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Becoming and Remaining a 'Force for Good' – Reforming the Police in Post-conflict Sierra Leone

Joseph P. Chris Charley and Freida Ibiduni M'Cormack

September 2011

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Summary

The Sierra Leone Police Force has its origins in the British colonial administration of the country. After Independence and with the consolidation of one-party rule the force slid into disrepute. The outbreak of civil conflict in 1991 largely decimated the force but the gradual restoration of peace provided an opportunity for police reform. This research report covers the aspects of the political and institutional environment that helped engender change, as well as constraints faced by the reform agenda. It considers how the officers actually carried out the task at hand, and shares lessons as to what reform tactics worked and which were less successful. While several challenges remain, the reform programme, centred around local needs policing has been largely successful, hinging on – among other factors – the appointment of a British Inspector General of Police, perceived to be neutral and above political machinations, supported by a core of reform-minded officers; long-term external technical and financial assistance; and a conducive political environment for change.

Keywords: Sierra Leone Police; SLP; police reform; security sector reform; SSR; community policing; local needs policing.

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Acronyms

ACPP	Africa Conflict Prevention Pool
AFRC	Armed Forces Revolutionary Council
AIG	Assistant Inspector General
APC	All People's Congress
CDF	Civil Defence Force
CID	Criminal Investigations Department
CISU	Central Intelligence and Security Unit
CP	Community Policing
CPDTF	Commonwealth Police Development Task Force
CSVs	Community Safety Volunteers
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DVU	Domestic Violence Unit
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EMB	Executive Management Board
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
FSU	Family Support Unit
IG	Inspector General
IMATT	International Military Advisory and Training Team
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IPAM	Institute of Public Administration and Management
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ISU	Internal Security Unit
JSDP	Justice Sector Development Programme
LNP	Local Needs Policing
LPpB	Local Policing Partnership Board
LUC	Local Unit Commander
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MoIA	Ministry of Internal Affairs

MSWGCA	Ministry of Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
NSP	National Security Policy
ONS	Office of National Security
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
R&P	Research and Planning
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SILSEP	Sierra Leone Security Sector Reform Programme
SJSR	Security and Justice Sector Reform
SLP	Sierra Leone Police
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
SSRIP	Sierra Leone Security Sector Reform Implementation Plan
TCG	Tasking Coordination Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOMSIL	United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (later UNAMSIL)

1 Introduction

Much has been written and made of the process undertaken to reform Sierra Leone's Security Sector, after the country's civil war ended in 2002 (Baker 2005; Albrecht and Jackson 2009; Albrecht 2010). The Sierra Leone Police (SLP), in particular, has received much attention. The purpose of this research report is not to duplicate the insightful work already undertaken, but to document the process from the perspective of Sierra Leonean Police officers who were key to the reform. This includes Assistant Inspector Generals (AIGs) Joseph P. Chris Charley (popularly known as Chris Charley), Kadi Fakondo and Elizabeth Turay, and Lance Phoday, the head of the SLP's Corporate Services.¹ It covers the aspects of the political and police force environment that helped engender change, as well as constraints faced by the reform agenda. It considers how the officers actually carried out the task at hand; and what reform tactics worked and which were less successful. By sharing the experiences of those who were centrally involved in the process it is hoped that the work may also provide insight and encouragement to other police forces in Africa, who are trying to implement reform in their own contexts amid similar constraints.

The report begins with a background to the SLP, particularly in the run-up to the country's civil conflict, which began in 1991. It then documents the journey of the SLP through the conflict, and the origins of the reform process. The experience of reform is then discussed, punctuated by personal accounts. Finally we discuss the challenges that the SLP still faces and conclude by drawing out some key lessons.

2 An introduction to and the descent of the Sierra Leone Police

The Sierra Leone Police has its origin in the West Africa Frontier Force which, between 1863 and 1906, was responsible for maintaining Britain's colonial frontier in the region, and maintaining law and order within the colony (essentially armed resistance against Britain's attempt to govern its Protectorate). From 1906 the force was patterned on the model of the British Police force, becoming part of the colonial civil service. Local officers were sent on various training programmes in the United Kingdom and/or other colonial territories. The Force was considered one of the best and well disciplined forces in colonial British West Africa.

The SLP gradually evolved over the years, and assumed the status of a community security force, moving away from a role that mainly consisted of defending British colonial interests. But it was a wholly colonial instrument, with its senior ranks staffed by retired and seconded British officers. Between 1955–56, the force was twice highly commended by Royal Commissions for its excellent

¹ The paper was written by Joseph P. Chris Charley and Freida Ibaduni M'Cormack. Freida Ibaduni M'Cormack also interviewed Chris Charley, Kadi Fakondo, Elizabeth Turay and Lance Phoday in Sierra Leone over a period of five weeks in December 2010 and January 2011. The information provided in the interviews was verified by/referenced using previous research on police reform in Sierra Leone.

handling of civil disturbances in Freetown (a general strike over the rising cost of living and low pay) and in the provinces (by peasants against paramount chiefs, who ruled at the pleasure of the colonialists).

However, during this period, Sierra Leone began moving towards Independence, with indigenous Africans beginning to take on significant roles in government and the civil service. This included the Sierra Leone Police, and by the time of Sierra Leone's independence in 1961, the Sierra Leone Police Force had virtually been Africanised. In 1963 the first Sierra Leonean Commissioner of Police was appointed.

In 1964, Parliament passed an Act to consolidate and amend the 'Law relating to the Organisation, Discipline, Power and Duties of the Police', setting up among other things a Police Council, with the Minister of the Interior as Chairman. This Act further defined the roles of the Sierra Leone Police Force as 'the detection of crime and the apprehension of offenders, the preservation of Law and Order, the protection of life and property, and the due enforcement of all Laws and Regulations with which they are directly charged' (The Sierra Leone Police Act, Act No 4 of 1964).

While before and shortly after Independence, the Police Force maintained a neutral role in national politics, with the introduction of the One-Party Constitution in 1978, this role was radically altered and compromised as a result of excessive political machinations. The Commissioner of Police was then made a member of the ruling party, a nominated Member of Parliament and a Cabinet Minister. This marked the turning point in the history of the Police Force. The period also witnessed the change of nomenclature from Commissioner of Police to Inspector General of Police (IG), in 1985. This politicised position of the IG created imbalances in the political allegiance of the force, which had far-reaching effects on police recruitment procedures, management and administration of the force and promotion, which consequently lowered ethical standards and morale, contributed to a breakdown of discipline, and encouraged corruption. Of course, this heavily influenced public perception and jeopardised police credibility among the citizenry.

Abuses, including early and untimely retirements, lack of opportunities for promotion and training, and arbitrary transfers, all helped to lower the collective morale of the police force. As a result, most police officers developed a lackadaisical attitude towards their job, further eroding public confidence. Subsequently police officers themselves lacked self-confidence and pride in their profession. This collective lack of confidence found expression in indifferent attitudes towards work, and even greater inefficiency and ineffectiveness in police service delivery. Officers who had once drawn respect from the public and fear from would-be offenders, were transformed into shabbily-dressed men and women in faded uniforms who drew only scorn and mistrust from the community.

The government did make some attempts to reverse the decline of the police. For instance, in 1984 a Cadet Officer Programme was instituted to promote recruitment among university graduates. The policy may have been instigated by the then Head of State, Siaka Stevens, in an attempt to limit the pressures exerted by members of his party to provide jobs for their dependants. The programme ensured that graduates would enter the police force at the relatively senior rank of Cadet Assistant Superintendents. The recruitment was somewhat successful, with 18 graduates from different backgrounds joining in the inaugural year. This squad had one woman

among them, Kadi Fakondo, who had studied in the USA. The programme was comprehensive, starting with six months basic training at the Police Training School at Hastings, just outside the capital Freetown. Thereafter the graduates undertook three-month rotations, working within the different divisions and sections – administration; general duties; prosecutions; special branch; immigration (now separate). They spent a total of three years rotating between different departments.

The nature of their recruitment had made them household names. As Chris Charley, one of the 18 notes:

The police force at this time was perceived to be an organisation that attracted only mediocre people, so when the 18 of us came in, overnight we started getting attention – the media zoomed in on the SLP to see how these new graduates were getting on and what changes they would bring to the police force... the limelight was on us; anything we did came within the public domain and it has its own advantages and disadvantages.²

With regard to relations with other members of the police, however, there were distinct disadvantages. In a context where instances abounded of sacking and threats of dismissal for attempting to hold on to the basic competencies of the profession, corruption-resistant police often found their promotion blocked. This included many of those that had entered the force under the Cadet Officer Programme. At one point, most of the cadre that entered in 1984 found their expected promotion to the position of Deputy Superintendent of Police blocked for four years. They found themselves extremely constrained. Again, according to Chris Charley:

The people we met in the job felt threatened – they thought: they're bringing in these people who're educated to come and lord them over us. Some of us... spent the period [just] going around [and around]; we were submitted to a whole lot of indignities, and a whole barrage of abuse, from old people who felt we were coming to take their jobs from them. Some were very understanding and helped us learn the job, but a lot of people frowned on us and didn't want to have anything to do with us... we were given all the odd jobs and we had to succumb to this sort of treatment because... it was a regimentation job where you have to be very respectful to your senior supervisors (*ibid.*).

With able-bodied and ambitious officers being held back, the force continued its downward spiral. This general malaise was reflected in all aspects of civil service and government conduct, considered to be one of the main contributing factors to the Sierra Leone conflict that broke out in 1991. As direct representatives of a corrupt and ineffective government, police personnel and buildings were a particular target of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) insurgency.³

2 Interview on 20 December 2010.

3 The Sierra Leone Civil War began in 1991, when a rebel group, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) invaded the country from neighbouring Liberia, supported by rebels fighting in that country's civil war. Although the RUF claimed they were fighting to free Sierra Leoneans from the ills of the Sierra Leone government, the atrocities they committed belied their claims. In the face of the army's inability to defend the country, other parties, including community defence groups and mercenary organisations were drawn into the war. After numerous failed peace agreements, two military coups and a transition to democratic governance, the war finally ended in 2002.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that the police played an important role in efforts to combat the rebels, as some elements found themselves in the interesting position of being better equipped to fight than the military: in the course of centralising power, one wing of the police, the armed Internal Security Unit (ISU) had served as President Stevens' armed personal guard (which has also been referred to as the 'presidential death squad' (Alpha 2010), strengthened and equipped at the expense of both the army (who he purposefully kept weak to minimise the threat of a coup d'état) and other police sectors. They had received specialist training in Cuba and Eastern Europe. They were also battle-tested, having been drafted in to crush the so-called Ndobusu insurgency in the mid-1980s, which rose up in Pujehun District against politicians citizens felt were being imposed on them by the one-party system.

In 1992, junior elements of the army staged a coup d'état against the Joseph Momoh government, which had taken over one-party rule from Stevens in 1985. After the coup it was clear that the sympathies of the military administration rested with certain elements of the police, particularly those whose progress had been restricted, and with whom they had close professional relations. This was demonstrated by the new administration's promotion of those officers that had been constrained by the political machinations of the previous government to higher ranks. In fact, many of the Cadet Officer squad were doubly promoted (i.e. they skipped two ranks), and attained the position of Chief Superintendents of Police.

This is not to say it was easy to maintain integrity under the army-led National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) government. For instance, as second-in command at Immigration, Charley fell foul of the regime for refusing to sanction the sale of Sierra Leonean passports to Hong Kong businessmen, who were worried about the implications of China resuming control of Hong Kong in 1997. (At the time, Immigration fell under the Police, although it has since been moved from police jurisdiction.) While this had been a sanctioned money-raising activity to acquire ammunition and intelligence equipment to prosecute the war, the NPRC government tried to expand the practice as a means of raising funds to turn itself into a political party and contest the 1996 elections aimed at returning the country to civilian democratic rule. Charley's questioning of the regime's agenda led to his enforced leave of absence and replacement with a more permissive official.

By the outbreak of the civil war in 1991 then it was clear that the police were a wholly demoralised and unprofessional force, heavily politicised and completely out of step with the requirements of the population. The war gave some elements a sense of purpose, fighting alongside the army, a relationship that strengthened once the army assumed power in 1992. However, the military regime, enjoying the windfalls associated with being in government, soon began to behave like their predecessors, contributing to the further de-professionalisation of the Police, to the extent that senior elements became involved in wide-scale forgery and mismanagement. On the eve of Sierra Leone's return to democratic multi-party rule, the SLP was lacking in transparency, rife with corruption, devoid of legitimacy and teetering on the brink of decay.

3 The wind of change

As part of the move towards returning the country to democracy in 1996, several advisory councils were set up to consider areas of governance that were problematic. One such body was the Advisory Council on the Present and Future Challenges of the Sierra Leone Police Force, headed by Dr Alhaji Tejan Kabbah, a former lawyer and retired senior United Nations Development Programme official, who would soon contest the presidency as the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) candidate.

According to the Council's findings:

The image of the Sierra Leone Police has deteriorated in recent times from the figure of a friend and social helper to a villain who is both ineffective and corrupt. This image has consequently adversely affected the relationship between the Police and the society. Poor people have been victims of this preoccupation of the Police. This state of affairs had led to further loss of confidence by the public in the Police Force resulting in the withdrawal of public co-operation without which police work can hardly be successful. (NPRC 1994)

The Advisory Council further recommended an expanded role for the police, to provide clearly defined jurisdiction to enable it to competently respond to various criminal challenges:

- a restoration of the friendly image of the police, to ensure good community relations
- the establishment of a planning unit that would be able to project the training and equipment needs of the Police Force
- the establishment of a Police Council (a provision contained in Section 156 of Act No 6 of the 1991 Constitution of Sierra Leone), chaired by the Secretary of State for Internal Affairs, with powers to make recommendations to government on policy issues affecting the police, including recruitment, reassignment and promotion
- the decentralisation of the Police Force, with an Inspector General, a Deputy Inspector General and a Senior Commissioner at the Headquarters in Freetown, and Officers at each Provincial level, and at Divisional Headquarters in the North, East, South and West, mandated to make decisions and act on their own without reference to headquarters
- trimming of the SLP's ranks, keeping only essential, positively functional policemen, expanding the system of promotion and exams, and encouraging the intake of capable university graduates by raising their points of admission to Cadets Officers
- and equipping the force adequately to enable it operate efficiently, by improving the emolument and conditions of service of officers.

The recommendations were wide-ranging and comprehensive. When he was elected as Sierra Leone's President in 1996, as former chairman on the Police Advisory Council, a priority of Kabbah's was to ensure that the recommendations of the Council were taken forward, more so as he had been elected under the banner of standing for good governance, accountability and transparency. The police would be critical partners in the consolidation of a budding democracy, and in ensuring public security in a context where civil war was still being waged in parts of the country.

Kabbah's government thus embarked on a process of reorganising the SLP along the recommendations made by the Advisory Council. This included promoting a new organisational structure, with emphasis on decentralising responsibility to local levels, respecting the administrative organisation of the country; establishing a more equal distribution of the human resources among the functional divisions in charge of the various tasks of the Police; and increasing the human resource capacity of the Sierra Leone Police, including by carefully screening and integrating ex-combatants, as specified in the 1996 Abidjan Peace Accord. Negotiation of the short-lived Accord began under the NPRC government, and was taken over by Kabbah when he was elected to power. The rationale was that the ex-combatants, exhibiting some degree of discipline, and a military background, could rapidly receive regular Police Training and be deployed within the force to strengthen it. Such recruitment was also considered a good opportunity for the SLP to curtail the otherwise inevitable increase in criminality the country was going to experience, resulting from the large amount of uncontrolled weapons readily available to the thousands of highly mobilised unemployed former fighters.

The Police Council was established under the Chairmanship of the vice President, Dr Albert Joe Demby. The Council developed a working document titled 'Policing Ethics' – a 12-paragraph booklet setting the standards for the performance of police officers to meet by the new millennium. Furthermore, Regional Commissioners were appointed for the North, South and Eastern Provinces.

In its efforts, the government was supported by a number of development partners including, significantly, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Other agencies and International Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), such as ActionAid, supported the rehabilitation of police infrastructures. Reputable national management organisations, such as the Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) and CORD-Sierra Leone, also provided the SLP with useful information, training and materials for the restructuring process.

The combination of a return to multi-party democracy, the election of a president that two years previously had chaired the advisory committee for police reform, the window of opportunity offered by a (temporary) lull in fighting, and a governmental priority of restoring law and order and donor funding to help achieve the same, ensured that police reform obtained priority status within the Kabbah government.

3.1 Setback: Part 1

Thus, a number of projects were identified and modalities for their implementation were underway when the plans were derailed by a coup d'état on 25 May 1997, by rebel elements of the Sierra Leone army, who promptly invited the RUF into Freetown to create a joint Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC)-RUF regime. Their first activities included targeting the police, and the prisons, releasing many prisoners. It was common practice for invading rebels to target and eliminate established law enforcement groups in order to establish their primacy. So when the AFRC-RUF alliance entered Freetown, police officers were a prime target. It proved a very difficult period, with the military junta viewing the police with suspicion for having been extremely collaborative with the overthrown government. Senior officers were summoned to the Cockerill Military Headquarters and warned against feeding information to the now-exiled government in Guinea. Charley's account in Box 3.1 demonstrates the difficulties the police had in working with the junta.

Box 3.1 The idiosyncrasies of the AFRC-RUF junta

I had to temporarily move to Immigration because I was asked to fill in for the Head of Immigration, who had escaped the coup. Whilst I was there, the AFRC sent their Attorney General, the late Claude Campbell to discuss with me the possibility of selling Sierra Leone passports to the Chinese or other interested people because they wanted to raise revenues in order to buy weapons. And I told them that it was impossible. It had been possible during the NPRC period because then Hong Kong was [being ceded back] to China and internationals were all very apprehensive so everyone was scrambling around to get a foreign passport. Besides, the AFRC regime had not been recognised internationally, so who was really going to come and buy passports from them? It wouldn't have been profitable.

I advised Campbell as someone that I had a close personal relationship with, and he related my view to the AFRC. One morning I was at Immigration when Hon. Sergeant Sankoh aka 'Zangalo' and Sergeant Gborie members of the AFRC Council itself, came to my office and arrested me. They had been advised to bring me down to Pademba Road prisons. When at Waterloo Street junction [near the prisons], they stopped the vehicle briefly and Zangalo asked me, 'Mr Charley, do you know why we're taking you to Pademba Road? You, along with other officers, have refused to accept that we are now in control...'. As soon as I could after I was released I escaped to Guinea. I left sometime in November 1997.

A colleague of mine, James Kanyako, was also whisked off one morning and accused of holding meetings at police headquarters and passing information to President Kabbah in exile. They took him to Cockerill and kept him there the whole day. Thankfully Kandeh Bangura, the Deputy Inspector General went and pleaded with them to release him. As soon as Kanyako came back he defected to the ECOMOG camp [ECOMOG was the West African Peacekeeping Force, who fought the AFRC-RUF junta to re-install the Kabbah government].

Many senior police officers eventually fled the country, fearing for their safety. But despite the difficult period some of those with integrity found a way to stay, realising the need to provide leadership, particularly given that within the military regime, it was virtually non-existent. The Deputy Inspector General, Kandeh Bangura deserves particular mention; many police officers feel that if he had left,

the integrity of the State would have been completely destroyed. Bangura was the consummate professional throughout: he ensured that salaries were paid; even those officers who had fled the military junta found their salaries and other benefits intact upon their return. He ensured that a structured leadership remained in place, which also helped when police who had fled returned after ECOMOG eventually drove the AFRC-RUF alliance out of Freetown in March 1998 and restored the Kabbah government to power. Although Bangura was from the Limba ethnic group and therefore close by association to the Limba-dominated junta leadership, he was not considered to be a junta supporter in any shape or form.

3.2 Reform: take two

With his return to power, the stage was set for the implementation of President Kabbah's earlier objectives. Various studies and follow-up activities were undertaken, culminating in a special request made to the Commonwealth and the United Nations, which saw the arrival of two International Police teams under the auspices of the Commonwealth Police Development Task Force (CPDTF) and the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL).

3.2.1 The Commonwealth cavalry

The teams included a number of experienced police officers, some of whom had had personal experience policing in post-conflict situations. It was probably an advantage both that there were two groups of advisors involved, and that the members of the two groups were from a range of different countries. The head of the Commonwealth Police Taskforce, Keith Biddle was from the UK, as was his deputy, Adrian Horn, and Chief Inspector David Tingle, but the other members came from Zimbabwe, Canada and Sri Lanka. The members of UNOMSIL's police teams hailed from Namibia, Kenya, Norway, India and Malaysia.

As Adrian Horn has noted (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 31), 'Everyone... had different experiences of policing and worked with different models'. This meant that one model could not prevail and there was more commitment to developing a model that was relevant for and appropriate to the Sierra Leone context. However, as the officers hailed mostly from Commonwealth countries (former British colonies), they did have one significant area of policing in common – the tradition of a common law system, rather than the civil law system,⁴ which prevails in France, for instance, and which has produced a different style of policing. Having a similar tradition, at least in that respect, allowed the different taskforce members to 'sing from the same hymn sheet' as it were.

The government's commitment to reforming the police was further underlined when President Kabbah announced the Sierra Leone Police Charter in August

4 Common law systems trace their history to England, while civil law systems trace their history to Roman law and the French Napoleonic code. Common law systems place great weight on court decisions, which are considered 'law' with the same force of law as statutes. Common law courts have the authority to make law where no legislative statute exists, and statutes mean what courts interpret them to mean. By contrast, in civil law jurisdictions, courts lack authority to act where there is no statute, and judicial precedent is given less interpretive weight.

1998 (Appendix 1), which established the primacy of the police as providers of internal security in Sierra Leone, and reiterated the importance of police reform to the government. The preamble to this charter states 'My [SLPP] Government wants to create a police service which will be a credit to the Nation.' The charter spelt out the roles of the police, the government, and citizens. Its overall aim was 'to see a reborn Sierra Leone Police, which will be a **force for good** in our Nation' (Sierra Leone Policing Charter 1998, see Appendix A1).

The Sierra Leone Police produced a mission statement in response to the Charter (Appendix 2), outlining the Force's duties, values, priorities and aims. The mission statement committed the police to respect human rights and the freedom of the individual; to be honest, impartial and free from corruption; to respond to local needs and involve all in developing policing priorities; and to endeavour to 'to win public confidence by offering reliable, efficient, caring and accountable Police Services' (SLP 1998). Unfortunately, these lofty ambitions were summarily halted by an unforeseen turn of events.

3.3 Setback II

Despite the return of the democratically-elected government to power in 1998 and the initiation of reforms, peace proved elusive, culminating in an offensive on Freetown by AFRC-RUF forces on 6 January 1999. Once again they were repelled by a combination of ECOMOG and Civil Defence Forces (CDF) troops but the offensive had taken its toll on both the civilian population and the police, who were targeted once more. The events highlighted the danger of being a police officer in highly volatile situations for, as obvious symbols of the law, police stations and barracks were razed to the ground and others severely damaged, including the Hastings Police Training School, and the Grafton, Jui, Kissy, Ross Road, and Kingtom Police Barracks.

The Criminal Investigations Department (CID), as one of the main prosecuting arms of government, was a particular target as many criminals who had joined the AFRC-RUF junta in 1997 had gone through their system. The Division's Headquarters at Pademba Road was burnt down, causing an irrecoverable loss of documents, records, and case files. Recently acquired equipment under the funding assistance of UNOMSIL and the CPDTF, including communications and IT equipment, was either vandalised or looted. Within 48 hours of the invasion the number of police vehicles was reduced from some 60 to five. An estimated 250 police officers were killed, some along with their families and dependents. About 164 million Leones meant for police salaries was stolen from the Pay and Quarter Master's Offices at Police Headquarters; and the police armoury in Kingtom was broken into, the invaders making away with weaponry and anti-riot gear.

These incidents are explained in detail to provide an understanding of the depths from which the police have had to climb. The 'January 6' invasion, as it came to be known, presented a huge setback, rendering the force immobile in its ability to perform its duties, even after the invasion was repelled and calm restored. If the prospect of reform had been difficult before, it now presented an even greater challenge.

3.4 Third time lucky? Reform III

The will of the police, and the reformers, remained unshaken, however. As Charley wrote in 1999:

The Sierra Leone Police Force accepts being struck, but the force refused to go down. Our resolve is greater than ever to regain all lost ground and thus build anew from the rubbles of destruction. Indeed, out of the ashes of our burnt-out stations, barracks and other installations, we can build up new structures, which will serve our people into the new millennium. Already, our determined personnel have started the resuscitation process and are engaged in building make-shift structures in place of their burnt-out quarters, in time before the start of the rainy season. This is another indication of the degree of resilience of our personnel...

In their endeavours, they were once again supported by the CPDTF, as well as police personnel from UNAMSIL, which replaced UNOMSIL as a much larger peacekeeping force, with an expanded UN mandate in October 1999.

3.4.1 The major player: Keith Biddle

With relative peace restored (although this would not be definitive until 2000) the Kabbah government returned to its ambitious task of reforming the police. The single-most important action of immediate significance was Kabbah's interim appointment of the Head of the CPDTF, Keith Biddle, a retired Assistant Chief Constable from Manchester, UK, as Sierra Leone's interim Inspector General of Police.

As problematic as the appointment may have appeared, it proved a stroke of genius by the Kabbah administration. By bringing in someone with no political affiliation or attachments, the government ensured the appointment of someone who would actually be able to make difficult decisions to bring about change.

Moreover, it was important for the populace to see that something radical was being done to make a real break with the past. A BBC news article reporting on the story in November 1999 commented:

Mr Biddle said he was aware that his appointment as a British Police Officer could be criticised as a neo-colonial anachronism. But he said he had support from honest Police Officers and the bulk of ordinary Sierra Leoneans. Corruption here in all government departments has reached such depths that many Sierra Leoneans feel they were better off under colonial rule. The war from which the country is tentatively emerging, has exacerbated the corruption and mayhem. It is sad but true that most Sierra Leoneans would rather be led by foreigners than by their own failed political class.
(Doyle 1999)

While this might be an exaggeration it is true that most Sierra Leoneans felt profound gratitude towards foreigners,⁵ and particularly the British, more so after

5 Kabbah similarly appointed Nigerian ECOMOG Commander Maxwell Kobe as his Chief of Defence Staff. After Kobe died under mysterious circumstances, a street in the nation's third city Kenema (where ECOMOG helped prevent the RUF from taking over) was named after him, and his memory kept alive through popular song and remembered gratitude.

the UK's military intervention in 2000 brought the war to a definitive end.⁶ Furthermore, the control of the SLP by the British during the colonial period was still part of many people's living memory. While it had served as an instrument of the colonial government and was therefore feared, it had at least been respected as a highly professional force. Given Sierra Leone's limited strategic importance to the UK government, the appointment also had the benefit of not appearing political or neocolonial.

Furthermore, as the article suggests, reform-minded police were in favour of the appointment, as the SLP did not have anyone who would have provided credible leadership at the time – someone able to get enough of the force behind him, and who could push through painful reform measures with relative impunity. There is general agreement that if a Sierra Leonean had been appointed to head the force at the time, very little would have changed. As Sierra Leone is an extremely relational (neopatrimonial) country, jobs and opportunities often come down to who you know, and who you are related to. This makes it very difficult to hire and fire people at will, and can make progress slow. A great advantage of having a foreigner in place was that he could ignore such machinations (described in more detail in Box 3.2).

Box 3.2 **Neopatrimonialism in Sierra Leonean politics and society**

In many African countries, in the absence of formalised institutional contracts and scarce opportunities, citizens rely on social contracts to progress in life. Often, these social contracts are described as neopatrimonialism.

The concept of neopatrimonialism is derived from Weber's definition of patrimonialism, whereby authority is ascribed to a person rather than an office-holder, who is firmly anchored in a social and political order, in a system held together by loyalty or kinship ties rather than hierarchical administrative grades and functions (Clapham 1985).

As defined by Clapham (1985: 48), neopatrimonialism is a 'form of organisation in which relationships of a broadly patrimonial type pervade a political and administrative system which is formally constructed on rational-legal lines.' As such, neopatrimonialism is concerned with the informalisation of state and political power and the distribution of scarce resources through patronage networks. It combines, to various degrees, 'lack of separation between public and private spheres... privatised extraction and redistribution along regional, ethnic and family lines. Power is personal, business is politics, the state is both simultaneously strong and weak' (Bøås 2003: 32). Professional progress depends on connections, rather than qualifications and expertise.

Bøås (2001) argues that an extreme version of neopatrimonialism existed in Sierra Leone prior to the war. A feature of the post-conflict period has been efforts to reverse the neopatrimonial state, including introducing more citizen-centred governance, such as local government elections, decentralised ministries and services, such as the police and more radical measures, such as appointing a foreigner, Keith Biddle, as the Head of the Sierra Leone Police.

6 In May 2000, RUF soldiers captured 500 UN peacekeepers, who were part of the provisions of the 1999 Lomé Peace Agreement. The situation that followed threatened to reignite the conflict. British troops promptly arrived to evacuate their own and other foreign nationals, and an 800-strong contingent remained to support the UN peacekeepers and support the reconstitution of the Sierra Leone Army.

Biddle pursued two tactics – one included identifying reform-minded police officers he knew he would be able to work with. In doing so he made it a policy to ignore seniority – a core aspect of a hierarchical organisation like the police – in favour of his own perception of competence. To this end, he identified a number of relatively young people, and within a very short space of time he brought them up in the hierarchy and sent them to the UK for training, to create a reservoir of people who shared his vision and who he therefore knew he would be able to work with. He showed a glaring preference for educated people over less educated – but perhaps more experienced – officers. He promoted quickly those officers who he perceived as being particularly smart.

The other tactic was to neutralise or get rid of spoilers outright. He found ways to retire people he felt he could not work with, by invoking a clause within the civil service wherein the Head of Department could retire staff from his institution before they reach the age of retirement, as long as valid reasons are given. Other tactics he used to get rid of senior colleagues he could not work with was to lure them out of the organisation with secondments, including Kandeh Bangura, the Deputy IG who had bravely safeguarded police interests during the AFRC regime: although reform-minded, and highly regarded by SLP officers, he still belonged to the old school and fearing being retired by Biddle became more concerned with personal survival than spearheading reforms. James Kanyako was seconded to the newly constituted Anti-Corruption Commission. Some middle-ranking officials who were perceived to be allies of Bangura were also investigated over the misuse of police property and for corrupt practices.

Predictably, not all Biddle's tactics were particularly welcomed, even by the reformers – some of whom were critical of certain approaches. His style was sometimes reminiscent of the 'divide and rule' approach of the colonial regime in the 1800s. There were also some competent, reform-minded police that were not Biddle's 'blue-eyed boys and girls'⁷ who were left out – particularly as he focused on people who he perceived he could work with rather than those who offered critiques to his management style. Eventually, however, he came to appreciate this group and their abilities, and promoted them accordingly.

In any case, Biddle left in 2003, and was replaced, on his recommendation, by Brima Acha Kamara. Kabbah's approval of the recommendation spoke volumes about the extent to which political preferences held sway, as Kamara was seen as aligned to the main opposition party of the time, the All People's Congress (APC). It indicated that Biddle had left a legacy that gave preference to competence rather than seniority or political affiliation. Before he left he also tried to regularise a lot of systems and ensure that the group he had promoted was in place to continue the work. Kamara maintained and continued many of Biddle's reforms, successfully steering the country through the 2007 elections, which saw a peaceful change of government, from the SLPP to the APC. The election of Biddle's protégés to the highest office of the SLP continued with the appointment of Francis Munu, who had served as Biddle's Operations Officer, to the position of IG in 2010.

7 Charley, interview, 20 January 2011.

4 The Sierra Leonean reformers

This sets the tone for a discussion of the profile of Sierra Leonean officers involved in the reform. A large number were sourced from the Cadet Officer Programme described above, along with university graduates that had been recruited subsequently. Many had been frustrated in the early years of their service to the police, but had held on, doing their best within a system that was largely derided by the public it was meant to protect.

The reform process presented an opportunity for this group to realise the vision of the police they had joined years before. Indeed, during the reform period, the Cadet Officer squad made and continue to make up the majority of the senior ranks of the Sierra Leone Police, and have thus been heavily involved in the reform process. The current IG is also a graduate of the programme.

Among these senior officers are the first enrolled in the programme, including Chris Charley, who attended Njala University College and graduated with a BA in Education in 1980. After this he taught at the Government Rokel School in Freetown, and part-time at other schools. He was also an examiner with the Examinations Council and seemed set to make his career in the academic world. This career progression was halted when he enrolled in the Cadet Officer Programme in 1984.

Kadi Fakondo also joined the programme in 1984. She had studied in the USA previously and after seeing the differences in policing between the US and Sierra Leone, returned to join the force in the hope that she would be able to implement what she had seen.

The current Inspector General of Police, Francis Munu, who holds a Masters degree in Business Administration, is also a cohort of this group. A popular Sierra Leone Diaspora newspaper commented on his appointment in 2010 thus:

The appointment of Mr. Francis Munu as Inspector General of Police in Sierra Leone signals a positive new direction for the country. His appointment signals a new era in Sierra Leone where excellence, professionalism and commitment matters more than party or tribal affiliations... IG Munu has distinguished himself as a man of integrity who put his country above personal gains, and that has paid off in his appointment as Inspector General of Police.

(Conteh 2010)

Some of these officers had taken to limiting their obvious association with the police because of their communities' negative perception. Officers who had found themselves limited within a poorly led and badly managed police force finally found a government, support and the resources to enable them to realise their dream. As Kadi Fakondo put it, 'It took so many years but it finally paid off because my aspiration was to get to the top and be part of a policing body to bring changes and reform to the Sierra Leone Police.'⁸

8 Interview, 10 January 2011.

However, not all senior officers were on board. Kadi Fakondo continues:

when the restructuring of the SLP came [it was as if] we (all SLP officers) were all standing on the platform... There were those of us who were ready to jump on board this [restructuring] train. There were those standing in the middle very confused – should I get on the train or not, what benefit am I going to get from this? And then there was a third group – I do not want change. I'm not going to get on board this train. So we had this task of actually working hard to convince others to come on board (*ibid.*).

5 Restructuring and reforms

The reforms officers had to take on board were wide ranging and ambitious. Internally, efforts had to be made to curb corruption and encourage the police to take pride in their vocation. Externally, there was a real need to strengthen civilian oversight of the police, as well as to improve relations between the public and the police. Furthermore, the war had brought untold destruction to police infrastructure, with logistical support either damaged or looted.

5.1 Internal control mechanisms

The Research and Planning Department (R&P) of the SLP led the way with the internal restructuring process. In 1998 it sent out questionnaires within the organisation which asked serving personnel straightforward questions about their views on what they wanted the police force to look like, the limiting factors preventing them from doing their jobs properly, and so on. Open meetings were also held, inviting officers to contribute to the discussion. Response to these invitations to contribute was initially lukewarm, however. As a result, suggestion boxes were put up at the various police stations, which proved very successful: while personnel were timid in the face of efforts to engage them in face-to-face dialogue, fearing a backlash from their peers, when they were able to make 'faceless' contributions they were happy to express their opinions.

The information gathered from the questionnaires and suggestion boxes was analysed by R&P, in collaboration with the Executive Board (see below). They informed the SLP strategic plan's priority areas, with projects accordingly introduced to achieve the objectives. Since 1999, the strategic planning cycle has been a major area of progress in the way the SLP works, and contributes towards the SLP's organisational development process, aiming to strengthen the management of, and get the best use out of, the organisation's 'scarce human, material and financial resources' (SLP 2008). It was a highly participatory exercise, comprising performance reviews, research on the operating environment, and extensive consultation with stakeholders, including members of the general public.

Abridged versions of strategic planning documents are now produced as standard, for dissemination to the media, NGOs, and other stakeholders, so they are aware of what the police are supposed to be doing and can hold them to account. They are also disseminated to the various divisions all over the country, which are asked to regularly monitor their progress towards achieving the plan.

Another significant internal reform was the establishment of the Executive Management Board (EMB), comprising the IG, the Deputy Inspector General and all the AIGs (there are AIGs for each main department of the SLP: Professional Standards; Operations; Crime Services; Support Services; and Personnel Training and Welfare, as well as for each of the four regions – North, South, East and West). Before the restructuring, management of the police was a one-man show, headed by the Inspector General of Police. Under the new system, the EMB convenes weekly to discuss strategic decisions on management and personnel.

There is a clear chain for disseminating decisions made at Executive Board level, which its members, the AIGs, are tasked to roll out. In the regions they are responsible for, AIGs meet with their Local Unit Commanders (LUCs) to discuss what has been decided on. The EMB model is replicated at divisional level, with each LUC heading a Tasking Coordination Group (TCG), which they are expected to convene regularly to review and plan policing within their divisions. In addition to the LUC, the TCG comprises the Crime Officer, Support Officer, Operations Officer and Information Officer, as well as a Local Policing Partnership Board (LPPB – see below) member. TCGs also have the responsibility of sharing information with the rank and file. This chain is supplemented by Force Orders (internal memoranda), and a lot of information is disseminated by being read at morning parades and so forth, ensuring that information and decisions flow from top to bottom.

Other significant changes pertain to recruitment, retention, promotion and remuneration policies. Prior to the restructuring, corruption was rife in the recruitment of police officers, with the result that many uneducated, unqualified people joined the force. New standards for basic recruits include: being a Sierra Leone citizen; education at least until fourth grade; ability to pass a written exam in English, Maths and General Studies; no criminal record; mental and physical fitness (which involves passing a medical that includes an HIV test); and being between the ages of 18 and 25.

In terms of remuneration and retention, huge efforts were made to ensure that police officers were paid a living wage. Attention was also paid to other non-remunerative factors, such as ensuring officers were supplied with new uniforms and boots, replacing faded uniforms that undermined professionalism and were the source of much derision by the general public.

A related reform, but one that proved extremely unpopular, was the decision to change the ranking structure, reducing the number of ranks from 19 to nine. The previous bloated structure had been very inefficient, making oversight and decision-making difficult, distorting roles, and hiding and allowing the promotion of incompetent officers. It was also unwieldy, limiting effective information flows and chains of command.

The move came under a lot of criticism, particularly as people in ranks that were phased out were more often demoted to a lower rank than promoted. It particularly caused frustration among older officers; the decision was so unpopular and upsetting that it was actually linked to a number of untimely deaths. Efforts were made, however, to ensure those who lost out still remained committed to the reform. For instance, the frustrations of the officers whose ranks were phased out were managed by ensuring that their salaries did not change when they were demoted.

Other internal control measures undertaken involve the creation of specialised departments, including (Charley 2008):

- The **Complaint, Discipline and Internal Investigation Department**, which deals with complaints from members of the public against SLP personnel.
- The **Internal Audit Department** acts as an internal oversight body to ensure quality assurance, probity and judicious use of resources. This department carries out regular audits to ensure the organisation adheres to all financial and monetary regulations mandated by government, as well as to identify lapses and impropriety.
- The **Corporate Service Department**, which is the think tank of the Change Management Process. It provides technical advice, guidance and timely information to help management to formulate policies to allocate, manage, monitor and control the use of SLP's limited resources.
- The **Equal Opportunity Department**, which was set up to ensure that every member of the SLP enjoys equal opportunity irrespective of age, sex, religion, tribe, etc. Top management now puts a lot of premium on, for instance, stamping out the issue of sexual harassment within the SLP, and attracting qualified females to the force.

5.2 External oversight

For the SLP to be successful it was critical to engage with the public, and try to overcome the public's perception that the police was an intrinsically and irreversibly corrupt institution. To this end, extensive consultations were held with members of the public at the start of the reform process, in the form of town and village meetings, public perception surveys and civil society consultations. Traditional, economic and cultural groups (such as market women's, cassette sellers', hawkers' and taxi drivers' associations) were all consulted and engaged in the process. They were able to air their grievances, and comment on what they felt were important aspects of restructuring, how they expected the police to engage with them and, importantly, engage in a process that was transparent and that set the ball rolling for them to have confidence in, and even work with, the police.

A variety of systems and procedures were also put in place to maintain good relations between the Police and the public. A very proactive **Community Relations Department** works with communities. An example of its work is outreach at schools, where it collaborates with student-led committees such as anti-violence groups, which are active in collaborating with the police to help reduce street violence.

Community members are regularly engaged to identify any problems they have with the police, and the force regularly investigates how best the police can improve its service delivery. Findings are reported to management and discussed during EMB meetings. A **Human Rights Unit** and **Media and Public Relations Department** ensure that the public is both provided with timely information about police activities and supported to provide inputs to the Police Strategy and activities; and a **Complaints Division** ensures that anyone with a grievance

against the police can report it. Members of the public also have recourse to the **Ombudsman** in the event that [a] person views an act of the personnel to be unjust, unfair or intimidating (Charley 2008).

While this has informed policing from the bottom-up, top-down oversight of the police was also reformed, with the re-institution of a Police Council headed by the country's Vice President. Its functions include advising the president on all major matters of policy relating to internal security, and (with the president's approval) make regulations for the performance of the SLP.

Additionally, the **Parliamentary Oversight Committee** oversees the activities of the SLP and has the power to question its operations. Parliament also has the powers to summon SLP management to give justifications for certain actions or demands (Charley 2008: 115). Human rights and other civil society groups/NGOs also play a key role in providing oversight and providing checks and balances to the Police (*ibid.*).

5.3 Developing external relations: engaging the community

Very early on it was recognised that the police would not be able to maintain law and order by themselves, and would require the assistance of the wider community. However, there was a conscious effort made to ensure that Sierra Leone's experience of Community Policing – an approach strongly influencing the Commonwealth Task Force, and particularly espoused by its British members – was not subject to preconceived notions of Community Policing (Albrecht and Jackson 2009).

Box 5.1 The philosophy behind Community Policing

Community Policing (CP) is considered a key principle of 'doing' policing in the UK, stemming from a perceived need to improve police-public relations in the face of various social crises (such as the race riots that occurred in a number of English cities in the early 1980s). Accordingly, in countries where the UK has brought its policing expertise to bear, such as in Sierra Leone, CP has invariably been promoted as part of the restructuring process.

The main elements of Community Policing include: policing directed by community engagement, where communities have a voice in police priorities and practices; devolution of responsibilities to officers on the ground, allowing them to make decisions with the community; partnership with other agencies and local authorities in securing the public's interest and resolving problems; a proactive (rather than reactive) approach to problem solving; and an orientation towards maintaining peace rather than enforcing the law (Mackenzie and Henry 2009).

CP is meant to result in better outcomes in the following areas: increased public satisfaction with the police; decreased fear of crime; reductions in levels of crime and anti-social behaviour; community involvement in solving local problems associated with crime; and improved levels of job satisfaction among community officers.

Sierra Leone's experience was not only different from what the task force members had experienced before, it was also clear that different parts of the country were going to require different types of community engagement. In some

areas, where state presence was limited, the SLP had never been present, and people were only familiar with traditional forms of authority; some areas of the country had been under RUF control for years, while in other communities CDF fighters had taken over the provision of security, and the imposition of law and order. Therefore, a system was needed that was flexible enough to engage with these different needs in different communities. Boxes 5.2 and 5.3 elaborate on two of Chris Charley's experiences, which vividly illustrate the complexity of attempting to consolidate police presence in the Southern Province, a region where (1) Civil Defence Forces (in this region known as *Kamajors*) had taken over responsibility for maintaining law and order in some areas and (2) traditional authority held sway in others.

Box 5.2 **Regaining control from Civil Defence Forces in Bo**

During the war, in the face of the double threat from both the RUF and rogue elements of the Sierra Leone Army, many communities mobilised their own civil militias (mostly derived from traditional hunting societies). Although now collectively known as Kamajors, the actual term is a specific reference to the militias that formed in the south and the east of the country, mostly in Bo District. They successfully repelled the RUF from Bo, Sierra Leone's second city, and subsequently set themselves up as police, judge and jury, arresting, imprisoning and even executing suspected criminals. Although initially formed with the very good intention of protecting their people and territories, they soon became known for administering justice in their own, often brutal, style. They became a law unto themselves, accountable to none, making the task of reintroducing an operational police presence into the area almost impossible. In March 2001, Charley was made regional commissioner of Bo District, and provides an account of his efforts to re-establish police primacy.

The *Kamajors* were initially highly suspicious of the police. Before the war the police were highly corrupt and directly following the war they had all but disappeared. Conversely the *Kamajors* were formed of the people and had fought to re-establish freedom and security in various regions. They were widely respected and believed themselves to have a legitimate claim to managing security, having earned the right through their bravery and sacrifice during the war. They also had the strength and numbers to remain even if challenged. This is the situation into which I arrived in Bo, with the mandate to first gain the cooperation of the *Kamajors* and then to take control of the distribution of law and order.

At meetings with stakeholders and key decision-makers, I witnessed first-hand how much the locals trusted the *Kamajors*, which contrasted heavily with my experience of our police station, which was generally avoided. I was able to ascertain that the issue was mostly down to trust: the *Kamajors* were trusted, the police were not. Years of police corruption had left our reputation in tatters and bolstered that of the *Kamajors*. This did not change the fact that the *Kamajors* were not the legitimate body to administer justice but it did show that we needed to work with them.

The job required a lot of skill and diplomacy. They had their own systems – some that worked well, others not so well, but either way, we had to deal with them tactfully, otherwise we would have lost our legitimacy. Their law was loosely based on tradition, they had been there when we were nowhere in sight, and they had leaders who were respected nationally, competent and effective in their own right. One such leader was the late Hinga Norman; recognised as the head of the *Kamajors* (he was even served as Minister of Defence during the war, although he was subsequently indicted by the

Special Court of Sierra Leone). I soon realised how important it was to strike a very good rapport with him. This was easier than I initially thought due to the fact that he was a man who liked his whiskey. Whenever he was in Bo I would make sure he received a bottle of whiskey; this simple gesture encouraged him to visit my residence whenever he journeyed from Freetown back to Bo – establishing a rapport which gradually won over his followers.

Another strategy I adopted was to drop my customary security detail when visiting the *Kamajors*; despite my seniority, I drove myself around and visited them alone in their secretariat, and to any meetings with them – they were impressed that an official of such a high ranking as myself dared to visit them in their compound without any security of my own – to my mind it was less an act of daring as of trust, one which gradually opened lines of communication. Slowly they started reporting their crimes to us and allowing us to bring people held in their custody to the police station. There were even people on their ‘death-row’ who are alive today because I was able to negotiate their release from *Kamajor* custody and unite them with their families when their time had been served.

By inviting their representatives to shadow our investigation branch they were able to see the extent to which the SLP had been reformed in terms of accountability and professionalism. Working in cooperation with the *Kamajors* had the benefit of not only inducting them into police procedure but also of empowering them to register and process members of their group who had committed crimes. This alliance developed further into an arrangement whereby the *Kamajors* were allowed to access their members after formal processing and administer civil justice in cases we deemed to be less serious, for example domestic rather than criminal cases.

We also had a system whereby we allowed them to detain *Kamajor* prisoners, but only after we had correctly processed them. Prior to this, they were arresting and detaining lawbreakers, confiscating articles from the scene of the crime and sharing them among themselves. This was problematic for us, as it meant the loss of precious evidence that was often key to a case. There was also the issue of the *Kamajors’* brutal treatment of people while in their custody. So we worked with them to reduce these incidences.

Understandably, many of my own officers criticised this arrangement, feeling that I was ceding too much control, but in reality I was led by simple pragmatism: the *Kamajors* were still armed and they could have posed a lot of problems for us. But gradually everyone from both sides agreed that it was working; on our part, the police were transparent in their dealings, accountable to the public and the *Kamajors* worked within the parameters of their cooperative role until we were finally able to take complete control of administering law and order in Bo.⁹

9 Interview on 6 January 2011.

Box 5.3 Treading carefully around traditional authority

The Bondo Society in Sierra Leone is widely revered, if not feared, and therefore rarely interfered with. A girl is initiated into the Bondo society through seclusion in the Bondo 'Bush', by way of a female circumcision and what are considered other rites of passage into womanhood. It is a common practice throughout Sierra Leone. It is also a highly political issue, demonstrated by the fact that despite international campaigns and pressure from rights activists in the capital to put an end to the practice, the strength of Bondo is such that politicians have been reluctant to oppose, and in fact have continued to endorse the practice, for fear of the losing support of its powerful champions (Afol 2002). In rural areas female circumcision is not open to public discussion. In his policing duties in Bo, Charley had to find a way to deal diplomatically with this very powerful traditional group.

Undoing the distrust sown by years of injustice and corruption within the police force is a constant endeavour. It requires an in-depth understanding of the local situations in which we work, a sensitivity to the importance of good community relations, and cordial ties with traditional authorities.

One experience that highlights the importance of policing in tandem with traditional authority occurred while I was serving in Bo, involving a particularly sensitive case concerning a girl aged about seven. Her mother came to the police distraught, to report that her daughter had been abducted and initiated into the Bondo society. Although formal arms of the law rarely get involved in traditional practices, in this case, the mother was reporting an abduction, which the police could not ignore. However, as serious an offence as kidnapping was, and the forced initiation of the girl represented human rights abuse, it was still a particularly sensitive issue because it involved complex traditional law.

A swift response was therefore essential, one that would likely require the mounting of police rescue, especially with the potential medical implications of the situation. But in this case it was essential to 'think outside the box' due to the power of the Bondo Society – as much guardians of culture as of community – in Sierra Leone traditions.

My knowledge of local customs dictated that the obvious course of action would be to approach the Paramount Chief of the area. As the title suggests, the Paramount Chief is a very important figure in Sierra Leone society. He is the ultimate judge in all family disputes, and final authority in all traditional, ceremonial and domestic matters. The SLP relies upon congenial relationships with local Chiefs to effectively serve the communities they represent, and we are obliged to work alongside them. In areas of limited police presence, the paramount authority and their chieftom police are responsible for maintaining law and order. Even where police are present, there is often delineated authority, with the Chieftom authority generally responsible for familial law, and the SLP being responsible for 'serious' crimes, such as larceny, assault and murder.

Through the course of the case I came to deeply respect traditional structures, and the way things work within the traditional system. After listening to a report of the situation, the Chief explained that no initiation could take place without the knowledge of the Chief Sowie (the chief female initiator, a very powerful figure in traditional society), and he summoned her immediately to his compound. She denied all knowledge of the initiation.

Bondo is a lucrative business; much is spent on the associated celebrations and Sowies are paid handsomely for their services. However, within traditional law Bondo should also only be undertaken within a strict ceremonial context where not only

familial consent is given but also appropriate expertise used. In this, the Chief Sowie is key. It was thus deduced that this particular 'Bondo Bush' had been convened outside of the traditional convention, by a woman who had ascribed to herself the title and power of a Sowie. However, whether sanctioned or not, the self-elected Sowie was still a Bondo member, and therefore well respected in the community. Moreover the Bondo Bush, as it is demarcated, is taboo to men, so male police officers could hardly storm in to rescue the girls she was initiating.

I therefore decided that the best way to justify a police intrusion would be on medical grounds, due to the girls having been initiated outside the traditional context with appropriate oversight – making the girls prone to infection, especially given the humid and damp conditions of the rainy season. So to these ends I approached the Chief Medical Officer at the Bo Hospital in search of a female nurse who could not only handle any potential medical problems but who was also a member of the Bondo society. As luck would have it, the Chief Ward Sister fit these requirements and agreed to accompany the police team. Female police officers under command were gathered and the situation explained. Anyone who was not a society member was excused from the mission. I led the team and although they had already been initiated, we were successful in rescuing the girls from the grossly unhygienic conditions in which they were being kept, worsened by the heavy rains, putting the lives of the girls at serious risk. We were able to provide them with medical attention in time to prevent any major infection or loss of life.

This is one example of the fine balance that needs to be struck between our responsibility to serve the public, highly sensitive political and cultural interests, and the traditional authority. In the past we bowed to the authority and political interests over the individual but today this is no longer the case. This case also highlights the necessity of working with other institutions, such as the medical profession, in our effort to safeguard the security of our citizens.¹⁰

Given the need, as highlighted in the two accounts in Boxes 5.2 and 5.3, to engage with various members of the community to ensure the effective operation of the police, it was clear that a system of policing, with community engagement at the centre, was necessary. Local Needs Policing (LNP) was developed as a way of capturing the locale-specific nature of policing that would be required, but one that could be delivered in different places within a 'national framework of standards and guidelines' with a basic organisational structure that was effectively and efficiently managed, accountable and with devolved authority and designed to deliver the policing needs within the local community (Albrecht and Jackson 2009: 32).

6 Local Needs Policing

The main structure for driving LNP is the Local Policing Partnership Board – the LPPB. The LPPB is essentially a partnership between the SLP and the community in each of Sierra Leone's 32 police divisions. It is coordinated by the Local Unit Commander, who administers SLP policies locally but the board is populated by upstanding members of the community from different walks of life, including paramount chiefs, religious leaders, women's group leaders and so on (a member of

¹⁰ Interview on 6 January 2011.

the police is normally involved in the capacity of secretary, to ensure that meetings are well documented; some capacity training is also provided). The LPPB comprises a chair (who also sits on the TCG) and members that coordinate joint patrols, and get involved in neighbourhood watch, intelligence gathering, and so on.

LPPBs are meant to be representative of a cross-section of the community. Existing members vote in new members, through elections coordinated by the community relations department, which also regularly sensitises the community about the purpose of the LPPB, and publicises elections. While LPPBs vary from division to division, some are extremely vibrant and proactive, and have been extremely helpful in supporting the police in their work. Their activities are varied: they help decide which issues the police should prioritise; they highlight areas of high crime and where more resources need to be applied; members inspect police cells; they support their local police units by lobbying their MPs on their behalf; engagement is constant. It has been a very good symbiotic relationship and, the police believe, is one of the reasons that the public's confidence in them has grown.

While police officers are present in an estimated 80 per cent of the country, the reality is that in many areas police presence is not felt, particularly in areas that are not easily accessible – so while police may be present within the division or locality, few are deployed in remote areas. These are areas in which the LPPB comes into its own. They are present in even the most remote areas and stand in for the police (although all perpetrators, for instance, are handed over to the police as soon as possible).

While the LPPB is at division-level, divisions are further sub-divided into smaller communities. These coordinate Community Safety Volunteers (CSVs) – able-bodied men and women in good standing with the community (recommended by the community and further vetted by the police). CSVs help the police by patrolling their neighbourhoods, night and day. They are easily identified by vests provided by the police, and are empowered to conduct citizens' arrests. It is important to note that they are *not* vigilantes. In fact, one indication that there is increased trust in and collaboration between communities and the police are the increased numbers of arrested people that are being brought to the police after citizen arrests, rather than the community dealing with it themselves (e.g. through mob justice).

6.1 The establishment of specialised units

As indicated above, a range of new departments were introduced to ensure that reforms were taken forward and sustained. However other departments were created after the fact – arising from particular needs the police were faced with, given the particular nature of the post-conflict environment. One such department was the Family Support Unit (FSU), established in 2001 to respond to cases relating to sexual and Gender Based Violence. The Family Support Unit made it easier for women and girls to report domestic violence and seek appropriate assistance (Fakondo 2009: 11). In Box 6.1, AIG Kadi Fakondo, who was largely responsible for its development, explains the origins of the FSU.¹¹

11 Interview, 10 January 2011, supplemented by information from Fakondo's Master's dissertation.

Box 6.1 **The creation of the Family Support Unit (by AIG Kadi Fakondo)**

The FSU grew out of the Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) which I started at Kissi [in the east end of Freetown]. After I came back from Beijing [the Fourth World Congress on Women in 1995] I had the idea of setting up the DVU [but did not have the opportunity prior to the restructuring]. While I was stationed at Kissi Police Station just after the conflict ended, women came in regularly to report their problems but we didn't know how to address it, so I started the DVU. At first it was on a very small scale but once they heard about it more and more people were coming to report – bush wives [girls and women who had been abducted and held during the conflict] and a lot of rape cases. Women were being told: there's nothing wrong with you going to the police and reporting that your husband has beaten you up and many came. We realised we were building the confidence of the people and more and more came to report their cases.

I remember Keith Biddle and members of the Commonwealth Team visiting my station. They thought it was such a brilliant idea they decided to bring in a consultant to help scale it up. So I worked with a consultant, Bill Roberts. Together we put together the idea of the FSU, starting with a pilot scheme in Freetown. When we went to the regions, it caught like wildfire. This was done through sensitisation campaigns and awareness-raising activities on Gender Based Violence in communities around the country. Soon, every district, every area wanted an FSU.

We worked closely with a team of officers attached to the Criminal Investigations Department. But we realised that the demands on the FSU were so great that we had to get some support for specialised training and support. So the Commonwealth Team came in and trained the police officers. Upon review, we recognised the need to train social workers alongside the police. So the police began to specifically look at investigating crimes, while social workers worked on protection. In this aspect we worked very closely with the Ministry of Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA). It was really gaining momentum and we now realised they need to have information going out so we went on radio, talked about it, informed the people.

DFID provided funding for the programme. Trainers came from the Commonwealth Team, who after initial training realised the need to have training of trainers who would be responsible for rolling out the training programme. We also had to put some money towards the evaluation of what was happening, so we had one of the senior investigators go to all the areas where we had FSU and we did an assessment and annual report.

We also worked very closely with UNICEF and other NGOs, such as the International Rescue Committee, one of our key partners (and once you have organisations like the INGOs working closely with you, you get the confidence of the people). We had worked with UNICEF before but this intensified after we established the FSU. Before all this nobody had wanted to do any work with the police. We were not getting any support, especially from the INGOs, because they believed that the police was corrupt, derelict and untrained. But then the FSU was set up and we started prosecuting cases to court. These were widely publicised, on the radio, everyone was talking about it, especially women's organisations who really supported us. We even had the Commonwealth support to bring in a specialised judge to try FSU cases.

Between 2004 and 2005 the efforts of FSUs and their partners resulted in 21 convictions of perpetrators of domestic violence, with prison terms ranging from six months to 22 years. That sent a signal to the entire populace that nobody would be spared as long as there was sufficient evidence against him. This led to the increase in the number of cases reported. Every FSU in the 26 Police Divisions countrywide is tasked to investigate and charge to court all reported cases of physical and sexual

violence against women and children including child cruelty. By 2005 the Family Support Unit staff members including other police officers and Social Workers had been trained in awareness-raising, human rights, media and communication skills, record-keeping and files/job tracking systems, and the joint investigation of sexual abuse (by police and Social Workers). The training was sponsored by the SLP, UNAMSIL Civilian Police, [and the] Department for International Development (DFID), support was also provided by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Rescue Committee (IRC), the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs and other agencies.

Initiatives such as the FSU were extremely relevant for Sierra Leone's post-war context, arising from a situation where sexual violence had been a prominent feature of the country's ten-year conflict. They were also a radical departure from the past, where 'family matters' were considered the strict purview of traditional and cultural authorities, whose abuse of their decision-making power over sentencing in social cases had been at least one contributing factor to the war (Richards 2005).

Furthermore, the involvement of the CPDTF and the initiatives that were being introduced gave other international aid organisations the confidence to work with the police. This provided them with further legitimacy among the populace, for whom these agencies represented the source of the majority of services they had access to, particularly in the early post-war period.

6.2 Resourcing

The changes made to the police have been sweeping. Other studies (Meek 2003; Baker 2006; Gbla *et al.* 2009; Albrecht and Jackson 2009; Albrecht 2010) have detailed the extent and content of spending on reforming the SLP, so suffice it here to say simply that none of the progress would have been possible or even imaginable without the sustained provision of funds by international donors – ranging from technical advice, staff training (including courses abroad), the provision of vehicles and other logistics, recruitment, the construction and rehabilitation of police structures and so on. Most of this has been from DFID (see Box 6.2), channelled through the CPDTF but support has also been received from the UN, regionally from Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Nigerian Government in particular, and a whole host of other international donors funding different aspects.

Box 6.2 DFID's Security and Justice Sector Reform Policy in Sierra Leone

Security and Justice Sector Reform (SJSR) is an approach that has been championed by the UK Government in fragile and post-conflict countries (Ball *et al.* 2007). In Sierra Leone, it formed part of a joint approach incorporating security sector reform (through the Sierra Leone Security Sector Reform Programme (SILSEP)), access to justice (through the Justice Sector Development Programme (JSDP)), and the reform of the military (through the International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT)).

SJSR has been led by the UK Department for International Development, and the Africa Conflict Prevention Pool (ACPP), which aims to draw together the work of the

Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and DFID (DFID 2004). The logic is that despite their different mandates and policy objectives, the three institutions share sufficient interest in poverty reduction and conflict prevention to provide a coherent platform for SJSR.

Rule of law, accountability, transparency, accessibility and affordability are central to the SJSR agenda. The four key elements of the agenda are (Ball *et al.* 2007):

- develop and implement an institutional framework
- establish and implement the principle of democratic control of the security sector through the practice of good governance, especially oversight, accountability, and transparency
- develop capable, professional and accountable security services and justice systems
- foster a culture that is supportive of the above among the political, security and justice leadership.

The aim of SILSEP (1999–2008) was ‘to assist in the creation of an enabling environment within the security sector to ensure the successful and sustainable implementation of the Sierra Leone Security Sector Reform Implementation Plan (SSRIP), as articulated within Pillar 1 of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and the new National Security Policy (NSP)’ (Biesheuvel *et al.* 2007). Through SILSEP, DFID and ACPP provided support to the Office of National Security (ONS), Central Intelligence and Security Unit (CISU), Ministry of Defence (MOD), Sierra Leone Police (SLP), Ministry of Internal Affairs (MoIA) and a range of non-security related institutions with an interest in accountability and enhanced service delivery across the security sector (parliament, civil society, media and academia) (Biesheuvel *et al.* 2007).

The goal of the JSDP, initiated in 2004 for a five year period, was the improved safety, security and access to justice for the people of Sierra Leone. Its purpose was to support the development of an effective and accountable Justice Sector capable of meeting the needs and interests of the people of Sierra Leone, particularly the poor, the vulnerable and the marginalised’ (JSDP 2004).

IMATT (SL) was established in 2002 following the end of war and disarmament of rebels by the UN in Sierra Leone. Its mission is to help develop the Sierra Leone Armed Forces into a democratically accountable, effective and sustainable force, able to fulfil security tasks required by the Government of Sierra Leone (MoD).

While the three reform components lacked coherence in their initial design, they became increasingly connected over time, and the Sierra Leone SJSR Programme serves as a successful example of cross-agency cooperation. Much of the SJSR work was pioneered and tested in Sierra Leone: of the £90.6 million spent by the ACPP on SJSR, 96 per cent of it was spent on Sierra Leone; additionally, 61 per cent of DFID’s bilateral allocation for Sierra Leone was spent on SJSR (*ibid.*).

The SLP has been extremely fortunate to have received such sustained support from international partners in its endeavours. While this reduced somewhat after Biddle left in 2003, significant funding continued to be sourced under the Justice Sector Development Programme. Started in 2005, in addition to the police, the five-year programme also provided support to the judiciary, magistracy, prisons and relevant government ministries and departments (DFID 2004). Additionally, particular support was provided for policing the 2007 elections and it is expected

this will again be forthcoming in 2012. But the reality is that Sierra Leone is no longer considered a post-conflict country. In the face of dwindling international support and interest, how sustainable will the reforms be? In a country beset with allegations of corruption at all levels of government, how immune are the SLP? In a context in which the public is increasingly dissatisfied with their levels of public service, how engaged with local needs policing will they continue to be?

7 Challenges and the road ahead

A number of the challenges facing the police were well documented by Al Shek Kamara, a former Chief Superintendent of Police, in his essay that formed part of his application for promotion to the rank of AIG in 2005, titled 'Future Challenges facing the Sierra Leone Police Force'. Many of the issues are still of relevance, and are summarised here.

Referring to the community policing strategy, Kamara noted that it 'is yet to gain full acceptance by a good number of... police personnel who are merely paying lip service to it' (Kamara 2005: 15). As with many reforms it is not easy to change things overnight, and 'attempting to switch from a highly centralised, authoritarian structure to a decentralised, democratic approach in a relatively short period of time is... a difficult undertaking' (*ibid.*).

Indeed, the lack of attitudinal change probably remains one of the greatest challenges to the reform process. This is exacerbated by the fact that despite efforts to improve conditions of service, pay and benefits for the rank and file remains relatively low. With ever decreasing international support, the concern is that invariably, old practices will start creeping back in.

7.1 Personnel

Police discipline and honesty remains a huge issue. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the traffic management department of the police who interface with the public all day, every day. Accordingly, their (mis)conduct is amplified as representative of the whole police force – evidenced by public perception surveys, but it is more perception than reality, as police statistics show increasing numbers of traffic fines being paid – indicating that traffic police are not being paid off to turn a blind eye but are actually fining offenders and charging them to court. In fact, the police bring significant amounts of money to the national coffers in the form of accruals from fines. Furthermore, corrupt practices are no longer done with impunity, or essentially condoned, as in the past. That they are a reality is recognised by the police management, but it is fighting hard to address the problem. There are severe repercussions for anyone caught taking bribes. Also, there are now structures in place within the institution where people who are aggrieved by unfair police practice can make complaints.

While ensuring people are paid a living wage and improving conditions of service are important aspects of rooting out corruption, the force is made up of human beings who will have their frailties, and among them there will be people whose attitudes, against all odds, remain unscrupulous. Also, rank and file police officers

have had expectations raised over the years about improved conditions of service. As funding runs out, however, these expectations may have to be lowered once more, which could have knock-on effects and cause some officers to revert to the unprofessional behaviour that once characterised the force.

Police training tries to play its part – extensive courses are taught on ethics. However, whether this becomes internalised depends on the cadre of the individual being taught, and this also, despite stricter eligibility requirements, remains problematic. Kamara (2005: 12) states that

a good number of recruits have found their way into the organisation by presenting fake documents indicating educational qualification and age... Yet these people are allowed into the organisation because of influence and cover-up by some unscrupulous personnel involved in the selection process. If this situation is not closely monitored... the organisation will soon be overwhelmed with a bunch of old semi-literates akin to the political era and unfit for the demands of community policing.

Another problem regarding recruitment is the difficulty in attracting female graduates from the universities and other tertiary institutions. Efforts to overcome this include outreach programmes at universities and the accelerated female graduate scheme, in operation since 2007. Similar to the Cadet Officer Programme of the 1980s, they pass out from the Police Training School with the rank of Sergeant and are fast-tracked through promotions.

7.2 Budgetary constraints

Maintaining a commitment to the range of reforms discussed above and continuing their spread across the country, while ensuring adequate logistics and infrastructure has colossal financial implications. While much of the financial burden of reform has been carried by DFID, including paying for consultancy services, there is a big question as to what happens when donor funding runs out, which apart from for particular activities – such as providing support for policing elections – it is more or less doing. This is in a context where the police needs to grow from its current capacity of 9,500 to a 12,000-strong force to ensure effectiveness.

As largely negative public perceptions (e.g. Vincent 2008) indicate, it has been a real challenge to manage the public's expectations, given the level of public engagement, rolling out of programmes and the contracting of finances. Senior police officers feel that the force is being judged against the background of Biddle. During his time the force was inundated with resources that allowed the police to be professional in both its outlook and its service delivery. The eight years since he left have coincided with donor fatigue, or donor diversion to other areas, both within Sierra Leone, and to war-torn post-conflict countries elsewhere in greater need of assistance. The reduced assistance to the organisation has started having an impact on both its professionalism and its ability to respond to crimes.

Other challenges arising from the lack of funds is the force's capacity to actually fight crime, particularly the more sophisticated forms of criminality it is increasingly faced with, such as cybercrime; money laundering; drug smuggling; and human

trafficking. The force continues to lag behind in technological advancements, including computer, forensic and CCTV technology (Kamara 2005), severely affecting its abilities. Furthermore, limited funds make it difficult for the police to address issues stemming from the recent history of conflict. This includes the challenge of (among other things) the large number of disaffected, war-hardened youth concentrated in the main cities and towns, who often resort to illegality to fund their existence.

The public has assumed that a civilian-led government would be in a position to provide the resources to enable the police to do its job. This has not been the case, unfortunately. The government's commitment to policing is not being called into question but its capacity to fund its activities is. The government's subvention to the police has been dwindling but mostly because the government itself has been grappling with its own revenues, meaning its assistance to the police has not been very robust or timely, which impairs the force's well-laid strategic plans. There will definitely be a need to juggle budgetary allocations, and prioritise some areas (e.g. training) over others (e.g. vehicle purchases). Alternative means of raising revenue, such as the private hire of police services by businesses such as banks are in place¹² but these are potentially problematic (e.g. if conflicts of interest arise). It is hoped that the government's fortunes will soon change (e.g. through recently agreed large mining contracts) to enable its financial commitment to mirror its stated commitment to the aims of the police force.

7.3 The political environment

The above section notwithstanding, the IG continues to be appointed by the President (although there is now wide consultation during this process) and supervised by the Minister of Internal Affairs; the Police Council is chaired by the Vice President; and the government controls the purse strings. While currently there is little evidence of this, the set-up continues to provide the facility for a corrupt political party, or individuals with oversight responsibilities, to levy undue influence over the keeper of the SLP's highest office.

With the change of government (from SLPP to APC), there was some worry that the police's newly-acquired independence would be eroded, and when they came in, some senior politicians tried to throw their weight around. But key ministers such as the former Minister of Internal Affairs, Dauda Kamara were instrumental (although ultimately unsuccessful) in trying to create an independent authority to supervise the police, outside of government machinery. Although not yet a reality, the proposal remains under review, and was even mentioned by the President in a recent State Address. However, it remains a contentious issue, not just in or for Sierra Leone, but also in other countries. After all, control over the use of force remains a key sovereign function of the state. What is the wisdom then of putting the police under the supervision of an independent authority?

In that case, it may be enough to ensure that the appropriate checks and balances remain in place. So for instance, while the appointment of the IG and their deputy are still political appointments, which may disfavour more

¹² Lance Phoday, interview, 8 January 2011.

experienced and capable AIGs who are not preferred by politicians, the appointments are now made after wide-ranging consultations and there is no longer scope for arbitrary appointments within the democratic system. Nevertheless, a recent constitutional review recommended that the appointment of the IG should be an independent from government.

7.4 Problematic areas of reform

One problematic aspect of the way the reform in Sierra Leone took place is that it focused on the police, largely in isolation – other institutions did not undertake the process – so it was only recently for instance that prison reform was undertaken. The JSDP has gone a long way in redressing this but the time lag has been problematic for the successful performance of the police.

A different problem stemming from the reform is that some changes were, and remain, very unpopular. These include the reduced ranking structure, among others. Brima Acha Kamara, who succeeded Biddle, continued his reforms lock, stock and barrel. A new IG took over in August 2010, and perhaps the time has come for the police to review, nearly ten years later, the impact and relevance of the restructuring. The time has come for the police to review, nearly ten years later, the impact and relevance of the restructuring. At the very least there is a need to review what has worked for the organisation, and what more needs to be introduced. For instance, the institution would benefit from reintroducing one rank within the junior ranking structure, and another in the senior ranking structure, to manage people's expectations.

8 Discussion and conclusions

Essentially, this paper has tried to tell a story about organisational change, from the perspectives of senior Sierra Leonean officers who were in the middle of efforts to see the change through, and who today have the responsibility of maintaining it. It is hoped that the sharing of experience will be beneficial to similar organisations contemplating or undertaking change.

Before the civil war corruption was rife within the police force and it was a highly partisan enterprise. These aspects were reflected throughout public institutions and were a core cause of the conflict. As a result of the conflict, the entire institution fell into disarray. However, through the war, a few individuals had been able to maintain a semblance of order. When international support teams arrived, at the request of the newly democratically-elected government, they were able to work with a core of dedicated officers, some of whom had fled the military junta. Together, and with significant public input, they were able to identify some of the problems within the organisation, including police excesses, nepotism, and inconsistencies in recruitment and promotion. They took their findings, developed a strategic development plan detailing where they wanted to go and started the restructuring process. Various structures were then introduced, dealing with external oversight, internal discipline, and community relations. Local Needs Policing developed as the country's answer to Community Policing, and is now a

primary feature of the SLP's approach. Today the SLP is a very different institution from what it was at the end of the twentieth century.

What factors account for this change? While the focus here has been on the police, it is also clear that without the context of a newly democratically-elected regime, reform would have been a non-issue. The fact that the President had previously sat on an Advisory Council of the police as part of the democratic transition, and that his political platform was based on a policy of transparency and good governance, meant that the changes were contextualised within the wider democratising environment. The commitment towards supporting a well-resourced police force, insulated from political machinations, which started with the Kabbah government was restated under the APC government when it came to power in 2007.

It is also clear that a key factor of success was that those in charge were able to take advantage of differing attitudes within the force to push through changes. A core of well-educated, pragmatic but somewhat idealistic mid- and senior-level officers seized the opportunity to realise a vision they had had of the police when they joined many years before.

Most of these officers were supported in their efforts by a strategic appointment of a foreigner, Biddle, as the transitional head of the organisation. He was able to make the most of the reform-minded to push through his agenda, while silencing (at least momentarily) dissenting views. By pursuing a policy of rapidly promoting people he considered competent and well-educated with little regard for age or seniority in the organisation, he ensured that strategic positions were populated by individuals sympathetic to, and supportive of, his agenda.

Furthermore, as the former head of the CPDTF, Biddle himself was regarded as highly competent. He came from a country, the UK, towards which the majority of Sierra Leoneans felt profound gratitude for essentially stabilising the country in 2000, and which seemingly had no other (for example economic) agenda. Importantly, he was insulated from the rampant neopatrimonial politics in the country, which a Sierra Leonean counterpart would have found extremely difficult, if not impossible, to isolate him or herself from.

Biddle's tenure has proved a useful precedent for the IGs who have had to follow in his footsteps, and the officers he left in his place remain committed to the reform agenda. The organisation is now led by a Sierra Leonean IG, supported by an Executive Management Board, which aims to ensure that whatever was achieved during the reform period is maintained and improved upon. This relatively democratic structure ensures that a single person is no longer responsible for making day-to-day decisions about the direction of the force, and there are systems in place to disseminate information and monitor progress.

Central to the reform was the introduction of the concept of Local Needs Policing, a form of Community Policing, considered particularly relevant for the Sierra Leone context (as Boxes 3.1–5.1 illustrated). Every effort was made to get the Sierra Leone citizenry 'on side', which essentially involved a massive rebranding and public relations exercise to inform and engage the public.

These efforts were supported by external expertise and the provision of resources sustained over a good number of years (from 1998 to present, albeit now in much reduced form). External funding also provided support for staff welfare and development, including training abroad for senior staff, the rehabilitation of police infrastructure (including stations, barracks and prisons), logistics, the creation of specialised departments such as the FSU, and so on.

However, significant challenges remain. Several public perception surveys (e.g. Vincent 2008) have shown that while the public does think the police force has improved, it is still widely considered a corrupt institution. As much as the restructuring has been embraced, there are still officers who have refused to change. At the same time, some members of the public are still on the fence – not everybody appreciates the police (sometimes, they feel – no matter what they do!). As with any war, there is always the aftermath to contend with. High rates of unemployment, particularly among young people, means high crime rates to deal with, community conflicts and so on. Furthermore, detractors worry that not enough has changed, and in fact the ground that has been won is already being eroded. With ever-decreasing sources of funding will progress be completely erased?

Senior police officers assert that they are working hard to ensure that they provide the necessary services, and will continue to do so, as long as essential funding is forthcoming. The government's role is therefore vital. Public security needs to be a priority of the government. While it is understandable that the government is squeezed, security provision is something that must not be compromised. A positive note however, is that lack of funds notwithstanding, the government's commitment to the process has been maintained. Despite the change in the governing party there is official commitment to maintaining the police's operational independence. The expectation therefore is that at such time as funds begin to flow freely so the government's disbursement to the police will increase accordingly. In the meantime the police continues to do its bit and recognises that it still needs to continue working hard to ensure that Sierra Leone remains a peaceful and stable country.

Finally, the Sierra Leone experience shows the need for reform to be a society-wide endeavour. Without a holistic change, very little will change. This is most apparent with regard to one of its major persistent problems facing the police: corruption. The reality is that problems of corruption spread far beyond the institution itself. The problem is society-wide – one could almost label it a cultural problem, pervading homes, families, churches, schools etc, and tackling it requires a holistic approach. In 2008, the government adopted an official national policy of 'Attitudinal Change'. The public must accept the role it has played in facilitating corruption among the Police, which reinforces the notion that improved policing in Sierra Leone must be a community effort.

Appendix A1: Sierra Leone Policing Charter

Introduction

'My Government wants to create a police service which will be a credit to the nation.'

The role of the police

The Sierra Leone Police will return our communities to peace and prosperity by acting in a manner which will:

- Eventually remove the need for the deployment of military and para-military forces from our villages, communities and city streets
- Ensure the safety and security of all people and their property
- Respect human rights of all individuals
- Prevent and detect crime by using the most effective methods which can be made available to them
- Take account of local concerns through community consultation
- At all levels be free from corruption.

Equal opportunities

The personnel policies of the Sierra Leone Police will be the same for all members, regardless of sex or ethnic origin. All recruitments, trainings, postings, promotions and opportunities for development will be based on a published equal opportunities policy.

The role of the Government

The Government will do all in its power to ensure that the Sierra Leone Police is:

- Directed and managed in accordance with the Constitution
- Locally managed so as to ensure that the community views are always taken into consideration
- Adequately resourced and financed
- Well-equipped to undertake its duties
- Professionally trained
- Dynamically led, and
- That the terms and conditions of service for members of the Sierra Leone Police reflect the importance of the task they perform.

The role of the people

In order that our Police Officers can successfully fulfil our expectations, it is essential that all people of Sierra Leone help and support them at all times.

Conclusion

Our aim is to see a reborn Sierra Leone Police, which will be a 'Force for Good' in our nation.

Source: Sierra Leone Police website,
www.police.gov.sl/content.php?p=6&pn=Objectives (accessed 3 August 2011).

Appendix A2: Sierra Leone Police Mission Statement

Consultation took place as a response to the Policing Charter amongst Senior Officers of the Sierra Leone Police Force. From this consultation, a four-part Mission Statement was produced by the Sierra Leone Police.

Our duty

We will provide a professional and effective service which:

- Protects life and property
- Achieves a peaceful society
- Takes primacy in the maintenance of law and order

Our values

- We will respect human rights and the freedoms of the individual
- We will be honest, impartial, caring and free from corruption

Our priorities

- We will respond to local needs
- We will value our own people
- We will involve all in developing our priorities.

Our aim

- To win public confidence by offering reliable, caring and accountable police service.

We all have a part to play. If a single Police Officer receives a few thousand Leones bribe to allow a traffic offender to escape prosecution, or takes advantage of his position as a Police Officer, it reflects on all of us. Furthermore, such actions are a criminal offence. By adhering to our values, we will win the respect of the public; thereby achieving our aim.

By working together we can truly become a 'Force for Good'.

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Security in an Africa of Networked, Multilevel Governance

A Research Councils of the UK Global Uncertainties Fellowship

This research programme centres on how the various institutions responsible for the production of security and the management of conflict in sub-Saharan African societies do, could and should evolve in response to the presence of violent conflict or criminality. The programme is built on the observation that all governance (especially in Africa) is multileveled and networked – from the village to the international organisation, and well beyond what is specified in formal government structures. Thus the focus is not only on the ways in which key conflict-management institutions evolve themselves but also on the changing ways in which the networks in which they are embedded actually operate.

The programme researchers are: David K. Leonard (director) together with Niagale Bagayoko-Penone, Peter Houtzager, Sidibe Kalilou, Freida Ibiduni M’Cormack, Ferdinand Mugumo Mushi, Thierry Nlandu, Mohamed Samantar, Anna Schmidt and James Vincent.

Countries in which field research has been or will be conducted are: Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, and Somalia (Somaliland and Puntland).

The objective of the research is the identification of institutional strategies for recovering the multiple aspects of human security in countries that have been fractured by violent conflict.

Key questions the programme seeks to answer are:

- *How do conflict management institutions evolve under the stress of prolonged violent conflict and how can they best contribute to the recovery of human security?* Institutions under consideration include elections, elected and traditional local government, local courts, the police, and the armed services.
- *What are the networks of relationships within and between states, communities, NGOs, international organisations, and international donors for the management and resolution of intrastate conflicts and how might their effectiveness be improved?*

Completed research papers under the **Multilevel Governance in Africa** programme are:

Bachmann (2011) *The African Standby Force: External Support to an ‘African Solution to African Problems’?*, IDS Research Report 67, Brighton: IDS

Bagayoko-Penone (2010) *Multi-level Governance and Security: The Security Sector Reform Process in the Central African Republic*, IDS Working Paper 351, Brighton: IDS

Bagayoko-Penone (2010) *Security Systems in Francophone Africa*, IDS Research Report 64, Brighton: IDS

Bagayoko-Penone (ed) (November 2009) 'Promoting Peace and Democracy through Security Sector Reform, *Governance Insight* 70

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