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Rebuilding war-ravaged institutions: UNDP capacity strengthening of the Sierra Leone house of parliament (2007-2018)

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Abstract

Post-war reconstruction and institutional rebuilding can be arduous and grueling. This is the case in countries where brutal civil conflicts completely destroyed the infrastructure of the state and its institutions, massified society, ransacked and pillaged properties, looted and plundered the economy, and created social insecurity and uncertainties. This was the state of affairs in Sierra Leone in 2002 when the civil war officially came to an end. The state institutional framework was broken, and central government had to rely on the donor community to rebuild and reconstruct the war-ravaged country. The overarching objective of this paper is to examine UNDP's financial and technical support especially to one of the three arms of government-the House of Parliament in Sierra Leone. UNDP's contribution to reform the Sierra Leone parliament and bring it up to speed has been overwhelming and strikingly noteworthy. The article demonstrates the fundamental role Parliaments play in the consolidation of both nascent and established democracies and how the institution empowers ordinary citizens to participate in the policies that shape their lives. This article concludes that the structural and institutional reforms put in place in the Sierra Leone's House of Parliament by the UN Agency has the potential to strengthen and consolidate the budding democracy in the country.

Keywords: Sierra Leone; Parliament; Democracy; Institutions; Reforms; Governance

1. Introduction

Parliamentary strengthening aims to enhance the effectiveness of parliaments through institutional development, through building the capacity of parliamentary staff, MPs and committees, and through putting in place the nuts and bolts of infrastructure and equipment [1]. Amundsen [2] argues that "As a political institution, parliament is the epitome of the idea of democracy, and a strong parliament is usually indicative of a healthy democratic and good governance system. Parliaments come in different shapes and with different strengths (and with different names; parliament, national assembly, legislature, House of Representatives, and congres). Besides, parliaments perform three core functions. They represent the electorate, they make the laws (including the state budget), and they oversee the executive branch of government. The latter, the 'checks and balances' function, is embedded in the balance of powers between the three branches of government: executive, legislative and judicial". Inherent in both arguments are the centrality and relevance of Parliaments in building the health and well-bring of democracies especially in developing countries.

In theory, parliament is one of the key institutions of democracy, playing an important role in terms of legislation, oversight and representation [3]. It is, however, noticeable that in both developed and nascent democracies,

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parliaments have proven to be inefficacious in performing their representative, legislative and oversight functions. It is against this backdrop that support to parliaments by development partners key in on providing the necessary tools, systems, resources and skills to improve and enrich their effectiveness.

Ideally, the responsibility rests on national governments to craft and shape the efficacy of their parliaments and to work in promoting and cementing good governance practices in their sovereignties. This is not the case in most African countries especially those that experienced brutal conflicts in the 1990s that left in its wake battered and broken state institutions. What external actors usually do is to help national sovereignties by engaging them to make efforts towards parliamentary effectiveness possible [4].

The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness is an international agreement between donors and recipients of aid to make aid more effective (The Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action are available at www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf). At its core are five inter-locking principles, adherence to which is expected to make aid more effective; ownership, alignment, harmonisation, managing for results and mutual accountability. According to article 3 (3) of the Declaration on the Right to Development, “States have the duty to cooperate with each other in ensuring development and eliminating obstacles to development.” (OECD, Development Cooperation Report 2005 (Paris, 2006), chap. 3, Aid effectiveness: three good reasons why the Paris Declaration will make a difference. Available at www.oecd.org/dataoecd/53/30/36364587.pdf). The Paris Principles provide a potentially useful vantage point from which to map the landscape of parliamentary strengthening and could – if they were applied in this sphere – enhance the effectiveness of parliaments and parliamentary strengthening. The intention is not to assess whether parliamentary strengthening activities have been influenced by the Paris Declaration; it would be too soon to make such an assessment. Rather, it is to use the Paris Principles as a vantage point for examining the landscape of parliamentary strengthening (The Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for Action are available at www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/41/34428351.pdf).

Without any doubt, UNDP has always taken the leading role in democratic governance, institution building and capacity development. As a matter of fact, the UN Agency is the most trusted partner to many governments especially in developing countries. The support ranges from good governance, economic development, the environment, livelihood security, gender equality, youth and women’s empowerment, and many more. Support to programmes in democratic governance and capacity building now account for over 45 percent of the overall portfolio of the organization (UNDP Strategic Plan 2008). The UN agency defines governance as “the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country’s affairs at all levels ... [comprising] the complex mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations” (See UNDP Strategic Plan of 2008 for details). Parliaments, the world over, serve as bedrock of democratic dispensation and play a quintessential role in ensuring that the executive is transparent, accountable and effective, at least in principle. As a representative institution of the citizens, parliaments are required to perform representative, legislative and oversight responsibilities in the governance system of any country. The need for their effectiveness and ability to checkmate particularly the executive arm of government, therefore, cannot be overstated.

Democratic governance is viewed as “participatory, transparent, accountable...and promotes the rule of law [5]. The responsibility to ensure that the democratic governance processes are transparent and accountable rests with the law-making body-parliament because its members serve as representatives of the people. When parliaments are strong and efficacious, they protect and promote equality before the law, protect the rights of citizens generally and advance the interests of the excluded, marginalized mostly minorities, in particular. They protect and promote the interests of a wide range of societal groups into government policy-making, thereby helping build support for democratic development among the broad citizenship [6]. As stated earlier, parliaments’ central role is to serve as a check on executive power: for example, if the executive branch of government is strengthened but are not accountable to the people, then the governance process may become essentially undemocratic, benefiting the few, but not the many (Inter-Parliamentary Union (2006), ‘Parliament and Democracy in the Twenty- First Century: A Guide to Good Practice’. Online:http://sdnhq.undp.org/governance/parls/docs/IPU%20Parliament%20and%20democracy_en.pdf).

The UNDP’s role in parliamentary development has grown significantly in the past decades. In 1995, only six countries had projects for parliamentary strengthening (See UNDP Strategic Plan for details). By 2007, UNDP was supporting parliaments in some 65 countries. Since parliamentarians represent an important segment of political leaders, low-cost programmes can have a large impact (Ibid., p. 6.). For example, in 2005 parliamentary development represented 11 percent of the UNDP governance agenda but only 2 percent of the budget. UNDP also implements multi-layered parliamentary support programmes through the Global Programme for Parliamentary Strengthening (GPPS), which provides limited resources to global, regional and national level parliamentary programmes (Ibid., p. 7.).

The UNDP support to the Sierra Leone House of Parliament dates back to 2007, a year after the country experienced the first democratic elections since the end of the infamous one-party rule (1978-1992). It was also the first after the end of the military rule that lasted for four years (1992-1996). Initially, UNDP's engagement was ad-hoc focussing on one or two activities in a year. After the peer learning visit to the Parliament of Uganda, which eventually led to the drafting of the Parliamentary Service Bill and its final passage into law was a critical turning point for the future of democratic governance in Sierra Leone. Having triggered this landmark change, UNDP, then went on to plan the future course of the development of the institutional backbone of Parliament, namely, the parliamentary service with the support of the UN Mission in Sierra Leone, IOM and other agencies. Eventually, UNDP began to support activities in a more structured and consistent manner through technical support to rebuild the institution (See Rasheed Draman, Evaluation of UNDP Support to the Parliament of Sierra Leone, 2018).

The UNDP collaborated with other development agencies such as the European Union (EU), the International Office of Migration (IOM) and the Westminster Foundation in its effort to revamp the Parliament in Sierra Leone. For instance, the EU support to parliament followed two strands: supporting the capacity building of the secretariat headed by the Clerk of Parliament (i.e., directorates and staff of parliament) and support to Members of Parliament, work of Committees and parliamentary processes. Since this was a new parliament with about 70% new MPs and over 100 new members of staff, the focus on capacity building remained critical. To that end, the following prioritised activities were implemented: Training of the Female Caucus, training of the Committee on Human Rights, training of the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA)-NGO Committee, media training for the parliament press gallery, round table for the education committee and conducted the parliament of Sierra Leone first Management Retreat in Kenema.

In consultation with the Clerk of Parliament, the programme supported the Management Retreat of parliament in Kenema where all the staff of parliament met to discuss the priorities of the vision of the new parliamentary administration and the restructuring that was being considered. They also discussed departmental roles and how they can be collaborating, the challenges they were facing and how the departments would be restructured in order to be more efficient and to provide professional support services to MPs and committees.

1.1. Brief Political Context

Table 1 Key Dates in Sierra Leone's Political History since Independence

1961	Sierra Leone gained independence from Britain under the leadership of Sir Milton Margai of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) who became first Prime Minister—Parliamentary Rule
1964	Sir Milton Margai met his untimely death at 64 years old and succeeded by his half-brother Sir Albert Margai who became the Second PM in the same year
1967	A controversial elections (widely perceived to have been won by the opposition) birthed the first coup (by Brigadier David Lansana) who stopped Siaka P. Stevens of the opposition All People's Congress (APC) from assuming power
1967	Also witnessed an incumbent being defeated by an opposition—the first in Sub-Saharan Africa.
1967-1968	A raft of coups and counter coups by junior and senior military officers that visited uncertainty to the politics of the country
1968	Brigadier John Bangura's coup called on Siaka Stevens who was living in exile in Guinea to form a government
1968	Siaka Stevens, the third PM of Sierra Leone and his APC party, formed the next government
1971	A Republican state was declared, and Siaka Stevens became the first Executive President
1973	First elections held under the republican state and was characterized by violence, intimidation, bloodshed and mayhem resulting in the withdrawal of the opposition SLPP party from participation
1973	<i>A de facto</i> one party prevailed (1973-1977) after the withdrawal from the polls by the opposition
1977	Nation-wide students' demonstrations that nearly brought the Siaka Stevens government to its knees
1978	A Constitutional change and the declaration of the One-Party state by the All People's Congress party of Siaka Stevens. A <i>de jure</i> monolithic system birthed. Most of the SLPP members crossed over to the ruling APC

1982	A first one-party state elections held and was marred by insane violence and cataclysm
1985	Siaka Stevens retired from active politics after seventeen years at the helm and hand-picked Brig. Gen. Joseph Saidu Momoh to succeed him
1985	Students riots at the University of Sierra Leone resulted in the rustication of several students and lecturers from the university that would have future implication of the security of the country
1986	First elections under the new leadership of President J. S. Momoh
1991	Clamor to return the country to a multi-party democracy culminating in the setting up of a Constitutional Review Committee that birthed the 1991 Constitution
March 1991	The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebel outfit started the decade-long civil conflict that engulfed the entire country
April 1992	Young, lower ranking and disgruntled soldiers from the war front attacked and overthrew the government of president Momoh and set up the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) military government
January 1996	Brig. Maada Bio overthrew the NPRC leader Captain Valentine Strasser in a palace coup
February 1996	At the height of the civil conflict, elections (proportional representation) were held to return the country rule were conducted and the Retired UN Civil Servant, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the SLPP was elected President
May 1997	Major Paul Koroma of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC) overthrew the legitimate government of President Kabbah in a coup
February 1998	Led, financed and sanctioned by ECOMOG, but particularly by the Nigerian Head of State President Sani Abacha, President Kabbah was reinstated as President of Sierra Leone
Jan 6, 1999	A Combined rebel forces (AFRC and RUF) entered Freetown and launched a campaign of Terror and mayhem
July 1999	President Kabbah led a government delegation to Lome where he and the rebel leader, Foday Sankoh signed the Peace Accord that brought peace to Sierra Leone
2002	President Kabbah officially declared the civil conflict over in Sierra Leone
2002	A General and Presidential elections (proportional representation) were held and President Kabbah won his second term in office
2004	The Local Government Act of 2004 was passed to reintroduce decentralization and Local Governance in Sierra Leone
2007	General and Presidential elections (return to first-past-the-post) were held, and the opposition APC party won the polls, the second time (first was in 1967) in the country's history where an incumbent Has been defeated in the pools
2007	President Ernest Koroma became the President of Sierra Leone
2012	A General and Presidential elections held were said to have been won by the incumbent President Koroma guaranteeing his second term
2015	A controversial mid-term census conducted that witnessed an increase in districts, constituencies and chiefdoms in the North and West relative to the East and South of the country
2018	The presidential elections resulted in the incumbent APC losing power to SLPP. President Bio declared President of Sierra Leone.
2022	A mid-term census conducted claiming that the East of Sierra Leone more populated than the Western Area
June 2023	The Electoral Commission of Sierra Leone declares Presidential and General elections in Sierra Leone

On the eve of independence in 1961, Sierra Leone enjoyed a relatively well-functioning state and a vibrant and promising economy; but the government quickly fell into dysfunction, becoming less and less responsive to the needs of its people [7], [8]. That is, the euphoric era of independence that witnessed the revolution of rising expectation soon birthed the revolution of rising frustration. Graft, rent-seeking and patronage went unrestrained, and opposition regional and ethnic groups felt that they were becoming increasingly marginalized and excluded from accessing state resources [9]. Years of bad governance, endemic corruption and the denial of basic human rights created deplorable conditions that made conflict inevitable (See the Truth and Reconciliation Report for Sierra Leone of 2002 for details). Various scholars writing on the political history of Sierra Leone (for instance, [10], [11] and [12] have postulated that the governing elite's perceived insensitivity to the growing discontent among the youths and among the most uneducated and impoverished portion of the population resulted in the wanton brutal civil war in 1991, one of the most violent civil conflicts recorded in human history. The country's rich mineral and other resources were exploited to fuel and sustain the civil war, [13] concluded.

Sierra Leone came out of a protracted, violent civil war with a legacy of irreconcilable political divisions, widespread destruction of social and physical infrastructure, severe population displacement and decimation, state/society disjuncture and a polarized society (Ibid., p. 28.). The civil conflict severely enfeebled central government institutions thereby intensifying insecurity and rendering state institutions dysfunctional. In addition, it destroyed social capital and local institutions through population displacement and widening of ethnic divisions. Above all, it created a culture of impunity, deepened a breakdown of law and order and spurred large-scale migration of skilled personnel abroad.

Sierra Leone became one of the biggest beneficiaries of the United Nations system. In 1999, the Security council authorized the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), a new and much larger mission with a maximum of 6,000 military personnel to assist the government in carrying out the mandate of the Lomé peace agreement. The UNAMSIL mandate was revised in 2000 and expanded the military component to a maximum of 11,000 military personnel and later to 13,000 including 260 military observers by its resolution 1299 of May 2000 (See UN Resolution 1299 of May 2000 for more details). Again on March 30, 2001, a further increase was authorized to increase the mission's strength to 17,500 (the biggest UN Peacekeeping Mission in the world at that time) by resolution 1346. The presence of the large UN Military personnel greatly helped the country to end a devastating and wanton conflict in 2002. Sierra Leone became one of

Devasted by a cataclysmic brutal conflict, the state's institutions and structures were rendered inefficacious, its capacity depleted, its human resource base ransacked, and the immediate task of the UN system was to provide technical and financial assistance to rehabilitate, rebuild and reconstruct the war-torn country. UNDP, with a comparative advantage in good governance, institution building, and capacity development focused principally on supporting the country as it embarked on the long and arduous journey of building a democracy from scratch. This was based on the belief that sustainable recovery from violent conflict and autocracy depends on rebuilding all sectors of the society and re-constituting a viable, trusted state authority through the creation of democratic institutions with Parliament as the key symbol [14]. In fact, there is an important causal link between the role of parliament and peacebuilding efforts. In post-conflict countries such as Sierra Leone, parliaments can be pivotal in conflict prevention, resolution and management. They serve as venues where groups that have been fighting each other in the past to sit at the table and attempt to resolve their differences with words instead of bullets.

Strengthening state institutions and bringing them back to the state of effectiveness is seen to be key to post-war recovery because research has demonstrated that many post-conflict recovery efforts are not sustainable – over 50% of “post-conflict” countries experience a return to conflict within ten years mainly because of the lack of attention to the role of institution-building in preventing the renewal of conflict [15]. Effective institutions are now widely viewed as critical to address both the “capacity and legitimacy deficits” faced by fragile states – since only strong national institutions can ensure that the state is associated with provision of positive services to the population and can be held to account by its citizens. This fact has been recognised by the global community as evidenced by the inclusion of Goal 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions in the SDGs (See the Sustainable Development Goals).

2. Results and Discussions

UNDP support to parliaments globally is predicated on the recognition that the institution plays an important role in democratic governance and national development. It serves as a trail blazer for democratic engineering. It conducts itself as the representative, legislative and oversight body over the other two arms of government: the executive and the judiciary. Consequently, parliamentary development is an integral component of UNDP services in democratic governance, with activities aimed at enhancing the representative, legislative or oversight capacity of parliamentary institutions in the governance process (See UNDP Strategic Plan).

Between 1991 and 2002, Sierra Leone suffered from one of the most brutal conflicts registered in human memory. It left in its wake a lasting scar on the country: a polarized and battered social order characterized by toxic, divisive, hate politics and social tension; a severe population dislocation and displacement that destroyed social capital and local institutions; a break-down in law and order; an insolvent economy that birthed a new form of an impoverished population; and an impaired state institutional infrastructure resulting in a compromised public service and eventual state collapse. State collapse was further exacerbated by enfeebled and dysfunctional public institutions incapable of providing basic social and economic services to citizens culminating in citizens' mistrust and lack of confidence in state institutions. Such was the grim and dire situation in the immediate post-war Sierra Leone in 2002.

Struggling under the weight of the brutal civil war, the government of Sierra Leone lacked the technical, financial and human wherewithal to rebuild its battered institutions. As such, the country had to rely on the goodwill of the international community to provide the much needed financial, human and technical support to resuscitate the economy, reconstruct state institutional framework, and to bring back respectability and legitimacy to public institutions. Renowned for its critical role in rallying other development partners to undertake development projects around the world, but moreso its role in mobilizing resources to promote good governance and institution strengthening, UNDP seized the opportunity to provide the much-needed assistance to the Parliament of Sierra Leone. Starting on an *ad hoc* basis, the UN Agency commenced engagement with the Parliament of Sierra Leone in 2007.

The engagement was necessitated by the peer learning visit to the Parliament of Uganda resulting in the drafting and passing into law of the Parliamentary Service Bill (PSB) (UNDP Report of 2008). The passing into law of the PSC also sparked UNDP's interest and set in motion the rebuilding process. Collaborating with other development partners such as the EU, IOM, the UN Mission in Sierra Leone, UNDP proceeded to plan the future course of the development of the institutional backbone of Parliament by ensuring that the parliamentary service commission was established. Eventually, the UN agency began to support activities in a more structured and consistent manner through technical support to rebuild the institution left unattended during the eleven-year-old civil conflict [16].

2.1. Provision of Technical Assistant

Following the dysfunctionality of the Sierra Leone Parliament during the civil war, UNDP, in collaboration with other development partners were on hand to provide support to the enfeebled institution. Positioning itself as the lead and trusted partner to the government, UNDP recruited and embedded a Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) with the view to trigger reforms, provide expert advice and share experiences. This was seen as the first point of call. Discussions held with staff indicated that the CTA was very instrumental in changing the face, script and management structure of the institution and transforming it into an enviable emerging modern parliament. Working materials and tools such as computers and accessories, servers, furniture and other devices such as transcript devises, digital and analog systems were provided to facilitate parliamentary work.

The CTA's terms of reference were both programmatic and policy laden. It included, among others, the establishment of structures, procedures, systems and processes that would ensure that parliament operates on a performance-based, modern-day management and administrative system. To modernize the Sierra Leone parliament and make it functional, the CTA, in concert with the leadership of parliament and development partners, established the Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC), the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), the Female Caucus, departments and providing expert advice to the Office of the Clerk has changed and improved the operations, management and functionality of the House of Parliament (See the 2018 UNDP support to the parliament of Sierra Leone). The consultative and interactive approach devised by the CTA improved communication and synergy between Parliament and the UN system much needed for improved relationship and addressing key policy and strategic issues.

Closely tied to the above, the CTA and other international consultants set in motion the development of tools for the Parliament of Sierra Leone such as the PoSL (Recruitment & Conditions of Service), Rules, 2016, Set of booklets on the Parliament for information of MPs and other visitors, A Financial Manual and a Strategic Plan 2016-2019 (See progress reports on UNDP engagement with the HoP, 2017). The resultant effect of this has been the tools have built the broader policy framework for the operation of parliament, enhanced professionalism based on rules, regulations and principles. The rules and procedures served as a check to the use of discretions and kinship ties in decision-making that had characterized Parliament before. This clearly helped to improve administration and management functioning of Parliament. Some other results have included improved performance of the administration and built continuity and trust with the UN after the closure of the UN Mission in SL in 2014 (Ibid. p. 6.).

One of the first structural reforms undertaken was the creation of a new Parliamentary Service, which has now a distinct status from that of the public service, an aim stated in the PS Act of 2007 (See the Parliamentary Service Act of 2007 for

details). An organogram was developed, positions created, terms of references and recruitment of staff carried out through a merit-based process. By the end of 2012, most of the key staff were in post in almost all the departments.

It can be argued that the quality of the output of a law-making body is predicated on the quality of support that MPs receive from the parliamentary service. It is for this reason that an effective and efficient parliamentary service, made up of very qualified professional staff, is critical for the proper functioning of the Parliament of Sierra Leone. The recruitment of qualified staff, spear-headed by UNDP, helped ensure that the Parliament had the core staff it needs to carry out its legislative and administrative responsibilities. The improvement of the human resource base became critical to this process. Without them, the institution cannot deliver on its mandate. It is against this background that the recruitment of key professional staff is viewed to have significantly impacted on the performance of the MPs.

A unique outcome of UNDP support has been the streamlining of the Parliamentary Administration through an active Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC) and decongesting the Office of the Clerk. To change the narrative about a parliament where low morale and demotivation among staff has been a commonplace before the intervention, UNDP support focused on building functional and system capacities creating key structures within parliament to enhance performance [17]. Nine departments were created: the Hansard Department, ICT Department, Public Relations Department, Committees Department, Legislative Department, Library Department, Finance Department, the Public Affairs Department and Human Resource Department. After the recruitment of staff, UNDP came in handy to pay salaries/stipends of staff for a transitional period. This singular act permanently changed the human resource dynamics and capacity in parliament and ensured that the institution has the most important resource – technical people – to provide support.

The exceptional UNDP assistance expedited the creation of departments, recruitment of staff and paying salaries. This has been recorded as the best that happened to any public institution in post-war Sierra Leone. The country was insolvent and needed such financial and technical investment to save its face and bring it back on its feet. Such engagement has resulted in increased productivity, effectiveness and enhanced performance of MPs compared to the period between 1996 and 2007. Parliament today can boast of a very capable, committed and unswerving staff that are providing the much-needed support to the MPs and to the Office of the Clerk (See Handing-Over Notes from the Chief Technical Adviser, 2018).

2.2. The Birth of the Parliamentary Assistance Coordination Office now DePAC

The Parliamentary Assistance Coordination Office (PACO) – now the Department of Parliamentary Assistance Coordination (DePAC) was birthed in 2010, with the view to facilitate and promote donor coordination and synergy. It also portends to mitigate overlaps and duplications of efforts and to maximize the support received from various donors. Donor coordination had been palpably weak and development partners had failed to engage each other with regards their assistance to the institution. It became evident that with the establishment of DePAC, donor efforts will not only be more harmonized, managed and smoothly coordinated but it will also ensure that the support is fairly distributed, targeted and monitored to avoid duplication and overlaps. The results from these efforts had been many. First, the support promoted linkages between development partners, the leadership of Parliament and the administration of Parliament. (See Evaluation Report on Parliament of Sierra Leone 2018 for details). The initiative and intervention has resulted in responding to capacity and resource needs of parliament as identified in the institution's Strategic Plan.

In tandem with the above, DePAC has built a more purposeful, cordial and fraternal working relationship with several partners (EU, WFD, IOM, UNDP, CPA) whose work focus on the Sierra Leone Parliament. The obvious outcome is the building of trust and increased confidence in parliamentary activities. UNDP assisted in the recruitment and training of staff in country and abroad for experience sharing. For instance, DePAC Director was supported to visit the Parliament of Kenya and learn from their experience how to engage and manage partners. DePAC has successfully coordinated the participation of MPs and staff in all the major parliamentary conferences including IPU held in Geneva in October and CPA in early December 2018 (Ibid., p. 28). The department has been given additional tasks to ensure that development partners engage and work within the parameters of the Strategic Plan of Parliament, share work plans and to improve sharing of information among partners. The research found that UNDP has helped other partners with status updates and have defined entry points thereby limiting duplication of efforts and maximizing gains. Consultations revealed that UNDP has been collaborative, supportive, and transparent and has helped every partner to carve its own niche in support of parliament.

2.3. Overhauling the Office of the Clerk

The Clerk of Parliament is the Vote Controller of the House. He/She serves as the principal adviser to Speaker of Parliament, Members of Parliament and Ministers on matters relating to legislation. The Clerk serves as Secretary of Parliamentary Commission and support MPs in their day-to-day work. Knight [18] argues that the Clerk is the Chief Executive of Parliament and is responsible for the management and employment of parliamentary services staff required to support and assist in the general administration of the operations of the House. Ideally, the Clerk advises the Speaker and all Members on the interpretation of parliamentary rules, precedents and practices. The Clerk is at the service of all Members, regardless of party affiliation, and must act with impartiality and discretion. He is responsible for the services provided by the permanent administration of Parliament (See the Standing Orders of Parliament).

Prior to UNDP intervention, the administration and management of parliamentary affairs was over-centralized in the Office of the Clerk. Decisions were top down, and no employee would take any decision relating to the activities of parliament without the expressed approval of or reference to the Clerk. The office maintained a tight bureaucratic order characterized by procedural bottlenecks that did not only slow down parliamentary work but also frustrated and made life unbearable for staff. No structure, procedures and systems existed to enhance effectiveness, efficiency and performance of the institution (See Evaluation report).

The thrust of UNDP intervention in the post-war era was to change the prevailing script about parliament and make it a model institution worthy of emulation [19]. As such, UNDP embarked on organizational and human resource development. Aided by the CTA, organizational development sought to change and strengthen structures, processes and management systems within the parliament in order to improve organizational performance. As indicated earlier, the Office of the Clerk was decentralized when key departments were created with clear responsibilities, roles and mandates. As such, the Clerk was left to play an oversight and advisory role to these departments. This in itself has helped build confidence in the staff and allow the Clerk to concentrate on more legislative and oversight responsibilities, key to democratic deepening and sustainable peace.

To determine the effectiveness of the Clerk, parliament must not be dependent on and subordinate to any other branch of government. Specifically, it must be free to follow its own regulations. Two key elements of the autonomy of Parliaments are administrative and financial. Parliaments must have the freedom to run their administration and sufficient autonomy to determine their own budget as well as other resources needed to efficiently carry out the constitutional mandates accorded them. This is not the case with the current state of affairs in Sierra Leone as the executive has an overwhelming sway and authority over the functioning of the HoP.

2.4. The Gender Agenda

Gender is critical to democratic engineering. The clarion call for women's' effective participation in politics and policy and decision-making processes have been loud and compelling. Kwankor [20] argues that women's equal participation in government is central to democracy and achieving sustainable development and egalitarian societies. While the struggle to redress the marginalization of women in leadership positions show a measure of success, this progress has been slow and uneven since 1995. Gender disparity persists in access to political leadership across local governments, national parliaments, and executive institutions of power—despite and in violation of an array of global, regional, and national laws that invest women with rights to equal political participation and representation as citizens. Women also face significant disparities within political parties, who serve as the gatekeepers to women's political access and competitiveness”.

Many efforts have been made in the past to support gender initiatives both at the level of MPs and the parliamentary administration. At the initial stage, the UN Mission and UN Women provided support the initiative to establish the Female Caucus *albeit* political disagreements. In 2012, UNDP intervened and negotiated and dialogued its formation and supported initial activities. These efforts were further thwarted by political divisions in parliament until 2018 when the CTA resuscitated the caucus and provided strategic direction to it. An executive was established, and a road map designed, and all the sixteen MPs and two female Paramount Chief MPs are part of the female caucus.

According to one of the members of the Female Caucus, the caucus has enjoyed capacity development through trainings in leadership skills; have been exposed to international learning exchange in Rwanda and Kenya to study the models on Gender Equality Bills; UNDP organized a retreat at Mamamah Beach in 2018 to harmonize findings from their trips to Rwanda and Kenya where a-8-point Resolution on how to design a Gender Equality Bill was developed (See Progress reports of 2018). The retreat also examined the Sexual Offense Act and how to amend some of it; presentation of the Resolutions was made to the President, Vice President and Chief Minister of Sierra Leone; the female caucus designed the Women Peace and Security Resolution that passed in parliament and support was provided by UNDP for the

popularization of the Gender Equality Bill. UNDP supported the Caucus to bring community women to share experience on the Rwanda and Kenya experience sharing visits. The Female Caucus was also supported to visit South Africa on peer learning experience. These efforts have made the female caucus to be more organized, knowledgeable, and cohesive regardless of party affiliation and more visible.

Another result is the Sierra Leone Parliament appointed a female as Director to head the Department of Parliamentary Assistance Coordination, the first in its history. There is also gender sensitivity in the recruitment of administrative staff in parliament and the potential to see more women appointed as Directors in the near future loom large. These developments tie in very well with and are contributing to the global development priorities, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 and 10. While gender representation in parliamentary administration is not adequate, it is a very good start. The caucus also succeeded in factoring a budget in the parliamentary budget to pursue affirmation action and Gender Equality Bill (caucus wants the gender bill to be a Private Member Bill).

2.5. Parliamentary Outreach: A Novelty

Outreach is a quintessential tool for building trust, raising awareness and educating the citizenry on what the elected officials are doing. As a matter of fact, it also brings elected officials face to face with the challenges and harsh realities facing their constituents. Through the use of constituency outreach activities, elected officials can become better informed and, therefore, better positioned to address the needs of their constituents in a timely and consistent manner. By connecting with citizens and getting involved with their day-to-day challenges, elected officials can demonstrate the government's commitment to respond to the needs and problems of citizens.

The researchers indicated that UNDP supported the pilot effort to open Parliament to the youths by providing opportunities for taking parliament to the schools, the first in the country's recorded history. This civic education of school children was led by staff of Parliament with technical and financial support from the UN Agency. By all accounts, this has been an experience which can surely be expanded to even local communities. At the heart of every democracy is the concept of representation and citizens' engagement. Parliamentarians are elected and appointed to represent the diversity in society and to articulate the voices, opinions and perspectives of citizens in the public policy making space that Parliament creates. This cannot take place without direct engagement with constituents, and this was what UNDP supported to ensure that parliament becomes responsive to its citizens. In these engagements, parliament offers the forum for issues of local and national importance to be debated and for those debates to be translated into sound policies. Effective representation requires that citizens are able to contribute to the work of Parliament. Getting young people, the future leaders, abreast of what is happening in Parliament has a significant impact not only on representation but the overall quality of democracy. The result has been the creation of platform for [parliament to dialogue and debate issues that affect the young population and how to respond to them. It was an eye-opener venture and has the potentials to bridge the gap that had existed between citizens and their representatives.

3. Conclusion

UNDP is seen as a knowledge leader and trusted partner at national and global levels. Its unique leadership strategy, responsiveness and flexibility has helped bolster state institutions and improve on their performance. UNDP's efforts have been largely complimentary to addressing issues such as root causes of bad governance, institutional decay and capacity deficiency. The UN Agency has been the most consistent, reliable and unwavering partner to post-war Sierra Leone generally, and particularly to the Parliament of Sierra Leone from 2007 to date. Its support has been and remains germane to the needs and priorities of the parliament of Sierra Leone. As articulated in this paper, UNDP's support has resulted in transforming the physical, organizational, operational and institutional framework of parliament. In general, the impressions provided by MPS, the Clerk of Parliament and staff and information gathered from documents are that UNDP support is positive, commendable and appreciated. It has responded well to the needs and aspirations of the parliament, staff and MPs as well as the committees and departments it has supported to establish over the years. The UNDP support, particularly the Chief Parliamentary Technical Advisor, is well appreciated by other partners and the interventions have complemented rather than duplicated the efforts of other parliamentary support efforts.

From the fore-going, most staff and MPs interviewed agree that UNDP support has motivated them to be committed to their work. They also noted that UNDP helped improve their performance and dedication to duty. All of these have been possible because of the tools UNDP has provided over the years. Systems and procedures have been put in place, equipment and other working tools have been readily provided and staff capacity development has been critical to UNDP's work. This has improved performance of staff and MPs, facilitated work, built synergies between MPs, staff and the Office of the Clerk.

The need to build the research capacity particularly the professional staff cannot be overstated. This helps to produce evidence-based information to support the work of MPs. MPs need reliable information and data in the execution of their duties/responsibilities of oversight, representation and law making. In the absence of evidence-based information and reliable data, parliament will be incapacitated to hold the executive accountable or to provide an effective representation of their constituents. Enhancing the research capacities of staff will help MPs perform and deliver on their constitutional mandate and, therefore, this should be a priority for partners to lend support to building a well-functional and strong parliament.

Developing the capacity component of parliament should be an on-going process. But aiding the Office of the Clerk in especially rolling out the Strategic Plan should be a priority of UNDP. The Clerk has identified key areas in the plan aimed at enhancing the operations and the effectiveness of the institution. Some of these key areas are: review of Parliament's Standing Order, increase the operations and effectiveness of Clerk's office to name two. UNDP needs to collaborate with the Clerk's office to implement these activities based on demand from parliament.

It is undeniable that UNDP's thrust has been to build the institutional framework of parliament, set up systems, procedures and policies and train and capacitate professional staff that could reform the battered image of a post-war parliament in Sierra Leone. In all intents and purposes, this approach has been lauded as the best in "putting Humpty Dumpty back together again" with a functional, operational and high performing parliament.

Priority Areas for Future Engagement

- Government to provide regular funding to not only upkeep parliamentary activities but to invest in new programmes, build capacities and reach out to the rest of the citizens.
- Closely tied to the above, undertake regular assessment of MPs' capacity and knowledge base/gaps in relation to their legislative and oversight responsibilities and functions. This could be done by designing a long-term, robust program that addresses the needs of the institution based on the priorities identified in the Strategic Plan and based on the emerging needs of the new Parliament.
- Develop new parliamentary procedures/manuals especially in situations of high attrition rate, low levels of skills on the part of MPs and parliamentary staff. It is clear that the procedures and manuals will provide guides to basic parliamentary information in an easy-to-read format. They will simply be primers on parliamentary fundamentals.
- Provide training facilities for parliamentary staff in-country and externally to ensure that they are *au fait* with parliamentary procedures, systems and activities. Staff training on legislative matters and how they provide support to MPs is crucial to the proper functioning of a modern-day parliament.
- Strengthen and capacitate the legislative department with the view to perform the full complement of its roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, there will be the need to ensure that the Budget and Research Office is fully operational with the right technical expertise needed so that it can provide the much-needed technical support to MPs and staff in the area of oversight and lawmaking
- Support mechanisms to build strong synergy between Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Parliament. Parliaments and CSOs both work in the same sphere, which is independent from the government and perform the similar tasks relating to the oversight and critique of the government. Hence, there are in-built complementarities between parliament and CSOs, which, when nurtured and developed, ensures to the benefit of society.
- Continue supporting the Female Caucus in parliament by providing training and resources in their quest to achieve the 30 percent representation in parliament. To achieve the gender agenda, women need to be empowered to effectively participate in decision making processes especially those that govern their lives.

Compliance with ethical standards

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The authors whose names are listed on this article certify that they have NO affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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