



## War, intervention and development

### *Civil war in Sierra Leone.*

Narrator

Revolutionary United Front or RUF as it became known invaded Kailahun district in the East of the country from Liberia. The invasion sparked ten years of instability and violence which left thousands dead or maimed, and displaced. Even before the war, Sierra Leone was one of the poorest countries in the world. A decade of violence and destruction has only made matters worse. What infrastructure there was has been devastated, buildings destroyed, and the vast majority of the population live with out access to safe water, electricity and health care. Peace was ultimately brought about after several interventions by the international community; ECOWAS – the West African states, the UN and the British army. But questions remain. Will peace last? What will happen when the massive presence of the international community is finally withdrawn? Sierra Leoneans are asking themselves: whether peace is enough and whether the causes of the war are being addressed?

Hannah Foullah, Radio Democracy

Some of the problems that we had, and why for instance the RUF had people to fight was because there was a lot of unemployed youths. The youth problem is still here, I don't think that has been addressed.

Ambrose James

Search for Common Ground

We are like nearly half way, we are like 40% prospects of war to peace, but what I know is that Sierra Leoneans are tired, they don't want war again.

Narrator

Are the efforts at re-construction and development by the international community and the present government appropriate and sufficient? Or are they just helping to recreate a system that led to deep-rooted conflict in Sierra Leonean society and ultimately to the brutal civil war?

Zainab Bangura, former presidential candidate

"One of the failures of the UN mission, is that one you have not addressed the causes of the war, people tend to concentrate on the consequences of the war, the effects, the soldiers, the child soldiers, the building of the schools, the roads, the rape victims. You know you deal with those issues but you do not deal with the causes of the war, and we all know that every country that is coming from war is much more easy to go back into conflict than a country that has never been into conflict.

In the case of Sierra Leone the reasons for the war were massive corruption, mismanagement of state resources – unaccountable government, marginalisation of the bulk of the population. The three countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, 45% of the population is under the age of 15, in the case of Sierra Leone 60% of the population is under 30, these are people who are unskilled, uneducated, who are unemployed, who are very angry and bitter."

Narrator

Only time will tell whether that anger and bitterness is addressed and peace is sustained or whether violence returns to Sierra Leone. The odds are not good – statistically civil war returns to half the countries affected within a decade. But conceivably the odds for Sierra Leone, and other countries emerging from armed conflict, can be improved if lessons can be learnt from past interventions.

*Screen caption:*

In 1997 the army staged a coup against the newly democratically elected government. The UN responded by imposing food sanctions on the whole country.

Abu Brima, Network Movement for Justice and Development

The sanctions, when it is not the wishes of the people, when it is not backed up by the support of the people, then it is not useful, but if the people themselves demand it and they want it, and they themselves take some initiative to prepare, to set themselves up for any crisis, for any problem like it happened in Sierra Leone, it actually meets their needs.

Alfred Carew, Centre for Human Rights and Democratic Reforms

I have always believed that aid could have continued, humanitarian assistance could have continued – that would have softened the blow on the people. Whilst that was going on they could then engage the AFRC – for them to say that we want to support you, but how can we get out of this impasse.”

Davidson Kuyateh, Sierra Leone Teachers Union

We supported the sanctions and that was very very critical in letting the junta give way because it helped to stifle their grip on the ground.

Abu Brima, Network Movement for Justice and Development

The civil society, the general population, were ready for anything. They were prepared to do anything to make sure that the junta was actually overthrown, or at least removed from power, so in that particular context the sanctions were responding to the demands of the people, so it was very useful.

Davidson Kuyateh, Sierra Leone Teachers Union

What benefit actually would there be with humanitarian aid? And besides who would have guaranteed that with humanitarian aid in this country the Junta was not going to use it for their benefit.