national and regional women's organisations. The chapter argues that their peacebuilding work differs from the liberal feminist approach of the UN, and the liberal consensus in general, allowing them to take a more holistic, transformative and sustainable approach to building human security, gender-sensitive governance and economic empowerment in their communities. The implication of chapter 7 is that the possibility for a more inclusive, sustainable and emancipatory peace exists, but the UN has failed to draw on and create the space for these alternative processes to emerge and influence its approach.

In the concluding chapter I draw together the different threads of the analysis, relating the theoretical and empirical insights about gender and liberal peacebuilding against the background of post-conflict Sierra Leone. The three main findings of the thesis are as follows. First, the UN's conceptualisation of a universal, ideal peace as embodied by the liberal peacebuilding consensus ignores and marginalises gender-differentiated needs and interests in

relation to peace and security. Second, the problem-solving liberal feminist approach to gender and peacebuilding does little to challenge the gendered power relations and structures that exclude women, resulting in what I term a "gendered virtual peace". Finally, bridging the gap between the formal, UN-led peacebuilding process and the informal activities of women's organisations could present an opportunity for pushing the boundaries of the liberal peacebuilding consensus, reinscribing it in more emancipatory terms. These findings relate to the four dimensions of the framework that I outlined in the previous section, and this will be referred to as a tool for measuring the success – or not – of the UN's gender and peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone.

The next two chapters will lay the theoretical and policy-related groundwork for the first part of the thesis. Chapter 2 will provide an overview of the emergence of peacebuilding and an analysis of the liberal peacebuilding consensus, drawing on the growing body of critiques of this approach. Subsequently, it will lay out the case for applying a feminist analysis to liberal peacebuilding exposing some of the gender dimensions of these processes. I will build on this in chapter 3 by focusing specifically on the emerging gender and peacebuilding agenda, thereby contributing a dimension that has been lacking from the literature to date. As Bendaña points out, "gender relations research forcefully provides us new ways of looking at structural power relations and the role of relational transformations in the process of peacebuilding," and therefore is a powerful tool for increasing the theoretical knowledge that is so lacking in the peacebuilding literature (Bendaña, 2003: 27).

CHAPTER 2. LIBERAL PEACEBUILDING AND ITS CRITICS: BRINGING A GENDER PERSPECTIVE TO THE DEBATE

The proliferation of civil conflicts at the end of the Cold War and a sense of donor fatigue and disillusionment with conventional relief and development models prompted a fundamental change in the international community's engagement with the developing world in the early 1990s. It became evident that donor programs and policies designed to alleviate poverty and under-development were failing to adequately address the social, economic, and political inequalities that fuelled violent conflict around the world, and at the same time, were equally unable to deal with the aftermath of these wars. Against the backdrop of these emerging challenges at the beginning of the 1990s, the UN, unhindered by the ideological obstacles that had constrained action in the previous decades, sought to adopt new approaches to 'ending the scourge of war'. However, not only did the UN face difficulties in operationally adapting to the dual challenges of violent conflict and underdevelopment with any consistent success, but Cold War informed, state-centric academic thinking around issues of conflict, development, and security was also found to be lacking in its explanatory ability. As it became apparent that the international community's traditional tool-box of frameworks and strategies for addressing conflict was no longer appropriate, theorists and practitioners alike began to search for new ways of approaching contemporary conflict. This signalled the beginning of the UN's forays into peacebuilding.

This chapter will chart out the process that led to the emergence of the liberal peacebuilding consensus, as well as presenting some of the main critiques that have been levelled against it. The chapter will then cast a feminist eye on this literature, pointing to some of the gendered dynamics that have been overlooked by scholars engaging with liberal peacebuilding. In so doing, it will add some nuances to their critiques, and prepare the groundwork for chapter 3 which explores the gender and peacebuilding agenda in more detail.

2.1 The evolution of the UN's approach to peacebuilding

Following the changes in the post-Cold War world, the concept of peacebuilding quickly gained currency and was embraced in both the policy and practice of the United Nations.[13] Indeed, the breakdown of many countries into civil conflict and the new global challenges and threats in the post-Cold War era demonstrate the limited capacity of the state to protect its population from new security threats. Furthermore, recent conflicts also show that state structures and institutions themselves can in fact be the source of deep and ongoing insecurity and violence. Kaldor has persuasively argued that the new forms of warfare challenge the traditional divide between local/global and internal/external, where globalisation and modernity bring new actors and forms of violence to bear on civilians (Kaldor, 1999).[14]

Responding to these conflicts required a re-evaluation of assistance strategies and heralded the reorientation of the international community towards peacebuilding, and broader, less-traditional notions of security. The fact that complex emergencies often occurred in 'failed states' further reinforced the idea of an inter-relationship between conflict, development and security (Milliken, 2003). These states were rarely perceived to possess the institutional structures or capacity necessary for effective governance and peacebuilding, factors that are exacerbated, or some have even suggested are causally linked, to their underdevelopment, poverty and marginalisation (Collier et al., 2003).

More recently, the literature surrounding fragile states and state-building reinforces the dilemmas the international community faces in engaging with and supporting development in poverty-stricken countries with ineffective and potentially unstable governance structures through which assistance must flow (Debiel with Klein, 2002; Milliken, 2003; Chauvet and

[13] Although peacebuilding as a concept was new, it is important to acknowledge that the West had been engaging in major post-conflict reconstruction programmes since the launching of the Marshall Plan in post-World War II Europe (Williams, 2007).

[14] Whilst Kaldor's arguments received prominence, other authors such as Kalyvas (2001) have challenged this view and argued that in fact the distinction between old and new wars is somewhat of a false dichotomy.

Collier, 2004; DFID, 2005). Before exploring the nature of the peacebuilding agenda that began to take shape from the mid-1990s onwards, this section will trace the evolution of the UN's peacebuilding efforts.

2.1.1 Peacebuilding in the 1990s[15]

At the same time as the political winds of change of the early 1990s presented new challenges to the international community in relation to global peace and security, there were also new opportunities to resolve violent conflicts and proxy wars that had been exacerbated by the Cold War, such as those in Angola and Cambodia (Cousens, 2001: 1). The UN and other international actors sought to support many of these countries in making the transition to peace and viable statehood. However, despite the ideals of sustained, long-term, and coordinated UN action in the areas of conflict prevention, development and peacebuilding, the legacy of their involvement in peace operations in the early 1990s was inconsistent.

Some degree of success was achieved in places like El Salvador and Mozambique, but there were more visible failures such as Somalia and Rwanda, where there was little peace to keep and the resources allocated for the job were glaringly insufficient. This mixed record reinforced the need for a reconceptualisation of contemporary peace operations, as well as a transformation in the structures and methods used by the UN to undertake these kinds of activities. At this time, the UN's approach to peacebuilding also began to more explicitly entail the replication of the liberal principles of democracy, economic liberalisation and human rights; principles that the UN itself was founded on in the years following the end of World War II. These changes also reflected the post-Cold War liberal optimism as embodied in Fukuyama's claim of 'the end of history' (Richmond and Franks, 2009: 19).

The first elucidation of the UN's new role and potential reform agenda came in the form of UN Secretary-General (UNSG) Boutros Boutros-Ghali's 1992 report entitled *An Agenda for*

[15] Parts of this section have been adapted from Barnes (2006).

Peace, which set out the beginnings of a blueprint for international interventions in wartorn countries.[16] Coined in this report, 'post-conflict peacebuilding' was loosely defined as efforts "to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people [...] Preventive diplomacy is to avoid a crisis; post-conflict peacebuilding is to prevent a recurrence" (United Nations, 1992a: para 55 and 57).[17]

The term is used expansively in the report, encompassing a wide range of goals and activities, but it contained few concrete recommendations about exactly how peace could be 'solidified' and the roles and timeframes of the various organs of the UN system intended to be involved in this process. Indeed, this reflects the ongoing challenge the UN faces in dealing with questions of sequencing, coordination, spheres of responsibility, and other tensions that reflect a lack of understanding of how best to respond, which too often leads to a failure to respond at all.

The concept of post-conflict peacebuilding essentially broadened the remit of the UN to a wider range of roles. At the same time, security assumptions based on the state were destabilised by events such as the genocide in Rwanda and the growth in critical security studies within IR literature.[18] It recognised the reality that states, the supposed guarantor of people's rights and freedoms within the international system, either through negligence or through direct actions, could in fact contribute to their citizens' insecurity. Indeed, despite alluding to the need for an 'integrated approach to human security' and a changing context that is making international security more complex, the *Agenda for Peace* failed to make

[16] Boutros Boutros-Ghali prepared this report in response to a request from the Security Council that he recommend ways to strengthen the UN's capacity for preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping.

[17] Post-conflict peacebuilding was one of four key roles that the Secretary-General envisaged as being the core of the UN's future involvement in peace and security issues. The other roles were preventive diplomacy, peace making, and peacekeeping.

[18] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to outline the development of critical security studies in any detail. For more information, see Krause and Williams, 1997; Buzan, Waever and de Wilde, 1998; Williams, 2008; Booth, 2004; Fierke, 2007; Buzan and Hansen, 2007.

explicit the important connections between democracy, the rule of law, and human rights in conflict-affected regions (United Nations, 1992a: para 16; Chinkin, 2004: 29).

Despite these and other limitations, Boutros-Ghali used the *Agenda for Peace* as a basis for instigating changes in UN policy, structure and procedures related to peace and security issues, and it remained the most important conceptual framework guiding UN conflict-related policy in the first half of the 1990s (Muller, 2001: 51; Lund, 2003: 2-3). Its publication was the first stage in a shift away from traditional national security discourse that ultimately led towards more inclusive, and interventionary, approaches focusing on human rights and collective action based on liberal principles (Peou, 2002: 52-54). In short, the *Agenda for Peace* set out a vision for the international community's role in ending violent conflict that rested on fundamental liberal principles as a means to create the conditions for peace. According to Barnett,

> we can consider these documents to be liberal to the extent that their narratives are informed by a belief in progress: that modernization and interdependence are transforming the character of global politics; that institutions can be established to help manage these changes; that democracy is a principled issue and can enhance peace and security; and that the UN has an obligation to protect individuals, promote universal values, and create institutions that can encourage political and economic freedom (Barnett, 1997: 539).

In mid-1994, Boutros-Ghali released another report, *An Agenda for Development*, that provided little in terms of practical recommendations but did begin to advocate for a more holistic approach, arguing that development was the most important foundation stone for peace (United Nations, 1994a: para 3). These two documents together represented the acknowledgement that to address violent conflict effectively meant addressing its root causes, and that neither peace nor development could be achieved without the other: "[e]mergency relief and development should not be regarded as alternatives [...] Peacebuilding means action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in

order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (United Nations, 1994a: paragraph 21-22).[19] In an attempt to refine and expand upon the original ideas in the two previous reports, *A Supplement to the Agenda for Peace* was released in 1995. The scope of what was considered relevant to conflict and security was broadened even further in this document, to recognise the fact that "only sustained efforts to resolve underlying socio-economic, cultural and humanitarian problems can place an achieved peace on a durable foundation" (United Nations, 1995a: para 22).

Throughout this time of conceptual repositioning, expectations of what the organisation sought to achieve on the ground, namely extending its involvement to ensure the foundation of a stable, legitimate and long-lasting peace, were also growing. For example, the peacekeeping budget of the UN increased from $230 million in 1987 to $3.6 billion in 1994, and the number of peacekeeping operations it authorised tripled (Doyle, 2001: 534). However, the *Supplement*, whilst expanding on the concept of post-conflict peacebuilding, still failed to offer operational guidance on how it could be integrated into peacekeeping mandates and structures, or to set out a truly comprehensive framework for reforming the peace and security operations of the UN.

While engagement in conflict-affected regions increased, the mandates and resources of these peacekeeping missions were rarely extensive enough to achieve the broad aims of post-conflict peacebuilding, and the UN found itself frequently, and problematically, engaging in countries where consent was non-existent or where there was in fact little peace to keep, and often with inadequate resources to carry out the mandated tasks. Taken collectively, these documents and the actions that resulted can be seen to be an attempt at legitimating a liberal international order, reflecting the belief that the solution to many of these problems lay in the promotion of liberal democratic and economic reforms (Paris, 2002; A. Williams, 2007).

[19] The other key dimensions of development that were emphasised were the economy as the engine of progress, the environment as a basis for sustainability, justice as a pillar of society, and democracy as good governance.

However, the documents and the subsequent peacebuilding activities of the UN failed to question the tensions and contradictions inherent in this liberal approach, which as will be argued later has contributed to the problematic nature of liberal peacebuilding (Barnett, 1997: 549-550).

By the mid-1990s, the new era of multidimensional peace operations had begun, on a rhetorical level at least. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was established in 1992 in response to the increased demand for complex peacekeeping in the post-Cold War world. The UN launched some thirty-five peacekeeping missions during the 1990s that provided an opportunity to put these new concepts into practice. In addition to the UN's own conceptual shift, the rest of the donor community and other humanitarian actors were also developing operational guidelines and best practices to improve their ability to assist countries emerging from conflict.[20] As the international community's peacebuilding activities increased, both policy-makers and academics attempted to determine a taxonomy of post-conflict peacebuilding, covering the vast range of activities that were included within this term.[21]

Thus, by the end of the 1990s, the UN had established new structures, tools and frameworks through which to address the challenges of post-conflict peacebuilding. By the end of the decade, the UN was engaged in 15 peacekeeping operations around the world, at an approximate cost of $2.5 billion.[22] However, the UN's ability to deliver effective responses to

[20] For example, see OECD, 1997 and OECD, 2001a.
[21] It is beyond the scope of this paper to enter into a detailed discussion of the various issues and activities that can be considered part of post-conflict peacebuilding. For useful overviews see Ball, 2002 and Keating and Knight, 2004. Given that every conflict has a particular context and dynamics that need to be taken into account, the range and sequencing of the activities undertaken in post-conflict peacebuilding operations varies widely but attempts were made to condense these operations into phases or 'pillars' to make operationalising the concept of post-conflict peacebuilding within the context of UN peace operations a more manageable task. However, it is important to note that these efforts did not fully address the challenges of effectively engaging in post-conflict contexts, or in dealing with the complex and multi-faceted challenges of political, economic and social reforms needed to build a sustainable peace.
[22] United Nations Peacekeeping from 1991 to 2000, Statistical Data and Charts, http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/pub/pko.htm

violent conflict was still being questioned, and despite the renewed commitments and resources for the UN to support peacebuilding and conflict prevention around the world, in practice it had a very mixed record.

2.1.2 The Brahimi Report: Reassessment and reorientation at the UN

Following on from Boutros-Ghali and the vision set out in the *Agendas*, under its new Secretary-General Kofi Annan, the UN launched the most ambitious reform agenda in the organisation's history in 1997 (United Nations, 1997a). This introspection was designed to refocus the UN in the face of criticisms about its conduct, purpose and capabilities, and sought to breathe new life into the organisation. The UN's reputation had been tarnished by the peacekeeping disasters of the early 1990s, and after the exuberance of the post-Cold War years, many were beginning to take a jaded view of the organisation's ability to meet its overarching goal of promoting peace and security throughout the world. One of the 'core areas' of UN activity that Annan identified for reform was peace and security, specifically to develop the UN's institutional capacity for preventive diplomacy and post-conflict peacebuilding (United Nations, 1997a: para 63-66). As part of this broader, institution-wide reform process, Kofi Annan commissioned a group of high-level experts to make "frank, specific and realistic recommendations" on how to improve the performance of the UN in carrying out peace operations. The result was the release of the *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations,* more commonly known as the "Brahimi Report" after the panel's chairman, Lakhdar Brahimi, in 2000 (United Nations, 2000c).

According to the report, the key requirements for successful peace operations are "political support, rapid deployment with a robust force posture and a sound peace-building strategy" (ibid, para 4). A peacebuilding strategy is later defined in the document as the process of "reassemb[ling] the foundations of peace and provid[ing] the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war" (ibid, para 13). This is

further elaborated upon to include a range of activities incorporating rule of law, respect for human rights, DDR and the holding of elections (United Nations, 2000c). As the report itself points out, "United Nations operations [...] did not *deploy into* post-conflict situations but tried *to create* them," even though neither the mandates and resources that were provided nor the institutional structures and coordination mechanisms that were in place were appropriate or adequate for this purpose (ibid: para 2). The concept of 'creating' itself is problematic, implying that the international community could or should enter into a conflict-affected country, rebuilding institutions from scratch with little regard for existing structures and processes (Paris, 2004). It also implies that the UN and other actors possess the knowledge, expertise and legitimacy to define what the new institutions should look like.

By significantly broadening the scope of action linked to peacebuilding even further, the *Brahimi Report* also opened the UN up to criticism of over-extension, continued impotence, ongoing institutional impediments, and the use of rhetoric in place of concrete action (Luck, 2002: 256-268; Lund, 2003). Critics have also suggested that the report failed to really 'think anew' about how peacebuilding is defined and problematize how peace operations relate to increasingly inter-connected global politics. By the end of the 1990s, the concept of peacebuilding was therefore broadening laterally in terms of the policy sectors engaged in implementing it; deepening in terms of increasing involvement in the domestic affairs of conflict-affected countries; and lengthening in terms of the timeline of interventions (Lund, 2003: 5). One could also argue that the beginnings of the liberal peacebuilding approach were becoming increasingly evident: "a consensus exists on what constitutes a crisis, the elements of the solution, and the most appropriate strategies to achieve it" (Bellamy and Williams, 2005a: 2).

During this time of shaping a new reform agenda, the UN began to benefit from the rapidly growing body of academic literature on the key limitations in the UN's structures and practices related to peacebuilding (Cousens and Kumar, 2000; Crocker, Hampson and Aall,

1996; Sriram and Wermester, 2003). Most of the analyses of peacebuilding in the 1990s, both academic and policy-related, focused on the technical or practical aspects of these interventions, such as how to support the relief-to-development continuum, the optimal sequencing of post-conflict activities, or how to ensure more effective coordination among donors (see Kumar, 1997; Forman and Salomons, 1999; Patrick, 1998). Whilst an important dimension of reform, these concerns have tended to shield the political nature of peacebuilding from closer scrutiny, and have buried questions of power dynamics, conflicting interests, and hidden agendas beneath the 'techno-speak' of sectoral disbursements, funding cycles, and inter-agency coordination mechanisms.

Much of the policy and academic literature at the time was therefore well suited for informing the reform of the UN's activities, as analyses of the practical side of peacebuilding inputted more readily into the *Brahimi Report* than overt political critiques would have done. At the time, very few critics from the policy or academic spheres questioned the underlying liberal values of the UN's approach. However, throughout the evolution of the UN's approach to peacebuilding in the 1990s, the underlying liberal assumptions became increasingly apparent. The idea of liberalisation as a solution to violent conflict is not new, and the 'liberal peace thesis' can be traced back to Woodrow Wilson (Paris, 2004: 40-41).

The notion of the liberal peace refers to the argument that democratic states are less likely to go to war with one another, and therefore an international system composed of liberal democracies will be inherently more peaceful (Doyle, 1986; Levy, 1988; Rummell, 1987). At the end of the Cold War, this principle was extended to the growing incidence of civil conflict, and led many to argue that supporting the process of transforming failed states into effective liberal democracies was the most effective way to bring about peace. Indeed, the *Agenda for Peace* and the *Brahimi Report* in effect are attempts by the UN to conceptualise and legitimise interventions by the international community to restore or create democracy into situations of internal conflict (Lund, 2003).

2.1.3 Building peace in the 21st Century: Consolidating the links between peace, security and development

Although the number of civil conflicts, which had spiked in the early post-Cold War years, was declining by the end of the twentieth century, peacebuilding was undeniably becoming a growth industry. In the early 2000s, theorising around the so-called 'security-development nexus' grew markedly, building on the insights of critical security studies and the ongoing experience of international involvement in peacebuilding. This research and policy agenda explored both how security and development agendas are linked through peacebuilding, but also the tension that can exist between the two agendas where their outcomes can in fact undermine, rather than reinforce, each other (Tschirgi, 2003).

Traditionally, military or security aims were separated from socioeconomic development objectives, with different actors carrying out projects in isolated spheres. However, the role of aid in sustaining and even contributing to conflict, the increasingly recognised links between security sector reform (SSR) and governance, and the inability to address poverty in a context of violence and instability made it clear that some kind of policy coherence between the supposedly discrete fields of security and development was in fact necessary (OECD, 2001b). Tcshirgi states that "lying at the nexus of development and security, peacebuilding requires a willingness to rethink the traditional boundaries between these two domains," and she argued that the post-Cold War world provided the opportunity for the international community to do so (Tschirgi, 2003: 2).

Initiated with the Carnegie Commission's report, *Prevention of Deadly Conflict*, there was also a move towards recognising the importance of conflict prevention and early warning, and identifying the reasons behind the emergence of failed states, with the aim of preventing conflicts before they start (Carnegie Commission, 1997). The central assumption was that

addressing the structural, underlying causes of conflict was critical to avoid repetitions of Rwanda or Bosnia as well as being a more cost-effective approach to peacebuilding. These ideas were also linked closely into emerging norms around humanitarian intervention as well as human security issues (Baranyi, 2008: 11-15).

One of the main developments at the beginning of the twenty-first century was the articulation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine that emerged from the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001. R2P essentially encapsulates many of the issues that had been on the international agenda for a number of years: namely when, how, and under what circumstances the right to intervene is acceptable. However, by changing the terminology the members of the ICISS hoped to prompt a reconceptualisation of the responsibilities, as well as the rights, that sovereignty brings, at the same time as avoiding many of the pitfalls previous discussions about intervention had encountered.

The idea of human security is strongly reflected in the report, in which security is extended to people as well as states. As the report points out, "the traditional, narrow perception of security leaves out the most elementary and legitimate concerns of ordinary people regarding security in their daily lives" (ICISS, 2001: 15). The report also echoes the UN's call for an integrated approach where emphasis is not solely on intervention, but also on the responsibility to prevent conflict (conflict prevention and peace-making), to respond appropriately when it occurs (peacekeeping), and to take action to rebuild societies when conflict has occurred (post-conflict peacebuilding). The Commission's report is in no way binding, and its subject matter makes consensus at the international level difficult, but it was important in that it presented an alternate framework for looking at the issues behind the justification of a growing UN responsibility for action in conflict-affected countries. The ICISS report and associated R2P doctrine further reinforce the liberal underpinnings of peacebuilding, emphasising the need to protect individual rights and democracy, good

governance and the rule of law, through 'tough and punitive measures' if need be (ICISS, 2001: para 3.3).

The somewhat limited progress that was made to strengthen peacebuilding operations in the 1990s and expand understandings of peace and security was further challenged by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and their aftermath. The 'terrorist threat' prompted a retrenchment, particularly in the United States (US), back towards conventional security strategies, and this was also played out within the UN. Human rights, good governance and the rule of law, previously considered to be the linchpins of effective peacebuilding, began to be deprioritised in the face of a renewed interest in national security. Furthermore, the UN's role as leader of international peacebuilding efforts was increasingly challenged by the growing unilateralism of the US in the early 2000s, and faced difficulties in terms of maintaining its capacities and resources in line with the growing security and development needs of the international community (Tschirgi, 2003: 10-13). Therefore, despite the need for integrated approaches suggested by the experiences from the field, the development agenda became increasingly subsumed within the security imperatives of the international agenda.[23]

However, the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the UN provided space and an impetus to reconsider how the organisation could be reformed to better promote global collective security. In response to this opportunity, the final two reports released as part of Kofi Annan's system-level UN reforms, *A More Secure World* and *In Larger Freedom*, reflect some of these challenges and make proposals on strengthening the UN's peacebuilding response, among other issues (United Nations, 2004a; United Nations, 2005a). The High-Level Panel Report (HLPR), *A More Secure World*, is based on the concept of collective security, and far from allowing the post-9/11 fallout to undermine the linkages between security and development, it continues to reflect the view that the two concepts are inextricably linked.

[23] This point has been argued by scholars such as Duffied (2001).

One of the most important outcomes of this report was the recommendation for the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) to unify the fragmented and ad-hoc approach that characterised much of the international community's peacebuilding efforts, as well as a Peacebuilding Fund of $250 million to rapidly mobilise the resources needed for sustainable peacebuilding in specific country situations.[24] The HLPR stressed the long-term and multi-dimensional nature of peacebuilding: "Deploying peace enforcement and peacekeeping forces may be essential in terminating conflicts but are not sufficient for long-term recovery. Serious attention to the longer-term process of peace-building in all its multiple dimensions is critical; failure to invest adequately in peace-building increases the odds that a country will relapse into conflict" (United Nations, 2004a: para 224). This call is echoed in *In Larger Freedom*, which reiterates the need for the PBC to assist countries attempting to make the transition from war to peace.

Despite difficulties in agreeing on the design, composition and institutional home of the PBC, it was finally established by the UN on 20 December 2005, with the concurrent adoption of General Assembly Resolution 60/180 and Security Council Resolution 1645/2005. Since its creation, the PBC has been an important body in mobilising and coordinating actors around a peacebuilding framework for the countries on its agenda (initially these were Sierra Leone and Burundi), collecting lessons learned on various aspects of peacebuilding, and playing an advisory role to countries that request its assistance.

However, in the immediate years following its creation, the workings of the PBC, PBF and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO)[25] were constrained by difficulties, including differing perspectives of the Member States, a lack of clarity over the role and timing of

[24] For more details about the proposed Peacebuilding Commission see United Nations, 2004: paragraph 261-269.
[25] The PBSO was established to enhance the coordination of the different UN agencies' peacebuilding work, and to assist and support the PBC and the administration of funds through the PBF.

assistance from the PBC and procedural aspects of how the PBC itself should operate (Berdal, 2009; Jenkins, 2010: 9-13). According to the UN Secretary-General, the UN's role is to "help countries emerging from conflict build democratic institutions and entrench democratic norms. Today, the UN's efforts to promote democracy are inseparable from our broader work for security, development and human rights" (UN Secretary-General, 2007, quoted in NUPI, 2009: 2). This sums up the thinking that lies behind and shapes the UN's response to contemporary challenges, and that has shaped and defined the dominant, liberal approach to peacebuilding over the past two decades.

2.2 The emergence of liberal peacebuilding

It has already been noted that the existing literature on peacebuilding in the early 1990s focused on the more technical or practical aspects of these processes. There was little attention given to analysing how peacebuilding fit into the global order, the normative assumptions held by the key peacebuilding actors, or the nature of the type of peacebuilding that began to emerge. The early analyses of post-Cold War peacebuilding efforts attempted to isolate the factors that could help the international community to effectively bring war to an end in places such as Angola and El Salvador (Crocker, Hampson and Aall, 1996 and 2001). Although these studies led to many useful policy recommendations and were the beginnings of a literature on peacebuilding, they also had many limitations (Baranyi, 2008: 9), and failed to fully question the assumptions, means and ends inherent in the newly emerging liberal peacebuilding consensus.

The UN's approach to peace operations has gone through several different generations, transforming from traditional peacekeeping in the 1960s into the liberal peacebuilding approach that is evident, and arguably dominant, today (Lund, 2003: 15). Since the end of the Cold War the international community has continued to be engaged in various complex peacebuilding processes around the world from Cambodia to Angola to Haiti. These

processes involve complex political, economic and social transitions and have become increasingly interventionist, in some cases even involving long-term UN-led transitional administrations.

Over the past decade, peacebuilding has received a growing amount of attention from scholars of international relations, and a body of work on the 'liberal peacebuilding consensus' has now emerged. This consensus has grown out of the UN's policy that was outlined in the previous section, as well as critical analyses of the dozens of conflict and post-conflict operations that have been carried out by the international community. Although frequently cited as a consensus, peacebuilding is a complex concept and there is by no means agreement on the nature, process or ends of these interventions (Heathershaw, 2008). Nevertheless, this thesis adopts the concept of liberal peacebuilding as used by many scholars to describe the dominant approach to peacebuilding undertaken by the UN. This section of the chapter will consider liberal peacebuilding in more detail, as well as providing an overview of the main critiques and limitations of this approach highlighted in the existing literature.

2.2.1 An overview of the liberal peacebuilding consensus

Liberal peacebuilding approaches are rooted in the historical experiences of Western Europe, and the belief in the universality of the liberal democratic thesis (Paris, 2004: 40-51). Indeed, peacebuilding, as it has developed throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, seeks to not just replicate Western norms and values but also the Western concept of the state-centric system: "There is a clear underlying liberal discourse that unites all attempts by liberal states acting in supposed unison in the international community to 'reconcile', 'reconstruct' or otherwise intervene in order to transform 'rogue' or 'failed' states, going back to at least 1914, and arguably well before that" (Williams, 2007: 542). The main values or principles underpinning the liberal approach to peacebuilding are democracy, the rule of law, human rights, development, and free and globalised markets. These principles reflect the values that formed the basis of the UN documents of the mid-1990s, and illustrate the widely-held belief that the

solutions to violent conflict could be found in the application of these fundamentally liberal assumptions (Baranyi, 2008: 6).

Indeed, one of the underlying tenets of the liberal peacebuliding approach is that by spreading democracy and good governance, violent conflict can be reduced or avoided all together. By adopting marketisation and democratisation as the building blocks of the liberal peace, these approaches assume a one-size-fits-all approach to security, governance and socioeconomic reform.[26] According to Paris, the key elements of the liberal peacebuilding approach are,

> promoting civil and political rights [...]; preparing and administering democratic elections; drafting national constitutions that codified civil and political rights; training or retraining police and justice officials in the appropriate behavior for state functionaries in a liberal democracy; promoting the development of independent 'civil society' organizations and the transformation of formerly warring groups into democratic political parties; encouraging the development of free-market economies by eliminating barriers to the free flow of capital and goods within and across a country's borders; and stimulating the growth of private enterprise while reducing the state's role in the economy (2004: 19).

Obviously the range, combination, and sequencing of peacebuilding projects is unique to each particular post-conflict context, but the above categorisations help to illustrate the breadth of activities undertaken by the UN in the liberal peacebuilding mold. Through its activities, the UN is able to institutionalise certain approaches, values and priorities through the provision of expert advice on how to implement peace negotiations and peace agreements; through conditionalities for continued post-conflict assistance that require certain types of actions and reforms; and through proxy governance and engagement in various aspects of the democratisation and marketisation process (Paris, 2002: 642-646). It is notable that southern or conflict-affected countries did not play a significant role in the articulation of the liberal peacebuilding approach or its emergence as a consensus within the UN.

Despite its relatively limited record of success, this continues to be the dominant way in which the international community responds to the challenge of contemporary conflict.

[26] These three areas will be explored in more detail both from a gender perspective (section 3.4) and subsequently in the context of the case study of Sierra Leone later in the thesis (chapter 6).

However, as this thesis will later argue, the reality is that even if not intended, this approach has consequences that are not always positive and it may in fact be inherently unable to deliver the kind of transformation to sustainable peace envisaged by many of its proponents. Although liberal peacebuilding has emerged as the consensus around which international actors shape their peacebuilding interventions, it should not be assumed to be an uncontested or 'ideal' form. Bellamy argues that although the underlying liberal agenda is not necessarily explicit and peace operations are presented as 'value-free', the reality of the past two decades reveals explicitly political, normative and culturally-relative assumptions about conflict and the building of peace (Bellamy, 2005: 19).

2.2.2 Critiquing liberal peacebuilding

As already stated, most of the early analyses on peacebuilding have focused on how it could be done better or more efficiently. What has not received enough attention are the assumptions, discourses, and normative values that underpin it, and indeed in whose interests peace is being built, and what kind of peace is being built. The lack of critical reflection and self-reflexivity is clearly one of the limitations of contemporary peacebuilding practice. As Bellamy states, "its instrumentalism causes it to overlook the role that politics plays in the construction of peace operations; leads it to portray a particular historical narrative which obscures many of the unlearnt lessons, simplifies the genesis of peace operations, and limits discussion of what role peace operations *ought* to fill in global politics by focusing on the classification of the roles they do fulfil" (Bellamy, 2005: 34).

One of the first main critiques of liberal peacebuilding was that although the ideas are essentially sound, the methods by which it is implemented are fundamentally flawed (Paris 1997; 2004). The core of this argument is that although the international community's peacekeeping and peacebuilding interventions have at times been useful in terms of actually ending the fighting and violence in civil conflicts, in many cases they have had adverse side effects, even undermining the very peace that the interventions are designed to support. This

is due to the inherent conflictual tendencies within the shift to democratic and capitalist systems, which can exacerbate social tensions and continued (or renewed) instability as post-conflict countries are often unable to deal with the polarisation and increased inequalities that such transitions can bring. Paris uses eight case studies (Namibia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Mozambique, Angola, Rwanda and Bosnia) to illustrate his argument that in all but one (Namibia) the reforms introduced as part of the peacebuilding intervention actually contributed to the further destabilisation of these countries (Paris, 2004).

Currently, the international community favours the rapid implementation of democratic reforms such as holding post-conflict elections and multi-party or inclusive decision-making structures, believing that these contribute to the consolidation of peace and eventual post-conflict stability. Elections, in particular, serve an important symbolic purpose, as well as beginning to plant notions of competition and legitimacy in the political institutions of the wartorn country.[27] However, in order for political democratisation and economic liberalisation processes to achieve these goals, it is essential that there is a corresponding institutional capacity to manage the societal tensions and conflict that may arise during the transition phase. In post-conflict contexts, this capacity is often sorely lacking, and liberalisation may therefore lead to polarisation, social cleavages, and disruption in the fragile peace. The international community, therefore, may need to play a role as a form of caretaker, or undertake a 'temporary directorship', which although potentially imperialistic, is, according to Paris, the short-term price of effective peacebuilding (Paris, 2001: 781).

Paris furthermore argues that, "successful peacebuilding, then, requires that the international community not shy away from acting 'illiberally' by constraining civil liberties and political activity in the short run, in order to build the institutional foundations for more peaceful and democratic societies in the long run" (2001: 766). He suggests that institutionalisation, not

[27] For a discussion of post-conflict democratisation, see Sisk, 2001: 785-800; Kumar, 1998; Lyons, 2002: 215-235.

liberalisation, should be the key priority in the post-conflict phase. In arguing for 'institutionalisation before liberalisation' (IBL), Paris suggests that in fact what may be necessary is a certain degree of illiberalisation while democratic and market values are being institutionalised which would keep possible conflicts in check, and only later should elections and free markets be brought in. However, the 'illiberal' peacebuilding that he suggests is necessary has serious political and ethical implications for many, especially marginalised groups, including women, whose rights may be even further curtailed and unrepresented. Furthermore, this approach would not necessarily address the problem that (neo)liberal approaches tend to prioritise economic growth at the expense of distributional equality, which can contribute to the underlying causes of conflict in the first place.

The experiences of interventions in countries such as El Salvador and Mozambique have illustrated the challenges donors face in terms of finding a balance between their desire to push for liberalisation and democratisation and the need to rebuild the institutional capacity of recipient governments to manage these transitions. As Carbonnier points out, "often critically short of expertise in macroeconomic management, domestic authorities have to wrestle with the competing demands of economic stabilisation and peacebuilding requirements. While the former requires drastic cuts in government expenditure, the latter implies increased public spending to cope with pressing requirements of the peace agenda" (1998: 14). The liberal economic agenda pushed by donor agencies often underestimates and simplifies the institutional limitations of wartorn countries in adequately managing the consequences of these stringent policies (Dzelilovic, 2000). The same goes for democratic reforms, where the pressure to promote inclusive polities may actually exacerbate societal conflicts. It could be argued that "the liberal peace is pursued by peacebuilding actors based on an unproven link between liberal modes of governance and peace, and that often 'illiberal' practices are employed to secure such a peace, which in turn actually reduces the potential for progressing towards a sustainable positive peace" (Peterson, 2010: 518).

Other scholars have adopted a more critical approach to liberal peacebuilding, arguing that the approach itself, rather than just the way it is applied, is problematic, or even illegitimate, and that the assumptions and priorities of the liberal approach need to be fundamentally reconsidered (Bellamy and Williams, 2005a: 6-7). Many critics argue that peace operations have been dominated by problem-solving approaches that privilege certain knowledge and experiences as relevant, and fail to reflect on or challenge the global structures that contribute to the problems the peace operations are designed to address in the first place.[28]

Peace operations do not operate in a vacuum or exist in isolation, but rather they are part of a wider context of global politics, and acknowledging this is central to a reconceptualisation of peace operations (Bellamy and Williams, 2005a: 2). The key implication of any dominant approach, in this case liberal peacebuilding, is that through its continued replication certain practices are rendered legitimate and others are not. Heathershaw claims that,

> Peacebuilding is overworked and under-theorised. Despite being used to mobilise significant political and economic resources for increasingly intrusive third-party interventions, peacebuilding is apparently little more than a composite of neoliberal problem-solving strategies – a form of praxis rather than a theory or concept (2008: 598-9).

While terms such as conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding have been continually debated, the nature of 'peace' is rarely discussed (OECD, 2001a: 86; Kumar, 1997: 2-4; UN, 1996). Thus although much work has been done on analysing how peace can be brought about or what prevents peace from being preserved or built, there is much less written about how peace itself as a concept should be understood. A discursive link is apparent between peace and liberal democracy in much of the policy documents that inform the liberal peacebuilding approach (Heathershaw, 2008: 601). Indeed, there is a far richer body of literature in international relations concerning the nature of war, as opposed to the equally (or arguably even more) relevant concept of peace. This is despite

[28] Cox's seminal article published in 1981 outlines the difference between problem-solving and critical approaches. The edited volume by Bellamy and Williams (2005) is a useful reference point for examples of critical approaches to peace operations.

the rich discipline of peace research that began with the work of Johan Galtung and his concepts of negative peace, positive peace, and structural violence, which are clearly relevant to peacebuilding strategies.[29]

An important contribution in this regard is the work of Oliver Richmond, who has deepened the analysis of the concept of peace. His starting point is the problem that most analyses focus on the ways or methods through which peacebuilding is carried out, rather than what kind of peace is built or the motivations of those who are doing the peacebuilding (Richmond, 2005.). In short, for Richmond, peace is an unproblematized concept. His model outlines three different understandings of peace rooted in the various theoretical traditions predominant in international relations, ranging from the realist tradition of viewing the balance of power and presence of a hegemonic state power as central to peace towards more critical approaches that argue for an emancipatory understanding of the concept rooted in social justice and interdependence. The three 'models' of the liberal peace project are conservative, orthodox and emancipatory (Richmond, 2005a). The latter in particular will be returned to in chapter 7 when looking more closely at women's peacebuilding work in Sierra Leone.

These three approaches can be present during any one peacebuilding operation to different degrees depending on the power, interests and capacities of the main peacebuilding actors, however he cautions that the competing approaches can actually undermine each other causing a breakdown in peacebuilding. The conservative end of the spectrum is more top-down, interventionist and state-focused, whereas the emancipatory model focuses on local ownership and bottom-up approaches, and has a stronger concern for social justice. Orthodox

[29] Galtung, 1969: 167-191. Galtung argues that the absence of 'personal violence' does not imply the existence of any kind of positive condition. The absence of 'structural violence', on the other hand, implies the existence of social justice and egalitarian distributions of power or, in other words, a positive peace. Although in their policies, donors discuss the need for 'sustainable peace' and often imply a concern to eliminate all sources of conflict within society, their activities are rarely designed to challenge societal power structures. Thus, although donor agencies emphasise positive peace at the conceptual level, in practice the focus is usually on the establishment of negative, rather than positive, peace. See also Banks' four concepts of peace (1987: 269).

models, where most current peacebuilding interventions lie, fall somewhere in the middle where there is still a certain normative assumption about the universality of the liberal approach (Richmond, 2005a: 211-219).

The essence of Richmond's argument is that peace needs to be explored in more depth, and should not be assumed to be a universal or ideal end-state. Rather it is subjective and political, and even a 'liberal invention' (2005a: 9). Indeed, the way that peacebuilding is approached by policymakers within the international community reflects this idea that peace has "an ontological stability enabling it to be understood, defined, and thus created" (ibid: 5). In reality, "one must take note of who describes peace, and how, as well as who constructs it, and why" (ibid: xii). This is a key point that will be returned to later in the thesis, where it will be argued that what the international community calls peace may in fact not be peace for everyone, and particularly not for women.

In extending his discussion of peace to the practice of liberal peacebuilding, Richmond argues that the result is in fact a 'virtual peace'. This virtual peace is more visible to those who are imposing it from outside than to those who are experiencing it on the inside. The virtual liberal peace arises because the reality of implementing liberal peacebuilding fails to result in a successful transformation towards security, rule of law, economic opportunities, respect for human rights and good governance. Richmond argues that the virtual peace stage is temporary but indefinite, and can result in the capture of state institutions by an elite and ongoing illiberal rule for the remaining masses (Richmond and Franks, 2007: 30-1). The result is that the dominant liberal peacebuilding approach fails to bring about long-term sustainable governance and peace. Indeed, according to Richmond, the control over resources for liberal peacebuilding is a new source of power and domination in post-conflict societies and thus these processes can ultimately drive and contribute to ongoing inequality and conflict. This concept of virtual peace is particularly useful, and later in the thesis I will

borrow and adapt this terminology to argue that what is in fact built by the UN in Sierra Leone is a gendered virtual peace.

Another important dimension of the critiques of the liberal peacebuilding approach is that as it is currently practised it fails to prioritise local ownership and bottom-up strategies. Engagement with local actors, both to build on and improve their capacities, as well as to ensure a sense of ownership and legitimacy, is an important dimension of peacebuilding. There is a large body of literature demonstrating the importance of participatory development processes to long-term development success, and this remains true for attempts to build peace in wartorn societies (Chopra and Hohe, 2004). Nevertheless, the majority of peacebuilding operations have, in fact, been donor-biased and dominated by the interests of external actors (Haugerudbraaten, 1998: 6-7). Bringing in local actors requires time and considerable effort and expertise on the part of donors, and can be made extremely difficult in the context of weak or repressive governments that do not favour wide participation. Nevertheless, local actors may have knowledge and expertise that could lead to an alternative model or path to sustainable peace.

Indeed, experience of past peacebuilding interventions has shown that if inclusive peacebuilding processes are adopted early, then it is more likely that they will be continued throughout the transition, ultimately leading to more sustainable advances towards peace (OECD, 2001a). The need to integrate a wide cross-section of the population is often forsaken in the interests of 'efficiency' or 'stability', or simply because it is easier for donor officials to work with the government representatives or other leaders who are already in place. However, to do so can have long-term effects on how the aid is used, which groups within society it helps, which needs are addressed over others, and who ultimately has a stake in the reconstruction process. As Boyce points out, "to speak of 'aid to postconflict countries' is to use shorthand that obscures the fact that aid flows not to countries as a whole, but rather to specific groups and individuals. Any influx of external resources invariably affects the

distribution of income, wealth, and power in the recipient country. The distributional effects of aid can ease social tensions or deepen them, reinforce the peace process or undermine it" (2000: 372).

Some of the peacebuilding failures of the past two decades can be attributed to the failure to promote local ownership and to be sensitive to the local contexts. In contemporary peacebuilding there is a tendency to value universal knowledge over local knowledge, and international legitimacy over domestic sources of this legitimacy (NUPI, 2009). From the analysis of the key UN documents it is evident that legitimacy for peacebuilding stems from the normative frameworks that exist at an international level which in turn inform the liberal model. It then becomes problematic that local perceptions, beliefs and norms are expected to fit into this mold rather than themselves shaping the agenda and nature of the peace being built (Sending, 2009: 3). The liberal model is then what provides peacebuilders with the legitimacy – it becomes self-reinforcing. In peacebuilding, "external actors assume the position of experts, and legitimacy is believed to follow from the assumed normative force and universal acceptance of the international standards that underpin peacebuilding. This leads to a relative marginalization of local knowledge and of local sources of legitimacy" (Sending, 2009: 3). These issues of ownership and legitimacy will be returned to later in the case study of Sierra Leone in relation to how gender issues are considered.

There are also critics who question the very legitimacy of the liberal peacebuilding approach. They have argued that the international community has used peacebuilding as a means to transmit the norms and principles of liberal market democracy to wartorn countries. While the record of liberal peacebuilding has not been very positive over the past decades, "the absence of credible, coherent alternatives leaves the basic tenets of liberal internationalism unchallenged to such an extent that peacebuilding often comes to resemble a bureaucratic exercise in installing the basic pillars of the liberal democratic state" (Donais, 2009: 7-8). In the quest to recreate or reconstruct a liberal model, and peacebuilders themselves are

constructed as the experts with the knowledge of how to build peace. It is this knowledge claim which serves to reinforce the legitimacy of the liberal peacebuilding consensus, leading it to be defined in top-down liberal terms (Sending, 2009: 2).

In order to be institutionalised, liberal democratic principles first require effective states, a task which then requires the support of the peacebuilding industry, and further serves to legitimate its involvement. This 'pathologisation' of post-conflict societies (Hughes and Pupavac, 2005) then entrenches the liberal approach to peacebuilding. By portraying and reinforcing these societies as dysfunctional, irrational or unstable, external actors are able to determine the parameters for rescuing and reconstructing them along liberal lines. To this extent, it may also entail an explicitly transformative agenda (Munro, 2001: 44). Therefore, what is being built, by whom, and why, become extremely important questions.

More radical critiques of current approaches to peacebuilding do exist. There are many scholars who assert that the current approach is something akin to neo-colonialism or the attempted globalisation of Western political and economic order at the expense of the conflict-affected countries themselves.[30] Some of these critiques are similar to those informed by Southern perspectives and the post-colonial literature that suggest globalisation and the spread of capitalism further marginalises the developing world and weakens those governments' capacities for self-governance and peaceful development (Bendaña, 2003: Duffield, 2001; Moore, 2000).

In summary, there are several reasons why the liberal peacebuilding consensus has been found to be problematic. First, peace and security are conceptualised in a certain way that informs what and who is prioritised. Reflecting this, the UN's approach to liberal

[30] Given that it focuses on liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminism, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider these radical critiques in more detail, but I would suggest consulting Barkawi and Laffey, 1999; Chandler, 2004; Duffield 2001 and 2007; Jabri, 2006 for a general overview of some of the main points that they raise.

peacebuilding is based on the notion that a universal, ideal peace rooted in Western liberal assumptions can be recreated in conflict-affected contexts. It must be remembered that peacebuilding "is inextricable from a larger regime of knowledge, power, interests and normative considerations that infuse development agencies and provide the dominant visions of the future into which populations emerging from conflicts – or simply living in the South – must fit" (Munro, 2001: 3). Unpacking these regimes is essential to understanding why donors behave as they do.

Second, as a result of the top-down, one-size-fits-all way that peacebuilding is conceptualised and practiced, the resulting 'peace' is often virtual, and does not allow space for critical reflection of power dynamics, the input of local actors, or any questioning of the kind of peace that is being built. The liberal peacebuilding consensus entails specific measures to restore security, establish democracy and create a liberal market economy, where these processes are seen as 'solutions' to the 'problem' of violent conflict. These approaches fail to acknowledge the context specificity of conflict-affected regions or the inherent tensions and challenges to existing power dynamics that can result from their implementation. While problem-solving approaches can help to address issues of effectiveness, they obscure the fact that it is usually the interests, values and priorities of the interveners that shape peace operations.

Finally, following on from this last point, the legitimacy of the liberal peacebuilding consensus itself is questionable. The top-down and outside-in nature of the UN's liberal peacebuilding approach means that there is rarely space for the empowerment and involvement of local actors. This is despite the valuable peacebuilding work being done at the community level, and outside of the UN sphere of influence and awareness.

In later chapters, this thesis will develop these points by exploring how the interests, values and priorities of the UN in relation to gender issues have shaped the possibilities, boundaries

and potential for addressing gender inequalities in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, it will look beyond the UN, to explore what local actors are doing and what insights could be gained from their bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding. A feminist perspective on peacebuilding may be a step forward in this direction given the ability of these approaches to ask unconventional questions, seek explanations in unconventional places, and their underlying objective of challenging unequal power relations within society. It is to this that the next section now turns.

2.3 Bringing a feminist approach to conflict and peacebuilding

From the previous analysis it is clear that the development of peacebuilding, both in practice and in theory, has been almost exclusively gender-blind, and has done little to engage feminist theorising despite the potential explanatory value that such approaches offer. However, this does not mean that there are no analyses of the gendered assumptions or consequences of these processes. Despite the marginalisation of gender issues in international relations theory, since the 1990s, feminist theorists and women's rights activists have been drawing attention to how men and women are drawn into conflict differently, through their various roles, responsibilities, and access to resources and power (Goldstein, 2001; Moser and Clark, 1998; Jacobs, Jacobson and Marchbank, 2000). This section will introduce some of the insights from feminist theorists to draw attention to the gender dimensions of conflict and peacebuilding that have been largely marginalised from the theory and analysis of peacebuilding presented thus far.

Feminist theorists tend to apply a more bottom-up approach to understanding violence, insecurity and peace, and take social relations as one of the principal categories of analysis (Porter, 2008; Hamber et al, 2006). This positions feminist theory well to provide additional insights to the critiques of liberal peacebuilding. Feminist analyses can lead to more nuanced understandings of peace and security that challenge the binary discourses of

passive/victim/domestic woman and aggressive/warrior/statesman and the way that masculinities and femininities are shaped by the gendered peace and security discourse. The experiences of conflict-affected contexts around the world provide ample evidence that although the sources of insecurity facing men and women often differ, these gender-related differences are rarely acknowledged. Despite the broadening and deepening of the study of conflict and peacebuilding, they are still not considered as legitimate issues (Blanchard, 2003; Hansen, 2000; Hudson, 2005; McKay, 2004).

In examining the concepts used in peacebuilding, it is important to be constantly aware of whose experiences are being included in their definition, and what kinds of gendered assumptions are hidden in supposedly neutral concepts. The public/private, male/female dichotomies that exist in all societies reinforce the perception of women as objects and of certain issues affecting women as non-political, and post-conflict contexts are no exception (Enloe, 2002: 26). Feminist approaches force us to the see the people and issues that are there, but not always visible through the lens of traditional approaches to conflict, peace and security.

The impact conflict has on both men and women is complex, multifaceted and often negative, and scholars and practitioners have sought to demonstrate how and why women are often disproportionately affected by violence and its aftermath. It is, however, important to stress that although women suffer during conflict in specific ways, this is not due to an inherent weakness, but rather a consequence of their position in society and gendered power inequalities that can exacerbate their vulnerability (Pankhurst, 1999: 7). Several volumes of feminist analyses and empirical studies of the experiences of women in conflict-affected regions have drawn attention to the way that the gendered impact and experiences of conflict are manifested (Bouta, Frerks and Bannon, 2005; Byrne, 1996; Cockburn, 2003; Goldstein, 2001; Jacobs, Jacobson and Marchbank, 2000; Lindsey, 2001; Lorentzen and Turpin, 1998).

Firstly, as a result of their gender roles and relations and the mobilisation of gender identities during conflict, men and women are drawn into and are affected differently by conflict in complex and multiple ways (El-Bushra and Mukarubuga, 1995; Mazurana and McKay, 1999; Sorensen, 1998; Cockburn and Zarkov, 2002; Meintjes et al, 2002; McKay and Mazurana, 2004; Moser and Clark, 2002, Lindsey, 2001: 23-32). Historically, women have mainly been perceived as passive victims of conflict, whereas men are viewed to play active roles as combatants, leaders or protectors. However, the reality is clearly more complex, and there is a need to challenge essentialist assumptions about the roles of men and women in conflict if peacebuilding processes are to be effective in supporting the real needs and interests of the population.[31]

An important contribution of the literature on gender, peace and security has therefore been to explore the reality of men and women's multiple roles and identities before, during and after violent conflict. Just as women and men can both become victims of conflict, through injury and death, displacement, disempowerment and in particular, through sexual violence, both can play a range of different roles in relation to violent conflict including as combatants, freedom fighters, bush wives, spies and couriers, peacekeepers, inciters of violence or heads of households (Porter, 2007: 3). These multiple roles also exist in the peacebuilding phase.

Both women and men play another key role that is often overlooked in the literature, which is simply that of survivor. While some individuals are involved directly or indirectly in carrying out or supporting violence, and many more others personally experience different forms of victimisation, the overwhelming majority of people just need to find a way to survive in conflict-affected contexts. Women in particular need to continue to go about their daily

[31] In many conflicts, such as those in Eritrea, Sri Lanka and El Salvador, large numbers of women have served in the military and in rebel movements, in some cases making up as much as 30% of fighting forces (Anderlini, 2007: 93-99). Women may take up arms by choice or by force, and in addition to direct combat roles they can also play a variety of roles in support of the fighting forces such as cooks, porters, spies or sex slaves. Many of these roles have been invisible or undocumented, with the result that they are not acknowledged when fighting comes to an end and women fall through the gaps of peacebuilding initiatives targeting former combatants (McKay and Mazurana, 2004).

business, be that travelling to the marketplace, working in the fields, engaging in petty trade to earn a subsistence income, or caring for children or other household members. One of the important elements of acknowledging the diversity of roles women and men play during the conflict is to avoid the pitfall of viewing them as homogenous groups. For example, women who were combatants during the war have very different needs and interests from women who were displaced by the fighting, and so acknowledging the complexity and multitude of these roles is critical to avoiding blanket policy prescriptions or projects that are then designed for the peacebuilding phase (Heidi Hudson, 2009: 296).

Secondly, violent conflict can challenge traditional gender relations, in particular the division of labour. Women's responsibilities as carers and heads of households often grow as a result of conflict, and this extends into the peacebuilding phase (Kumar, 2001: 15-17). These increased responsibilities come about as a result of men being displaced or fleeing the violence and risk of abduction, being drawn into the fighting, or as a result of them being injured and killed. This can lead women to become the main breadwinners, and to take on new forms of waged labour in both the formal and informal sectors, adding a further burden on top of the domestic responsibilities that they may have already had pre-war (Bouta, Frerks and Bannon, 2005: 89).

Whilst these new economic roles can at times be empowering for women, there is also the risk that men's identities as the 'provider' are undermined. This is particularly the case where there is high unemployment during or following the conflict, and this can lead to increased levels of domestic violence and violence with small arms when men return to their communities (Bouta, Frerks and Bannon, 2005: 148-150). Furthermore, the additional roles that conflict can bring to bear on women are not always empowering and are often an additional burden on their lives, as they often take these roles on in addition to their existing responsibilities (Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 2002: 2).

In circumstances of displacement and instability, although both men and women have to adapt to the loss of social networks and the destruction of traditional coping strategies, women can feel this loss more acutely due to their greater involvement in and responsibility for the day-to-day demands of family and community life (Turshen and Twagiramariya, 1998; Lindsey, 2001). Indeed, the ability of individuals to survive and adapt to changing circumstances during and after conflict is influenced by the degree of their access to power structures and resources. It is in this respect that women are particularly disadvantaged, as they face more difficulty than men in adapting to transformed social, political, and economic relations due to the fact that they are often excluded from decision-making processes and have fewer rights and access to resources (El-Bushra, 2004: 169).

Finally, gender identities and particularly the forms of militarised masculinity that become prevalent in conflict settings, can have extremely negative impacts on women. One of the most visible forms this takes is in the high rate of sexual violence, and in particular rape, that women often have to endure.[32] Rape has now been recognised as a weapon of war, and although it is rhetorically considered as an issue of international peace and security, the paucity of the prevention and response to the horrific rates of sexual violence in conflict-affected countries indicates otherwise.[33] It can be understood as a manifestation of the unequal power relations that exist between men and women, where women's bodies become objectified and become 'territory' during violent conflict (Kelly, 2000: 50). Too often, women are offered little assistance to deal with the consequences of sexual violence, and the general failure to prosecute those responsible for the majority of human rights abuses committed against women during times of violent conflict results in little accountability for these crimes. Sexual violence is used as a way of harming and instilling fear not only in individual women but also in whole communities, and is linked to the destruction of social

[32] It is important to recognise that men and boys can also be, and are, victims of sexual violence during conflict; however the scale on which women experience rape during conflict far exceeds this.
[33] In June 2008, the UN Security Council adopted resolution 1820 on sexual violence in conflict, which is one of the strongest statements on this issue. As a result, some action is being taken and the issue of sexual violence has moved up the policy agenda in the past few years.

order (Sideris, 2001; Kelly, 2000). That peace can be said to exist in contexts where such cultures of violence exist even after the fighting ends is one of the paradoxes of the UN's approach to peacebuilding.

It is critical that the potentially negative impacts of conflict on both men and women are understood. Taking a narrow gender approach that only focuses on women can not only disadvantage men themselves, but also has knock-on effects for efforts to support and empower women. Displacement and unemployment can be particularly dislocating experiences for men, and can challenge their sense of identity within their communities (Bouta, Frerks and Bannon, 2005: 91). While men make up the overwhelming majority of combatants, they too face serious challenges in reintegrating into society after conflict, and often experience marginalisation and disempowerment. Involvement in fighting forces during conflict can influence the underlying levels of violence in 'post-conflict' times and the ways in which masculinities and femininities are understood, and so is particularly relevant to understandings of gender, conflict and peacebuilding.

By the same token, the post-conflict or peacebuilding phase is also gendered, and men and women experience peacebuilding in specific and different ways as a result of socially constructed and assigned gender roles. However, these should not be seen as fixed, and in throwing gender relations into flux, conflict can potentially open up new spaces for (re)negotiation of these roles. As social constructions, gender identities, roles and relations can be transformed, and importantly for feminists, this creates the possibility for the empowerment and emancipation of women. Men and women can face both costs and opportunities when they cross the boundaries of what are perceived to be appropriate gender roles, but peacebuilding can potentially open up the 'political space' for a new gender order (Pankhurst, 2004: 12-19). As Cockburn asks,

> [t]he militarization of a country during war, and the differential impact of armed conflict on women and men, in some ways deepens traditional gender complementarity and inequality, while in others it can be observed to disturb old

> patterns, forcing new roles and capabilities in women. In the postwar moment, does a society revert to the *status quo ante*? Or does the hegemony of militarised masculinity perpetuate the gender relations of wartime? Or, in the social turmoil of the postwar moment, is an opportunity seized to transform gender power relations in the interests of women? (2002: 68-9)

Given that peacebuilding itself is a relatively new field, the scholarly literature has only recently begun to analyse women's contributions to peacebuilding processes around the world.[34] Much of this work has emerged from empirical studies of contemporary peace operations, where it became apparent that women were being left out of some of the most critical peacebuilding processes such as DDR and post-conflict elections. Many of these studies were based on the work and research being done by the UN, NGOs and women's rights activists (Anderlini, 20001a; International Alert, 2002 and 2004; Pankhurst, 1999; Rehn and Johnson Sirleaf, 2002; UN, 2002a).

The few academic studies that do exist on gender and peacebuilding have tended to approach the issue from specific perspectives such as issues related to gender justice (Pankhurst, 2008a; Chinkin, 2004), feminist ethics, justice and reconciliation (Porter, 2008), gender and peacekeeping (Olsson 1999; Cockburn and Zarkov, 2002) or more generally on how women and gender issues can be involved in the different aspects of building peace such as elections, DDR or peace processes (Anderlini, 2007; Corrin, 2000; Puechguirbal, 2004). Some studies have also considered the structural obstacles to women's participation or the gendered biases of the peacebuilding process and actors (Karame, 2004; Kandiyoti, 2005; Rees, 2002;

[34] However, there is a strong tradition of feminist writing on peace, ethics and more recently, security studies, as well as the gendered discourses of the state and nationhood that have informed the emergent literature on gender and peacebuilding (Brock Utne, 1989; Cockburn, 1998; Elshtain, 1987; Hoogensen and Rottem; Sjoburg, 2010). For example, some scholars and activists suggest that women possess certain qualities that make them inherently suited to fostering peace within their communities. These works draw on the rich literature on women's roles as 'natural peacemakers' linked to maternal instincts or the ethics of care (Reardon, 1993; Ruddick 1989). There is therefore a perceived affinity in some of the literature between a feminist and a peace politics, but this risks essentialising women and potentially further marginalising them from the security discourse. These arguments can however undermine the empowerment of women by laying them bare to the counter-argument that if they are so suited to informal peacebuilding, then perhaps they are not so suited to formal political negotiations or security issues. In traditional IR literature, the emphasis that is placed on women as victims and the gendered discourse around masculinity and 'protecting the nation' has historically devalued the important roles that women also play as actors and positive change agents in their homes, communities and countries (Enloe, 2000).

Strickland and Duvuury, 2003; Whitworth, 2004: 119-150), as well as the ways in which peacebuilding could intentionally or unintentionally reinforce gender inequality or have negative impacts on women (Olsson et al, 2004).

The policies and decisions that are made by peacebuilding actors are informed by certain gendered assumptions, and peacebuilding processes themselves also necessarily have a gendered impact on the context in which they are applied. This occurs both in terms of their different consequences on individual men, women and communities, and in terms of their potential to intentionally or unintentionally influence the gender roles and relations of those communities (Chinkin, 2004: 32). The ways that men and women are affected by and involved in peacebuilding processes will be explored in more detail in chapter 3 and in relation to Sierra Leone in chapter 6, building on some of these analyses but making a more direct and explicit link with the liberal peacebuilding literature.

An important factor to note is that women may not necessarily benefit from, or be seeking, a 're'construction of the previous state, and they may not be able to access and therefore influence the formal spaces where these decisions are being made. Much of the peacebuilding work that women do is pushed into the informal sector, and they are too often seen as victims or objects rather than subjects (Porter, 2008: 7). Nevertheless, this work constitutes a valuable resource for women's individual empowerment, those living alongside them, and also the international community and other actors who seek to support and end violent conflict. Women's organisations in particular can be a valuable resource in terms of their knowledge about community-level needs and in the access that they have to rural or marginalised populations, as well as being a mechanism through which to empower women (Kumar, 2001: 205).

Feminists working in the peacebuilding field have long emphasised the need to involve women who are active at the grassroots level as well as the benefits that building on local

capacities and resources brings (Pankhurst with Piza-Lopez, 2000; Marshall, 2000: 9). Women are actively engaged in myriad forms of active peacebuilding during times of violent conflict, from initiating early warning mechanisms in the Solomon Islands to negotiating with warlords and government forces in Liberia, to developing their own recommendations for peace negotiations in Sudan and Somalia (Anderlini, 2007).

Women can successfully mobilise other groups of women or members of their communities more broadly, in demanding an end to violence or to bring about peace. In many contexts, they have also effectively led peace movements that bridge across religious, ethnic or other identity divides (Cockburn, 2003). In essence, therefore, the critical point emerging from this body of evidence is not to suggest that women are inherently peace-loving or that their own peacebuilding approaches are unproblematic, but rather to assert that women must be seen as subjects, not victims or objects (Porter, 2008: 7). Feminist theorists and activists argue that women should be acknowledged as active players and agents for change during peacebuilding processes. Indeed, peacebuilding and development processes can offer opportunities for those who suffered during conflict, and can present a space to support the more equitable redistribution of power, resources and influence in households, communities and society as a whole.

2.4 Conclusion

Many of the critiques of liberal peacebuilding centre on its failure to incorporate local perceptions and needs, and the fact that it tends to be administered in a 'top-down' way by international peacebuilding experts. The failure to involve women in reconstruction may be explained by the need to engage with recipients quickly to ensure rapid disbursal of funds, and the fact that it is usually men who hold leadership and decision-making positions, thereby providing a ready-made structure for engagement. Women (and men) may also lack the capacity or skills to enable them to engage effectively, and donors are often reluctant to invest

in the longer-term capacity-building of the local population. However, beyond issues of convenience, it also becomes a question of who has the authority to influence peacebuilding processes: "to what extent do those people who wield militarised power become, in everyone else's eyes, the people to whom one must gain access if one is going to have an impact on public affairs?" (Strickland and Duvvury, 2003: 10). Therefore, when considering questions of ownership and participation, it is important to examine whether or not both men and women have the opportunity to engage in peacebuilding. To consider the 'local population' as a homogenous group risks overlooking these important issues, and exactly who is included in the mainstream reconstruction processes is something that deserves closer scrutiny.

Critiques that point to the need to build on local capacities and to include both men and women in peacebuilding processes are crucially important in terms of exposing gender biases within donor agencies' post-conflict strategies. Although this is usually a stated priority, in practice it tends to fall by the wayside. The failure to see inclusiveness as an essential ingredient in peacebuilding means that the resources, expertise, and time required to foster truly participatory approaches are rarely found (Pearce, 2004: 254-260).

Thus not only do the gendered biases in the liberal peacebuilding consensus lead to limited impact in empowering women and addressing gender inequality, it can actually have detrimental effects due to the fact that when the international community fails to turn a critical eye on gendered structures and power relations, problematic assumptions about the construction of and role of gender result. While violent conflict can destabilise gender roles and relations, peacebuilding processes can also contribute to their reconfiguration, both positively and negatively. These effects can happen either intentionally or unintentionally, and therefore it is critical to apply a gender perspective to the design and delivery of peacebuilding programmes.

Women often do not necessarily benefit from the peace dividend that can arise at the end of violent conflict, and may be overlooked in peacebuilding programmes or prevented from accessing and participating in them. This creates the 'gendered virtual peace', where not only is the peace itself an illusion, but the peace is said to exist despite the continuation and at times, exacerbation, of gender-differentiated insecurities and needs. This concept will be returned to throughout the thesis as a helpful conceptual tool for illustrating the many and complex ways that the UN's approach to peacebuilding fails to acknowledge the reality of men and women living in conflict zones.

The next chapter will trace the policy developments related to gender and peacebuilding in order to understand the liberal feminist assumptions that lie at the root of these approaches, and to situate the UN's gender and peacebuilding agenda within the context of the broader liberal peacebuilding consensus.

CHAPTER 3. GENDER AND PEACEBUILDING IN POLICY AND PRACTICE: THE EVOLUTION OF A LIBERAL FEMINIST APPROACH

The previous chapter outlined some of the policy developments and events that led to the development of the liberal peacebuilding approach, as well as the theoretical literature on peacebuilding and gender, conflict and security. The purpose of this chapter is to pick up on the final section on gender and peacebuilding and trace the evolution of the UN's approach to mainstreaming gender in policy and practice. Although it is only within the last decade that gender issues have been explicitly on the international community's peace and security agenda, there is a much longer history of advocacy and momentum on these issues.

The first section of the chapter will briefly explore the early efforts to integrate gender into the development and human rights fields, also outlining the relevance of the human security approach to the gender and peacebuilding policies that began to emerge in the late 1990s. The second section traces the process that led to the adoption of SCR 1325, which represented the first time the UN had taken issues relating to gender and peacebuilding seriously and still represents the most extensive articulation of the UN's approach to these issues. The final two sections analyse developments following the adoption of SCR 1325 through to the end of 2007, making the case that a particular kind of gender agenda has emerged. This agenda is based on liberal feminist assumptions, similar to many of those evident in the liberal peacebuilding approach, illustrated in the way that gender issues have been integrated into security, governance and economic reforms.

It is reasonable to argue that at the outset, the various actors within the emerging peacebuilding industry showed little concern or sensitivity to the role of gender issues in peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Gender equality is not mentioned as one of the 'essential complements' to effective peacebuilding in the Brahimi Report, and indeed the

word 'gender' features only eight times in the 74 pages. Seven of these times it was in reference to the need to ensure 'fair geographical and gender distribution' in the various UN operations, and once was to emphasise that all UN personnel should be sensitive to gender and cultural differences.[35] There is no mention of gender at all in the *Agenda for Peace*, and women only feature once in their 'traditional' place of being lumped with children as the 'more vulnerable group' in society (United Nations, 1992a: para 81). Additionally, only two of the ten Brahimi Report panel members were women.

Nevertheless, the emphasis that human security places on the individual, coupled with the broadening definition of peacebuilding that was laid out in UN policy during the 1990s, in theory provided a potential opening to improve the integration of gender issues into the UN's peacebuilding operations. Increased sensitisation to the structural causes of conflict and the multiple sources of insecurity that exist in the contemporary global context should logically justify bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding that are sensitive to gender-differentiations in experience, needs, opportunities, resources and rights. Although many non-governmental organisations, women's groups and feminist theorists appreciated this and produced countless documents that reaffirmed the fundamental importance of gender equality to sustainable peace, as this chapter will show, the impact on the mainstream of UN peacebuilding policy was minimal, despite the gradual (and marginal) development of a gender and peacebuilding agenda.

3.1 Women, gender and development

In order to properly understand the evolution of the 'gender and peacebuilding agenda', it is necessary to put it in the context of a process that began several decades before with the first UN World Conference on Women in 1975, and the early efforts to integrate first a focus on women and then a gender perspective into the development and human rights fields. SCR

[35] UN, 2000c. These references occur on pages 11, 32, 33, 39, 41, 62, 71, and 72.

1325 and the policy frameworks that have built on it did not emerge spontaneously, rather they represented the culmination of ongoing advocacy, research, activism and field-based evidence that argued for the need to recognise the myriad and complex ways in which gender relations affected and were affected by armed conflict and efforts to build a sustainable peace.

3.1.1 From WID to GAD to gender mainstreaming

Although women and gender issues have been historically marginalised from peace and security issues, bodies of the UN such as the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the General Assembly (GA) have taken on the advancement of women as a critical concern from the organisation's earliest stages, albeit in an ad hoc and limited way. From the early 1970s onwards, and particularly during the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985), academics, policy-makers and development practitioners all began to look for explanations why economic growth and productivity were lagging despite the concerted development efforts of the previous decade.

Poverty appeared to be widespread, and increasing rather than diminishing; and even where development projects had had some degree of success, men consistently benefited more than women (Anderson, 1993: 7).[36] It was posited that women could play a productive, as well as reproductive, role in society, and that the main impediment to them doing so was their unequal access to resources (Razavi and Miller, 1995a). A new strategy dubbed the 'women in development' (WID) approach emerged which aimed to make women more visible, through targeting them at the field-level with specific projects and training staff to be more gender-sensitive, while institutionalising these changes within organisations through the creation of WID units.

However, despite its initial momentum as a new development strategy, WID was criticised for simply creating special programmes targeted towards women that did not help them to

[36] Two of the seminal works on these issues are Boserup, 1970 and Elson, 1991.

overcome marginalisation from the mainstream of development work and for neglecting to assess the power inequalities and gendered social relations that limited the opportunities and choices that women had (Razavi and Miller, 1995a: 5-10). In response to these limitations, focus shifted to gender and development (GAD) as a new mechanism for improving on WID theory by examining and questioning existing social structures, and how these led to differentiated development outcomes for men and women (Connelly et al, 2000). In other words, it focused on the position, as well as the condition, of women, opening up new opportunities to re-examine gendered power structures. It also signified a movement away from women as a target group and towards gender equality as a new strategic goal for sustainable development. In this sense, it extended beyond the 'add women and stir' approach of the WID years, and opened up the possibility of addressing issues related to power, inequality of resources and opportunities, and discriminating social structures.

Also linked to the development of gender and peacebuilding approaches is the concept of gender mainstreaming, as defined in chapter 1.1.4. It evolved in the 1990s largely as a result of the GAD policies that had been adopted by the international community and was an attempt to bring gender issues to the front and centre of all development policies and programs. Theoretically, mainstreaming can involve both integrationist as well as more transformative agenda-setting goals, and ideally the strategies work in tandem (Jahan, 1995). However, despite the strategy's potentially more radical approach, the reality is that in practice, gender mainstreaming has been interpreted as a largely integrationist approach by the UN. When thinking about gender mainstreaming it is necessary to be realistic about what such a strategy can achieve. As a concept it lacks clarity, and within the UN there has been little attempt to define ways to measure or assess it as a process. Gender mainstreaming is also often criticised for leading to the 'adding in' of women or gender issues at the end, rather than gender becoming a lens through which to understand and design projects (Hafner-Burton and Pollack, 2002; von Braunmühl, 2002).

The way that gender is applied often means that the critical intent of the concept is lost, and it becomes a 'technocratic' exercise that is more concerned with the process than the more transformative end goal to which many feminists adhere (Baden and Goetz, 1997). Gender mainstreaming can also lead to gender becoming a synonym for women, where the focus is on adding in women's needs, losing the relational aspects of gender, power and ideology and the roots of the structural subordination of women. Southern feminists have often accused WID and GAD of being Western concepts that bear little relevance to the reality of and the challenges facing men and women in developing countries (Afshar, ed, 1991; Marchand and Parpart, eds, 1995; Mohanty, Russo and Torres, 1991). Certainly, gender and women are not uniform groups. Therefore the question of whose vision of gender equality to mainstream, and how to mainstream it (if mainstreaming even is the answer), are issues that will be returned to later through the lens of the case study of Sierra Leone.

3.1.2 Contributions from the human rights field

In addition to the contributions from those working on gender and development issues, advances related to women's human rights were also important precursors to the more recent work on gender and peacebuilding. Although equal rights for men and women are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the adoption of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 marked a turning point for the inclusion of women's rights within the human rights framework. CEDAW focuses in particular on discrimination against women, encompassing a range of issues from addressing violence against women to alleviating the barriers to women's participation in the public sphere.

There is one striking element in particular in the content of CEDAW that is worth briefly mentioning, as although challenges in implementation and lack of accountability for full domestication of the principles set out in CEDAW remain, there are some precedents in the convention that could be usefully applied to efforts to integrate gender into peacebuilding. In

Article 5, CEDAW calls for a quite radical transformation of the acknowledged/accepted gender relations within society, suggesting that State parties should modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women with the aim of eliminating prejudices and stereotypes. This would seem to suggest something more transformative is needed, rather than just giving women equal rights and integrating them on an equal footing into existing structures and institutions.

Another important shift in the human rights discourse that relates to the emergence of the gender and peacebuilding agenda was the move towards rights-based, or people-centred, approaches to development. Human rights are often separated into two different categories: civil and political, and economic, social, and cultural rights. Rights-based approaches were intended to be a more holistic approach to the challenges of development, and these approaches focused on empowering people, protecting and respecting their human rights, and using 'human development' as opposed to pure economic development as an indicator for countries' and individuals' well-being.[37] As Molyneux and Razavi point out, however, the growth in civil and political rights has not been matched by a similar improvement in social justice, which can then lead to a negative impact on the lives of women (2003).

Regardless of the new protection women's rights began to be afforded on paper, many states remained resistant and women were not able to exercise these rights, voiding them of substantive meaning and limiting their ability to fight for equality. In particular, paper rights have not always translated into protection under the rule of law or access to justice in the case of violations, both of which are necessary for the protection and promotion of women's rights. Despite the limitations, the opening up of the human rights discourse in the latter half of the twentieth century to new issues, such as domestic violence, has created the space to

[37] See the United Nations Human Development Report 2000. Accessible at: http://www.undp.org/hdr2000/english/HDR2000.html. The human capabilities approach elucidated by Sen and Nussbaum is also linked to this idea of individual rights and the actual capabilities of people, rather than merely looking at utility or preferences which may be tempered by other factors such as deprivation. See Nussbaum and Sen, 1993; Nussbaum and Glover, 1995.

theorise about the place of women's rights and to mobilise and petition for the inclusion of gender equality as a fundamental, although not always respected, right within the international community's development approaches. This has been an important contribution to the work on gender and peacebuilding, given the close links between human rights, legal protection, violence and gender identity.

While the emphasis on accountability, empowerment and participation is an important element of rights-based approaches, some have criticised them as being defined in terms of Western values and assumptions (Cornwall and Molyneux, 2006; Mohanty, 1991; Molyneux and Razavi, 2003). Many of these criticisms mirror those made of the gender mainstreaming literature, and of liberal peacebuilding, and reflect the fact that although these approaches have emerged as the dominant human rights discourse within the UN they do not necessarily reflect the reality of men and women's lives in developing and conflict-affected contexts. Some of the local alternatives to gender mainstreaming in Sierra Leone will be picked up on in more detail in chapter 7.

3.1.3 The concept of human security

Another area that has influenced the development of the gender and peacebuilding agenda, although its potential to widen the discourse was to a large degree unrealised, was the emergence of the concept of human security. Human security has been subject to intense criticism since its inception for being vague and 'all-encompassing', and for diluting the important traditional security agenda of protecting the state from external threats (Paris, 2001: 88-90). While the ambiguity can be problematic, it nevertheless serves a useful purpose in terms of enabling a wide range of issues and actors to fall within its parameters that were outside the purview of the traditional approaches to security, including specific human rights. A human security perspective necessitates a long-term focus, and in doing so, it is an important conceptual bridge between the objectives of peacebuilding on one hand, and sustainable development on the other. It therefore became an important link in the discussions

around how to link the security and development agendas of peacebuilding, and provided the rationale for ensuring that these two separate goals did not undermine each other (Tadjbaksh and Chenoy, 2007; Thomas, 2001).

One of the most frequent sources of insecurity facing women, girls and some men and boys in conflict-affected regions is the threat of sexual violence. Their bodies often figuratively and literally become the battleground during contemporary conflict, with gender inequalities contributing to their vulnerability in these contexts (Sideris, 2001). Given the focus on the individual and the emphasis on freedom from fear and the need for protection and empowerment, there is potentially space within the human security discourse to incorporate issues related to sexual and gender-based violence, thereby giving them the status of security threats.

However, feminists have drawn attention to the fact that human security can mask gender-differentiated insecurities by encouraging a gender-neutral approach (Hudson, 2006; Hoogensen and Rottem, 2004: 155-171; and Hansen, 2000: 285-306). Feminist theorists with a critical security studies perspective argue that, "girls and women experience human insecurity differently from men and are subject to gender hierarchies and power inequities that exacerbate their insecurity [and] because of their lower status, girls and women are less able to articulate and act upon their security needs, as compared with boys and men" (McKay, 2004: 153).

There is clear evidence from around the world reinforcing the argument that those with the least power are typically those who are least secure. For example, women and girls often have to live off less food than men and boys in the same families and receive less education or access to opportunities to secure a living (McKay, 2004: 154). This weakens their coping mechanisms and leaves them more exposed to the negative effects of conflict and instability. Even whilst emphasising the importance of an individual-level focus, the male experience is

often prioritised over the female by human security approaches, and the experience of 'universal man' dominates.[38] At the same time, insecurities that are experienced by men in specific ways, such as the impact of the increased militarisation of society, can sometimes be over-looked.

Therefore, differentiating between each individual's experiences of (in)security becomes important, and it becomes problematic to assume that human security as a concept will automatically or inherently do this.[39] Indeed the way in which human security has been operationalised is limited due to the failure to incorporate the insights a gender perspective could bring (Gibson and Reardon, 2007). However, the events around 9/11 and the subsequent move away from human security approaches meant that it was not as central a part of the early years of the gender and peacebuilding discourse as it might otherwise have been. Instead of building on these linkages, women's activists tended to draw on the women's human rights discourse, emphasising women's roles in decision-making and the need to provide them with civil and political rights. Nevertheless, although it has not really been applied to advance the gender agenda within peacebuilding, the concept of human security is still an important piece of the foundations on which later policy developments are based.

3.2 Building momentum around women, peace and security issues

The previous section has outlined some of the policy advances in the development, human rights and security fields that laid the groundwork for the emerging policy on gender and peacebuilding that began to take root in earnest from 2000 onwards. Although not directly applied to gender, conflict and peacebuilding, policymakers and practitioners who sought to

[38] It is important to note that security is not only mediated by gender, but also by other factors such as ethnicity, age or class. In turn, Western, liberal notions of security are often prioritised over other local, culturally-mediated ones. These are some of the complexities that underlie the notion of a universal concept of 'human security'.

[39] Whilst some have argued for an integration of women, peace and security issues within the concept of human security, others have raised concern at the possibility that important gender issues could then be marginalised or overshadowed by this broader concept. For an interesting overview of issues related to gender and human security see Gomáriz and García, 2003.

focus attention on the gender-specific dimensions of conflict and peace were able to draw and build on the progress made in bringing a gender perspective into development and human rights.

By the mid-1990s, some degree of change was becoming evident, even if this was not reflected in Boutros-Ghali's or Annan's reform agendas. The 4th UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 was the largest ever conference organised by the UN, and the parallel NGO forum attracted more than 30,000 women from around the world. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) was the outcome document of the conference, and it addressed twelve critical areas of concern, incorporating strategic objectives and recommendations. One of these twelve areas of concern was identified as women and armed conflict (United Nations 1995b).

The preamble to this section explicitly linked peace to gender equality and recommended that a gender perspective be mainstreamed into all policies and programs (United Nations, 1995b: paras 131 and 141). Beijing provided a focus for the global women's movement and played an important role in creating new networks and mobilising civil society organisations working on peace and security issues (Anderlini, 2001a). The BPfA emphasised the need for the increased participation of women in decision-making and also further institutionalised the concept of gender mainstreaming (Krook and True, 2008) which was seen as critical to advancing gender issues within international politics. As a UN document, the BPfA represented a compromise between member state delegations, but it still sets out an ambitious call for reform and the integration of gender issues into all aspects of social, political and economic life.

Following from Beijing, in 1996 the UN Economic, Social and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) launched its "Women's Contribution to a Culture of Peace" project. The aims of this initiative were the empowerment of women and support for their peace initiatives, as well

as gender-sensitisation with a focus on fostering an ethos of non-violence.[40] At the same time, academics and policy-makers were also beginning to recognise that gender relations and power dynamics influenced the effectiveness (in terms of design, delivery, and impact) of humanitarian assistance in emergency and conflict situations, and that women's needs were often overlooked in aid programs (Byrne with Baden, 1995; GTZ, 1996; Turshen and Twagiramariya, 1998; Vickers, 1993).

In 1998, the African Women's Report published by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) was devoted to presenting a gender perspective on post-conflict reconstruction in Africa (UNECA, 1998). This report affirmed the importance of gender to conflict and the need to recognise that "women in post-conflict situations are not mere passive sufferers and aid-dependent beneficiaries specially [sic] vulnerable to abuse, but have been and should be very much part of the solution" (UNECA, 1998; v). These documents were published by two UN agencies, demonstrating some progress in advancing gender issues in the UN context. However, they do display a tendency to treat women as a homogenous group, and to essentialise their role in peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. Furthermore, the emphasis tends to be on women's socioeconomic roles, rather than considering their need to engage and participate in security and political issues in the aftermath of conflict. They also remained on the fringes and failed to penetrate the evolving mainstream UN peacebuilding discourse.

The advocacy of women's groups throughout the previous decade and the increased level of public awareness about gender issues due to the large-scale crises in Rwanda and Bosnia gathered pace at the end of the 1990s (Byrne, Marcus and Powers-Stevens, 1996; Mertus, 2000). At the same time, the failure to fulfil the various objectives of declarations such as the Platform for Action became increasingly evident, and the voices of feminists and others who

[40] See http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/projects/wcpinfo.htm. For a more detailed discussion of the objectives of this initiative, see *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Women's Contribution to a Culture of Peace* UNESCO Consultative Committee on Women, Manila, 25-28 April 1995.

were critiquing gender-blind approaches to addressing conflict became louder. It was at a debate on the BPfA and Women and Armed Conflict during the annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March 1998 that the group of NGOs who had been informally working together as the Women and Armed Conflict Caucus started to discuss the possibility of raising these issues in the Security Council, given its role as the main organ of peace and security policy-making at the UN (Cohn, 2008: 187).

In 1999, International Alert, a London-based peacebuilding NGO launched a global campaign, *Women Building Peace: From the Village Council to the Negotiating Table.*[41] Through this campaign, a coalition of 200 civil society organisations supported by certain actors at the UN such as UNIFEM, advocated for the adoption of a Security Council resolution on women, peace and security to address the absence of women and gender perspectives from formal peace processes such as peacekeeping, peace negotiations, justice and reconciliation and post-conflict reconstruction. Beijing had provided an important forum for women's groups to network and collectively strategise, and some of these linkages and collaborations continued (Anderlini, 2001a), especially at the global level. Indeed, it is notable that "the international women's movements' most important political strategies and objectives have always been located *below* and *above* the *nation-state* level" (Ruppert, 2002: 148).

3.2.1 The Path to a Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security

Despite the advocacy and research being done by civil society organisations in the late 1990s, it was still difficult to get gender issues on the table at the Security Council. A significant step forward was in March 2000, when Ambassador Anwarul Chowdhury of Bangladesh who held the presidency of the UN Security Council at the time, used the opportunity of International Women's Day to make a statement linking the role of women to conflict prevention and

[41] For a description of some of this work see Anderlini, 2001a.

peacebuilding (Hill et al, 2003: 1257). In his statement, Ambassador Chowdhury said that Security Council members,

> affirm that the equal access and full participation of women in power structures and their full involvement in all efforts for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are essential for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security [...] Members of the Council note that although women have begun to play an important role in conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peace-building, they are still under-represented in decision-making in regard to conflict. If women are to play an equal part in security and maintaining peace, they must be empowered politically and economically, and represented adequately at all levels of decision- making, both at the pre-conflict stage and during hostilities, as well as at the point of peacekeeping, peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction (Chowdhury, 2000).

NGOs were able to draw on this powerful statement issued by the President of the Security Council as efforts to get women, peace and security issues on the table intensified throughout 2000. At the end of the CSW in March 2000 six of the members formally came together to establish the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security (NGO Working Group).[42] The new NGO Working Group took advantage of the momentum and commitment articulated by Ambassador Chowdury and organised several different events and meetings with members of the Security Council and UN entities, and began the push for a Security Council resolution on women, peace and security issues in the months following the CSW in 2000.

A further important policy development was the Windhoek Declaration and Namibia Plan of Action of 31 May 2000 that was issued following a seminar on 'Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations' hosted by the Government of Namibia and the Lessons Learned department of DPKO. This declaration highlighted the need to include a gender perspective in all aspects of peacebuilding.[43] The report states that, "Women's presence improves access and support for local women; it makes men peacekeepers more reflective and responsible; and it broadens the repertoire of skills and

[42] The initial founding members of the NGOWG were: International Alert, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, International Women's Tribune Centre, Hague Appeal for Peace, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children, and Women's Caucus for Gender Justice.
[43] Declaration at http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/windhoek_declaration.pdf.

styles available within the mission, often with the effect of reducing conflict and confrontation. Gender mainstreaming, then, is not just fair, it is beneficial" (UN 2000b: 4).

The Windhoek report is one of the most comprehensive case studies of these issues prior to the adoption of SCR 1325 (Carey 2001: 54), and lays out an in-depth assessment of the changes needed to ensure that men and women are able to participate equally in peace operations. Subsequently to the meeting in Windhoek, the 23rd special session of the General Assembly from 5th-9th June 2000 was devoted to discussions on "Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century", also known as Beijing +5. The outcome document of this session was intended to address the concerns around the delays in implementation of the BPfA, as well as highlight progress made and remaining obstacles for each of the critical areas of concern.[44] The Women and Armed Conflict Caucus continued to ensure these issues were part of the agenda of Beijing +5 (Porter, 2007: 14).

In advance of the open debate in the Security Council an 'Arria formula'[45] meeting was held on 23rd October 2000, during which members of the Security Council heard testimonies from four women from conflict-affected areas.[46] The Namibian presidency of the Security Council also agreed to sponsor the open session on Women, Peace and Security on 24th-25th October 2000.[47] In a press release issued prior to the Security Council session, the NGO Working Group highlighted three key recommendations: to consult with and include women in peace

[44] For details of this outcome document, see United Nations General Assembly (2000) http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/followup/ress233e.pdf [accessed 29/11/09].

[45] Arria formula meetings are named after Ambassador Arria of Venezuela who used the mechanism for the first time in 1992 to enable a Bosnian priest to speak to members of Security Council. The aim of Arria formula meetings is to provide an informal space for Security Council members to hear from civil society representatives on issues or from contexts of interest to the Council's work. This formula for meetings has been used repeatedly by those working on women, peace and security issues to advance specific advocacy messages with Security Council members in advance of the annual open debate.

[46] The four women who addressed the Security Council were: Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika from the Organisation of African Unity African Women's Committee on Peace and Democracy, Isha Dyfan from WILPF-Sierra Leone, Luz Mendez from the National Union of Guatemalan Women, and Faiza Jama Mohamed, a Somali from the Africa Office of Equality Now in Kenya (Hill, Aboitiz and Poehlman-Doumbouya, 2003: 1259).

[47] Open sessions in the Security Council are notable in that during these times, non-Security Council members are also permitted to make statements.

negotiations, to train and raise the awareness of peacekeepers to the special situation of women, and to promote more women to senior positions where the UN is working in conflict areas (NGO Working Group, 2000).

These requests were represented as quite radical ideas, given the historic marginalisation of women from peace and security issues and the work of the UN Security Council. However, already in these early recommendations the emphasis was placed on the role of women and the need to integrate them into existing structures to make them more gender equal, rather than an emphasis on gender roles and relations more broadly, perhaps in recognition of the big challenges that these advocates were up against.

According to observers and participants in the process leading up to the adoption of SCR 1325, it was outsiders rather than those working within the UN who saw and acted upon the opportunity to bring about the resolution.[48] Many on the inside of the UN felt that the timing was not right to raise these issues on the floor of the Security Council. Ultimately, it was the Ford Foundation, who provided resources to fund the networking and advocacy of NGOs, and a few non-permanent members of the SC (who are not really insiders either due to their temporary status) who enabled the resolution to be adopted.

The adoption of SCR 1325 was therefore the result of an effective collaboration between international and grassroots NGOs as well as between these NGOs and the UN entities and member states (Hill, Aboitiz and Poehlman-Doumbouya, 2003: 1256). The decades of efforts by feminist activists, scholars and practitioners and the 'femocrats' working in international organisations and national government machineries in the 1980s and 1990s also played an invaluable role in laying the groundwork and creating the discursive and actual space for merging women's rights with peace and security policy and practice. Finally, the brutal and

[48] This was confirmed by several members of the NGOWG at a strategy meeting of group members, held in June 2007.

violent conflicts that played out across the globe during the 1990s also served to focus attention on the specific ways in which women were affected by and also influenced conflict and peace, providing an even more urgent rationale for tackling these issues at the international policy level.

However, while all of these documents and processes were important and made significant contributions to the eventual adoption of SCR 1325, it must be remembered that at the same time, negotiations were underway on a number of key issues, such as those covered in the Brahimi report. It is notable that there was little to no cross-over of the gender-related issues into these more 'mainstream' policy-making processes (Whitworth, 2004: 127). While the reports and declarations surrounding the adoption of SCR 1325 were all important in terms of advocacy and raising awareness, their impact on the mainstream of conflict and security issues at the UN was negligible. Considerable resistance to gender issues was still evident both within the UN and within the governments of conflict-affected countries, and this was reflected in their early forays into peacebuilding. International actors consistently failed to consider how stereotypical conceptualisations of men, women and gender relations shaped their actions in conflict zones, and rarely conducted any kind of gender analysis of their programs (Corrin, 2000; Pankhurst, 2004: esp 17-20). Before exploring the development of the 'gender and peacebuilding agenda' at the UN, the next section will first offer a brief analysis of SCR 1325 given its integral role in framing the discourse and policy relating to gender and peacebuilding that has developed in recent years.

3.2.2 UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security

The historic adoption of SCR 1325 took place on October 31, 2000 (United Nations, 2000d). This resolution was the first official recognition by the UN body of the need to address gender issues in conflict prevention, management and reconstruction mechanisms. As Cohn points out, "although 'gender mainstreaming' has been official UN policy since 1997, Resolution

1325 represents the first time that gender has been mainstreamed in the *armed conflict and security* side of the UN" (Cohn, 2008: 185). Indeed, SCR 1325 was a watershed and signaled a real change in the UN in the sense that the resolution sought to make gender relevant and mainstreamed in all aspects of peace operations, placing responsibility (in theory at least) squarely on the shoulders of international community.

The Resolution recognises the "important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts and in peace-building, and stress[es] the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security" (United Nations, 2000d). However, not only does it acknowledge the vital role that women can play in peacebuilding and suggests that their inclusion is an important dimension of these processes, it also recognises that it is their *right* to participate (Cohn, 2004: 8). The text of the resolution begins with a reiteration and reaffirmation of previous Security Council resolutions and other commitments and declarations made by the international community relevant to women, peace and security. The eighteen operational paragraphs of the resolution cover a wide range of issues, ranging from women's roles in decision-making for the prevention, management and resolution of conflict, to recognising the needs of women and girls during repatriation and the need for consultation with local and international women's groups (United Nations, 2000d).

The provisions of SCR 1325 have often been summarised into the "3 Ps": the protection of women, the prevention of conflict, and the increased participation of women.[49] Some activists also add prosecution or punishment for sexual violence and the promotion of a gender perspective as the 4th and 5th 'Ps' of the resolution. SCR 1325 concluded that the Security Council would remain actively seized of the matter, and the Secretary-General was requested to produce a report on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in

[49] The 3 Ps framework was first developed by the NGO Working Group. See NGO Working Group, 2004.

peacebuilding, and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution. The resolution is targeted at different actors, including the post-conflict authority, international and regional bodies, international NGOs and the local population (Chinkin, 2004: 29). There is some mention of the role of women's organisations and the need to support their work, but the text focuses mainly on the key actors in national and global governance, and the emphasis is on the formal aspects of peacebuilding processes.

The resolution successfully raises a number of important issues and highlights the disproportionate effect that conflict can have on women, their right to be involved in decision-making around peace and security issues and the important role they play in peacebuilding, particularly at the community level. It also specifies the urgent need to protect women from gender-specific forms of violence during conflict, in refugee camps and in other situations where they may be vulnerable to attack. Although SCR 1325 also refers to the need for the integration of gender perspectives in peacebuilding and the provision of gender training to military and civilian personnel, the emphasis is still on women's needs and interests. This is not unexpected given that it is a resolution on women, peace and security rather than gender, peace and security but it has led to some ambiguity about how gender issues relate to the provisions called for within the resolution.

Despite being the central policy framework and reference point for many of the subsequent developments of the gender and peacebuilding agenda, SCR 1325 itself has been subject to criticism. The language of the resolution is weak with most of the operational paragraphs beginning with the phrases 'urging', 'expressing' or 'calling on'. It therefore fails to mandate or require specific actions of Member States or other parties, rather leaving the implementation of the resolution open to interpretation and the political will of the key stakeholders. Although it is almost certainly a reflection of the necessary compromises that were made among the member states to arrive at a document that was universally acceptable, this language is somewhat ambiguous and is gender is couched in liberal feminist terms. SCR

1325 also covers a much broader range of potential interventions than can realistically be implemented, and it is not clear where the key stakeholders should invest their limited commitment and resources in furtherance of these objectives. This ambiguity opens up the Resolution to a myriad of different interpretations, a problem that is even further exacerbated by the failure of the member states and UN entities to specify priorities amongst the different recommendations.

Some argue that SCR 1325 fails to fully take into account the complexities and nuances in women's roles in conflict prevention, reconstruction and peacebuilding. Rather, the resolution can be read in a way that affirms essentialist notions that including women will inevitably lead to peace, due to their inherently peaceful nature (Shepherd, 2008: 117-119). Importantly, SCR 1325 also fails to challenge some of the more entrenched, fundamental constructs linked to notions of masculinity, military/ised power, and gender inequalities that are tied up in the discourse of international peace and security institutions (Cohn, 2008: 197-198). Indeed, "the references to 'gender' in the international vocabulary of peace-building are almost invariably references to women, circumventing the more radical implications of the concept, which would draw attention to masculine identities that are implicated in conflict and peace-building" (Chinkin and Charlesworth, 2006: 939). This links back to the assumptions of liberal feminism that focus more on adding women in to peace and security processes, as opposed to questioning the gendered structures and practices that underpin them.

Finally, by failing to mandate any specific accountability or monitoring mechanisms and without leading to increased resources and capacity within the UN agencies and national machineries of Member States, actual implementation of the resolution was going to be challenging from the outset. Although not unique to this Security Council Resolution, this lack of accountability risks rendering the resolution impotent to a considerable extent (Magwaza, 2003: 34-38).

Another limitation in SCR 1325 is that it entirely excludes economic issues from consideration, the implications of which will be analysed in more detail in chapter 6.3. One of the reasons for this relates to the tension between the members of the Security Council and the General Assembly, where each body seeks to input into and decide on key issues of international interest. Traditionally, the latter has a remit over all UN issues with the exception of matters of international peace and security that fall under the mandate of the Security Council. However, the growing trend of the Security Council deliberating on thematic issues such as the protection of civilians, children and armed conflict, and women, peace and security, led to the question of what counts as a peace and security concern becoming somewhat blurred.

In 2000, as a Security Council resolution, many UN Member States did not believe that SCR 1325 should address issues that would normally fall within the remit of the General Assembly. In particular, socioeconomic issues were perceived to fall more clearly under the mandate of the Economic and Social Council within the GA, and so were not seen as directly relevant to the issue of women, peace and security. As a result, compromises on scope were made during the drafting of the resolution. While the resolution covers other areas relevant to peacebuilding such as political and security reforms, the important area of economic development was therefore left out. The text of the resolution is what provides the mandate, or entry point, for working on women, peace and security issues, and as a result, much of the subsequent advocacy, research and programming linked to SCR 1325 has failed to prioritise economic issues.

Furthermore, there are many structural and cultural obstacles that exacerbate gender inequalities that would need to be addressed as part of the process of implementing SCR 1325:

> In other words, Resolution 1325, while emphasizing the significance of women's participation in transition processes, does not address the root causes of their frequently lacking participation or structural problems such as the access of women to

> economic and financial resources and education [...] Additional strategies such as capacity building for women and long-term policies to counter cultural stereotypes and proactively implement affirmative action will be needed to effectively enable women to participate in the political, legislative, judicial, electoral, and economic reconstruction and reform processes of their countries (Binder, Lukas and Schweiger, 2008: 25).

In thinking about the limitations or omissions of SCR 1325 it is critical to remember just how significant it was to put issues relating to women's rights and gender issues on the agenda of the Security Council. "Understanding this policy outcome requires analysis of political motivations, institutional structures, and discursive framings – all the while being attentive to the serendipity of personal relationships, upon which much of this rests" (Cohn, 2008: 195). Despite the shortfalls, SCR 1325 did represent a turning point and created the space and the possibility to put women on the peace and security agenda of the UN. Somewhat ironically, it was in a sense the perception of women's vulnerability and victimhood in relation to armed conflict that gave women agency at the UN, and enabled activists and advocates from within the UN system and member state governments to raise these issues up the agenda. While SCR 1325 is broad and specifically includes issues relating to participation and empowerment, the victimhood and protection dimensions of the resolution have in some ways been easier to advance and indeed, these issues received the most priority in Member State statements during the initial open debate prior to the adoption of the resolution.

3.3 The emergence of the UN's 'gender and peacebuilding agenda'

Although SCR 1325 placed attention on women, peace and security issues and has led to some policy developments and rhetorical commitments by the UN and its entities, there has been little impact in terms of getting gender onto the mainstream peacebuilding agenda. Although in practice non-binding, the adoption of SCR 1325 provided the international community with a concrete framework that could be adapted and incorporated into existing

peacebuilding policies and programs.[50] Indeed, in response to SCR 1325 and the mobilisation of civil society surrounding it, the majority of donors have indicated support for the provisions within the resolution, and by now, gender equality has become a 'cross-cutting' issue within most of their peacebuilding policies.[51] Each member of the international community, including bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental actors, has internalised and operationalised the gender agenda differently, although rhetorically, most tend to adopt the stance that the equal inclusion of women in existing peacebuilding processes is essential.

In addition to forming the basis of donor policies related to gender and peacebuilding, SCR 1325 has also played an important role in awareness-raising, education, and advocacy, and has become the centre of a global civil society movement dedicated to promoting the inclusion of women in building peace around the world. For example, groups have emerged in countries such as Sweden, the UK and Canada with the central purpose of lobbying their governments to include women and/or gender issues in their peacebuilding and foreign policy agendas more broadly. These organisations also conduct research at the grassroots level to build up knowledge in the area of gender and peacebuilding and to provide national governments as well as multilateral and bilateral donors with proven strategies to improve their capacities in this field. More and more local and national NGOs in conflict-affected contexts are also using the Resolution in their advocacy and research. It is also an important part of the international legal framework that recognises the particular rights and protection needs of women and girls (Inglis et al. 2006). As such, it offers an important tool to persuade a range of actors such as the UN agencies, Member States, parties to armed conflict, NGOs, peacekeepers and others to place increased priority on the inclusion of gender issues within

[50] SCR 1325 does not invoke Chapter VII of the UN charter which would make it binding and enforceable upon all member states, however the charter does require that Member States act in accordance with and carry out the decisions of the Security Council.

[51] This applies to both bilateral and multilateral donors. CIDA, USAID, UNHCR, UNDP, World Bank, and others all have either dedicated departments for gender and peacebuilding or at the very least, comprehensive policies outlining their commitment to including gender issues (often as a 'priority issue') in their peacebuilding programs.

their policies and programs. This section will illustrate some of the changes that have been brought about as this gender and peacebuilding agenda has emerged during the 2000s.

3.3.1 Implementation of SCR 1325[52]

Following SCR 1325, the UN began, at least at a rhetorical level, to take issues of women, peace and security more seriously. As mentioned previously, the adoption of SCR 1325 led to a plethora of policy recommendations, research reports, conferences and other meetings, and networking between women's organisations in the West and in conflict-affected countries. In 2002, UNIFEM appointed two special representatives to conduct an in-depth assessment into women, peace and security issues. In carrying out this research, Their report, *Women, War, Peace*, covers various thematic issues linked to SCR 1325 such as violence against women, peace operations, and justice and accountability providing an overview of the key challenges and anecdotal evidence of the ways in which women around the world are affected (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002).

SCR 1325 invited "the Secretary-General to carry out a study on the impact of armed conflict on women and girls, the role of women in peace-building and the gender dimensions of peace processes and conflict resolution" (UN Security Council, 2000: para 16). To this end, Kofi Annan commissioned a study, *Women, Peace and Security*, which was published in 2002 and takes a similar thematic approach to the UNIFEM-led report, but with an emphasis on how the various agencies have integrated gender into the UN's peacebuilding work (UN, 2002a). Both of these reports illustrate the breadth of gender and peacebuliding issues, as well as some of the challenges to ensuring that women benefit and engage in peacebuilding.

[52] Whilst SCR 1325 remains the central and over-arching articulation of the women, peace and security agenda, the international community recently renewed its commitment to these issues with the adoption of three new Security Council resolutions: SCR 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009). Given that the time period of this thesis is from 2002-2007, discussing the implications of these new resolutions is beyond the scope of this thesis but it is important to recognise that these resolutions, along with the upcoming 10th anniversary of SCR 1325 have provided new momentum to these issues.

Interestingly, both reports draw attention to the economic dimensions of reconstruction and the important roles that women play in the informal sector not just economically, but also politically. In reviewing the policies and progress that has been made since 2000, other than these early mentions very little attention has been given to economic issues, and indeed they are not even mentioned in the resolution itself. Similarly, the focus has been on bringing women into formal peacebuilding, rather than exploring how formal peacebuilding could be strengthened by bridging the gap and supporting the many informal peacebuilding activities that women are engaged in: "their skills and capacities, which have been almost totally neglected, are one of the greatest untapped resources for stabilizing and rebuilding community life" (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002: 129). Again however, the important findings of these reports initially failed to have an impact on the UN's broader peacebuilding policies.

Annual open debates in the Security Council during the last week of October have also been an important aspect of follow-up to SCR 1325. They have provided an opportunity for member states to articulate their commitments and progress made in supporting and implementing SCR 1325. The NGO Working Group has also taken advantage of the opportunity provided by the annual debates to sponsor women from conflict-affected contexts to travel to New York and address the Security Council.

However, despite the annual focus on SCR 1325 and the rhetorical commitments of the UN entities and its Member States, gender issues are not being mainstreamed within the broader ongoing work of the Security Council, although slowly some change is becoming evident. As an example, "from October 2000 to August 2008, 102 out of 309, or 33 percent, of country-specific Security Council resolutions include language on women and gender. The number of resolutions even mentioning women prior to 2000 is negligible" (N. Hudson, 2009). The emphasis placed on SCR 1325 at the UN during the 'anniversary week' in October of each year also risks marginalising the issue even further, and encourages UN entities and member states to only consider women, peace and security issues at this time instead of mainstreaming

them within their work throughout the year. There is a tendency towards tokenism in the UN efforts to address SCR 1325, with systematic integration of gender issues in peacebuilding being cast aside in favour of once-a-year statements of commitment from the key actors that result in little structural changes.

In parallel to these debates, the NGO Working Group has continued to organise annual Arria Formula meetings with the support of UN Member States to inform the discussions in the formal session. These meetings are important in that they provide a link between policymakers and the field level. Whilst bringing local perspectives to headquarters is important in raising awareness about the reality of women's experiences in conflict-affected regions the difficulty of turning this awareness into concrete action remains. Furthermore, the types of advocates invited to attend these sessions are often well-educated and elite-level within their countries and so cannot be assumed to represent the interests of all women in any case. Nevertheless, these statements have given civil society actors an opportunity to influence the key decision-makers in the Security Council, as well as to advance specific recommendations around women's participation and agency and the need for significant and meaningful structural reform to address these issues at the UN.

Since 2000, the Security Council has also issued annual reports that provide an update to actions taken by the different agencies of the UN to implement the resolution. These reports highlight progress that has been made and ongoing gaps that remain in areas such as gender training, deployment of gender experts in peacekeeping missions, recruitment of women in peace operations and UN decision-making structures, supporting the participation of women in peace processes, and preventing and responding to SGBV. Most UN agencies also now have policy statements on women, peace and security issues, and several also have dedicated staff or focal points working on these issues.

For example, the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) has been an important body in mobilising and coordinating actors around a peacebuilding framework for the countries on its agenda. There has been some success in getting gender on its agenda, including in its original mandate, which can be attributed to ongoing advocacy by women's advocates and the fact that shortly after its establishment, a UNIFEM official was seconded to the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO).[53] The integration of gender issues into early recovery and post-conflict reconstruction processes has been slow, but since 2008, the PBC and PBSO have played increasingly important roles in mobilizing support in this area. The role of the PBC in relation to gender and Sierra Leone will be returned to and discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

Overall, the amount of resources allocated to the implementation of UNSCR 1325 is still insufficient, reflecting the overall marginalisation of gender issues within the UN. Whilst there is more reporting, information-sharing and data available on women, peace and security issues than there was in 1999 prior to the adoption of SCR 1325, this is still not systematic. Between 1948 and 2008, only 17 women have ever held the position of Special Advisor to the Secretary-General. Despite various country-specific projects funded by UN agencies and the efforts of UNIFEM and OSAGI to spur action at the UN level, there is still no systematic monitoring of the implementation of SCR 1325. Women's advocates have also repeatedly critiqued the lack of leadership and accountability within the UN system for implementation, citing it as one of the major obstacles to effective action on women, peace and security issues at the UN level (Beetham and Popovic, 2009).

Despite all of the policy guidelines, anecdotal evidence and rhetorical commitments indicating the centrality of gender equality to sustainable peacebuilding, the UN's track record in actually integrating gender into its peacebuilding policies and programmes

[53] For example, see Gina Torry, ed, *Six Years On Report: SCR 1325 and the Peacebuilding Commission*, New York: NGO Working Group, 2006.

following the adoption of SCR 1325 is somewhat limited. However, from the section above, it is possible to identify the five key areas where change is evident. First, there has been a proliferation of policies, guidelines and checklists, strategic frameworks and action plans both at a UN-wide level, as well as in specific UN entities in Member States and NGOs. Second, structural changes are evident in the creation of gender units, focal points and task forces that theoretically provide a focus for gender-related activities and expertise.

Third, many UN entities at headquarters and in the field have contracted gender training for their staff, although not always with a peacebuilding focus. This training is intended to equip staff with the skills necessary to carry out gender analysis and apply it to all stages of programme design, implementation and monitoring. Fourth, there has been a proliferation of case studies and anecdotal evidence that seeks to demonstrate the critical role women play in supporting peacebuilding, the specific and different ways that men and women experience conflict, how and why women are marginalised from peacebuilding processes, and the potential costs of failing to integrate a gender perspective into these activities. Contributions to this research have come from the key UN stakeholders themselves in the form of annual reports and statements during the SCR 1325 annual debate, but mostly from academics and practitioners working in the field of gender and peacebuilding.

Finally, there has been a modest increase in the resources available to support women's peace initiatives in conflict-affected contexts. Several governments, most notably the Norwegian, British, Danish and Swedish, actively support INGOs working in this area, but it still represents a small proportion of aid budgets, and gender issues are not necessarily integrated into the other security, governance and economic reform projects that these countries are supporting.

3.3.2 Integrating gender and peacebuilding into the work of DPKO, UNDP, UNIFEM and the World Bank

In response to SCR 1325 and the mobilisation of civil society surrounding it, the UN and the majority of donors have indicated support for the provisions within the resolution, and by now, gender equality has become a 'cross-cutting' issue within most of their peacebuilding policies.[54] Each member of the international community, including bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental actors, have internalised and operationalised the gender agenda differently. However, rhetorically, most tend to adopt the stance that the equal inclusion of women in existing peacebuilding processes is essential, reflecting the liberal feminist bias that will be discussed in more detail in the next section. Four international entities which are particularly relevant to the case study of Sierra Leone are the Department of Peackeeping Operations (DPKO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the associated United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and the World Bank. These entities are also relevant to the liberal peacebuilding agenda, given the roles that they play in establishing security, governance and economic reform. This section will provide a brief overview of their efforts to incorporate gender issues into their structures and processes.

Department of Peacekeeping Operations

Of all the UN entities, DPKO has probably been the slowest to acknowledge the role of gender equality in its policies and practices (Olsson et al, 1999; International Alert, 2002). Peacekeeping is a central element of peacebuilding operations, although its security and military mandate is often (mistakenly) seen as separate to other political, social, and economic aspects of these interventions. This has allowed the UN to sideline gender issues in DPKO, arguing that they are irrelevant to its area of concern. As a result, women have been and continue to be under-represented in peacekeeping operations, and the gender-

[54] This applies to both bilateral and multilateral donors. CIDA, USAID, UNHCR, UNDP, World Bank, and others all have either dedicated departments for gender and peacebuilding or at the very least, comprehensive policies outlining their commitment to including gender issues (often as a 'priority issue') in their peacebuilding programs.

differentiated impact of peacekeeping and peacekeepers themselves on local communities and the potential contribution women can make to these processes were not recognised until the end of the 1990s.

Momentum was gained with the adoption of SCR 1325 which made explicit reference to "the urgent need to mainstream a gender perspective into peacekeeping operations" and "the importance of the recommendation [...] for specialized training for all peacekeeping personnel on the protection, special needs and human rights of women and children in conflict situations" (United Nations, 2000d). A senior gender advisor position within DPKO headquarters was finally established in 2004, after almost four years of trying to get the necessary funding. The position was however established at two ranks below the senior (D-1 level) position that had actually been recommended, with obvious consequences for the perceived seniority and authority of the individual in the position.

Another sign of progress is that a number of 'best practices' documents have been released by DPKO and other actors, which offer detailed strategies for the successful mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all aspects of peacekeeping operations (DPKO, 2004).[55] Analyses and studies of the gender approaches of various peace operations have also more recently been carried out. However, despite these seemingly positive measures, much discrimination against women remains and abuse of women's rights during peacekeeping missions occurs all too frequently (Graybill, 2002).

In addition, the negligible amount of resources and authority given to the DPKO gender advisors severely limits their ability to implement extensive programs to address gender inequality, suggesting that the gender agenda has not been very thoroughly institutionalised within this agency. It is particularly problematic that gender advisors have few resources such

[55] See DPKO, 2004; and the "Gender and Peacekeeping Training Course" designed by the British and Canadian governments, available at: http://www.genderandpeacekeeping.org/references-contact-e.asp.

as a designated budget, however small, or adequate staff to meet the demands of the workload implicit in being tasked with mainstreaming gender throughout a peacekeeping operation (Keaney-Mischel, 2006: 5).

However, DPKO appears to be currently trying to amend this situation by extensive research into training, removing barriers for more women to participate in peacekeeping missions, and analysing the interplay between gender issues and peacekeepers' multiple tasks and responsibilities in post-conflict situations. In large part in response to the much-publicised scandals involving UN peacekeepers over the past decade, since the mid-2000s, DPKO has focused significant attention on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and the measures it has taken to address the issue. In reality, it is not clear that the resources accorded to dealing with SEA are proportional to the scale of the problem and may risk overshadowing the gender dimensions of DPKO's work with other issues finding it difficult to get on the radar.

UNDP and UNIFEM

UNDP has a number of policies and frameworks that provide operational guidance for its peacebuilding work. UNDP explicitly links its approach to gender equality with rights-based approaches to development: "equality between women and men is just, fair and right. It is a worthy goal in and of itself, one that lies at the heart of human development and human rights [...] when development is not 'en-gendered' it is 'en-dangered'" (UNDP, 2002b: 5). It also has the comparative advantage of being closely linked to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which has a specific mandate to promote women's human rights, political participation and economic security through financial and technical assistance. Previous research has also shown UNDP to be more successful in mainstreaming a gender perspective in its activities, as compared to other agencies such as the World Bank (Razavi and Miller, 1995).

UNDP was one of the first agencies to release a specific policy document outlining its gender agenda in post-conflict situations (UNDP, 2002a). It is a very operationally-focused document, with clear guidelines on how to conduct a gender analysis, use a gender checklist, and engender the project cycle. More recently, UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) launched a major review of its gender mainstreaming efforts, and in 2007 developed its *Eight Point Agenda: Practical, positive outcomes for girls and women in crisis*, which sets out a comprehensive approach to responding to women and girls needs, and giving them a voice in post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding processes.[56] As part of this agenda, UNDP has committed human and financial resources to achieving its gender mainstreaming goals, although the extent to which this has trickled down to impact on the ground is negligible, as will be seen in chapters 5 and 6.

UNIFEM is a UN fund focused on women's empowerment and gender equality, and was established in 1975 after the first World Conference on Women. It provides financial and technical assistance in four strategic areas: reducing feminised poverty, ending violence against women, reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls, and achieving gender equality in governance, peace and security. It only works in developing countries, and despite its broad mandate, it has a tiny budget representing a fraction of the resources available to other UN agencies such as UNICEF (Hill, Cohn and Enloe 2004: 2). UNIFEM has, since 1999, been working increasingly on issues related to peace and security and now has programmes in several conflict-affected countries. Within its activities under the governance, peace and security programme UNIFEM focuses on using CEDAW as a basis for legislative reform, working with women's organisations to increase their participation in governance, working to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in post-conflict reconstruction, and promoting gender justice. Of all the UN agencies, UNIFEM comes the closest to pushing beyond a liberal feminist approach to gender mainstreaming, but its impact is limited by the nature of the UN bureaucracy and its own marginal position in the UN architecture.

[56] For more on UNDP's Eight Point Agenda, see http://www.undp.org/cpr/we_do/8_pa.shtml

The World Bank

The World Bank has engaged for many years on gender and development issues, over time switching its rationalisation for addressing gender from the efficiency, welfare, equity, and, most recently, to the empowerment approach.[57] The World Bank's 'gender agenda' has been institutionalised in a series of operational policies (BP/OP 4.20) most recently updated in 2003, and appears to demonstrate at least a surface commitment to mainstreaming gender issues within the broad range of Bank programming. The Bank also has a gender and development programme.

With respect to how the Bank has institutionalised the gender agenda in its operations in post-conflict contexts, what has been most noteworthy is the total absence of any such process. The Bank's gender mainstreaming policy fails to assess the consequences conflict has on gender relations and the situation of women especially, and all the research done on post-conflict operations draws attention to the fact that the needs of women are never given adequate attention. An exception would be the volume published in 2004 by the Bank that focuses on the links between gender, conflict and development. While the findings of the book confirm that "gender was an important missing dimension and did not figure systematically in its conflict work [and]; conversely, rarely if at all did conflict figure in the gender mainstreaming agenda" (Bouta, Frerks and Bannon, 2005: 7), it does not appear to have led to any new policy commitments or significant reforms at the Bank.

The few gender-related programs the Bank has implemented in post-conflict settings have been specifically targeted at women, especially in the social sectors such as health and education, focusing on addressing their practical needs as opposed to their strategic interests. The bureaucracy of the Bank and its neoliberal approach to economic development and

[57] For more detailed discussion of the Bank's changing approach to gender during the 1970s-1990s, see Buvinic, 1995 and Murphy, 1995.

growth have made it resistant to mainstreaming efforts, and the perceived pressures of post-conflict contexts have provided a justification for this resistance. The emerging rhetoric at the World Bank, therefore appears to be rarely implemented in practice (Zuckerman and Greenberg, 2004).

3.3.3 Civil society advocacy around SCR 1325

In addition to the developments at the UN entities during the 2000s, international NGOs such as International Alert began to generate large amounts of field-based research demonstrating the gender dimensions of various aspects of peacebuilding, as well as documenting and drawing attention to women's voices and experiences in relation to peacebuilding (El-Bushra, 2003; International Alert, 1999). In addition to supporting the work of many women's organisations in conflict-affected regions, INGOs also provided policy advice, training and technical expertise to the UN agencies and other stakeholders (International Alert and Women Waging Peace, 2004).

For example, the UN office of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) established the PeaceWomen website as a resource for policymakers and practitioners, providing links, analysis and documentation on issues related to the implementation of SCR 1325 and gender and peacebuilding more broadly. Following the adoption of SCR 1325, the NGO Working Group consolidated its role as the key network of organisations working on these issues, and played an important role in providing expert advice and information to UN policymakers and acting as a 'connector', providing a channel through which women peacebuilders were able to access the UN and get their voices heard through initiatives such as the annual Arria formula meetings on SCR 1325 held in advance of the resolution's anniversary on October 31st each year.

Due to the adoption of SCR 1325, some national and regional networks and organisations based in conflict-affected regions were also able to gain profile and support for their work.[58] However, most of their efforts remain unacknowledged and their contributions to peacebuilding processes are below the radar of the international community. An invisible barrier exists between the political, security and socioeconomic reforms supported by the international community focusing on the public sphere, and the community-based efforts of women to provide physical and economic security to their families and to gain a voice and authority at all levels, enabling them to make decisions about their own lives.

Clearly, linking up with and building on the insights and activities of women peacebuilders at the community-level would strengthen peacebuilding efforts overall. However, until women are perceived as legitimate and valuable actors in the eyes of the UN and other peacebuilding actors it is unlikely that this gap between the formal and informal spheres of peacebuilding will be bridged. The problem with the conventional approach to peacebuilding is that it focuses on the formal level, and as a result "miss[es] the informal practices of mediation, advocacy, conflict management and reconciliation in which many women are involved informally" (Porter, 2007: 8). These issues will be returned to in more detail in chapter 7.

Porter takes the view that peacebuilding is a process, and much of that process occurs informally, in marketplaces, homes and local communities rather than in the corridors of high politics and the containers of a UN peacekeeping mission. She further argues that "while women are active peacebuilders, their contribution often is informal, behind-the-scenes, unpaid, collaborative and unrecognized as actual peacebuilding, and thus they consistently are excluded from formal peace negotiation processes and public, political decision-making" (2007: 5). However, there is the risk that while they undoubtedly are doing valuable and under-recognised work, the emphasis on women's informal roles can be counter-productive in

[58] For example, in 2003, the UN General Assembly awarded the Mano River Women's Peace Network (Marwopnet) the UN Prize for Human Rights in recognition of their work to support human rights and conflict resolution across the Mano River region.

reinforcing perceptions that they belong in or are most suited to the informal sphere (Helms, 2002; H. Hudson, 2009). One of the problems is "how to make the formal peace process benefit from the efforts of women at the informal grassroots level without the latter being subsumed by contestation at the elite level (H. Hudson, 2009: 294).

Having presented the evolution of the gender and peacebuilding agenda, largely embodied through actions around the implementation of SCR 1325, the final section of this chapter will now turn a more critical lens on this agenda. Through an analysis of how gender issues have been integrated into the three main pillars of the liberal peacebuilding consensus, it will cast light on the liberal feminist nature of these efforts.

3.4 A 'liberal feminist consensus' on gender and peacebuilding

As was argued in chapter 2.3, feminist approaches to conflict and peacebuilding are useful and can shed much light on the different impact that these processes have on men and women, as well as some of the reasons why there is often a failure to integrate gender. However, they fail to directly engage with the liberal peacebuilding critiques that explore very relevant issues such as tensions between local ownership and external, top-down approaches; the assumption of universally applicable Western ideal types; and the nature of the peace that is being built.

Given that the liberal peacebuilding consensus shapes the nature and practice of peacebuilding processes, it is important to understand the gendered nature of this consensus, as well as apply a feminist lens to it to better understand the power dynamics, assumptions and questions of legitimacy that influence the nature of the peace being built. By assessing each of the three liberal peacebuilding pillars (security, governance and economic reform) in turn, this final section of the chapter will argue that a liberal feminist agenda has emerged.

Critiques that can be made of this approach resonate with many of the critiques of liberal peacebuilding that have already been highlighted in chapter 2.2.

3.4.1 Establishing security

Stability and security are particularly key issues in post-conflict contexts. Unlike traditional military conflicts, in cases where the UN deploys peacekeeping missions there is often little security to keep and violence may be ongoing on a large or small scale. Despite the rhetoric demonstrated in the many UN documents relating to peacebuilding, the reality in practice is that security is often understood as 'negative peace' as opposed to the more all-encompassing approach of human security. The concept of security sector reform (SSR) only began to enter peacebuilding discourse in the late 1990s, as donors had previously been reluctant to directly address issues of security in peacebuilding interventions.[59] This shift to embracing SSR within the broader post-conflict peacebuilding agenda was based on a development rationale, as well as evidence of the very real social and political problems that ex-combatants and an unreformed security sector pose for a post-conflict country (Colletta, Kostner and Wiederhofer, 1996). The key multilateral actors implementing reforms in this sector are the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), UNDP and the Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA).

SSR typically involves the demobilisation and reintegration of ex-combatants and the restructuring of the army and police forces. These reforms often occur in the context of the extreme militarisation of society, ongoing regional instability, and weak institutional capacity, which can further complicate efforts to secure post-conflict stability. Increasingly, justice sector reform is being linked with SSR, including a range of activities such as holding perpetrators accountable for past abuses, strengthening the rule of law, promote reconciliation

[59] Donors had been involved in activities that are now considered part of SSR for several years, but mostly in an ad-hoc and non-institutionalised manner (Brzoska, 2003).

and peacebuilding at the community and national levels, establishing an official truth about past events, and compensating and addressing the needs of victims.

DDR and SSR are two of the main strategies that the international community uses to re-establish security and to create the space for and bolster parallel governance and economic reforms. Increasingly, justice reform is also seen as part of the SSR process, both in terms of transitional justice and legislative reforms as well as removing barriers to accessing justice. Gender inequalities can mediate access to security and justice, and in turn the processes of reforming the justice and security sectors can have significant gendered impacts (Barnes, 2009a; Valasek, 2008). The main area where gender has been integrated into security reforms is through the creation of opportunities for women and girls to benefit from DDR processes and the recruitment and training of women to enter the police and the military. In both these cases, the emphasis is on bringing women into the existing structures.

Feminist critical security scholars question how security is defined, and draw attention to the multitude of gender-related insecurities that are frequently overlooked in the post-conflict phase (Hoogensen and Rottem, 2004; H. Hudson, 2005), but few of these insights appear to have been integrated into the UN's approach to security reform. Ongoing sexual violence is one issue that has received some attention (Kelly, 2000; Pillay, 2002; Sideris, 2002), but there are also other issues relating to security such as economic obstacles to accessing justice, the link between the proliferation of small arms and domestic violence, the lack of respect for human rights, and the balance between justice and reconciliation that merit, but rarely receive, attention in the post-conflict phase. As Kandiyoti argues, "gains achieved in women's formal rights are condemned to remain dead letters in the absence of security and the rule of law" (2005: 22).

3.4.2 Governance reform

The liberal peacebuilding consensus prioritises democratisation as one of the key processes through which peace can be rebuilt in a country that has experienced civil conflict. However, political and institutional reform is one of the most difficult and controversial of donor activities, as well as being the least measurable, due to the nature of reforms necessary and the length of time it takes for them to be consolidated. Institutional capacity in post-conflict countries is weak, and corruption, mismanagement, and undemocratic governance styles are often rife. In addition, governments are often unable or unwilling to deal with the frequent and widespread human rights abuses that occur during civil conflict.

Donor agendas for political and institutional reform are influenced by the principles of good governance and democratic values, and include activities such as capacity-building of governing institutions, support for post-conflict elections, human rights monitoring, and anti-corruption training. The key multilateral donor agencies involved in these activities are the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA).

The international community has made token attempts to include women in peace negotiations, such as those held to discuss the Burundian peace process in Arusha in 2000, in an attempt to redress this balance.[60] However, since women were only accepted as observers, and faced considerable resistance from other male delegates, it is questionable what the impact of such initiatives can be.[61] In addition, these kinds of activities play little more than a symbolic role, demonstrating to the public the 'dedication' of donor agencies and governments to the goal of gender equality, without ever requiring any real commitments or compromises. Indeed, "despite solid arguments by feminist activists that sustainable peace

[60] UNIFEM (2000) "Breakthrough for Women at Burundi Peace Negotiations", Press release, June 27. Accessible at: http://www.reliefweb.int/w/Rwb.nsf/0/4d4d3607bd05fdfac125690d004364dc?OpenDocument.

[61] Personal communication (November 2001) with Burundian refugee woman who attended the Arusha peace talks.

also requires more permanent transformation of social norms around violence, gender and power, this broader agenda has received little attention in intergovernmental forums and in most peace processes" (Baranyi, 2008: 11).

Women are frequently excluded from the formal political process in times of peace as well as during conflict. Recent research from UNIFEM (2009a) demonstrates that fewer than 1.2% of women are signatories of official peace negotiations, which has consequences for their future political participation as well as the terms of the peace agreements themselves. The reasons for this are many: women are often not perceived as 'parties to the conflict' or are not in positions of political leadership, their insights may not be seen as relevant to the brokering of the peace, and they may not have the skills or experience necessary for them to be seen as legitimate actors. They may also have difficulties in running for office during post-conflict elections, or in participating in elections as voters. Puechgirbal argues that there are many ongoing obstacles to the participation of women in peace processes and in the political space which is created, such as: lack of political strength and vision; lack of experience, exposure and skills in negotiation, advocacy and lobbying techniques; lack of visibility; lack of financial and material resources; their participation in politics is rarely sustainable; and, the modes of expression that women use reinforce gendered assumptions about what women should and should not do (2004: 58-9).

Whilst many civil society organisations are often run by women and they play an important role in forging reconciliation and peace at the community level, these roles often do not translate effectively into the formal sphere. Social norms and the predominant discourse on gender roles as well as the possibility of a 'post-war backlash' (Pankhurst, 2008a: 3-7) can also make it difficult for women to assume public roles during peacebuilding, even where governments have signed up to international commitments in this regard. Furthermore, women who are involved in politics and governance reform may not necessarily promote

gender-sensitive reforms or may not be sensitive to the different needs of men and women in their constituencies.

Decentralisation, which involves the transfer of legal, administrative and political power from the centre to lower levels of government, is often portrayed as good for women. First, it is assumed that it will be easier for them to participate in government at the local rather than national level, and second, because they have a specific stake in local service delivery such as housing, primary schools and sanitation (Goetz, 2009a: 16). However, these local structures can replicate patterns of power and exclusion visible at the level of national government, and can therefore still marginalise women. International human rights and specifically rights for women may also be more difficult to advance at the local level where traditional and informal networks and alliances can influence the political process, further entrenching discrimination against women (Beall, 2008: 190-2). The issues that are prioritised in local governance may also fail to benefit men and women equally, for example if preference is given to rehabilitating road or rail infrastructures over the provision of health and education facilities.

In terms of integrating gender into governance reform, the international community has placed some attention on the need for more women to participate in the formal political spheres. The success of quotas in post-conflict countries such as Rwanda that now has the highest number of female parliamentarians in the world is testament to this fact. However, this again illustrates the liberal feminist trap of the gender and peacebuilding agenda, where the UN has focused on adding women in rather than questioning the underlying power dynamics that keep women out of the political sphere. Too little attention has been paid to transforming decision-making structures at the community and local levels, or ensuring that women's needs and interests are being adequately met in terms of service delivery and the accountability of the government to its people.

3.4.3 Poverty reduction and economic reform

Given that it often focuses on the macroeconomic level, the liberal approach to market reform does not necessarily acknowledge the specific socioeconomic challenges facing the population in post-conflict countries, and these measures can at times exacerbate vulnerability and inequalities. Issues such as employment opportunities, land and property rights, and economic security are critical to the viability and sustainability of peace at the household and community level. Economic reform in post-conflict environments can incorporate a wide range of reforms such as community reintegration of ex-combatant and displaced populations, employment generation programmes, reform of public finances, natural resource management, private sector development and poverty reduction. It is questionable how much aid and the benefits of economic reform actually trickle down to the local population, as opposed to the elites who benefit from these processes (Pugh, 2005b). According to Rehn and Sirleaf, "aid for reconstruction has stuck to a rigid framework that requires public sector downsizing, reduced government and the expansion of a free-market economy. This has had negative effects on women and the entire peace process" (2002: 134).

There is an extensive literature on the links between gender equality and development (Boserup, 1970; Elson, 1991; Jackson and Pearson, 1998; Kabeer, 1994). These works demonstrate the clear connection between advancing women's rights and a reduction in poverty and improved welfare of households and communities, as well as the empowerment of women themselves. Several critiques of the gendered impact of neoliberal macroeconomic reforms, particularly relating to structural adjustment policies and, more recently, PRSPs, have also been made. These critics argue that economic reforms inhibit efforts to achieve gender justice, and that the quest for economic efficiency can in fact work against women's human rights (Zuckerman, 2002). Where women's economic needs have been addressed, it tends to have been by including some women in microcredit initiatives or in training them in stereotypical trades such as weaving and soap-making. Again, the liberal feminist approach of

giving women some limited access to economic opportunities without questioning the structures that continue to marginalise them is visible in the UN's approach.

The feminisation of poverty and the economic vulnerability of female-headed households have also been widely acknowledged, although the linkages are still debated (Chant, 2008; Jackson, 1996; Pearson, 1978). However, in contrast to the literature on women's political and social roles and needs, the gender-differentiated impact of socioeconomic reforms has received relatively little attention in the literature, and as has been argued earlier in this chapter, these issues have been largely absent from the development of the gender and peacebuilding agenda. "Peace agreements written or supervised by Western diplomats often bestow civil and political rights on African women, while failing to pay attention to their priorities, which would often rank social, economic and cultural rights before those civil and political rights" (Heidi Hudson, 2009: 297).

Kandiyoti questions what empowerment can mean in the context of neoliberal reforms that restrict access to basic services and social safety nets (2007: 191), drawing attention to the impact that socioeconomic insecurity can have on other aspects of political and social security. Given that the principles of the neoliberal economic agenda have largely been incorporated into the liberal peacebuilding consensus, it would therefore be expected that many of the same critiques would have been made of economic reforms in post-conflict countries. However, contrary to this assumption, in fact relatively little research has been done on the links between gender equality and economic reform and the differential impact of economic insecurity on men and women in post-conflict contexts or how economic issues are integrated into the international community's gender and peacebuilding agenda.

3.4.4 Explaining the emergence of the liberal feminist approach to gender and peacebuilding

Before exploring how the liberal feminist approach to gender and peacebuilding has played out in the case study of Sierra Leone, it is important to consider why this particular way of addressing gender issues has emerged as the dominant discourse and practice at the UN. Firstly, despite the now significant numbers of women from developing countries who are mobilising around gender issues, particularly in relation to peace and security, the formative years of the gender agenda were clearly dominated by Western feminists and Western concepts. Dating back to the 'first wave' of feminist theory in the nineteenth century that focused on women's suffrage and equality in education, until the beginning of the UN Decade, the dominant voices were those of Western women.[62] As a result, the majority of the documents and policies that emerged during this period reflect Western notions of women, gender, and equality, often focusing on the rights of the individual and universalising the position of 'woman', relegating the experiences and insights of Southern women to the margins.

Eventually, concurrently with the attention the WID/GAD and women's movement attracted to the plight of women in developing countries, critiques began to emerge that challenged the universal theorising that informed the early development of the gender agenda (Mohanty, Russo and Torres, 1991). Regardless, these new critiques were unable to exert much influence over international organisations that were characterised by male-dominated bureaucracies, neoliberal agendas, and constrained by the interests of the strong member states. As a result, in practice, these organisations adopted a form of 'gender mainstreaming' that was mostly focused on the need to remove barriers to women's participation and often avoided the more difficult issue of transforming gendered power relations and structures. Thus, the dominance

[62] For a good general overview of feminist thought see Tong, 1989.

of Western actors and ideas in the process of creating a gender agenda seems to have created a predisposition for an integrationist, liberal feminist approach.

Second, although some policies (e.g. the Beijing Platform for Action) may appear to indicate a major commitment to the issue of gender equality, the political reality remains that this goal is subsidiary to many other key concerns of the international community. There is significant resistance to change within many of these organisations, and bureaucratic obstacles to gender equality remain an important factor with which to contend.[63] In addition, even where gender issues have been taken on board, they have most often been phrased in a way that ensures their compatibility with the other key mandates or approaches of the organisations. For example, the first chapter of the World Bank's 2002 strategy for gender mainstreaming begins with a chapter entitled 'the business case for mainstreaming gender', and describes "the evidence linking gender to poverty reduction and economic growth", explicitly framing gender equality in the neo-liberal language of efficient economic growth that characterises this organisation (World Bank, 2002a). Thus, internal resistance coupled with the range of other priorities in international development limits the range of potential options for promoting gender equality. A liberal feminist approach often tends to dominate as the most viable strategy due to the fact that it does not present a major challenge to the status quo, and measures can be implemented 'on the side' or as token gestures that do not require any significant changes in structures or attitudes. The political nature of the issue of gender equality constrains the options that committed individuals both within and outside of these organisations have to press for change.[64]

[63] The bureaucratic explanations for the gap between gender-related policy and practice have been discussed in detail elsewhere and remain outside the focus of this thesis. For example, Staudt, 1997; Goetz, 1997; Kabeer, 1994.

[64] For a discussion of the roles of insiders and outsiders in influencing the gender policies and programs of development institutions, and the obstacles they face in doing so, see Miller and Razavi, 1998.

Another reason for the predominance of the liberal feminist approach could be operational difficulties encountered in actually trying to implement a more transformative agenda. Gender units are usually under-resourced, under-funded, and are almost always marginalised within the structure of organisations. For example, only 0.07% of all the funds requested as part of the $1.7 billion UN-sponsored Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for Afghanistan in 2002 were earmarked for women-specific projects (Rehn and Sirleaf, 2002: 129).[65] With such limited, and project-cycle dependent, funding it is difficult to implement the long-term programs that are needed to address gender equality in a more fundamental manner, beyond measures such as increasing girls' enrollment in school and increasing women's access to non-traditional employment. This is despite the very prominent place that gender issues have assumed within the rhetoric of the international community during the reconstruction process. Furthermore, gender focal points (common within international organisations seeking to delegate the job of being 'responsible' for the promotion of gender equality) are often junior staff members with little influence or opportunity to challenge gendered practices. Other 'on the ground' problems in operationalising gender agendas include time pressures that make gender-sensitive participatory approaches difficult, cultural obstacles, and a limited knowledge of the gender context of any given situations amongst programme staff.

Critiques of liberal peacebuilding have been made which question who has the knowledge, legitimacy and ability to set the priorities and agenda of peacebuilding processes. Whilst these critiques tend to make the distinction between external and local actors, they assume a certain homogeneity among these groups, and tend to assume that the liberal peacebuilding process will impact on a community in the same way. Applying a feminist analysis can help to expose whose knowledge counts, who has access to and control over power within a society, and

[65] Although it is recognised that other, non-women specific projects may have had positive effects on gender equality, this statistic is still indicative of the lack of priority that is accorded to these issues. Furthermore, although gender issues featured prominently in the discourse, it is unsurprising that this was not reflected in the practical reality.

how men and women are differently affected and involved in processes of security, governance and economic reform. It is often the case that women are not perceived to be legitimate peacebuilding actors, and therefore end up marginalised from these processes despite the specific contributions they can make, and their right to benefit from the peace dividend.

This chapter has outlined the intersection of global-level changes that created the space and provided the momentum for the emergence of a gender agenda within the international community's peacebuilding work. Using the case of Sierra Leone, the remainder of this thesis will argue that the gender and peacebuilding agenda has been shaped along the contours of a liberal feminist model, in much the same way that the UN's peacebuilding efforts can be understood to be part of a liberal peacebuilding consensus. International organisations frequently make assumptions about the roles men and women play, or should play, in peacebuilding processes, which leads them to make program decisions that can have intended, or at times unintended, consequences on the gender order within post-conflict contexts.

CHAPTER 4. THE GENDER DIMENSIONS OF THE CONFLICT IN SIERRA LEONE

This chapter provides an overview and analysis of the causes and consequences of the war in Sierra Leone, in particular the different impact that it had on men and women and the different ways in which they were drawn into the conflict and efforts to build peace. Gender inequalities have been characteristic of everyday life in Sierra Leone, and women have traditionally been marginalised from formal politics and economics. Linked to this gender inequality are endemic forms of discrimination and gender-based violence that pervade the lives of most women and girls and are particularly exacerbated by customary laws and traditions that give them few rights and little personal security. This chapter will present a brief overview of the causes and consequences of the conflict, with a specific focus on the gender dimensions and the important role that many women's organisations, in particular the Sierra Leone Women's Movement for Peace, played in advocating for a peaceful end to the conflict and the resumption of democratic governance. It will also cover the immediate post-war years and the arrival of UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, before setting out some of the key themes and issues that will be addressed in chapters five to seven, tracing the evolution of the UN's efforts to integrate gender into the peacebuilding process and contrasting this with the work being done by local women's organisations.

4.1 Brief historical background to the conflict

According to Keen, civil conflict is often forced to fit into traditional models of warfare, involving two sides fighting each other. He criticises this model as being 'old-fashioned' and incapable of incorporating the 'perverse and destructive nature' of contemporary civil wars (Keen, 2005: 2). Indeed, much has been written on the so-called 'new wars' of the post-cold war years and the challenges they pose to existing frameworks of international relations and war (Berdal, 2003; Kaldor, 1999; Kalyvas, 2001; Duffield, 2001). The case of Sierra Leone

would qualify as one of these conflicts; it broke out of the traditional boundaries given the extent of the war economy, regional instability, and sheer extent of brutality that were characteristic of the years from 1991 until almost a decade later. One of the first academic studies of the conflict was by Paul Richards (1996) in the mid-1990s, and since then, Sierra Leone has featured as an infamous case study in numerous volumes on failed states, rebel movements, and peacekeeping as well as being studied in more detail by those involved in and removed from the conflict. This section does not seek to reinvent the wheel by attempting to provide a more detailed account than already exists in those given by first-hand observers and regional specialists, but rather to merely give an overview of the key events to situate the subsequent case study chapters in context.[66]

During its colonial heyday, Sierra Leone was an African success story.[67] Fourah Bay College, in Freetown, was the first university established south of the Sahara, and the country's socioeconomic indicators were relatively healthy for the region. However, the historical legacy of this era was not benign. Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle argue that the instability in post-independence years was due, in part, to "the inherited disjuncture in state-society relations largely responsible for the woeful lack of legitimate, efficient, and well developed institutions that can transcend and weld together the parochial ethnoregional and class interests of Sierra Leone society" (1999: 75). Indeed, it is true that while colonisation had ensured a certain degree of institutionalisation of political structures, it contributed to the latent inequalities and rivalries that were simmering beneath the surface waiting to erupt. Some of the key divisions and tensions exacerbated during this period were between the Krio descendants in Freetown and indigenous groups in the rural provinces; the Mende/South and Temne/North division; the wealthy expatriate elite and the poverty-stricken indigenous population; and finally the urbanised, Westernised elite and the traditional chieftaincy

[66] For detailed accounts of the origins of the conflict see Abdullah, ed. (2004); Gberie (2005); Richards (1996).
[67] For useful studies of pre-colonial and colonial Sierra Leone see Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle (1999); Koroma (1996).

structures in the provinces (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle, 1999: 76). Upon their departure from Sierra Leone in 1961, the British left behind a largely functioning multi-party system and decent infrastructure, but a society that was already fragmenting along ethnoregional lines.

In the immediate post-independence years, Sir Milton Margai and his Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) came to power with the support of the country's elite in 1961, and until his death in 1964 did little to erode the structures set up by the British. However, when power passed to his brother, Albert Margai, the era of patrimonialism began in earnest as he sought to benefit from corrupt policies and to cement ethnic divisions between his Mende supporters who benefited from SLPP rule and other groups such as the Temne and Limba in the north (Hirsch, 2001: 28). When Siaka Stevens emerged as a viable and ultimately successful challenger in the 1967 elections Margai tried to prevent Stevens from assuming power first through parliamentary means and then subsequently by endorsing a military coup.[68] Eventually, Stevens took over as prime minister in 1968 and the path to rapid and sustained decline was truly set in stone.

During Stevens' rule (from 1968-1985) the inequalities and rivalries that were first stirred up by Margai were even further entrenched as a result of Stevens' patrimonial political style that served to enrich him and his cronies at the expense of the state. Although impoverished, the Sierra Leone that Stevens inherited upon coming into power in 1968 was essentially a functioning state (Chege, 2002: 151). However, through policies of intimidation, corruption, mismanagement, self-interest, and greed he succeeded in eroding the ability of the state to perform its intended duties. Stevens, according to Chege, "[was c]onsumed with ambition and the desire to create a one-party state under his personal control, he gradually emasculated the once-vigorous parliament, finally banning opposition parties and dealing harshly with bona

[68] See Koroma (1996) for a discussion of Margai's attempts to subvert the democratic process and the coup staged by Brigadier David Lansana in 1967.

fide political opponents" (Chege, 2002: 151-2). However, the international community adopted at best a tolerant approach to Stevens' excesses, and at worst, a benevolent approach to his misrule. The international financial institutions (IFIs) and bilateral donors gave millions of dollars in loans to the government; money which subsequently ended up in the pockets of patrons and clients of the Stevens regime. The increasingly repressive rule and patronage networks within the country set the stage for the economic downturn and social crisis that ultimately paved the way to the RUF invasion of 1991.

Stevens selected Joseph Momoh as his successor in 1985, although despite his retirement he continued to hold influence over Sierra Leonean politics. Momoh proved to be a relatively ineffective leader and exacerbated the significant economic, social and political problems that were already beginning to confront the state by the early 1980s. The country was extremely indebted, corruption and graft were rife throughout the elite, the majority of the population was impoverished, unemployed, and increasingly discontented with self-interested rulers, and the funding supplied by the international community continued to line the leaders' coffers.

Aside from the inappropriate domestic policies due to patrimonialism, the decline in overseas development assistance (ODA) and export value of minerals and agricultural products due to illegal mining, an overvalued currency, and the neglect of infrastructure and social welfare programs contributed to the dire situation facing the country (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle, 1999: 92-94). There was another attempted coup in 1987, and the continuing economic decline and lack of political control meant that Momoh was unable to satisfy his patronage networks. These eventually began to break down as different groups started competing for power and exploiting the state to ensure their own survival (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle, 1999: 123-125).

Clearly, the high unemployment and lack of opportunities for (particularly male) youth provided a fertile breeding ground for disaffection. According to Abdullah and Muana, the

'lumpen youth' began to form into groups in the years running up to independence, and although often uneducated and with little political consciousness they were soon manipulated. The ranks grew to include more politicised, middle-class urban youth who brought a certain social legitimacy to the previously marginalised group (Abdullah and Muana, 1998). The economic downturn of the 1980s exacerbated the problems of unemployment and under-funding of social services and fuelled calls for revolution amongst the youth. It is also important to note the particular divide that had been deepening between Freetown's urban elite, and the majority rural population who suffered at the expense of the government's over-centralisation of the state in the capital. This lack of equity in resource allocation also contributed to the growing disconnect from and grievances against the state system (Alie, 2000: 20).

The war in Liberia was from the very beginning entangled with the demise of Sierra Leone.[69] Taylor and Sankoh also had a common background, having both been trained by Qaddafi in Libya during the 1980s. Therefore, it was with the assistance of Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL), that the RUF invaded Sierra Leone from Liberia on 23 March 1991, and seized control of numerous border towns in the Kailahun and Pujehun districts (Abdullah and Muana, 1998: 178). The strategy of the RUF was to infiltrate the border regions, whose residents were long-term opponents of the All People's Congress (APC) regime in Freetown, to garner support and build bases allowing for the extension of RUF advances further into Sierra Leonean territory, especially the areas around Bo and Kenema which were the main regional centres in the south and east.

Initially, the RUF numbered only about 100 fighters, composed of Sierra Leonean exiles and Burkinabe and Liberian mercenaries (Richards, 1996: 5).[70] The government immediately

[69] The regional context has been an important element in understanding both the conflict and the subsequent peacebuildng process.
[70] Keen (2005) mentions that there is some discrepancy regarding the actual numbers of RUF fighters at the outset of the conflict, but most estimates are between 100-300.

launched a counter-attack and tried to present the rebellion as Liberian-led to detract attention away from Sankoh and his possible threat to Momoh's regime. However, the heavily armed RUF fighters, who by this point numbered closer to 300, had captured most of Kailahun province in the eastern part of the country within a month, and could no longer be ignored (Gberie, 2005: 59-60).

As of July 1991 the APC government began to attack the RUF bases, with a combination of army regulars, Liberian refugees (who were anti-NPFL and some of whom had experience fighting in Liberia), Nigerian troops supporting the ECOMOG mission in Liberia, and disaffected youth who either wanted revenge against the RUF or joined the military due to lack of other educational or social opportunities (Abdullah and Muana, 1998: 180). In addition, due to the defence pact that the country had with Guinea, extra troops were available for the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) from this country as well. The SLA itself did not have a great deal of legitimacy, and was seen by the population as a tool of colonial repression, known for its brutality as much as anything else. Facing pressure from the RUF insurgency, the ranks of the army grew, but the mainly uneducated and undisciplined youth that took up arms to defend the state did not do much to improve the record of the SLA (Gberie, 2005: 40 and 64). Although neither side had particularly strong military training, the bush warfare was particularly suited to the RUF's style of operations and it was able to make gains due to its fighters' knowledge of the area.[71]

In April 1992 there was a coup by young military officers that began as a revolt over pay and conditions of those fighting the RUF in the front lines but turned into a more general call for total revolution and overhaul of the political and economic system. The coup brought into power Captain Valentine Strasser to replace Momoh as leader under the name of the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC); he became the youngest-ever state leader at the age of

[71] See especially Richards (1996) for a discussion of the role of the bush in sustaining the RUF's insurgency in Sierra Leone.

only twenty-six. Strasser had previously served with the ECOMOG force in Liberia, but had little political experience or ability to prepare him for the task of ruling a country in the midst of a rebel insurgence (Richards, 1996: 9). Although the coup was widely supported by (especially urban) youth throughout Sierra Leone, Strasser, who was a Krio, concentrated on issues affecting the capital and on reconstructing those elements of the state that were 'visible' to the donor community (Richards, 1996: 52). According to Gberie,

> Strasser announced the junta's aim to be a quick end to the war, rehabilitation of the battered country, and a return to civilian rule. In fact, his regime would see the war escalate beyond everyone's comprehension, and the RUF grow from a marginal band of bush guerrillas dismissed by almost everybody as common bandits into a very destructive and indeed decisive force in the country (Gberie, 2005: 69).

Attempts were made for a ceasefire between the RUF and the NPRC, but this did not hold. The coup was problematic for the RUF given that the defining purpose of their struggle was to overthrow the corrupt APC government – now that this had been done, albeit by disaffected SLA soldiers, one of their justifying reasons for the conflict had been removed. According to Gberie, RUF representatives rejected Strasser's suggestion of unconditional surrender in return for amnesty on the basis that they believed the NPRC coup was successful in part because of the RUF struggle and its role in weakening the government, and they wanted a piece of the governmental pie in return (Gberie, 2005: 74). In the immediate aftermath of the coup the situation in Sierra Leone improved for many as artificial shortages of essential goods were ended, and the Strasser regime appeared at first to be a welcome change from the cronyism and incompetence of Momoh. However, this popular goodwill was squandered as the NPRC reneged on its promises to relieve the country of its poverty and corruption and the RUF continued to attack civilians throughout the country.

Despite suffering initial losses in the run-up to and immediate aftermath of the NPRC coup, by late 1993 the RUF had managed to establish a network of bush camps and was launching a number of increasingly brutal attacks on civilian villages. Hirsch points out the irony that while the RUF declared a war against government officials and their business associates, the

main victims were the rural peasantry who ultimately had little ability or opportunity to influence the leaders in Freetown (Hirsch, 2001: 31). The army and the RUF were also recruiting from the same groups of disadvantaged, dissatisfied youth, and ultimately it became difficult to differentiate between the sides as both terrorised civilians and exploited the spoils of war – it is from this reality that the term 'sobel' became widely used.[72] This period witnessed a mass exodus of civilians from war-affected areas, as entire towns and regions were razed and pillaged by the RUF, but also by the NPRC soldiers who wanted to preserve their own survival.

In early 1994 the tide seemed to be turning in the RUF's favour, with foreign workers being evacuated in expectation of a rebel onslaught in Freetown, and Sierra Leoneans becoming increasingly discontented with the way that the NPRC rulers seemed to be prolonging the war for their own personal benefit (Abdullah and Muana, 1998: 184). The RUF had achieved their long-desired international attention through hostage-takings, and also served to emphasise the lack of control of the NPRC in the face of the ever-encroaching rebel threat. According to Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle, the NPRC failed to defeat the RUF primarily as a result of military indiscipline, disloyalty, and insufficient resources (1999: 134).

Essentially, the Sierra Leonean state no longer had a monopoly over the use of force by the mid-1990s, and rebels, government soldiers, and mercenaries were all implicated in violence. Indeed, Keen has written extensively and persuasively of the collusion that existed between the various actors in the conflict (Keen, 2005). Strasser appealed to various international bodies to send mediators to assist in resolving the continuing crisis, and he also turned to Executive Outcomes (EO), a private South African military company to provide additional support. However, by the end of 1995 there was virtually no formal economic activity in

[72] 'Sobel' is a short-hand term to describe the emergence of individuals who were 'soldiers by day, rebels by night', switching between the different sides of the conflict in order to maximise their personal gain and interests at the expense of civilians.

Sierra Leone and the country was in tatters with the state increasingly unable (and perhaps unwilling) to provide security and welfare to its people.

During this phase of the conflict, a fledging civil society movement began to take form and started to pressure Strasser to live up to his initial commitment to relinquish the NPRC's power and turn the country over to civilian democratic rule. Women's groups were at the forefront of this process and ultimately contributed to pushing for the decision to hold elections and work towards a ceasefire. However, despite this, civil society representatives were notably absent from the negotiations in Abidjan.[73] In the run-up to the elections that were scheduled for the spring of 1996, Strasser was ousted in a peaceful internal coup by Brigadier General Julius Maada Bio.[74]

The weeks prior to the elections was also when the brutal strategy of amputating limbs was first systematically implemented in an attempt by the RUF to disrupt the polls. However, despite this and last minute attempts by Maada Bio to postpone them, the elections went ahead as planned. Ahmed Tejan Kabbah, a former UN employee and SLPP candidate won the elections and negotiations between the new government and the RUF continued. This culminated in Kabbah and Sankoh signing a peace agreement on 30 November 1996 in Abidjan.[75] The growing success of EO and the other actors on the ground in terms of pushing back the RUF was largely responsible for their apparent willingness to negotiate. One of the RUF's terms was that external actors, including the all-important EO, were required to leave Sierra Leone. Seemingly faced with few other options and under pressure from the international community who were underwriting the peace agreement, Kabbah eventually

[73] FAS, 2000: 23. The peace talks held in Abidjan in 1996 brought together the leaders of the RUF and first the NPRC and then the newly-installed government of Ahmed Kabbah. Sponsored by the UN, ECOWAS and the OAU, the Abidjan Accords set out a process of political transition that would have seen the RUF transformed into a political party. The main provisions of the Accords were a ceasefire, DDR, an amnesty for the RUF and the withdrawal of all foreign forces (Gberie, 2005: 11-12; Hirsch, 2001: 54-55).

[74] Strasser was ineligible to run as a candidate in the 1996 elections, and the coup occurred when he attempted to bend the rules enabling him to do so.

[75] The accord can be viewed online at: http://www.sierra-leone.org/abidjanaccord.html [accessed 18/11/05].

consented.[76] This would turn out to be a major mistake with enduring consequences for the future trajectory of the conflict in Sierra Leone.

Ultimately the Abidjan Accords failed in all senses, most fundamentally in their inability to put a stop to the violence. Kabbah's government believed that Sankoh was stalling on fulfilling his part of the agreement, in particular to support demobilisation.[77] For the RUF, there was dissension in the ranks about whether or not to push for peace, and as a result the RUF leadership splintered. Not all members of the leadership were in favour of a negotiated settlement with the government, and finally at the beginning of 1997 Sankoh's followers incarcerated some RUF officials accused of treason due to their attempt to appoint a new leader for the movement (Hirsch, 2001: 54). Sankoh, meanwhile, was arrested in Nigeria in March 1997 where he had allegedly travelled to negotiate an arms deal. He would not return to Freetown until July 1998.

Thus, by mid-1997, Kabbah's government had succeeded in making some progress in combating the RUF largely through the efforts of the Civilian Defence Forces (CDF), but the departure of EO gave the rebels the time and space needed to regroup and re-arm.[78] Gberie reports that Kabbah had begun rehabilitating the economy, with the country registering a positive growth rate of 6.4%, and the civilian population welcomed this respite (2005: 100).[79] However, at the same time, dissension within the SLA was growing as poorly-paid soldiers saw little improvement in their lot and fears about their future after the planned demobilisation grew. According to Keen, while donors had promised vast sums of

[76] Another important condition of the peace agreement was that the RUF were to be given amnesty and no judicial action would be taken against them.
[77] Hirsch reports that in December 1996, the SLA intercepted a radio message from Sankoh to his field commanders confirming that he had only chosen to enter negotiations because of the military pressure that the RUF was under at the time, and that he intended to purchase more arms and keep fighting. Sankoh was especially bitter that he was not given a role in the new government, despite having been promised the vice-presidency by the previous regime of Maada Bio (Hirsch, 2001: 54).
[78] According to Abdullah and Muana, the two main decisive factors that sustained the attempts to ward off the RUF was the presence of Executive Outcomes (EO) in the country and the efforts of the Civil Defense Forces, the 'Kamajors'.
[79] It is likely that that this growth rate can largely be attributed to donor-led post-conflict investment projects, as well as tighter regulation of the diamond trade thereby increasing government revenues.

reconstruction money to Sierra Leone, little of this seemed destined to off-set the social costs of military down-sizing, fanning soldiers' fears about their post-war lives (Keen, 2005: 198).[80]

Another simmering issue was that while in power (and even after he was ousted in the coup of May 1997), Kabbah had increased support for the Civilian Defence Force. Despite being the constitutionally recognised defenders of the state, the government did not believe in the loyalty of the military, and therefore gave more resources to the CDF who it was believed would ultimately be more effective in defeating the RUF.[81] Kabbah had also selected Chief Hinga Norman, a Mende, to be his Deputy Defence Minister, which cemented the links between the government and the Kamajors. This caused further outrage amongst the already-troubled army, and observers believe this contributed to the decision of some members of the military to cooperate with the RUF in the AFRC junta that took power following the coup in 1997 (Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle, 1999: 136-8; Gberie, 2005: 100-101).

On May 25th, 1997, a group of young army officers stormed Pademba Road Prison releasing, among others, Major Johnny Paul Koroma who was an ex-SLA officer imprisoned for his role in an attempted coup in 1996. While some members of the armed forces did have legitimate grievances, "the coup was particularly anti-state, driven by criminal impulses, wholly self-serving and predatory, and carried out by people who had no conception of governance, let alone aiming at it" (Gberie, 2005: 98). Indeed, for all observers and analysts of the Sierra Leonean conflict, this coup was a major turning-point. Not only did the newly formed regime of Koroma, the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), have control of Freetown but the RUF was invited to join the junta.

[80] This argument is also supported by Gberie (2005): 102-106.
[81] It is also important to point out that the SLA was largely dominated by northerners who, following the lines of ethnic rivalry, were opposed to the prominent role being assumed by the Mende (and therefore southern) dominated CDF.

President Kabbah was whisked away to Guinea and the (legitimate) government called on ECOWAS to reverse the coup. Since ECOMOG already had a base in the country from which it was running its peacekeeping mission in Liberia with mandate that included regional stability, ECOWAS, with the support of the United Nations Security Council, accepted this request for assistance. Foreigners were evacuated in a massive operation and several hundred thousand Sierra Leoneans went into exile as the rebels moved toward Freetown. Initial attempts at negotiation were made, but when these failed to bear fruit an ECOMOG military invasion became the only perceived option. The junta attracted many political opportunists who saw the coup as a chance to gain retribution for grievances against the Kabbah regime, despite the fact that the regime was not recognised by any government and did little other than plunder the state and terrorise the population (Hirsch, 2001: 62). The fact that Charles Taylor came into power in neighbouring Liberia was also an important boost for the illegitimate junta, but did little to give them a credible political agenda to rebuild the country and bring the war to an end.

The period of the AFRC/RUF junta rule from 1997-1999 was one of the most brutal times of the war. Despite this fact, the international community was slow to respond and Sierra Leone's troubles were still seen as 'marginal' to the rest of the world. While the collaboration amongst these two groups – former government soldiers on the one hand and the rebels with whom they were supposed to be fighting on the other – appeared surprising to many, according to Keen it reflected a different reality of the conflict. Namely, that the Sierra Leone war did not fit into the 'good side fighting bad side' model previously expected. In fact, the rebels and some groups within the army had been covertly collaborating with each other for several years, and the junta simply provided an opportunity to make this public (Keen, 2005: 193).

Civil society was largely unanimous in their resistance to the junta's rule, which almost immediately carried out offensives against CDF-protected areas and adopted policies of

harassment and abuse against any potential political opponents (Gberie, 2005: 109-111). Eventually, the junta was forced to sign the Conakry Peace Plan on October 23rd, 1997 due to sustained domestic civic and international pressure (Gberie, 2004: 162-163). Although it called for the immediate cessation of hostilities, it was never fully or successfully implemented.

Hirsch alleges that from early on there were fractures between the different elements of the AFRC/RUF junta. He suggests that Johnny Paul Koroma was keen to negotiate an end to their rule and the return of Kabbah's exiled government, whereas other members were pushing for the reduction of Nigerian troops in the ECOMOG force and the return of Sankoh from exile so that he could assume the role of vice president which the junta had awarded him in absentia (Hirsch, 2001: 64-5). Furthermore, Keen also describes the tensions between the RUF and the AFRC over lucrative diamond mining revenues and the difficulty in taming the unemployed men who made up the rank and file of the AFRC/RUF alliance and were accustomed to a life of violence (Keen, 2005: 212-213). These rifts would eventually lead to the two groups fighting each other, with renegade soldiers and rebels all fighting for the same spoils and regional power.

During this time, the ECOMOG Nigerian-led force was ultimately unable to succeed in its peacekeeping mission.[82] Lacking the resources, leadership and the logistical capabilities required to defeat the rebels, Kabbah tried to bolster ECOMOG through enlisting another private security company, Sandline International, this time with British connections. In July 1998, Sankoh also made his long-awaited return to Freetown to stand trial for treason, and was eventually sentenced to death in October of that year. This raised the stakes and there was a renewed push for negotiations with the RUF who were still wreaking havoc upcountry,

[82] According to Adebajo, Nigeria provided 80% of ECOMOG's troops and 90% of the funding for its missions in Sierra Leone, therefore effectively determining the force's policies (Adebajo, 2004: 170).

while Kabbah, who had by now returned to a devastated Freetown, started the process of rebuilding the ravaged country.

However, when rebels invaded Freetown in January 1999, ECOMOG and the SLA again failed in their attempts to fend off the RUF through guerrilla tactics and a military stalemate resulted. The invasion, dubbed 'Operation No Living Thing', caused untold human suffering, and images of drug-crazed young rebels and ex-SLA soldiers looting and killing in the streets of the capital were relayed around the world. Significantly, the UN had still failed to provide the peacekeepers promised at Abidjan in 1996, and the major international response prior to the rebel onslaught in Freetown was to withdraw the staff from the country. Even the UN Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), created in July 1998, pulled out a few days prior to the invasion in January 1999 (Keen, 2005: 225). In the end, political accommodation and the appeasement of local warlords at Lomé was the only option for a war-weary population and an impotent leadership in exile (Adebajo, 2004: 168).

The Lomé agreement was signed in May 1999, although at the outset was largely ignored. The merits of Lomé were contested, with critics arguing that it gave too many concessions to a brutal, rebel force, rewarded violence with political power, and the amnesty it granted would enable the rebels to await ECOMOG's expected exit from the country before staging another coup.[83] The proponents, on the other hand, believed that negotiation was crucial in order to end the mass-scale civilian suffering caused by the war and that this priority was paramount. It also contained provisions for political reform and ideally would institutionalise a form of good governance in Sierra Leone that was designed to counter any continuing belligerent tendencies of the newly empowered rebel leaders (Cook, 2003: 23).

[83] Another pressure placed on ECOMOG's operations in Sierra Leone came with the sudden death of Nigerian President Abacha in June 1998. The new civilian government came under pressure to reduce the costly and ineffective ECOMOG operation, despite Kabbah's pleas to remain.

Another off-shoot of Lomé was the creation of UNAMSIL, the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Sierra Leone, with the passing of Security Council Resolution 1270 on October 22nd, 1999. Finally, restoration of the government of President Kabbah was a critical step forward in political terms. Despite the signing of Lomé, fighting still continued sporadically between the RUF and the government-led forces, as well as ECOMOG and the new UN peacekeeping force. Furthermore, the rebels were making a resurgence in certain parts of the country, continuing to terrorise the population and take hostages from amongst the various groups fighting the conflict. This interrupted the process of disarming and demobilising the various combatants scattered around the country, and real progress was not really made until after the signing of a ceasefire agreement in Abuja in late 2000.

4.2 The gendered impact of the conflict: Legacies of violence and insecurity

Historically, rates of education and literacy in Sierra Leone have been very low amongst women, particularly in rural areas. Cultural traditions have also prevented women from taking on active roles in formal political and economic life, although there have been some exceptions (Campaign for Good Governance, n.d.: 200-1).[84] The marginalisation of women also extends to the economic sphere, where women tend to carry out 60-80% of agricultural work but are often unable to retain control of the economic resources they generate within their households and communities (TRC, 2005: 108).

Problems of economic insecurity, unemployment, poverty, and a general lack of social, political and economic opportunities for the majority of the population are widespread in Sierra Leone and affect both women and men. However, because of the customary traditions and patriarchal social relations that are prevalent throughout the country, women face particular challenges in overcoming these obstacles. Access to land and property is critical to

[84] Sierra Leone has witnessed some female paramount chiefs and Freetown had its first female mayor, Agatha Constance Cummings-John, from 1966-7 (Lamin, 2007: 115).

building a sustainable livelihood, but discriminatory laws mean that women have had difficulty securing their rights to property and land, making them dependent on male family members or the discretion of community leaders. The knock-on effects of this mean that women may not be able to obtain credit or loans, or be able to cultivate food to feed their families and to sell for additional income. The protracted poverty in Sierra Leone has thus affected women and girls disproportionately, making them less able to escape exploitative relationships or to take advantage of training and educational opportunities.

The discriminatory context facing women in Sierra Leone was exacerbated by the conflict, when women had to deal with increased poverty, displacement, ongoing insecurity and the breakdown of social services. Given their roles as carers and providers of food for the family and their subordinate position in society, women were disproportionately affected by the conflict. The destruction of social networks and structures, the breaking up of families and communities, and the mass displacement of half of the population all resulted in the destabilisation of traditional value and cultural systems. Whilst this offers the opportunity to renegotiate traditionally held beliefs, it also potentially facilitates a culture of violence where there is little accountability and few inbuilt structures to regulate behaviour, since ties to family and community were so often broken. This section of the chapter will give a brief overview of the gendered impact of the conflict, focusing specifically on the consequences it had for women.

4.2.1 Sexual and gender-based violence

There is growing recognition of the myriad ways that women and girls were involved in the conflict in Sierra Leone; as cooks, porters, sex slaves, heads of households, combatants and income generators to name a few (TRC, 2005). Regardless of the different roles they played, women and girls from all parts of the country were subjected to extensive sexual violence

throughout the duration of the conflict.[85] Indeed, the war in Sierra Leone was characterised by extreme brutality, and it is widely estimated that up to 250,000 women and girls in Sierra Leone were victims of GBV during the ten-year war.[86] Many of these women experienced multiple and gang rapes (Physicians for Human Rights, 2002: 2-4).

The report of the TRC finds that "all of the armed factions, in particular the RUF and the AFRC, embarked on a systematic and deliberate strategy to rape women and girls, especially those between 10-18 years of age, with the intention of sowing terror amongst the population, violating women and girls and breaking down every norm and custom of traditional society" (TRC, 2005: 162). Few women were able to protect themselves from these violations, but those affiliated with the fighting forces were sometimes able to use their position to gain a certain degree of security for themselves and other vulnerable people around them. Although estimates vary, according to one Sierra Leonean female activist, "all in all, 72 per cent of the country's women have suffered human rights abuses" (Dyfan 2003: 3).

In addition to the evident physical and psychological effects on the individuals, the social impact of this sexual violence on both the victims and their communities has been equally damaging. Women in Sierra Leone have historically had little control over their sexuality, and a premium is placed on girls' virginity which is perceived as 'belonging' to the family. When a woman is violated, particularly if she is virgin, it is not seen just as an individual act but as a violation of the male members of her community. The prevalence of rape and other sexual violations during the war were a direct challenge to many of the norms associated with virginity and women's sexuality (TRC, 2005: 196-7). Much of the violence was carried out either in front of or by immediate family members, thereby undermining societal and familial

[85] A report on the violations that occurred during the conflict found that "all of the armed factions, in particular the RUF and the AFRC, embarked on a systematic and deliberate strategy to rape women and girls, especially those between 10-18 years of age, with the intention of sowing terror amongst the population, violating women and girls and breaking down every norm and custom of traditional society" (TRC, 2005: 162).

[86] For an overview of sexual violence during the war in Sierra Leone see Human Rights Watch, 2003; TRC, 2005.

ties (TRC, 2005: 197).

Consequently, after the war many women faced stigma, ostracism and shame, and they were often rejected by their husbands for being raped or having been 'rebel wives'. This stigma was particularly marked in cases where women were pregnant or had given birth to children borne from rape during the war. In some cases, the stigma experienced by women affected by gender-based violence has led them into prostitution as a means of survival, since there are few other options available for women considered to be 'tarnished' by sexual violence. In other cases, women simply chose to remain silent about the abuses they had endured.[87]

Despite the knowledge about the specific insecurities women were facing, the UN did little to address them. SCR 1270, while highlighting the specific protection needs of children and refugees makes no specific reference to the widespread and extreme sexual violence that women were being subjected to daily throughout the country. As will be seen in chapter 6.1, the failure to prevent and respond to sexual violence has continued in the post-conflict phase with consequences for the broader peacebuilding effort.

4.2.2 Women in decision-making and the legal system

Sierra Leone is a highly patriarchal society, where the institutional structures that currently exist discriminate against women. These institutionalised gender inequalities are exacerbated by discriminatory traditions and customs, and by the high levels of illiteracy and poverty amongst Sierra Leonean women that prevent them from upholding many of their internationally recognised rights. Their marginalisation from decision-making processes further limits their ability to redress these gender inequalities.

The legal environment in Sierra Leone is made particularly complex by the co-existence of

[87] Personal interview with Viktoria Jarr, Caritas Makeni, 14 March 2006. Human Rights Watch, 2003: 52-3; Physicians for Human Rights, 2002: 78-81. It is important to note that some boys and men were also victims of sexual violence during the conflict, and also faced extreme levels of stigma.

three different legal systems: general law, made up of statutory and codified law inherited from the era of British colonial rule; customary law, made up of unwritten traditional codes and practices; and Islamic law, where statutes related to marriage, divorce and inheritance law are differentiated from those within customary law. Customary law is protected in the Constitution and is defined as "the rules of law by which customs are applicable to particular communities in Sierra Leone" (HRW, 2003: 15). Because most of the population of Sierra Leone lives outside of the Western Area where Freetown is located, up to 85% of the population falls under the jurisdiction of local courts and the system of customary law.

Each system has specific implications for women's rights, and the differing practices adopted by each can lead to confusion and the failure to provide protection. The result is that even though women have certain rights in Sierra Leone under general law, the majority of the population follows the practices of the customary system which can result in the predominance of discriminatory attitudes and behaviour. There is also a tendency for communities to resort to informal law, where decisions are made by the Chiefs or other traditional leaders rather than going through Local Court authorities who are mandated to adjudicate on matters of customary law. Discrimination and human rights abuses against women are even more pervasive in the informal legal sector (Amnesty International, 2006).

According to Amnesty International, "not only do Chiefs act outside their jurisdiction, at times they collude with men in the community to forcibly evict women and children from their homes or subject them to arbitrary detention and other forms of gender based violence" (Amnesty International, 2006: 1). Families often resort to the informal legal system due to ease of access, lower costs, and the traditional view that violence against women is something that occurs within the private sphere and should therefore be resolved informally.[88]

[88] For an extensive analysis of the parallel systems of formal and customary law as well as the coexisting formal and informal structures see Amnesty International, 2006.

Women themselves are also socialised into acceptance of harmful attitudes and practices, and are often unaware about their rights and how they can be protected. Many women indicate that physical violence perpetrated against them by their male partners is permissible, as they have been socialised to see this behaviour as acceptable and expected. Pursuing recourse against the perpetrators is rarely an option due to stigma, social pressure, expense, lack of awareness and generally prohibitive legal structures. As a result, few women have the ability to challenge the discrimination that they face on a daily basis. Changing these patriarchal attitudes is a gradual and long-term process, yet it should be a central element in any holistic strategy to ensure security for women and girls and the building of a broader peace in Sierra Leone.

4.2.3 Economic insecurity

Poverty in Sierra Leone is endemic and entrenched and affects all men and women, both young and old. During this research poverty was repeatedly identified by civil society organisations and donor agencies as one of the key issues impeding the consolidation of peace. The war exacerbated poverty, resulted in a halving of GDP per capita, displacement and physical injury leading to reduced productivity, widespread corruption, and the destruction of social, economic and political infrastructure (GoSL, 2005a: viii). The 2005 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) reports that approximately 3,360,000 people (70%) in Sierra Leone live in poverty, with 73% of this poverty being concentrated in the rural areas (GoSL, 2005a: 20). According to the PRSP profile, poverty is more marked amongst women, of whom 74% live on less than 50 cents a day, compared to only 54% of men. Women in Sierra Leone earn only 42% of male-earned income (United Nations, 2003a). The resulting economic insecurity increases the overall vulnerability of women.

Sierra Leonean women have historically constituted the majority of the rural labour force, often as informal agricultural workers or petty traders. They have played a key role in food production and in providing basic goods for the family, but despite this, women are also

frequently economically insecure (TRC, 2005: 100). The conflict, particularly the consequent widespread displacement, affected the division of labour within society with the result that women assumed new economic roles, in addition to their traditionally held domestic responsibilities. At the same time, the incidence of female-headed households and widows also increased in the aftermath of the conflict and women frequently had to take on the added economic burden of caring for extended families, making them more vulnerable to the adverse effects of resource scarcity. Furthermore, "the disproportionate spread and depth of poverty amongst women results from their long hours of work, lack of access to productive assets and the very low rate of financial returns of the income generating activities in which they engage" (LAWCLA, n.d.: 4).

Discriminatory laws and attitudes compound women's low economic status and independence, and poor social indicators for women such as school enrolment and literacy rates. In cases where they are not the household head, women tend to have limited decision-making power within the home, which can make them economically dependent and unable to control even the resources that they themselves contribute to the household. This lack of ownership of their own reproductive rights and productive assets further limits their capacity to combat poverty. While economic insecurity is experienced by both men and women in Sierra Leone, "gender based violence impairs women's economic activities and income generating strategies in the formal and informal sectors [...] thus, gender-based violence intensifies the feminisation of poverty" (Funk, Lang and Osterhaus, 2005: 6).

4.3 The UN, gender and peacebuilding at the end of the conflict: 1999-2001

The establishment of UNAMSIL in late 1999 was a belated attempt by the UN to provide the peacekeeping force that had been promised, but never delivered, in the Abidjan Accords of 1996. Originally limited in size, it was given a broad mandate that ranged from facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance to aiding the government with implementing the DDR

process.[89] Nevertheless, the international peacekeeping force at first proved unable to dispel the rebels who were continuing to receive illegal financial and logistical support that filtered through the porous regional borders, and the security situation remained fragile.

The UN perceived the continued role of ECOMOG in providing security in the country as critical to the success of UNAMSIL, but following the sudden death of Nigerian president Abacha in June 1998 the subsequent civilian government came under pressure to reduce the costly and ineffective ECOMOG operation. According to Annan, given ECOMOG's repatriation of its troops by the beginning of 2000, there was "no alternative to expanding UNAMSIL in order to keep the peace process in Sierra Leone on track" (United Nations, 2000e: 6).[90] In addition to an increase in size, UNAMSIL's mandate was also significantly broadened, and major efforts were made by the international community to relieve the immediate suffering of the population. Nevertheless, gender-related insecurities and needs continued to be ignored by the peacekeeping mission.

In May 2000, the rebels were once again able to close in on Freetown, and UNAMSIL's attempts to repel them proved futile as the RUF took approximately 500 peacekeepers hostage, and continued to terrorise humanitarian workers. In the end, British forces were sent in to evacuate foreigners and secure the airport, and were ultimately responsible for restoring security in the capital. It was only by the beginning of 2001 that the peacekeepers were able to deploy throughout the rebel-held parts of the country following the signing of the Abuja ceasefire agreement in November 2000. During its six-year presence in the country, UNAMSIL fulfilled a variety of crucial roles, and importantly was able to stabilise the security situation and support elections and the reintegration process in the country.[91] "At its

[89] United Nations (1999a) Security Council Resolution 1270. S/Res/1270. http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/315/02/PDF/N9931502.pdf?OpenElement [accessed on 6/12/05].
[90] The force was to be increased to 11,100.
[91] For a good overview of UNAMSIL, see Olonisakin, 2008. UNAMSIL's activities in Sierra Leone in relation to gender issues will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

2002 peak, it was the largest and most expensive UN mission on the ground, with over 17,000 troops and a large civilian staff, at a total cost of nearly US$700 million a year" (Olonisakin, 2008: 111).

Several UN agencies were active in Sierra Leone prior to and during the onset of conflict in the 1990s. They had historically been engaged in development programming such as immunization programmes, technical support and infrastructure rehabilitation, but as the war progressed their programming shifted to emergency humanitarian assistance. Prior to 1999 when the UN presence in the country began to increase markedly with the arrival of UNAMSIL, few gender-related or women-focused activities were being undertaken by the international community. According to the mission report of a UNHCR gender advisor deployed to Sierra Leone from January-July 2001, "there was no strongly established implementing partner focusing on gender-related activities [...] This limitation also worked to slow the level of responsiveness to some of the gender-related problems in the field" (Lamptey, n.d.: 5).

Disarmament was able to move forward in earnest following the signing of the Abuja II Ceasefire Agreement in May 2001, and over the next year approximately 72,000 ex-combatants were disarmed. During this time, the RUF also transitioned into a political party. Given the destruction that the war wrought on the country, another immediate priority was to relieve the humanitarian suffering of the population. The annual Consolidated Appeals (CAP) Process, spearheaded by the UN, raised money to finance a wide array of socioeconomic and infrastructure recovery projects. For example, the 2000 CAP launched on 23rd November 1999 appealed for $71 million from donors in support of humanitarian activities in the country. Priorities at this time were to address the needs of displaced people, provide an

alternate coping mechanism for the poorest people, and to provide immediate relief from illness and malnutrition.[92]

Gender issues were not at all mainstreamed in any of the CAPs from 1999-2001, and again, women were only mentioned in the context of being particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of conflict, such as food insecurity and sexual violence. Clearly, despite the proliferation of literature and lessons learned about the link between gender issues and humanitarian assistance, such understandings were not effectively institutionalised in donor policy and practice in Sierra Leone.

During this immediate post-war phase, the gender-differentiated socioeconomic needs of men and women should have been clearly acknowledged and addressed. One of the contributing factors to the war was the vast number of unemployed, impoverished male youth (Richards, 2006: 206-210). The lack of viable alternatives made joining the army or one of the rebel forces an attractive option for these men, and therefore providing them with the ability to earn a livelihood needed to be a central part of any peacebuilding process (Weiss, 2005).

At the same time, the impact of years of conflict took a great toll on girls and women in terms of their health and education, requiring that special programs be targeted at them. These problems were both compounded by the huge number of displaced people, who did not have traditional social networks on which to rely and whose coping strategies were even more compromised. Most importantly, women should have been actively engaged in the humanitarian and immediate post-conflict planning, as well as the negotiations around the process. However, the early documents guiding the first years of the humanitarian and peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone do not demonstrate recognition of these issues.

[92] UNOCHA (2000) *Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Sierra Leone*. Geneva: OCHA: 1. Available at: http://www.reliefweb.int/library/appeals/slemt00.pdf [accessed on 17/12/05].

Instead, during 1999-2001 as the peacebuilding process was beginning to get underway despite the ongoing violence, a very liberal agenda became apparent. The initial focus on DDR, and the desire of the UN to begin setting the groundwork for governance reforms and in particular post-conflict elections illustrates the types of actions familiar to the liberal peacebuilding consensus. Despite the massive socioeconomic challenges, the ongoing prevalence of GBV and the inequalities between populations living in rural and urban areas, none of these issues figured at the top of the UN's agenda. While understandably ending the armed violence had to take priority, the focus on stabilisation and negative peace did little to create the space or conditions for anything other than a limited liberal peace to emerge (Taylor, 2009).

4.4 Women mobilising for peace in Sierra Leone

At the same time, and despite this entrenched discrimination, women in Sierra Leone have a history of involvement at the local levels within their communities and households, performing a range of economic, social, religious and political roles. They continued to assume these roles during the conflict, but the shift in the traditional gendered division of labour and patterns of gender relations during wartime blurred the lines between formal and informal, public and private. For example, many women assumed new roles such as being the sole family breadwinner, and had to develop mechanisms to cope without traditional networks and support structures as the conflict destabilised civilian life throughout the country. At the same time as it changed their daily lives, the war also offered opportunities for women to organise around shared issues, in particular to foster peace within their communities.

As the previous section demonstrated, it can be argued that women were affected by the conflict in both empowering and in disempowering ways.[93] Although the experience of women and girls as victims of sexual violence is the most documented of their war experiences, to see women only as victims is to ignore their role as agents in processes of violent conflict and peacebuilding. In addition to, or perhaps in spite of, their vulnerability and insecurity, women played a key role in mobilising civil society to demand peace. Whilst women's organisations have a long history in Sierra Leone, the conflict provided a unifying purpose and became a focal point for activism during the 1990s enabling many women's groups to work collaboratively for the common goal of restoring peace to their communities.

Representatives from women's organisations in Sierra Leone such as the Sierra Leone Women's Forum (SLWF) attended meetings including the Fifth African Regional Consultation on Women in Dakar in 1994 and the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995.[94] Following these meetings, they returned to Sierra Leone and scaled up their networking, bringing together organisations working on issues as diverse as domestic violence, women's access to decision-making, and education of the girl child. Given the continuing conflict in the country, they found a common thread in their activities based on the need for peace and security.

Following the beginning of the conflict, women became involved, intentionally as well as unintentionally, in peacemaking efforts within their communities and at the national level. According to Thorpe, "at the onset of war, women were indeed not prepared. At organizational level they were nominally weak, and many organizations figuratively speaking

[93] While this chapter frequently refers to 'women in Sierra Leone', it is important to note that this is not assumed to be a homogenous category, and each individual's experience of their gender varies. Women are also differentiated by whether or not they remain behind or flee conflict, or are actively involved in combat, community-based peacebuilding, or any other activities. Other factors such as religion or their access to income also influence the hardship experienced by women during conflict, as well as their position in society and the opportunities that have been available to them since the end of the war.

[94] The development of the SLWF was initiated by the Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW) who proposed that women's groups in the country should meet regularly. It was established in mid-1994 and involved a range of different women's organisations based in Freetown (Jusu-Sherrif, 2000).

were dormant. However the organizational potential was there awaiting the catalytic effect of the war" (Thorpe, 2006: 21).[95] Although this activism in large part emerged due to the socioeconomic and security threats facing women at the time, it was also influenced by the growing momentum of the international women's movement.

The Sierra Leone Women's Peace Movement (SLWMP) was established in January 1995 as a member organisation of the SLWF, and was founded on the basis that women as 'natural peacemakers' could make a vital contribution to the peace process. The SLWMP sought to influence the parties to the conflict through non-confrontational strategies including protests, marches and demonstrations, such as those held in January 1995 in Freetown, Bo, Kenema, Makeni and Kabala involving women from throughout the country (Jusu-Sherrif, 2000; Steady, 2006: 43). The movement was non-partisan and initially shied away from direct involvement in politics, but in order for the women's peace campaign to have an impact it became clear that engagement with the political establishment in Sierra Leone would be necessary. As the conflict in Sierra Leone became more protracted and neither side seemed likely to achieve an outright victory, the SLWMP subsequently became involved in actively calling for and participating in national consultations around the issue of elections.

Women activists played key roles during Bintumani I and II, as the public consultations that took place in 1995 and 1996 on elections came to be known, and are largely considered to have been leaders of the civil society movement calling for "elections before peace" (Hirsch, 2001: 40-41). These conferences represented the beginning of women's participation in national politics through organised groups, and as well as leading the public campaigning on the issue, they also advocated in their communities for women to participate in the elections of March 1996 (Thorpe, 2006: 40). Their actions had important knock-on effects that may not

[95] Thorpe reports (2006: 77) that prior to 1990 there were only ten NGOs headed by women throughout the entire country, but that after the war more than 100 organisations run by women have been established.

have been planned at the time but that contributed to the strengthening of women's peacebuilding roles at the national and local level:

> Women NGOs conducted a door to door campaign, ignoring threats to their security, to persuade other women to vote. Apart from directly influencing the outcome of the elections, their political action also generated a sense of solidarity among women, who were encouraged to organize themselves on a number of conflict prevention issues relating to social justice, economic and cultural development (Nzomo, 2002: 11).

In addition to their role in publicly campaigning for elections, delegations of women also sought to meet with the rebels to convince them to lay down their arms, although they were not always successful.[96] The catalytic effect of their participation in the Bintumani negotiations also led women to call on leaders to address issues such as 30% representation for women in politics, improved literacy, health care and business training for women, and reform of discriminatory legislation on marriage and divorce, property and inheritance (Dyfan 2003: 4). Women's organisations used a variety of different strategies such as private lobbying with key community leaders, sending messages of peace and reconciliation through the media to both government and rebel fighters, rallying support amongst other civil society organisations, and public advocacy for peace (Solomon, 2005: 175).

The SLWMP was extremely active during the middle of the war, but eventually disintegrated as a result of internal conflict and as many of the organisation's key members fled the country following the coup of May 1997.[97] However, by continuing to use the strategies pioneered by the SLWMP, many Sierra Leonean women played a critical role in the process of bringing the conflict to an end. The achievements of these women leaders reflects their ability to influence and play an active role in peacebuilding, despite the notable exclusion of women from the country's previous formal peace processes in Abidjan (1996) and Conakry (1997).[98]

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[96] In one particularly bad incident, a group of women were gunned down in Kenema when they tried to approach rebel bases, killing several activists. Personal interview with Gladys Gbappy-Brima, Freetown, 26 June 2006.
[97] International Alert and AAWORD, 2000; Jusu-Sherrif, 2000.
[98] To view the texts of the various peace agreements, see http://www.daco-sl.org/encyclopedia/8_lib/8_3Agov.htm.

Indeed, a clear impact of these achievements was that for the first time, during the discussions and negotiations leading up to the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement some women were invited to be present.[99] It has been suggested that their presence resulted in some attention to women's issues reflected in Article 28 of the Agreement which states, "given that women have been particularly victimised 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."[100]

However, this commitment was never really fulfilled, and more crucially it failed to mention the potential of women to play political and economic roles in post-conflict Sierra Leone. Involving women and ensuring gender issues are incorporated into peace negotiations is key, given that the ensuing peace agreements are the basis for the future legal framework and the foundation of legitimacy for reforms in the post-conflict phase (Chinkin, 2004: 28). If gender issues are left out, then ensuring their inclusion at a later date can prove to be extremely difficult. The lack of any gender-specific recommendations in the context of the structure and mandates of post-conflict institutions is also problematic, as the legacies of these institutions will continue for many years (Dyfan 2003: 6).

Despite the signing of Lomé, fighting in Sierra Leone continued, and many people were disillusioned with the government roles that were granted to members of the RUF during the negotiations, particularly in the case of Foday Sankoh who was appointed as vice president

[99] There is some discrepancy in accounts of the Lomé negotiations regarding the number of women present. According to a report by Femmes Africa Solidarité, four of the nine key negotiators at Lomé were women (Femmes Africa Solidarité, 2000: 23-4). However, the TRC reports that only two women were involved in Lomé, and one was an OAU representative and not Sierra Leonean (TRC, 2005: 194), whereas Mazurana and Carlson indicate that two women were present, one as part of the government delegation and another as an RUF representative (Mazurana and Carlson, 2004:16). Isha Dyfan reports that of the government delegation of 10 people, two were women, and that the rebel delegation of 10 included one woman. Furthermore, some women participated in the civil society observer groups that were also present during the negotiations (Dyfan 2003: 5).

[100] The Lomé Peace Agreement can be viewed online at http://www.sierra-leone.org/lomeaccord.html.

and minister in charge of natural resources. The situation for the majority of the population was not improving, and women were again at the forefront of calls for peace and reconciliation.

On 6 May 2000, the SLWF mobilised women to march on Foday Sankoh's house in Freetown to demand an end to the fighting and the release of UN staff who had recently been taken hostage by the RUF. Although Sankoh refused to see the women, they continued up towards the junction near his house on Lumley Road and a representative from the Sierra Leone branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom read aloud a statement prepared by the SLWF.[101] Following the abuse and derision they experienced from Sankoh's guards and the refusal of the leader to meet them, a group of older women in the delegation representing churches and mosques took a radical step: the women lifted up their skirts and bared themselves. According to the beliefs and traditions in the region, in committing this act they put a serious curse on Sankoh and his compatriots, which the community at large then had an obligation to uphold.[102]

Seeing that women could face up to the political issues and a feared rebel leader, other members of civil society were galvanised to take action to resist the violence and terror. On 8 May, a second, larger march involving thousands was held. This demonstration was not carried out peacefully, and at least 20 demonstrators were killed outside Sankoh's residence by RUF fighters. Despite this tragic turn of events, the protests sparked by the women's actions were important in bringing about the subsequent arrest of Sankoh and other RUF leaders, and ultimately were one of the factors that contributed to tipping the balance towards an eventual durable peace agreement in the country.[103] In April 2001, many Sierra Leonean

[101] Personal interview with Lucinda Asmara, Freetown, 20 June 2006.
[102] For an account of this incident, see Mazurana and Carlson, 2004: 17.
[103] Although Sankoh fled from his house following the shootings of innocent civilians, he was subsequently captured and arrested by British troops on 13 May 2000.

women also participated in a march for peace in Freetown, initiated by UNAMSIL and Sierra Leonean civil society organisations (Puechgirbal, 2004: 57).

Illustrating the importance of the civil society networks of women peacebuilders, from 1997-1999, Sierra Leonean women were able to provide updates and briefings on the situation of women affected by the conflict to members of the UN Security Council through contacts at the UN office of WILPF (Dyfan 2003: 4). This was also in part enabled by the connections Sierra Leonean women had with international civil society. Their activism and advocacy was also strengthened by the sub-regional women's peace networks of WIPNET[104] and MARWOPNET, the Mano River Women's Peace Network. The Commonwealth Secretariat supported a workshop held in May 2001 on "Women and men in partnership for post conflict reconstruction". This workshop provided an opportunity for key stakeholders and priorities to be mapped out, major gaps identified, and a plan of action on how different actors, particularly the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) could ensure that gender issues were properly integrated into the post-conflict reconstruction process (Dyfan 2003: 11).[105]

The case of women's organisations in Sierra Leone is indicative of how women in conflict-affected regions actively build peace at the community level outside of 'formal' peacebuilding or conflict resolution structures. Notably, in Sierra Leone, women were also doing this long before the UN began to develop its women, peace and security agenda. The conflict was a catalytic experience in many ways, exposing women to new responsibilities and requiring them to acquire new skills that changed their perceptions of themselves and their role as women in society. As Thorpe puts it, "the survival skills and sense of responsibility consequently developed during the process provided these women with basic

[104] WIPNET, the women in peacebuilding network, is a sub-regional project that was initiated by the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) in 2002. See www.wanep.org.
[105] For copies of the conference papers as well as the main outcomes and recommendations, see Baksh-Soodeen and Etchart, 2002.

developmental tools, a sense of independence, and the desire for social advancement on their return to their areas of origin after the war" (Thorpe, 2006: 36).

4.5 Gender, peacebuilding and the UN in Sierra Leone: Key themes

Whilst the liberal peacebuilding consensus as applied in Sierra Leone and elsewhere has been subject to much criticism, little of this has focused on the gendered impacts of these processes. The following case study chapters will therefore shed light on the way in which gender has, or has not, been mainstreamed into the UN's peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone , and with what consequences for the overall peacebuilding process. Before turning to the next chapters, it is useful to summarise three of the key themes that have emerged from the preceding analysis and will be discussed in more detail throughout the remainder of this thesis.

First, the UN has articulated and developed a specific idea of how to build peace and create the conditions for a return to normal life and sustainable development based on liberal assumptions (UN 2000c; 2004a; 2005a). As demonstrated by chapters 2 and 3, this consensus has emerged with little concern for gender dynamics or the different roles that men and women can play in these processes, despite the importance of recognising how individuals experience security and peace at the community levels. Globally, levels of violence against women are extremely high, and in conflict-affected contexts it is endemic. To assume that a culture of peace can coexist with the daily gendered insecurities and threats that women experience is problematic. By unpacking the policies of the UN in relation to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone it will be possible to see what issues are prioritised and valued in relation to the peacebuilding process, and therefore how peace and security are conceptualised by these actors.

Second, there are a number of challenges that emerge as a result of the implementation of the peacebuilding programmes in the areas of security, governance and economic reform. It is not clear that these processes result in anything other than a 'gendered virtual peace'. Gender issues tend to be marginalised from the implementation of peacebuilding, and issues of immediate stability can dominate broader concerns of societal transformation, preventing the gains from peace reaching the population as a whole. As Pankhurst argues,

> Actors in the 'international peace industry' have no common agenda of what post-conflict societies should be transformed *to*, and many have no agenda to support transformation *at all*, because hanging on to conditions of negative peace dominates all other agendas. In this context, different discourses and values, shaped locally and internationally, tend to collide, rather than interact; to co-exist, rather than transform. For the moment at least, it is unclear what major policy shifts might be possible in this area in the foreseeable future, even if we regard the ultimate transformation of gender relations as inevitable (Pankhurst, 2002: 134).

Finally, the very legitimacy of the liberal peacebuilding consensus itself has been questioned for failing to prioritise local ownership and bottom-up approaches. Inclusive approaches are more likely to be sustainable, but for a variety of reasons highlighted in chapter 2, too often the agenda is defined and carried out by donors, and peacebuilding programmes tend to focus on the formal, state level. Without more explicit acknowledgement of local initiatives, the divide between UN-led, formal peacebuilding processes may undermine or marginalise the informal strategies being adopted and the space for a real peace to be fostered.

In Sierra Leone, civil society organisations and women's networks in particular played a central role in ending the conflict, largely without the support of the international community. It is therefore important to explore how the UN has subsequently built on or engaged with these groups as a resource for the transformation towards peace, and what alternative understandings of peacebuilding they brought.

Although the liberal peacebuilding approach has emerged as the consensus, the considerable insight and context-specific knowledge of women's organisations operating in Sierra Leone could shed light on the gaps and limitations of these approaches. Women's organisations at

the community-level offer an important alternative to the dominant discourses and practices of peacebuilding and gender mainstreaming and thereby bring the possibility for more engendered peace and security processes. Bridging this gap between the formal and informal, the international and the local, may represent the real challenge in transforming the liberal peacebuilding consensus into an approach that is more gender-sensitive.

This chapter has outlined the development of the conflict in Sierra Leone, its gendered consequences and the important role that women played in ending the fighting. The next three chapters of the thesis will build on this and discuss the evolution of the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone in three parts, building on the three themes highlighted above.

Chapter 5 will present an overview and analysis of the main peacebuilding frameworks of the UN and the structures and mandates of the key agencies operational on the ground, to determine the extent to which gender was integrated into their structures and policies. As has already been argued in chapter 2.2, the UN has a specific way of defining and constructing peace based on the idea of it as a universal, liberal end-state. It will therefore conclude with a critique of both the liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminist underpinnings of the UN's discourse around peace in Sierra Leone. Chapter 5 will focus on the first theme relating to how peace is defined and which issues are prioritised in the process.

Chapter 6 will then turn to the implementation of peacebuilding activities within the three central pillars of establishing security, good governance and economic reform. As the main priorities of the liberal peacebuilding approach, this chapter will analyse how the UN carried out its reforms in these areas to determine the different impacts they have had on men and women in Sierra Leone. This chapter will also critique the liberal feminist approach the UN has taken to gender and peacebuilding, arguing that this can explain some of its inherent limitations. Chapter 6 elaborates specifically on the idea of the gendered virtual peace, linked to the second theme described above.

Finally, linked to the last key theme identified in this section, chapter 7 will turn to the local level and explore what alternative, informal peacebuilding efforts have been undertaken by women's organisations in Sierra Leone. It will provide examples of organisations working on gender and peace-related issues at the local, national and regional levels and explore what can be learned from their activities. The purpose of this chapter is to contrast the UN-led, liberal approaches to both gender mainstreaming and peacebuilding with the alternative strategies and approaches used by local actors, largely marginalised into the informal sphere. In so doing, possible openings for moving towards a more emancipatory version of peacebuilding may become evident.

CHAPTER 5. THE UN AND GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN SIERRA LEONE: POLICY DISCOURSES AND STRUCTURAL ISSUES

As already outlined in earlier chapters, one of the major critiques of the liberal peacebuilding consensus has been the way in which problematic concepts such as peace and security are understood and framed. This has particular implications for gender-sensitive efforts, in terms of how the role of women and gender equality are incorporated into policy and framed discursively in the post-conflict environment. Furthermore, the liberal feminist approach to mainstreaming gender into the peacebuilding process adopted by the UN leads to a tendency to highlight the importance of addressing women's participation and ensuring that they are integrated into processes such as DDR and post-conflict elections. Much of this is done without questioning the gendered structures and multiple and complex roles that they play in post-conflict societies. As result the full opportunities for transforming gender inequalities in the post-conflict space are not always realised.

The UN is one of the key actors shaping and implementing the liberal peacebuilding consensus, and through UNAMSIL and other agencies it was an important actor in shaping the peacebuilding discourses and practices in Sierra Leone. The purpose of this chapter is to understand the UN's underlying policy frameworks relevant to gender and peacebuilding and the institutional and structural context of their gender mainstreaming efforts in Sierra Leone, before assessing how their gender and peacebuilding efforts unfolded in practice in chapter 6.

This chapter will analyse the key peacebuilding policies developed during 2002-2007, and assess how these priorities were reflected in the structures and mandates of the agencies with responsibility for carrying out the peacebuilding agenda. Drawing on the critiques of liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminism already presented, the chapter will conclude with an analysis of the UN's discourse around gender issues and some of the specific internal

challenges and obstacles that may have impeded their efforts to gender-sensitise the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone.

5.1 Identifying the peacebuilding priorities: where does gender fit in?

Following the Lomé peace agreement signed in 1999 and the immediate post-war emergency phase, there were a number of key strategies and policies that set out the priorities for peacebuilding phase in Sierra Leone. These documents are important because in addition to highlighting the peacebuilding priorities, they were also the basis from which the UN developed its programming in the country. Understanding how these policies were developed and the key actors involved is therefore critical to understanding why the peacebuilding process unfolded the way it did in Sierra Leone.

Furthermore, which issues were included and excluded also reveals much about the discourse around gender, peace and security and the perceived relevance of gender equality to the overall process. Several key documents have been identified and each of these will be examined in turn, thereby unpacking the assumptions and concepts that guided the UN's peacebuilding actions in Sierra Leone. Collectively, these policies outline priorities that are in line with the liberal peacebuilding consensus and liberal feminist approach to gender outlined in chapters 2 and 3, and reflect the emphasis on democratisation and liberalisation coupled with the restoration of stability and security throughout the country.

The key strategies and frameworks from the case study period that will be expanded are: the Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP), the National Recovery Strategy (NRS); the UN Strategy to Support National Recovery and Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone (PBRS) and the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF); the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP); the Peace and Consolidation Strategy (PCS) and the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework (Compact).

5.1.1 The I-PRSP and the National Recovery Strategy (2001-2002)

The Interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (I-PRSP) was approved by the Joint Executive Board of the IMF and the World Bank in September 2001. The I-PRSP outlines the government's interim strategy for enhancing growth, reducing poverty and increasing access to services for the population in the immediate transition phase (GoSL, 2001a). According to the executive summary of the I-PRSP, "The strategy will emphasize the continued implementation of sound economic policies to attain macroeconomic stability within an overall framework of good governance" (GoSL, 2001a: 8). This statement clearly reflects the liberal peacebuilding emphasis on democratisation and liberalisation.

In terms of gender issues, the I-PRSP does not perform very well. According to an official working in the Ministry of Development and Economic Planning, "there was no gender in the I-PRSP."[106] Analysis of the document itself would appear to uphold this perception. The poverty data on households underlying the analysis is based on data from 1989/1990 which reports that only 2.3% of households are female-headed, an unlikely figure given the research that demonstrates how the conflict transformed gender relations and led to many women and girls taking on new responsibilities for their families and other dependents (GoSL, 2001a: 17). There is a short section on women and children (GoSL, 2001a: 21) that highlights the many burdens and vulnerabilities facing women, and importantly mentions their lack of access to productive assets and formal employment, as well as the customary and religious practices that increase their vulnerability.

The I-PRSP suggests that since the GoSL has adopted two policies on the advancement of women and on gender mainstreaming this indicates a commitment to social justice and gender equality (GoSL, 2001a: 33). However as analysis of the GoSL's efforts in chapter 6 will

[106] Interview with Hawa Musa, Ministry of Economic Development and Planning, Freetown, 23 March 2005.

demonstrate, these policies may well be empty rhetoric. Finally, in the policy matrix for the I-PRSP, there is no gender disaggregation of indicators for activities such as demobilisation, food aid and farming inputs or access to markets. There is some effort to gender disaggregate the indicators under the social sector programmes, namely health and education, and the only other relevant indicator is the percentage of women in senior public and political positions.

Under the leadership of UNDP, the UN developed the NRS to support the I-PRSP. As access to the country was restored following the end of the conflict in January 2002, it was possible to move from humanitarian and emergency response into peacebuilding programming. Based on a series of nationwide needs assessments led by the National Recovery Committee[107] following the end of the DDR process, the NRS is a joint UNCT, UNAMSIL and government strategy developed in May 2002 (GoSL, 2002a). The NRS' objective is to provide an overview of national recovery needs to lay the foundations for the PRSP, combining a focus on a short to medium-term recovery strategy with the longer-term dimensions of the transition to peace.

It was a far-reaching plan and aimed to the link the transition and development phases, (UN, 2002b: 4), and its importance cannot be over-estimated given its centrality to the conduct of post-conflict peacebuilding operations in the country. The timeframe of the NRS was envisaged to be from October 2002 until the end of 2003, when the PRSP was to come into effect.[108] The four key priority areas outlined in the NRS are the consolidation of state authority; rebuilding communities; peacebuilding and human rights; and restoration of the economy.

[107] The National Recovery Committee was established in 2001 and was chaired by the Vice-President. Its mandate was to drive forward the restoration of civil authority and broader recovery process in Sierra Leone (GoSL, 2002a: 10).

[108] In fact, there were significant delays in developing the PRSP, and ultimately the draft was not finalised until March 2005.

Despite being largely driven by the UN (GoSL, 2003a: 107), the NRS does emphasise the importance of local participation in the rebuilding of communities: "social reintegration in post war Sierra Leone is as much about empowering individuals by giving them the opportunity to become involved in community processes, as it is about the provision of materials or services. To this end, all recovery interventions should be designed to maximize their potential for participation" (GoSL, 2002a: 25). This indicates some space for local actors to inform the peacebuilding process, but the overall policy still follows the liberal peacebuilding formula of democratisation and liberalisation as the strategy for reaching peace.

While the NRS emphasised gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, it tended to be discussed in terms of improved socioeconomic indicators at the household level through investment in women, rather than linking gender-differentiated needs into the overall recovery strategy. In one of the few mentions of women or gender in the NRS, in the context of the civil society component of the recovery process, the document stresses, "youth and women in particular need encouragement and support to activate their own groups in order to contribute effectively to the recovery process" (GoSL, 2002a: 13). Specific mention is made of the needs of women and girls in relation to access to education, sexual violence as a specific issue linked to child protection, the need for broad sensitisation about women's rights, and in the context of small microcredit loans programmes where women make up the majority of recipients.

Extensive data in relation to recovery needs is included in the NRS, but this is not sex-disaggregated and no distinctions are made about the needs of different groups in relation to infrastructure, shelter and sanitation, access to healthcare or roles in local level governance. This lack of data implies that the needs assessments and context analyses done as part of the NRS did not pay specific attention to the different needs and experiences of men and women. Without such an analysis and the resulting data, it is therefore unsurprising that the

programme design and implementation phase failed to take gender roles and relations and the resulting power dynamics into account.

In terms of the financial requirements for implementing the activities outlined in the NRS, a total budget of $212 million was requested. Of this, only $820,000 was for activities with a specific women's rights or gender dimension, with a further $1 million allocated for microfinance activities, the majority of which according to the document would support women entrepreneurs.[109] While many of the other activities would also have a positive impact on women and girls, it could be argued that it was unrealistic for gender equality to 'cross-cut' through the recovery strategy with a specific budget of only 0.08% of the requested total.

Despite the existence at the time of comprehensive gender-related policies within all the different UN agencies[110], this document fails to effectively integrate gender objectives throughout. In the case of health, some specific needs of women in relation to their role as mothers is made, and the need to pay attention to gender issues is highlighted a few times. However, every single one of the target objectives or key benchmarks that comprise the actions to be taken by the UN agencies is gender-blind. This leads to problems of the lack of accountability, tokenism, and the continued deprioritisation of gender issues, symptomatic of the limitations of the UN's approach to gender mainstreaming.

5.1.2 The UN Strategy to Support National Recovery and Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and the UN Development Assistance Framework (2002-2004)

The UN Strategy to Support National Recovery and Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone (PBRS) was drafted in October 2002 and was intended to pave the way for the eventual adoption of a

[109] For full details of the financing for activities under the NRS, see GoSL, 2002a: 100-116.
[110] For example, UNDP's manual on gender approaches in conflict and post-conflict settings was released around the same time as the NRS; SCR 1325 had been around for two years; and other operational agencies such as the World Food Program (WFP) were also releasing guidelines.

UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) in 2004.[111] According to the PBRS, the causes of the conflict stemmed from a combination of "bad governance, denial of fundamental rights, economic mismanagement and social exclusion" (UN 2002b: 7). The PBRS was prepared by the UN country team and UNAMSIL, and reflects the national policies and priorities identified by the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) as set out in the I-PRSP and the NRS (UN 2002b: 4).

The PBRS aimed to provide a framework to guide the UN and its various agencies in supporting the transition from humanitarian relief to longer-term recovery and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, and has five focus areas: strengthening the security framework and regional collaboration; facilitating reintegration; reducing poverty; fostering good governance; and promoting human rights and encouraging reconciliation. These focus areas emphasise assistance for those groups who suffered the most during the conflict, as well as targeting the more widespread issues of poverty and weak governance (UN 2002b: 8). The intention was to update this strategy annually until the UNDAF was in place, and provide a framework to "focus [the UN's] dialogue, advocacy and operational activities during the period 2003-2007" (UN, 2002b: 4). In strategic terms, it is therefore an important document in relation to the UN's activities in the country and the identification of key priorities to focus on in the peacebuilding phase.

In terms of supporting the security situation in Sierra Leone, the PBRS identifies three key areas for UN assistance: providing area security; strengthening capacity of the Sierra Leone Police (SLP); and contributing to addressing the causes and consequences of regional instability (UN 2002b: 9). There is no mention in the PBRS of the kind of 'human security' concerns that at this time were continuing to affect hundreds of thousands of Sierra Leonean women. There is however mention that "the needs of women and children should be carefully

[111] The UNDAF is a planning framework for the UN system, intended to bring greater coherence between the activities of the different UN bodies at country level. It outlines common objectives, timeframes and resources for the achievement of development goals. See UN, 1999b.

monitored to ensure that their situation does not worsen during the period of resettlement" (UN 2002b: 11) in the section on resettlement, as well as an acknowledgement that "the most vulnerable [children] are the child girls (sic) who were abducted and became fighters, sex slaves or "wives" to commanders or camp followers (UN 2002: 12).

In recognition of the critical role that poverty plays in contributing to human insecurity, the PBRS acknowledges that "reconciliation and the rebuilding of a peaceful community will be greatly enhanced when basic household needs are met and economic disparities are reduced" (UN 2002b: 14). Gender and regional inequalities are mentioned as key determinants of poverty in Sierra Leone, although the only gender-specific measures that are mentioned in the UN activities under this focus area relate to girls schooling and health issues, in particular as they relate to pregnancy and the spread of HIV/AIDS. Unemployment has been a significant challenge in Sierra Leone since the end of the conflict, and the PBRS highlights three areas to which it will respond: income generation (with special attention to women and girls to ensure gender balance), infrastructure and access to food.

The PBRS does not explore the roots of the governance crisis in Sierra Leone, or offer any analysis of which segments of the population in particular lack any meaningful role in decision-making and governance structures. Similar to the priorities in the NRS, the restoration of civil authority and the decentralisation process are highlighted as the two key UN priorities in the PBRS (UN 2002b: 22). The monitoring of human rights abuses and promotion of reconciliation are the final UN priorities listed in the PBRS. Although it suggests that addressing abuses is critical to avoiding a resumption of violence, it does not clearly link ongoing human rights abuses to the immediate security and stability of the population. The PBRS has an annex of key objectives and benchmarks for its activities in Sierra Leone, but none of these make any reference to gender-differentiated impacts or effects. As the basis for dialogue, advocacy and operational programming then, the PBRS

does not offer much analysis or prioritisation of gender issues to the central peacebuilding issues it identifies.

The UNDAF was drafted by the UN in close collaboration with the GoSL and its partners, and similar to the PBRS, is based on already identified national priorities. The UNDAF translates the key dimensions of the PBRS into a common operational framework on which the various UN agencies active in Sierra Leone could base their work in the period from 2004-2007, and was intended to also contribute to the development of the PRSP (UNCT 2003a: 2). The four focus areas of the UNDAF were: poverty reduction and reintegration; human rights and reconciliation; good governance, peace and stability; and economic recovery (UNCT 2003a: 3). Importantly, the UNDAF also forms the basis of the country programmes for the different UN agencies and funds operational in Sierra Leone, which were harmonised into a cycle for 2004-2007.

In keeping with the focus on results emphasised in the document, the UNDAF contains benchmarks and a monitoring and evaluation framework. The indicators developed for the UNDAF were in line with those already in place for the I-PRSP. With the exception of two lines of action, one under the human rights and reconciliation pillar focusing on "promot[ing] the rights of women and children as expressed in international conventions" and one under good governance, peace and security on "support[ing] the Government to officially adopt and fully comply with international laws (refugee, women and child rights conventions in particular)", women's rights and gender equality are not specifically mentioned in the programme framework (UNCT, 2003a: 11 and 12). They are acknowledged as cross-cutting issues for poverty reduction and reintegration, human rights and reconciliation, and good governance, peace and security but are notably absent under economic recovery. In this pillar, the cross-cutting issues are capacity building, empowerment and anti-corruption initiatives which could in theory involve a gender dimension, however this oversight reinforces the perception that gender issues are not central to economic recovery.

The UNDAF also includes a programme resources framework which notably does not allocate any resources to UNIFEM, despite mentioning it as an implementing agency for several of the programme outcomes. It could be assumed that as a fund of UNDP, UNIFEM would instead receive resources allocated through UNDP and that this perhaps explains the lack of specific funding for its activities. However, UNFPA, which is in a similar position of also being a UN fund, does have its own budget allocation. According to a member of the UNCT in Freetown, although the UNDAF was to be drafted by the UNCT, in reality it was the people closest to the Resident Coordinator (seconded from UNDP) who were able to influence the documents. This perhaps played a role in making decisions about resource allocations, and is indicative of the lack of prioritisation of gender issues by the senior management of the UN agencies.[112]

5.1.3 The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (2005-2007)

The extreme poverty in Sierra Leone has both direct and indirect effects on the stability of the country. Direct effects are such that "countries affected by conflict face a two-way relationship between conflict and poverty – pervasive poverty makes societies more vulnerable to violent conflict, while conflict itself creates more poverty" (World Bank, 2004a: 14). At the same time, poverty is indirectly linked to social unrest and dissatisfaction, increasing inequality among social groups, and reducing the opportunity cost in resorting to violence. Poverty reduction has, by necessity, been a focus of all government and donor interventions in the country. Approximately 80% of the population in Sierra Leone live below the poverty line (expenditures of less than $1 per day), and in 2005 only Niger ranked below Sierra Leone on the UN's Human Development Index (GoSL, 2005a).

After publishing the I-PRSP in 2001, work began on drafting the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The preparation of the PRSP was led by the Poverty Alleviation Strategy

[112] Interview with Bauke van Weringh, Transitional Support Team, UNDP, Freetown, 4 May 2005.

Coordinating Office (PASCO), and the government established the Poverty Reduction Steering Committee (PRSC), which was further divided into sectors.[113] The PRSC was tasked with providing direction, guidance and technical inputs into the drafting of the paper, as well as with raising awareness about the PRSP and the government priorities (Canakiah, n.d.). The committee received extensive capacity building support and financing from various donors such as the World Bank and the Commonwealth Secretariat. The PRSP covered the period from 2005-2007, a critical time for consolidating the gains from the peace process and preparing the country for elections in 2007 and the broader transition to longer-term development. The Development Assistance Coordination Office (DACO) was then established by the GoSL and was tasked with coordinating implementation of the PRSP.

The Commonwealth Secretariat provided funding for an international gender consultant to work with the government in providing the needed gender-related input into the draft PRSP (GoSL, 2005a). The consultant conducted rapid assessments within each sector and ministry and held workshops and training for focal points working on gender issues.[114] However, the participatory poverty assessments (PPA) that were held in 42 communities across Sierra Leone to assess local perceptions about the causes and consequences of poverty and the key issues that needed to be addressed were not gender-sensitive and participants were not disaggregated by sex (Canakiah n.d.). Although gender issues and the specific needs of women are mentioned in the PRSP, according to a Sierra Leone civil society representative, although women were included and consulted, "there isn't really anything reflected in the document that offers them anything".[115]

[113] The five sector working committees were: governance and national security; macro-economic policy and private sector development; resettlement, reconstruction and reintegration; agriculture, natural resources and environment; and social sector development. Gender, HIV/AIDS and preventive health, youth and the environment were all specified as cross-cutting issues across the sectors.
[114] Interview with Hawa Musa, Ministry of Development and Economic Planning, Freetown, 23 March 2005.
[115] Interview with Yasmin Jusu-Sherriff, Marwopnet, Freetown, 26 May 2005.

The PRSP was largely endorsed by the donors, although it was criticised for the fact that little effort was made to prioritise amongst the many objectives and goals outlined in the document. While efforts were made to be inclusive and participatory, many groups, such as rural women, were left out of the process. While the review of the civic engagement process found that it had been broadly successful in terms of a moderately high understanding of the PRSP process throughout the country and a perception that civil society perspectives had fed into the PRSP, the results on women's participation were not so positive: "Men of all social groups have been involved in the process. Even young men have been able to participate meaningfully. Women were poorly represented at facilitation level. Even men who hold senior positions in [ActionAid's] implementing partner organisations at national level have displayed disregard of women's contributions. Very few women participated in the review" (McKeown, 2005: 20).

Amidst allegations of corruption donors tempered their initial enthusiasm for the PRSP and much of the funding necessary for implementing the proposed reforms was not immediately forthcoming. Given that much of the gender-related input came from an externally-sponsored consultant, there was also less ownership over these issues than may have resulted from closer engagement of the different line ministries in the GoSL. Key donor agencies in Sierra Leone including the World Bank developed a programme to build the capacity of the GoSL and its ministries, departments and agencies (MDAs) to implement the PRSP, as the lack of capacity, resources and expertise were identified as major obstacles (World Bank, 2005a).

While the PRSP highlights the need to work with and strengthen women's organisations, in the outline of the training, staffing and technical assistance needs to be provided to MDAs, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Gender Affairs (MSWGCA) is notably missing as one of the targets for this assistance. According to one official working with the National

Commission for Social Action, "the PRSP failed to bring gender out in a way that will allow implementers to have an impact."[116]

Following the successful completion of the PRSP, another Consultative Group meeting was held in London from 29-30 November 2005. This meeting was intended to provide an opportunity for multilateral and bilateral donors to pledge funds to the government for the next stages of its recovery, and in particular for implementation of the PRSP. However, the fact that the PRSP was a description of the situation in Sierra Leone rather than a clear strategy of how to move forward was problematic for the donors who require goals to be operationalised and measured.[117] Some of the documents released in advance of the CG meeting mention gender as a cross-cutting issue but there is little evidence of a more gender-sensitive approach by the UN.[118] In any case, more rhetoric does not necessarily mean more change. What is important is how the gender-related rhetoric is turned into practice and implemented within Sierra Leone. There is no attempt at gender budgeting in any of the government or UN documents related to Sierra Leone's transition, and this is one area where real changes could be made. But again, it is an issue of a lack of training and capacity, as well as of political will.

5.1.4 The Peace and Consolidation Strategy and the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework (2006-2007)

The Peace and Consolidation Strategy (PCS), finalised in September 2006, is a joint strategy of the UN and GoSL and was intended to guide the transition to long-term development in Sierra Leone. The PCS focuses specifically on the key threats to ongoing peace consolidation in the country that at the time and if not managed properly, threatened to disrupt

[116] Interview with John Ngebeh, NaCSA, Freetown, 24 May 2005.
[117] Interview with Bauke van Weringh, UNDP Transition Support Team, Freetown, 4 May 2005.
[118] For the documents submitted in advance of the 2005 CG meeting, see http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/AFRICAEXT/SIERRALEONEEXTN/0,,contentMDK:20485493~menuPK:1102797~pagePK:1497618~piPK:217854~theSitePK:367809,00.html.

implementation of the PRSP and the run up to the planned national elections in 2007 (UN/GoSL, 2006: 5). The PCS includes a context analysis outlining these threats, however there was a failure to ensure that a gender analysis was also undertaken.[119]

Although the PCS hints at the exclusion of women from decision-making and the discriminatory justice sector, it does not make any direct reference to gender inequalities or the important role that women can play in the consolidation of peace. National consultations took place in December 2005 involving civil society and other stakeholders, but it is not clear how the outcomes of these consultations fed into this document. There is no mention of issues such as the endemic gender-based violence and continued socioeconomic vulnerability of women, despite the fact that these factors were clearly linked to the consolidation of peace at the community level.

Given its focus on short to medium-term 'threats' to peace, the fact that gender issues do not merit a mention in the PCS is probably due to their not being prioritised in the face of more (perceived) immediate concerns. The fact that there was no gender advisor in place during UNIOSIL's development of the Peace Consolidation Strategy with the government also contributed to this oversight and meant that critical opportunities and entry points for supporting gender equality were not capitalised on.

With the establishment of the PBC, there was a new opportunity for the international community to provide strategic guidance to the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone, as one of the first two countries on its agenda. The negotiation of the Strategic Peacebuilding Framework with Sierra Leone began on 23 June 2006 with the first meeting of the PBC to discuss the situation in the country. This was followed by a series of formal meetings,

[119] The main threats identified are: continuing challenges to internal security; challenges to a national dynamic of reconciliation; perceptions of a lack of accountability by national institutions; the need for a culture of respect for human rights; a widespread sense of economic disempowerment; and a lack of a national infrastructure for peace.

informal briefings and in-country consultations to identify the key peacebuilding priorities and themes. There were doubts about the appropriateness of Sierra Leone being selected as a country by the PBC given its supposed focus on immediate needs in countries emerging from war, since Sierra Leone was largely perceived to be beyond the post-conflict phase (Street, Smith and Mollett, 2007: 12). Nevertheless, dialogue continued, and on 3 December 2007, the Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Compact was adopted by the GoSL and the UN.

The priorities identified in the Compact are youth employment and empowerment, consolidation of democracy and good governance, justice and security sector reform, capacity-building, and energy sector development (UN PBC, 2007a: 4). Thus the Compact reflects the liberal peacebuilding pillars evident in the documents presented above. Gender equality and human rights are highlighted as cross-cutting issues to be taken into account in the analysis of the other priorities. Notably, however, the Compact specifically reaffirms the UN's commitments in relation to SCR 1325, and women's needs, particularly in relation to access to justice and political participation, are highlighted several times in the document.

The Compact demonstrates significantly more gender-sensitivity than the other UN peacebuilding policies highlighted in this section for a number of reasons, some of which have already been covered in chapter 3. In relation to Sierra Leone specifically, there were a number of consultations organised by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP)[120], UNIFEM and other INGOs such as International Alert on gender issues and the role of women in the peacebuilding process that identified a number of the gender-related issues that informed the development of the Compact. For example, in 2007, International Alert organised a roundtable meeting in New York with PBC members, UN agencies and member states to discuss how to integrate gender issues into the PBC's priorities relating to

[120] WANEP is one of the key civil society organizations engaging with the PBC, and eventually took on the coordinating role of the civil society partnership (CESPEC) for the PBC and was nominated as one of the representatives from civil society to sit on the PBF National Steering Committee.

security and rule of law in Sierra Leone and Burundi.[121]

Civil society representatives were also invited to participate in the country-specific meetings of the PBC in New York, and each time they highlighted gender issues. Additional technical support for gender issues was also provided by the Sierra Leone desk officer (initially seconded by UNIFEM as a gender focal point) within the Peacebuilding Support Office in New York, and who made several trips to Freetown to support the PBC's work in-country. This facilitated links with women's organisations and provided an entry point in New York to ensure that the final draft of the Compact included some gender language.

Women's organisations had much greater visibility and presence throughout the development of the Compact than had been the case with any of the other policies developed in post-conflict Sierra Leone. This is largely due to the support that these organisations received from UNIFEM and INGOs who were advocating for the inclusion of gender issues into the work of the PBC at the international level. Marwopnet, a leading women's peacebuilding network, was also selected as one of the civil society representatives on the PBF Steering Committee. This position was particularly important since prior to finalising the Compact, the PBF also had an allocation of $35 million that could be rapidly disbursed to support specific peacebuilding activities. UNIFEM, along with the MSWGCA and Marwopnet developed a project to support women's empowerment and gender equality. However due to delays in agreeing the project design and bureaucratic hurdles, it was not ultimately approved until July 2008.[122] This project, initially envisaged with a budget of $3 million eventually only received an allocation of $800,000.

Despite these promising developments, a report on civil society perspectives on the PBC's

[121] For more details on this roundtable, see International Alert, 2007a.
[122] For full details on the project supported by the UN PBF, including "Supporting Gender Capacity, Women's Rights Protection and Child Protection in Recovery and Peacebuilding", see http://www.unpbf.org/sierraleone/sierraleone-projects.shtml

work found that in Sierra Leone, "the PBC work was seen as 'Freetown-centric', owned by elite, mainstream peacebuilding umbrella organisations, and not by the grassroots communities most affected by conflict" (Street, Smith and Mollett, 2007: 16). This claim caused significant problems in Freetown, with local civil society organisations including WANEP and Marwopnet refuting it and suggesting that in fact it was the INGOs who were to blame for not working constructively with local communities.[123] This illustrates some of the challenges the international community faces in supporting the work of local civil society organisations and the difficulty of accessing rural-based networks, even if the intentions are sound.[124] Nevertheless, the Compact demonstrates some progress in terms of integrating a gender perspective from the earliest stages of policy formulation. This progress can be understood as the result of a combination of factors including stronger international support for integrating gender into the policy document, the active engagement of women's organisations in Sierra Leone, and technical support and gender expertise available to those drafting the Compact.

5.2 Gender mainstreaming and the architecture of the UN in Sierra Leone: Mandates and structures

Whilst the policy discourse frames the key priorities and issues relevant to the UN's peacebuilding efforts, the mandates and structures of the agencies themselves also play major roles in determining the extent to which these priorities are internalised and translated into concrete actions. The main UN bodies relevant to a study on the integration of gender into the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone are UNAMSIL (and subsequently UNIOSIL), UNDP and UNIFEM, the UNCT Gender Theme Group, and the World Bank.[125] This section will provide a brief overview of the mandates and structure of each of these bodies vis-à-vis

[123] Focus group discussion with members of CESPEC, Freetown, 20 July 2007.
[124] This issue will be more fully discussed in chapter 7.
[125] Several other agencies such as UNICEF and WFP also dealt with gender issues either directly or indirectly, but it is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into their mandates and structures in detail.

gender issues in order to understand the internal dynamics that had an impact on the extent to which they prioritised women's rights and gender equality.

Despite the tokenistic approach to integrating gender issues into the majority of the peacebuilding policies from the signing of Lomé until the end of 2007, there is the potential for the UN agencies to establish structures and develop specific programmes to ensure that both women's rights and gender mainstreaming inform their actions on the ground. However, as this section will show, with some exceptions, again these issues were sidelined, under-resourced and deprioritised in the structures and mandates of the organisations. The reasons for this are linked to the liberal peacebuilding approach of a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach to building peace and the liberal feminist nature of gender mainstreaming processes which leaves little space for a real reconfiguration of gender roles and relations.

5.2.1 UNAMSIL and UNIOSIL

The original mandate of UNAMSIL did not specifically mention gender issues, either separately or in the context of the mission's other priority areas. The only passing reference to gender issues in UNAMSIL's mandate is in paragraph 15 in relation to gender training (UN, 1999a). Given that SCR 1325 had not been adopted at the time UNAMSIL's mandate was drafted, which would have provided more impetus to the issues, this is not necessarily unexpected. However, other instruments relating to women's rights and gender equality could have been referred to. For example, in East Timor, the mandate of the UN-established Transitional Administration (UNTAET) was explicitly linked to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which provided an important tool to guide the work of the gender affairs office (Whittington, 2004: 5).

Subsequent resolutions on UNAMSIL did not demonstrate much improvement, with only a few mentions of the 'special needs of women' mentioned from 2002 onwards. In 2004,

resolution 1562 provided UNAMSIL with a revised mandate to guide its work as the mission drew down, and again an opportunity to integrate a gender perspective into the work of the peacekeeping mission and to recognise the needs, interests and contributions of women's organizations was overlooked. The Resolution highlights the role of the UN mission in continuing to monitor and support the restoration of security, public services and state authority and in promoting human rights, but there is no specific reference to gender-related insecurities or needs.

Following on from its largely gender-blind mandate, the structure of UNAMSIL also reflected a marginalisation of gender issues from the central preoccupations of the peacekeeping mission. During the early years of the mission, UNAMSIL's human rights section officially had the position of a 'gender specialist', although the section was under-staffed and it was therefore not always filled (Human Rights Watch, 2003). In addition to a gender specialist, there was also a focal point for women to assist with gender balance within the mission. However, according to a mid-mission report, this position was ineffective and the focal point did not have enough information or access to senior management to effectively carry out her job (Date-Bah, 2006: 79).

However, following the adoption of SCR 1325 and largely as a result of the continued lobbying of civil society groups at the UN who repeatedly called for gender advisory positions to be placed within peacekeeping missions, such a position was established within UNAMSIL in 2003.[126] The gender advisor (GA) was placed within the human rights section; however the fact that no independent budget and only limited authority was attached to the

[126] The first gender position created within a UN peacekeeping missions was in Kosovo in June 1999. A gender unit was planned for East Timor at the outset of UNTAET, but it was cut due to budgetary reasons and instead two focal points were assigned in October 1999. By mid-2000, a full-scale gender unit had been established in UNTAET and was the first of its kind in a peacekeeping mission.

position was a serious limitation. This resulted in a reactive rather than proactive response to gender issues within the mission.[127]

Eventually, at the beginning of 2005, the position was moved to the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. This made the gender advisor a member of senior staff, and gave her greater access to the higher decision-making levels within the organisation (UN DPKO, 2005a: 33). Previously, the GA had had to report to the head of the human rights section who would then feed back any issues to the SRSG, resulting in a circuitous line of reporting and accountability for gender issues. However, at one year prior to the drawdown of the mission, this move came too late to have any real sustainable impact on the ability of UNAMSIL to mainstream gender throughout its activities.[128]

UNAMSIL itself was divided into eight functional areas responsible for different aspects of the mission such as public information, planning and political affairs, and civilian police.[129] In an evaluation of gender mainstreaming within UNAMSIL conducted for DPKO, it is noted that the degree to which each of these divisions accorded attention to gender mainstreaming varied significantly (Date-Bah, 2006: 22-23).[130] Separate to the role of the gender advisor, the scandals around sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) at the hands of peacekeepers in West Africa prompted UNAMSIL to begin paying more attention to these issues. As a result, strict codes of conduct were instituted, and a staff member within the human rights section was designated as the SEA focal point. She initially undertook these duties in conjunction with a broader role, but eventually confronted the management of the mission with an ultimatum that to continue covering SEA issues would require the establishment of a full-time post of SEA

[127] Interview with Theresa Kambobe, UNAMSIL gender advisor, 25 May 2005.
[128] Personal interview with Theresa Kambobe, UNAMSIL gender advisor, Freetown, 25 May 2005; Multi-donor review, 2006.
[129] These areas are: the SRSGs office (incorporating DDR, child protection, civil affairs, HIV/AIDS and legal advisors unit); planning and political affairs; human rights; military; DRSG's office; civilian police; personnel; and public information. See Date-Bah, 2006: 22.
[130] This impression was confirmed in an interview with the UNAMSIL gender advisor, Freetown, 25 May 2005.

advisor.[131] This post was eventually established and the SEA advisor subsequently collaborated with NGOs and other agency staff to take action on the issue of SEA, as well as playing an important internal role in training, sensitisation and awareness-raising.

At its peak, UNAMSIL was the biggest ever peacekeeping mission and to expect a single person to be able to effectively fulfil a gender mainstreaming mandate was simply unrealistic (Date-Bah, 2006: 17). The fact that gender issues were not included in the mandate of UNAMSIL from the outset also served to restrict the potential for succeeding in mainstreaming, given that decisions about funding and authority are frequently made at the earliest stages of a mission's life-cycle. For mainstreaming to be successful it requires the actual incorporation of gender into all policy and operational areas from the earliest planning stages of the mission, which in turn necessitates the allocation of funds and personnel capable of undertaking the task. Including mention of gender issues and SCR 1325 in the mandate of peacekeeping missions is critical since it lends legitimacy, articulates and shares responsibility and provides the potential for the allocation of resources that all help to ensure that the job is done (ibid: 40-42).

Although UNAMSIL had a difficult beginning it has largely been seen as a success story by the international community.[132] Following repeated extensions, the Secretary-General recommended that UNAMSIL end its operations in the country by the end of December 2005. Over a period of months, the peacekeepers began to withdraw, and the mission was eventually downsized to a few hundred personnel to be integrated into the new UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) as of January 1st, 2006. The drawdown of UNAMSIL and the creation of UNIOSIL resulted in a smaller UN presence than the previous UNAMSIL mission. There was an opportunity to consolidate the limited advances towards gender equality that had been made by UNAMSIL by ensuring that the new integrated office accord

[131] Interview with Lory Dolar, UNAMSIL SEA Advisor, Freetown, 17 February 2005.
[132] For example, see "UNAMSIL: A Success Story in Peacekeeping", 2005. http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamsil/Overview.pdf.

sufficient attention and resources to the issue, however, the gender advisor position was terminated. The lack of gender expertise within UNIOSIL was a major weakness of the peacebuilding effort in 2006, and reflects the failure of the mainstreaming project by the UN in Sierra Leone.

Had gender issues genuinely been prioritised by the senior management of the peacekeeping mission or seen as relevant to the ongoing peace and development process in the country then it would not have been possible to eliminate this role. It also indicates a lack of continuity in UN programming, since the gender advisor had already shown herself to be key to the efforts at supporting women's organisations, raising the profile of gender issues and providing gender training to UN and government staff. Although the UNAMSIL gender advisor completed an end of mission briefing, the majority of files and reference materials pertaining to the mission's gender work were left on the hard drive of the GA's computer and were lost at the time of drawdown. The fact that there are no detailed records of what activities and projects were undertaken related to gender during UNAMSIL's tenure in Sierra Leone is a serious loss of institutional knowledge.[133]

In preparation for the handover from UNAMSIL to UNIOSIL, a detailed strategy was developed, outlining the priority areas for the transition and the roles of the different UNCT actors in carrying out these tasks. In the preamble to the activities chart of this document, emphasis is placed on the continued need to consolidate and support a durable peace in Sierra Leone (UNCT, 2005). However, no mention is made of the role of women in this process, or of the relationship between peace and gender equality. Gender is only mentioned specifically in four of the twenty-seven issue areas of the transition strategy (public information, women, education, and gender mainstreaming) despite the many opportunities to integrate a gender perspective throughout the entire document. Furthermore, separating 'gender mainstreaming'

[133] Personal interview with member of UNIOSIL senior management who had also held a senior position within UNAMSIL, June 2006.

as a stand-alone task in the strategy is not necessarily constructive towards achieving a successful integration of gender issues throughout the country strategy.

Attempts were made by the UNCT Gender Theme Group (GTG) to lobby senior management within the UNCT to revise the Transition Strategy so that a gender perspective could be more fully integrated in accordance with SCR 1325, but several layers of resistance were encountered. Furthermore, by the time the draft Transition Strategy was discussed in the GTG meeting it was too late to make any significant changes.[134] Thus, the future UN priorities in the country were to be framed by a document that did not incorporate a gender perspective, further jeopardising attempts to build a sustainable and inclusive peace in the country.

The mandate of UNIOSIL includes "developing initiatives for the protection and well-being of youth, women and children," but does not mention SCR 1325, support for gender mainstreaming, or the important roles of women in the consolidation of peace (UN, 2005b). The Human Rights and Rule of Law section within UNIOSIL did have a gender focal point in 2006, and the gender advisor from the UN peacekeeping mission in Burundi was seconded to UNIOSIL for one month in June 2006 to support the office to engage women in the run-up to the elections in 2007. A gender advisor was eventually hired on a six-month contract in June 2007 (eventually extended), providing important support to efforts to integrate gender issues into the work of UNIOSIL. However, the lack of dedicated gender expertise during the initial stages of the integrated office had the result that a gender sensitive approach was not institutionalised from the outset.

According to a multi-donor review of the implementation of SCR 1325 across four UN peacekeeping missions, the failure to prioritise the role of the gender advisor by the UNAMSIL and UNIOSIL missions was highlighted as having a negative impact (Multi-donor

[134] This information is based on numerous interviews as well as first-hand experience of GTG meetings during March-May 2005 in Freetown.

Review, 2006). This was particularly stark following the drawdown of UNAMSIL and before the recruitment of a gender advisor to UNIOSIL, when the review team found that "there was an absence of a mission-wide gender strategy, a lack of ownership and a lack of leadership on gender." (ibid: 6).

5.2.2 UNDP and UNIFEM

UNDP has played a key role in the post-conflict recovery of Sierra Leone. Because UNDP is not a specialised agency with a narrow or specific mandate, it has a wide remit of programmes in Sierra Leone that cut across a range of issues. Some examples of UNDP programming in Sierra Leone include an innovative community-based programme on 'arms for development', support for elections and capacity building of elected local council officials, and strengthening of the rule of law and access to justice. UNDP was therefore active across the different thematic areas of the peacebuilding process that fell under the purview of the United Nations.

Since 2002, UNDP Sierra Leone's (UNDP SL) programmes have covered three practice areas: recovery and peace-building; governance and democratic development; and poverty reduction and human development. In addition to support staff and the senior management, UNDP's programme staff is allocated to these three thematic areas. The main focus of UNDP's work has been on recovery and peacebuilding, and in 2004 more than 50% of its budget of $25 million was allocated for projects under this programming area (Kaldor with Vincent, n.d.: 20).

As stated in UNDP's own documents, a gender perspective should be mainstreamed throughout all its operational and advocacy work.[135] Although UNDP did not have a specific gender advisor or gender focal point in Sierra Leone, its link to UNIFEM theoretically could

[135] See background to UNDP at http://www.daco-sl.org/encyclopedia/5_part/5_3undp.htm [Accessed 27/9/08]

have provided it with a certain degree of internal expertise, especially as the UNIFEM programme officer was located in the same building. Nevertheless, a review of its work in Sierra Leone indicates that it has been less than successful in this area: "UNDP's gap-filling role has been rather effective because it has been demand driven rather than donor driven and because of the efficiency of local staff. However, more attention needs to be paid to civil society and gender" (Kaldor with Vincent, n.d.: 5).

This view was supported by various interviews carried out in Freetown in 2005, where the lack of integration of a gender perspective into UNDP's recovery activities was noted. According to one UNDP official, "there is more said than done when it comes to gender issues, but the concern is there. It just doesn't follow through all the time. UNDP needs more indicators and yardsticks to assess gender dimensions, we also need more vigorous monitoring and assessment but there isn't really any money or time."[136] The fact that more was said than done in relation to gender issues by UNDP is unsurprising. As the policy documents in the previous section demonstrated, beyond token mentions of gender in passing, the UN did not make the connections between recognizing the gendered impact of peacebuilding with the broader sustainability of these processes. This may partly be due to the many competing priorities and limited resources, but it is also due to the fact that peace in the UN's eyes was no different for men or for women, reflecting the one-size-fits-all liberal consensus.

The UNIFEM office in Sierra Leone opened in 2002, and for the majority of the time since then has only been staffed by one locally-recruited programme officer who also focused on HIV/AIDS issues.[137] Much of UNIFEM's work in Sierra Leone has focused on access to justice and addressing the extensive legal discrimination facing women. Some examples of projects that UNIFEM has initiated include: providing gender training to the commissioners

[136] Interview with Lorna French, UNDP, Freetown, 28 June 2006.
[137] There have at different times been one or two locally-hired programme assistants, and an internationally-hired programme manager arrived in 2009.

on the TRC; facilitating and enabling women organisations and individual victims of violence to testify and deliver statements before the TRC; and working with Conciliation Resources, an international NGO, to hold a workshop on gender justice issues. The UNIFEM representative played a key role in the UNCT Gender Theme Group (see below), the Coordinating Committee on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CCSEA)[138], and in supporting the work of the MSWGCA and Freetown-based women's organisations.

Due to the poor reporting and lack of transparency about budgets, it is difficult to assess the financial resources of the UNIFEM office in Sierra Leone. However, it is clear that resources, both financial and human, were limited and that this restricted the ability of the UNIFEM office to fulfil the need for gender-related programming in Sierra Leone.[139] According to a UNDP official in Sierra Leone, UNIFEM's role is marginalised and under-utilised, and the fact that they have such a small budget and therefore require other agencies to assist with funding activities makes them unpopular within the UNCT.[140]

Despite the limited resources available, the UNIFEM programme officer was still able to have some impact and was a useful resource and contact in the UN system for the women's organisations based in Freetown. Similar to the situation in UNAMSIL and UNIOSIL, the fact that the UNIFEM programme officer worked mainly alone, it was difficult for her to have any sustained presence or activities in the rural parts of the country. Nevertheless, the UNIFEM office was an important entry point for women's organisations in Freetown to engage with the UN, and it also provided ongoing support and technical input to the work of the MSWGCA. It is clear that while having a UNIFEM presence in-country is crucial, there is

[138] For more information about the international community's response to issues of sexual abuse and exploitation see Higate, 2004: 37-57.
[139] This is not a problem specific to Sierra Leone. Although UNIFEM's budget was doubled in 2007 to $115 million (up from $57 million) this figure still represents a fraction of the budget available to UNICEF, which in 2006 was over $2 billion. See "New-Improved Women's Agency Vies for U.N. Priority", *Women's E-News*, 6 March 2008. http://www.womensenews.org/story/international-policyunited-nations/080306/new-improved-womens-agency-vies-un-priority.
[140] Interview with Lorna French, UNDP, 5 March 2005.

an institutionalised failure to adequately resource and engage with the agency on the part of the other UN agencies represented in Sierra Leone (Multi-donor Review, 2006: 10).

5.2.3 UNCT Gender Theme Group

The UN Country Team (UNCT) approach originated in response to calls for increased coordination and communication amongst the various agencies, funds and programmes that work in developing and conflict-affected contexts. In Sierra Leone, the UNCT is led by the UN Resident Coordinator, and is composed of several different UN agencies, funds and programmes: FAO, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOCHA, WFP, WHO, and the World Bank. Additionally, the UNAMSIL Human Rights Unit and Political Affairs units and UN Field Security Coordination Officer (UNFSCO) are also represented (UNCT, 2004b: 1). Throughout the post-war years, the UNCT held weekly meetings at which decisions were made on the role of the UN and its activities in relation to the post-conflict recovery in Sierra Leone. This was done in close collaboration with UNAMSIL and the government.

The UNCT has a Gender Theme Group (GTG) that aims to provide analytical and advocacy support for the inclusion of a gender perspective in the work of the various UN agencies operating in Sierra Leone. In theory, each agency has at least one gender focal point who attends the monthly meetings of the GTG. However, the meetings are quite irregular and as the gender focal points are usually junior and not always present at meetings, they rarely have the authority or the resources to take any of the recommendations back to their organisations and implement them.[141] From 2005 onwards, the GTG was being chaired by the UNIFEM program officer, who works within the UNDP office.[142] Previously the GTG was chaired in rotation, although was often led by WFP. According to the terms of reference of the GTG, the

[141] Discussion with members of the UNCT GTG, Freetown, March 2005.
[142] It has been agreed that in line with the UNDP Gender Action Plan, UNIFEM will take the lead on coordinating gender equality issues in the UNCTs where it has a presence through a UNCT gender theme group. See UN, 2006a: 13, para 82.

group was to provide technical support to the UNCT, act as a forum for dialogue around gender issues, and provide strategic leadership on gender mainstreaming.[143]

This was an ambitious programme of work, all the more so given the fact that the GTG had no fixed budget, and relied on the efforts of the individual agency representatives to follow through on the activities listed in the workplan. As an example, in 2003, the budget for the GTG was only $45,000.[144] In 2005, the workplan included activities such as technical support to the partners responsible for implementing the UNDAF, a mapping assessment of how the UN agencies have supported gender equality and the empowerment of women in Sierra Leone, recruitment of an expert to identify gender training needs and design and carry out training workshops with UN staff, and carry out advocacy activities around violence against women. A lack of resources and commitment from the various member agencies prevented the full implementation of the plan, although certain activities were undertaken.

According to the Multi-donor Review of gender programming in Sierra Leone, there was little evidence that the GTG was active or successful (2006: 20). A lack of coordination and collaboration amongst key donor governments on gender issues was also a significant obstacle to a more holistic and effective approach by the international community. Reasons cited by two donor government representatives were that nobody had the time or resources to lead on the coordination issue, and that the GTG should be leading on this.[145] The 2005 workplan of the GTG did include a proposal for the expansion of the GTG to include the MSWGCA and other development partners, but this was not realised.

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[143] Proposed Terms of Reference: Gender Theme Group for the UN System in Sierra Leone (n.d.). http://www.undg.org/archive_docs/4385-Gender_Theme_Group_TOR__Sierre_Leone_.doc [Accessed 27/9/08]

[144] "Results of the UN Coordination System in 2003", Resident Coordinator Annual Report. http://cfapp2.undp.org/dgo_unct_report/reports/index.cfm?fuseaction=show_report_results&cty_id_c=Sil [Accessed 27/9/08]

[145] Interview with two regional gender advisors for the MSWGCA, Freetown 22 June 2006.

By mid-2007, the GTG had continued to regain its momentum, and by this point the head of UNIOSIL, the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General (ERSG) and the heads of the various UN agencies were more involved in the work of the group.[146] Whilst this indicates some progress, gender issues were still being pigeon-holed and seen as the remit of the GTG, rather than being relevant to the peacebuilding process.

5.2.4 The World Bank

Whilst the World Bank was one of the key donor organisations operating in Sierra Leone throughout the peacebuilding process, its presence on the ground was fairly light. The Bank office in Freetown was staffed by a country manager and assistants, and additional technical support was provided from the West Africa office based in Ghana and country specialists in Washington, DC. The Bank also engaged consultants and other staff to assist with implementation of specific projects. The World Bank developed a Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for the period 2006-2009 that was intended to support the implementation of the PRSP.

It is encouraging that the CAS made specific reference to gender issues (2005b: 27), but it was in relation to socioeconomic issues only, and also emphasised women exclusively as a vulnerable group in need of social protection and safety nets. It is unsurprising that the World Bank did not have a gender advisor or gender focal point in the Sierra Leone, reflective of the Bank's poor record in this area as already discussed in chapter 3. While the country manager acknowledged that "women are 50% of the population so you can't ignore them" and that "gender is integral to development", he also suggested that gender issues should not be highlighted but rather addressed in the context of other initiatives, and that "people are not interested in challenging gender stereotypes in Sierra Leone. You can only begin thinking about these things when you have an income, when you have choices".[147] Given that the

[146] Interview with Jebbeh Forster, UNIFEM, Freetown, 16 July 2007.
[147] Interview with James Sackey, World Bank, Freetown, 2 May 2005.

World Bank disbursed approximately $47 million in direct budget support, PRSP financing and specific project funds, the omission of gender issues from such a large percentage of overall donor funding is problematic.

Many of the issues pointed to so far illustrate the failure to provide the necessary funds and resources for the UN agencies to address gender issues. Structurally, these agencies were also not well-designed to prioritise gender issues, given their limited expertise and technical knowledge of the issues. While these explanations carry some weight, they are also reflective of a deeper and more problematic bias within the peacebuilding process. Even if adequate resources were in place, it is not clear that the UN would have been more effective in integrating gender, since the very premises of how this should done are based on liberal feminist strategies of adding women in, rather than taking the gendered dynamics of peacebuilding into account. The next section of this chapter will now turn to exploring some of these premises to demonstrate how the liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminist approaches to peacebuilding shaped the discourse in a specific way that resulted in the sidelining of gender issues in post-conflict Sierra Leone.

5.3 Mainstreaming or sidelining gender? Analysing the discourse and structures of the UN in Sierra Leone

This chapter has presented an analysis of the key UN peacebuilding policies and the structures and mandates of the different agencies. The purpose of this chapter was to explore how gender issues were discursively and structurally integrated into the UN's work in Sierra Leone. Overall, the analysis is not encouraging and provides some explanation for why the UN's record in gender-sensitising the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone was so poor. The actual implementation of its peacebuilding activities within the three key pillars of establishing security, governance reform and economic reform will be discussed in more

detail in chapter 6, but this final section will first provide some explanation for the failure of the UN to prioritise gender in the peacebuilding priorities in Sierra Leone.

The previous sections of the chapter have raised a number of key problems linked to the liberal underpinnings of both gender mainstreaming and peacebuilding that can be summarised into three areas, each of which will be briefly discussed below. First, the UN's conceptual approach to the liberal peace provided little space for the inclusion of gender-differentiated priorities. As a result, gender issues have been incorporated into the discourse in a limited way, focusing on women's needs as opposed to gendered dynamics. Second, following from this point, gender issues were repeatedly deprioritised, reflected in the marginal place these issues occupied in the policies and structures of the UN agencies. Third, too little effort was made to engage the local population in articulating the peacebuilding priorities, reflecting the externally-driven, top-down nature of the liberal peacebuilding process.

As this chapter presented, these problems manifested themselves in the all-too-common structural constraints in relation to gender mainstreaming. Collectively, they led to the 'adding-on' of gender issues (understood as women's issues) to peacebuilding policies, and despite claims of mainstreaming gender the resources and priority accorded to these issues have not been commensurate with the task. As argued earlier in the thesis, this is in line with the limitations of liberal feminism. The remainder of this section will now turn to an analysis of these issues before exploring the implementation of the UN's peacebuilding activities in the next chapter.

However, before proceeding a caveat is necessary at this point. It does not necessarily follow that simply because gender issues or women's rights are not mentioned within these policies and strategic frameworks that they were not taken into account at all, and were subsequently excluded from the peacebuilding process entirely. Field research confirmed that the presence

of key individuals sensitive to these issues made a difference on a small scale. For example, there have in particular been some encouraging signs of progress in bringing gender issues to the table since the PBC has been active in Sierra Leone, largely due to connections with the global advocacy networks around the Commission's work.[148] Nevertheless, without strategically prioritising gender issues early on, allocating resources and identifying indicators and benchmarks that should be achieved, and developing gender-sensitive policies then it is unlikely that such ad hoc progress will be sustainable.

5.3.1 The UN's discourse around peace and gender issues

Despite the existence of many international commitments in relation to gender and peacebuilding, most notably SCR 1325, the UN's policies in Sierra Leone largely fail to reaffirm or expand on these issues. Poverty reduction and human security are still massive challenges in Sierra Leone, and were even more so during the case study period. Whilst they were mentioned as priorities of the UN and GoSL as articulated in the policy documents, too little effort was made to analyse the community-level dynamics and relationships in Sierra Leone, or to distinguish between the different needs of different groups within the population in relation to poverty and security. A more thorough gender analysis would have helped to ensure that some of these dynamics and the access to resources and power of men and women and children were taken into account. There is little evidence of such an analysis being applied by those drafting the policy documents, and as a result the local population tended to be treated and referred to as a homogenous group, with little detail about how they would be engaged in and affected by the various measures outlined in the policy documents.

There was also little reflection in the policies of the many gender-related insecurities that continued to persist in Sierra Leone, particularly the endemic gender-based violence that was characteristic of both the conflict and peacebuilding phases. During the course of this

[148] An example of such progress were the national and regional consultations held in Sierra Leone on the PBC and SCR 1325 during 2008, led by UNIFEM with support from the headquarters in New York.

research, women's organisations repeatedly highlighted GBV as one of the main concerns of women throughout the country.[149] Despite this, and aside from a few mentions of discriminatory legislation and the need for better access for women to healthcare and the justice system following incidences of sexual violence, GBV does not emerge as an element of the conflict analysis in any of the policies from the I-PRSP through to the Compact. This reflects the gender-blindness of the liberal peacebuilding approach, where issues of stability and restoration of state authority were prioritised over individual security needs in the consolidation of peace.

As has been illustrated, the UNDAF, PRSP and PCS all highlight women's needs in relation to the social sector, but do not integrate a genuine consideration of gender dynamics in relation to the political, security or economic-related aspects of the transition to peace. If donor agencies themselves fail to prioritise gender equality, then it is likely that existing patriarchal values will be reinforced and transferred into the nascent institutions of the post-conflict society. As Enloe points out, if it is men in militarised roles who are in charge of the transition to peace, then the whole discourse of the reconstruction agenda can become couched in those terms and the militarisation of society is perpetuated, exacerbating any gender inequalities (Enloe, 2002: 25-26).

Addressing women's needs in relation to access to education and healthcare can be less challenging than tackling underlying stereotypes and assumptions that exacerbate the marginalisation of women. The following quotation aptly sums up some of the pitfalls of the discourse on gender issues in the UN's peacebuilding policies visible in Sierra Leone:

> There is an inherent danger in labelling gender issues as 'soft': this increases the risk of their being considered trivial, as possible to postpone and even as luxury items – in stark contrast to concerns described as 'hard' security issues, which are seen as urgent, rational and requiring expertise and unique skills. As a result of such labelling, the second category is likely to receive considerably more attention and resources that the first. Therefore, a major challenge is to describe and frame gender issues as urgent and rational and to ensure that personnel assigned to handle

[149] Focus group discussion with local women's organisations, Bo, 20 July 2007.

> intervention issues have necessary gender skills and gender knowledge (Olsson et al, 2004: 52).

A gender, as opposed to a women-focused, analysis may also help to better understand the dynamics around male youth unemployment, household poverty, and the opportunities for reconciliation at the community level in Sierra Leone. While gender equality is highlighted as a 'cross-cutting' issue by almost all of the relevant policies, the reality is that gender issues tend to be understood as women's issues. An outcome of the focus on women is that there is also a tendency to not see them as agents of change but rather as passive recipients. Most of the policies that mention support for women focus on their roles as victims or the particularly marginalised and vulnerable, rather than their ability to be empowered as actors in the peacebuilding process. This is an issue that will be returned to in the conclusion of the thesis.

5.3.2 The gendered politics of prioritisation

The second trend evident from the analysis of the discourse and structures of the UN in Sierra Leone is the fact that gender equality and women's empowerment were not seen as key to how peace and security were defined. This reflects what I call the 'gendered politics of prioritisation'. Although it was at times acknowledged as a cross-cutting issue, in analysing the policies themselves it becomes clear that gender equality was not perceived as linked to the other broader objectives of the transition to peace in Sierra Leone. As a result, it was dropped from the post-conflict agenda at the earliest stage. The process of setting the peacebuilding priorities in Sierra Leone reflected the attitude of the UN that gender equality is something that can be postponed, when all the other 'more important' concerns have been dealt with (Abdela, 2004: 89-92).

The allocation of resources, in particular donor funding, to the various aspects of the peacebuilding process reflected the way in which the international community prioritises issues. As this chapter argued, gender issues received very little priority. This is not a problem

that is unique to Sierra Leone, but rather is indicative of broader trends. Rao illustrates this point well:

> In 2002, UNIFEM's resources totalled $36 million. In comparison, UNFPA's budget for the same year was $373 million; the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' budget was $64 million and UNAIDS' budget was $92 million. UNICEF's budget in the same year totalled $1,454 million. The message is clear: investment in women is of the lowest order. Most mainstream agencies cannot even track how much money they spend on women rights and the achievement of gender equality (2006).

It is not easy to isolate the exact figures spent on women-specific programming as well as the gender-related component of broader thematic activities. However, interviews with different individuals working for UN agencies in Sierra Leone confirm that the budgets allocated were small, unreliable and difficult to access.[150] Therefore, although the UN's policy statements around gender issues in Sierra Leone may indicate a certain degree of commitment to the issues, the reality is that the resources required to turn the commitments into practice were simply not there. As one UN official pointed out, "[SCR] 1325 is useful in the Sierra Leonean context because it provides the legal framework for greater involvement of women, the greater *recognition* and involvement of women. But what is needed is to pour the resources into making that greater involvement a reality. If you want women to be involved you have to empower them. It takes resources to empower them."[151]

Belief in a trade-off between stability now and equality later is widespread, and leads to gender equality being framed as a 'long-term luxury' that can be focused on after other more immediate concerns are dealt with (Pankhurst, 2004: 3). However, as Pankhurst points out, "negative peace [can] be achieved in conditions of extreme gender inequality with no 'efficiency imperative' to push for change, and sexual politics not sufficiently developed to make it a problem not to change" (2004: 13). Thus, the separation of the two objectives in post-conflict contexts can be rationalised by donors as 'unnecessary' resulting in gender issues being put to the side, to be addressed after more immediate imperatives have been dealt

[150] Interview with various UN officials in 2005 and 2006.
[151] Interview with Jebbeh Forster, UNIFEM, Freetown, 27 June 2006.

with. In particular, tokenistic approaches need to be resisted. "The UN needs to make it [gender mainstreaming] mandatory. The perception is that you can live without it [...] people see gender as a choice and this is a problem."[152]

5.3.3 Key internal obstacles to gender mainstreaming

The issue of organisational obstacles to mainstreaming gender is not new. Despite the long history of the women in development, gender and development, and gender mainstreaming movements, the policy-practice gap in terms of actually implementing gender-related rhetoric is a consistent feature of the development field. The peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone is no exception. Research in the country repeatedly demonstrated the consistent failure of the UN agencies to take gender issues on board, or to accord them any priority or centrality to the peacebuilding process.

The UN approach to peacebuilding dictates a hierarchy of issues, usually defined by the external actors working in their different silos, and this leaves little space for developing more context-specific, or gender-sensitive, responses. This can be seen in the decisions that were made in relations to structure, budgeting and positioning of the gender affairs staff. According to UNAMSIL's gender advisor, there was no continuous mechanism to help foster gender mainstreaming, and there was little capacity to address it.[153] Furthermore, the shoestring budget of her office and the fact that there was only one gender advisor was in direct conflict with the massive mandate of ensuring that UNAMSIL adopts a gender perspective.[154] According to another official working with UNDP, "personally, I think that mainstreaming means just drop it".[155]

[152] Interview with Theresa Kambobe, UNAMSIL Gender Advisor, Freetown, 25 May 2005.
[153] Ibid.
[154] According to Kambobe, the budget for the gender unit is approximately $20,000, a tiny figure when contrasted with the estimated $1.5 million a day price-tag for UNAMSIL.
[155] Interview with Bauke van Weringh, UNDP Transition Support Team, Freetwon, 4 May 2005

The UNIFEM advisor in Sierra Leone was limited by the lack of funds and resources, as well as being marginalised within UNDP and UNCT decision-making processes. For example, the various reports and submissions by the UNCT to the Secretary-General and other UN bodies were only shared with UNIFEM at a stage where it is too late for the required changes to be made so that a gender perspective could be integrated.[156] The case of the UN Gender Theme Group also demonstrates the lack of political will and perceived 'unimportance' of gender issues.

While limited resources are a problem, it is also one of technical capability and commitment, and accountability of senior management to integrate gender issues. For example, although one male UN worker attended the GTG, on the whole the gender focal points in Sierra Leone were female staff members who do not possess the authority to influence decision-making within their organisation.[157] In order for the GTG to be truly effective the Resident Representative, or at least senior-level managers within each of the agencies would need to attend. As stated by one civil society activist, "the problem with UN agencies is that unless someone is pushing for change [in relation to gender issues] then nothing will happen".[158]

According to a senior UN official in UNAMSIL, efforts to promote women's empowerment by the mission were nominal, in part due to the lack of capacity and manpower. "I can say this was a major weakness on our part [...] we did not give it the attention that it requires. But you know as in everything, there is a time for things. Sometimes it is a question of demand and supply also."[159] From 2004 and onwards, delegations from New York, including the DPKO senior gender advisor, periodically made trips to Sierra Leone, and this high-level support also assisted UNAMSIL to make more effort to integrate the resolution into the

[156] Interview with Jebbeh Forster, UNIFEM, Freetown, 27 June 2006.
[157] This is based on observation of these meetings in 2005. Paul Sengeh, a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, was one of UNICEF's two gender focal points at that time.
[158] Interview with Yasmin Jusu-Sherrif, Marwopnet, 26th May 2005.
[159] Interview with Gebremehdin Hagoss, Chief Peace and Governance Section, UNIOSIL, 29 June 2006.

mission's work. These lessons also apply to the other UN agencies where structural placement, leadership and accountability are key to support the gender focal points and to enable them to have a concrete impact.

In addition to the financial resource constraints, the lack of human resources and technical capacity within the UNCT and broader donor and national community was a significant obstacle to effective gender mainstreaming. Aside from a few training workshops and distribution of resource packs and manuals, very little support or capacity-building was available to UN staff. The UNIFEM programme officer and UNAMSIL and UNIOSIL gender advisors were over-stretched and unable to meet the demands of integrating gender into the highly complex and multi-dimensional peacebuilding environment.

Furthermore, as a DFID evaluation of its work in Sierra Leone points out, "because of the conflict it is difficult to get access to reliable data for gender planning: until late 2004, poverty data from 1988 was being used" (Johnston 2005: 26). This lack of sex-disaggregated data and historical marginalisation of women from the public sphere and formal economy means that very little information about their political, economic and social status relative to men is available. Without this information it is difficult to plan and implement gender-sensitive programmes effectively, even were the policies and resources to do so are in place.

5.3.4 The failure to engage the local population

All the policies and strategies outlined in this chapter emphasised the importance of local ownership over the peacebuilding process. The UN's policies should therefore be reflective of the national priorities that were identified with the GoSL and civil society organisations. However, as the assessment of civic engagement around the PRSP showed, the views of the

population, and particularly of women, were not effectively sought out and integrated into the policy frameworks.[160]

Although some UN agencies are operating throughout Sierra Leone, there is a predominance of activities in Freetown and the district capitals and not enough sensitisation or outreach was done to ensure that the local population was aware of and able to engage in the identification of priority issues. It is notable that none of the UN bodies operating in Sierra Leone had gender advisors or focal points that were active at the district level. The limited gender capacity that was available to the UN system was concentrated in Freetown, and the resulting lack of awareness of these issues meant that few rural women were informed about or engaged on donor policies (Castillejo, 2008: 8).

The PCS and the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework both demonstrate the difference that can be made when civil society, including women's organisations, are engaged in consultation processes during the policy drafting phase. There is consequently evidence that the peacebuilding discourse has evolved over time in Sierra Leone to incorporate the provisions of SCR 1325 and a more holistic understanding of how gender issues related to the overall peacebuilding process. However, even though these latter policies did include mention of gender equality and women's empowerment, as chapter 6 will show, too often this remained a rhetorical rather than a real commitment.

This chapter has demonstrated the failure to integrate gender issues into the peacebuilding priorities or to mainstream gender throughout the structures and policies of the UN agencies in Sierra Leone. I have also argued that both the liberal feminist and liberal peacebuilding approaches, in particular their top-down and problem-solving natures, go some way to explaining these failures. The analysis will now turn to the implementation of the UN's

[160] Personal interview with Alpha Sankoh, ActionAid, 28 April 2005. See also ActionAid Sierra Leone, n.d.

peacebuilding activities, considering each of the areas of security, governance and economic reform in turn. By exploring how and why gender issues were marginalised from these processes, the gendered biases and assumptions inherent in the liberal peacebuilding consensus will be unpacked. Furthermore, it will also shed light on the limitations of the UN's liberal feminist approach to mainstreaming gender in peacebuilding.

CHAPTER 6. LIBERAL PEACEBUILDING APPLIED: A GENDER PERSPECTIVE OF THE UN'S PEACEBUILDING ACTIVITIES IN SIERRA LEONE

> *There is evidence to show that women's specific needs are often neglected in early recovery periods, on the grounds that, when 'everything is urgent', women's concerns can be postponed to a less desperate moment. This approach relegates gender equality and women's rights to a 'special needs' category, instead of recognizing that gender profoundly shapes the needs of the entire population. Neglect of women's needs (in particular for physical security, productive asset and income control, and access to decision-making) can impose serious costs on recovery, undermining the credibility of efforts to assert the re-rule of law, and slowing economic recovery.*[161]

Following on from the previous chapter's focus on describing the key UN actors, policies and priorities in relation to peacebuilding in Sierra Leone from 2002 onwards, this chapter will turn to the actual programmes and activities that were implemented. Taking a thematic approach, it will cover the different pillars of the peacebuilding process led by the UN in Sierra Leone from 2002 until 2007, in order to determine to what extent, and how, gender issues were incorporated into these efforts. The chapter will also address the women and/or gender-specific initiatives undertaken by the UN, and the specific challenge of limited national capacity to further understand the limits of liberal feminist approaches. As the above quote illustrates, if gender issues are not integrated into the reconstruction process from the outset, the very sustainability and success of peacebuilding will be undermined.

The areas covered in this chapter include security and justice reform (DDR, SSR and justice sector reforms), governance reform (elections and decentralisation), and economic reform (poverty reduction and macroeconomic reforms), which have all been important emphases of the post-conflict recovery process in Sierra Leone. These thematic areas are indicative of the 'liberal peacebuilding' emphasis on stability, democratisation and marketisation, as applied in Sierra Leone and other countries.

[161] "Promoting gender equality in recovery and peacebuilding: Planning and financing, monitoring and accountability", Consultation for the UN Secretary-General's Report on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding and Early Recovery. Co-hosted by UNIFEM, UNDP and the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, 28 January 2009.

Although the UN and other actors implicit in liberal peacebuilding tend to adopt a sectoral approach to peacebuilding, the reality is that these processes cannot be neatly divided up into different pillars or spheres. Economic issues, particularly poverty and unemployment, have clear consequences for security and stability, just as security, both physical and economic, are needed to enable the population to engage meaningfully with the political process. Therefore, although this chapter separates these processes in line with the taxonomy of peacebuilding used by the UN and other international actors, this division is assumed to be artificial and the interlinkages between the different sectors will be highlighted where particularly relevant, and further serves to demonstrate the limitations of liberal peacebuilding.

6.1 Establishing security

The three focus areas in relation to the justice and security sector reform (JSSR) process in Sierra Leone have been identified as DDR, SSR and transitional justice, particularly in relation to sexual violence and other human rights abuses committed during the conflict. These are all major programmes and reforms that necessitated the engagement of a broad range of stakeholders, and were rolled out throughout the country, although in some areas more successfully than others. Whilst there is a fairly extensive literature on the failures to integrate gender into the DDR process (de Watteville, 2002; Farr, 2002; Mazurana and Carlson, 2004; Schroven, 2006) and on the need for justice for survivors of the widespread sexual violence during the war (Amnesty International, 2006; Barnes, Albrecht and Olson, 2007; Human Rights Watch, 2003) there is to date no study that considers the establishment of security, incorporating all aspects of SSR, DDR and transitional justice, in Sierra Leone from a gender perspective.

This section will consider each of these three areas in turn, concluding with a brief assessment of the security that has been, according to the UN, 'successfully' been established in Sierra

Leone. Despite the insights of human security and feminist approaches that point to gender-differentiated security concerns (McKay, 2004), this section will argue that they have not been successfully addressed in the context of Sierra Leone.

6.1.1 Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration

As part of the peace negotiations and subsequent peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone, a large-scale DDR program was launched with the support of the international community from 1999-2002.[162] The government's National Commission for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (NCDDR) set up an Executive Secretariat in 1998 to oversee and monitor the implementation of the DDR process in the country. Although the DDR process was officially managed by the NCDDR, UNAMSIL was involved in disarming and demobilising the combatants, UNDP was involved in the reintegration programs, and the World Bank managed a multi-donor trust fund that financed the demobilisation process as well as supporting recovery and reintegration efforts through its community-driven development projects (Zhou, 2009b: xviii). Another body, the National Commission for Reconstruction, Resettlement and Rehabilitation (NCRRR)[163] was mandated with the coordination of emergency and medium-term recovery efforts, particularly focusing on the community level.

SCR 1325 calls on all actors implementing peace negotiations to acknowledge special needs of women and girls in the context of DDR (UN, 2000d: para 8a and 13). However, as the peace accords were being negotiated in 1999, the reality was that little attention was being paid to the many female combatants and those associated with the fighting forces. This can partly be attributed to the fact that the Lomé Accords do not contain any specific provisions about gender and the DDR process, although as previously noted in chapter 4 they do mention the specific needs of women and girls in relation to reconstruction, rehabilitation and

[162] The DDR process is estimated to have cost $100 million, far exceeding the original budget of $33.6 million, the majority of which was administered through the World Bank (NCDDR, 2004: xii-xiii).
[163] The NCRRR was succeeded by the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA), which was created by an Act of Parliament in 2001. NaCSA's mandate is to build physical and social capital, support poverty reduction and sustainable development.

development.[164]

UNAMSIL's original mandate as set out in SCR 1270 and subsequent extensions of the peacekeeping mission affirm the UN's support for the DDR process but fails to mention any specific issues in relation to women and girls, although children are mentioned as a category.[165] The DDR process officially ended in February 2004, and according to official statistics the total number of individuals that went through the process was 71,043 (GoSL, 2005a: 2).[166] Of this number, it was stated that 4,751 were women and 6,787 were children. According to these statistics, girls numbered only 506.[167]

However, subsequent research has demonstrated that the presence of women and girls in fighting forces is often hidden by official numbers, and their real contribution and the impact that their involvement has on their future prospects for successful reintegration is overlooked.[168] More detailed investigation of the DDR process in Sierra Leone has shown that while only 506 girls are recorded as having been demobilised, the actual number of girls associated with fighting forces during the conflict is estimated to be around 12,056, or 12% of total combatants (Mazurana and Carlson, 2004: 3).[169] Conciliation Resources also estimates that up to 10,000 women fought with or were associated with the RUF, and of these, as many as 9,500 may have been abducted (1997). Therefore, this would indicate that the DDR process failed to reach and benefit the majority of girls and women who were involved in the conflict. Mazurana and Carlson's research found that although the total number of participants increased with each phase of the DDR process, the proportion of females

[164] Lomé Accords, Article 28, para 2.
[165] UN, 1999a.
[166] These numbers can be further broken down as follows: a total of 72,490 individuals were disarmed, 71,043 of these were demobilized (including all the disarmed children), and 61,161 received reinsertion support.
[167] The statistics on women and girls in the fighting forces are based on the findings of Mazurana and Carlson (2004): 2.
[168] For further discussion of the gender dimensions of the DDR process in Sierra Leone see Mazurana and Carlson, 2004; Ollek, 2007; Schroven, 2006.
[169] This figure is based on Mazurana and Carlson's estimate of a total number of 137,856 combatants, 48,216 of whom were children.

remained at a relatively constant, and marginal, level (2004).

There are many reasons for the exclusion of women and girls from organised DDR processes. Possession of a weapon was often a pre-requisite for admission into the DDR sites, yet few women had a gun or ammunition of their own. Awareness-raising and sensitisation campaigns conducted during and in advance of the DDR processes failed to reach girls and young women and subsequently few were aware of the opportunities and benefits offered by these programs (Barnes, 2005). Fear, insecurity and intimidation were also further barriers to their participation. Many of the girls were used as sexual slaves during the conflict and suffered horrific physical, mental and sexual abuse at the hands of their abductors. As a result, many did not perceive the DDR camps to be a safe environment and were worried that they could suffer further harm if they entered into the process.[170] There were also no women in the disarmament sensitisation committee (Coulter, 2005a: 4), which could have made it more difficult to reach out to the female ex-combatants.

Women and girls who did not go through the DDR process in Sierra Leone faced a number of ongoing problems and had specific needs that required targeted programming initiatives. Many of the girls and young women who were abducted gave birth as a result of the sexual abuse they suffered during the conflict and were responsible for caring for young children, often with no social network to rely on for support. Furthermore, they faced rejection, hostility and stigmatisation from their families and communities as a result of having been associated with the fighting forces, despite the fact that they were almost all abducted against their will.[171] They were also often left with a range of health-related and psychological problems as a legacy of their time in the bush.

[170] Interviews with UNICEF Freetown Child Protection staff members, March 2005.
[171] Interview with Viktoria Jarr, Project Supervisor, Caritas Makeni, 14 March 2006.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, female ex-combatants faced massive socioeconomic challenges and were often unable to secure even the most basic needs such as food and shelter. The fact that so few of the girls associated with the fighting forces completed a basic education before they were implicated in the conflict further exacerbated their difficult situation.[172] While young women and girls rarely pose a threat in terms of an increased risk in violence, if they are not empowered and provided with the tools to sustain a livelihood then the overall processes of community development, reconciliation and peacebuilding may be less sustainable. The sustainability of any peace is dependent on the engagement and participation of the local population and their willingness to invest in the future. If they are excluded from their families, lack the skills or access to resources to earn a living and make an economic contribution to their community and wield no power in decision-making then they will not be able to support a peacebuilding process (Anderlini, 2007; Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen, 2002).

It is also important to question the extent to which women and girls perceived that the DDR process would have even been beneficial to them. MacKenzie suggests that none of the former combatants that she interviewed indicated that they wanted to be part of the process, and that the process did not meet their needs such as looking after and providing for children born during the war (2009: 250). However, the interviews carried out for this research pointed to the fact that while some former combatants may not have wanted to be part of the process, this was most often due to incorrect perceptions about the aims and objectives of DDR as opposed to believing that they would be better off without the support of a reintegration programme.

[172] During interviews carried out in Makeni and Kono in March 2005, the lack of formal education and skills was repeatedly cited by girl ex-combatants as a major obstacle to their ability to return to civilian life and earn a sustainable income. Personal interviews, Makeni (14-16 March 2005) and Kono (29 March-1 April 2005).

Despite the much-lauded 'successful' DDR process in the country it appears that the UN failed to ensure the integration of gender issues despite its repeated commitments to do so. The evaluation of UNAMSIL's gender work found that more effort should have been made to integrate ex-combatant women and girls, the various toolkits and manuals that exist to guide policymakers should have been used[173], and women should have been better integrated into structures like the NCDDR (Date-Bah, 2006: 40). Notably, the 2003 evaluation of UNAMSIL by DPKO barely mentions the needs of women and girls, except for noting them as a 'special group', and fails to make any specific recommendations on how they could be better served by the DDR process (UN DPKO, 2003a: 26-7). This reflects the fact that they tended to be an invisible group in the DDR process, and where addressed, their needs were an 'add-on' to the main task of DDR which was demobilising the male combatants.[174] Again, this resonates with the assumptions of liberal feminism.

To illustrate some of the limitations of the UN's assistance to women and girls in the DDR process, two projects will be briefly discussed. First, given the massive obstacles facing girl ex-combatants in Sierra Leone, UNICEF put in place a project that specifically targeted their needs in a number of key areas. This project, known as the Girls Left Behind Project (GLB), was launched in March 2002. According to the initial guidelines and standards drawn up for the project, it was designed to be a "one-time short-term intensive intervention" to be completed by the end of March 2004.[175] Operating in Bombali and Kono Districts, this project was implemented by two partners: Caritas Makeni in Makeni and Kamakwie, and Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI) in Koidu Town.[176] These implementing partners then

[173] For example, Douglas et al., 2004; Farr, 2002; Anderlini and Conaway, 2004; UNDDA, 2001 and 2003.
[174] A similar point has been observed in relation to the DDR processes in the Great Lakes Region (Schroeder, 2005: 6).
[175] See "Guidelines and Standards for the Girls Left Behind Project (girls that were abducted)", UNICEF Sierra Leone 2002. On the basis of requests by the implementing partners and the ongoing needs of the beneficiaries, the project was extended until the end of 2005.
[176] It is important to note that until 2004, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) was also an implementing partner for the GLB project in Koidu. Although Caritas Makeni operates in both Makeni and Kamakwie, only beneficiaries living in the Makeni area were interviewed.

linked up with grassroots organisations and training centres who also carried out activities to support the reintegration of the girls and young women.

The GLB project was designed to have a number of different impacts (social, economic, and psychosocial) and targeted both the individual and community-level (Barnes, 2005). Although it did bring specific advantages to the beneficiaries, the limited scope of the project and the massive socioeconomic challenges facing these girls meant that the types of interventions that UNICEF designed were not sustainable in the long-term (ibid). In addition, although important, these small-scale projects that targeted specific groups of women did not solve the problem of the continued marginalisation of gender issues from the mainstream DDR process, through which the majority of funding is channelled. The total budget of the GLB project was very small in comparison to the total expenditure of the DDR process which was estimated at $100 million (NCDDR, 2004: xii-xiii).

Second, the UNDP Reintegration Opportunities Programme provided skills training, toolkits and a 'reinsertion benefit' to ex-combatants to assist their reintegration, up until June 2004.[177] However, there were many flaws in this and other reintegration projects where there was no prior analysis of what types of training to provide.[178] The marketability of training is particularly important in a post-conflict economy with high unemployment rates such as Sierra Leone. There was also little support for ex-combatants returning to their communities, and those communities were also not involved in the reintegration projects.[179] Finally, the sustainability of the employment opportunities was limited, exacerbated by the fact that many beneficiaries sold their toolkits for quick cash leaving them unable to earn a sustainable

[177] For more details of this project, see http://www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=60. The main elements of the reinsertion and reintegration programme was to provide reinsertion benefits, short-term employment opportunities and skills training programmes, and referral and counselling services to enhance reintegration into the community (NCDDR, 2002: 8). 54,439 people went through the reintegration programme receiving support and skills training in different areas (Vocational training and apprenticeship: 28,901; Formal education: 12,182; Agriculture: 9,231; Job placement: 444; Others: 364). See http://www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=60.

[178] Interview with Dr Salua Nour, GTZ, 17 January 2008.

[179] Interviews with Alpha Sankoh, ActionAid, 28 April 2005 and Viktoria Jarr, Caritas Makeni, 14 March 2006.

livelihood. According to a senior UNDP official, "the choice of name, Reintegration Opportunities Programme, was inaccurate as it was not properly addressing reintegration from the perspective of community strengthening and involvement but solely focussing on the immediate needs of the ex-combatants, without contributing to the rehabilitation or creation of sustainable institutions. It was more of a time-buying concept" (Ljunggren and Molly, cited in Kaldor with Vincent, n.d.: 18).

It is now recognised that women played a largely unrecognised role in supporting reintegration at the community level, through maintaining a domestic base and discouraging ex-combatants from returning to the influence of their commanders (Molloy, 2004: 18).[180] The focus on the formal DDR process meant that these vital roles that women were fulfilling at the community level were not capitalised on, despite the potential they offered for strengthening the reintegration of combatants following the end of the conflict. The focus, as evidenced by the emphasis on young men in DDR programmes, is usually on meeting the needs of those who were involved in the fighting and who present an immediate threat to the resumption of armed violence.

However, the reality is that those who suffered need to benefit from the dividends of peace as well. According to one UN staff member, "The people whose lives were shattered by war need to be rebuilt. You can't just protect or keep paying those who fall foul of the law".[181] The final evaluation of the DDR process found that "the political imperatives [of the DDR process] were at odds with optimal program implementation, and political imperatives carried the day" (NCDDR, 2004: xii). The lack of gender-sensitivity was a further victim of the political imperatives and as a result the process was carried out in a gender-blind fashion. This links to critiques to the top-down approach of the UN resulting in a failure to address the real needs of the people, especially women. Although the UN eventually added some women

[180] The role of women in informally supporting reintegration of ex-combatants and the displaced in their communities will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7.
[181] Interview with Jebbeh Forster, UNIFEM, Freetown, 16 July 2007.

in to the DDR process, such a liberal feminist approach fails to challenge the political imperatives and the dominant discourse and practices.

It is indicative of the failure to recognise the centrality of gender issues to peacebuilding, that the NCDDR's final report on the process notes that "there are two ways of incorporating women and girls into DDR programs: by adopting a gender-neutral approach or a gender-sensitive one. NCDDR adopted a gender-neutral approach, and it is widely agreed that females did not fully benefit from this" (NCDDR, 2004: ix). In reality, it is not possible to take a gender-neutral approach, since any action will affect men and women differently given their different status, roles and access to and control over resources, even if this impact is unintentional. The failure to differentiate between these factors can result in a perpetuation of inequalities or can exacerbate the marginalisation of vulnerable groups, in this case women and girls. Clearly, adding a few women in did not change the power dynamics or structures of DDR, which, as has been shown, marginalised women and gender concerns.

The reintegration phase of the DDR process also played a particular role in re-affirming traditional stereotypes of both men and women (Schroven, 2006: 82-3). While women received minimal benefits and skills training in female-dominated trades such as gara tie-dyeing and soap-making, men were expected to assume the role of head of household and received provisions for their families on this basis. However, they faced many similar challenges in finding gainful employment, compounded by the loss of identity and place within the militarised, masculine hierarchies of the fighting forces. For example, male former ex-combatants in Bo found that the skills-training programmes were too short in duration or not targeted for viable employment opportunities, leaving them unemployed and struggling to reintegrate into their communities.[182] As a result, many turned to riding motorbike taxis to earn a living, and established a Bike Riders Association to provide support and combat negative perceptions within the community, many of whom initially felt threatened by the

[182] Focus group discussion with members of the Bo Bike Riders Association, Bo, 21 July 2007.

young men. Therefore it was also difficult for men, especially young men, to counter assumptions that they were a volatile and potentially violent group who could not be effectively reintegrated into the community.[183]

Although their roles in fighting forces during the conflict, as combatants or otherwise, may have resulted in shifts in power dynamics between men and women, it is not clear that in the post-conflict phase women have greater opportunities. According to MacKenzie, the roles of women during conflict have been depoliticised and as a result they have not been targeted as primary beneficiaries by the DDR process in Sierra Leone (2009a: 257): "the reintegration process for men has been emphasized as vital to the transition from war to peace while the reintegration process for females has been deemed a social concern and has been moralized as a return to normal" (ibid: 259). Furthermore, "eliminating women from the category of soldier and security priority also removes them from significant policy discourse" (ibid: 257). In Sierra Leone, women and girls were not seen as 'real' soldiers, and ensuring their involvement in the DDR process was not seen as a security issue or one with implications for the broader peacebuilding process.

Schroven suggests that the DDR process reveals many different 'gendered categories', such as ex-combatant, bush-wife or victim, and that women could choose which to identify themselves with (2006: 111-114). The consequence, however, was that these categories were still depoliticised by the DDR process and so did not enable them to challenge dominant approaches and attitudes towards gender issues. Where they were acknowledged, women were just seen as victims needing protection and an opportunity was missed apply a true gender analysis to the process, thereby challenging and potentially transforming essentialised roles of men and women in post-conflict Sierra Leone. "It becomes obvious that women were not totally excluded from the DDR in Sierra Leone but given certain roles and possibilities not matching the expectations of gender mainstreaming policies within the UN system"

[183] Ibid.

(Schroven, 2006: 118). This is a clear illustration of the add women and stir approach discussed in chapter 3.

The evidence therefore supports the argument that the DDR process in Sierra Leone failed to target both men and women, with serious consequences for the reintegration of women and girls into society. This is despite the fact that the need to include women and girls in these processes is explicitly mentioned in SCR 1325, and the relevant UN agencies were already beginning to issue guidelines about how to address this need.[184] According to a UN official who was closely involved in the DDR process, "One unequivocal admission by all stakeholders in the delivery of the peace is that the process failed women, not only as beneficiaries but also as participants with a huge potential to deliver an improved peace process" (Molloy, 2004: 16).

In the case of DDR, therefore, women's needs were overlooked and they did not benefit from the process. The UN only supported the formal DDR process, with the result that although women's organisations did step in to fill some of the gaps they did not receive adequate support, given that they were largely working informally. This point will be picked up on again in chapter 7, where the contributions of women's organisation will be assessed in more detail. The result was that by seeing women as victims rather than actors in the DDR process, they were only added in as an afterthought rather than being seen as central to the process of re-establishing security through DDR.

6.1.2 Security sector reform

Security sector reform was a key priority in Sierra Leone, entailing reform of the various security actors and structures to enhance transparency, effectiveness and accountability.[185] The SSR process was explicitly linked with poverty reduction and was implemented in

[184] For example, see UN DDA, 2001.
[185] For a more detailed description of the security sector, see Albrecht and Malan, 2006: 114-115.

support of pillar one of the PRSP (Albrecht and Malan, 2006: 114). UNAMSIL initially assumed responsibility for security in Sierra Leone following the conflict, but this responsibility was transferred back to the government following the departure of the peacekeeping force in December 2005.

SCR 1325 and the Lomé peace agreement do not make any specific references to SSR or its gender dimensions. However, during the 2007 open debate on SSR, the UN Security Council affirmed gender equality as one of the fundamental principles guiding SSR processes (Hänggi and Scherrer, 2007: 4). SCR 1436 on UNAMSIL was the first time the UN Security Council referred specifically to the strengthening of the security sector in the context of a peacekeeping mission, although the police and judicial reform had previously been mentioned (Hänggi and Scherrer, 2007: 11). UNAMSIL therefore did have an explicit mandate to support SSR in Sierra Leone.

Very few of the existing analyses of the SSR process in Sierra Leone incorporate a gender perspective, making it difficult to assess the impact of these reforms on gender roles and relations. Although actors in the security sector generally exclude gender issues from consideration, security has a gender dimension and security actors impact directly on gender roles and relations (Bastick and Valasek, 2008; Sjoberg, 2010; Tickner, 2001: 61-64). Elements within the army and police committed sexual violations during the conflict, and both institutions remained dominated by and biased towards men. The militarised culture within the security sector exacerbated and institutionalised sexual and gender-based violence, making it even more challenging to deal with these issues in the rank and file of the RSLAF and SLP in the peacebuilding phase. Although it is not always seen as such, violence against women is also a critical issue that needs to be addressed by SSR (Vlachová and Biason, 2003).

Women have traditionally been excluded from the security sector, and it is not clear that the

SSR process has opened the door to their participation or to the integration of gender perspectives into the work of the key structures. As part of the SSR process, the Provincial Security Committees (PROSECs) and District Security Committees (DISECs) were set up as regional forums for local stakeholders to discuss security concerns, and to provide an entry point for civil society input.[186] From the beginning women were underrepresented on the PROSECs and DISECs and it is not clear to what degree women's civil society groups have been systematically engaged (Barnes et al, 2007: 23). The PROSECs and DISECs could act as a useful channel to transmit gender-related security concerns to the government, but they appear to rarely consider gender issues.[187] There is therefore a gap in awareness among the local population about the potential benefits of the SSR process, and a significant need for training of the members of the security committees on gender issues and GBV in particular. This is a direct result of the top-down way that SSR was implemented in Sierra Leone, and has an impact on how security was conceptualised and what needs were prioritized in the post-conflict phase.

The focus on formal SSR reforms not only resulted in a failure to adequately incorporate the security needs and perceptions of people living in rural areas, but it also overlooked informal security threats and provision. For example, groups of young men, also known as the 'area boys', are emerging as vigilantes within their communities and can pose a significant security threat, but they are not being engaged in the SSR process.[188] These perceptions of exclusion and marginalisation can have serious consequences for the long-term sustainability of the peace in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, while some advances are being made in legislation and awareness about human rights as well as training of the police, the justice sector infrastructure

[186] Reports from the DISECs and PROSECs are channelled up to the Office of National Security. For more information, see Albrecht and Malan, 2006: 118-121.
[187] Interview with Rosalind Hanson-Alp, Conciliation Resources, 17 July 2007.
[188] Interview with Jeanette Eno, ENCISS, 17 July 2007.

and capacity is not necessarily keeping up with these reforms and access to justice for men and women alike and rule of law across the country were still lacking.[189]

Despite the fact that gender issues have been largely left out of the SSR process, there were two areas where some effort was made by the UN to support gender-sensitive reforms: training and the establishment of the Family Support Units (FSUs). First, some human rights issues have been integrated into the retraining of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) and the SLP.[190] UN agencies were responsible for running a number of training sessions with members of the RSLAF and SLP. For example, in May 2007, UNIOSIL along with UNIFEM, UNICEF and UNDP held a workshop on SCR 1325 to build the capacity of middle career officers in the RSLAF to respect and respond to human rights issues in the course of their work.[191] A key problem is assessing the impact of these kinds of training, and if there is no follow-up, and support in the form of technical guidance and resources then the likelihood of the officers taking the issues on board is limited. The SLP now has guidelines outlining what should be done if an allegation of physical or sexual assault or sexual exploitation of children is received, but comprehensive guidelines on the full range of gender issues is still lacking.

Second, the Family Support Units within the SLP were established in 2001, initially with a focus on domestic violence but they have now expanded out to deal with other incidences of sexual violence.[192] As of July 2006, FSUs were established in 26 locations across the country,

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[189] Presentation by Kadi Fakondo (Assistant Inspector General, SLP) at a workshop on SSR, Freetown, 16 January 2008.

[190] Reform of the RSLAF was lead by the British-led International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT), which was tasked with rebuilding the RSLAF into an effective, professional and democratically accountable force. The SLP reforms were lead by DFID through the Commonwealth Community Safety and Security Project.

[191] "UNCT holds sensitization workshop on gender, democracy and human rights for middle career officers of the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF)", Reliefweb, 28 May 2007. http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/LSGZ-73PGLF?OpenDocument&query=gender women&cc=sle&rc=1 [Accessed 28/9/08]

[192] The FSUs were established largely on the initiative of Kadi Fakondo, Assistant Inspector-General of the SLP, who was working in Kissy at the time and identified domestic violence as a problem that the police had little capacity to address.

including eight in the Freetown area. The FSUs have a memorandum of understanding with the MSWGCA and also work in partnership with INGOs and local NGOs for health, medical and psychosocial support services. UNAMSIL has been involved in the provision of some gender training to FSU staff (UNSG, 2003b: 12).

Another key element of the FSU's work was community outreach to inform the population about the consequences of GBV and to raise awareness about the role and responsibility of FSUs, as well as the need to press charges against perpetrators. Trained social workers provided by the MSWGCA were supposed to be stationed in every FSU to ensure that women and children were not re-victimized in the interviewing process. However, due to lack of capacity in the MSWGCA, as of 2007, social workers were only attached to about 30% of the FSUs, although this rose to 75% in Freetown.[193] The SLP received training alongside MSWGCA officials, and in 2007 SLP officials went to Liberia to train police there in the criminal investigation of sexual violence cases. Despite some improvements, insensitivity and lack of response to GBV has remained a problem (Refugees International, 2004). There is also a need to ensure that all SLP officers, not just those affiliated with FSUs, are able to identify and address all incidents of sexual violence appropriately.

Whilst an important step, there are still many limitations to the FSUs. For example, although the FSUs aim to maintain confidentiality, the limited office space in many police stations, particularly upcountry, means that interviews often take place in full view of the public. This puts the victim at risk of stigmatisation and may deter some individuals from reporting GBV-related incidents. Furthermore, the FSUs are over-stretched, lacking even basic office supplies, and they are not able to cover all rural areas where many of the crimes are committed (Barnes et al, 2008: 24). FSU officers are also involved in family mediation which can be positive, but can also encourage families to settle their differences informally, which may not be in the interest of the victim. Though this may inadvertently reinforce social

[193] Interview with Jeneba Koroma, MSWGCA, 13 June 2006.

pressure and stigma, it may reflect the fact that there are no alternative options for victims to seek protection, shelter and sustenance outside the home and illustrates that while they are a positive initiative, the FSUs are under-resourced.

To compensate for some of these obstacles, community-based organisations in Bo and Kenema have procedures for accompanying the survivors to the FSUs to report the crimes if they come to their drop-in centres for assistance. The staff of these organisations have built up relationships with the FSU officials which enables them to access the proper assistance more quickly and effectively, and also reduces the likelihood of requests for payment or bribes passing hands. Although the reform and training of the SLP as part of the FSUs workplan is important, it is only a minority of the population who actually feel the presence of the SLP in rural areas.

According to the SLP's annual crime report for 2005, sexual offences count for only 2.8% (SLP, 2006: 12). Given the widespread sexual violence that has been documented, these figures seem to indicate a relatively low level of reporting or follow-through by the police since a higher figure would have been expected. Furthermore, there is no mention of the need to tackle sexual violence in the SLP's Draft Medium-term Strategic Plan for 2006-2008, indicating yet again the deprioritisation of these issues (SLP, 2005). The SLP does have an accelerated training programme and a formal quota system with the aim of increasing the number of women to 30%, but obstacles such as a lack of confidence in the SLP, corruption and favouritism continue to prevent women from joining the new community-based policing force. As of the end of 2007, only 1,550 out of 9,200 police personnel (less than 17%) were female (UNSG, 2007b: 4).

DFID has led reform of the SLP, and evaluations of their two programmes in support of police reform demonstrate the consistent lack of gender sensitivity of their efforts.[194] It has therefore been important that UNIFEM and the UNAMSIL gender advisor have also worked with the SLP to ensure that officers have access to some gender training. INGOs such as the International Rescue Committee (IRC) that set up three sexual assault and referral clinics in Sierra Leone have also played an important role in facilitating interface between the SLP's FSUs and victims of sexual violence, whilst also supporting the work of community-based organisations.

The case of Sierra Leone illustrates the fact that during the peacebuilding process it is generally the external actors – principally the UN – who determine the point at which the security of a population has been achieved. Rarely do these actors consult with the local populations to attain a better understanding of how they define their own (in)security, with the result that externally imposed notions become the standard points of reference. Here again, it is possible to see the impact of the liberal peacebuilding approach. The SSR process in Sierra Leone, despite the emphasis on human security in the peacebuilding rhetoric, has tended to focus on issues of national security, strengthening the core formal structures of security provision, and has failed to fully integrate men and women's perceptions of security. Hänggi and Scherrer find that "the extent to which gender issues are mainstreamed into SSR activities on the ground still largely depends on the level of cooperation between the gender section and the various entities of the mission involved in such activities [...] cross-cutting activities such as gender mainstreaming are still rarely part of, or at least linked to, integrated missions SSR programmes" (2007: 11).

[194] DFID was one of the leading agencies in supporting the SSR process, and despite trying to address security in a holistic way they have also acknowledged that their security work in Sierra Leone also failed to integrate a gender perspective. Having identified this as a gap, in mid-2007 they were planning to engage a gender expert to identify potential openings for future work. This information was obtained during a personal interview with Rebecca Stringer, DFID, Freetown, 17 July 2006.

The analysis above has shown that the SSR process focused on the formal security institutions and actors. The result was that it did not necessarily address the security needs of the broader population, particularly in rural areas where men and women had little access to these formal structures. The efforts of the UN to add some women in did not succeed in changing which security needs were addressed or prioritised, nor did these efforts recognise the fact that the security structures themselves continued to be an ongoing source of insecurity for many women.

6.1.3 Justice sector reforms

As noted in Chapter 4, the coexistence of formal, customary and Islamic law makes for a complex legal environment, with the majority of the population resorting to customary structures for justice-related issues. Justice sector reform has been a key priority of the peacebuilding process, given the role that the lack of accountability and access to justice played in the conflict. The Lomé Peace Agreement stipulated the creation of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and a Human Rights Commission (HRC). These mechanisms were designed to deal with the massive human rights abuses that had occurred during the conflict, and the serious violations that were still occurring in some parts of the country.

UNAMSIL was mandated to support law enforcement in the country, and several UN agencies took on justice sector reform as a priority. Although gender-specific justice issues were not mentioned in either the Lomé peace accords or UNAMSIL's mandates, SCR 1325 calls on all parties to adopt gender-sensitive measures that "ensure the protection of and respect for human rights of women and girls, particularly as they relate to the constitution, the electoral system, the police and the judiciary" (UN, 2000d: article 8c). There were two areas where specific efforts were made to advance the rights of women and to ensure that a gender perspective informed the transitional justice process in the country. These were in the work of

the TRC and the reform of discriminatory legislation, and each will be discussed in further detail in this section.

The TRC Act instructed that special attention should be given to the issue of sexual violence (GoSL, 2000a: 6.2.b). Women were also encouraged to participate and testify before both the TRC and the Special Court of Sierra Leone.[195] Similarly, efforts were made to sensitise women about the truth and reconciliation process and to train women to act as testimonial-takers. Victims of GBV were given the opportunity to testify in private, although some women did prefer to speak openly about the abuses that they had suffered. In addition to the testimonies, individuals and organisations were also invited to make submissions to the thematic hearings on women and children. These documents constitute a vital source of information about the impact of conflict on women, particularly with respect to GBV.[196]

However, although the TRC was mandated to specifically investigate crimes against women, the Commission's staff had little knowledge or experience in these issues (Ben-Ari and Harsch, 2005: 2). According to UNIFEM's regional programme director for Anglophone West Africa, "One commissioner said he went to a community where he was leading a team of recorders that were collective testimonies. The women did not come out, only the men came. When they were asked why, the men said 'we can speak for the women'" (Florence Butegwa, quoted in Ben-Ari and Harsch, 2005: 3). This illustrates the importance of understanding gendered power dynamics, and the impact that they can have on the implementation of peacebuilding activities. Simply removing the obstacles for women's participation is often not enough to transform discriminatory attitudes and practices.

[195] The Special Court of Sierra Leone, established jointly but the UN and the GoSL, is mandated with trying those deemed to bear the greatest responsibility for the war-related violence that occurred in Sierra Leone from 30 November 1996. For more information, see http://www.sc-sl.org.
[196] See TRC Report (2005), Appendix 2. http://www.trcsierraleone.org/pdf/APPENDICES/Appendix%202%20-%20Submissions.pdf.

UNIFEM and UNAMSIL's gender advisor actively supported the TRC and were involved in the Women's Task Force that was set up in 2001 to support the Commission in upholding its responsibility to pay special attention to the issue of sexual violence. For example, in April 2003, UNIFEM and Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights carried out the first workshop on gender-based human rights violations for the TRC Commissioners. This workshop covered issues such as the impact of the conflict on women, the need for gender-sensitivity in taking the testimonies of women and girls, and the skills necessary to deal with victims, witnesses and perpetrators of gender-based crimes.[197]

On the one hand, UNIFEM's work to ensure that women were able to testify and that gender-related crimes were considered by the TRC had a positive impact and enabled women to break their silence about GBV and allowed their voices to be reflected in the findings of the Commission (Ben-Ari and Hirsch, 2005: 1). On the other hand and despite these efforts, there was still considerable reluctance to testify and fears of retribution amongst much of the population, including girls and women (Denov, 2006: 335).

The TRC report was submitted to the President on 5 October 2004, with it being finalised and distributed in both print and electronic form in the latter half of 2005. The TRC report provides an excellent, in-depth overview of the status of women.[198] However, the problem was in the implementation of the recommendations that the Kabbah (and subsequently Koroma) government, despite successive commitments to do so, had yet to take any action on by the end of 2007.[199]

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[197] "UNIFEM and Urgent Action Fund support peace-building process in Sierra Leone" *Reliefweb*, 17 April 2003. http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/OCHA-64CUB8?OpenDocument&query=gender women&cc=sle&rc=1 {Accessed 24/9/08]

[198] The specific recommendations on women are organised into the following categories: Women Affected by the Armed Conflict, Domestic Violence, Sexual Violence, Sexual Offences under Customary Law, Police, Prosecutors and Judicial Officers, Discrimination against Women, Minimum Age of Marriage of Girls, Skills Training and Economic Empowerment, War Widows, Education, Access to Justice, HIV/ AIDS, Gender Commission, Political Participation and Access to Power, Developing Leadership, Achieving Equality, and The Most Vulnerable.

[199] Although no efforts were made to implement the TRC recommendations within the time period of this research, in mid-2008 a grant from the Peacebuilding Fund to support the implementation of a

The second area of justice reform where specific attention was paid to gender issues was the reform of discriminatory legislation. Following the end of the war, the government set up a Law Reform Commission (LRC) of seven Commissioners.[200] The LRC was designed to evaluate the laws of Sierra Leone and bring them up to date to reflect the current situation in the country, as well as enhance links between the central justice system and customary law. In July 2003, UNIFEM and UNICEF supported the MSWGCA, the IRC and the LRC to hold a three-day workshop entitled "Building a Women's Law Reform Agenda" (MSWGCA/IRC/LRC, 2003). Given the existence of discriminatory legislation, women's activists and other representatives of civil society had for some time been calling for reform, and the workshop was convened with the intention of developing a plan of action to initiate such a process. As a result six key areas for action were identified including education and training, violence against women, and succession and inheritance (MSWGCA/IRC/LRC, 2003).

Reforming the legislative structures in Sierra Leone is absolutely critical in terms of supporting gender equality, since laws that uphold the rights of women will give them the tools they need to protect themselves. This kind of legal reform process sits well within the liberal feminist approach that prioritises formal equality in the law. However, the process cannot stop here since the formal law in Sierra Leone only has limited reach and accessibility. Limited awareness of laws and legal processes is exacerbated by low literacy rates, and therefore the wide dissemination of the reformed laws amongst the local population as well as judges, magistrates and lawyers is a necessary step.[201]

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reparations programme as part of the TRC recommendations was agreed. This one-year, $3 million grant, goes some way towards kick-starting the implementation of the recommendations, but despite commitments to the contrary the government of Ernest Bai Koroma has been slow to begin the process.

[200] During the case study period, only one of the LRC Commissioners was a woman.

[201] Interview with Amie Tejan-Kella, IRC, Freetown, 5 July 2006.

The challenge of regulating uncodified customary law practices and changing attitudes towards GBV specifically and discrimination against women in general also remains critical: "The fact that the state in Sierra Leone has traditionally relegated those issues of most importance to women to the 'private' sphere and the control of customary authorities has had profound implications for women's rights and participation in governance" (Castillejo, 2008: 3). This approach echoes the emphasis of liberal feminist approaches on removing barriers such as discriminatory legislation. However, by focusing on law reform the UN agencies did not devote adequate attention to questions of capacity for implementation and the obstacles presented by cultural and gendered power dynamics on any new rights that women were afforded under the law.

The Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights (PCHR) and several civil society organisations, including Lawyers Commission for Legal Assistance (LAWCLA), Lawyers Yearning for Equality, Rights and Social Justice (LAWYERS) and Marwopnet have been leading the efforts to advocate for reform of laws that are particularly discriminatory towards women, including those on customary marriages, property inheritance and sexual offences. While the LRC indicated support for reforming laws that discriminate against women, their actual commitment and political will for moving this agenda forward was limited. The international community and women's groups played a critical role in pressuring the parliamentarians and advocating for the law reform process to move forward. Although the process of drafting these bills constitutes a significant achievement, it was hampered by a lack of coordination. Both the PCHR and civil society groups drafted versions of the same bills under parallel initiatives, which then needed to be harmonised. The three new gender bills were finally passed by Parliament just before it disbanded for the elections in June 2007, following sustained advocacy and lobbying by women's organisations.[202]

[202] The 'Gender Bills' refers collectively to three key pieces of legislation: the Domestic Violence Act, the Devolution of Estates Act, and the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act.

Another important step forward was the drafting of the first-ever country report to be submitted in line with the requirements of CEDAW in May 2007. The process of drafting the CEDAW reports resulted in a number of key activities related to the establishment of new structures, the collection of data, and training related to combating discrimination against women.[203] For example, two workshops were convened by the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in 2005 to educate and support the line ministries in implementing the Convention, which raised awareness about CEDAW and GBV within the government.[204] The government has also received $49,500 from UNIFEM and $50,000 from UNDP in contributions towards completing the report. UNDP supported the legislative debate and processes leading to the adoption of the gender bills, as well as financing the production of the CEDAW shadow report through the Sierra Leone Association of NGOs (SLANGO).[205]

As already alluded to, there is a contradiction in the emphasis that donor-supported justice sector reform places on the formal sector and the reality that most people in conflict-affected regions rely on informal justice mechanisms. It is estimated that as much as 80% of the population relies on customary justice mechanisms (PBC compact: 5). In Sierra Leone, "local justice and governance in [rural and peri-urban] areas are delivered less by formal, modern state structures – the most 'local' of which are the local courts and local councils – than by a complex network of institutions ranging in formality and sources of authority" (Manning, 2009: 127). This has problematic implications for the liberal peacebuilding consensus that relies heavily on channelling peacebuilding activities through the formal sector.

Even where more modern structures have been established, such as the local councils, they can still reflect traditional power structures and norms, which are often discriminatory towards women (Manning, 2009: 127). According to a UN official, only $20,000 was

[203] See CEDAW (2006) p. 20-22.
[204] See DAW (2005) *Implementation of CEDAW: Report of a Training Workshop*, 4-8 April 2005, Freetown, Sierra Leone.
[205] Interview with Jamesina King, Human Rights Commission, Freetown, 19 July 2007.

allocated to local courts out of the $4 million justice sector reform project being financed by the PBF.[206] This had particular implications for women, since domestic violence, property rights and other issues specifically affecting women were often relegated to customary law and informal justice mechanisms, despite the existence of the new legislation. Regardless of reforms that have been put in place to increase women's rights, their access to justice in rural areas is still extremely limited with serious implications for their physical and human security.

There is a key challenge in linking up progress made in areas such as the new gender bills with the reality outside of Freetown. While these statutory changes have taken place, enforcement is another issue altogether and local courts or customary courts often make rulings on issues relating to domestic violence that are supposed to be outside of their jurisdiction (Castillejo, 2008: 11). Indeed, few structures are in place to support realisation of the new laws, and grassroots women are not always aware of the new legislation or how to pursue their rights in the formal courts of law.[207] The local courts need support to develop the capacity to deliver justice as outlined in the gender bills, but few resources are available for this purpose within the UN-driven peacebuilding process. Women themselves also need to understand the laws to benefit from them. This is where the UN should be ensuring that it is working with organisations and women's networks operating at the community level, often informally, since they provide access to marginalised groups and can bring insight to the kinds of reforms that would be needed to improve access to justice for gender-related crimes. However this kind of engagement with the informal level does not sit easily within the liberal peacebuilding approach, a point that will be returned to in the conclusion of the thesis.

This section has discussed the process of justice sector reforms in Sierra Leone. The emphasis in the language around these reforms has tended to focus on the protection and vicitimisation

[206] Interview with Jebbeh Forster, UNIFEM, Freetown, 16 July 2007.
[207] Interview with Barbara Bangura, Freetown, 16 July 2007.

of women, as opposed to access to justice or questions of reconciliation. Furthermore, the focus has been on formal legal reforms at the expense of a more holistic gender justice. However, as this section has shown, this is not always culturally appropriate since in Sierra Leone, more often than not it was the informal justice system that mattered most to women (Sriram, 2009: 119-122).

6.1.4 Security reform, gender mainstreaming and the liberal peacebuilding consensus

When looking at the issues from a gender perspective, it is problematic that peacebuilding in Sierra Leone has been widely lauded as a success story. This section has shown that persistent gender-based insecurities remained, women and girls were left out of the DDR and SSR processes, and access to justice continued to be limited and fraught with obstacles. While the JSSR reforms were theoretically underpinned by principles of human security, gender was still one of the biases that undermined these principles. This was characteristic of the problem where women and gender issues remain in the domestic private sphere, and the public sphere remains dominated by the 'real' security threats. "The overarching fact is that in failing to formalise the gender perspective in peace negotiations as well as in the implementation, the process has failed to capitalise on the significant strengths of women, initially as a deterrent to the spoilers and to ensure that benefits contribute to the strengthening of community security, the base of the security triangle" (Molloy, 2004: 19).

Security, peace and justice are gender-blind concepts within the liberal peacebuilding consensus. While women were not perceived to be part of the process of establishing security in Sierra Leone and were depoliticised into the private sphere, in fact they played important, if invisible, roles in contributing to security. A more gender-sensitive understanding of the process of re-establishing security that acknowledged some of these roles could have perhaps led to a more sustainable result. It was however difficult for women to negotiate a place in the security reform, because as a gendered process, the discourse and implementation of policies relegate them to the sidelines.

Furthermore, the efforts at mainstreaming gender into JSSR amounted to little more than enabling a small number of women to go through DDR, training the police and military in human rights issues and recruiting more women into these forces, and efforts to reform discriminatory formal legislation. These were all activities that fall comfortably within a liberal feminist approach and do not necessitate any real challenging of gendered security discourses and practices. They also complemented the broader liberal peacebuilding activities being led by the UN, and as a result gender was only integrated into JSSR in a minimal way.

6.2 Governance reform[208]

This section of the chapter will explore how gender issues were integrated into the broad area of post-conflict governance reform. Recognising the importance of integrating gender issues into governance reforms, UNDP prepared a document outlining quick entry points to enable field staff to "understand and respond to social norms, culture, beliefs and other factors that are normally removed from technical discussions" (UNDP, 2007a: 6). It highlights how to ensure inclusive participation and gender equity in processes such as elections and how to strengthen responsive government institutions through decentralisation and reforms in public administration. In the case of Sierra Leone, it is clear that while certain efforts were made by UN actors to engage women and integrate gender-sensitivity into these processes, the small-scale and limited resources allocated to these efforts meant that these principles were not fully integrated or respected. Efforts were ad-hoc, and a strategic vision placing gender equality at the heart of governance reform was absent.

For example, UNDP launched a governance project in June 2002 that was designed to support the governance-related priorities within the I-PRSP and the NRS (UNDP Sierra Leone, 2002b). However, again, gender issues were not effectively integrated throughout, and

[208] For a good overview of governance reform as it relates to gender issues, see Goetz, 2009a.

women were marginalised from formal spheres. The failure of the international community and the GoSL to engage women in governance issues is linked to the failure to ensure women's representation and the integration of gender issues in the relevant clauses of the Lomé Peace Accords. The peace negotiations are one of the first, and key, opportunities to address gender issues, and if missed out at this early stage then it can be difficult to reintroduce them at a later stage in the peacebuilding process.

The closest mention made in SCR 1325 relating to governance is in reference to the need to increase women's representation in decision-making at all levels, clearly reflecting the liberal feminist underpinnings of the resolution that were already discussed in chapter 3. Given that SCR 1325 forms the basis for much of the UN's efforts to integrate gender into peacebuilding, the fact that this reductionist approach to gender and governance is then replicated in the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone is no surprise.

This section will examine how women's participation and gender issues were incorporated into the national elections in 2002 and 2007 and the local elections held in 2004, and in the decentralisation process launched in 2004. It will demonstrate how governance reforms as envisaged by the liberal peacebuilding consensus in fact have very different impacts on men and women. Despite elections or decentralisation presenting an opportunity to adapt structures to make them more accountable and responsive to women's political preferences and needs, the reality is that women remain marginalised in both these processes, and the pronounced benefits of these reforms do not reach all members of the population equally. This failure to recognise and address the gendered impacts of governance reform has negative consequences on the peacebuilding process. As argued by Goetz, "if governance reforms are undertaken without an understanding of the governance deficits that undermine women's rights and capacity to participate in public decisions, it is possible that they will reproduce gender biases and patterns of exclusion in the management of public affairs" (2009b: 244).

6.2.1 Local and national elections

Although women's right to hold public office and participate in political life is enshrined in the 1991 Constitution, they have been largely absent from the political scene in Sierra Leone. Prior to and during the conflict, only a few women succeeded in taking on senior roles within the government or were Paramount Chiefs.[209] As outlined in chapter 4, the only peace process in which women were able to participate was the Lomé negotiations held in 1999.

Free and fair multi-party elections that returned President Kabbah to power were held in Sierra Leone in May 2002. Women's political participation, although an important area of gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding, is difficult when few female candidates present themselves for election. In Sierra Leone, the lack of capacity for women to effectively participate in the formal political sphere, both as candidates and as an informed electorate, was a major obstacle. Along with this lack of capacity was also the issue that women's domestic responsibilities and the traditional patriarchal social relations prevented them from having the self-confidence to play an active role in the country's politics.[210]

The UN supported a number of capacity-building workshops, tried to raise awareness about the elections, and encouraged the government to provide gender-friendly polling stations that would enable women to exercise their right to vote. Prior to the national elections, UNFPA supported the Network of Women Parliamentarians (NEWMAP) to carry out education and awareness-raising. The National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the British Council supported a national NGO, the Fifty-Fifty (50/50) Group[211], to conduct training workshops

[209] Paramount chiefs are considered the highest authority in each of the 149 chiefdoms throughout the country. The Chieftancy Act of 2009 states that women are permitted to run for Paramount Chief in all chiefdoms in Sierra Leone. However, to date, very few women have been successful and they have been in the predominantly Mende south of the country, while the Temne in the north did not allow women to assume these positions.

[210] Interview with Christiana Solomon, Freetown, April 29th 2005.

[211] The 50/50 Group is one of the leading Sierra Leonean organisations supporting women to engage more effectively in politics and decision-making at all levels, and it has received support from a range of international donors. Among other activities, the 50/50 Group provides training to women candidates in skills such as lobbying, advocacy and political campaigning; mentors and supports women candidates and politicians through workshops and roundtable discussions; publishes training

with potential women candidates. During the elections, forty-six women ran for parliamentary seats and seven of the eight political parties fielded women candidates. Eighteen women were successful and subsequently became members of parliament (14.5%), including three Cabinet Ministers and three Deputy Ministers. There was also one presidential candidate. This compared favourably with the previous elections in 1996 when only 5 women became members of parliament (6%) including two Cabinet Ministers and two Deputy Ministers.

Whilst this number is still low, the progress from the 1996 to the 2002 elections demonstrates the positive impact that training, awareness-raising and capacity-building have had on women's overall political participation. According to Christiana Thorpe, "the rebel war years were catalytic to development in the social advancement of women in post war Sierra Leone", and this also translated into some gains in political representation (2006: 4-5). This marked increase in women's representation provides some support to the argument that the post-conflict period can create space for more women being able to move into the public sphere (Pankhurst, 2004). Nevertheless, it not clear that this will lead to a transformation in the structures themselves.

Indeed, despite the efforts that were made, some observers have suggested that the same elite individuals were in fact restored to positions of power following the 2002 elections, and that little success was achieved in making political participation more broad-based (Hanlon, 2005). Furthermore, the resources that were devoted to democracy assistance in the country have been relatively limited (Sesay and Hughes, 2005). While UNIFEM and the gender advisor of UNAMSIL supported women's organisations to raise awareness among women voters and train women candidates, this support was limited and Freetown-focused due to the capacity constraints of these offices discussed in chapter 5. The urban/rural divide was also

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manuals, leaflets and other materials to support women entering general and local elections; sensitises voters around women's representation in politics; and lobbyies political decision-makers about the need to support and select women candidates (Thomas, 2005: 3-4).

exacerbated by the top-down approach and focus on the formal sector reinforced by liberal peacebuilding.

As part of the decentralisation process, the first local government elections in 32 years were held throughout the country on 22nd May 2004.[212] As a result of these elections, nineteen local councils were established within Sierra Leone's four administrative regions.[213] The government included provisions in the Local Government Act to have at least 50% female representation in the District and Ward Development Committees (GoSL 2004a: 95(2)c). The Ward Committees are intended to facilitate local participation and the articulation and representation of community interests within the local government system. The Local Councils are the highest political and administrative authorities and as such, this is where more equitable representation of men and women would be particularly important, although the responsibilities of these councils will only be increased gradually as their capacity is built.

According to an independent team of experts, "approximately 10% of all candidates standing for election across the country were women, and in general women seemed satisfied with their status as voters", although the report also mentions that this falls short of the 30% target that is generally recognised as being gender equal (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2004: 15-17).[214] Following the Local Government elections, 10% of elected Councillors, 5% of Local Council chairpersons, and 7.4% of Paramount Chiefs were women. In all, this meant that women occupied 12.7% of all council seats (Zhou and Zhang, 2009: 86). However, despite the new legislation and election of some women to the local councils, they were still marginalised in decision-making (Human Development Report, 2007: 55).

[212] As UNAMSIL was originally to drawdown at the end of 2004, these local elections were organised rapidly following the signing of the Local Government Act to benefit from the presence of the peacekeeping troops (Zhou and Zhang, 2009: 86).
[213] Each of the thirteen districts and six major towns in Sierra Leone has an elected local council. Each district is further divided into wards, and each ward has a seat on the council.
[214] Of the 1,115 candidates approved to run in the elections, 107 were women.

Despite the 50% quota in the Local Government Act and even where the gender quotas were realised, this did not necessarily carry over into a gender equal impact in decision-making. In many cases, women were still beholden to their husbands or male family members and often did not have the ability or the desire to speak out independently. Whilst SCR 1325 and liberal feminist approaches emphasise the importance of women's participation, what is in fact important is the effective participation of women. This is a more difficult change to bring about as it requires changing attitudes and structures as well as practices. In the rural areas outside of Freetown, women are particularly disadvantaged. In some parts of the country, particularly the North, they have even fewer rights that in the capital, and with a literacy rate of around 20%, even less awareness of gender issues.

This quota was intended to help women attain some level of decision-making authority within their communities. According to a female leader of a Ward Development Council in Kono district, elections had to be held three times before the quota of female candidates was reached.[215] It is clear that continued support and training is necessary to ensure that their participation is effective. In the end, according to data provided by the NEC from 2006, only 48 out of a total 474 elected local councillors were women. Some of the barriers to women's participation in public life that could explain the low level of women include a lack of education or financial and political resources, heavy domestic workloads, a lack of mobility and negative cultural attitudes (Castillejo, 2008: 6; Oxfam, 2008: 7). Too often, women candidates were also put forward by political parties as a token gesture in districts where they were unlikely to win, and anyway lacked the capacity to campaign and win votes.[216]

In 2007, Sierra Leone began preparations for the second national elections following the end

[215] Personal interview, Koidu Town, March 30th 2005.
[216] Interview with UNIFEM, 16 July 2007. It is worth mentioning that in the 2008 local elections, although outside the timeframe of this thesis, resulted in a higher level of women's participation. Women won 18.9% of their seats in these elections, an increase of more than 6% compared to the 2004 results (Zhou and Zhang, 2009: 105). This indicates that while slow and fraught with obstacles, there is a trend towards a greater acceptance of women playing a role in formal politics in communities throughout Sierra Leone.

of the conflict. The presidential and parliamentary elections took place on 11 August, followed by a presidential run-off on 8 September 2007. These elections were widely lauded as a success, and were seen to restore confidence in the legitimacy of the democratic process in Sierra Leone (Crisis Group, 2008: i). Notably, the National Election Commission, the body in charge of the electoral process, was headed by a woman, Christiana Thorpe. Thorpe has a long legacy of activism on women's rights in Sierra Leone and so there was much anticipation that her position would facilitate the inclusion of women and gender issues in the 2007 elections. However, the number of women in parliament decreased following these elections, falling to 16 seats from 18 seats in the previous government, and none of the parties fielded a female candidate for president. UNDP and UNIOSIL provided technical and financial support for the elections, and several women's groups such as the 50/50 Group provided specific training and capacity-building for women candidates.

However, in addition to the limited number of women active in local and national politics, there is also the challenge of getting both male and female politicians to take on gender-sensitive issues. There was some effort to engage with the Women's Wings of the main political parties in Sierra Leone to encourage them to adopt gender-sensitive political agendas, but the impact was minimal. According to Gladys Gbappy-Brima, "women's wings are like chicken wings; they are the parts that nobody wants". As a result they have not always been an effective vehicle for promoting gender-sensitive politics. Indeed, female politicians have been more likely to adopt the agenda of their political party rather than an explicitly feminist agenda.[217]

This section has shown that while the UN supported efforts to provide training and awareness-raising enabling some women to seek public office, it is not clear how sustainable or transformative this adding in of women will be. The case of Sierra Leone would seem to affirm the argument that liberal feminist approaches are not well suited to challenge decision-

[217] Interview with Christina Solomon, Freetown, 29 April 2005.

making structures that have a history of excluding and being discriminatory towards women. Reflecting this, according to the 2007 Sierra Leone Human Development Report, women's participation in good governance, poverty reduction and development is "not yet adequate" (2007: 74).

6.2.2 Decentralisation

Prior to the war in Sierra Leone, the patrimonial ruling style of successive governments caused politics to become increasingly centralised geographically in Freetown and amongst the elite of the country. This led to the alienation and marginalisation of vast numbers of the population, and the failure of public service delivery at the local level. Networks of chieftancies had always been part of the traditional Sierra Leonean authority structure, but these were gradually destroyed during the conflict as chiefs fled their communities or were attacked by the rebel fighters. The decentralisation of government has been a focus of UNDP and World Bank assistance for governance reform in Sierra Leone.[218] Donors placed extensive support behind the decentralisation process due to the fact that the exclusion and entrenched poverty of the rural population was acknowledged as one of the main roots of the conflict.

One prerequisite for effective decentralisation is capacity and resources at the local level to implement governance reforms. In the case of Sierra Leone, social development was so low and the war-related destruction and corruption so prevalent that this capacity did not exist at the time when reforms were being initiated (Zhou, 2009b: xviii). This meant that even after the fighting ended, essential public services were still not reaching masses of the population, and men and women had to do without adequate health and education services, revenue collection was ineffective, and there were challenges with reinstating the chieftancy system in a more democratic and accountable way (Olonisakin, 2008).

[218] For an extensive review of the decentralisation process in Sierra Leone, see Zhou 2009a.

The legislation on decentralisation and local government in Sierra Leone was adopted in 2004, and the National Decentralisation Programme was planned to last for four years from June 2004-June 2008. Through funding from the World Bank, the Institutional Reform and Capacity Building Project (IRCBP) set up a Decentralisation Secretariat to coordinate and monitor the process from within the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development (MLGCD). The IRCBP had a budget of $25 million over four years from its establishment in May 2004, funded by the World Bank.[219] The Decentralisation programme in Sierra Leone involved reforms in four key areas: political, administrative, fiscal, and functional reforms linked to service delivery (UNCT, 2004a: 2).

The effective working of local government structures is dependent on efficient functioning at the national level, both in terms of resources being channelled down to the community level as well as the necessary large-scale infrastructure being in place for service delivery (Human Development Report, 2007: 49). One of the major concerns around the decentralisation process in Sierra Leone is how the traditional system of paramount chieftancies (traditional authorities) relates to the local government bodies (elected councils), and in particular around issues such as taxation and collection of revenues.

There are also questions around where authority and accountability lie in relation to access to justice, which for most Sierra Leoneans is still sought through customary mechanisms. The way in which most people come into contact with local government is through the provision of services, so involving them in the design and implementation of these services can be an effective way of increasing participation and accountability levels, both of which are low in Sierra Leone. Gender roles and relations play an important role in mediating access to services, as well as the extent to which women are able to engage in the structures of local governance. Despite this, little gender analysis was carried out in the context of

[219] This grant was supplemented by a further $25 million from DFID and the EC to be administered through an IDA-managed trust fund (Zhou, 2009b: xxi).

decentralisation and women were not engaged in priority setting around service delivery. Again the reinforcing of the rural/urban divide by the liberal peacebuilding approach was also problematic in the context of decentralisation.

UNDP supported decentralisation through activities such as the restoration of paramount chiefs, provision of assistance to the NEC for local elections, supported local government and decentralisation of the line ministries out into the districts, provision of $2 million of core funding through its Interim Governance Project (Human Development Report: 73). The UN Country Team established UN District Teams that were intended to support capacity-building of the local councils, funded out of a $4.5 million Transition Initiative Fund (Human Development Report: 80-81). Local participation in the decentralisation reforms was not realised, largely due to the top-down approach taken where the UN agencies, donors and government line ministry representatives dictated the design and implementation of the transitional projects. This in turn is indicative of the top-down and externally-led liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminist approaches.

A significant part of the decentralisation process was focused on building the capacity of local council structures and elected representatives, largely funded and supported by UNDP and the World Bank. Civic education was also a component of this process, but the planning and activity matrices do not indicate that special measures were taken to sensitise and educate women in relation to the services that were available or the roles that they could play in the process of local governance (UNCT, 2004a). It appears that there was a belief, similar to that articulated by the NCDDR in relation to DDR referred to in the previous section, that decentralisation could be carried out in a gender-sensitive way. However, the assumption that all community members would be involved and be able to engage was misplaced, and the reality was that gender as well as age and status in the community defined which voices were part of the decentralisation process. Again, liberal feminist approaches may not be well-placed to target these kinds of barriers.

The UNCT led by the Resident Representative and the network of TSTs were designed to link the activities of the UNCT with UNAMSIL to ensure a smooth drawdown process, as well as contribute to the implementation of the NRS.[220] The TSTs focused on work at the district level, to encourage the different agencies operating throughout the country to set priorities in line with the needs of the different communities and not to duplicate activities. However, certain parts of the country (particularly in the east where up to 90% of houses were destroyed during the conflict) had much greater needs than others, and decisions had to be made about how to balance the needs of different regions, as well as build the capacity of local actors to actually implement and administer the projects. There was a sentiment amongst some district-level TST staff that despite the claims that priorities should be set at the community-level, in actual fact the staff in Freetown made the decisions without even visiting the areas that are being affected.[221] Thus despite the attempt to counter the urban focus of liberal peacebuilding, in reality the process continued to be driven top-down, rather than engaging the priorities and needs of rural populations.

Often women are so occupied with earning a livelihood and taking care of domestic responsibilities that they have little time to participate in decision-making processes and their input is only ensured if particular effort is made to consult them. This is a time and resource-intensive process to which donors and implementing agencies are unlikely to be willing to commit, given the demands of funding cycles and the tendency towards quick-impact projects. Some efforts were made to integrate gender issues into the work of the TST, but according to the director, "personally I think that mainstreaming means just drop it".[222] This reflects the attitude dominant amongst many of the UN staff interviewed that a token gesture

[220] Interview with Bauke van Weringh, Head of TST, Freetown, May 4th 2005. According to van Weringh, until November the relations between UNCT and UNAMSIL were ad hoc and minimal.
[221] Interview with G. Jojo, UNDP TST, Kenema, 29 March 2005.
[222] Interview with Bauke van Weringh, Head of TST, Freetown, May 4th 2005

of including a few women or a few sentences on gender as a 'cross-cutting theme' would be enough to fulfil the gender mainstreaming requirements articulated in the policy documents.

Local government is typically involved in providing services like health, education and water and sanitation to communities. Women therefore often have specific interests in the adequate and efficient functioning of local government as the key caregivers within the household. There could be an opening to bridge the informal and formal at the local government level, by drawing in women's collectives and organisations that operate within the community but may not traditionally have many links with formal governance or administrative structures.

Involving women in local government can help to provide them with the skills and knowledge that would enable them to be politically involved at district or national level, as well as empowering them in community decision-making structures. Educational barriers are less of an issue at the local council level, as meetings are held in indigenous languages. This could also present an opportunity for the UN to push beyond its traditional liberal approaches to peacebuilding and gender mainstreaming. However, the discriminatory attitudes and perceptions of men, particularly community leaders and elders, as well as women themselves need to be transformed.[223]

Despite formal measures to change the ways in which decisions were made or how the local population was represented, difficulties remained in ensuring that both men and women have equal voices, opportunities and resources. "Even where traditional power structures have been broken, the problem of historical bias and ignorance remains. The biases of gender, plus a reluctance to examine new ideas and ways of understanding constitute another impediment to effective local decision-making" (Human Development Report, 2007: 84).[224] This points to the limitations of a reductionist understanding of governance as representation, since

[223] Interview with Christiana Solomon, Freetown, 29 April 2005. A similar view was also articulated by Yasmin Jusu-Sherrif (Marwopnet) during an interview in Freetown, 7 July 2006.
[224] The same view was echoed by G. Jojo, TST staff member, Kenema, 29 March 2005,

something more than greater numbers of women would be required to shift traditional and cultural attitudes about gender roles and relations. It appears that liberal feminist approaches may be insufficient for the ambitious ends of reshaping liberal peacebuilding in a more gender-sensitive way.

The findings of a recent World Bank study of the decentralisation process are telling when it comes to the superficiality of attempts to engage women in local governance:

> Often youth and women leaders are brought into meetings only to speak to visitors—in part, it seems, to satisfy the visitors concerned with gender equity—or when some contribution is required from them. Even when respondents say they are included in decision-making, a deeper investigation often reveals that they have been informed rather than consulted or truly involved. In at least some cases, the position of "women's leader" is formally constituted and even filled by election, but in others it is more a matter of a preferred spokesperson. As one 36-year-old female community member from a small village in Moyamba District explained to a researcher, "Women are not organized in that structured manner that you think. Most often when visitors come, the chief calls me and [another woman] to represent the women in the village. I think they call us because they have realized that we are bold, we are presentable, and we can speak in public." (Manning, 2009: 116).

Furthermore, public perception surveys have illustrated significant gender and generational gaps in civic participation and self-perceived influence on local governance (Zhou and Zhang, 2009: 99). As Paris argues, the institutionalisation of certain norms is necessary for democratisation processes to be successful. Similarly, in traditional rural settings in Sierra Leone where the patriarchal and unaccountable chieftancy system dominated, changing norms and values that create space for women to participate meaningfully in democratic governance will take a long period of time. However, these informal structures are not easy to target through liberal peacebuilding or liberal feminist methods.

Decentralisation is an opportunity to make governance structures more accessible to women and also can provide space to ensure that they are engaged in making the decisions about service delivery that will have a great effect on them (Castillejo, 2008: 4). However, it is clear that more than quotas, and more than this kind of liberal feminist solution, are needed to ensure that women are able to have a constructive impact on local-level governance (Goetz,

2009a: 17). Research carried out by the World Bank found that the benefits of decentralisation primarily accrued to the villages and communities of elected local councillors (Zhou and Zhang, 2009: 104). It would further be expected that the benefits would first go to the power-holders and decision-makers within the community, few of whom are women. It is possible therefore that while there is an overall benefit to the population through decentralisation, it is experienced by the population in a very uneven way that can be brought into light by using a gender perspective. It is particularly important to find a way around this to ensure that women are able to participate in the decentralisation process: "if women can play a role in local government, then they will have a stake in it. This is the only way that things will change."[225]

6.2.3 Governance reform, gender mainstreaming and the liberal peacebuilding consensus

Women's experience of governance is framed by the interface between formal and customary governance systems, in particular the relegation of domestic and community issues to the customary sphere and the barriers they face in accessing the formal spheres of political life (Castillejo, 2008: 13). In contrast, almost all of the UN's efforts in support of governance reform were focused on the reconstruction or transformation of formal governance structures.

As Goetz argues, state institutions even when reformed as part of the 'good governance agenda' can in fact end up 'governing women' and reproducing the various forms of subordination to with they are subjected (Goetz, 2009b: 239). This results in entrenching their status as second-class citizens. Furthermore, the double burden of caring for dependents and also earning a living also makes it even more difficult for women to engage meaningfully in politics and decision-making, as they often have little time to engage in meetings and

[225] Participant at a workshop on "Making SCR 1325 work for women", organised by International Alert and GEMS, 10 March 2009, Bo.

workshops that provide an opportunity for mobilising action at the community level (Richards et al, 2004: iii).

The tension between formal and informal authorities and institutions in Sierra Leone underlies all efforts at governance reform, but is an ever-present dimension of the liberal peacebuilding process. This tension is then further influenced by complex gender relations and power dynamics, which if not incorporated into the analysis that guides governance reform risk undermining these broader efforts. However, the formal and informal systems should not be seen as in endless conflict with one another, but rather can coexist and build on each other to shape a more democratic, transparent and accountable Sierra Leone.

6.3 Poverty reduction and economic reform

Economic reform is an integral aspect of the liberal peacebuilding consensus, as it is widely held by the UN and other donors that economic liberalisation and the opening up of markets creates the conditions necessary for building sustainable peace. However, critics of the liberal peacebuilding approach argue that the failure to acknowledge and integrate bottom-up contributions to peacebuilding and the lack of a social contract based on ideas of welfare and justice in fact undermines economic development and any efforts to build sustainable peace (Richmond and Franks, 2009: 106-7). The case of Sierra Leone demonstrates that the donor-guided push for macroeconomic stability has often been prioritised at the expense of job creation and overall social welfare, thereby creating the conditions for ongoing conflict. In such contexts there is a tension between the expectation of economic reform to bring a peace dividend, and the reality that the liberal peacebuilding model fails to address inequalities and poverty that undermine conflict.

As already highlighted in chapter 3, economic issues were notably absent in the discussions around SCR 1325 and other policy commitments related to gender and peacebuilding.[226] Nevertheless, there is a critical link between gender equality, economic security and the broader peacebuilding agenda, which certainly merits greater attention in the future.[227] As this section will argue, women in Sierra Leone faced specific challenges in relation to economic insecurity and poverty and have rarely benefited from the economic reforms supported, and in some cases initiated, by the UN and other donors. Exacerbating this is the fact that women's economic security was not seen as relevant to the broader processes of building peace and security, and was often delayed until a country has moved into the 'long-term development' phase.

While liberal peacebuilding has resulted in some improvement in human rights and a move towards a more democratic political culture in some contexts, it has rarely resulted in tangible or sustainable development or economic benefits for the populations of post-conflict countries (Salih, 2009: 133). This is particularly the case in Sierra Leone, where most donor emphasis in the years following the conflict was placed on reforming the security forces and supporting national and elections. Efforts at poverty reduction and broader economic reform did not receive the same attention, and it was only in 2005 with the adoption of the PRSP that these processes were underway in any concerted manner.

As a result, in comparison with the preceding sections on security and governance reform, the information and analysis in this section on gender and economic reform covers a more limited time period. While there have been some gender-sensitive economic reforms, particularly in

[226] UNDP's eight point agenda to empower and protect women in crisis situations was adopted in 2007 and is one of the few policy commitments that makes specific reference to economic issues. The agenda states, "women must be given equal opportunities to livelihoods, including access to land and credit. Rebuilding in key sectors such as transportation, shelter and health care must specifically benefit women". However, this document was only adopted at the end of the time period covered by this research, and so it is not possible to determine whether or not this new policy has had any impact on UNDP's programming in Sierra Leone. See http://www.undp.org/cpr/we_do/8_pa.shtml.

[227] It is beyond the scope of this thesis to fully explore these links, but this is a research area that I plan to pursue in the future.

the areas of localised service provision and micro-credit initiatives, the vast majority of economic reforms in Sierra Leone were designed and implemented with little analysis of the role that gender roles and relations play. Furthermore, although widespread poverty was acknowledged as being one of the underlying causes of the conflict, the initial focus on establishing physical security throughout the country and the elections in 2002, 2004 and 2007 also meant that economic reform did not receive as much attention at the outset.

This section will explore the impact that the limited economic reforms have had on men and women in Sierra Leone, focusing specifically on two issues. The first is the UN's involvement in poverty reduction, using the examples of microcredit lending and job creation schemes. Secondly, the section will conclude with a brief consideration of the gendered impact of macroeconomic reforms, and the problematic nature of the liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminist approaches to these issues.

6.3.1 Poverty reduction

The key economic indicators for Sierra Leone paint a bleak picture of a country struggling with endemic poverty, weak economic and governance structures, and limited possibilities for economic development. According to the findings of the 2004 Population and Housing Census that formed the basis for the analysis in the PRSP, more than 70% of Sierra Leoneans live below the poverty line of less than $1 per day, and more than 25% cannot meet the basic food needs of their households (Winnebah et al, 2006: 10-11). Food insecurity, poor infrastructure, low rates of education, and the challenge of getting economic growth to meet employment and social needs in a fragile post-conflict context are just some of the economic challenges facing the government (GoSL, 2005b: vii). Since the early 1990s, Sierra Leone has consistently placed near or at the bottom of the UN's Human Development Index. Despite years of peacebuilding reforms, this is still the case and in 2007 Sierra Leone only ranked higher than one country, Niger.

Through the MDG process and the PRSP, the GoSL committed to eradicating both extreme hunger and extreme poverty. Sierra Leone was granted significant debt relief in 2002 under the enhanced HIPC Initiative, which freed up much-needed resources for the poverty reduction programmes (UNSG, 2003a: 13). The 'pro-poor sustainable growth' approach of the PRSP is under-pinned by the neoliberal development principles of achieving macroeconomic stability through low inflation and strict fiscal deficits, most commonly witnessed in the approach of the World Bank and IMF. These are in turn key elements of the liberal peacebuilding approach to economic reform. Although not acknowledged by the actors driving the process in any meaningful way, these issues all have a gender dimension. Indeed, gender roles and relations and traditional power structures play a key role in mediating the extent to which men and women are able to exit the poverty trap.

Chapter 4 provided an overview of the effects of poverty in Sierra Leone, both a principal cause and consequence of the conflict, on women's insecurity, vulnerability and disempowerment. The war not only deepened the endemic poverty in the country, but the resulting widespread displacement, increase in the number of women-headed households and changes in women's workloads further reduced their ability to participate in decision-making within the community and the formal political sphere. Customary laws, particularly in relation to property and inheritance rights, further discriminate against women and played a major role in increasing women's economic insecurity (Pankhurst, 2008: 18-21). Compounding these problems was the fact that the economic value of home-based work was not acknowledged, particularly in relation to provision of services in the household, and there was therefore a disconnect between how productive and unpaid (reproductive) work is represented in PRSPs, including that of Sierra Leone (UNDP, 2006: 23).

Furthermore, women's employment prospects are constrained by cultural stereotypes and practices that inherently limit the options open to them in Sierra Leone. As a consequence, many women are pushed into the informal sector, and rely on petty trading or subsistence

agriculture for the livelihoods of themselves and their households. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that Sierra Leonean women have played an integral role in the economy and development in the country (Abdullah et al., 2010: 40), even if not in the formal sector.

Poverty in Sierra Leone therefore has a gendered face, which is not uncommon (Baksh, 2005: 82). Looking at the issues of poverty reduction in Sierra Leone from a gender perspective draws attention to many relevant issues and should have been a key principle of PRSP process in the country. However, broadly speaking and as already mentioned in chapter 5, there was a lack of participation and specifically of women's voices in the PRSP process.[228] One INGO reported that they were only given two days to make substantive contributions on how a gender perspective could be better integrated, and that the perception of most INGOs is that they have been sidelined from the entire process in general.[229]

This failure to fully gender-sensitise the PRSP had consequences for donor programmes that then used the PRS as the framework for their activities, and was one of the underlying causes of the failure to effectively reach women through poverty reduction efforts. The donor-funded government analysis of poverty in Sierra Leone based on the findings of the 2004 Population and Housing Census was largely gender-blind and included little sex-disaggregated data or analysis on the relative poverty of men compared to women (Winnebah et al., 2006). Despite some lip service to gender issues in the PRSP and UN policies (UNDP Sierra Leone, 2002a: 3), exploring the case of microcredit initiatives and job creation schemes are instructive for considering the real impact of poverty reduction efforts on men and women. It is to these two areas that the analysis will now turn.

[228] Interview with Sybil Bailor, ENCISS, Freetown, 11 January 2008.
[229] Interview with Kirsty Baughman, Gender Coordinator, Oxfam. Freetown, 22 February 2005.

During the period 2002-2007, the UN, bilateral donors and several INGOs supported a range of microcredit and village savings and loans schemes throughout Sierra Leone. For example, UNHCR worked with 32 women's organisations and trained 1000 women and youth in livelihood skills in 2002 (Gender profile, n.d.: 12). UNICEF also funded small training and income-generation schemes with reintegrated female ex-combatants during 2004 and 2005, as described in 6.1.1. In 2003, UNDP signed a project agreement with the GoSL and the UN Capital Development Fund for the development of a pro-poor financial sector in Sierra Leone during the period 2004-2009. According to a mid-term evaluation of this project, "gender issues were not specifically addressed in the project design; no information was provided on the number of women in the potential microfinance market or on the number of women being reached by MFIs [microfinance institutions] before the project, and no specific gender-related targets were set" (Duval and Bendu, 2006: 19). Regardless, it appears that the project had some success with all the microfinance institutions funded by the project reporting that the majority of their clients were women. However, again, the liberal feminist solution of adding a few women in will not necessarily result in a sustainable transformation in their economic security.

However, despite the examples of success of some of these projects, due to logistical challenges and lack of resources and capacity these initiatives are usually localised to a few communities and are not set within a broader strategic plan of economically empowering women and their households. According to one NGO activist, support to women or communities working in collectives would be more effective.[230] Despite the UN calling for more support for cooperative enterprises and economic empowerment as well as income generation (UNSG, 2005a: 13), the evidence appeared to be that there was no systematic investment in these types of activities.

[230] Personal interview with Valnora Edwin, Campaign for Good Governance, Freetown, 11 January 2008.

In post-conflict contexts, "there is a tendency to slot women into micro-credit while men gain access to larger credit – although women require more than micro-credit for SMEs [small and medium enterprises], particularly urban educated women" (Zuckerman and Greenberg, 2004: 10). Of UNDP's total budget of $12,158,543 for 2004, only $182, 626 was allocated to microfinance initiatives, and the total amount for poverty reduction and human development was also small at only $1,334,680 (Kaldor with Vincent, n.d.: 20-22). This reinforces the argument made earlier that economic issues, particularly poverty reduction, were not given the same priority focus as the security sector or governance reform programmes.

There are many examples in Sierra Leone of small-scale micro-credit projects, *osusus*[231] and other revolving credit schemes. *Osusus* in particular have tended to be the most popular way for women to mobilize capital (Abdullah et al., 2010: 41). While some of these types of credit loan schemes have the support of the UN or INGOs, many are organized at the grassroots where women have come together collectively to address their economic insecurity. According to CARE Sierra Leone who have been working on small income generation projects with women, village savings and loans programmes have proven to be more sustainable than microcredit grants.[232] This is because the revolving loan schemes often have contingency funds that can help absorb shocks such as illness, whereas otherwise women may need to spend all their savings and profits to deal with such eventualities.

Although microcredit initiatives are often an innovative solution to providing women with income-generating opportunities, they should not be seen as a panacea for women's economic insecurity. It is important to link microcredit initiatives to additional activities focused on addressing the other practical and immediate needs women have in relation to earning a subsistence income. For example, microcredit projects should be combined with other efforts such as training and enabling women to have more access to property and credit as part of a

[231] *Osusu* in Sierra Leone are forms of community-based rotating credit clubs.
[232] Interview with Brian Larson, Country Manager, CARE, 14 January 2008.

strategic process to change the division of labour and open up economic opportunities for women.

While training and microcredit initiatives have been successful in terms of addressing poverty and lack of skills at the household level, the challenge of translating these localized, small-scale activities into societal transformation remains. Whilst they are 'quick-fixes' for the UN, and enable them to tick the gender box, the reality is that it is only be properly engaging with men and the informal, community-level actors that the impact of these activities can be sustained. It is also important to be realistic about the fact that women may not always want to collaborate and may also be vulnerable to corruption or failure to pay back loans.[233]

Furthermore, little is being done to challenge the traditional division of labour, despite the many new roles that women took on during the war and have sought to continue in the peacebuilding phase. 'Economic illiteracy' is another major challenge for women, and particularly those living in rural areas. Even those who do receive microcredit loans often do not understand the principles of developing a sustainable business, or what profit and capital are.[234] To be effective, microcredit schemes need to incorporate additional training and donors should ensure that market analysis and a plan for long-term sustainability have been done prior to enlisting women in these programmes (World Bank, 2005: 90).

Donors should not just look at the number of microcredit loans granted, but they should also focus on impact. One of the key problems is that in taking a liberal feminist approach, the UN tends to focus on getting the number of loans as high as possible, as opposed to focusing on how the loans then transform the economic security of the female recipients. The number of loans granted is easier to report on than the impact the loans have had. As acknowledged by a World Bank official, "changes happen at the community level in places and through dynamics

[233] Interview with Barbara Bangura, GEMS, Freetown, 14 January 2008.
[234] Interview with Sybil Bailor, ENCISS, Freetown, 11 January 2008.

that we don't have access to."[235] This again points to the gap between formal economic reforms that are initiated by the international community and the local-level, informal initiatives that fall in the gap, and these issues will be revisited in more detail in chapter 7 and the conclusion of the thesis.

The second area of poverty reduction relevant to this thesis is job creation. UNDP's interim recovery project highlights job creation as a key priority, and the project provided training to youth as well as 200 small group income generating projects. While the project documentation mentions the specific economic needs of women, there is no specific gender analysis in the project activities, and yet evidence shows that these job creation schemes have often failed to benefit women.[236] Within the context of the UNDP country programme document (2004-2007), the goals in relation to livelihood opportunities for women and youth were relatively limited. The aim for UNDP was to have 400 youths and/or women managing income generating activities via micro-financing, implying that the project was designed to only target a very limited number of people (UNDP, 2003: 6). In this case, the gender mainstreaming box might get ticked but it is questionable what real impact this will have.

Job creation can be a challenge in any economy, but in post-conflict contexts there is the additional problem that the economy itself is depressed, and opportunities are few and far between. The solution of the UN and other donors has been to support training and small grants in specific trades, however if there are no means with which to apply the skills, it is still difficult to earn a living (Humphreys and Richards, 2005: 36). MacKenzie's research on reintegration programmes in Sierra Leone confirms this point: "the lack of market assessment meant that trades were chosen for females based on gendered ideas of what women should do in the marketplace rather than an assessment of trades that would allow women to make

[235] Interview with James Sackey, World Bank, Freetown, 2 May 2005.
[236] Presentations by Catherine Greenwood and Sybil Bailor at a workshop on "Integrating women's priorities into peacebuilding processes: Experiences from Sierra Leone and Burundi", organised by International Alert, London, 25-29 February 2008.

money and succeed in the marketplace" (2009b: 212). Another fact compounding the problem of job creation, particularly among youth, was the urbanization of much of the population during the war, and the fact that few wanted to return to agricultural work in the post-conflict phase. UNDP supported some small-scale pilot projects to get youth to return to crop-growing and other agricultural jobs but these were only a 'drop in the ocean' (Kaldor and Vincent, n.d.: 24).

High youth unemployment has been identified as one of the major ongoing sources of insecurity in Sierra Leone (UNSG 2007b: 1), and so youth have been specifically targeted for employment schemes. Due to customary practices, women are often married young in Sierra Leone at which point they cease to be considered as 'youth', and as a result they miss out on employment opportunities. "Labour intensive programmes don't incorporate women. Youth schemes target youth clubs but women are married, they might already have families, and so they can't be part of these groups and they get overlooked."[237] Youth is therefore a highly gendered category, and youth unemployment is seen as a 'male issue'. High youth unemployment also has consequences for governance, with many of these young people failing to engage in political processes due to feelings of disenfranchisement and marginalisation.[238]

Job creation is therefore one area where a gender analysis is particularly important, at times requiring a focus on men rather than women. For example, the lack of viable employment opportunities or even the barest means of survival can increase the vulnerability of women and girls and lead them to turn to prostitution or become victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, unemployment can undermine young men's sense of identity in their community, and this can often contribute to violence against women, particularly forms of domestic violence as the frustration is taken out on women in the household (World Bank,

[237] Interview with UNIFEM representative, Freetown, 16 July 2007.
[238] Interview with Valnora Edwin and Christian Lawrence, CGG, 17 July 2007.

2005: 89). This was repeatedly cited by several NGOs as an important concern of the local population that was not being given adequate priority by the donor community.[239]

Despite their important roles in the agricultural sector, women also often miss out on credit and development programmes: "dissemination of seeds, tools, technology, and other agricultural start-up packages often miss the women farmers' strategic role in subsistence and market agriculture" (Zuckerman and Greenberg, 2004: 11). According to Abdullah et al., in Sierra Leone the reasons why women are often denied access to land or agricultural extension services are frequently gendered (2010: 41). However, it is possible to change the way that aid is provided to ensure that both men and women are able to benefit. An interesting example is cited by the World Bank,

> [w]hen CARE in Sierra Leone decided to offer seeds to all adults, and not via household heads (as it had done previously), it was surprised to discover the extent to which seed requirements changed. Offered an independent choice, the women's (and young men's) requests for groundnut seeds rose compared to rice. Groundnuts in Sierra Leone are recognized as a woman's crop, which also has important empowering potential since it offers women the possibility of engaging in petty trading (2005: 103).

The issue of gendered employment opportunities also extends to other sectors. For example, much of Sierra Leone's wealth comes from alluvial mining. At first glance, this seems to be an industry dominated by (largely young) men who spend their days sifting the sand and water in the hopes of finding a large diamond or gold, many of whom were combatants during the war. However, looking more closely, it is possible to see the many women and girls who support the work of the miners, offering food and small items for purchase around the margins of the mines, transporting materials to and from the mines or earning an income through prostitution. Many women are engaged in the prospecting of alluvial goldmines and therefore make an important contribution to this sector, perhaps representing up to 90% of

[239] Participants at a focus group discussion held in Bo, 20 July 2007..

those engaged in these activities.[240] Nevertheless, their needs are not recognized in the majority of job creation or income generation programmes targeting this sector.

According to the World Bank, in most post-conflict settings far fewer women are formally employed as compared to men (2005: 90). This is partly due to the fact that informal jobs are easier to find for women who are uneducated or have little capital to start their own business, but also because the obstacles and limited opportunities of finding work in the formal sector that they face. The failure to provide adequate employment opportunities in the post-conflict phase can also be linked to the return to pre-conflict traditional stereotypes seen in other sectors, where women are expected to maintain the forms of domestic and informal labour expected of them. While it was acceptable for them to be trained in and return to trades such as gara tie-dying and soap-making, they did not receive support to continue the new roles that they assumed during conflict, for example in the agricultural sector. This can then make it difficult for women to acquire the skills, capital and networks that they need to begin their own business or take up a trade that will lead to employment in the formal sector.[241] This reflects the tendency to focus on traditional forms of employment for women as opposed to using these job creation schemes as an opportunity to challenge gendered stereotypes.

It is clear from the analysis in this section that while poverty in Sierra Leone has a female face, most of the funding and project activities in support of poverty reduction are gender blind. The projects that did exist targeting women tended to be small-scale and did not provide sustainable solutions or income-generation prospects for women and the households. The next section will now turn from the issue of poverty reduction to the broader question of macroeconomic reform.

[240] "Sierra Leone eyes a golden future", BBC News, 20 August 2006. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/5262960.stm
[241] Interview with Daniele Gridel, Coordinator, COOPI, Kono, 31 March 2005.

6.3.2 Macroeconomic reforms

In the early years of the peacebuilding process and with the support of the international community, the GoSL was able to maintain macroeconomic stability, increase GDP (albeit from a low starting point) and initiate some improvements in public sector resource management (UNSG, 2002a: 9). During the time period in which this research was carried out, Sierra Leone continued to perform badly in terms of overall economic development and poverty reduction, although the country did manage to record modest economic growth of around 6-7% real GDP per year. Although there was some regeneration in the mining and agricultural sectors, the beginning of trade liberalisation and the government's fiscal capacity increased, employment in the formal sector remained a challenge and economic growth did not trickle down to the majority of the population (Brown et al, 2005: 7-8).

Throughout this period the government was highly dependent on foreign assistance, with 50% of the budget being donor-funded in 2005 (UNSG, 2005a: 9). By 2007, over 50 percent of total health expenditures, 75 percent of agriculture expenditures and 76 percent of the total budget for education came from donor sources (Zhou, 2009b: xxvi). Therefore, one of the main priorities of the GoSL and international community was the strengthening of the economic management capacity of the government, particularly in revenue collections and macroeconomic management (Zhou, 2009b: xviii). The World Bank financed two Public Sector Management Support projects to support these goals.

Two of the key forums for engagement between the UN and other international actors and the GoSL are the Consultative Group (CG) Meetings and the Development Partnership Committee (DEPAC) meetings. The reports of the major CG meetings held in 2002, 2005 and

2006 demonstrate the almost complete marginalisation of gender issues from the issues being discussed by the main donors and government actors.[242]

The documentary research and interviews carried out for this thesis demonstrate the extent to which gender issues were marginalised from macroeconomic reform process. This is not unique to Sierra Leone, and the exclusion of gender issues from post-conflict economic reconstruction has recently been analysed in detail by UNIFEM (UNIFEM, 2008: 91-97), showing that only a small percentage of economic assistance has a specific gender component. The focus of economic assistance on the formal, macroeconomic sector also makes it difficult for women to access these funds:

> Macro-level policies for the post-war context tend to ignore what women are trying to do, unless they are intended to stop them doing it. For instance, many women continue with war-time economic strategies involving small-scale trade in the informal economy; such strategies tend to be ignored as being unsustainable or unimportant, rather than being evaluated as providing an important service, let alone the potential for successful business growth (Pankhurst, 2008: 16).

This problem is linked to the fact that women's economic insecurity is not seen as a priority and is delinked from the broader peacebuilding process. Given the extent to which women are marginalised from the formal economic sector, they are unable to exert much influence over reforms in this area. Nevertheless, even for women living on a subsistence income, the macroeconomic reform agenda introduced by the UN and other donors as part of the peacebuilding process has significant gendered implications. Despite the lack of information about gender and economic reform in Sierra Leone, three important issues or lessons learned can be extrapolated from the experience in the country, and these will be described briefly below. Indeed, while there is little information to present on gender and the economic reform process, it is an issue to which the donor community should devote considerably more attention.

[242] See the World Bank website http://web.worldbank.org/external/default/main?menuPK=367855&pagePK=141155&piPK=141124&theSitePK=367809 for links to the documents from the 2002, 2005 and 2006 CG meetings.

First, women need access to proper sources of credit, not just the small amounts available through ad hoc UN or NGO-supported microcredit schemes. They need to be supported to set up and administer small and medium enterprises, which necessarily involves a reform of the legal system to enable women to access land, credit, property and other inputs such as agricultural extension services. Understanding the needs of women in relation to access to capital and resources as opposed to small-scale micro-credit loans is therefore an important, but overlooked, element of macroeconomic reforms.

Second, the failure to integrate gender issues into macroeconomic reform processes could be ameliorated through the introduction of gender budgeting measures. The need for gender budgeting was repeatedly cited by many people interviewed for this research, but it is also clear that expertise is lacking in this regard.[243] Had gender budgeting principles been applied, it is more likely that gender issues would have figured into the budget allocations of UNDP, UNAMSIL and other key donors, as well as the government departments that were coordinating infrastructure rehabilitation, public service delivery, job creation and other elements of the economy recovery process.

Finally, donors such as the UN need to find a way of reaching those who are economically active in the informal sector, and divert more funds to small and medium enterprises rather than just the private sector elites who receive much of the benefits of macroeconomic reforms. Despite the important roles that women play in the informal economy, and particularly in subsistence agriculture, according to UN data from 2005, women's economic activity was only 55% of that of their male counterparts.[244] Women also play a key role in industries such as fisheries, where approximately 60% of the labour force is women engaged

[243] Interviews with Jamesina King, HRC, 19 July 2007 and Nana Pratt, CSPEC focus group, 18 July 2007.
[244] UNDP HDR, 2005. http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/countries.cfm?c=SLE

in cleaning, selling and processing fish.[245] However, it is not clear that the UN's liberal peacebuilding approach is well-suited for targeting these kinds of informal activities.

In 2003, it was estimated by the UN that the informal sector accounted for two thirds of the total labour force, rising to 70 percent of the urban labour force (UNCDF/GoSL, 2003: 2). There has been little focus on private sector development in Sierra Leone, or support for small and medium enterprises. Where private sector development programmes did exist, they tended to focus on the elite business community, mining sector and diaspora capital.[246] In reality this only represents the tip of the iceberg of the private sector in Sierra Leone, and the vast informal and small-scale private sector is left out. "There is a big part of the economy that is not on the radar of the donors, but 90% of the population is working in this area [informal sector]. But the problem is that they are not really able to secure their survival."[247] It is difficult for small enterprises to access the capital or guarantees that are needed to benefit from microcredit opportunities.

According to some critics of the liberal peacebuilding process, "the neoliberal component of the liberal peace model allows for security to take precedence over everyday life, however, reducing the responsibility of international actors, agencies and donors to actively work towards dealing with poverty, the lack of jobs and opportunities, and the deficiencies in public services, broadly defined" (Richmond and Franks, 2009: 170). The tendency for the UN to work through specialized agencies, despite the "Working as One" policy, and to divide the various elements of peacebuilding into silos further exacerbates this problem.

[245] Interviews with Rebecca Stringer, DFID and Edwin and Lawrence, CGG, 17 July 2007.
[246] Dr Nour, GTZ, 17 January 2008
[247] Ibid.

6.3.3 Economic reform, gender mainstreaming and the liberal peacebuilding consensus

The exclusion of gender issues from the economic reform process in Sierra Leone is all the more remarkable given the fact that economic insecurity was so frequently highlighted as the major concern of women during the course of this research.[248] However, the way that the liberal peacebuilding project is conceptualised and implemented does not lend itself to dealing with the localised, context-specific and individual economic security needs. Nevertheless, reality does not play out in silos, and the economic insecurity facing women in Sierra Leone has serious implications for other issues. According to WIPNET's focal point in Bo, "justice is out of reach for many people because of their poverty, especially for women. And nothing is being done, nothing."[249] According to another participant in the same workshop as the WIPNET focal point, "women are less secure than men because they are not economically empowered." For the average Sierra Leonean, therefore, economic insecurity impacts on justice and security despite the UN's tendency to see these issues in discrete boxes.

Rather than being able to effectively address economic insecurities and poverty, it seems that the liberal peacebuilding approach has further marginalised the poor, many of whom are women (Salih, 2009: 137). Economic issues are not perceived as security concerns, just as an individual's capacity to engage in government is not seen to have an economic dimension. In reality, however, all are inter-connected, and to delay or postpone the focus on poverty reduction and economic issues can have major lasting in consequences. "Economic projects are seen more as development rather than peacebuilding. But does this matter anyway? I

[248] For example during the focus group discussions held in Freetown on 19 July 2007 and in Bo on 20 July 2007.
[249] Participant at a workshop on "Making SCR 1325 work for women", organised by International Alert and GEMS, 10 March 2009, Bo.

mean what does peacebuilding mean to rural people anyway?"[250] When looking at the issues through a gender lens these consequences become even clearer.

As Castillejo points out, socioeconomic rights are critical for women to enjoy civil and political rights in Sierra Leone (2008: 12), but the reality is that the financial costs of accessing justice and others services is prohibitive and leaves women excluded from the benefits of the reforms that are taking place in the formal sphere. Failing to address women's economic insecurity can therefore undermine and have a negative impact on efforts to empower women in other spheres. The UN's attempts to integrate gender into the post-conflict economic opportunities failed to challenge the traditional division of labour, and similarly women's productive roles in the economy, which largely fall in the informal sphere, continued to be unacknowledged. The result was that resources and the benefits of economic growth were not distributed equally between the population, and women in particular appeared to miss out on these opportunities.

6.4 Women-specific programming by the UN

Although gender equality was framed as a cross-cutting issue in most of the policies discussed in the previous chapter, the reality was that very few programmes had either promoting gender equality or addressing the needs of women as a clear component. The previous sections of this chapter have demonstrated the limited way in which gender was integrated, and the different impacts the various dimensions of the peacebuilding process have had on men and women. However, there are also some examples of UN programmes that were more specifically designed to target women or deal with gender and peacebuilding issues. Most of these programmes were carried out by UNIFEM or the UNAMSIL/UNIOSIL gender advisors. It is important to remember that having gender as a cross-cutting issue and

[250] Brian Larson, CARE country director, 14 January 2008

actually having the capacity to 'do' it are two different things. The extent to which this capacity existed throughout UNAMSIL and other UN agencies is minimal.

UNAMSIL established a radio station in the country to transmit news, music and information about the peace process to communities throughout Sierra Leone as well as to provide a forum for raising awareness on a variety of issues. A programme on gender issues and women's human rights was a regular weekly fixture of Radio UNAMSIL and this seems to have been an effective way of reaching the population and discussing potentially controversial issues such as rape and domestic violence. Representatives from the UN agencies as well as local women participated in these broadcasts, which are credited with having played a role in raising awareness about women's rights, particularly related to sexual violence (Date-Bah, 2006: 23). Radio UNAMSIL also spearheaded specific campaigns, such as one on violence against women in 2002 that coincided with the global campaign "16 Days of Activism" around ending violence against women.[251] In 2002, UNAMSIL collaborated with an NGO, Physicians for Human Rights, to undertake extensive research into the war-related sexual violence that women and girls had been subject to.[252] This report became a useful advocacy tool for both the UN and other members of the international community and draws attention to the critical need for documentation of women's human rights abuses in post-conflict contexts.

The UN gender advisors also played an important role in introducing a range of UN, government and civil society actors to SCR 1325 and other gender-related human rights instruments through training and sensitization workshops throughout 2004 and 2005. Several government officials indicated that these trainings were the first time that they had been made

[251] "Sierra Leone: Campaign on violence against women launched", *Reliefweb*, 26 November 2002. http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900sid/ACOS-64D59C?OpenDocument&query=gender women&cc=sle&rc=1 {Accessed 24/9/08]
[252] Physicians for Human Rights report

aware of SCR 1325, and that they found them incredibly useful.[253] UNIFEM and the UNAMSIL gender advisor were involved in a gender training for senior UN staff members in 2004, including those at the peacekeeping mission, which revealed that many were not aware of the gender policies that exist or the gender-differentiated impact of their programmes.[254] However, from the analysis of the security, governance and economic reforms earlier in the chapter it is clear that SCR 1325 was rarely referred to or used in designing or implementing activities within these three pillars, indicating the limited impact that it has had on the ground.

Indeed, despite trainings that new military personnel and some civilian personnel within UNAMSIL received on SCR 1325 and human rights, significant resistance to gender issues remained within the mission. Despite having been issued copies of the DPKO Gender Resource Package and the training efforts of the gender advisor, awareness of the content of the resolution appears to have been relatively low, and the internal trainings were of too short a duration to have much impact. Gender issues often continued to be perceived as unimportant by some UNAMSIL officials, and the gender advisor believed that she was able to have more impact through training outside of the mission than within it.[255]

The advisory and consultative role that the gender advisors played in relation to women's organisations was another important area. Although UNAMSIL did not have any regular and institutionalised meetings between mission staff and local women's organisations as occurs in other missions such as the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), the gender advisor herself did play a key role in this regard. She acted as an important advocate inside the UN system for women's organisations and was a point of contact within the bureaucracy of UNAMSIL, even if this collaboration was largely ad hoc.[256] This was repeatedly mentioned by women peacebuilders as critical to their ability to access the formal corridors of the UN and provided

[253] Interviews with two programme officers from the MSWGCA, Freetown 22 June 2006.
[254] Interview with Jebbeh Forster, UNIFEM, Freetown, 13 June 2006.
[255] Interview with Theresa Kambobe, UNAMSIL, Freetown, 25 May 2005.
[256] Interview with Gebremehdin Hagoss, UNIOSIL, 29 June 2006.

them with the needed support for their peacebuilding work, and the gender advisor was unanimously praised for having been accessible and supportive.[257] Given that women's organisations are often active in the informal sphere and can face obstacles to accessing key decision-makers and international representatives, such a channel is vital to making the work of these groups more visible.

As pointed out by the UNAMSIL gender advisor, "it is of utmost importance that the Mission constantly consults with women's organizations in order to positively respond to the concerns of its stakeholders to give them a voice and promote credibility and ownership" (Kambobe, 2005). However, many of the women's organisations that exist in Sierra Leone are located at the community-level in rural areas and can therefore be difficult to identify and support. Although UNAMSIL did have contingents throughout the country which played an important role in rebuilding infrastructure and providing security to communities, they did not systematically engage with local people, in particular women's organisations who may have had less access to the peacekeepers and various UN agencies. This meant that the support that the UN was able to provide to some of the women's groups and other actors in Freetown was out of reach of those living in rural areas.

UNIFEM seems to have been guided by SCR 1325, and UNIOSIL to a lesser extent, but on the whole the UN's activities do not seem to have been greatly influenced by the existence of the resolution. Nevertheless, in 2006, the UNCT did have an action plan on the implementation of SCR 1325. This plan was developed in response to a request by the Security Council during a meeting about UNIOSIL on 7 September 2006 (UNCT, 2006). The plan focuses mainly on training and integrating a gender perspective into the various ongoing reforms, for example by including women in the JSSR, TRC and electoral processes. It also highlights the role of women's organisations and the need for ongoing and regular consultation with civil society. However, the plan does not include allocation of resources,

[257] Various interviews in Freetown during 2005-2006.

which made the subsequent implementation of its ambitious set of activities problematic. It is also demonstrative of the failure of the gender mainstreaming process in Sierra Leone that while this plan existed, there is not a single mention of SCR 1325 or gender perspectives in the UNIOSIL's workplan for 2006. Therefore, while the action plan is a useful document in itself, these issues still remained marginalised and were not properly integrated into the 'real' activity matrices of UNIOSIL or other UN actors.

One example where women's organisations and the UN have overcome some of the obstacles in engaging with one another is advocating for the integration of gender issues into the work of the PBC. This success has largely been due to INGOs such as International Alert and the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) acting as an interface between the UN and other donors and women's organisations, although there has still been an emphasis on dialogue and partnership with Freetown-based organisations as opposed to those working at the local level. In 2006 a nascent network of peacebuilding organisations identified eight priority areas for the PBC, one of which was gender mainstreaming.[258]

For example, on 10-11 January 2007, a national consultation on enhancing women's engagement with the PBC was held in Freetown with the objective to feed women's perspectives into the development of the Peacebuilding Compact. From this consultation, gender-based violence emerged as the most significant threat to women's human security in Sierra Leone, and participants in the consultation identified a number of strategic recommendations to address this and other problems. The national consultation was followed by two district-level consultations, which also identified issues relating to GBV, economic

[258] See WANEP (2006). This ad-hoc network developed into the Civil Society Peacebuilding Engagement Committee (CSPEC) which has led on coordination and dialogue with the PBC and PBF.

insecurity, land rights, and unequal decision-making and traditional structures that result in women having little say in resource allocation or priority-setting at the local level.[259]

Civil society organisations such as Marwopnet also had the opportunity to meet with and present statements to members of the PBC in Freetown and New York throughout 2007. However, even though engagements with the PBSO have been largely positive, women still face the challenge of transforming attitudes in their communities. "Because women are generally not part of the discourse as a whole on peacebuilding, during the rural consultations with the PBSO many of them were afraid to speak. The men were threatening to not let them attend the meeting."[260] Therefore, while some of the women-specific projects in particular may have resulted in creating some space for women to renegotiate gender roles and relations, the reality is that "*de facto* gains have not been translated into *de jure* changes in women's status: women have taken on responsibility but have not been granted power" (El-Bushra, 2004: 163, emphases in original).

While having these women-specific projects may be necessary, it seems that there was little true gender mainstreaming. Instead, women-specific projects have ended up being 'ghettoised' and further removed from the main policies and reforms that were driving the peacebuilding process. Their impact was therefore limited.

6.5 National-level capacity for gender mainstreaming

The weakness of the government in addressing and supporting gender equality in Sierra Leone was a further obstacle to efforts linked to adopting a more engendered approach to peacebuilding in the country. Whilst the UN has been a key peacebuilding actor in Sierra Leone, and the liberal peacebuilding consensus drove most of the policies and programming

[259] See Report on National Consultation for Enhancing Women's Engagement with the UN Peacebuilding Commission in Sierra Leone, January 10-11, 2007, Freetown, Sierra Leone: 13-14 (unpublished report).
[260] Interview with UNIFEM, Freetown, 16 July 2007.

in the country, the GoSL also had a key role to play. Although there has been an institutional mechanism to deal with gender issues since 1988, the Gender and Children's Affairs division only began recruiting a core of professional staff in December 2003. With the support of the international community, the MSWGCA was able to undertake a number of useful initiatives such as preparing the country's first CEDAW report, lobbying for legal reforms, raising awareness of gender issues throughout the government through a system of gender focal points, and providing some expert input into the PRSP process.

However, capacity and resources are so limited, and progress so slow that the donor community is has been increasingly frustrated with the failure of the MSWGCA to move forward. Sierra Leone is by no means unique in the marginalisation of the national women's machinery, and research has shown that this is common across many developing countries. As Goetz argues, "the creation of a new bureaucratic structure with no leverage in the system, no incentives to offer, no means to execute a vast mandate, is a blueprint for building a gender ghetto" (Goetz, 2009b: 247).

The MSWGCA developed two comprehensive gender policies which were passed by Parliament in 2000: the National Policy on Gender Mainstreaming and the National Policy on the Advancement of Women. These two policies and subsequent official statements about the position of women indicate that the government recognises gender inequality as an important issue in Sierra Leone, but it is not clear that the political will to actually implement the policies exists. Interestingly, these policies are quite far-reaching and also acknowledge the role of discriminatory practices and traditions, and the inequalities in access to control over resources that men and women have based on their gender roles.

Despite the impressive rhetoric, the two policies have not been efficiently distributed and therefore are not well-known, if at all, across the government's different ministries and departments. For example, the Governance Reform Secretariat was not using the gender

policies in their ongoing work on reforming the civil service due to a lack of awareness.[261] According to the Sierra Leone CEDAW report, the policies have not been publicized or implemented, and the sectoral gender experts that were established were not functional (CEDAW (2006) p. 29 para 10.6.3-4).

The lack of crossover and collaboration between the Gender Department of MSWGCA and other government ministries is a serious obstacle to ensuring that gender issues are incorporated into the various aspects of political, social, economic and legal reform in Sierra Leone. For example, MSWGCA representatives did not sit on the Inter-Ministerial Committee overseeing the implementation of the PRSP, although the Chief Social Development Officer (from the MSWGCA) is a member of the National Technical Committee.[262] The MSWGCA was only represented on the Pillar Three working group of the PRSP focusing on human development, and was tellingly not a member of the other two which deal with promoting good governance, peace and security and promoting pro-poor sustainable growth. According to representatives of the MSWGCA, gender focal points have been assigned in each of the government's line ministries, although it is unclear who these focal points are and whether or not there have been regularly scheduled meetings between them. Furthermore, given that it is often the most junior female member of staff who is allocated the 'gender focal point' responsibility; it is unlikely that they are able to provide the skills to support their ministry's attempts at gender mainstreaming.[263] The MSWGCA was also supposed to have a network of gender advisors deployed to each of the districts, however this has been repeatedly delayed due to the lack of resources available to support their assignment outside of Freetown.[264]

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[261] As of mid-2007, the ministries under review included the MSWGCA, the Ministry of Justice/Office of the Attorney-General, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Interview with Emmanuel Gaima, Decentralisation Secretariat, Freetown, 13 July 2006.
[262] See "Implementation and Framework for the PRSP" *Encyclopaedia Sierra Leone 2007.* http://www.daco-sl.org/encyclopedia/2_coord/2_1view.htm [Accessed 30/9/08].
[263] Interview with Hawa Musa, MODEP, Freetown, 26 June 2006.
[264] Interview with Susan Sesay, MSWGCA, Freetown, 22 June 2006.

The international community has supported the MSWGCA and sought to strengthen its ability to spearhead efforts to promote gender equality. For example, on two separate occasions the Commonwealth Secretariat funded external consultants to provide technical assistance for 12-month periods.[265] While they were effective in providing guidance to the Ministry in terms of strategic planning and gender training, it is not clear if this type of support has had a sustainable impact. The institutional memory often disappears with the departure of the consultant, leaving behind sophisticated and extensive plans and strategies that there is simply no capacity or political will to implement.

Similarly, several donors such as UNIFEM have provided funds, material resources and trainings to MSWGCA staff, but have seen little outputs as a result of their efforts. The weakness of the MSWGCA is a problem for the UN, since responsibility and accountability for the peacebuilding process ultimately lies with the government. With a lack of capacity at the national level it means that there is less likelihood of any gender-related reforms being sustained. Indeed, finding the balance between the role of the UN and the need for the government to take ownership over the peacebuilding process, despite its capacity limitations can be difficult (Kaldor with Vincent, nd: 19).

However, the fact that the government is so limited in terms of capacity on gender issues could be an opportunity to push beyond the liberal peacebuilding focus on formal structures. The UN and other donors were beginning to look for ways to bypass the MSWGCA, but still support gender-related reforms in Sierra Leone.[266] An example of this is the development of the Sierra Leone National Action Plan on the implementation of SCR 1325. The UN and several INGOs have been actively supporting civil society organisations to engage in the

[265] The first consultant was hired in 2000 and helped to develop the MSWGCA's two gender action plans, and the second consultant provided expert advice on integrating gender issues into the country's PRSP in 2004.
[266] Interview with DFID official, Freetown, July 2005.

process of developing priority actions for the plan, and arguably have been playing more of a lead role than the GoSL.

UN discourse on capacity often refers to the formal, state-level, but as chapter 7 will demonstrate, many women's organisations and networks are untapped resource. If the UN recognised civil society as a different kind of national-level capacity, then in fact weak government capabilities in this area could be an opportunity not only for these organisations to get support, but also a way for the peacebuilding process to better build on informal structures and actors.

6.6 Challenges in integrating gender into UN peacebuilding activities in Sierra Leone

As demonstrated through the analysis in this chapter, the UN has faced many challenges and limitations in the process of integrating gender into its peacebuilding work. This section will conclude with a brief summary of these key challenges, which will also provide insight into the gendered dimensions of liberal peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. These issues will also be returned to again in more detail in the conclusion of the thesis.

First, the different needs that men and women had in relation to the peacebuilding process, and the different ways that they were impacted by the UN-led reforms were not acknowledged. Despite the critical roles that women played during the conflict and the fact that the peacebuilding process also has a gendered impact: "sadly they are the sector least consulted in developing the peace and the sector to least benefit directly from the programmes associated with the peace process" (Molloy, 2004: 19).

For example, the DDR and SSR processes were designed and implemented in a way that failed to acknowledge women's gender-differentiated security needs, with the result that

many of the insecurities that they faced persisted in the post-conflict phase. Governance reforms that sought to restore service delivery and reorient decision-making to the local level did not reach rural women effectively. Whilst the UN tried, through its liberal feminist approach to gender mainstreaming, to ensure that some space was created for women to engage in governance, they arguably failed to challenge the dominant power structures or gender relations in a way that truly empowered them. Arguably, many men also did not benefit from peacebuilding, particularly as a result of the focus on the formal state institutions that few people had access to, but their exclusion was less systematic than that experienced by women. The economic reforms also tended to ignore the informal economic roles that women played. Emphasis was placed on giving them access to small-scale microcredit, as opposed to more sustainable employment opportunities or credit schemes to support their engagement in non-traditional activities. The result of this failure to recognise and address the gendered impact in peacebuilding has resulted in a gendered virtual peace.

Second, while the UN policies and rhetoric may emphasise gender mainstreaming, the reality of its programming is that it tends to focus on women rather than taking a true gender approach. The UN displayed a reluctance to place gender issues at the front and centre of peacebuilding initiatives, instead preferring to ghettoise them in 'women's projects', if addressing them at all. SCR 1325 and gender policies can be incredibly useful advocacy tools for women in post-conflict contexts throughout the world, as well as for gender focal points within the UN and other organisations. However, in terms of resulting in concrete progress they have been less effective.

SCR 1325 in particular appears to encourage a certain degree of tokenism due to its broad prescriptions that are informed by liberal feminist assumptions. For example, whilst ensuring that a certain minimum percentage of decision-making roles or beneficiaries of a project are women is a laudable goal, for example as seen in UNDP's micro-credit projects, it can be counter-productive. This encourages UN staff to 'tick boxes' in terms of conceiving the idea

of mainstreaming as a measurable action rather than a process of structural change. As a result, projects that target women are often confused with achieving gender equality.

The team of donors reviewing implementation of SCR 1325 across four peacekeeping missions, including that of Sierra Leone, found that

> none of the missions visited showed evidence that gender was successfully mainstreamed across the mission. Recognition had increased but gender was still not generally considered a priority. In many cases a number of misconceptions still existed, for example, there was a widespread tendency to view gender as 'women's issues' rather than as relations between the sexes. Gender mainstreaming was often interpreted as gender balance and gender was often considered an 'add on' to a policy once it had been developed rather than integral to its development (Multi-donor Review, 2006: 8).

Despite having transformative potential and in theory linking in to changes in organisational culture, structures and resources allocations (Strickland, 2003: 9), it seems that gender mainstreaming as applied by the UN was rarely used as a tool to challenge power dynamics and gender relations and identities. As one interviewee aptly pointed out, "gender mainstreaming needs to be seen as a process of transformation, not just a technical exercise."[267] However, as the case of Sierra Leone has shown, the dominant liberal peacebuilding approach of the UN overshadowed any potential for transformation and instead of integrating gender into all aspects of programme design and implementation, too often gender was left out or added on only at the last moment.

The tendency towards adopting tokenistic approaches to integrating gender should be resisted, but doing so requires leadership, accountability and resources. As one UN employee stated, "the UN needs to make it [gender mainstreaming] mandatory. The perception is that you can live without it [...] people see gender as a choice and this is a problem."[268] Gender issues need to be incorporated into the mandate, structure and processes of peacekeeping missions from the outset.

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[267] Interview with Jamesina King, HRC, Freetown, 19 July 2007.
[268] Personal interview with Theresa Kambobe, UNAMSIL Gender Advisor, Freetown, 25 May 2005.

Although she is writing about the different context of Afghanistan, Kandiyoti's comments in relation to the gender mainstreaming process in that country are instructive:

> In a context where the vast majority of women have limited contact with the institutions of the state, market or civil society, donor-assisted gender projects can easily either miss their target or give rise to unrealistic – and often thwarted – expectations of immediate betterment. A more creative engagement with the complexities of the politics of gender, which is laden here as elsewhere with its own historical baggage, would mandate a contextual, non-technocratic approach which requires temporal horizons, levels of commitment and types of coalition-building (including cross-gender coalitions) and collaboration that far exceed the bureaucratic blueprints of international aid (2007: 198).

Finally, the preceding analysis has drawn attention to the UN's focus on the formal peacebuilding process in all spheres of security, governance and economic reform. This divide between formal and informal efforts is to be expected, as the liberal peacebuilding approach has been shown to pay too little attention to local ownership and initiatives, and is focused on the liberalisation of formal, state-led governance and economic structures. However, as a result, important local-level dynamics and activities that are taking place informally are missed out on, and the formal and informal processes exist in parallel with one another. This also links into and contributes to the construction of the virtual peace, since too few of the benefits trickle down to the grassroots level, and there is a disjuncture between the priorities that are defined by the external actors and the needs of the local people on the ground.

It is to this last conclusion that the next chapter will turn. Given the limitations of the liberal peacebuilding consensus and the dominance of a liberal-informed approach to gender mainstreaming it is interesting to explore in more depth what was happening at the local level and the types of peacebuilding activities that were being carried out As chapter 4 illustrated, women's groups made important contributions during the conflict, and as the next chapter will show this did not stop with the end of the fighting. However, because many of these contributions were in the informal sphere and at the community level they were beneath the

radar of the international community and therefore were not capitalised on by the UN and other actors. The next chapter will seek to understand the contrasting approaches of the local women's organisations, making links with the critiques of liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminism that draw attention to the need to build more on bottom-up, local dynamics as a potential strategy for a more transformative form of peacebuilding.

CHAPTER 7. TOWARDS A MORE EMANCIPATORY PEACE? WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS, GENDER AND PEACEBUILDING IN SIERRA LEONE

As outlined in chapter 4, in the immediate aftermath of the war, women in Sierra Leone made important contributions to the processes of social and economic recovery in their communities. As the fighting ceased, women were often the first to return to resettle their communities and they took on the building of dwellings, production of food and other forms of labour and income-generation, as well as advocating for non-violence and reconciliation. Women's peacebuilding efforts therefore can fill a vital gap in conflict-affected regions where there is no option other than working together to address the challenges of building peace, where necessary adapting their strategies to the constraints of the power dynamics and sociocultural realities that play out at the community level in Sierra Leone. However, local actors occupy a problematic space in the liberal peacebuilding model where priorities and actions are defined externally and administered in a top-down manner, and they are too often ignored by the formal peacebuilding process.

Since 2002, the number of women's organisations[269] throughout the country has increased, and they have continued to play important roles at both the community and national levels. There is great diversity in the nature and scope of women's organisations, with networks and organisations operating at the regional and national levels down to small grassroots organisations active in rural communities. While some of these groups, particularly those engaged at the national level, do receive some funding from INGO and occasionally UN sources, the amounts are small and they do not constitute a sustainable investment in, or an acknowledgement of the value, of the work that the women's organisations are doing.

[269] The term 'women's organisations' is used to capture a wide range of civil society, community-based and grassroots organisations and networks. There is an immense diversity of membership, focus, approach and methods used by these different groups, and they therefore cannot be easily categorised. The organisations described in this chapter range from those that are formally registered NGOs active at the national level down to informal community-based networks that work in rural areas.

Working directly with women's organisations and supporting them to develop sustainable activities can strengthen and bring legitimacy to attempts to build peace and contribute to the attitude shift required to end violence (Anderlini, 2007). Furthermore, their vision of what constitutes peace itself can often differ from the liberal ideal as outlined in the UN documents discussed in chapter 2. The traditions and patriarchal culture of Sierra Leonean society have meant that women have historically been able to wield little influence and hold few roles in the formal, public spheres, and they have rarely been perceived as legitimate actors in the eyes of male leaders. Women's organisations have therefore had to negotiate space to challenge stereotypes and attitudes that discriminate against women, and this has also helped to shape their approaches to issues such as gender equality, peace and security at the community level. As pointed out by de la Rey and McKay, approaches to peacebuilding should be understood as culturally-specific and gendered (2006: 141).

One of the reasons why women's organisations have such little power is that they are not accorded the status of legitimate actors who hold valid knowledge and expertise by the UN and other proponents of the liberal peacebuilding consensus (Sending, 2009). As this chapter will show, this is a flawed perception, as women's organisations have much to offer both in terms of supporting the UN's peacebuilding work as well as pushing the boundaries of what 'counts' for the liberal peacebuilding consensus. Local actors, particularly women's organisations, can help external actors gain a better understanding of the contextual and complex nature of gender roles and relations as well as identify peacebuilding needs and dynamics at the local level. However, regardless of their possible insights, "women's peacebuilding actions and areas of focus are often unrecognised by the broader national and international community because women have little power within these structures" (de la Ray and McKay 2006: 150).

The need to adopt more bottom-up and locally owned methodologies and ontologies of peace has been argued for by several critics of the liberal peace project (Donais, 2009; Sending,

2009). More emancipatory approaches, as outlined by Richmond (2005: 214-222) represent an effort to reinscribe peacebuilding from the bottom up. Such approaches resonate with elements of the liberal peace, but simultaneously create more space for engagement between external and local actors and place more of a priority on social justice and the primacy of bottom-up approaches to the 'civil peace'. According to Richmond, "if a sustainable peace is to be constructed, there can be no exit until both locals and internationals have agreed that such a version of peace has actually been achieved" (2005: 220). If this statement is to be accepted as holding some truth, then the questions still remain of who gets to define that peace, who is involved in building or achieving it, and whether or not the experience of that peace is equally shared. According to one women's rights activist in Sierra Leone, "the UN doesn't make enough effort to find out what is going on locally, but these are the entry points. The UN will never be able to come in to a country, figure it all out, fix it and leave. You need to look at what is going on here to find the solutions, and then you support those solutions. That is how you make it sustainable."[270]

In contrast to the previous focus on the UN's approach to integrating gender into its peacebuilding activities, this chapter will now turn to the work of women's organsations in Sierra Leone, analysed in the context of the particular dynamics of gender equality and peace at the community level in the country. As I will argue, the contributions of women's organisations and networks were largely overlooked, with consequences for both the sustainability of liberal peacebuilding in Sierra Leone as well as the nature of the peace that was being built. The purpose of this chapter is to determine what sustainable peace looked like from their perspectives and whether or not their approaches could provide an entry point leading towards a more gender-sensitive, emancipatory peace than that possible within the confines of the UN's liberal feminist approach to gender mainstreaming.

[270] Personal interview with Gladys Gbappy-Brima, 16 January 2008, Freetown.

First, the chapter will provide some contextual background to the traditions and other socio-cultural factors that shape and influence the terrain of both gender issues and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone. Secondly, it will briefly outline the focus, activities and impact of a selection of women's organisations and networks.[271] Third, the chapter will outline a framework that can help to understand the kind of peacebuilding work that women's organisations have carried out in Sierra Leone, as well as other places. Finally, the rest of the chapter will focus on analysing how the different strategies and approaches used by women's organisations not only support and deepen the three pillars of the liberal peacebuilding process, but also push the boundaries of the liberal peacebuilding consensus itself. It will also make links with the specific social and cultural dynamics in Sierra Leone which can shed some light on why their activities have evolved in the way they did. In emphasising transformative strategies and bottom-up approaches, women's organisations reflect the potential for moving towards a more emancipatory peacebuilding model. The possibility that this could lead to a more sustainable, gender-sensitive and less virtual, peace has important implications for how the international community approaches these issues in Sierra Leone, and in other post-conflict contexts.

By juxtaposing an account of the activities of women's organisations and local perspectives on gender and peacebuilding with the previous analysis of the liberal feminist approach of the UN, this chapter will feed into the conclusion which considers the possible alternatives to the UN's liberal feminist approach to mainstreaming gender in peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, and the challenges and opportunities in bridging the gap between formal and informal processes. Indeed, the failure to capitalise on women's involvement in peacebuilding in

[271] For the purposes of this thesis, it was necessary to select a limited number of organisations to explore in more detail. In choosing which organisations to focus on, a number of criteria were identified that enabled me to narrow down the scope to eight organisations and networks. First, the organisations had to explicitly have either a women or gender-focused mandate. Second, they had to be active at the national as well as local level (and in the case of WIPNET and Marwopnet, also at the regional level). Third, the organisations all had to have at least one person serving as coordinator or director of activities, as opposed to being a loose network of individuals. Fourth, the organisations had to demonstrate an engagement in the peacebuilding, either at a conceptual or practical level. Finally, the organisations had to be accessible so that I could carry out first-hand research with members.

informal, local spheres has been a critical shortcoming of the UN's engagement in Sierra Leone, and of liberal peacebuilding strategies more broadly. Whilst bridging this gap is fraught with difficulties, it will be an essential step in the move towards a more emancipatory, sustainable and locally-legitimate peace.

7.1 Contextualising gender and peacebuilding in Sierra Leone: power dynamics at the local level

One of the main critiques of both liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminism is their tendency towards universalistic assumptions and approaches (Newman, 2009: 43-43). To avoid this and to strengthen the argument made in this thesis that women's organisations at the local level offer an alternative, and more legitimate and sustainable, model for building peace in Sierra Leone, it is therefore necessary to situate these organisations in the specific social and cultural context of the country. This requires acknowledging the cultures, traditions, and power dynamics at play that mediate and influence the roles they play and the types of activities that they are able to undertake in order to identify the specific factors that have shaped their approaches. Whilst it is far beyond the scope of this thesis to cover all of these dynamics in detail, it is important to flag some key aspects of the local level dynamics that will be returned to throughout this chapter and which have already been alluded to in chapters 4 and 6.

Secret societies occupy an important place in Sierra Leonean society (men belong to *Poro* and women to *Sande*). They are the mechanism through which boys and girls are initiated into adulthood and they continue to be a site of power and influence in all aspects of community life. Secret societies also play a specific role in relation to shaping the meaning and practice of gender identities, roles and relations in Sierra Leone (Schroven, 2006: 23-24). The initiation rites are an important site of teaching young men and women their ascribed gender roles in society, which are then entrenched through the traditional practices of these societies

(Ferme, 2001). In particular, the women's secret societies act as a network to control women's productive and reproductive capacities, and have the power to impose social rules, fines and other punishments, which maintain women in a subservient position (Schroven, 2006: 24).

In addition to the secret societies, religion also plays a strong role in social life in Sierra Leone, where the population largely follows either Islam or Christianity. Geography and ethnicity also play a strong role in defining social dynamics. These factors all shape the largely hierarchical and male-dominated traditional structures, which are the site of justice and conflict resolution within the community (Manifesto 99, nd: 19). Although many of the traditional structures of social relations were destroyed by the war, they have since been rebuilt, and continue to shape the environment in which women's organisations are advocating for greater rights and empowerment.

As mentioned in chapter 4, customary law applies widely throughout the country, and since it is not codified, its interpretation and enforcement hinges on the attitudes and beliefs of the paramount and section chiefs, religious leaders and local heads of the secret societies. Whilst some efforts have been made to transform attitudes and raise awareness of women's rights in the post-war period, the terrain of social, cultural and religious life in Sierra Leone continues to pose specific challenges for women's empowerment and their ability to claim their rights.[272] Given the importance of both the secret societies and religion to daily life in Sierra Leone, particularly in the rural areas, local women's organisations have therefore by necessity had to engage with these groups in order to carve out the space to carry out their work. This is in contrast to the UN and other international actors, who have failed to engage with religious and traditional leaders in any meaningful way on questions relating to gender equality, and therefore have overlooked the impact of these crucial dynamics and relationships.

[272] Interviews with Valnora Edwin, Campaign for Good Governance, Freetown, 11 January 2008 and Jeanette Eno, Director, ENCISS, Freetown, 17 July 2007.

As has already been illustrated in chapters 5 and 6, the peacebuilding activities carried out by the UN focused mainly on the urban centres of the country. Given the limited capacity of UNIFEM, and UNAMSIL/UNIOSIL in relation to gender issues, and the constraints facing the MSWGCA, little attempt was made to extend the programs and projects addressing gender inequality beyond Freetown and the district capitals. Some INGOs were operating projects in rural areas, such as the International Rescue Committee's support for the Rainbo Centres, however these were the exception rather than the rule. Furthermore, awareness of the peacebuilding process, the obligations of the government with regards to the provision of security and governance and economic reform, and the activities of the UN agencies in these areas was not widespread (Street et al, 2007: 16). This left a significant area of the country where the international community and the formal peacebuilding activities were not reaching, and local women's groups and other civil society organisations stepped in to bridge the gap, often out of necessity.

There can be major differences in the priorities and needs of women living in urban or peri-urban areas as compared to in the rural parts of the country, and the limited mobility of many people due to poverty can easily lead to the exclusion of rural populations. The rural/urban divide can be a source of tension, and although some of the women's organisations described in section 7.2 attempt to link up regions, many of the people interviewed outside of Freetown highlighted their distance from the peacebuilding process that was largely perceived to occur only in the capital region.[273]

A further aspect of the Sierra Leonean context of note is the patriarchal nature of social, economic and political life, as was mentioned in chapter 4. The unequal power dynamics between men and women have largely been maintained in the post-conflict phase. There is the risk that women experience pressure, or the necessity, to return to pre-war social roles,

[273] Focus group discussion, Bo, 20 July 2007.

and traditional norms and ideas can constrict the ability of women to capitalise on the new roles that they may have fulfilled during the conflict (Schroven, 2006: 49-50). In some instances, the social and demographic shifts have also lead to new forms of conflict, for example in marriage and the division of labour, that also need to be addressed in peacebuilding efforts (Richards, 2006).

At the same time, violent conflict did alter the spaces where men and women negotiate their roles and relationships, and so the 'post-conflict moment' (Cockburn and Zarkov, 2002) presented some opportunities. As argued by Abdullah et al, "women's independent organising became a new pathway of women's empowerment in wartime Sierra Leone, and has opened new avenues for women to articulate their demands for equal rights and social justice in a postwar situation" (2010: 37). The fact that many women mobilised others at the community level and also took on new economic roles during and in the aftermath of conflict meant that they began to acquire some of the skills necessary to challenge the status quo. The entry of international actors such as the UN and INGOs also facilitated the creation of space for at least some women's groups to grow and develop, and indeed the postwar environment witnessed a proliferation of locally-based civil society groups.

There has also been a breaking down of the age-based hierarchies that previously shaped social life in Sierra Leone, creating new space for organising, particularly among young people and women in the peacebuilding phase (Ferme, 2001: 227), as well as laying the ground for new conflicts as outlined by Richards (2006). The post-war social and cultural dynamics in Sierra Leone are therefore complex, multi-faceted and ever-changing, and influence the shape of the post-war moment for both women and men. Another dimension of peacebuilding that has been specific to Sierra Leone is the challenge of reintegrating the large numbers of girls and women who experienced various forms of sexual violence during and after the conflict. Historically, domestic and sexual violence have been shrouded in a culture of silence (Shaw 2005), and husbands across many of the ethnic groups in Sierra Leone have

traditionally had the right to chastise their wives, including through physical violence (Abdullah et al, 2010: 42). The widespread sexual violence directly targeted the norms and values of society, leaving a legacy of broken social networks at the community level. This shaped the terrain of building peace at the local level in Sierra Leone, and efforts to promote gender equality have necessarily had to engage with the complex challenge of reintegrating and rehabilitating women and girls back into their communities.

This section has briefly highlight religion and secret societies, the urban and rural divide, gendered power dynamics at the community level and the widespread sexual violence as having a bearing on the peacebuilding process. Indeed, these issues and others are tied up in the historical legacies of sexuality, patriarchy and kinship in Sierra Leone (Ferme, 2001), and the challenge of negotiating and engaging with these dynamics is ever-present for women's organisations seeking to transform gender roles and relations and build peace in rural areas in Sierra Leone. The liberal peacebuilding model, on the other hand, does not provide space for acknowledging, engaging with and addressing these context-specific factors which may offer some explanation for the differing approaches of women's organisations to which this chapter will now turn.

7.2 Women's organisations working for gender equality and peace in Sierra Leone

The number of women's organisations in Sierra Leone has increased significantly since the end of the war, in terms of organisations operating at both national and local levels.[274] They design and implement community-based initiatives to address the needs of women in areas as diverse as health, education, income-generation, negotiation and decision-making skills, and legal rights, as well as promote peace and conflict resolution at the local level (Thorpe, 2006: 80-81). Although the work being done by these organisations resonate with different aspects

[274] This reflects the general trend across the civil society sector in Sierra Leone (DAI Europe, 2006: 16).

of the three peacebuilding pillars liberal peacebuilding outlined in chapter 6, more importantly they push beyond this limited view of peacebuilding and incorporate a broader range of activities and approaches that challenge current liberal understandings and essentially amount to a reinscribing of peacebuilding. Their position at the community level also requires them, or perhaps enables them, to engage more explicitly with the different power hierarchies and structures that continued to persist in post-conflict Sierra Leone. These were largely male-dominated, and despite women's roles as change agents during the war many taboos and discriminatory cultural practices remained.[275] Women's organisations working for peace therefore had to adapt their strategies in a way that enabled them to negotiate these power dynamics, whereas the liberal peacebuilding approach of the UN did not acknowledge them at all.

The fact that their work cannot clearly be assigned to one of the pillars is further demonstration of the limitations of the narrow and structured top-down approach adopted by the UN. In reality, the pillars are inter-related. For example, economic issues are integral to the physical security of women and girls, political participation is only possible for many women if their household survival needs have first been addressed, and access to justice and protection from gender-based violence undercuts all aspects of socioeconomic and political empowerment.

This inter-connected nature of peacebuilding, which is an organic and complex process, is rarely acknowledged by the UN in its taxonomy of building a liberal peace. Not only do women's organisations not fit neatly into these categories, but they also address other areas that push the boundaries of what is considered to 'count' in the liberal peacebuilding consensus. As will be shown in this chapter, women's organisations frequently address the wider issues of community reconciliation, conflict prevention and gender-based violence,

[275] Interview with Memunatta Pratt, Fourah Bay College, Freetown, 21 June 2006.

none of which have an evident home in the liberal peacebuilding approach, except at its most emancipatory extremes.

It is important to note that the activities of women's organisations are not necessarily framed as 'empowerment of women' or 'promoting gender equality', in large part due to the constraints of the patriarchal environment in which they are operating.[276] Nevertheless, the training, support and capacity-building that women gain through these projects means that they are in turn better placed to negotiate their rights, their needs such as protection from violence or economic independence, and their roles within society. As such, women's empowerment and gender equality are an integral part of the subtext of the work of these organisations, and are effective where a more overt strategy of challenging gender dynamics would not be. This approach may provide more nuance and critical possibilities than presented by the UN liberal feminist approach. As Barry notes:

> Instead of working to *promote and advance* the rights of women and girls, they now directed their resources and energies towards *resisting conflict* and *protecting basic rights*, including, for example, the right to life and freedom of movement [...] Crucially, their responses were grounded in the real and complex priorities of women and girls affected by the conflicts. Hence, their new interventions were often multidisciplinary and flexible, shifting rapidly to respond to the mounting and varied impacts of the violence (2005: 28).

The organisations whose work will be described below are: Grassroots Empowerment for Self-Reliance (GEMS), Federation of African Women Educationalists (FAWE), the Fifty-Fifty (50/50) Group, the Sierra Leone Market Women's Association (SLWMA), the Sierra Leone Women's Forum (SLWF), and Women's Partnership for Justice and Peace (WPJP).[277] Two regional networks are also discussed in a separate section: the Mano River Women's Peace Network (Marwopnet), and the Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET). All of

[276] Participant in focus group discussion, Bo, 20 July 2007.

[277] It is not possible in this thesis to provide an extensive analysis of these organisations, or a detailed assessment of their successes and failures in working in post-conflict Sierra Leone. However, the overviews presented in this section represent the insights gleaned from many interviews and in some cases, months of working in partnership with these organisations on their gender and peacebuilding projects. Some of the obstacles and limitations of these organisations will be returned to in more length in the conclusion of the thesis.

these organisations are based in Freetown, with the exception of WPJP, which is based in Bo. Although Marwopnet, WIPNET and WPJP were the only three women's groups with a mandate focused explicitly on peacebuilding issues during this time period, the other organisations also indirectly address issues related to overall peacebuilding efforts, and all have an explicit focus on women and gender issues.[278]

7.2.1 Grassroots Empowerment for Self-Reliance

GEMS was launched in May 1998, in response to the situation of women during the conflict in Sierra Leone. GEMS is active in the Western Area (Freetown and surroundings), and in two chiefdoms of the Northern Region around Makeni. GEMS' founding principle is that "basic social needs are basic human rights", and it aims to transform the lives of marginalized women by fostering self-reliance through development and enabling them to effectively participate in decision-making. The founder and coordinator of GEMS, Barbara Bangura, had encountered significant discrimination following the death of her husband, particularly in terms of issues related to inheritance. According to Bangura, "economic issues are integral to everything, that is why self-reliance and development are our starting points"[279], and the formation of the organisation itself was in a sense motivated by the traditional practices that deny women rights. Since 2006, GEMS has gained an increased profile in Sierra Leone and has succeeded in obtaining some funding from INGOs and foundations such as the Global Fund for Women, but the amounts are limited and the lack of resources was named as one of the key obstacles to GEMS' work by the national coordinator.

GEMS is engaged in a range of different activities, many of which are carried out through workshops and trainings in the regions where the organization is active. The focus is on raising awareness about women's rights and training on non-violence, using community

[278] Marwopnet and WIPNET are both regional networks that are active across West Africa; however most of the activities take place at the national level and the capacity of the national branches of these networks vary significantly.
[279] Interview with Barbara Bangura, GEMS National Coordinator, 14 January 2008.

dialogue as a key tool. This reflects an a focus on informal mechanisms and channels for enhancing peaceful relations, using the local level as the site for transformation of power that theoretically could then transfer to the national level. Given the focus on economic issues, GEMS has also initiated a number of micro-credit initiatives in the regions where it operates. However, it was found that the women they worked with were not always collaborative or honest, and that the rate of return was poor. As a result, GEMS has now turned to revolving loans for agriculture as a solution to this problem. Instead of small amounts of money, women receive seeds and eventually pay back in kind. GEMS found that "the agricultural loans system was good because it was easy to see the gains from harvest and less tempting for the recipients to not fulfil their obligations".[280] This would have been a valuable insight for the UN, and speaks to some of the problems with the microcredit projects that were discussed in chapter 6.3.

GEMS has also organised many workshops in and around Freetown, focusing on peacebuilding and reconciliation and building skills of participants to peacefully resolve conflict in their communities. For example in 2003, GEMS organized a two-day workshop on peacebuilding and reconciliation in Kroo Bay, which is one of the most deprived slums of Freetown. As a result of the workshop, community members established a task force to settle disputes.[281] Its activities also require women to network and collaborate, thereby strengthening the often ad hoc work being done by grassroots organizations in different communities, and filling a gap for peacebuilding within rural areas. By focusing on establishing community-based networks and giving people the tools to solve their own conflicts through alternative dispute mechanisms recognises that local actors also have knowledge and expertise in relation to peacebuilding. These alternative mechanisms are often better able to work alongside the customary legal mechanisms that are prevalent in rural Sierra Leone and are therefore a more realistic channel to achieving justice.

[280] Presentation by Catherine Greenwood, Alert workshop Feb 2008.
[281] Interview with Barbara Bangura, GEMS National Coordinator, 16 July 2007.

Since early 2007, GEMS has been extensively involved in a mass advocacy violence-free elections campaign, acting as coordinator of the coalition of organisations engaged in this initiative. Some of the activities that the coalition initiated included nationwide prayers bringing together Sierra Leoneans from diverse political and ethnic backgrounds, dialogue with political leaders around issues related to peace consolidation, sensitization through TV and radio programmes, and voter education.[282] GEMS and other women's organizations played an active role in this campaign largely due to fears that women would suffer disproportionately from violence if it occurred during the elections, both in terms of physical risk as well as a diminished likelihood that they would be able to participate as voters. This campaign also benefited from links with Liberian women, and during August 2007 a Liberian "Women Peace Train" travelled to Sierra Leone to display solidarity with the objectives of the coalition.[283] This campaign focused heavily on raising awareness among men, as the main propagators of violence against women. This alludes to the importance of networks that will be discussed in more detail in the later sections of this chapter.

GEMS has also played an important role in disseminating and advocating for the implementation of the three Gender Bills adopted by parliament in 2007. While these Bills represented an important step forward for women's rights in the country, few women outside of women's activists in Freetown were aware of the additional rights they were afforded by these new laws. This illustrates the need to link up the top-down national processes of reform with the locally-driven informal channels. Although they have been translated into plain English by FAWE and the Lawyers Centre for Legal Assistance (LAWCLA), GEMS argues that they need to be simplified and shared with women throughout Sierra Leone, particularly those who are illiterate and living in rural areas where there are few services and little access

[282] Interview with Barbara Bangura, GEMS National Coordinator, 16 July 2007.
[283] *Awareness Times*, "Sierra Leone Women to Launch Violence-Free Elections Campaign", 9 July 2007.

to justice.[284] Critically, officials working in the justice system, both formal as well as informal, also need to be sensitized and engaged in efforts to implement the gender bills since without their cooperation it is unlikely that women will be able to obtain justice for crimes committed against them. "Now the laws are in place, the real challenge is making them relevant to the members of communities throughout Sierra Leone and ensuring that they have access to justice."[285]

7.2.2 The Forum of African Women Educationalists

The Sierra Leone chapter of FAWE was established in 1995 during the height of the war, and focused its efforts on establishing coping mechanisms in conflict for women and girls (FAWE, n.d.: 207).[286] It was founded by Christiana Thorpe, who later became a Deputy Minister of Education and in 2005 was appointed as chairwoman of the National Election Commission (NEC). FAWE focuses on education, using it as an entry-point to support work in other areas such as addressing the culture of violence amongst youth, issues of reconciliation and reintegration, and gender-based violence. By 2005, FAWE had 863 full members across 24 branches spread throughout the country (FAWE 2005: 1) and this number has continued to grow.[287] FAWE's funding comes in the form of monthly contributions from members, as well as some limited support from the GoSL and the international community.

7.2.3 The Fifty-Fifty Group

The 50/50 Group was formed in 2000 to address women's marginalization and discrimination and to promote their participation in public life.[288] The motivation for establishing this group came from the fact that at this time, women were being excluded from the peace negotiations

[284] Interview with Barbara Bangura, GEMS National Coordinator, 14 January 2008.
[285] Interview with Barbara Bangura, GEMS National Coordinator, 14 January 2008.
[286] FAWE is a pan-African organisation founded in 1992 with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. FAWE has national chapters in 33 African countries.
[287] Interview with Eileen Hanciles, FAWE, 23 June 2006.
[288] Through their work, the 50/50 Group seeks to address the under-representation of women in decision-making throughout Sierra Leone, with the rationale that "so long as women are unable to play a full role in political decision making, policies are unlikely to take into account the reality of women's lives and will fail to meet their needs" (The 50/50 Group, 2004: 2).

and new post-war governance structures, despite the important roles that they had played during the war. Given that women have been historically marginalised in political life, the evolution of the 50/50 Group represented an important challenge to the patriarchal structures that existed at national and local level. As a campaigning organisation, their activities focus on sensitising voters, lobbying decision-makers and providing training and mentoring to women candidates and politicians.

When it first began, the group did not have an office, but rather the small number of members met at the British Council in Freetown. Over the period of less than a decade, the 50/50 Group has transformed into a nationally-recognised organization and its name has become synonymous with gender equality in Sierra Leone.[289] The 50/50 Group defines itself as a non-partisan campaigning organization that seeks to empower and train women to enter into politics, advocate for the removal of barriers to women's political participation, and change the public perception of women in politics (50/50 Group, 2004). There are now active branches throughout all fourteen districts in Sierra Leone, and the organization has been successful in attracting a modest amount of support from INGOs and other donors.

Examples of the type of work carried out by the 50/50 Group include training over 1000 women in leadership, communication and advocacy skills prior to the 2002 national elections, and over 500 women in similar skills in the lead up to the local government elections in 2004.[290] The majority of the 165 women who ran for election in 2002 were trained by the 50/50 Group.[291] As a result of their historic marginalisation from the public sphere, potential women candidates had limited skills in campaigning and leadership, and also had little access

[289] In Sierra Leone it is common to hear men talking about "that fifty-fifty business" in reference to gender equality or women's rights. While the term is at times used in a disparaging way, it also indicates a much greater awareness of these issues, a fact that will hopefully translate into greater recognition and respect for women's rights.
[290] Interview with Harriet Turay, 50/50 Group, Freetown, 24 June 2006.
[291] "Gender, democracy and post-conflict restructuring in Sierra Leone: An interview with Ms. Abator Thomas, Minister of Health and Sanitation", p.3.
http://www.afrimap.org/english/images/paper/Sierra%20Leone%20Interview%20(fin).pdf

to the financial resources necessary to run for election. The 50/50 group was able to initiate this training as well as help women to raise the funds needed. The group has also produced training manuals and established a network of more than 20 trainers who can support the organisation's work outside of Freetown.

Education is key to the work of the 50/50 Group, and is seen as vital to the emancipation of women and the key to ensuring that women are able to influence and engage in politics and decision-making. One of the demands that the group has been making through the "Atlantic Declaration" is that 30% of all candidates in national and local elections should be women, however progress towards adoption of a quota has been slow. This figure is also problematic given the estimated 85% illiteracy rate among rural women, making it unlikely that there are enough women with the skills and capacity to fill these positions. Another problem highlighted by the president of 50/50 is the lack of available funding for their work in the years between elections.[292] Whilst donors have been willing to fund training for women candidates, this has only been forthcoming in the months immediately preceding an election. However, it takes years to build capacity and raise awareness. Programmes in support of political participation need to be more long-term if women are to be able to compete on an equal footing with men, who were already beginning to prepare and campaign for the 2007 national elections in early 2005.[293]

While the 50/50 Group sees itself as representing women and playing a key role in national advocacy on women's exclusion from decision-making, their work is not always seen this way by others. Some interviewees suggested that the 50/50 Group is perceived as an elite organization that does not necessarily cater to the needs of illiterate women living in rural areas, who represent a significant part of the population.[294] The tensions of balancing a national-level profile and the goal of responding to the needs of the constituency base of local

[292] Interview with Harriet Turay, 50/50 Group, Freetown, 24 June 2006.
[293] Interview with Christiana Solomon, Freetown, 29 April 2005.
[294] Interviews with various civil society representatives in Freetown, February-May 2005.

women, as well as the difficult task of changing men's attitudes, are two factors that the Group has not always successfully contended with.[295] The 50/50 Group is also perceived as threatening to some men as a result of the challenge it presents to the gendered division of labour and the traditional marginalization of women to the domestic sphere (George-Williams, 2005: 70). According to one of the founders of the 50/50 Group, "A few women are hostile to the group as they still believe in the myth that politics is a man's game and they fear the violence that is usually associated with it [...] Many 50/50 Group activists are accused of being divorced women who want to undermine the family and displace men" (Thomas quoted in Braun n.d.). Nevertheless, the 50/50 Group has undoubtedly played an important role in raising awareness of women's political participation, and the membership is diverse and growing.

While the 50/50 Group has achieved much recognition in Sierra Leone, at times their approach resonates with liberal feminist approaches that focus on removing the barriers to women's participation in decision-making. What perhaps allows this group to push beyond these approaches is that they do work with women at the grassroots level, and recognise that the transformation of attitudes is a critical element if women are to engage effectively in decision-making.[296] However, it does appear that the strategies used by the 50/50 Group have not always been successful in breaking down the gendered social structures and traditional attitudes that permeate and influence women's access to public spaces in Sierra Leone.

7.2.4 The Sierra Leone Market Women's Association

As a consequence of their economic marginalisation, women in Sierra Leone have a long history of subsistence trading. This type of work has historically been the main source of income to cover household needs, but it tends to generate small amounts of money and therefore rarely allows for any savings of profits (Steady, 2006: 59). Given that women are

[295] Interview with Abimbola Akinyemi, Oxfam, 25 February 2005.
[296] Interview with Harriet Turay, 50/50 Group, Freetown, 24 June 2006.

primarily engaged in the informal economic sector which offers little support and protection to workers, women have at different times in the country's history mobilised themselves into collectives and networks to increase their access to loans, support, training and protection. One such example is the Sierra Leone Market Women's Association (SLMWA).

As a result of the specific constraints and discrimination they faced as the conflict in Sierra Leone drew to a close, market women came together to begin their own voluntary association. The SLMWA is now a registered NGO with full-time staff and a membership of approximately 6,500.[297] The membership of the SLMWA is diverse, with many members being illiterate and from extremely deprived backgrounds, and therefore representing groups of women who have been particularly marginalised by the strict gender division of labour and gendered access to resources in Sierra Leone. The association received some limited support from the UK government and a local NGO to launch micro-credit schemes in 2000, and since then their activities have grown. Initially working in Freetown, the SLMWA provided loans of Le 100,000 (£20), which were given to groups of approximately 20-30 women across the many different markets in the city. Loans had to be repaid gradually on a daily basis, and the women were also encouraged to set aside a small amount of their daily earnings to enable them to eventually develop a capital base (Solomon, 2005: 266). Since the initial phase of lending the SLMWA's activities have been extended and they now support market women in Bonthe, Bo, Kono, Makeni, Kabala and Kambia districts.

Approximately seventy percent of market women are the main breadwinners for their families, yet most market women live a hand-to-mouth existence and had little access to credit or other resources that would enable them to earn a more sustainable income. They face significant domestic problems, and are often away from their homes from 6am until 9pm. Market women tend not to have access to capital and so buy stock daily, and only have

[297] The term 'market woman' can be understood as follows: Among the majority of rural and low-income urban dwelling women, market women describe themselves as the 'poorest of the poor'. They deal mostly in perishable foodstuffs at small local daily markets." (Solomon, 2006: 463).

limited profits which often go toward transport costs or school fees for their children.[298] Interest rates are so high that it is almost impossible for most women to access credit, and illiteracy rates are also high among this group. Similar to other marginalized women and those living in rural communities, market women rarely go to health clinics because of prohibitive costs, and this is particularly visible in relation to the high rates of maternal and infant mortality.

Beyond the economic empowerment aspect, the SLMWA also assists members with problems such as human rights violations, domestic violence and HIV/AIDS, and provides training in leadership skills and food hygiene. The SLMWA has little funding to provide concrete support to its members, but it can link women up with one another and facilitate the sharing of skills and advice. For example, representatives from the organisation visit and appraise women's businesses and then write references to support market women's applications for bank accounts.[299] They can also link women up with a range of other organisations if they are facing specific health or legal problems.[300] As Solomon points out, it was the close connection that the organisation had with communities and households throughout the country that enabled it to have "a multiplier effect that contributed to the national development goals of creating economic self-sufficiency and improving standards of living" (2006: 466).

According to the members of the SLMWA interviewed for this research, several women stated that without the support of the association they would have less access to the means to provide food and education to their families.[301] A further initiative of the SLWMA was to develop an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) handbook in 2007. This initiative stemmed from the fact that in absence of access to formal justice mechanisms, market women were turning to the leaders of the SLMWA to resolve disputes. The ADR handbook is designed to

[298] Focus group discussion with members of the SLMWA, Freetown, 14 January 2008.
[299] It is estimated that only about 26,000 people have bank accounts in Sierra Leone.
[300] Interview with Marie Bangura, SLMWA, Freetown, 14 January 2008.
[301] Focus group discussion with members of the SLMWA, Freetown, 14 January, 2008.

be used as a capacity-building tool as well as providing some degree of standardisation in the way that intra-market disputes are dealt with, and allows for a fair and speedy resolution of conflicts.[302] This project received the support of the JSDP, and is an important example of how informal peacebuilding mechanisms can supplement and support formal peacebuilding reforms.

Given the significant backlog of cases, damaged infrastructure and limited capacity of justice officials as well as the high costs of accessing the formal justice sector, finding alternative strategies to support justice sector reform was critical in Sierra Leone. By developing a manual to provide some standardisation and providing training to communities in the Western, Southern and Eastern regions of Sierra Leone throughout 2007, the SLMWA played a vital role in supporting conflict resolution at the community level at the same time as relieving pressure on the formal justice sector. Such initiatives require a relatively small amount of funding, but can have a multiplier effect in tackling key peacebuilding challenges at the grassroots and community levels.

The diverse activities that the SLWMA carries out on behalf of its members can represent a microcosm of the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone. Although the organisation is primarily focused on the provision of economic opportunities, it also brings other security and governance-related benefits to its members. According to the chairwoman of the SLMWA, there is now evidence that market women are more able to play a role in decision-making in their households, making them less vulnerable to issues such as domestic violence and empowering them in their communities.[303] This network of women could therefore act as an important inroad for the international community to access and support women both practically and strategically, particularly the most illiterate and impoverished groups of women that the UN often finds it difficult to reach.

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[302] "SLMWA Launches ADR Handbook", *Concord Times*, 23 May 2007, Freetown.
[303] Interview with Marie Bangura, SLMWA, Freetown, 14 January 2008.

7.2.5 Sierra Leone Women's Forum

The SLWF was formed in 1994 with the motto of "empowerment, equality and development" and is the most developed national network of women's organisations in Sierra Leone. According to their leaflet, "the vision of the SLWF is a Sierra Leone free from violent conflict, where good governance prevails, and where women, from the majority of the population, have equality of opportunities in all spheres of life. Another objective is the empowerment of women to meaningfully contribute towards the attainment of durable peace and sustainable development of the nation." The main areas of the SLWF's work are coordination, leadership, networking and information-sharing. During the conflict, "the Forum's strategy was to build alliances horizontally through a consultative and democratic process with women's associations and the women's wings of political parties. This served to enhance their base of solidarity and to strengthen their position as a pressure group and a women's movement for peace and development" (Steady, 2006: 46). However, the vision and goal of the SLWF, like many of the other organisations already mentioned, pits it against the traditional structures of power in Sierra Leone that do not provide women with equality of opportunity in any spheres of life. By building on the changes in gender roles and relations during the conflict, in theory the SLWF created some space to give women a platform for collectively advocating for their rights.

Its membership includes business women, professionals, members of parliament and the government, and community-based organisations. It has a National Assembly comprising 85 representatives from throughout the country, a small National Secretariat, and Executives at various levels, although the links between Freetown and the provinces are not necessarily that strong.[304] The SLWF has received some specific funding for projects, including the holding of a consultation to ensure women's interests were taken into account during the poverty reduction strategy (PRS) process. In 2005, Oxfam funded SLWF under their capacity-

[304] Interview with Rosaline McCarthy, Freetown, 4 July 2006.

building programme to provide for the training of finance and IT staff. During 2007, the SLWF were also planning to develop a project on social inclusion focusing on engaging and sensitising chiefs and other traditional authorities on gender issues, but as of the end of the case study period it had yet to receive any funding.[305] This reflects the problem that even where the women's organisations recognise and have the intention to engage with the local-level power dynamics, it can be difficult to obtaining the necessary funds given that the UN's liberal peacebuilding agenda leaves little space for acknowledging these issues.

The country-wide network and broad-based membership of the SLWF could theoretically be an excellent entry point for accessing women throughout the country, as well as being a focal point for gender-related projects at the community level. However, before that is possible it was clear from the many interviews carried out in Freetown and Bo that the SLWF would need to better reflect the diversity and interests of Sierra Leonean women in order for it to legitimately represent them in the peacebuilding process.[306] The organisation also clearly needed significant financial, technical and administrative support to enable them to organise more effectively, and to bridge the urban/rural divide that prevents rural women from feeling that their interests are being represented.

The range of member organisations of the SLWF, a national umbrella network of women's groups, and previously of the SLWMP, reflects the multidimensional nature of women's groups. Although the SLWF acted as an umbrella group and provided an important networking forum, "each member group maintained its autonomy [...] the women were bound together by solidarity in the fight against injustice, under-representation of women in decision-making positions, poverty and underdevelopment."[307] Whilst the SLWF remains one of the main women's networks in Sierra Leone, it is not clear that their membership base

[305] Rosaline McCarthy during roundtable with CSPEC, Freetown, 18 July 2007.
[306] Several interviewees stated that the SLWF is seen as an elite organisation, and that it doesn't have enough support at the community level to be seen as a network that is really representative of women throughout the country.
[307] Steady (2006): 46.

reaches effectively into the districts, and the lack of capacity and resources constrains their activities and their reach into rural areas, and potentially ultimately their peacebuilding potential.

7.2.6 Women's Partnership for Justice and Peace

The Women's Partnership for Justice and Peace (WPJP), a women's organization based in Bo, was established in 2006. According to the founder, one of the key motivations for establishing WPJP was the need to create a space for women to come together and identify their needs and interests at the community-level through a participatory methodology.[308] Disillusioned with the over-concentration of donor efforts in Freetown and the ongoing invisibility of the work being done by women's organizations, Gbappy-Brima sought to establish an organization in Bo to support the social, economic and political empowerment of women and girls in the adjacent rural areas. The main focus group for WPJP's activities are individual girls and women between the ages of 15-45 living in poverty in rural and semi-urban areas as well as smaller grassroots organizations in these communities that are working for non-violence, peace and poverty reduction.

WPJP works in four key areas: girls' education and empowerment, supporting women's economic security, combating GBV, and building the capacity of women to be more effective voters. For example, WPJP has supported more than 100 girls in two rural schools located in Taiama and Njala (Bo district), mobilized women to engage in income generating activities such as food production and petty trading, supported a monthly women's peace dialogue forum, and acquired land and buildings for technology centres and library facilities. In Bo, WPJP established a Women's Human Rights and Resource Centre which has become an important venue for women to come together to receive skills training, but also a place where they can access information about their rights and receive support from other women in the community.

[308] Interview with Gladys Gbappy-Brima, 16 January 2008.

This Centre has also been recognized by some men as a valuable resource, who acknowledge that prior to this initiative "women did not have anywhere to go, but it is important that there is some space for them".[309] According to the national coordinator of WPJP, "there are many small women's groups in Bo, but the problem is that they don't have strong leadership that would enable them to come together and develop an agenda. This stops us from thinking about things systematically."[310] Therefore, through its workshops and community peace forums WPJP also seeks to foster more collaboration and networking amongst the different small women's groups in Bo district, with the belief that through collective action a transformation in the patriarchal social relations may be possible.

WPJP uses education as an entry point, largely through the Girl Empowerment and Education Programme (GEEP). By educating girls, the objective is to provide them with the skills and information necessary to make more positive choices in their lives and to open up more opportunities. According to Gbappy-Brima, this also empowers them to become change agents in their community, supporting WPJP's second objective which is to transform the structures and practices that contribute to gender inequality and discrimination against women. Although WPJP explicitly focuses on women and girls, the organisation acknowledges the importance of also working with 'like-minded' men who can then play an important role in sensitizing other men within the communities in which they live.

As a relatively new organization, WPJP has received most of its funding from member contributions or small donations from individuals, particularly in the Netherlands where the director has some links. Increasingly, WPJP is being supported in some of its activities by INGOs such as International Alert, but this support tends to be tied to specific projects identified by the funders and does not necessarily provide money that can be used towards the

[309] Male participant at the focus group discussion held in Bo, 20 July 2007.
[310] Interview with Gladys Gbappy-Brima, Freetown, 16 January 2008

core costs of the organization. As it does not have an office in Freetown, WPJP also has the challenge of achieving visibility to the UN and other larger donors who rarely support women's organizations working outside of the capital region. This challenge links into critiques of liberal peacebuilding as being top-down and elite-focused, and the difficulties in ensuring that the focus of the UN's activities also reaches the grassroots level.

7.2.7 Regional networks: Women in Peacebuilding Network and the Mano River Women's Peace Network

In addition to the organisations operating at the national level, there are also two women's peacebuilding networks that have been active across the region. Conflicts in West Africa, including that in Sierra Leone, have important regional dimensions both in terms of causes and consequences. In recognition of this fact, some women saw the value in collaborating across regional borders to establish a platform for regional peace, building on the work that they and their organisations were individually doing at the national level. The value of a regional approach to peacebuilding is that these networks can help to empower and build the capacity, as well as increase the leverage, of the work that women's organisations are doing in their own countries. It also provides important opportunities for women to learn from one another, share experiences, and potentially develop new strategies for dealing with the challenges of peacebuilding in West Africa. Given its focus on state institutions, the liberal peacebuilding approach is not well-suited to address and target the regional dimensions of conflict, and as a result the UN's peacebuilding activities rarely build on regional initiatives, such as those of WIPNET and Marwopnet that are outlined below.

WIPNET was established in 2001 as a programme of the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, a regional civil society organisation based in Accra, Ghana. The rationale for WIPNET was that few women in the region had the capacity to become involved in peacebuilding of any kind. The goal of WIPNET was "to use 'women's peace activism' to

promote social justice. Women's peace activism was defined not just as antiwar activism, but as the deconstruction of structural forms of violence existing in everyday society" (Ekiyor and Gbowee, 2005: 134). Following an initial meeting in Accra attended by two women from Sierra Leone, WIPNET developed a training manual and identified trainers in West Africa who could continue the work at the national level.[311] Once back in Sierra Leone, Bangura and Gbappy-Brima then trained a further twenty women (five from each region) in Kenema, all of whom were representatives from gender-sensitive women's organizations, who could then go on and set up community-based chapters of WIPNET throughout the country.

WIPNET is perhaps best known for the role of its Liberian members in the Mass Action for Peace campaign, which took place in 2003. Given that the war in Sierra Leone was almost over by the time that WIPNET was established, the organisation has been more involved in peacebuilding, as opposed to conflict resolution, activities. As of mid-2007, the network had twenty-seven different women's groups who were members across the country. WIPNET has been most active in Southern Sierra Leone, where is a coordinator in Bo who arranges open-air meetings every Wednesday, and community-based peace groups have been set up so that women have somewhere to go to discuss their concerns and receive support from other women in the community.[312] The organisation's work in Sierra Leone has been to a smaller scale than in Liberia and other countries throughout West Africa, although in addition to the in-country programmes several of the Sierra Leonean members have also regularly attended the regional meetings and are active at that level.

WIPNET largely relies on funding through WANEP, although each country chapter of the network had to raise money for its focal points. Due to limited funding the position was often filled on a voluntary basis. According to Gbappy-Brima, who was for a time the country focal

[311] The two representatives from Sierra Leone were Barbara Bangura and Gladys Gbappy-Brima. Their exposure to SCR 1325 at the initial WIPNET training and their subsequent involvement in the national chapter of WIPNET were important factors in shaping their approach to peacebuilding in their own NGOs.
[312] Interview with Gladys Gbappy-Brima, Freetown, 16 July 2007.

point, the fact that WIPNET was a programme within a larger organisation was a significant challenge: "it's not easy to push for women's empowerment or women's equality in male-dominated organizations. I have found that very frustrating. They think 'she's here again with her women talk or her gender talk'. They still see WIPNET as something outside, as something not very important."[313] Externally, however, WIPNET has a strong reputation and some NGOs such as the Danish Refugee Council support the work of the network.

In contrast to WIPNET's focus on community-level mobilisation and empowering grassroots women, Marwopnet evolved to play a role at the elite level. The network developed out of a joint regional initiative of women peacebuilders in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea in May 2000, supported by the Geneva-based INGO, Femmes Africa Solidarité (FAS). Marwopnet has a national chapter based in Sierra Leone and principally adopts an approach of lobbying and advocating for peace at the highest levels. They also implement income-generation and skills training projects through the national chapters and on the initiative of individual Marwopnet members. For example, Marwopnet members have been actively monitoring the ongoing conflict in Yenga at the border between Sierra Leone and Guinea, which is a potential conflict flash-point in the future.[314] Guinea is seeking to consolidate authority in the region and is reportedly harassing civilians, particularly women who cross the border at Yenga for trading activities, and these female traders are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence.

Marwopnet is "a combination of all the strategic partnerships and networks of women in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone to ensure successful implementation of their platform for peace" (Solomon, 2005: 178). However, not only does Marwopnet work with members of civil society across the MRU, but they also actively seek to engage members of the political elite with the result that they are regularly invited to participate in consultations, meetings and

[313] Interview with Gladys Gbappy-Brima, Freetown, 26 June 2006.
[314] Interview with Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff, Marwopnet, 26 May 2005.

summits with the MRU and ECOWAS. Indeed, it was due to the efforts of Marwopnet that in July 2001, the leaders of the three MRU countries came together for the first time to discuss the need to control the wave of fighting sweeping across the region. It is therefore an important actor at the regional level, and has even had some success in bridging the gap between women's peacebuilding work and the formal political process.

This overview of some of the women's organisations involved in community-based and national-level peacebuilding work is not intended to be exhaustive or definitive. By providing a brief sketch of the goals of these organisations and the types of activities which they are engaging in it is already possible to see the different levels and areas of action that they target as compared to the UN's peacebuilding efforts. The discriminatory social structures and the forms of gendered power relations at the local level can constrain the impact of the work that these organisations are doing. However, at the same time, the desire to transform the role of women in Sierra Leone is a powerful motivating factor for all of these organisations and as the next section will demonstrate, even within the confines of the context, women's organisations have sought to challenge or at the very least, negotiate space around the gendered social dynamics.

7.3 Pushing the boundaries of the liberal peace: Bottom-up and gender-sensitive perspectives

In addition to supporting some of the same priorities as the liberal peacebuilding approach, women's organisations also adopt different methods with an emphasis outside of the formal structures of the state. These methods are defined more on the needs of the population as opposed to the exigencies of an externally mandated liberal approach, and therefore may go some way towards pushing the boundaries of liberal peacebuilding. This section will focus on the ways in which women's organisations in Sierra Leone force a rethinking or reframing of the liberal peace pillars of security, governance and economic reform.

The analysis presented in chapter 6 has already argued that the UN-led reforms under the three main pillars of security, governance and development liberal peacebuilding largely excluded women and failed to adequately employ a gender perspective. The result was a gendered virtual peace in Sierra Leone which was not experienced equally by men and women, and the blueprint approach used by the UN that did not pay adequate attention to the specific dynamics of the local context. Women's organisations could in fact be a valuable resource for not only supporting but also expanding the remit and nature of the pillars, and offering an alternative or counter to liberal peacebuilding. Rather than emphasising top-down, formal processes, women's organisations have instead emphasised human security, gender-sensitive governance and economic empowerment. These concepts are complementary to the values espoused by the international community, but too rarely turned into practice in peacebuilding processes.

7.3.1 Fostering human security

As detailed in chapter 6.1, the security reforms undertaken by the international community have focused on the state and the formal provision of security and justice. Despite the sometimes contradictory rhetoric within the liberal peacebuilding approach, security in practical terms is taken to mean an absence of armed violence, or negative peace, and little attention has been given to gendered insecurities. Correspondingly, the liberal feminist approach of the UN has been to support gender and human rights training for the police and army, and efforts to encourage more women to be integrated into the key security structures. The UN has also supported the reform of discriminatory legislation, and some training of paralegals and other justice providers and support for women's increased access to formal justice structures.

It seems that in practice, broader issues related to human security rarely informed the security reform process. Although the post-conflict phase implies a transition out of violence and the

beginning of the peacebuilding phase, it is rarely peaceful for those who live in the daily reality of a country emerging from years of war. From her experiences as a gender advisor in UN missions such as MINUSTAH in Haiti, Puechguirbal reaffirms this statement: "In terms of security, I find it really interesting that at the United Nations "security" means that we secure the UN staff, and then we secure the UN assets, and eventually we secure the population [...] What is the security concept for the UN? Security is a very broad concept, and in my experience I've seen that on the ground the population is expecting more than the UN means by it" (Puechguirbal and Enloe 2004: 4).

We have seen that the activities of women's organisations in Sierra Leone frequently focused on social issues, with the main objectives being securing a livelihood or improving the living conditions in households and communities. According to Porter, "how many women understand peace processes differs from the norm – typically it includes attending to practical material needs that further a sense of security. It is hard to feel secure if you are starving, your shack has been destroyed or your water source is polluted" (2007: 26). This was repeatedly confirmed during the field research, particularly in focus group discussions and workshops held outside of Freetown.[315] . Customary traditions and the division of labour also meant that the economic security of women living in rural areas was precarious, making a more holistic approach to livelihoods and basic needs central to their perception of physical security as well. Human security, not national security or stabilisation, was therefore a central objective of organisations such as GEMS and WIPNET

Women have faced specific threats to their physical security as well as pressure to resume traditional gender roles, and there has often been a backlash against any new space that they have attempted to carve out for themselves during the conflict.[316] Women also face specific challenges from returning male ex-combatants and legal and economic obstacles to their daily

[315] Focus group discussion held in Bo, 20 July 2007; Makeni and Bo Alert workshops March 2009.
[316] Focus group discussion held in Bo, 20 July 2007.

lives, in addition to increased levels of crime and domestic violence (Karamé 2001: 23-4). Indeed, for most people, the official end of the conflict and the ensuing DDR process, post-conflict elections and development efforts did not necessarily equate to peace or security. As one Sierra Leonean woman pointed out, "when there is a high level of wife-beating and gender-based violence there is no peace."[317] According to another civil society representative, "You can't be at peace when you're working out where to get water from or how to send your kids to school".[318] How peace and security are defined, and by whom, then become very important questions. Women's organisations in Sierra Leone appeared to be more open and receptive to these alternative definitions, challenging the narrow approach adopted by the UN that too often leads to a virtual peace.

Women's organisations have sought to ensure that women can play a role in defining peace and security. Some organisations such as Marwopnet, through their connections with INGOs, have been able to participate in international fora such as the PBC meetings where these very questions are discussed.[319] At the other end of the spectrum, the community-based workshops organised by WPJP and other organisations provide a forum for women to learn about their rights, issues related to access to justice, and the obligations that the government has towards them. At the same time, rural women can identify their needs and priorities which the leaders of the larger organisations presented in this chapter can channel back up to policymakers in the GoSL and UN. On a more localised level, the SLMWA has provided a degree of security to market women in different towns throughout Sierra Leone by educating them about their rights and in some locations also providing physical protection.[320] The Freetown bias of the UN has therefore to a certain extent been overcome, although there is still a disconnect evident between rural and urban areas even in the work of these women's organisations.

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[317] Hannah Koroma, Women against violence and exploitation society, focus group discussion in Bo, 20 July 2007.
[318] Rosaline McCarthy, SLWF, 4 July 4 2006.
[319] For example, Nana Pratt (Marwopnet) was invited to deliver a statement at the PBC's Informal Country-Specific Meeting on Sierra Leone, "Discussion on the Annotated Outline of the Sierra Leone Compact", held in New York on 9 May 2007.
[320] Focus group discussion with members of the SLMWA, Freetown, 14 January 2008.

Supporting reintegration is another area where women's organizations have been particularly active, particularly because of gendered practice that prevented women in Sierra Leone from undergoing the traditional cleansing rituals that would have facilitated their return into community life (Schroven, 2006: 53). The UN has focused on the disarming and demobilization of combatants, in other words the 'DD' of DDR, at the expense of the critical, and longer term, process of reintegration. Women's organizations tend to have better networks and access to the communities throughout the country than UN officials, and have therefore initiated programmes that offered sustained and holistic support to returning and reintegrating populations, particularly for girls and women who were involved in the fighting forces. One survey found that 55% of the study population believe that women in the community had played a significant role in their reintegration, as compared to the 20% and 32% who believed traditional leaders and international aid workers respectively had played a similar role (Mazurana and Carlson, 2004: 23).

In addition to providing skills training, these organisations also initiated community mediation, health and psychosocial support services, literacy programmes and provided other support as basic as providing food and shelter to women and girls who had no support from their families or community members.[321] This seems to indicate a more holistic approach to reintegration, and one that is more in line with the ideals of human security.

Women's organisations complement the liberal peacebuilding focus on the formal sector by linking up with and filling gaps in the informal sector, particularly in relation to access to justice and training Paramount Chiefs and other community leaders who dispense customary justice to the majority of the population outside Freetown. But their activities also seem to be informed by a broader definition of human security that recognizes the multiple and complex gendered security threats that exist in post-conflict contexts. Their activities are often defined

[321] Interviews in Kono and Makeni, March 2005.

by the needs of the communities in which they are working, enabling a bottom-up approach to security, as opposed to one defined in national security terms, or a reform process that is targeted solely on the formal security apparatus of the state.

7.3.2 Building capacity for gender-sensitive governance

The liberal peacebuilding approach to governance reform places emphasis on the holding of post-conflict elections and the restructuring of governance structures at local levels. In Sierra Leone, the UN has attempted to integrate a gender perspective into these processes, with the liberal feminist approach leading to a focus on women's representation in formal governance structures. Less attention has been paid to the more difficult issues of how effective, and prepared, women are to take on these public roles, the degree to which they are subsequently able to influence decision-making, or how the various different layers of governance play out at the local level. According to Abdullah et al, "[women's] access to political office has been based on tokenism and the benevolence of male leaders" (2010: 38). Any efforts to engage women politically therefore need to recognise and transform the patriarchal dynamics that are still prevalent in post-conflict Sierra Leone. Women's organisations could potentially be used as a platform for enhancing women's political engagement, and this began to be the case during the war years, as was seen in chapter 4 in the account of the SLWMP.

A further problematic assumption of the liberal feminist approach is that elected women will inherently represent their female constituents and ensure that gender issues are brought into the political sphere. However, this is not necessarily the case, and according to the findings from this research, political affiliations in Sierra Leone quickly trump any affinity women may feel to a broader gender agenda.[322] The challenge of politically empowering the many women who are illiterate, uneducated and living in rural areas is immense, as is ensuring that they have access to improved services and infrastructure at the community level.

[322] Interview with Christiana Solomon, 29 April 2005.

As noted in chapter 6, the local elections in 2004 and the process of decentralisation were intended to bring politics and service provision closer to the population. However, the failure to fully recognise and engage with the persistent inequalities and discriminatory norms and structures that existed in Sierra Leone meant that women were often marginalised from these processes. Had the UN been more effective at integrating a gender analysis into its programming, then some of the power dynamics and patriarchal traditions that excluded women from formal governance structures may have been identified. Despite, or perhaps as a result of, the failure of the UN to concretely address the need for supporting women at the local level, many women's groups and small community-based organisations were fulfilling this function.

For example, along with WPJP, the Forum for Women's Empowerment and Development in Bo is an example of a locally-based organisation that is filling this gap.[323] This organisation is a network of 100 women's organizations based throughout nineteen different chiefdoms (fifteen in Bo and four in Pujehun), and their goal is to increase women's role in community decision-making as well as local politics. Their activities include training women in leadership and how to be active stakeholders in their communities, including training women as observers for the 2007 national elections. They also train women in administration and basic business skills required for the effective management of small organizations, as well as working with women in Bo district to educate and sensitise them about their rights through workshops, radio programmes and leadership training. If funded, these types of activities can have a multiplier effect, where training a few key community leaders makes it possible to reach a much greater proportion of grassroots women. It is these women who need to be empowered to participate in decision-making at the community level and get their voices heard by the new ward development councils and other similar structures that were set up as a result of the decentralisation process.

[323] Bo focus group discussion, 20 July 2007. Regina Kamara, WIPNET; Sophie Alieu, Forum for Women's Empowerment and Development; Hannah Koroma, Women against Violence and Exploitation Society.

Many of the women's organisations interviewed indicated that they also try to address issues relating to gender-based violence, which they perceive as critical to empowering women and enabling them to feel secure, participate in decision-making and achieve some degree of independence and agency.[324] Emphasising this point, one participant in a focus group discussion held in Bo in 2007 said, "women have worked so hard for peace for so long, but now how do they continue because there is no peace in the home, no peace in their hearts."[325] This comment referred to the high prevalence of domestic violence and gender-based violence more generally throughout many communities in Sierra Leone, that is still occurring despite the fact that 'peace' has supposedly been established.

Women's organisations such as WPJP and FAWE work with community structures in addition to the formal political ones to carve out space for women to empower them to engage in decision-making in the home. This contributes to the transformation of discriminatory attitudes related to women's roles in public life, and also empowers women to engage more in making decisions about themselves, their children and their community life. Given the importance of secret societies, customary and religious institutions and traditional leadership structures, raising the awareness of key influential figures within the community is a critical for initiating momentum around changing attitudes and practices on violence against women and gender roles and the division of labour.[326]

This level of empowering women in decision-making in the home and community is particularly difficult for the UN to do given that most agencies tend to work through government structures, or with women's organisations based in Freetown, such as the 50/50 Group. Women's organisations that have links with grassroots associations or that are themselves active in rural areas are therefore able to act as an important linkage between the

[324] Interview with Barbara Bangura, GEMS, Freetown, 16 July 2007.
[325] Sally Kargbo, SLWF, focus group discussion in Bo, 20 July 2007.
[326] Interview with G. Jojo, UNDP Transitional Support Team, Kenema, 29 March 2005.

UN's focus on formal political structures and the often missed out local-level decision-making bodies. In this case, the liberal structures and approach could be translated into something more far-reaching by linking up more effectively with organisations that have networks down to the local levels.

7.3.3 Addressing women's economic insecurity

A central pillar of the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone has been the liberalization of the economy and broader efforts to address the endemic poverty and high levels of unemployment experienced in the country. Of all the areas of peacebuilding, this is the one where gender issues have been least addressed, for the reasons already discussed in chapters 3 and 6.3.This research has found that economic insecurity is one of the most common concerns of women in post-conflict Sierra Leone. The economic hardships that they faced led some women to engage in rebel forces or to engage in exploitative relationships (Abdullah et al, 2010: 41), but it also created some space for women to engage in economic activity. Solomon has demonstrated how women were able to take advantage of trading goods on the black market (2006), and Utas has also written about the economic opportunities that can be created in conflict-affected regions where the rules of peacetime do not apply (2005). Although women were economically active before, during and after the conflict, it was largely in the informal sphere, making their contributions less visible to the UN and other international actors. Therefore, the reality of women's poverty and exclusion from economic opportunities has not been tackled effectively by the UN.

Broadly speaking, the liberal feminist approach to gender mainstreaming has been to ensure that some of the employment generation and micro-credit schemes initiated by the UN also benefit women. This was important and provided some support to women, but generally only on a small scale and individual level. The UN-supported programmes have failed to challenge the gendered division of labour, which is a very important factor in efforts to address gender inequality. In Sierra Leone, women are marginalized from the formal economy and as a result

are pushed into jobs in the informal sector, most frequently working in traditional trades such as gara tie-dying or soap-making (Abdullah et al, 2010: 40). Combined with the traditions and cultural norms that can make it difficult for them to access land and credit, this means that women are rarely able to escape the poverty trap or to achieve a degree of sustainable economic security.

Almost all of the women interviewed during the course of this research, even five years after the end of the war, highlighted economic security as the single most important factor for their security and one of the keys to their ability to negotiate and transform gender roles and relations leading to more equality in the home and society. Recognising this, many women's organizations involve microcredit initiatives as part of their activities, but then use these as an entry point to then start building other skills and empower women. For example, for GEMS, the dimension of economic empowerment is critical to the other issues that they work on and in fact women's economic independence is inseparable from their ability to engage in political life or peacebuilding more broadly.[327] Given that women in Sierra Leone are so often involved in informal economic work such as petty trading, these organisations are also responding to the fact that women struggle to obtain credit and access employment opportunities that may be made available through the formal peacebuilding process. Whilst the UN also engages in these types of activities, the fact that the women's organisations more frequently use the model of *osusus*, and are more embedded in the community makes them more effective and sustainable. It is possible that the various *osusus* and micro-credit schemes that evolved at the community level capitalised on and were a natural extension of the trading and economic networks that some women formed during the war when they took up new economic activities (Schroven, 2006: 52).

[327] Presentation of Catherine Greenwood, Workshop at International Alert workshop, London, February 2008.

To date, there are few examples of women's organizations, or any international actors, who have been able to break down the barriers to women's participation in the formal economy. Indeed, while women's organisations systematically prioritise the need for a sustainable livelihood as a precursor to other dimensions of empowerment, their approaches tend to address the practical needs of women, but not necessarily the strategic dimensions of their economic marginalisation. However, while they may not succeed in providing sustainable economic security for women, the fact that these issues of household level welfare are addressed at all represents a significant divergence from the liberal peacebuilding model.

Engaging more with these organizations and using them as an entry point for security, governance and development reforms would enable the UN to better meet the needs of the communities in which they are working, by ensuring that their programmes are locally-defined and owned, as well as informed by a gender-sensitive approach. On the other hand, in addition to acting as an entry point, women's organisations push the boundaries of the liberal peacebuilding approach by including a wider range of perspectives, values and needs and engaging at levels where the UN is simply unable, or uninterested, in reaching. By working with these actors there is therefore not only the possibility to strengthen peacebuilding, but also to transform or reorient it in a more holistic, bottom-up way. The next section will now consider the different strategies used by women's organisations that push beyond the liberal peacebuilding consensus and liberal feminist approaches to addressing the challenges of gender inequality.

7.4 Different strategies, different outcomes? A framework for understanding women's peacebuilding activities

Whilst the liberal peacebuilding project is preoccupied with a reconstruction of state structures, women's organisations focus more on the transformation of relationships and power dynamics at the local level. Rather than seeking to create an ideal liberal version of

peace that Richmond has argued ends up being virtual rather than real, women's organisations focus on engagement with women and men at the grassroots levels to determine the needs and the multiple meanings and dimensions of peace in Sierra Leone. These locally-rooted approaches are more in line with the emancipatory version of liberal peacebuilding and may allow for more scope for transforming gender roles and relations than what is possible within the confines of the UN's liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminist approaches.

While the diversity of the nature and scope of work being done by women's organisations makes it difficult to categorise, El-Bushra (2003: 42-8) has proposed a useful framework for assessing the different ways in which women's organizations contribute to peace. Although the organisations described in this section work at different levels, with different stakeholders, and their goals are varied, some similarities can be identified in the strategies that they employed. It is important to keep in mind the specificities of the particular social and cultural context in which women's organisations exist in Sierra Leone, as this is the background and frame of reference for their activities. This context and the associated power dynamics have often constrained the possibilities for transforming gender roles and relations and building peace at the community level. Nevertheless, as illustrated in section 7.3, women's organisations have challenged and pushed the boundaries of what gender and peace mean and are for women in Sierra Leone, thereby also pushing the boundaries of the liberal approaches to peacebuilding and gender mainstreaming.

In this final section I elaborate on this framework and present some of the key components or elements of the approaches used by these women's organisations. In summary, the focus areas of these organisations according to this framework are: livelihoods; non-violence and conflict resolution; advocacy; leadership training; outreach and capacity building. I also argue that their approach to gender equality is an important differentiating factor, and so towards the end of the section I adapt and add to the framework. Together, these characteristics would

appear to support a situation of women's peacebuilding work closer to the emancipatory end of Richmond's peacebuilding spectrum.

First, many women's organizations begin with a focus on survival and basic needs. The work of GEMS and SLMWA demonstrates this through their emphasis on establishing sustainable livelihoods and providing women with the means to ensure economic security. In the case of the SLMWA, while the main activity was the provision of small loans, it "also transformed the perceptions of the women about themselves and contributed to an understanding of self-development" (Solomon, 2006: 466). Many of the grassroots organizations that provide women with access to healthcare and trauma counselling in the context of reintegration support also fall within this category. In describing some of the challenges facing women living in Kailahun, one INGO governance advisor stated,

> the women's organisations in this area have not really been able to come together. For these women, livelihoods are the most important thing and until they have access to basic needs they will not be able to devote time and energy to other issues. Most importantly, it is necessary to raise awareness because most women do not see the links between their poverty and vulnerability and decisions that are made concerning their welfare.[328]

A focus on survival and basic needs is clearly in line with the social justice emphasis of more emancipatory forms of peacebuilding (Pugh, 2009: 84-86), and is an important counter to the liberal approach that focuses on the formal, macroeconomic level. However, it is important to echo the caution of McKay and Mazurana that, "coping mechanisms and resilience demonstrated by women [...] should not be mistaken as empowerment itself" (quoted in Schroven, 2006: 119). In Sierra Leone, this orientation was due to necessity, rather than an overt acknowledgement by the organisations themselves of the need for a human security/social justice approach.

Second, despite their marginalization from the formal peacebuilding process, many women's organizations support peacemaking, which includes activities linked to getting women's

[328] Interview with Abimbola Akinyemi, Oxfam, 24 February 2005.

issues on the table at peace negotiations as well as community reconciliation and training in non-violence and conflict resolution. This can occur at high levels to get gender issues into peace negotiations and post-conflict reconstruction, such as the work done by Marwopnet, but it takes place more commonly at the informal community level in the case of the peace forums initiated by WPJP. Women's organisations have also been involved in many workshops and consultations, which provide an opportunity to identify priority issues for women, highlight the gender dimensions of the UN-led peacebuilding process and then negotiate and advocate for these issues to be taken on board. For example, after being elected as a member of the PBF National Steering Committee in January 2007, Marwopnet was able to use this position to advocate for a more gender-sensitive approach.

Both the SLMWA and GEMS developed alternative dispute resolution strategies that could offer some potential for dealing with ongoing conflict and violence at the community level. Such strategies could be effective in also dealing with some of the gendered security issues that are not addressed by the SSR process. In particular, their closer engagement with traditional and religious leaders provides a useful avenue into negotiating and transforming the discriminatory practices and culture of violence that places women's physical security at risk. If the UN heard and listened to these different methods of conflict resolution and prevention then it is possible that the priorities of the peacebuilding process might shift.

Third, many women's organizations undertake advocacy, either lobbying on specific issues such as legislative reform, or national campaigns to raise awareness about women's rights and to advocate for the inclusion of gender issues in policymaking. All of the organizations surveyed in the previous section undertook advocacy work, with some of the most effective examples being where they worked through networks of members such as WIPNET. Of all the strategies, this is perhaps where women's organisations in Sierra Leone have received the most support from the UN, at times in order to directly apply and advocate for the implementation of SCR 1325. This is perhaps unsurprising since this is also the area which

resonates most with the UN's liberal feminist approach. Nevertheless, the advocacy of groups such as FAWE or GEMS is not just focused on breaking down the barriers to formal equality in public structures, but rather also addresses violence against women and the need for community reconciliation; issues that were not prioritised by the UN.[329]

UNIFEM and the UNAMSIL gender advisor supported campaigns such as the passage of the three gender bills and for increasing the number of women active in national and local level politics. However, their support was focused on activities carried out in Freetown, leaving the women's organisation to bridge the gap between women's rights and policy-making at the national level and the reality facing Sierra Leoneans in the rural areas. SCR 1325 is one issue that has captured the attention of donors, and many are now rushing to fund advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns that are focused around the resolution.[330] Although by 2007 things were beginning to change, historically, very few women, even amongst the educated elite who were directors of many of the NGOs described here, were aware of the resolution or how it was relevant to the situation of women in Sierra Leone.

Fourth, many organizations undertake training of women in leadership skills to enable them to play more effective roles in politics and decision-making, both nationally as in the case of the 50/50 Group, or more locally as in the case of WPJP. Related to this is the fact that most of these organizations, perhaps with the exception of the 50/50 Group, acknowledge that a transformation in gender relations will be necessary before women can be fully empowered in a gender equal society, and so they at times work closely with men. This sets women's organisations slightly outside of the liberal feminist approach that tends to focus on bringing women into existing formal structures without necessarily looking at the underlying patriarchal structures and dynamics that contribute to women's exclusion and ongoing gender

[329] Interview with Eileen Hanciles, FAWE, Freetown, 23 June 2006.
[330] For example, in November 2006, International Alert received a grant of approximately £900,000 to support a three-year project on the implementation of SCR 1325 in Sierra Leone, Guinea and Liberia from the Danish government.

inequality, or the lack of capacity and skills that prevent them from playing more active roles even when the barriers to access have been removed. For women's organisations in Sierra Leone, the dynamics around family life, secret societies and religion made engaging with men a necessity.[331]

Finally, women's organizations often play a key role in grassroots outreach and the rebuilding of communities in the peacebuilding phase. This is perhaps the area where women's organisations and the other smaller local-level groups they work with play the most significant, and invisible, role. Activities in this area can include small income-generating schemes, women's support centres, skills-training programmes, health clinics, among others. The small organizations and training centres involved in the GLB project are an example of groups supporting this kind of work. This work is so important because it goes some way to filling the gap that is left due to the UN's focus on formal structures and urban areas, as well as meeting the needs of both women and men which may not otherwise be addressed due to the nature of the gendered virtual peace.[332]

Related to this concept of outreach are the multidimensional linkages that women's organisations create, from national to local and across regions. For example, organisations such as Marwopnet communicate women's priorities from the grassroots up to the highest levels of decision-making. Their regional approach also means that they are able to learn from strategies and experiences of women in other countries, and apply them in Sierra Leone.[333] Regional networks can also strengthen and build momentum around peace, as was illustrated by the Liberian women's 'peace train' that came to Sierra Leone during the 2007 elections to advocate for non-violence. The regional dimension of conflict and peacebuilding does not tend to feature strongly in the liberal peacebuilding approach, but for women's organisations

[331] Interview with Rosaline McCarthy, SLWF, Freetown, 4 July 2006.
[332] Interviews with Mariama Hadih, Adama Komba and Louis Smith, Koidu Town, 30 March 2005.
[333] Interview with Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff, Freetown, 7 July 2006.

developing these cross-linkages with women represented an important source of solidarity and knowledge-sharing.

I would argue that there is a critical element missing from El-Bushra's framework, and that is that women's organisations tend to adopt a gender-sensitive approach to their work, in contrast to the liberal feminist focus on women only. Interviews with women in Sierra Leone, both activists and those who are not explicitly involved in peacebuilding, demonstrated that an understanding of gender roles and relations is critical to their understanding of how women's position within society can be changed. The founder of the Sierra Leone chapter of FAWE makes the important point that "as we live in a traditionally male dominated society, it would be like preparing for a stillbirth of the organisation if provision for male participation were left out especially the participation of the Paramount Chiefs who are the traditional rulers" (Thorpe, 2006: 64). Indeed, it could be argued from the evidence that the approach of women's peacebuilding organisations is more 'gender-focused' than that of the donor agencies operating in the country.

It seems that local women accord greater recognition to the crucial role the men play in buying into the empowerment of women and in leading the attitude shift necessary for gender equality to become accepted. This could be explained by the fact that they are more familiar with the particular gender dynamics of the country and therefore more aware of the limitations that the patriarchal culture and attitude place on women's efforts, making engagement with men a critical aspect of success.[334] As demonstrated previously in the thesis, however, the liberal feminist approach of the donor organisations meanwhile assumes that women can simply be brought into the structures that already exist without a specific shift or significant transformation in power dynamics between men and women. What many women's organisations in Sierra Leone are seeking is social transformation, rather than the technical approach to achieving gender equality favoured by the international community..

[334] Focus group discussion with civil society representatives in Bo, 20 July 2007.

The relationships between men and women were critical in shaping social dynamics in post-war Sierra Leone. As outlined in the introduction, the conflict between the new roles and responsibilities women assume during war and the retrenchment of traditional practices as men return and seek to reassert old power dynamics has been well documented, and the case of Sierra Leone is no exception (Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen, 2002). Outside of Freetown, most decisions are made by men, often in traditional settings such as *Poro*, which women are unable to access.[335] This points to the fact that gender relations are mediated by culture, and working only with women or failing to fully contextualise their experiences as a function of both gender and culture will result in ineffective programming at best, and possibly even a backlash against gender issues. While being interviewed for this research, Jamesina King shared an example that illustrates this point. "There was a case where over 100 men sat in a bush in a secret society in the East of the country, and they wouldn't accept or vote for women candidates. You know, they just wouldn't accept the idea even through it was in a region where dynamic women candidates came from. There was little the women could do. These are the attitudes that we need to fight against."[336] In Sierra Leone, women's organisations at the community level were better positioned, and better equipped, to address and engage with these attitudes than the UN.

According to a statement submitted to the TRC, "male patriarchy and cultural beliefs persisted to the extent that women who form 50% of the population continued to languish in silence while their male counterparts exercised power over them and forged ahead."[337] Where they have been involved or engaged in sensitisation efforts, their roles in supporting women's empowerment have been important. This was particularly the case for paramount chiefs and community and religious leaders who have in some areas been able to encourage

[335] Interview with Christiana Solomon, 29 April 2005, Freetown.
[336] Interview with Jamesina King, Human Rights Commissioner, 19 July 2007.
[337] Sierra Leone Women's Forum (n.d.) *The situation of Women and Girls in the Pre-conflict, Conflict and Post Conflict Sierra Leone, Submission to the TRC Hearings on Women and Children*, May 2003. TRC report: 221.

transformation in traditional attitudes and the gendered division of labour. For example, one chief interviewed during this research reported that sexual exploitation and abuse and domestic violence within families had been problems in the community, but due to sensitisation via radio he now knew the proper response mechanism and was able to refer the cases to the authorities rather than resolving them through the customary system.[338] Another example is a workshop organised in December 2007 by the Kenema-based coalition on women's rights, where they brought together Paramount Chiefs from the Eastern region to raise their awareness about the three new gender bills that had recently been passed into law.[339] Engaging the Paramount chiefs and other religious and community leaders and training them in their responsibilities for implementing the new legislation is critical, largely because such a great proportion of the population accesses the customary justice system, particularly for issues relating to women's rights.

UNAMSIL, and the international community more broadly, tended to interpret gender equality as women's rights, which is a frequent problem linked to the liberal feminist approach. Donor interventions, perhaps unintentionally, reinforce the role of women as victims, since so many of the projects to assist them are targeted in this way. This may not affect the type of assistance they need or receive, but it can have a big impact on the way in which they are perceived within their communities. Mentioning women as a 'vulnerable group' requiring protection is the easiest and most common way of ticking the gender mainstreaming box in project reports and evaluations. However, this leads to a mentality of perceiving women as victims, rather than seeing them as actors with the power to change their own situation (Helms, 2002). The full complexity of women's roles and identities during

[338] Interview with Chief Nabi, Lewabu Community, Kakua Chiefdom, Bo District, 12 April 2005. However, it is worth noting that despite the Chief's assertions the overall perception of most of the women's organisations interviewed was that far too few of the GBV-related cases go through the proper channels, and that there are still problems with sensitising men in the community about women's rights. Nevertheless, he was aware of the various health, police and justice services that were available to victims of domestic or sexual violence indicating that the sensitisation had had some impact.

[339] Concord Times, "Paramount Chiefs School on Gender Laws", 5 December 2007, Freetown.

conflict and peacebuilding need to be recognised, and situated within the specificities of Sierra Leonean traditions and gendered dynamics at the community level.

7.5 Conclusion

As outlined in the previous section, underlying most of the work being carried out by women's organisations is a greater concern with human security, social justice and economic empowerment, than that evident in the work of the UN. All of these factors contribute to a more gender-sensitive and sustainable vision of peace, and one that is unlikely to be realised within the confines of orthodox or conservative liberal peacebuilding approaches. Several women interviewed during the course of this research emphasised this need for the *transformation* of the structures and practices of society, as opposed to simply reconstructing or maintaining the status quo with a few extra women added in for good measure. According to Porter,

> build[ing] peace requires culturally meaningful dialogue and reflection on what constitutes peace and security within different cultures, nationalities, ethnicities and for different groups of people, including men and women [...] in order to promote a peace that meets everyday needs, social, political and economic structures as well as relationships need transformation and thus the process of peacebuilding encompasses democratic principles of participation, rights, social justice and equality (2007: 33).

From the analysis presented in this chapter, it can be argued that these women's organizations working in Sierra Leone demonstrate some or all of these values. The UN's liberal feminist approach operates on the assumption that once the barriers to women's participation are removed, for example through quotas or other mechanisms, then they will be able to have an impact on peacebuilding. However, a participant interviewed as part of a focus group discussion in Bo put it differently: "If you're poor you don't feel safe and you won't be a good peacebuilder in the community."[340] Reflecting these challenges, the work of women's organizations is therefore more in line with the emancipatory idea of peacebuilding as outlined by Richmond, than what is exemplified by the UN approach, and is more of a

[340] Participant at the focus group discussion held in Bo, 20 July 2007.

process that relates to all aspects of welfare and justice, as opposed to a technical solution devised and delivered by outsiders.

Whilst this chapter has suggested that women's organisations represent an opportunity for emancipatory peacebuilding, it is important to be wary of presenting women's peacebuilding work unproblematically or uncritically. It can be easy to fall into the trap of making essentialist assumptions about women's peacebuilding roles, based on a standpoint perspective. These groups often face significant challenges both in terms of their own legitimacy, sustainability and wider impact, and do not universally present a contrast to the UN's approach of liberal feminism. Nevertheless, engaging more with these organisations would provide the UN with a greater degree of 'input legitimacy', one of the elements of the framework for measuring the success of efforts to mainstream gender in peacebuilding outlined in chapter 1. The contribution, potential and real, of women's organisations to bring about a more gender-sensitive peace in Sierra Leone will be returned to in more detail in the next chapter.

It is also important to recognise the potential down-side or danger that in seeking to collaborate with the UN and engage in the peacebuilding process, these organisations will be co-opted. Whilst this thesis argues for more interaction between the formal and informal spheres, what could in fact happen is that rather than transforming the UN's approach and forcing these actors to rethink how they define and implement peacebuilding, the women's organisations could have to conform to the liberal peacebuilding model and become institutionalised into this kind of approach.

It is clear that engaging with women's organizations is not a panacea, but failing to recognise their contribution equally risks the perpetuation of a gendered virtual peace. The fieldwork carried out for this thesis demonstrated the depth, complexity and innovation of women's peacebuilding work in Sierra Leone, that did more often than not offer something different to

the liberal solutions to violent conflict and gender inequalities. The challenge for the UN and other actors therefore is to find a way to build on and recognise this work without resulting in the depoliticisation of women, taking away their agency or resorting to essentialist assumptions about their roles (Helms, 2002). It is also important to note that despite offering an important counter to the liberal feminist approach of the UN, the women's movement in Sierra Leone "was not able to fully use the opportunities created by the war to advance a women's agenda for gender equality and empowerment in the post-conflict reconstruction process" (Abdullah et al, 2010: 44). The gendered power dynamics in Sierra Leone, some of which were highlighted in the beginning of this chapter, shaped and limited the possibility of local actors to transform Sierra Leone society and traditions along more gender equitable lines, even if their activities recognised and engaged with these dynamics to a greater extent than the UN and other international actors did.

Richmond and Franks suggest that the international community should behave as an 'enabler' for local dynamics to emerge and shape the peace being built, rather than leading on top-down 'international engineering projects' (2009: 183). This resonates with the work of women's organisations such as WPJP who attempt to act as intermediaries, providing this linkage between the bottom-up, local peace dynamics, and the technical capacity and liberal underpinnings of the UN. Arguably, their approach to peace and security differed from the concept of the liberal peace that is defined in Western terms. If the formal peacebuilding policies and practice were informed by these perspectives then the resulting activities may be more successful in providing opportunities to empower women and challenge discriminatory structures, practices and values that result in the perpetuation of gender inequalities in Sierra Leone. These insights would not only be useful for efforts to integrate gender but also to the peacebuilding process more broadly, and they present a challenge to the solutions put forward by the dominant liberal feminist approach of the UN. Most importantly, however, this might enable the creation of something more than a gendered virtual peace.

CHAPTER 8. CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Despite the general consensus that Sierra Leone has moved out of the post-conflict phase and into long-term development, the peace that has been built in the eight years since the end of the conflict remains fragile and uneven. Although armed violence has ceased, there have been two rounds of successful national elections and decentralisation is proceeding apace, a closer examination of these peacebuilding reforms reveals a different picture. At the end of 2007, women remained marginalised and excluded from formal economic and political life and gendered insecurities such as sexual violence remained rife. Furthermore, the absence of gender analysis from the policies and programmes of the UN has meant that too frequently, women have been marginalised from the benefits of the peacebuilding process and the gender dimensions of these processes remain unacknowledged. The liberal peacebuilding focus on formal structures and top-down peacebuilding reforms missed the opportunity to engage with and support the work of local women's organisations who were also seeking to build a more gender equal peace.

This thesis has sought to make both an empirical and theoretical contribution to the study of gender and peacebuilding. In answer to the research agenda set out at the beginning of the thesis, it can be seen that the liberal feminist approach to gender mainstreaming resulted in the UN failing to engage and empower women in a meaningful way and it has made little contribution to a transformation in gender roles and relations in Sierra Leone. In short, for the majority of Sierra Leoneans it remained a virtual and gendered peace. There are three main conclusions that can be extrapolated from this research, and each will be discussed in detail in this final chapter.

First, the policies developed by the UN to guide its activities in Sierra Leone reflected a specific understanding of what constitutes peace, and led to the prioritisation of certain issues over others in the peacebuilding process as demonstrated in chapter 5. Local actors were not

able to influence the externally-defined discourse around peacebuilding, and gender issues in particular were not seen as relevant to the central objectives of achieving stability and development in line with the concept of an ideal, liberal peace. Rather than recognising that men and women define and experience peace and security in different ways, the UN adopted a one-size-fits-all approach that narrowed the parameters and nature of peace in post-conflict Sierra Leone.

Second, I argue that not only has a virtual peace been built in Sierra Leone, but it is also gendered. Applying a feminist lens to the peacebuilding process in chapter 6 exposed the different ways that men and women were engaged in and were affected by the peacebuilding reforms carried out by the UN in Sierra Leone. Women in particular have failed to gain from the peace dividend, as gender-related needs and insecurities were all too frequently pushed to the bottom of the list of the UN's priorities. The UN achieved only limited and ad hoc successes in mainstreaming gender into its peacebuilding work which can, in part, be explained as a function of the liberal feminist underpinnings of its approach. Furthermore, the predominance of this liberal feminist approach can be understood as an extension of the liberal peacebuilding consensus given that it reflects many of the same biases and assumptions, and at the same time is subject to many of the same limitations and critiques.

Finally, one of the keys to moving towards not only a more effective gender mainstreaming approach, but also a more legitimate and emancipatory form of peacebuilding, may lie in the important work being carried out by women's organisations at the margins of the informal sphere in Sierra Leone. As argued in chapter 7, these organisations reflect alternative understandings of peace and security that call for a transformation in gender roles and relations in the post-conflict space, and demonstrate more ownership and legitimacy than the UN's liberal peacebuilding approach. By necessity, women's organisations tend to be more grounded in the local context, and while this means that they face the challenge of operating within the constraints of the specific social and cultural dynamics in Sierra Leone, it also

provided them with the possibilities to adopt a more nuanced approach to gender-sensitive peacebuilding. The analysis presented in chapter 7 outlined how their strategies offer an alternative and address some of the critiques levelled at liberal feminist and liberal peacebuilding approaches in chapter 2.

As outlined in chapter 1, Moser and Moser's framework (2005) proposes the three measures of success as adoption of gender-related terminology, putting gender-related policies into place, and the eventual implementation of these policies, to which I have added the fourth dimension of legitimacy. Chapter 4 illustrated the important roles that women played in bringing an end to the conflict, networking and building a momentum for peace, and actively resisting and adapting to the negative effects of the ongoing violence. Despite this, other than some attempts by UNIFEM and the gender advisors working for the other UN agencies, little was done to support and create a space for women's ongoing peacebuilding work to inform the UN-led reform processes. This opens up questions of legitimacy, both in terms of how the implementation of peacebuilding in Sierra Leone effectively met the needs of these groups (output legitimacy) and in terms of how they were able to participate in the peacebuilding process itself (input legitimacy).

Based on these three central findings, the thesis will conclude by assessing the success of the peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone, in particular which dimensions of the liberal peacebuilding, and liberal feminist, project could be preserved at the same time as moving towards a more emancipatory form of peacebuilding. Paris highlights the following challenge: "if both the heavy footprint and the light footprint are problematic, what is the 'right' footprint?" (2010: 343). Arguably, the right footprint to support gender and peacebuilding lies somewhere in between the formal and informal discourse and approaches, and moving the one-size-fits-all, top-down approach to something that is more responsive to and driven by locally-contextualised strategies in line with the principles of human security and social

justice. The findings of this thesis demonstrate that despite its limitations, liberal peacebuilding may still offer promise as a framework for building a gender-sensitive peace.

8.1 What kind of peace is being built?

The first main finding of the thesis is that peace and security in Sierra Leone have been conceptualised in specific ways that have excluded and devalued gender issues, suggesting that the first criteria of the adoption of gender-related terminology has not been met. The UN defined peace in Sierra Leone in liberal, universalist terms, which failed to capture the complexities and differences in the peacebuilding priorities of men and women at the local level. In chapters 2 and 3, I suggested that feminist critiques can add depth and substance to debates around liberal peacebuilding by asking questions about what and who counts. Examples of policies such as the PRSP and PBRS seem to reinforce the point that women and gender did not count, since other than making passing references to gender issues or more commonly 'women' as a homogenous group, little attempt was made to understand the gender-differentiated insecurities and vulnerabilities that existed in post-conflict Sierra Leone.

Comparing the peacebuilding priorities articulated by the UN through the key policy documents outlined in chapter 5 with the focus of the women's organisations highlighted in chapter 7 also points to the differences between the liberal peacebuilding discourse and local priorities in the post-conflict context. Given that the UN's policies directly informed the security, governance and economic reform processes, it appears that it was these external actors who were defining and describing peace in Sierra Leone. This lack of participation of local people in the process of defining the post-conflict agenda meant that it did not fully respond to women's needs, and was not necessarily perceived as legitimate in their eyes.[341]

[341] The failure to fully acknowledge and integrate perspectives from civil society was mentioned several times during the roundtable held with civil society groups in Freetown, 19 July 2007. This is also echoed in Street et al, 2007.

Pankhurst has suggested that "where the question of pursuing greater gender equality does arise at the point of a settlement, it is not uncommon for it to be seen as neither essential, nor urgent in peacebuilding" (2004: 3). In Sierra Leone, not only was it not seen as essential or urgent, but it appears that gender was not even seen as relevant at a conceptual level. As an example, the language in the PBRS around peace consolidation focused on stability and the restoration of state authority and strengthening of formal institutions. Local women's groups, on the other hand, were shown to approach peace from a perspective of human security, reconciliation and social justice. The examples cited in chapter 7 illustrated that women's organisations prioritised a different set of issues such as addressing gender-based violence, economic security and the role of reconciliation in community-based reintegration. However, these bottom-up approaches and priorities rarely reach prominence within the UN's liberal peacebuilding agenda (Richmond and Franks, 2009: 182-3), and the case of Sierra Leone reinforces this point. There is clearly a mismatch between the UN's vision of what peace in Sierra Leone looks like and the perspective of local actors, and as the next section will demonstrate, the absence of gender in the peacebuilding terminology and discourse resulted in an absence of gender in practice.

In the case of liberal peacebuilding, there is evidence that the discourse has expanded to recognise women's needs and rights, however too often this was in an uncritical and unproblematic way. This makes it difficult to demonstrate success within the parameters of the Moser and Moser (2005) framework. Indeed, from the empirical evidence presented in this thesis, it is apparent that gender was frequently taken to mean women when it was included in the peacebuilding policies. For example, although the Compact highlighted gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, the activities listed in the implementation matrix relate more to women specifically, and do not address the more complex issues of transforming gender roles and relations. This is in contrast with the organisations presented in chapter 7 that adopted a more holistic approach to gender equality. Their different strategies appear to have evolved in part due to the necessity of engaging with the patriarchal culture,

making it necessary to perceive gender issues not just as about women, but also in relation to male roles and identities.[342]

There is also the deeper problem in that assigning the issues as 'women's issues' leads to the perception that they are not relevant to the central security, political and economic concerns of peacebuilding. This can be understood as a by-product of the liberal feminist orientation of the UN. As Cohn argues,

> the impact of gender discourse [...] is that some things get left out. Certain ideas, concerns, interests, information, feelings, and meanings are marked in national security discourse as feminine, and are devalued. They are therefore, first, very difficult to *speak* [...and] second, they are very difficult to *hear*, to take in and work with seriously, even if they *are* said" (1993: 231).

It is acknowledged that ensuring gender equality is a lengthy, sensitive and time-consuming process. Furthermore, women's needs and priorities can change frequently according to the context which requires flexibility in analysis and approach, but UN structures often prevent this. The UN and other donor agencies have clearly played an important role in setting the agenda in post-conflict Sierra Leone, and in large part the government responds to what it perceives the desires of donors are.[343] In this respect, it is even more important that the UN begins to recognise the centrality of gender issues to other aspects of the transition to peace in Sierra Leone. The majority of UN staff interviewed were able to cite the fact that 'gender equality is a cross-cutting issue in all of our projects', but understanding of what this actually means was limited. The case study of Sierra Leone illustrated that the UN and other external actors displayed a reluctance to place women front and centre of reconstruction initiatives, preferring to ghettoise them in 'women's projects', if at all, and failing in their stated policies that claim gender equality is a priority issue. This also alludes to challenges in meeting the second criteria for measuring success of putting gender-related policies into place (Moser and

[342] Interview with Lucinda Asmara, WILPF Sierra Leone, 20 June 2006.
[343] Interview with Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff, Mano River Women's Peace Network (MARWOPNET), May 26th 2005. For example, the PRSP reflects donor priorities in Sierra Leone and is clearly written with an international donor audience in mind.

Moser, 2005) which was explored in detail in chapters 5 and 6 and will be returned to in more detail in the subsequent section.

The UN has been criticised for perceiving and acting as if gender equality is something that can be postponed, until after all the other 'more important' concerns have been dealt with (Abdela, 2004: 89-92). Clearly, gendered assumptions inform what key actors believe 'matters' in terms of securing peace. By looking at who is making the decisions, and whose viewpoints are feeding into these decisions, it may be possible to determine where donor priorities in peacebuilding lie. As pointed out by Mackay, "A 'peace' that neglects the interest of a large part of the community or that supports, reconstructs or in some cases strengthens the inequalities in the power structure [...[can not truly be called a peace worth having – and is unlikely to be sustainable" (2004: 107). Thus, there are consequences for the whole peacebuilding process, beyond the under-representation of women. The challenge then becomes to reorient them through feminist analysis to be more inclusive and gender-sensitive. The women's organisations covered in chapter 7 go some way towards revealing what more gender-sensitive and context-specific peacebuilding priorities might look like in Sierra Leone. However, because they are not necessarily perceived as legitimate actors with the expertise and ability to influence the processes and places whereby peace was defined, the notion of a liberal, universal – and gender-blind – peace prevailed in Sierra Leone.

8.2 A gendered virtual peace in Sierra Leone

This thesis has made the case that the UN adopted a liberal feminist approach to women's exclusion from peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, which plays some role in explaining why it failed to successfully integrate gender into its policies and programmes. The problem was largely perceived as the absence of women from existing formal structures, and that if they were given a more explicit role then positive change would occur in terms of their ability to participate in and influence conflict prevention and reconstruction activities. However, this

approach made it possible for the UN agencies to create the illusion that they were addressing gender issues whilst doing little to change the structural aspect of gender inequality, or to address the inability of women to retain any real power or resources to influence decision-making within Sierra Leone.

According to the framework outlined in chapter 1 (Moser and Moser, 2005), for gender issues to have been successfully integrated into the peacebuilding process by the UN, the existence and effective implementation of gender-related policies would need to be evident. Given that this thesis has argued that women were left out of the policy and planning around peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, and gender-related needs and interests were not seen as relevant to the broader goals of the peacebuilding process, this does not appear to have been a success. Due to their different access to power, resources and opportunities, men and women did not benefit to the same extent from the reform process, and nor were they able to engage equally. The assumption that all members of a population will necessarily engage in and benefit from peacebuilding reforms is therefore flawed, and in many ways women lost out and continued to experience high levels of insecurity and political and economic marginalisation, despite assertions that the overall situation had improved. This encapsulates what is meant by a gendered virtual peace, a term that I have developed and used throughout this thesis.

There are several key empirical examples from the case studies that are instructive and support this second conclusion of the thesis. In chapter 6, the analysis of the implementation of security, governance and economic reforms drew attention to the fact that these reforms often failed to recognise their gendered impact and dynamics. For example, as argued in chapter 6.1, women and girls were almost completely excluded from the DDR process, and failed to benefit from the training and reinsertion packages that should have helped them to reintegrate into their communities. Once this oversight was acknowledged, some projects were designed to target them and fill this gap, but the majority of women associated with the

fighting forces remained invisible and had little support from the international community. The specific cultural context of Sierra Leone made their transition back into community life even more difficult, given the stigma and discrimination associated with having been part of the fighting forces or having been subject to sexual violence during the conflict. This created a gap that was often filled by local organisations, who had more of a focus on reconciliation and reintegration at the community level, such as WPJP. These approaches were indicative of a deeper understanding of the specific context and attitudes that returning populations encountered, and allowed these organisations to develop more nuanced initiatives to community-based reintegration. In the same vein, the decentralisation process that was designed to improve public service delivery and engage people in decision-making at the local level failed to prioritise or meet the needs of women, and their civic participation and access to services remained limited.

As Olsson and Skjelsbaek point out, even when they are gender-blind, peace operations inevitably have unintended consequences on gender roles and relations in the societies where they are being carried out (Olsson et al., 2004). By consciously asking questions about who is being affected and how, and how men's and women's needs and interests differ, negative consequences could surely be better managed. Where some effort was made by the UN and other stakeholders to integrate a gender perspective into the reform process presented in chapter 6, it tended to result in a tokenistic approach of adding some women in without properly assessing the structural barriers that continued to marginalise them from the peacebuilding process. This thesis argues that in Sierra Leone it can be concluded that the liberal peacebuilding (and liberal feminist) approach to peacebuilding has not resulted in a successful articulation or implementation of gender-related policies.

The liberal peacebuilding focus on the formal sector also meant that the UN did not necessarily reach the majority of women who are marginalised to the informal sphere with little access to the formal institutions that are the site of the peacebuilding reforms. For

example, as part of the broader justice and security sector reform process, UNIFEM and the UNAMSIL gender advisor sought to ensure better protection for women, particularly from GBV. They focused their efforts on supporting the reform of discriminatory legislation, and although important results were achieved with the passing of the three new gender bills in 2007, the impact this had on women in rural areas was negligible. A greater recognition of the urban/rural differences and of the particular social and cultural traditions of Sierra Leone could have led to a more nuanced response by the UN. This is necessary since up to 85% of the Sierra Leonean population only have access to informal justice systems that are governed by customary law, and this is particularly relevant for issues relating to violence against women. Whilst the UN's attempts to ensure that new laws were in place in the formal justice system, the reality was that few people were aware of or protected by these laws, and GBV continued to be a major problem affecting women throughout the country. The norms and practices relating to gender roles and relations remained unchallenged and discriminatory practices continued despite the new legislation.

Another example that illustrates this point was the focus on microcredit initiatives as part of the poverty reduction efforts. Although this was one area where specific efforts were made to target women, the actual budgets allocated and scope of the projects was so limited that only a very small number of women were able to benefit from this support. Furthermore, these loans were used as a 'quick-fix', where the number of women assisted could be recorded and then used as evidence of mainstreaming gender, despite the fact that at the same time women were being left out of bigger projects focused on larger credit and support for SMEs. As I argued in chapter 6, although microcredit projects can be an innovative way to create income-generating opportunities for women, they are not a panacea for addressing women's economic insecurity. Furthermore, the way in which these projects were designed did not necessarily draw on the community-based networks that women had formed, or associations such as the SLMWA that were able to provide additional support to women beyond simply small amounts of credit. This reflects the limitations of problem-solving approaches of liberal

peacebuilding where blueprint solutions are applied, regardless of the nature of the specific context or challenges, and the opportunity to build on and deepen successful bottom-up approaches is missed.

Another important insight supported by this research has been that as long as the liberal feminist approach reduces gender mainstreaming to a women-focused, integrationist and problem-solving tool, then the marginalisation of women from peacebuilding can be perpetuated and the gendered structures and relations of society and institutions left unchallenged (Vlachová and Biason, 2003: 25). This limitation was illustrated in chapter 6.2 in relation to the decentralisation process that aimed to enable women to participate in decision-making structures. The 50% quota for women in the local elections of 2004 may have resulted in more women taking up seats in local councils, but it did not succeed in changing the attitudes of men or ensuring that they were able to make meaningful contributions to local politics. Women's organisations such as WPJP made more explicit attempts to engage men and community leaders, recognising that in the patriarchal culture of Sierra Leone, their support for advancing the rights and opportunities open to women was necessary. Without these efforts, men often resisted the changes to gender roles and relations such as increased representation of women in public life, as was seen in the local elections in one village in Kono described in chapter 6.2.[344]

There may be a pragmatic reason why a liberal feminist approach has been easier to implement in peacebuilding contexts as opposed to a more transformative agenda. By challenging the patriarchal structures and the underlying inter-relationship between militarism and masculinity, feminist approaches to conflict and peacebuilding have the potential to destabilise the assumptions on which mainstream understandings of the world are based, a fact which may explain the quite significant resistance that these approaches continue to encounter. The liberal feminist approach to gender mainstreaming fits more

[344] Personal interview, Koidu town, 30 March 2005.

neatly within the notion of a universal and ideal peace, characteristic of the UN's liberal peacebuilding model. Anything more critical would challenge the very basis of the concept of external actors being able to build peace in conflict-affected contexts. This could go some way to explaining why the UN tends to support the recruitment of women into the police during SSR processes, as opposed to considering alternative strategies for policing or security provision that may offer better protection for women. An example of such a strategy highlighted in chapter 7 is the conflict resolution carried out by the SLMWA when problems arose either between their members or involving the local community.

According to Hudson, "much of the progress associated with [SCR] 1325 reflects an additive and integrative approach to the international security agenda rather than a transformative and deeply critical approach to the way that the UN does security. Women's concerns, problems, and rights are still largely an afterthought, rather than an internalized and institutionalized change" (H. Hudson, 2009: 22). Indeed, this thesis has presented similarities between the critiques of liberal peacebuilding and the critiques of the way in which gender and the women, peace and security agenda have been mainstreamed (or not) into international peace and security policy. What results, and this could be applied to both the liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminist orientations, is an "ahistorical, apolitical, de-contextualised and technical project that leaves the prevailing and unequal power relations intact. This normalization is happening at both the level of discourse and material practice" (Mukhopadhyay, 2007: 135-6).

In reality, peacebuilding is not value-free and is an inherently political process, meaning that it will always be flawed if reduced to a technical solution (Newman, 2009: 42). This was particularly apparent in Sierra Leone where despite claims that the UN's peacebuilding efforts in Sierra Leone have been a success, the analysis in this thesis – and particularly demonstrated in chapters 5 and 6 – has demonstrated the extent to which the peacebuilding process failed women. Indeed, when assessed against Moser and Moser's framework, it is

clear that the policies and structures that were put in place to mainstream gender into the peacebuilding process resulted in a tokenistic 'adding-in' of women, with the result that efforts at implementation were also flawed, and based on a problem-solving, non-transformational approach. Despite these limitations, there were some small, localised projects such as UNICEF's work to reintegrate girl combatants or UNIFEM's gender training workshops that were successful in achieving some positive results as illustrated in chapter 6. Although not widespread or systematic, these examples illustrate that it is possible to put in place gender-sensitive policies as in the case of the FSUs (see chapter 6.1.2), reform legislation to provide more *de jure* protection for women's rights (see chapter 6.1.3) or to raise awareness of gender issues among the population through radio programming (see chapter 6.4). The implication is that even within the confines of the liberal approach it is possible to identify peacebuilding 'successes', which can then be built upon.

One explanation for the difficulties that the UN faced in Sierra Leone could be its tendency to, at an ad hoc level, integrate gender issues into existing structures and processes through frameworks such as SCR 1325 which contributes to turning a gender perspective into a problem-solving instrument rather than a critical lens (Whitworth, 2004: 120). This is one of the main paradoxes surrounding the attempts to engender peacebuilding practices. In order to engage with the dominant structures and processes of peacebuilding, it is necessary to 'speak the language', thereby dulling the ability of feminists to bring any real structural changes about. As Sandra Whitworth convincingly suggests, it is not clear that anything beyond the technical solutions and problem-solving approach would be compatible with the UN system.

> In order to be 'heard' within this context, arguments must be presented in a way that adopts the language of the UN, accommodates itself to UN-produced understandings of peace and security, and is alert to the hierarchies, protocols, and 'stories' by which UN personnel define themselves [...] Trying to insert gender into the dominant discourse of peacekeeping being produced within a UN context significantly limits the possibilities of critique (Whitworth, 2004: 120).

The major international organisations have adopted an 'add women and stir' approach, focusing on bringing women into existing peacebuilding structures and processes and making their social, economic, and political roles more explicit and visible. Certainly this has a value, and even if all that is achieved is making women more visible in peacebuilding contexts then this could be seen as some sort of a success, and could create the space for reform of provide a basis for an eventual challenging of the discourse and practice of peacebuilding. However, as the case of Sierra Leone has shown, the UN's liberal feminist approach ultimately made it unable to respond reflexively and appropriately to the challenge of promoting gender equality, given the failure to problematise the categories of women/gender and the one-size-fits-all, ad hoc approach to integrating women into the peacebuilding process. This was exacerbated by the divide between the UN's gender-related activities in the formal sector and the women's organisations working informally, which further reduced the possibilities for the peacebuilding process to take on a more nuanced approach. "In short, [...] actually living up to the gender mandate is an uninviting proposition that generates uncomfortable situations and offers all too few rewards. Not surprisingly, the operative maxim seems to have become 'add women and do NOT stir'" (von Braunmühl , 2002: 65).

8.3 Bridging the gap between formal and informal approaches to peacebuilding

It appears that despite some limited examples of isolated success, the UN has largely failed in its efforts to mainstream gender in the peacebuilding process, in terms of the gender-sensitivity of its discourse, policies and implementation (Moser and Moser, 2005). This thesis has argued that this failure can largely be explained by drawing on the critiques in both the liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminist literature. Given the shortcomings of the top-down, liberal approach of the UN and international community, this thesis also considered what could be learned from the rich and varied work being carried out at the grassroots level by local women's organisations in Sierra Leone. Critics of liberal peacebuilding have suggested

that local actors may offer the potential for transformation or a more emancipatory approach to peacebuilding (Mac Ginty, 2008; Richmond, 2005), and have been overlooked by liberal peacebuilders.

In analysing the case of Sierra Leone, chapter 7 presented the work being done by organisations such as GEMS, WIPNET and the SLWMA and suggested that they push beyond the traditional UN-defined areas of security, governance and economic reform to support more organic, bottom-up processes of peacebuilding. Their approaches are informed by the social and cultural context in which they are operating, and they more explicitly engage with and negotiate the different forms and levels of power in the post-conflict society. In terms of advancing gender equality, this meant working within the confines of customary law, patriarchal family relations, and traditions such as the secret societies to challenge the existing gender roles and relations. For many women, building peace in Sierra Leone also necessitated transforming the post-conflict gender order. The UN, on the other hand, failed to engage directly with gender dynamics, opting instead to add women in to existing structures such as the microcredit activities (see chapter 6.3.1) or increase their quantitative representation through quotas (see chapter 6.3.2), resulting in little more than a tick-box approach (Barnes, 2010b: 131).

Bridging the gap between women's groups and the 'formal' peacebuilding processes such as DDR schemes or decentralisation can be difficult and time consuming, but failing to engage with informal actors compromises the legitimacy of any peacebuilding process Indeed, there is an artificial divide between the top-down, donor-led process of gender mainstreaming and the work that women's organisations were doing at the local level, often informally. This resulted in the loss of expertise, knowledge and resources that could have contributed to the transformation of gender roles and relations, and also prevented women from benefitting fully from peacebuilding processes. Addressing this problem and adopting more bottom-up

methods could be one way of beginning to move beyond the liberal feminist approach towards something more in line with an emancipatory vision of peacebuilding.

This research has shown that the UN's peacebuilding activities were largely targeted at the formal security, political and economic sectors. For example, efforts focused on training women as candidates for national and local elections overlooked the fact that increasing the number of female politicians and councillors did little to change the discriminatory practices that excluded women from the public sphere. Similarly, reforming the security sector to include women as police officers and in the army and providing training in human rights and gender issues was an important step, but only went half-way in that the majority of the population, and particularly women, had little access to the security or protection of these actors. Furthermore, such measures do not change the masculinist culture of these security institutions which stubbornly resist gender-related security concerns such as gender-based violence as a key concern (Barnes, 2009a; Vlachovà and Biason, 2003).

One important shortcoming of the UN's engagement was therefore the failure to capitalise on Sierra Leonean women's deep involvement in peacebuilding in informal, local spheres. The UN most often engaged with the elite civil society actors concentrated in Freetown, reflective of the urban-rural divide in Sierra Leone and the tendency of donors to work with the most easily accessible individuals and groups, regardless of whether they are fully representative of all groups in society or not. Nevertheless, some of the organisations such as WIPNET and the 50/50 Group had networks throughout the country and given their ability to reach both the formal and informal spheres, had they received more support from the UN then they may have been able to bridge the gap between these levels. For example, the training and support that the SLMWA provided to market women throughout the country could have been one way to make the microcredit projects initiated by the UN more far-reaching and sustainable.

The insights from this thesis coupled with the analysis of the problems associated with the liberal peacebuilding model point to the need for both formal and informal peacebuilding (Paris, 2010: 363). The challenge is to link them up so that they do not occur in separate spheres but rather strengthen and build on each other, thereby also increasing both the input and output legitimacy of peacebuilding. However, the liberal peacebuilding predilection for focusing on formal structures makes this difficult. Informal initiatives are the key not only to the sustainability of peacebuilding, but can also make security, governance and economic reform processes more responsive to the needs of local people and can be a way of increasing the participation of the local population in identifying priorities, capacities and interests.

The UN tended to view men and women as separate homogenous groups, and as a result the needs of different groups within the population were not adequately analysed or addressed in the main policy documents such as the NRS or the PRSP. This links back to the need to understand the complex and multiple roles women play in post-conflict contexts, rather than simply assuming that they are a vulnerable group in need of protection. Given the frequent criticisms of a lack of legitimacy and ownership that are often levelled against the UN, it is important that space is provided for dialogue between the local population, especially at community level, and the formal institutions that are being supported through peacebuilding. This case study of Sierra Leone suggests that working more closely with women's groups could be one way of achieving greater accountability and more bottom-up approaches to the issues. However, despite the need to bridge the gap between formal and informal activities, even if more efforts had been made by the UN to ensure input legitimacy within the peacebuilding process, there would have been a number of important obstacles to overcome.

A first challenge is that most international organisations are based in Freetown, although some also do have offices in the regional centres. This makes it difficult for the UN to access the people living in large parts of the country, and from chapter 6 it was evident that they had difficulty in accessing, seeing or hearing what was happening at the grassroots level in Sierra

Leone. Organisations that do exist in rural areas, particularly those working at the community as opposed to district levels, tended to be ad hoc and operate independently with very little support outside of the members themselves. Furthermore, the low levels of literacy and education amongst women in Sierra Leone, particularly in the rural areas also influenced the types of assistance they needed and the degree to which they had sustainable capacity.

This top-down outsider perspective can often lead to the situation where funds are given to a few organisations that are able to register on donor radars and are therefore assumed to be legitimate, at the expense of others that may represent a wider group of stakeholders or perspectives. This resonates with some of the critiques of liberal peacebuilding that were highlighted in chapter 2 related to the fact that these approaches do not accord local actors with the same level of expertise or legitimacy as the UN actors driving the process. In reality, however, the women's organisations described in chapter 7.2 could certainly be argued to possess both the expertise and legitimacy that puts them in a strong position to determine the gender-differentiated needs and interests of different groups within the local population. The problem for them however is in achieving visibility and recognition in the eyes of the UN and other donors with whom they have very little contact.

Second, there is also the challenge that some women's organisations may compromise their own objectives and goals for transformation in order to access the funds necessary for implementing their peacebuilding activities. Women's organisations, like any other NGOs, have to fall within donor priorities if they have any hope of receiving support. As a result, "their agendas, projects, and activities are likely to be determined not by their own assessment of needs or their organizational capabilities and strengths, but by the priorities and concerns of the international donor community" (Kumar, 2001: 211). This cooptation of local organisations and the dilution of bottom-up approaches is another consequence of the liberal peacebuilding approach. In the case of Sierra Leone, there are several women's organisations providing training for women in politics and awareness-raising around the gender bills and

SCR 1325, which is in part in response to the availability of donor funding for these activities.[345]

The process of accessing funding from the UN, donor governments and some INGOs can also require specific programme design skills and the use of tools such a 'results-based management' that may not be familiar, or applicable, to those working for women's organisations (El-Bushra, Adrian-Paul and Olson, 2005). As one Freetown-based civil society activist argued, "donor structures don't make it easy to address gender issues. Women's needs change all the time and so it is necessary to be flexible, but the project cycle makes flexibility difficult to achieve. People spend too much time squeezing into boxes that are not meant for them so indigenous capacities don't have the chance to develop."[346] A parallel can be drawn here with the emergence of the liberal feminist approach of the UN agencies. It is possible that gender mainstreaming had to lose or adapt some of its critical focus in order to become a strategy that was feasible within the confines of the UN, a point that was already alluded to in chapter 8.1.2.

A third constraint is that although the number of women's organisations increased exponentially following the end of the conflict and much progress was made in terms of raising awareness about women's rights and opening doors to them politically, economically and socially, these organisations faced ongoing stigma and marginalisation, from both women and men. According to one interviewee, "men felt that when it comes to politics they feel that they should be the leaders, it's the culture, the upbringing, the background. Some of them don't even understand that women can even play a role."[347] As argued in chapter 7, women's organisations were better placed than the UN to understand and negotiate with these forms of resistance given their familiarity with the cultural context. Nevertheless, these power dynamics were still a major obstacle and at times even these local organisations were not

[345] Interview with donor government representative, Freetown, July 2007.
[346] Interview with Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff, Marwopnet, Freetown, 26 May 2005.
[347] Interview with Lucinda Asmara, WILPF Sierra Leone, Freetown, 20 June 2006.

always successful in overcoming them. The resistance can also come from women themselves, as once the uniting experience of conflict dissipates, it can be difficult for women's organisations to continue actively advocating for women's rights. According to Jeanette Eno,

> the women are tired [...] because we're hearing the same old rhetoric, time and time again, [and] nothing tangible seems to be moving forward. Women's situations, their quality of life don't seem to be improving in relation to some of the commitments that have been made at the international level and even at the national level. Now, until women have seen some difference [...] they're not interested" (quoted in Barry, 2005: 82).

Liberal feminist approaches that fail to fully consider gender dynamics, especially in relation to changed gender relations and division of labour, can unintentionally exacerbate this resistance (Olsson et al., 2004).

Another limitation is that women's peacebuilding work is often seen as an extension of their domestic or care-giving responsibilities, thus devoiding it of political legitimacy (Pupavac, 2005). According to one activist, men were supportive of the work that women were doing through the SLWF until they began to challenge them at a political level.[348] Experience from countries around the world shows that "women who work for peace at the grassroots level, often at the peak of atrocities and instability, create a local sense of community, but they rarely reach national prominence" (Meintjes, Pillay and Turshen, 2002: 10). This has direct consequences on their visibility and the extent to which the international community can access and support their work. It also has consequences in that the UN and many INGOs may support small-scale or localised programmes that empower women economically or politically, but these projects are still seen as addressing private issues and are not linked up strategically with broader economic or governance reforms. Placing too much emphasis on the importance of women's informal contributions to peace processes can in fact serve to reinforce the marginalization of women to the NGO and informal sphere whilst paying lip-service to the important work that they are doing (Hudson, 2010: 259).

[348] Interview with Rosaline McCarthy, Freetown, 4 July 2006.

Fundamentally, it seems that it comes down to the questions of who does what, who gets recognised for doing what, and who receives the support for doing what in post-conflict societies (Porter, 2007: 23). Where support for women's organisations does occur, it often happens too late to have an impact. It should not always be left until the aftermath, but rather women's needs and priorities need to be integrated and resourced from the very outset. According to one Sierra Leonean woman who works for a UN agency, women and their roles in society have changed, but the institutions and mechanisms are not in place in Sierra Leone to accommodate those changes:

> women have learned new skills, they have made a major contribution to conflict in terms of supporting their families and communities, women have also made efforts to build peace, and women have gone out in the ways that they knew and have made something happen. But at the end of the day what did they get from this? They were still not really invited to sit at the table and anyway not many women have the skills to do that in Sierra Leone compared to men.[349]

The peacebuilding activities being carried out by women's organisations rarely require massive amounts of money, but do require more time and sustained engagement to identify and build up the necessary relationships. The fact that many women's organisations operate at the grassroots level and have extensive reach throughout the country means that they have the potential to play an important collective role in influencing conflict dynamics and fostering efforts to consolidate peace. They can also be a channel for enhancing the input legitimacy of the peacebuilding process, by enabling more direct participation of the local population. However, the increasing fragmentation and limited capacity and resources of these organisations needs to be overcome, and the alternative strategies that they adopt to engender peacebuilding activities need to be better understood. This challenge of bridging the gap between formal, UN-led peacebuilding initiatives and the informal activities of local organisations is particularly stark in Sierra Leone.

[349] Interview with UN representative, Freetown, July 2006.

It is important to recognise that deep cleavages, divides and differences are present in any group of women or men within society, and Sierra Leone is no exception. Given its uncritical orientation, the liberal feminist approach may not be able to provide the tools for recognising these challenges, or problematising the relationships amongst women as well as between women and men. It is then also not well-equipped to effectively target peacebuilding interventions in a way that does not exacerbate unequal power dynamics or perpetuate exclusionary hierarchies (Lidén, Mac Ginty and Richmond, 2009: 594; Paris, 2010: 359). This points to the need to be cautious of the risk of 'romanticising the local', whereby local actors are seen as an unproblematic panacea for the challenges of building peace (Newman, 2009: 47). A balance needs to be found between recognising the need for a more legitimate, locally-driven peace and the necessary resources and expertise that international actors can bring. If this balance can be found then it is possible that the legitimacy of the peacebuilding process, in terms of input through participation and output through more effective implementation, will be increased and the likelihood of a gendered virtual peace decreased. The final section will now consider what this would mean in terms of a move towards a more emancipatory vision of peacebuilding, and whether or not some aspects of the liberal feminist/liberal peacebuilding project should be saved.

8.4 The potential for emancipatory peacebuilding

To repeat the analysis presented in chapter 2.2.2, two conclusions could be drawn about the future of liberal peacebuilding, and, by extension, liberal feminist approaches to mainstreaming gender in peacebuilding. On the one hand, the concepts, practices and approaches of liberal peacebuilding are flawed and limited by their problem-solving technical nature, thereby challenging the whole project of liberal peacebuilding. On the other hand, there is an argument that although the liberal framework in which peacebuilding is carried out is imperfect, there are strategies that could lead to a more inclusive and sustainable peace within the confines of the liberal peacebuilding approach. The purpose of this thesis has been

to explore the UN's experience with liberal peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, specifically examining how gender has been integrated into its policy and practice. Through the case study analysis, I have also contrasted the liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminist approaches of the UN with the locally-rooted and context-specific experiences and approaches of women's organisations and networks working for peace at the community and national levels in Sierra Leone. The question remains of what the potential is for moving towards a more emancipatory approach to peacebuilding.

According to the critiques that were presented in chapter 2 and then illustrated through the case study of Sierra Leone, both liberal peacebuilding and the liberal feminist approach to gender mainstreaming are constrained by being Western-biased and non-transformative, thereby limiting the very gender equality and sustainable peace that these processes are trying to achieve. Indeed there is a plethora of stringent critiques of the way in which the international community addresses gender issues, and countless others recommending strategies to overcome the obstacles and negative effects.[350] In theory, emancipatory approaches can escape the critique of being western-biased, and it is their very context-specificity that makes them more universally applicable. However, there are also pragmatic reasons for continuing within the framework of the liberal model, which theoretically is broad enough to accommodate some reforms and could enable or allow space for locally-driven processes to emerge.

Providing more opportunities for women's organisations to influence the setting of priorities in peacebuilding and enabling the UN and other international actors to be influenced by alternative perspectives in terms of programme design and delivery may help to find some middle ground between the top-down (liberal) and bottom-up (emancipatory) approaches to peacebuilding. This could help to encourage recognition that the international community's

[350] For example, see Charlesworth, 2005; Eyben, 2010; Goetz, 1997; Kabeer, 1994; Mukhopadhyay, 2007; Walby, 2005.

approaches to security, governance and economic reform that have dominated peacebuilding are not the only ones, and that locally-defined values and approaches to gender, peace and security are not only relevant but necessary. Blueprint approaches cannot accommodate the complexity of the processes and power dynamics that play out at the local level, and this is where local women's organisations have a clear entry point. The challenge is in finding a balance where local actors do not just fit into the liberal model, but the model itself emphasises local agency, social justice and human security. This points to the need to rework and rethink the liberal peacebuilding approach, creating space for something more bottom-up and legitimate to emerge (Paris, 2010: 363).

This is not to suggest that the liberal feminist model should be abandoned. On the contrary, the gender mainstreaming approach adopted by the international community has led to important advances in the situation of women and reduction of gender inequalities throughout the world. However, it is necessary to consider more carefully how this model feeds into the policies and programs donors design to deal with gender issues in post-conflict contexts. While a liberal feminist approach can be the most effective in an environment of limited resources and political constraints, the gendered nature of peacebuilding interventions requires constant questioning and indeed, significant transformation, of attitudes and structures that may be difficult to achieve through such methods. Bureaucratic obstacles, such as those highlighted in chapter 5.2, are all too commonly assumed to be at the root of the failure of the international community to address gender issues. On the contrary, this thesis has argued it is not only these obstacles, but also the way in which the overall gender agenda has been constructed can be inherently limiting. Even with major funding and dedicated donor staff it is not clear that gender equality in post-conflict contexts could be realized.

Nevertheless, this should not lead to a complete discarding of the liberal feminist, or liberal peacebuilding, approach (Paris, 2010). Although liberal feminists have been criticised for focusing on the public sphere at the expense of the private, the two are clearly inter-related.

As such, changes in the public sphere may actually shift and shape individual consciousnesses ultimately leading to transformations in gendered frameworks through cultural and social changes. Thus, liberal feminist theory may actually have a more far-reaching and radical impact than it would at first appear, and may allow space for more interaction between the formal and informal which would inevitably lead to more bottom-up and contextualised approaches.

Indeed, it is impossible to deny that adding women, although not the radical strategy that many feminists argue for, has some kind of an effect on the masculine structures and discourses from which they have been excluded (Zalewksi, 2002: 30). There is an argument for using the tools that exist in more creative and ultimately transformative ways, thereby leveraging the liberal approach for transformative change in both the nature of peacebuilding and mainstreaming gender (Subrahmanian, 2007: 119). Similarly, Paris argues that liberal peacebuilding provides more space than is acknowledged for a diversity of approaches and strategies to engage in conflict-affected contexts (2010: 339-340), which echoes the arguments that are made about gender mainstreaming having the potential to result in a more radical shift. As he points out, "the tools of critical analysis could just as easily be used to explore alternatives *within* liberal peacebuilding" (2010, 339).

One area worthy of future research would be to explore exactly how the middle ground or interplay between top-down and bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding could work in practice, and specifically how local actors can engage with the international community's gender agenda to arrive at a more transformative, holistic approach to addressing women's marginalisation and gender equality in peacebuilding. The work of the PBC/PBF demonstrates the impact that a small degree of participation and input from local actors can have at the policy level, but it is still unclear how a more emancipatory approach would look in practice. Exploring this is beyond the scope of this thesis, but it would be an interesting future research project. Authors such as Pugh (2005b) and Richmond (2007) have alluded to

the need for more emancipatory approaches, but beyond suggesting that 'local participation' and 'social justice' or 'human security' approaches are necessary, they do not offer any real alternatives (Paris, 2010: 356). In chapter 7, through the examples of the work of several women's organisations, I have demonstrated what these approaches look like in practice, and how they bring a different perspective to the liberal peacebuilding and liberal feminist approaches. Building on this and comparing different experiences across countries would be valuable in fleshing out a model or deeper understanding of a more emancipatory peacebuilding, and might point to the conditions and processes under which such approaches might be possible.

This thesis concludes that while limited and having largely failed to engender peace in Sierra Leone, the liberal peacebuilding approach and the closely linked liberal feminist strategies should not be entirely discarded. The focus on security, governance and economic reform should be retained, but more effort devoted to blurring the lines between the pillars, and incorporating less tangible and quantifiable dimensions of building peace such as reconciliation and household level economic security. The international actors implementing the liberal peace should find more ways to identify, support and build on locally-rooted initiatives by channelling funding, partnering and providing opportunities to learn from and respond to the priorities and needs they represent.

As Meyer and Prügl point out, "the significance of international documents is not that governments will automatically implement them but that national and local groups can use them to hold their governments accountable. In this sense, what appears as universal standards can be adapted and used in local contexts to further specific emancipatory agendas" (1999: 13). This is especially relevant in the case of peacebuilding where gender relations are in flux, and new spaces for re-negotiating gender roles potentially open up. In these situations it may be possible for these local actors, as well as a more sensitised international community to bring about concrete change through the limited tools available. Focusing more on this

level and the ways in which local women's organisations have reinscribed liberal peacebuilding and transformed their communities along more gender-sensitive lines may provide some insight into how to support an engendered – and real – peace in conflict-affected contexts.

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Appendix: List of interviews

Freetown

Enshrah Ahmed
Gender advisor, UNIOSIL
18 July 2007
11 January 2008

Abimbola Akinyemi
Governance advisor, Oxfam
25 February 2005

Lucinda Asmara
WILPF Sierra Leone
20 June 2006

Sybil Bailor
ENCISS
11 January 2008

Barbara Bangura
GEMS
22 June 2006
16 July 2007
14 January 2008

Marie Bangura
Secretary, SLMWA
14 January 2008

Kristy Baughman
Gender advisor, Oxfam
22 February 2005

Gladys Gbappy-Brima
Women's Partnership for Justice and Peace
26 June 2006
16 July 2007
16 January 2008

Mike Charley
Protection officer (Southern region), UNICEF
22 June 2006

Lory Dolar
SEA advisor, UNAMSIL
17 February 2005

Valnora Edwin
Campaign for Good Governance
17 July 2007
11 January 2008

Jeanette Eno
Director, ENCISS
28 June 2006
17 July 2007

Kadi Fakondo
Assistant Inspector General, SLP
7 July 2007

Jebbeh Forster
Programme Officer, UNIFEM
22 February 2005
25 February 2005
13 June 2006
27 June 2006
16 July 2007

Lorna French
UNDP
5 March 2005
28 June 2006

Karine Genty
EC Delegation
20 May 2005

Lenny Gill
21 June 2006

Felix Gomez
WFP
27 May 2005

Gebremedhim Hagoss
Chief, Peace and Governance Section, UNIOSIL
29 June 2006

Eileen Hanciles
FAWE
23 June 2006

Rosalind Hanson-Alp
Country manager, Conciliation Resources
18 July 2007

Richard Hogg
Country Director, DFID
25 May 2005

Abdullai Jalloh
US Embassy
29 April 2005

Ambrose James
Head of programming, Search for Common Ground
7 July 2006

Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff
Marwopnet
26 May 2005
7 July 2006

Theresa Kambobe
Gender advisor, UNAMSIL
25 May 2005

Fenella Kella
Director of FSU section, SLP
6 July 2006

Ellie Kemp
Deputy Country Manager, Oxfam
6 July 2006

Jamesina King
Human Rights Commission
19 July 2007
14 January 2008

Simon Kirby
IMATT
28 June 2006

Jeneba Koroma
Regional gender advisor (Southern), MSWGCA
13 June 2006

Memunatu Koroma
Deputy Minister, MSWGCA
28 June 2006
18 July 2007

Dr Lahai
FAO
25 May 2005

Brian Larson
Country manager, CARE
14 January 2008

Christian Lawrence
Campaign for Good Governance
17 July 2007

Rodney Lowe
Amnesty International
14 June 2006

Rosaline McCarthy
Sierra Leone Women's Forum
4 July 2006

Rafal Mohammed
Gender focal point, World Food Programme
16 February 2005

Hawa Musa
MoDEP
23 March 2005
26 June 2006

John Ngebeh
NaCSA
24 May 2005

Grainne O'Neill
Country Director, Irish Aid
4 July 2006
17 July 2007
11 January 2008

Dr Salua Nour
Programme manager, Employment Promotion, GTZ
17 January 2008

Eunice Njovana
Programme Officer UNIFEM
12 March 2009

Memunatta Pratt
Department of Peace and Conflict Studies
Fourah Bay College
21 June 2006

Donald Robertshaw
Head of Child Protection, UNICEF
6 July 2006

James Sackey
Country Manager, World Bank
2 May 2005

Jonathan Sandy
Human rights advisor, UNDP
7 July 2006

Alpha Sankoh
ActionAid
28 April 2005

Lovetta Sesay
Independent consultant
18 January 2008

Rashid Sesay
DACO
18 March 2005
24 May 2005

Susan Sesay
Regional gender advisor (Eastern), MSWGCA
22 June 2006

Brima Sherif
Country director, Amnesty International
14 June 2006

Christiana Solomon
Independent consultant
29 April 2005

Rebecca Stringer
DFID
17 July 2007

Mr Tandia
UNHCR
25 May 2005

Fernanda Tavares
Gender consultant, UNIOSIL
19 June 2006

Glenis Taylor
Child Protection officer, UNICEF
28 June 2006

Amy Tejan-Kella
Gender advisor, IRC
2 March 2005
5 July 2006

Janet Tucker
Executive Secretary, Marwopnet
6 July 2006

Harriet Turay
2nd Vice President, 50/50 Group
24 June 2006

Nnenne Uchegbe
Legal advisor, UNIOSIL
18 June 2006

Francesca Varlese
EC Delegation
12 March 2009

James Vincent
Independent consultant
12 January 2008

Bauke van Weringh
Transition Support Team, UNDP
4 May 2005

Mark White
DFID
7 July 2006

Focus group discussion with members of CSPEC
19 July 2007

Edward Jombla, WANEP
Mohamed Suma, SL Court Monitoring Project
Rosaline McCarthy, SLWF
Emma Kamara, Children's Learning Services
Harriet Turay, 50/50
Christiana Konteh, Council of Churches Sierra Leone
Christian Tokeh, Association of well-being of rural communities
Nana Pratt, Marwopnet

Focus group discussion with members of the SLMWA
14 January 2008

Bo

Sally Kargbo
SLWF (Southern region focal point)
12 April 2005

Josephine Mbaka
Social Development Assistant, MSWGCA
12 April 2005

Patrick Musa
ActionAid
20 July 2007

Chief Nabi
Lewabu community, Kakua Chiefdom
12 April 2005

Daniel Sesay
Social Development Assistant, MSWGCA
12 April 2005

Sister Philomena
Missionary sisters of the Holy Rosary
20 July 2007

Roundtable discussion with civil society representatives
20 July 2007:

Cecilia Koroma, NMJD
Rosa Vandy, UNHCR
Agnes Sia Tamba, NMJD
Tom Sandi, Bo District Human Rights Committee
Sophie Alieu, Forum for Women's Empowerment and Development
Amy Brima, Women's microcredit collective
Rosetta Sovula, WIPNET/Community Women Development Committee
Sylvester Bangura, My Brother's Keeper
Regina Kombe-Kajue, WPJP
Sally Kargbo, SLWF
Josephine Kpaka, MSWGCA
Maxwell Sesay, Partners in Conflict Transformation
Yvette Pratt, Women's peace association
Hannah Koroma, Women against violence and exploitation society
Lucy Carr, WIPNET

Focus group discussion with members of the Bike Riders Association
21 July 2007

Kenema

Chief Brima Navo
14 April 2005

G. Jojo
UNDP TST
29 March 2005.

Kono

Mariama Bayoh
Learn to Read and Write
30 March 2005

Mamie Conteh
Programme Officer, COOPI
30 March 2005

Daniele Gridel
Coordinator, COOPI
31 March 2005

Mariama Hadih
MH Classic Salon
30 March 2005

Adama Komba
Dynamic Salon
30 March 2005

Louis Smith
Kono Technical and Vocational Training Institute
30 March 2005

Focus group discussion with project beneficiaries
30 March 2005:

Kumba Amadu
Florence Fease
Hawa Moadeh
Sarrah Williams
Fanta Condeh
Aminata Kanawa
Rugiatu Conteh
Sia Kanawa
Asiatu Kamara
Sia Kwiwa
Fea Buffa
Yainkain Conteh
Adama Mansaray
Fatmatta Katta
Mariama Yappa
Adama Sesay

Makeni

Viktoria Jarr
Project supervisor, Caritas Makeni
14 March 2006

Focus group discussion with project beneficiaries
15 March 2006

Lois Kaju
Margaret Kanu
Rebecca Mansaray
Memunatu Conteh
Aisha Kamara
Kadiatu Sesay
Mariatu Kamara
Mohamed Sesay
Aminata Turay
Marie Turay
Maryan Kargbo
Juliet Turay
Mariama Sesay
Haja Kanu
Adamsay Kamara
Mariatu Kamara
Isatu Mansaray
Adamsay Forna
Adama Turay

New York

Sahir Abdul-Hadi
Technical advisor on WPS, UNFPA
23 May 2008

Natalia Zakharova
OSAGI
23 May 2008