

**Chiefdom Governance Reform Programme Public Workshops:
An Analysis of the Facilitators' Reports¹**

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Executive Summary

This report analysis the reports of public consultations facilitated by the Chiefdom Governance Reform Programme (CGRP) between 1999 and 2001. Consultations were held in seventy-five chiefdoms and eight teams, all of which made use of the same set of pre-prepared activity and discussion modules, handled facilitation. The teams differed in their interpretation of these modules, and in their methods for selecting workshop participants. The facilitating teams placed a heavy emphasis upon instruction, but the tone of participants' reported responses suggests that for them, the main output of the workshops was a message to government that their problems and grievances required urgent attention. Much useful data appears in those sections of the reports where facilitators are summarising plenary discussions or their own field observations.

Each of the workshop reports contains a brief summary of local economic activities and a section dealing with community development needs ranked in order of priority by participants. Several of the workshop reports also devote space to issues of specific interest to women. But governance in the chiefdoms is the issue covered in by far the greatest depth.

A complaint voiced repeatedly in the workshops was that chiefs rarely consult with the people but are always ready to exploit them for material gain. Chiefs and councillors were accused of imposing illegal levies on the populace (in money or in kind) and entering into contracts with private businesses to exploit chiefdom resources (e.g. timber) without informing the people. But above all, chiefs of all ranks were accused of exercising their 'traditional' prerogative to perform jurisprudence purely for the purpose of making money from fines and summoning fees. People complained in workshop after workshop that these fines are grossly incommensurate with the offences committed and that justice invariably goes to relatives of chiefs or to the highest bidder. Some workshop participants also claimed that chiefdom committees are in the habit of passing byelaws without informing the people, and then proceeding to lecture offenders that innocence of the law is no defence. Another common complaint was that a senior chief will demand large sums of money from all parties to adjudicate a land dispute but then neglect to deliver a judgement.

Communal labour was highlighted in the workshops as another source of contention between chiefdom authorities and the local populace, especially youths. The legal right of chiefs to compel their subjects to work for their personal benefit was abolished in the 1950s, but it remains a legally permissible and generally accepted practice for chiefdom authorities to call upon their able-bodied subjects to perform tasks beneficial to the community as a whole (e.g. clearing inter-village paths). Penalties for non-compliance are authorised by chiefdom committees in byelaws. In the workshops, many chiefdom authority representatives complained that local youths were no longer willing to work for the common good, while the youths retorted that they had no incentive to comply as long as the work was unpaid and they had no say in the running of the chiefdom. In one workshop, local youths reportedly observed that 'they are only considered as part of the chiefdom when it is time for communal labour'. In another workshop, it was also argued that chiefdom taxpayers should be exempted from the obligation to provide communal labour.

While many complaints about chiefs' governance were voiced in the workshops, the facilitators' reports indicate that the local populace places even less trust in District and Provincial administration. District Officers were often described as arrogant and prone to interfering in chieftain affairs. Instances of alleged interference included appointing regent chiefs and lesser chiefs without consulting the people, demanding exorbitant fees for registering candidates at chieftaincy elections, conniving with paramount chieftaincy candidates to inflate councillor numbers in towns and sections supporting those candidates and conniving with chiefs and Treasury Clerks to embezzle local tax revenue. They were also seen as the channels through which powerful politicians in Freetown exerted influence over chieftain affairs, especially chieftaincy elections. Indeed, a recurring local grievance was that external agencies were placing clients in positions of authority in the chiefdoms, allegedly in order to milk tax revenue and other resources.

Considering these grievances in the round, it is hard to escape the impression that interventions by central and district authorities in chieftain affairs are welcomed by those that derive political benefit from them and condemned by those who do not. Yet participants' responses on the way forward for better governance in the chiefdoms suggest genuine ambivalence over the foundations of citizenship and the rights and prerogatives deriving from it. On the one hand, there were calls for bureaucratic improvements and rationalisations: better record keeping, regular auditing of accounts, full public consultation over important decisions, prosecution of corrupt officials and protection of the right of the people to elect chiefs and councillors. It was also stated forcefully in workshop after workshop that if the government could only pay realistic salaries to Chiefs and Chiefdom administrative staff, the latter would command greater respect among the populace and be less prone to corruption. On the other hand, participants expressed a strong desire to rein chiefs and chiefdom functionaries back into a local moral community based upon ties of kinship and history.

The problems here is that as soon as modern patronage networks begin to infiltrate a system of customary authority, the political struggles of the rural masses tend to focus on recovering 'custom' rather than demanding rights as modern citizens. After all, if one can ensure that chiefs display the appropriate hereditary credentials, there is at least some chance that they can be prevailed upon to honour their historical and family responsibilities and govern in the interests of the people. Yet, the measures advocated by workshop participants to ensure that chiefs and chiefdom administrative staff are reined back into the local moral community – a wider franchise in Chieftaincy elections, stronger and more representative local committees, better auditing and record keeping, etc – require the support of the state apparatus and might, if implemented, render chieftaincy increasingly superfluous.

The challenge for policy makers is to design reforms in government institutions that might satisfy these demands for bureaucratic improvement. This is a very difficult challenge. There are powerful vested interests in the chiefdom system and it would be extremely difficult for any Sierra Leonean government to initiate root and branch reform in this area. Furthermore, the reinstatement of District

Councils under the new Local Government Act appears, at first sight, to satisfy demands for modern local government without requiring attention to chieftom administration. Yet, by leaving the structure and most of the functions of chieftom administration intact, the new Act does little to alleviate the governance problems cited in the workshop reports.

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List of Abbreviations

AFP	Action For Peace (facilitating team)
APC	All Peoples' Congress
CDA	Community Development Associates (facilitating team)
CDF	Civil Defence Force
CGRP	Chiefdom Governance Reform Programme
CMPB	Conflict Management and Peace Building (facilitating team)
COPAD	Coalition for Peace and Development (facilitating team)
CD-PEACE	Center for Development and Peace Education (facilitating team)
CPR	Campaign for Peace and Reconciliation (facilitating team)
CR	Conciliation Resources (facilitating team)
NDO	Ndegbornei Development Association (facilitating team)
NPRC	National Provisional Ruling Council
SLPP	Sierra Leone People's Party
UNAMSIL	United Nations Mission to Sierra Leone

Chiefdoms Hosting CGRP Workshops, 1999-2001

Eastern Province

Kenema District

Dama (COPAD)	Dodo (AFP)
Falla Wando (CMPB)	Gaura (COPAD)
Gorama Mende (CMPB)	Kandu Lekpeyama (COPAD)
Langrama (COPAD)	Nomo (COPAD)
Nongowa (COPAD)	Simbaru (CMPB)
Small Bo (CR)	Tunkia (COPAD)
Niawa (COPAD)	Koya (COPAD)

Northern Province

Port Loko District

Kaffu Bullom (CD-PEACE)	Koya (CD-PEACE)
Lokomasama (AFP)	Maforki (AFP)
Masimera (CD-PEACE)	Dibia (CD-PEACE)

Tonkolili District

Kolifa Mabang (CD-PEACE)	Yoni (CD-PEACE)
Gbonkolenken (AFP)	

Southern Province

Bo District

Bagbo (CPR)	Lugbu (CPR)
Bagbwe (AFP)	Gbo (CR)
Baoma (AFP)	Bumpeh Ngao (CR)
Jaiama Bongor (AFP)	Njala Konboya (CMPB)
Selenga (CMPB)	Tikonko (CR)
Wunde (AFP)	Badijia (CMPB)
Valunya (CMPB)	

Bonthe District

Bendu Cha (CDA)	Bum (CDA)
Dema (CDA)	Imperri (CDA)
Jong (CDA)	Kpanda Kemoh (CDA)
Kwamebai Krim (CDA)	Nongoba Bullom (CDA)
Sittia (CDA)	Sogbineh (CDA)
Yorbeko (CDA)	

Moyamba District

Banta Mokele (NDO)	Bumpeh (CR)
Fakunya (NDO)	Kagboro (NDO)
Kaiyamba (NDO)	Kamajei (CPR)
Kongbora (NDO)	Kori (NDO)
Kowa (CPR)	Lower Banta (NDO)
Mano Dasse (CR)	Ribbi (NDO)
Timdale (CPR)	Bagruwa (CPR)

Pujehun District

Barri (AFP)

Kpaka (AFP)

Makpele (AFP)

Mano Sakrim (AFP)

Peje (AFP)

Sowa (AFP)

Gallinas Perri (AFP)

Kapanga Kabonde (AFP)

Malen (AFP)

Panga Krim (AFP)

Sorogbeima (AFP)

Yakemo Kpukumu Krim (AFP)

Introduction

1. Between 1999 and 2001 eight teams commissioned by the Chiefdom Governance Reform Programme (CGRP) facilitated public workshops in seventy-five chiefdoms. The designed purpose of these workshops was to assist the populace in re-establishing good governance as a principle in chiefdom administration and to set conditions for the post-war restoration of chiefly authority. General comments on this exercise have already appeared in the output to purpose review.² The present report analyses the content of these workshops, especially the views expressed by rural Sierra Leoneans on a variety of governance issues. This analysis is based solely on the facilitator reports for each workshop.

2. Three pilot workshops were held between December 1999 and January 2000 and the rest got under way the second half of 2000. Seventy-one had been completed by October of that year. RUF occupation of much of northern and eastern Sierra Leone meant that activity was restricted to the south. All the chiefdoms in Moyamba, Bo, Bonthe, and Pujehun Districts were covered, and all but two chiefdoms in Kenema District. A further five chiefdoms in the southernmost parts of Tonkolili and Port Loko Districts were also covered. A further four workshops were held in chiefdoms in these two Districts in 2001.

3. Eight different teams facilitated the workshops and the workload was distributed as follows: Action for Peace (AFP), 20 workshops; Community Development Associates (CDA), 11 workshops; Coalition for Peace and Development (COPAD), 9 workshops; Conciliation Resources (CR), 8 workshops; Ndegborme Development Organisation (NDO), 8 workshops; Conflict Management and Peace Building (CMPB), 7 workshops; Center for Development and Peace Education (CD-PEACE), 6 workshops; Campaign for Peace and Reconciliation (CPR), 6 workshops. None of the reports list the memberships of the facilitating teams. Copies of two reports produced by CR (from the Kakua and Niawa Lenga workshops) could not be obtained from either CR or the CGRP office.

² Richard Fanthorpe, Alice Jay and Victor Kalie Kamara, *Sierra Leone: A Review of the Chiefdom Governance Reform Programme, Incorporating an Analysis of Chiefdom Administration in Sierra Leone*, DFID, November 2002.

Section 1: Workshop Organisation and Objectives

Preparatory Activity

4. Facilitators made preliminary visits to target chiefdoms to organise the workshops and gather background information. This information often appears in the introduction to each report. Chiefdom sections, ruling houses and previous Paramount Chiefs are often listed, along with dates of any chiefdom amalgamations. The main economic activities of the chiefdom are also noted, along with a list of NGOs working locally and estimates of the extent of wartime damage to local infrastructure and economic activities. Some reports, notably those of CPR, CR and AFP, go on to list local schools, chiefdom population figures (1985 national census data), and figures for chiefdom taxpayers and councillors.

5. In all of the reports the situation regarding the leadership of the target chiefdom is noted: whether the leading chief is a Paramount or Regent, whether s/he is in residence in the chiefdom, and whether s/he has *de facto* authority in the chiefdom. At the time the workshops were taking place, this last question was particularly pertinent due to the uncertain security situation in rural areas, recurrent challenges to chiefs' authority from CDF commanders, and the large number of regent chiefs. Unlike Paramount Chiefs, who are elected by Chiefdom Councils, Regent Chiefs are appointed by District Officers with the approval of the local government ministry and are not required to be natives of the chiefdoms they supervise.

6. The facilitating teams were given funds to provide food and contribute towards expenses for 65-70 workshop participants. The CGRP management also supplied the facilitating teams with a standard list of stakeholder groups that should be represented at each workshop. Copies of this list remain attached to some of the reports.³

³ The groups listed are: Paramount Chiefs/Regent Chiefs, Section Chiefs, Speaker, town chiefs, chiefdom councillors, civil defence force, women's leader, societal leaders, Mammy Queen (ceremonial women's Chief), youth leaders, ex-combatants, religious leaders, Native Authority (i.e. Chiefdom) staff, health workers rep., teachers' rep., social workers' rep., NGO rep., retired civil servants, traditional healers, drivers (union) rep. Annexed to some of the CDA reports is a more aggregated list of stakeholder groups with target figures for representation at the workshops: 10 chiefs (1 Paramount Chief, 1 Speaker, 4 Section Chiefs, 2 town chiefs, 2 village chiefs), 10 youths (6 male, 4 female), 10 women's representatives, 11 'social group' representatives (5 teachers, 3 medical, 3 NGO), 5 CDF, 5 ex-combatants (3 RUF, 2 SLA), 6 religious leaders (3 Christian, 3 Muslim), 3 chiefdom administrative staff (1 Court Chairman, 1 Treasury Clerk, 1 Court Clerk), 5 traders, and 3 traditional society leaders. The total here is 65.

Workshop organisation

7. Prospective facilitators joined an orientation seminar to devise an agenda for the workshops.⁴ Here, prospective facilitators were encouraged to discuss governance issues at the chiefdom level and suggest possible solutions to the most pressing problems. These discussions were subsequently developed into ten ‘modules’, designed to provide guidelines for the workshops in the chiefdoms:

1. Identifying points of conflict in the community, ‘to identify community issues that have affected good/positive relationship between Paramount Chiefs and their subjects, leaders and people’.
2. Discussing roles and responsibilities of chiefdom staff, with the objective that ‘by the end of the session, the various local chiefs will know their administrative roles and responsibilities and the community members will also understand the functions of their leaders’.
3. Discussing relationships between chiefdom authorities and the chiefdom populace, ‘to highlight the structure of chiefdom leadership and their expectations at each level of the hierarchy’.
4. Highlighting the roles and responsibilities of chiefdom staff with discussion stimulated by role-play.
5. To examine the role of the local courts to ‘enable the community and Native Authority workers to be aware of their vital roles in the dispensation of justice and generation of revenue for the chiefdom’.
6. Reconciliation of chiefs and people, ‘to ensure a renewed commitment to the social contract between a community and its leaders’.
7. Discussing the way forward for the restoration of chiefs, ‘to enhance participants’ skills in planning for the development of the chiefdom’.
8. Discussing the way forward to enhance development at chiefdom level, ‘to enable participants to develop a plan of action for their community’.
9. Discussion of ‘good governance’ issues as perceived by chiefdom people.
10. Discussing the selection of chiefs and chiefdom authorities, ‘to enable participants to examine the process and factors on how they select their own chiefs’.

Some of these modules required the division of the participants into focus and task groups, while others were intended for plenary sessions. The report on the orientation workshop also states that ‘the facilitators will be able to determine the appropriate module that best fit[s] the situation for each chiefdom’.⁵

8. While all the facilitating teams made extensive use of these modules, they differed in the ways they applied them in workshop exercises and compiled them into an overall agenda. According to CR, the general objectives of the workshops process were: a) to identify obstacles to re-instituting the full authority of the Paramount

⁴ See *Orientation of Facilitators for Chiefdom Consultations on the Restoration of Paramount Chiefs Project* (Sierra Leone, Governance Reform Secretariat, March 2000).

⁵ *Orientation of Facilitators*, p. 11.

Chief; b) to clarify governance issues that are causing conflicts locally; c) to identify development priorities for the chiefdom. The workshops proceeded through five sessions. First, issues of general concern to the local community were identified and prioritised and possible solutions discussed. Some of this work was done in plenary, but most was allocated to focus groups (representing CDF and youths, women, chiefs and chiefdom functionaries, and ‘civil society’⁶ respectively) and task groups (randomly constituted). Second, issues specific to the domain of governance were discussed: the roles and responsibilities of chiefs and chiefdom staff, the relationship between chiefs and populace, electoral procedures, areas of conflict, and recommendations for the future. Almost all of this work was done by focus groups. Third, each focus group was asked to make ‘tangible commitments’ towards the resolution of community problems. Some participants’ pledged labour and materials for the construction of the chiefdom house, but these commitments also included promises to resolve specific disputes, hold traditional ceremonies, and organise committees and working parties for other community building exercises. Fourth, each focus group was asked to identify and prioritise local development needs. Fifth, a committee was nominated to implement the overall project, especially the procurement of materials and labour for the chiefdom house.

9. Among the other facilitators, only NDO went so far as to set out workshop objectives. According to this team, the general aim of the workshops was ‘to outline the concerns of the chiefdom with a view to finding solutions and proposing recommendations to enhance good governance and sustainable development’. It appears that the NDO facilitators presented the list of modules to workshop participants and encouraged them to choose the topics they wanted to discuss. One workshop was given over in its entirety to a discussion entitled: ‘The Rebel War in Sierra Leone and its Effects on Kori Chiefdom’. Several participants handed over statements of need, requests for assistance and formal letters of complaint (mostly against local members of parliament and district authorities rather than chiefs) to the NDO team, and copies of some of these documents remain attached to workshop reports.

⁶ Professionals, government workers, trade union representatives, religious leaders and NGO/CBO workers are often lumped together in workshop reports under the heading ‘social group’, ‘civic group’ or ‘civil society’.

10. The other facilitators do not set out workshop objectives in their reports, although some summarise the team spokesperson's opening address. According to AFP, the overall aim of the CGRP was to restore dignity to the institution of chieftaincy and provide a package of assistance to each chiefdom. COPAD announced that it was the Sierra Leone government's intention to reform governance in all regions, ensure the free and fair election of Paramount Chiefs and review the role and responsibilities of native (i.e. chiefdom) administration 'so as to avoid the mistakes of the past'. CD-PEACE stated that consultation between government representatives (i.e. the facilitators) and chiefdom authorities was part of a new 'good governance' approach, and went on to list the following as the main objectives of the CGRP: 1) holding free and fair chieftaincy elections; 2) 'building bridges' between chiefdom citizens (especially between those who stayed during the war and those who fled); 3) providing housing for Paramount Chiefs; 4) holding public meetings to discuss problems in chiefdom administration.

11. There is little indication in the reports that modules were chosen to fit the socio-economic and political profiles of particular chiefdoms. For example, the CR team did not raise the issue of chieftaincy elections in chiefdoms where there was a sitting Paramount Chief. Yet three of the other teams asked participants to report on the issue even when the Paramount Chief was present, while the remaining four did not raise the issue in any of the workshops they facilitated. All workshops had the same basic format: a) instructional exercises in the principles and practices of good governance, the roles and responsibilities of chiefs and chiefdom administrative staff, and techniques of reconciliation; b) reports from task and focus groups on local social and governance problems; c) itemisation and prioritisation of local development needs by the same or different task and focus groups. AFP and CPR workshops tended to place more emphasis on instruction, while COPAD and CMPB tended to focus more directly on problems arising between chiefs and chiefdom administrative staff on the one hand, and the local populace on the other. CDA, CD-PEACE and NDO

workshops were more action-orientated. Here, participants were asked to establish a special committee for coordinating solutions to problems identified by the workshop.⁷

12. All facilitating teams organised focus groups in the same manner as CR (see above). In some cases however, the ‘civil society’ group was either omitted or attached to the ‘youths’ group. Women were also grouped with ‘youths’ in some workshops; in a few other cases, ‘elders and councillors’ and ‘CDF’ formed separate groups from ‘chiefs’ and ‘youths’ respectively. In general, the workshops used randomly constituted task groups for specific exercises and focus groups for collecting information on general governance issues and development needs. However, the CMPB and NDO teams also asked focus groups to report on, and acknowledge responsibility for, problems originating within their own social spheres, while the CD-PEACE team often allocated different workshop exercises to different focus groups.

13. Reconciliation was discussed in many workshops, but mainly in principle rather than in practice and in relation to the RUF rather than the chiefs and their subjects.⁸ Discussion of the specific powers and functions of the special committees nominated by some workshops – especially their relationship to the established Chiefdom Committees and Councils - does not appear in any report.⁹ Furthermore, while all facilitating teams raised the issue of the chiefdom house with local people - in some cases asking participants to pledge labour and materials while the workshop was in progress – only the reports of CR and CD-PEACE note that special committees charged with the resolution of local governance problems might also be asked to coordinate the house building exercise.¹⁰

⁷ CDA called this special committee the Crisis Management Committee, CD-PEACE called it the Chiefdom Recovery Committee, while NDO called it the Conflict Management Committee.

⁸ In one Chiefdom where three different people were claiming the Regent Chieftaincy, the AFP team attempted to ‘sensitise’ the people with a role-play, telling them that ‘without peace and unity no development would come to their Chiefdom’.

⁹ It is stressed in CD-PEACE reports that the new Chiefdom Recovery Committee would not take the place of any existing committee, although this caveat still begs the question of the new committee’s authority.

¹⁰ Building houses that would provide accommodation for Paramount Chiefs yet remain the property of the Chiefdom was a major component of the CGRP, conceived as both an incentive for Chiefs to return to their Chiefdoms after the civil war and a community building exercise.

Technical issues

14. Paramount or Regent Chiefs participated in 50 of the workshops (in the remaining cases the Speaker or a close relative of the Paramount Chief acted as a proxy) and in every case they exercised their prerogative to deliver an opening address. Some took the opportunity to praise the President and confirm their loyalty to the SLPP government, but all emphasised the social and economic problems their chiefdom was facing after a decade of civil war. Some also remarked that the workshop represented the first time in many years that central government had taken an interest in the affairs of their chiefdom.

15. Only a handful of reports provide data on workshop participants. Registration data attached to some of the CDA reports indicate heavy recruitment of workshop participants in chiefdom capitals. For example, in Kamwebai Krim chiefdom, 46 of the 53 registered workshop participants gave their residence either as the chiefdom headquarters or the nearby hometown of the Speaker. In Kagboro the chiefdom headquarters and Speaker's hometown likewise accounted for 32 of 65 registered participants. In Bendu Cha chiefdom, 21 of 51 registered participants gave their residence as the chiefdom headquarters; the corresponding figures for Gbangbatoke, Nongoba Bullom, Bum, Sittia, and Imperri chiefdoms were 41/65, 36/58, 27/57, 15/58, and 15/55 respectively.

16. Many reports note a keen local interest in the food and expense payments on offer to workshop participants - one report going so far as to accuse chiefdom authorities of manipulating the list of workshop invitees to ensure that members of their families obtained these benefits. Almost all of the workshops attracted uninvited participants. Some teams welcomed contributions from these 'guests' but declined to extend registration and expense payments to them (in one case two Section Chiefs were refused registration), while others felt that they had no choice but to provide food and pay expenses to everyone because the unregistered guests had been invited personally by the Paramount Chief.

17. While the data are incomplete, there are also indications of variation between the facilitators in sampling methods. For example, the CDA team, working in remote parts of Bonthe District, did not manage to recruit a full quota of 'civil society'

representatives to its workshops. By way of contrast, in two of the three CR workshops for which figures are available, 'civil society' representatives comprised 33/69 and 36/66 of workshop participants respectively. Both of these workshops took place in Bo District, a focus of government and NGO activity in the latter stages of the civil war. However, a sum total of eight 'civil society' representatives were registered in the five AFP workshops for which figures are available and three of these took place in Bo District. Closer examination reveals that CR registered relatively few traders, religious leaders and chiefdom administrative staff while AFP registered relatively many chiefs, councillors, ruling house members and chiefdom administrative staff. In the five AFP workshops for which figures are available, chiefs, councillors and administrative staff accounted for 19/62, 34/61, 37/72, 21/63 and 31/58 participants respectively.

18. The issue arising here is whether the workshops managed to capture a fully representative sample of local interests and opinions. Organising public workshops in rural Sierra Leone is challenging at the best of times. Most of the population works on the land and is scattered in small villages. Intra-chiefdom communication is largely by word of mouth and few can afford to use motor transport even when this is available.¹¹ Market and service activities tend to concentrate in the chiefdom capitals, and workshop facilitators were most likely to find representatives of the specialist and professional groups they were seeking in these locations. Heavy recruitment of workshop participants in the chiefdom capitals has to be understood in this context.

19. Furthermore, as the workshops were devoted to issues affecting each chiefdom as a whole they should, ideally, have included representatives from every section and major settlement. Yet village and section chiefs were already in place to serve in this capacity. The AFP team took this point into account and notes in several of its reports that every effort was made to invite as many section and village chiefs as possible. Of course, this strategy might have allowed chiefs to dominate the workshops and suppress critical voices. On some occasions, facilitators did indeed report that the presence of the Paramount or Regent Chief at the workshop seemed to constrain discussion. Yet, extremely frank views on the performance of chiefs and Chiefdom

¹¹ On two occasions the NDO team, working to a tight schedule, had to send its vehicle out on the eve of a workshop both to recruit and collect participants.

administrative staff were expressed in most workshops and here it must be borne in mind that chiefs and councillors representing different sections and ruling houses are often the bitterest of political rivals.

20. The overall impression given by the workshop reports is that women's and youth representatives communicated their concerns freely in focus group discussions and that issues specific to these social groups were also aired in plenary. However, some reports note that few women attended the workshops and that those who did were reluctant to participate actively. It is also noteworthy that the CPR team reports scaling back focus and task group exercises in its later workshops on the grounds that illiterate participants of both sexes tended to leave all the talking to their literate fellows in small group exercises, but were much more inclined to contribute to plenary sessions. The implication here is that those participants who relied wholly on speech as a medium of communication preferred to have as large an audience as possible for their talk. Furthermore, as the facilitating teams tended to introduce themselves as representatives of government - a higher power than the Paramount or Regent Chief - some participants may have felt that they had special authorisation to speak freely in the plenary sessions.

21. A further issue is whether participants gave responses reflecting the promptings of facilitators rather than their own views. This question is hard to answer on the basis of the reports alone. For example, the COPAD team listed universal adult suffrage in chieftaincy elections in its workshop briefings on 'expected outcomes' and in confidential recommendations.¹² Many focus groups (especially 'youth' and 'civil society' groups) in COPAD workshops adopted this idea as a resolution but it is open to question how far it reflected participants' real convictions. It is noteworthy, however, that calls for universal adult or taxpayer suffrage in chieftaincy elections were voiced in several workshops facilitated by other teams. It is also noteworthy that most resolutions passed by the workshops were of a highly specific and local nature (e.g. the abolition of licences for planting oil palms and other economic trees),

¹² The Chiefdom Council (formerly, Tribal Authority) is the local, land holding authority recognised in law. The Chiefdom Committee serves as the Chiefdom Council's executive arm. At present, only chiefdom Councillors are eligible to vote in Paramount Chieftaincy elections.

although none of the facilitating teams were in the field long enough to ascertain whether these resolutions went on to be incorporated as chiefdom byelaws.

22. Many reports summarise exercises in which participants were asked to state their expectations for the workshops. COPAD reports mix facilitators' views on the matter with those of participants, and other facilitators may have done the same. Yet these summaries still provide some useful insights into participants' private attitudes towards the workshops. Some stated that they had come to the workshop to gain knowledge in general or to learn about the workings of chiefdom administration and their rights as citizens. Others hoped that the workshops would help change attitudes and foster peace and reconciliation. But the vast majority had more immediate and pragmatic expectations. Participants were looking forward to the complimentary meals and expense payments offered by facilitators; they wanted to know why the government had summoned them when the country was still at war, but also to hear that the government had brought an end to the war and would bring development to their chiefdom. They wanted help in rebuilding their houses and assistance for farming but they also wanted an opportunity to speak their minds and send a message back to the government. The NDO team's explanation for the dedication of an entire workshop to a discussion of the civil war is noteworthy:

An introductory general concern expressed by participants was the surfeit of workshops with which the chiefdom has been overwhelmed since the gradual onset of war became evident. A plethora of NGOs has visited, conducted surveys and organised seminars and workshops to little evident avail; the effect has been growing scepticism bordering on apathy in the chiefdom: another workshop? Another talkshop? This time round the chiefdom decided to concentrate on the rebel war and its effects on Kori chiefdom...

23. In the final analysis, the success of consultation exercise in helping to establish a new local governance pact is open to question. While participants often declared that the workshops had been extremely useful and informative, the tone of participants' responses suggests that for them, the main issue was sending a message to government that their social and economic problems required urgent attention. The same issues crop up in workshop after workshop and there is no doubt that the overall consultation process was successful in capturing this message. The main problem for analysis is that most of the facilitators seem to have given greater weight to the instructional aspects of the consultation process. There is considerable redundancy in

those sections of the reports that summarise workshop exercises and focus/task group outputs. Participants often stated the obvious (e.g. the role of the treasury clerk is to organise revenue collection; greed and selfishness generates bad governance) and facilitators reported these statements repeatedly. Most of the useful data on local governance issues appears in those Sections of the reports where facilitators are summarising plenary discussions or their own field observations. Unfortunately, this approach means that it is not always possible to attribute reported viewpoints to any specific stakeholder group. Analysis of these data now follows.

Section 2: Issues Raised by Participants

Governance and Jurisprudence in the Chiefdoms

24. When workshop participants were asked to identify the roles and responsibilities of chiefs, responses varied little from place to place. The primary duties associated with Paramount Chiefs were a) liaison between central government and the chiefdom people, b) maintaining law and order and c) settling disputes between subjects. Participants also observed that the Paramount Chief is the head of the Chiefdom Committee and Council, signs all major contracts and documents relating to the chiefdom and is responsible for seeking out and bringing in development projects. The primary duties associated with the Speaker were a) deputising for the Paramount Chief in his or her absence and b) relaying messages between the people and the Paramount Chief. Duties associated with section and town chiefs were a) maintaining law and order within their spheres of authority, b) providing hospitality to strangers c) organising communal labour for public works (e.g. road and footbridge maintenance), and d) ensuring that local sanitary regulations are observed.

25. These responses illustrate one of the fundamental principles of Sierra Leonean chiefdom administration: grafting elements of modern bureaucracy onto patriarchal community leadership. But the reports go on to reveal that the ‘natural’ governance contract between chiefs and people has come under severe strain and is in danger of breaking down altogether. A complaint voiced repeatedly in the workshops was that chiefs rarely consult with the people but are always ready to exploit them for material gain. Chiefs and councillors were accused of imposing illegal levies on the populace (in money or in kind) and entering into contracts with private businesses to exploit

chiefdom resources (e.g. timber) without informing the people. But above all, chiefs of all ranks were accused of exercising their ‘traditional’ prerogative to perform jurisprudence purely for the purpose of making money from fines and summoning fees. People complained in workshop after workshop that these fines were grossly incommensurate with the offences committed and that justice invariably goes to relatives of chiefs or to the highest bidder. Some workshop participants also claimed that Chiefdom Committees are in the habit of passing byelaws without informing the people, and then proceeding to lecture offenders that innocence of the law is no defence. Another common complaint was that a senior chief will demand large sums of money from all parties to adjudicate a land dispute but then neglect to deliver a judgement.

26. It was noted in several workshops that competition among chiefs to hear cases is intense, and that plaintiffs sometimes compound the problem by bringing cases to high ranking chiefs that are properly heard by lower ranking ones or vice versa. One Speaker, who had arrogated to himself the authority of an elderly and housebound female Paramount Chief, was described in one workshop as being ‘hyperactive’ in his efforts to exercise jurisprudence wherever there is money to be made. The other chiefs had retaliated by withdrawing from ‘all chiefdom matters’, but the Speaker appears to have been thriving on the increased workload.

27. Under Sierra Leonean law, the Local Courts have sole right to hear and determine civil cases involving customary law, and there are strict limits on the size of the fines they are allowed to impose. The Local Court system was badly disrupted by the civil war, and in one workshop, a court chairman complained that town chiefs are so intent on judging cases for their own financial gain that they seldom refer any cases to his court. But the general view was that the Local Courts are just as likely to exploit alleged offenders as the chiefs. It was reported in one workshop, located in an area of extensive swampland, that Court Chairman had an arrangement with produce traders. The traders were briefed about upcoming court cases and arranged to pay the summoning fees and fines of selected individuals. Offenders then had to settle their debts with the traders by working farms for them or allowing them first call on their

rice harvests at rock bottom prices. Male youths were reportedly frequent targets for these traders, and many of the latter were female.¹³

28. Another problem highlighted in the workshops was that the Chiefdom Police, unpaid and out of uniform for many years, are often unwilling to journey to distant villages to serve summonses. Chiefdom Police officers attending the workshops repeatedly accused Court Clerks (recorders of cases and issuers of summonses and receipts) of withholding expense allowances and employing their own relatives to serve summonses. Other participants complained that illiteracy among court chairmen (appointed by the District Offices on the recommendation of Chiefdom Committees) is widespread and that this tends to give Court Clerks a free rein to make fraudulent records and embezzle revenue obtained from fines and summoning fees.

29. It was noted generally that exploitative jurisprudence had been going on for years in rural areas, and had caused many able-bodied youths to leave their home chiefdoms. It was claimed in some workshops that youth out-migration has inflicted severe labour shortages on the local farming economy, and in others that many young exiles had returned as members of the RUF in order to exact revenge.

30. Communal labour was highlighted in the workshops as another source of contention between chiefdom authorities and the local populace, especially youths. The legal right of chiefs to compel their subjects to work for their personal benefit was abolished in the 1950s, but it remains a legally permissible and generally accepted practice for chiefdom authorities to call upon their able-bodied subjects to perform tasks beneficial to the community as a whole (e.g. clearing inter-village paths). Penalties for non-compliance are authorised by Chiefdom Committees in byelaws. In the workshops, many chiefdom authority representatives complained that local youths are no longer willing to work for the common good, while the youths retorted that they had no incentive to comply as long as the work was unpaid and they had no say in the running of the chiefdom. In one workshop, local youths reportedly observed that ‘they are only considered as part of the chiefdom when it is time for

¹³ The brief paragraph dealing with this issue in the CR workshop report is unclear, but I was able to obtain fuller information in an interview with a former member of CR staff.

communal labour'. In another workshop, it was also argued that chiefdom taxpayers should be exempted from the obligation to provide communal labour.

31. A further complaint voiced in many workshops was that chiefs regularly demand money, produce or labour from their subjects in order to meet the costs of entertaining (and thus attracting the patronage of) district and provincial administrators and NGO representatives. While such levies might be construed as being in the public interest, the essence of the complaint was that no revenue was ever accounted for and no surpluses were ever refunded. In some workshops, participants expressed a desire to go back to the old system whereby each village contributed labour for a set number of days to a central 'chiefdom farm'. That way, they reasoned, there was some chance that 'customary' obligations towards the funding of chiefs' governance could be regulated.¹⁴

32. The workshop reports are indicative of strong popular dissatisfaction with chiefs' governance and jurisprudence. While there is nothing in the reports to suggest that this dissatisfaction was not genuine, the political temperature had been raised by the wartime assumption of administrative and jurisprudential authority by the Civil Defence Forces (CDF). The RUF threat was receding when the workshops were being held, and many chiefs were attempting to reassert their authority over a CDF now facing pressure to disarm. But the situation was complicated because many Paramount Chiefs had left their chiefdoms during the conflict while several lesser chiefs, notably Section Chiefs and Speakers, had remained behind and gone on to serve as CDF organisers and commanders. It was reported some workshops that people were still taking disputes to the CDF in preference to the local courts and returning Paramount Chiefs because the militia groups had developed a reputation for acting quickly – and invariably violently – to recover debts or deliver punishments. In one chiefdom, both the CDF area commander and his second-in-command had taken over the chairmanships of Local Courts.

33. Yet on the whole it seems that the CDF had made themselves so unpopular with the public that the transfer of power back to Paramount Chiefs was easily facilitated.

¹⁴ An unspoken issue here was that control over the disbursement of formal tax revenue was transferred from the Chiefdom committees to the District offices in the 1970s. See paragraphs xx-xx below.

For example, after one workshop the NDO team acquired documents relating to the recent fining and suspension of the chiefdom's Speaker. The Speaker had remained in the chiefdom while the Paramount Chief was in exile and had developed a close working relationship with the local CDF. He had served as acting chairman at an emergency Chiefdom Committee meeting in August 1999, during which the District Officer appealed for acceptance of the Paramount Chief's return to the chiefdom. The local CDF had opposed the chief's return, but announced to the meeting that they had discussed the matter in private and had now unanimously agreed to 'pardon' him. As soon as the Paramount Chief returned, several village headmen came forward to complain that the Speaker had authorised the CDF to 'manhandle' their people and take money from them on the pretext that they had infringed chiefdom byelaws. The Speaker claimed that in his role as caretaker of the chiefdom, he had received requests from both the District Office and the CDF High Command to organise communal labour for clearing paths, road verges and town perimeters. The local CDF had been asked by the District Officer to help supervise this work. While the Speaker admitted that the now disarmed CDF had been heavy handed in enforcing these instructions, he complained that the Paramount Chief had demanded that he refund all of the fines out of his own pocket. When he refused, he had allegedly been fined 4 million leones (approximately £1,300), and when he had forwarded an appeal to the 'elders and descendants' of the chiefdom, the Paramount Chief had suspended him indefinitely and appointed a replacement. The Speaker was now hoping that the NDO team would forward his petition for reinstatement to the local government ministry in Freetown.

34. In another workshop, an otherwise popular Paramount Chief was roundly criticised for his attempts to integrate CDF personnel into chiefdom administration by awarding them village and section chieftaincies.¹⁵ Elsewhere, CDF and youth representatives almost came to blows with the chiefs' representatives when the latter refused to listen to their grievances. Yet the facilitators' report on this particular workshop also notes that the local CDF had 'usurped the power of the chiefdom authorities', were unwilling to relinquish it, and were in the habit of behaving in a 'pompous and arrogant' manner towards chiefs and civilians alike. In another chiefdom, a *kamajoi* High Priest Initiator was said to maintain a network of informers

¹⁵ Again, the workshop report is unclear on the matter and a former member of CR staff supplied additional details in an interview.

and preside over an unofficial court that was ‘enslaving the people in [] debt’. The appointment of the above-noted CDF commanders as local court chairmen in a neighbouring chiefdom was likewise said to have ‘resulted in intimidation tactics to extort revenue and justice being denied [to the] people’.

35. A general complaint voiced against CDF personnel was that they were not interested in working for the benefit of their chiefdoms, only in extorting travellers at road checkpoints, compelling civilians to work farms for them and, in one case, seizing the equipment of a mining gang and digging for diamonds. The CDF personnel who perpetrated these acts had allegedly claimed a right to compensation for their wartime defence of the land. But their cause was not aided when the CDF High Command declared that their ‘society’ (*kamajoi*) laws could only be preserved if CDF courts were granted sole power to discipline CDF personnel.¹⁶ It was alleged that as a result, many CDF members acted as if they were above the law and were habitually committing any number of petty crimes against civilians. Another allegation emerging in the workshops was that many non-combatant youths were now claiming to have been initiated into the CDF at the height of the conflict, and were refusing to recognise the authority of the chiefs and Local Courts. It was noted in one chiefdom that these youths were following the example of former CDF regulars in refusing to participate in communal labour.

36. The recurrent complaint among CDF members attending the workshops was that, in spite their sacrifices in the war, they have won scant respect and material support from either civilians or government. As if to prove their point, in a chiefdom where chiefs had allowed the local CDF to appoint the chiefdom labour ganger, communal labour had reportedly been successfully mobilised. In a third chiefdom the Regent Chief, a wealthy farmer, had been the driving force behind the local CDF. At the time of the workshop, the local CDF units had disarmed and, with the Regent Chief’s support, had begun to focus their energies on cash cropping.

¹⁶ ‘Society’ laws are rules initiates must follow in order to maintain the efficacy of the magic controlled by the society. They can forbid (or demand) certain actions in certain locations and social situations and many of these might appear perfectly unremarkable to non-initiates.

Accountability, Citizenship and Perceptions of Corruption

37. While many complaints about chiefs' governance were voiced in the workshops, the facilitators' reports indicate that the local populace had even less trust in district and provincial administration. District Officers were often described as arrogant and prone to interfering in chieftain affairs. Instances of alleged interference include the appointment of Regent Chiefs and lesser chiefs without consulting the people, exorbitant demands for fees for registering candidates at chieftaincy elections, conniving with Paramount Chieftaincy candidates to inflate councillor numbers in towns and sections supporting those candidates and conniving with chiefs and Treasury Clerks to embezzle local tax revenue. District Officers were also seen as the channels through which powerful politicians in Freetown exert influence over chieftain affairs, especially chieftaincy elections.

38. The Treasury Clerk, technically an employee of the District Office, was also regarded with suspicion. It was pointed out in several workshops that the chieftain people never see any benefit from formal taxation (chieftain poll tax, market dues, etc) and that they have no idea how the money is being used. The Treasury Clerk is seen as the District Officer's 'representative' and it was noted that as long as he provided his superiors with a share of the revenue he embezzled, he was immune from dismissal, let alone prosecution. It was reported in several workshops that some local residents were refusing to pay tax on the grounds that the revenue is never used to develop the chieftain. Participants also complained in several workshops that Treasury Clerks have been attempting to issue tax receipts stamped with the wrong year. While up-to-date receipts may not have been available due to wartime disruption, public confidence in the honesty of Treasury Clerks was apparently so low that some local residents had been refusing to pay tax until the correct stationary was used.

39. Provincial administrators appear to have been held in no greater regard. For example, another private petition collected by the NDO team appeals to the local government minister to nullify a recent Chieftain Committee appointment. The petitioner points out that the proper and legal procedure for Chieftain Committee

appointment is election by the chiefdom councillors resident in each ward.¹⁷ Yet the petitioner alleges that the Regent Chief, in conjunction with the Acting Provincial Secretary, had used ‘dictatorial powers’ to appoint an individual to the Chiefdom committee without consulting the chiefdom councillors in the relevant ward. The chiefdom capital is an important river port with access to the sea, and the petitioner goes on to allege that this individual had been a member of a team that had been collecting, and systematically embezzling, dues for market and jetty usage over a number of years. That team was now under investigation by the District Officer and Chiefdom Committee, and a new team had reportedly collected over 5 million leones (approximately £1,700) in dues over a four-week period. The petitioner alleges that the individual in question was appointed to the Chiefdom Committee so that he could join the investigation and assist the Regent Chief in undermining it. In a final expression of indignation, the petitioner alleges that the individual in question is merely a ‘settler’ (i.e. not locally born), with no interest in the welfare of the chiefdom or its people. The Acting Provincial Secretary is not mentioned again in the petition. However, the NDO team notes in the main body of the workshop report that dues collected by the new team had reportedly gone missing. Neither the District Officer nor the Treasury Clerk claimed to know what had happened to the money but rumour was circulating that ‘a senior provincial official’ had sent a representative to collect it, ostensibly for use in his own office. It seemed to the facilitators that the chiefdom was still being denied access to much-needed funds it rightfully owned.

40. This case highlights the recurring allegation that external agencies have been placing clients in positions of authority in the chiefdoms in order to milk tax revenue and other resources. In one workshop, a District Officer was alleged to have summarily appointed a Section Chief despite vehement local protests that he lacked the right to do so. It was reported that local youths were refusing to answer this Section Chief’s calls for communal labour. In another chiefdom, the District Officer was alleged to have demanded a candidature fee of 600,000 leones (approximately £200) in a recent section chieftaincy election. Two local aspirants for the position withdrew from the contest as soon as this fee was announced, leaving the field open

¹⁷ The unit referred to here as a ‘ward’ comprises of one or more chiefdoms or chiefdom sections. Wards were set up in the 1950s to facilitate the election of District Councillors and, subsequently, Chiefdom Committee members. When the District councils were suspended in 1972, some chiefdoms changed over to electing Committee members on a section basis. See also note 21 below.

for a civil servant domiciled in the District Headquarters. In a third chiefdom, a Regent Chief was reported to be in the midst of a protracted conflict with two Section Chiefs. The people had welcomed the Regent Chief's formal suspension of these Section Chiefs, but one had won the support of a CDF regional commander and the District Officer was backing the other. It was alleged in the workshop that these chiefs were still ruling their sections as private fiefdoms, although one had recently seen his son killed in a fracas with local villagers. All of these chiefdoms are located in diamondiferous areas.

41. Regent Chiefs were in charge of several chiefdoms when the CGRP workshop exercise was taking place and some of these were deeply distrusted by local residents owing to the circumstances of their appointment.¹⁸ One Regent Chief, not born in the chiefdom and allegedly appointed by the District Officer without consultation, was reported to reside permanently in the provincial headquarters. He was said to have suspended the Speaker and a Section Chief at one point for failing to respond to his summons, and to rule through an unelected cabal that had arrogated to itself all decision-making in chiefdom administration. Other Regent Chiefs were reported to be employing similar tactics. Another report makes the following observation about a Regent Chief allegedly appointed by the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) regime against the wishes of the people:

Knowing how unpopular he is in the Chiefdom, the Regent Chief has appointed his sons and close allies as Section/Town Chiefs, Councillors and Chiefdom Development Committee Members to consolidate his position. Those he could not influence or coerce he has continued to suppress in the hope they would resign their positions.

42. Wartime upheaval undoubtedly left rural Sierra Leoneans vulnerable to opportunists, but the general view in the workshops was that external political interference in chiefdom administration has been going on for years - especially in Paramount Chieftaincy elections. The former All Peoples' Congress (APC) regime was singled out for blame in this regard, although it may be noted that almost all the workshops took place in areas traditionally supportive of the Sierra Leone People's

¹⁸ Paramount Chiefs are elected by local Councillors and formally appointed by the head of state. Regent Chiefs are directly appointed by the minister responsible for local government (via the District office) with, in theory, the approval of the chiefdom people. They are not required by law to be natives of the chiefdoms over which they preside.

Party (SLPP). In two of the workshops, the APC government was said to have declared a rotational succession agreement null and void in order to favour a particular ruling house; in another two cases it was said to have recognised a new ruling house on the grounds that an ancestor of its protégé had been a signatory to a British treaty recognising the authority of the original line of Paramount Chiefs. In a further five cases the APC regime was said to have deposed a sitting Paramount Chief in order to install its own protégé. In each of these five cases the APC-backed chief had since died and the deposed chief had been re-elected.¹⁹

43. It is noted in two reports that Paramount Chiefs still holding office had been elected as a result of APC patronage. Both of these chiefs were deeply unpopular locally. One had been living outside his chiefdom for many years and relations between the other and his people had reached such a low ebb that he told the facilitating team that he ‘was in doubt if people would attend this particular meeting as the invitation was sent out under his signature’. In recent years, this second chief had suspended both his Speaker and a Section Chief who had been serving as the local CDF coordinator. But it had also become a custom in the chiefdom for newly elected Paramount Chiefs to serve as patrons of Wunde society initiations and collect offerings from the people. This custom allowed a chief to recoup election expenses and the offerings were taken as a sign of popular approval for his/her election. It was reported in the workshop that this particular Paramount Chief had never once been invited to serve as patron of the Wunde society in twenty-five years of office.

44. While external interference in chiefdom affairs is clearly an emotive issue, the workshop reports suggest that it is often linked to intra-chiefdom politics. For example, it was reported in one workshop that a Deputy Minister in Freetown had recently threatened to remove the local District Officer from his post unless he took action to rectify alleged inequities in the distribution of food relief in the chiefdom. The Regent Chief informed the facilitating team that this Deputy Minister was a ‘son of the soil’ and ruling house member who was really objecting to the fact that a member of a rival ruling house had been put in charge of local relief distribution. The latter was subsequently relieved of his duties. It was reported in another workshop

¹⁹ These re-elections were said to have taken place in the declining years of APC power or under the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) regime.

that there were three claimants to the position of Regent Chief. The first claimant had been appointed by the District Officer and introduced to the people, but some Section Chiefs and elders had apparently raised objections and a different person was subsequently named as Regent Chief on local radio. Soon afterwards however, a third man came forward with letters of appointment from the Provincial Secretary's office. This man had allegedly been put forward by one of the ruling houses. The facilitators reported that there had already been several 'ugly scenes' involving the supporters of the three rival claimants and that even the local CDF were divided on the issue.

45. Furthermore, it is implied in several reports that Paramount Chiefs are the originators of the practice of appointing clients and family members to positions of authority in the chiefdom without consulting the people. Yet it is also implied that tactics were sometimes responses to, rather than primary causes of, intra-chiefdom political conflicts. Facilitating teams found on several occasions that the representatives of a particular chiefdom section had either boycotted the workshop or had not been invited in the first place. Few details of the disputes prompting such actions appear in the reports but the impression given is that they were longstanding. In one case it is noted that the people of one section had refused to participate in chiefdom administration in protest against alleged misallocation of aid benefits in the chiefdom headquarters. In another case a section was not represented at a workshop because the Paramount Chief was in the process of punishing a Section Chief and his supporters for taking a dispute over a logging contract to the District Officer without informing him. Participants claimed that disputes between ruling houses made some chiefdoms virtually impossible to govern, especially as a powerful faction opposing a chief would not hesitate in recruiting District administrators or national politicians to its cause. One report summarises a Paramount Chief's bitter resentment at such politicking:

A system of governance [has] existed wherein politicians directly interfered into the traditional rights of the Paramount Chiefs. Parliamentarians had so much power they appointed and sacked Chiefs at will. Paramount Chiefs were very powerful when they were in absolute control of everything ranging from decision making to appointment to certain positions. As at now most cases are referred to the regular Police or District Officer who seem to be more powerful than the Chiefs.

Paramount Chiefs have to subdue themselves to Honourable Ministers [] or they are not respected. Otherwise, their decisions are overruled by the

Honourables who frustrate their efforts. The Section Chiefs who are supposed to be the Paramount Chief's 'own ministers' are more answerable to the Parliamentarians and Ministers who appoint them.

47. On occasions, participants voiced approval at the idea that a Paramount Chief should have complete control over appointments to committees and minor chieftaincies. In that way, they reasoned, the chief could get on with work and not suffer constant harassment from 'supporters of politicians'. In most workshops however, such tactics were seen as counterproductive. As one report put it:

Another important constraint affecting governance in Ribbi is the nature of Chiefs' elections. It was agreed [in the workshop] that the imposition of Chieftain Speaker, Town Chiefs and Court Chairmen on the community undermines the authority of the Chiefs, rather than enhancing it to ensure stability.²⁰

48. It is hard to escape the impression here that interventions from central and District authorities in chieftain affairs were welcomed by those that derive political benefit from them and condemned by those that do not. Yet participants' responses on the way forward for better governance in the chiefdoms suggest genuine ambivalence over issues of citizenship and the rights and prerogatives deriving from it. On the one hand, there were calls for bureaucratic improvements and rationalisation: better record keeping, regular auditing of accounts, full public consultation over important decisions, prosecution of corrupt officials and protection of the right of the people to elect chiefs and councillors. It was also stated forcefully in workshop after workshop that if the government could only pay realistic salaries to chiefs and chiefdom administrative staff, the latter would command greater respect among the populace and be less prone to corruption. On the other hand, participants expressed a strong desire to rein chiefs and chiefdom functionaries back into a local moral community based upon ties of kinship and history.

49. Local views on paramount chieftaincy elections are a good illustration of this ambivalence. The general view in the workshops was that these elections have become rife with corruption: candidates lacking the appropriate hereditary credentials are allowed to stand as a result of bribery or political patronage, taxpayer lists are

²⁰ Like most of the information on local politics contained in the workshop reports, these points appear in the facilitators' overview and are not attributed to any particular interest group.

manipulated to skew voter numbers in favour of particular candidates, chiefdom councillorships are awarded (or sold) to clients of chiefs and politicians rather than representatives of local taxpayers and any councillors not already controlled in this manner can expect to be ‘camped’ (i.e. corralled for the purposes of bribery and coercion) by chieftaincy candidates and their supporters at election time. As noted above (paragraph 21), workshop participants tended to respond positively to facilitators’ promptings regarding the desirability of full adult suffrage in paramount chieftaincy elections - especially youth and ‘civil society’ groups. In some cases, the stated preference was for restricting the suffrage to local taxpayers and in others for keeping the electoral college of chiefdom councillors but reducing the ratio of councillors to taxpayers from the current 1:20 to 1:10 or 1:5. But the overall and very strong message emerging from the workshops was that as many local people as possible should be voting in paramount chieftaincy elections. While principles of democracy were invoked on some occasions, this message contained a strong streak of pragmatism. As one report put it:

‘...the people are strongly advocating that PCs be elected by all taxpayers. They argue that Councillors who vote for PCs do not adequately represent the interest of the people. It would be easy to manipulate a few people but not the majority’.

Calls for the abolition of the ruling house system were also voiced in one or two workshops, but the overwhelming preference among participants was for expanding the franchise in paramount chieftaincy elections yet still restricting candidature to members of historic ruling houses.

50. The Chiefdom Committee is another case in point. Unlike minor chieftaincies and speakerships, the composition of the Chiefdom Committee and procedures for electing it are laid down in the statute.²¹ There were many calls in the workshops for the budget-making powers to be restored to the Chiefdom Committees and for a return to regular auditing of chiefdom financial accounts.²² In some workshops, it was

²¹ According to the Tribal Authorities (Amendment) Act of 1964, the Chiefdom Committee consists of the Paramount Chief (chairman), senior Speaker (vice-chairman), the second Speaker (if any), two members from each local ward elected by the chiefdom councillors, and a literate councillor nominated by the minister responsible for local government. Present day Chiefdom Committees include a women’s leader (Mammy Queen) and youth’s representative.

²² Control over the disbursement of chiefdom revenue was transferred from chiefdom authorities to the District Offices in the early 1970s. Auditing of chiefdom accounts by external auditors (private accountancy firms at first, later the Auditor General’s office) had petered out by the close of the same decade.

also suggested that the Chiefdom Committee should be expanded to represent the full range of local interest groups (especially women and youth) and that it should take over from the District office as the agency employing chiefdom administrative staff (treasury clerk, Chiefdom police, etc). Yet it was also suggested that it should become compulsory for all chiefdom functionaries to be locally born ('sons of the soil'), especially treasury clerks. Again, the underlying issue here is lack of popular trust in the bureaucratic impartiality of state functionaries. The local view was that a 'son of the soil' could be held to account where a 'stranger' cannot. As one of the facilitating teams put it when hearing about a case of alleged embezzlement by a Treasury Clerk:

What is the greatest concern now to the Chiefdom authorities in Kowa Chiefdom is the Treasury Clerk, who has absconded with all their Chiefdom revenue and could not be traced. [We] strongly recommend that any other Treasury Clerk to be appointed must be an indigene of the Chiefdom, since in matters like this he could be traced or his family held responsible.

51. Yet it is by no means clear that such parochial solutions would, if implemented, improve the wider environment of trust. In a chiefdom near Bo, some participants suggested that anyone who had been paying local tax in one place for five years or more should become eligible to vote in paramount chieftaincy elections. Yet in a workshop held in Kenema town, participants complained that Sierra Leonean 'strangers' had been appointed to chiefdom councillorships ahead of 'indigenes'. Furthermore, in one of the diamondiferous chiefdoms, participants complained that mining license fees were far too high for most 'indigenes' to afford and that rich 'strangers' from other parts of Sierra Leone were buying the licenses and then employing 'indigenes' to mine diamonds on their own land. The facilitators observed that:

...the people see this as an insult to their own natural heritage and ask that the licenses be drastically reduced for them to be able to pay and work for themselves. They also request that indigenes from the Chiefdom be appointed as mines wardens. The belief is that they will be lenient with their compatriots. A common understanding would always be reached for them to mine and improve themselves. The non-indigenous wardens have never been lenient with them.

In a neighbouring Chiefdom, the view from 'strangers' was noted:

There is a serious problem of exclusion against indigenes. The citizens have the habit of referring to others as strangers who should not interfere into their Chiefdom matters. Many citizens are tribal sensitive and

continue to discourage other ethnic groups from entrenching their position in the Chiefdom. According to the strangers, this trend has made them go away to build in their places of origin when they get diamond money.

52. Again, one is left with the impression that one person's corruption can become another's moral economy. The darker side of such parochial sentiments emerged in a workshop held in a chiefdom near the Western Area. Here, the granting of (temporary) access to 'fertile bush' to internally displaced persons was a strong source of grievance amongst 'indigenes'. Yet there are many indications in the reports that this particular form of parochialism is relatively recent. For example, it is noted in one report that in the early colonial era, a British District Commissioner delayed a paramount chieftaincy election in order to investigate apparent shortfalls in the local tax revenue passed to him by the previous Paramount Chief. A wealthy Krio trader settled in the chiefdom, was said to have made good these shortfalls out of his own pocket 'to save the chiefdom from shame and embarrassment'. The chiefdom elders showed their gratitude by electing this trader as their new Paramount Chief. Another report notes that inter-ethnic relations remain very cordial in an historic boundary area in central Sierra Leone:

As a result of [Yoni Chiefdom's] proximity to Moyamba District, there is cross cultural and social cooperation amongst the Temnes in Yoni Chiefdom and the Mendes in the neighbouring Chiefdoms of Kori, Fakunia, Kayamba and Ribbi. For example, people on both sides of the border speak both Mende and Temne, inter-marriages are common and therefore [many people have] dual Chiefdom membership.

53. In the final analysis, it is likely that the ambivalent views on citizenship emerging in the workshops are a product of poverty, isolation, and a recent history of political corruption rather than anything culturally deep-seated. Here, the fundamental governance problem would seem to be that as soon as modern patronage networks begin to infiltrate a system of customary authority, the political struggles of the rural masses tend to focus on recovering 'custom' rather than demanding rights as modern citizens.²³ After all, if one can ensure that chiefs display the appropriate hereditary credentials, there is at least some chance that they can be prevailed upon to honour their historical and family responsibilities and govern in the interests of the people.

²³ This is a point made by Mahmood Mamdani in his book *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton), 1996.

Yet one cannot help noticing that the measures advocated by workshop participants to ensure that chiefs and chiefdom administrative staff are reined back into the local moral community – a wider franchise in chieftaincy elections, stronger and more representative local committees, better auditing and record keeping, etc – require the support of the state apparatus and might, if implemented, render chieftaincy increasingly superfluous.

Economic Issues and Development Priorities

54. Each of the workshop reports contains a brief summary of local economic activities and a section dealing with ‘community development’ needs ranked in order of priority by participants. In chiefdoms with vacant paramount chieftaincies the speedy election of a new Paramount Chief was almost always listed as the main ‘development’ priority. This response emphasises the importance many rural Sierra Leonean attach to Paramount Chiefs as brokers and facilitators, directing investment and aid programmes towards their own corners of the countryside. Many of the other prioritised needs were of an immediate nature, reflecting the parlous state of rural amenities after a decade of devastating civil war. These needs included better drinking water and sanitary facilities, shelter, seeds and tools for agriculture, the reconstruction of school buildings, court barris, health centres and other public buildings, the re-equipment and re-staffing of schools and health centres and the rehabilitation of motor roads and bridges.

55. The Sierra Leone government and international agencies have since undertaken a massive effort to fulfil these pressing needs. But at the time of the workshops, NGOs were a frequent subject of complaint. The common grievances were that NGO fieldworkers were always promising more than they delivered and that Chiefdom authorities were appropriating benefits meant for the people. It was even suggested in one workshop that if NGOs were not prepared to deliver benefits to every person in a community they should not come at all.

56. When looking towards medium term needs, participants often expressed a desire for the return of services and amenities that had been present in the chiefdom in the past. Foremost among these were a bus service, mechanised ferries on the larger rivers, a postal service and a radio communications network. Several of the provincial

towns visited by the facilitating teams had once had electricity supplies (or were in the process of acquiring them when the war began) and there were many calls for such supplies to be reinstated. But participants wanted especially to see the replacement of worn out or looted agricultural machinery, especially oil palm mills, rice husking and cassava grating machines and tractors and ploughs for swamp cultivation. Many of these machines had been brought in by development projects in the 1950s, '60s and '70s.

57. Calls for a new influx of agricultural machinery reflected a general awareness that for many, farming was the only source of sustainable income. As one report put it:

Since agriculture is the major activity and means of livelihood of the people, they would want to shift from crude traditional method[s] of subsistence farming to some form of mechanised farming but they lack the technical know-how and tools (tractors, etc).

At the time of the workshops, many rural people had not had an opportunity to restart farming and indebtedness was a major problem. It was noted in one workshop that:

Indebtedness was viewed as a serious problem that has perpetuated poverty in many homes in the chiefdom. People have found no reasonable means of getting out of debts, which seems to create animosity even between close friends.

It was noted in another workshop that:

It was said that seed rice was given on loan with a hundred percent interest rate. This rice, coming as it often does in the rainy season, is often eaten and not planted. The result is that debts are piling and even causing some residents to escape to other places. There is a strong fear on the part of many that it won't be long before the debt situation takes [on] a very ugly dimension.

58. It was suggested in the workshops that micro-credit schemes or better still, the return of rural banks, might help to alleviate local indebtedness. Yet participants also felt that as soon as anyone gained a little money, somebody with more power would take it away again. There were many complaints in the workshops that even such basic economic pursuits as planting oil palm, coffee, and cocoa saplings or selling goods at the local market required licences from chiefdom administration. In some chiefdoms, the ownership of portables radios and bicycles was also taxed through licences, and workshop participants also felt that traders and commercial transport operators provided a very unreliable service yet charged extortionate prices.

59. Accordingly, when looking towards the longer term, participants emphasised the need for skills training. They wanted more and better-equipped secondary schools, but also adult education centres and vocational training centres for agriculture and related skills (especially blacksmithing). They also wanted a vastly improved road network and more marketplaces. The idea here was not just that local farmers would have more opportunities to sell their produce, but that better transport and communications infrastructure would attract more traders and investors from the outside and, by implication, challenge local trading monopolies and cartels. Calls for the return of government rest houses for the use of important ‘strangers’ may also reflect the same sentiment. But above all, participants wanted to see the return of government price controls, especially for agricultural produce and building materials.²⁴ The return of the Sierra Leone Produce Marketing Board was called for in several workshops, although some recent studies have shown that this organisation did few favours to local producers.

60. The majority of the workshops were held in Sierra Leone’s south-western quarter, and there are only a few pointers in the reports to regional variations in economic activities and local development priorities. First, in one of the chiefdoms in Pujehun District adjacent to the Liberian border, problems with currencies were noted:

The Chiefs have a problem of controlling the Leones as against the Liberian dollar. The local people, especially the traders, prefer the Liberian currency to the Leone because they get all their goods from Liberia. Some people are not comfortable with this especially when the traders devalue the Leone for the Liberian dollar. This has also created tensions due to the fact that Liberia has infiltrated and may claim that part of Sierra Leone.

61. Second, fishing was a major local industry in the coastal chiefdoms of Moyamba, Bonthe and Pujehun Districts, and here workshop participants called for support in the form of outboard motors, improved jetties, and re-investment of revenue from fishing licences into the industry. Workshops held in these chiefdoms reported problems with foreign-owned ocean going trawlers. These foreigners were said to violate all

²⁴ Interestingly, World Bank loan conditionalities (i.e. structural adjustment) were cited in one workshop as a cause of the Sierra Leonean civil war.

territorial rights, regularly spoil or steal local fishing nets and even, on occasion, shoot at local fishermen.

62. Third, while land disputes were frequently mentioned in workshops held in diamondiferous areas (Bo and Kenema Districts), disputes over purely agricultural land had a noticeably high profile in the few northern chiefdoms covered by the workshops. These chiefdoms are clustered in southern Port Loko and western Tonkolili Districts and all have good road connections with Freetown. These areas would have been under UNAMSIL control at the time of the workshops and it is possible that an influx of internally displaced persons had put pressure on local resources (see paragraph 52 above). However, it was also noted in the workshops held in these chiefdoms that much local agriculture was geared to supplying the Freetown market. In one workshop, participants noted wryly that heavily laden trucks bound for Bo and Kenema would often return empty to Freetown and these provided them with a ready means of transport for their produce. Yet it appears that the benefits of this market were restricted to those controlling local customary land rights. In one chiefdom, youth representatives complained that the elders were reluctant to grant them land for market gardening. In another chiefdom, some participants complained that 'strangers' were always charged more for renting land than 'indigenes'. In a third chiefdom, there were calls for a comprehensive land registration exercise and a review of land law throughout the provinces.

63. Finally, it was noted in several workshops that geological surveys had proven that abundant mineral resources were present in the chiefdom and that if foreign firms could be brought in to extract them the local economy would receive a huge boost. Yet attitudes were decidedly different in areas where foreign firms had previously been operating. For example, a substantial Section of one of the NDO reports is devoted to the local impact of Sierra Rutile. Participants alleged that the original agreement between the company, the Sierra Leone government and the chiefdom authorities had provided for several local development programmes that had never been implemented. Foremost among these was the establishment, and subsequent sponsorship, of a primary school in each of the five sections of the chiefdom. It was also alleged that public roads had not been repaired after heavy Sierra Rutile vehicles had rendered them impassable, that the government had never forwarded ground

rents, and that the company had never employed indigenes 'at a scale that was satisfactory'. This last grievance was particularly strong because it was alleged that 'stranger' labourers hired to build roads, dig drainage ditches, and refurbish living quarters had desecrated secret society bushes belonging to old villages located in the concession area.

Women's Issues

64. Several of the workshops reports devote space to issues of specific interest to women. By far the most common grievance raised by female participants was that they were excluded from decision making in both chiefdom matters and in the home. It was claimed in one workshop that women bore the brunt of levies imposed on the populace by chiefs but were not allowed to vote in chieftaincy elections. While second part of this claim is not strictly true (women can volunteer to pay local tax and, in theory, elect their own chiefdom councillors) it was pointed out in another workshop that 'most serious disputes and leadership affairs are concluded in the male societal bushes'. Women sitting on Chiefdom Committees claimed that their views were usually ignored and that they did not even have a say in governance and jural matters specifically relating to women. In one chiefdom, it was alleged that women had been specifically excluded from a recent NGO aid distribution list and in another that the only women who benefit from aid distributions are the wives and girlfriends of the men controlling it.

65. Alleged lack of male respect for the women's Bundo society was another major source of grievance. Many of the women's society houses had been desecrated or destroyed during the war and female participants claimed that chiefs displayed no interest in helping to rebuild them. On the contrary, it was alleged that women were being forced to pay hiring fees for bush in which to perform Bundo initiations. A further source of grievance, this time general to the local community, was that Treasury Clerks were forcing families to purchase marriages licences for girls initiated into Bundo even when they were still attending school.²⁵ A related grievance was that traditional birth attendants (i.e. Bundo adepts) were required to take out

²⁵ Among the rural poor, female school attendance and marriage are generally considered mutually exclusive.

licences in order to practice but not were deemed eligible for formal remuneration like other chieftom functionaries.

66. Hints of social change underlie these expressions of grievance. It was noted in several workshops that the war had divided families and that many women, whether widowed or abandoned, had been left to bring up children on their own. It was said that in the past, women in single-parent households could rely upon in-laws and relatives for assistance, but now times were hard and no such help was forthcoming. The suggestion implicit in these complaints was that men have been especially slow to adapt to the changes war has brought. There was anger as well as contempt for those men (allegedly many) who continue to indulge in polygamy when they can no longer afford to support large families. Women were also indignant that when husbands died, a wife was not considered and inheritor but part of the inheritance of the deceased's sons and brothers. Some female participants went on to observe that customary law no longer offers women anything except oppression, although others claimed that if traditional values are properly upheld, they do not oppress women.

Section 3: Conclusions and Policy Recommendations

67. The workshop reports indicate that many rural Sierra Leoneans continue to demand rights as indigenes of localities rather than as citizens of the state. They place little trust in the professional impartiality of government functionaries and deeply resent what they perceive to be external interference in their chieftom affairs. Broader horizons of trust may have collapsed as a result of the civil war, but four decades of patrimonial politics have also shaped this outlook. For many, the key to power and wealth is placing a 'son of the soil' in a position of influence within central government, business, or the international community. Some of these centre-local patronage networks are so narrowly focussed that the primary point of identification is not the chieftom but the Section or ruling house. Yet the striking message emerging from these reports is that rural Sierra Leoneans desperately desire better bureaucratic accountability, better record keeping, stronger popular participation in local government and democratic elections for chieftom authorities.

68. The challenge for policy makers is to design reforms in government institutions that might satisfy these desires. This is a very difficult challenge. There are powerful vested interests in the chiefdom system and it would be extremely difficult for any Sierra Leonean government to initiate root and branch reform in this area. Furthermore, the reinstatement of District Councils under the new Local Government Act appears, at first sight, to satisfy demands for modern local government without requiring attention to chiefdom administration. Yet, by leaving the structure and most of the functions of chiefdom administration intact, the new Act does little to alleviate the governance problems cited in the workshop reports.

69. For example, the Act empowers District Councils to employ chiefdom councils as tax collecting agencies. The District Council will take a precept from local tax and a proportion of local license revenue (including mining licenses). It also has the power to set the rate of local tax, approve the annual budgets of Chiefdom Councils, and oversee the implementation of such budgets. The situation depicted in the workshop reports suggests that these measures will be hard to implement. Chiefs have been in the habit of imposing any number of extra-legal levies on the populace, even if the local understanding is often that such levies make up for shortfalls in formal salary payments. Much formal tax revenue also seems to be used as private income by chiefs and district and provincial administrators. It is possible that the new councils will take action to ensure that local tax revenue is properly collected, used and accounted for. But the system leaves chiefdom authorities with every incentive to retain as much of the local revenue collection as they can manage - by fair means or foul. Furthermore, if the workshops reports are anything to go by, local residents are likely to resent the idea that their taxes could help to fund a development project in a part of a district other than their own.

70. While chiefdom authorities will no longer have the capacity to initiate development investment without the approval of the District Councils, Chiefdom Councils continue to hold customary rights in land throughout the provinces, and retain authority to make byelaws of their own. On whose authority, therefore, will development projects improving chiefdom land be initiated? Section 95 of the new Act states that:

A local council may, where it considers that a local custom or tradition impedes or acts as an obstacle to the development of the locality, or obstructs the local council in the performance of its functions, consult the relevant traditional authority for the purposes of resolving the matter.

The Act goes on to state that the Ministry has the final say if the matter cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties and that once a resolution has been reached the District Council should pass a bylaw 'altering or modifying local custom'. While this clause ensures that customary use rights in a particular tract of land or water do not impede development work, chiefdom authorities might also view it as an infringement upon their sovereignty. There is more at stake here than mere principle. Section 21, paragraph 3a, of the new Act gives the District Councils powers 'to mobilise the human and material resources necessary for the overall development and welfare of the people'. This paragraph does not refer directly to 'communal labour', but it is hard to imagine how the District Councils could mobilise unskilled labour for public works in any other fashion. The workshop reports suggest that local youths resent calls for unpaid communal labour at the best of times, but especially so when the work benefits, or is overseen by, agencies other than chiefdom authorities.

71. The fundamental problem with the new Act is not its provisions as such, but the political environment in which it will be implemented. Even the larger chiefdoms will elect no more than three or four District Councillors (not counting urban areas). Most District Council wards are based on chiefdom sections or groups of conterminous sections. Therefore, even though District Councils will be elected on the basis of universal adult suffrage there is a distinct chance that localised factional rivalries, so apparent in the workshop reports, will come to dominate the new local government system. It hardly helps that the Act also makes provision for the establishment of ward committees that will 'mobilise residents of the ward for the implementation of self-help' and 'organise communal and voluntary work'. There is nothing wrong with this provision except for the fact that the ten ordinary members of the ward committee are supposed to be 'elected by the ward residents in a public meeting'. Given that many wards have adult populations numbering in thousands, it is hard to imagine how, in practice, such a committee will be formed except by appointment. The danger here is that the new District Councils will serve - or be seen to serve - as yet one more platform from which the rich and powerful take resources from the hands of the poor.

72. These concerns are not new. It was once noted that:

The District Councils have emasculated the [Chiefdom authorities] as local government bodies; they have tried to replace some [Chiefdom] and some Central Government services with services of their own but without any adequate feeling of responsibility for finding the necessary revenue; they have not spread their favours sufficiently widely...Local Government must be confined to areas which enjoy a local common feeling and the two tier system can only work effectively where there are two common local feelings; the only common feeling we have found is that of the Chiefdom.

It was also noted that Chiefdom authorities were:

...to a large extent mere tax collectors for the District Council; less than one third of their revenue goes on expenditure within their own scope and visible to the taxpayers; of that small proportion some goes to reserves or other unspectacular projects. There is much evidence everywhere that meeting the precept is regarded as money going to the Government, or is regarded as expenditure not in the Chiefdom's best interest or is understood negatively in that it is expenditure for which the Chiefdom can see no return. We do not, of course, suggest that the expenditure covered by the District Council precept is unproductive of benefit to the contributing Chiefdoms; we do suggest that much of it could be met by the Chiefdom themselves and which, being then within their own control, they would the more willingly meet. As one witness said of his [Chiefdom] Authority: 'we can do what the District Council does if we had the money'.

73. These comments were written by the chairman of the Commission of Inquiry into rioting in the Northern Province in 1955-56. The Commission found that a major factor precipitating these riots was the introduction of a streamlined local tax that added the District Council precept to the chiefdom tax and shifted legal liability for payment from the chiefs to individual citizens.²⁶ The Commission's recommendations for developing the chiefdoms as local government units were not taken up by the Sierra Leone government of the time, and were regarded as unworkable by one commentator writing in the post-independence era.²⁷ Yet the APC government under Siaka Stevens went on to promote this very idea – if only rhetorically – when it suspended the District Councils in 1972. By that time, the old District Councils had become mired in debt, inefficiency, and political infighting.

²⁶ Government of Sierra Leone, *Report on the Commission of Inquiry into Disturbances in the Provinces (November 1955 to March 1956)*, Freetown, 1956.

²⁷ John Cartwright, *Politics in Sierra Leone, 1947-67* (University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 75-86.

74. In present-day Sierra Leone, there are many good reasons for devolving central government functions to the regions and the new District councils are the appropriate vehicles for this devolution process. Yet under the arrangements of the new Act, the District Councils are not complementing chiefdom administrations but competing with them. Indeed, it is hard to imagine an arrangement more likely to create conflict. If local government reform in Sierra Leone was to be approached on the basis of logic alone there are two alternatives. First, the District Councils would manage all local services and revenue collections and the chiefdoms would be abolished and replaced by democratically elected ward committees. Second, the District Councils would only collect revenue for their services at the point of use (via school fees, urban property rates, road tolls, market dues, etc), and the remainder of their budgetary requirements would be met by central government. The chiefdoms would continue to collect a local poll tax, but would be given back control over their budgets. They would also pay for District Council services, but on the basis of actual usage rather than a general precept. A democratically elected Chiefdom Committee would take over from the Chiefdom Councils as the governing authority in each Chiefdom, although the Paramount Chief would still serve as the chair of this committee.

75. The first option is politically out of the question in Sierra Leone at the moment, although some in the international donor community still hold out the hope that the chiefdoms will wither on the vine as soon as ward committees are operational. The second option has been mooted many times in the past. The above-mentioned Commission of Inquiry is one case in point, and another is the report of a United Nations local government expert, dating from the 1970s. This expert went so far as to produce a draft Chiefdom Committees Act, having noted that chiefdom authorities have never been formally instituted as local government bodies.²⁸ No recent Sierra Leonean government has made a serious effort to implement this second option (despite its rhetoric, the APC regime transferred key powers from the chiefdoms to the District Offices), and it would likely meet opposition on the grounds that ‘tradition’ was being violated. Yet the workshop reports clearly show that people in

²⁸ C. Viswasam, *Sierra Leone: Local Government in the Chiefdoms, First Interim Report*, UNDP and Ministry of the Interior, Freetown, 1972. While modern administration in the Chiefdoms was established in the colonial era, legislation has always observed the principle that Chiefdom authorities are customary authorities.

the provinces want justice, inclusiveness and accountability in chiefdom administration whatever changes are required to deliver it. In this regard, rural people are far less conservative than some members of the Sierra Leonean elite.

76. In some respects, the easy option for an international donor would be to leave chiefdom administration to one side and concentrate on other areas of need (e.g. strengthening civil society and access to justice). However, the establishment of viable and democratically accountable government structures at the grassroots level is a pressing need and crucial for the future stability and security of Sierra Leone. Implementation of the Local Government Act is bound to generate controversy, but may also create an opportunity for re-examining aspects of chiefdom administration. For example, local tax has proven extremely difficult to collect in recent years, and if the District Councils are going to have any chance of collecting revenue from the chiefdoms, treasury clerks will have to be paid proper salaries and supplied with office equipment and transport capacity. A decision will also have to be made as to whether local tax defaulters come under the jurisdiction of the magistrates' courts or the local courts, and this in turn will have consequences for the future role and functions of the Chiefdom Police vis-à-vis the state police.

77. In conclusion, the workshop reports suggest that there is demand at the grassroots for reform in chiefdom administration. In that case, DFID would have a strong rationale for extending the work of the Task Force on Local Government and Decentralisation to an examination of chiefdom administration. A new round of chiefdom-level consultations, this time taking in the whole of the country, might yield immediate benefits - but only if outputs were properly disseminated and the consultation process as a whole was specifically linked to policy development.