Engaging Civil Society in Peacekeeping
Strengthening Strategic Partnerships between United Nations Peacekeeping Missions and Local Civil Society Organisations during Post-conflict Transitions

Sabbatical Leave Research Paper submitted by Comfort Lamptey
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<th>Acronyms</th>
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<tr>
<td>CPA</td>
<td>Comprehensive Peace Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration</td>
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<td>DFS</td>
<td>Department of Field Support</td>
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<td>DPKO</td>
<td>Department of Peacekeeping Operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECOMOG</td>
<td>Economic Community Cease-fire Monitoring Group</td>
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<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of West African States</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organizations</td>
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<td>QIPS</td>
<td>Quick Impact Projects</td>
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<td>SRSG</td>
<td>Special Representative of the Secretary-General</td>
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<td>UN</td>
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<td>UNAMSIL</td>
<td>United Nations Assistance Mission in Sierra Leone</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
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<td>UNIFEM</td>
<td>United Nations Development Fund for Women</td>
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<td>UNIOSIL</td>
<td>United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone</td>
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<td>UNMIL</td>
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Executive Summary

This report is the outcome of a four-month sabbatical leave research on the theme: Engaging Civil Society in Peacekeeping. The research was undertaken during the period April-August 2007 at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) in Accra, Ghana, and also included a three-week field visit to two case study missions, namely the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL).

The report advances an argument for strengthening partnership-building efforts between UN peacekeeping missions and local civil society organizations in post-conflict countries and primarily reviewed the role of four civil society sectors, (Faith-based organizations, the Media, Women’s Organisations and Educational Establishments). It identifies a number of important reasons for partnership-building with civil society which include the fact that civil society organizations play an influential role at community levels; have a knowledge of the operational environment in which peacekeepers are deployed; have a capacity to facilitate outreach by peacekeepers to the local population and to foster confidence-building among the wider population in the peace process; can act as an important check on government excesses and thus promote greater accountability; and that they also represent an important pillar to facilitate the task of building democratic structures and institutions in post-conflict countries.

The research findings highlight a number of issues. First, the report acknowledges that civil society actors are not neutral bystanders in a conflict, but have the potential to serve as peace enforcers or as spoilers to fragile peace processes. Second, it underscores the role of civil society as a critical third pillar which must be mobilised to work in conjunction with the other two pillars of national government and the international community, in all efforts to build sustainable peace. Third, the report provides concrete illustrations of the positive contributions made by civil society in Liberia and Sierra Leone towards supporting the peace process – both prior to, and after the establishment of United Nations peacekeeping missions. These included the political level interventions by inter-faith groups in their capacity as mediators during the peace negotiations, the role of the intelligentsia as advisers to the parties in conflict, as well as the strategic partnerships established between women’s organizations and the regional Economic Community Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) peacekeeping forces to advance the Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process, particularly in the case of Liberia. Fourth, the report notes that close partnership between peacekeeping missions and civil society has the potential of bringing more value to the work of the entire UN system in post-conflict countries.

Whilst the research provides evidence of the important role of civil society in transitions to sustainable peace, the partnership record to date between UN peacekeeping missions and civil society in the missions reviewed has been sporadic at best – often driven by the
individual commitment of peacekeeping personnel – and underdeveloped overall. The factors that have contributed to this partnership gap include amongst others, the absence of a clear policy framework, the prevailing institutional culture in peacekeeping, bureaucratic and administrative procedures of peacekeeping missions, and the lack of available resources – whether human or financial, for pursuing partnerships with civil society. By comparison, civil society representatives in both Liberia and Sierra Leone alluded to a more effective strategic engagement with the earlier regional ECOMOG peacekeeping forces.

The report notes that the most successful areas of partnership-building to date, relate to logistical and training support provided by United Nations peacekeeping missions to some sectors of civil society. However, at the level of strategic engagement, peacekeeping missions have invested little in understanding how the influence of civil society at the ground level (their wide outreach capacity, their knowledge of the operational environment and the trust and respect that specific sectors of civil society command at the community level) could be better-harnessed to facilitate implementation of mission mandates.

A fundamental point highlighted in the report is that in order to facilitate the establishment of democratic structures in post-conflict countries, peacekeeping missions must invest as much in strengthening government structures, as in strengthening structures within civil society, since this latter can support local-level peace-building initiatives, and can also help to monitor the exercise of accountable governance.

A summary of the key policy considerations for DPKO/DFS stemming from this report includes the following:

- A commitment to partnership-building with civil society should be integrated into existing policy and guidance materials.
- Specific guidelines should be developed for peacekeeping personnel on how to engage more strategically with civil society, drawing on existing good practices.
- Planning and mandate review processes should ensure systematic consultations with local civil society organizations as stakeholders and partners in the peace process. This recognition should in turn inform peacekeeping mandates.
- Where relevant to mandate implementation, the leadership of peacekeeping missions should establish and institutionalize mechanisms for regular consultations with civil society, and also mobilize civil society to support outreach efforts aimed at educating the local population on mission mandates.
- Pre-deployment training and induction courses for peacekeeping personnel should underline the strategic value of engaging with local civil society.
- Financial resources should be sought through peacekeeping budgets to support capacity-building of civil society as custodians of the peace process.
- Partnership-building strategies between peacekeeping missions and civil society should be developed in conjunction with other UN partner agencies in the area of operation.
Introduction

Civil society actors represent a critical pillar for sustaining the peace dividend in fragile post-conflict countries. Oftentimes, even prior to the establishment of a peacekeeping mission, some local civil society actors would be at the forefront of efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Equally, some sectors of civil society would have contributed to fuelling the conflict by overtly taking sides with the warring groups. Against this backdrop, there is a pressing need to secure the inputs of civil society in all efforts to build and sustain lasting peace during post-conflict transitions.

The question of how United Nations peacekeeping missions can engage strategically with local civil society organizations in post-conflict countries has not received sufficient attention to date. This apparent oversight may not be intentional, but stems rather from a number of historical and practical realities, including the fact that peacekeeping missions have not traditionally underlined strong partnership with civil society - neither in the mandates of peacekeeping missions nor in policy directives of the UN peacekeeping department. This has undoubtedly limited the extent of knowledge available to peacekeepers on the role played by civil society groups prior to the establishment of missions, and of the opportunities presented for harnessing the capacities of civil society to support the peace process.

This paper sets out to provide an initial review and exploration of the opportunities available for strengthening strategic partnerships between peacekeeping missions and a number of influential sectors of civil society in post-conflict countries. The key research questions examined below include amongst others: the effectiveness to date of efforts by peacekeeping missions to partner with local civil society organizations; the nature and impact of such partnerships; whether partnerships with civil society have any significant bearing on averting conflict relapses in fragile post-conflict countries; and what key policy implications can be drawn from this undertaking to inform the work of United Nations peacekeeping in future.

Given that the partnership potential between local civil society and peacekeeping missions has been largely unexplored to date, a major research challenge encountered in the course of this investigation, was one of a dearth of relevant prior research on the topic. Oftentimes, what little information could be sourced related more to the issue of protection of civilians, than to the issue of assessing the strengths of local civil society actors as key stakeholders whose interventions can impact meaningfully on political and social transitions to lasting peace. Thus in many ways this study was launched on a clean slate and will hopefully provide the foundation for a much broader future exploration and

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1 The civil society sectors targeted for this review are deemed influential by virtue of the fact that they have a significant mobilizing and outreach capacity, which ensures that they are able to influence the opinion of wide sectors of the population.

2 The focus of this review was limited to the two case-study mission areas, namely the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the former and current missions in Sierra Leone respectively: the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), and the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL)
analysis pertaining to the role of local civil society actors in facilitating and supporting implementation of peacekeeping mandates.

**Research Methodology and Scope**
The research methodology pursued for this study principally took two forms: a) a desk-based review of relevant publications and articles; b) field visits to the two case study countries/mission areas to conduct interviews with stakeholders from civil society, personnel from within the UN peacekeeping missions, UN agencies and government officials.

The two case study missions visited were the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL). In line with the research objective of assessing partnership experiences between peacekeeping missions and civil society, the field visit to Sierra Leone, in large part, focused on a review of the experience of partnership relating to the previous United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

The scope of the civil society organizations reviewed was also limited to four key sectors, namely: religious/faith-based organizations, women’s organizations, educational establishments - principally universities and other institutions of higher learning - and local media establishments in the two case study countries. Undoubtedly, the sectors targeted for review do not make up the totality of the most influential opinion-shapers of civil society in these countries. The study could well have been broadened to include a review of partnership opportunities with other sectors of civil society which also have significant outreach and mobilizing capacities. Indeed, throughout the course of the field research, many of the individuals and groups interviewed highlighted the need to extend the study to include a review of partnership opportunities between peacekeeping missions and youth groups, given the importance of this particular sector in influencing the sustainability of the peace process in both countries. There were, however, justifiable grounds for limiting the study to the four sectors identified above since this facilitated a more manageable and focused review within the available time-frame for the research.

**Structure of report**
The first part of the report provides a conceptual definition of civil society as used to inform the rest of the study. It then identifies some of the main obstacles to effective partnership-building between civil society and peacekeeping missions, as well as the key ingredients for successful collaboration, drawing from the experience of the two case study countries. The general conclusion is that institutional, cultural and policy barriers have hampered the development of strategic partnerships between peacekeeping missions and the civil society groups. The second section of the report outlines the rationale for a stronger partnership engagement between peacekeeping missions and civil society, and elaborates the positive impact this has on the peace process as well as for facilitating democratic governance practices. This section also reviews the question of what impact such partnership engagement may hold for sustainability of the peace process. The third
section of the report provides a case study review of the actual partnership engagement between the four civil society sectors and the peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The fourth part of the report explores the broader partnership context in post-conflict societies by assessing the role and experiences of other UN agencies and regional organizations in building effective partnerships with local civil society organizations. It also highlights relevant lessons from these experiences for the work of peacekeeping missions. The final part of the report outlines a number of lessons learned from the case study analysis to guide a more systematic engagement between peacekeeping missions and civil society organizations in future.

I. Analysing the Partnership Gap between Civil Society Organisations and Peacekeeping Missions

Defining Civil Society

This paper employs a definition of civil society which is not confined to registered non-governmental organizations, but also includes other organized social networks and associations outside the governmental sector, whose activities and programmes influence and inform the lives of wide sectors of the community. They include voluntary associations, non-governmental organizations, social movements, traditional organizations and community-based associations, including faith-based organizations. The range of activities that inform the work of these civil society organizations include: the provision of basic social services; monitoring implementation of national government policies according to established national and international standards; undertaking advocacy for, and working to promote social justice and equality; and providing moral and/or cultural leadership at the community level.

In recent development discourse, civil society is often presented as a complementary pillar to the work of government at the national level. Given that many civil society organizations in developing and post-conflict countries are engaged at the community level, they are often considered an effective vehicle for translating national level policies into practical programmes and activities for the benefit of wide sections of the population. In communities where the impact of national policies may not have taken sufficient root at the local level, traditional leaders and religious/faith-based groups often wield strong influence in the governance of the day-to-day lives of the population. Civil society groups can also provide an independent voice to monitor the implementation of government policy and to advocate and negotiate for socially just policies and programmes.

4 This viewpoint is acknowledged by multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and is captured in an “Issues and Options” paper prepared by the Bank on Improving World Bank – Civil Society Engagement (March 2005).
5 Human rights activists have rightly noted the tensions that can be cited between the oftentimes conservative governance principles adhered to by some traditional and religious authorities, which tend to undermine the human rights of some sectors of society, including women on the one hand, and international human rights principles and standards that inform national-level policies on the other.
Although this paper is informed by the above positive role of civil society, it also incorporates an awareness of the fact that civil society, like any other strand of society, contains elements that may fail to act in the interest of the common good. Thus certain civil society organizations may employ undemocratic and unprofessional approaches to their work, be motivated by purely financial interests and show little accountability to the interests of the communities they claim to represent. Any effort on the part of peacekeeping missions to build an effective partnership strategy with civil society must therefore be preceded by an assessment of the motivations driving the work of individual civil society organizations, and must also incorporate a mechanism to ascertain the institutional and technical strength of the organizations, as well as their internal governance mechanisms.

The partnership gap

The two case study countries under review both witnessed an explosion in the sector of civil society in the post-war period. Any analysis of the partnership gap between peacekeeping missions and civil society must therefore take cognizance of this fact. The composition of civil society organizations in the pre-war years, in both cases, was limited to the work of traditional organizations, professional associations and pressure groups such as labour unions, student unions and market women’s associations. In the post-war period, this sector has expanded to include organizations working for governance and human rights, women’s empowerment organizations, humanitarian organizations, amongst others. The recent expansion of this sector has also often been complemented by efforts of civil society organizations themselves, often with support of international partners, to enhance their ability to function as professional and well structured entities.

From the peacekeeping perspective, the broadening of peacekeeping mandates to emphasize the civilian aspects of peacekeeping is an equally recent development, which may account for the absence of a culture of systematic engagement with civil society. Moreover, the traditional militaristic approach, which has until recent times largely dominated the conduct of peacekeeping, has often placed emphasis on the so-called “hard” security issues related to the control of armed violence, whilst the operational focus of many civil society actors on the seemingly “soft” human security issues, has drawn less focus. At a related level, the principle that peacekeepers, in facilitating an end to violent conflict and restoration of security in a post-conflict context, are required to primarily engage with the parties to conflict, has resulted in less attention being given to engagement with civil society actors as key stakeholders in the peace process. Furthermore, pre-deployment planning and training activities conducted for peacekeeping personnel has generally not underlined partnership-building between peacekeepers and civil society actors in post-conflict countries.

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6 During interviews with the Military personnel in both UNIOSIL and UNMIL, they did however underline the fact that from a military perspective, the strategy of “winning hearts and minds” is one that requires good interactions with the local population. The language barrier between military peacekeepers from diverse backgrounds and the local population in post-conflict countries was however cited as an impediment to partnership-building by some of the civil society representatives interviewed.
At another level, the partnership gap is sustained by a limited investment on the part of peacekeepers – during pre-mission assessment exercises – in understanding the role which civil society actors may have played in facilitating the peace process prior to the establishment of a peacekeeping mission. This knowledge is however necessary to make more visible the successful interventions undertaken by civil society organizations upon which peacekeepers could further build during the transitional process.

A perception of civil society organizations as largely weak and incoherent may also explain the tendency of peacekeepers to overlook them and concentrate rather on working with government authorities. In the two case study countries - Liberia and Sierra Leone – for example, the civil society sector has witnessed an explosion in the post-war period, although a significant number of these organizations have weak institutional and financial resource foundations which may appear to justify this perception. De-prioritising the role of civil society on these grounds may have the effect however, of closing available doors of opportunity for partnership between peacekeepers and civil society. It may also limit avenues whereby peacekeepers could facilitate stronger partnerships between government and civil society for the purposes of cementing the peace process.

At a related level, a perception that sections of civil society are partisan and politicized, may offer another reason for the cautionary approach of peacekeepers to this sector. Whilst this is clearly not true universally, in cases where this perception may hold true, peacekeepers do have a responsibility to engage with civil society in order to ensure that they do not serve as spoilers to a fragile peace process.

The partnership-building effort may also be adversely influenced by a narrow interpretation of peacekeeping mandates, whereby partnership with civil society may be viewed as part of the long-term institutional support to a country, and therefore more relevant to the peace-building phase, with the development agencies in the lead. In the course of researching this study, the limitations of this approach were identified by representatives of both civil society and UN agencies in the mission areas visited. In this regard, a key message conveyed by UN partners is that closer partnership between peacekeeping missions and civil society has the potential of bringing more value to the work of the entire UN System and could also facilitate the leveraging of more resources by UN agencies to continue this work. A strong partnership-building strategy between peacekeeping missions and civil society can also foster more effective relations between the UN System and local NGOs.

Given that no clear guidelines have been established to direct partnership-building between peacekeeping missions and civil society, and with little or no emphasis given to partnership-building in the mandates of peacekeeping missions, the positive initiatives that can be cited to date, have been largely driven by personal motivation and commitment of individual peacekeeping personnel. Moreover, the budgets of peacekeeping missions do not contain any provisions to facilitate partnership-building with civil society, such that even where peacekeeping personnel see strategic value in working with civil society, their efforts are constrained by a lack of resources.

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7 This particular point was underlined by the UNDP Resident Coordinator in Liberia.
**Key ingredients for partnership-building**

For the purposes of this research, partnership-building between United Nations peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone, and civil society organizations in both countries, has been explored at two levels: firstly, at the level of strategic engagement, where each party recognizes the strength of the other and collaborates to create a win-win outcome; and secondly, in terms of partnership as capacity-building, where the peacekeeping mission provides technical, training and advisory and/or financial resources to support civil society. At each of these levels, the partnership experience has in large part been sporadic and unsystematic. Whilst a few individual success stories can be cited, the sum of the partnership experience as captured through the detailed review of the four civil society sectors (faith-based organizations, media, educational institutions and women’s organizations) in section three of this report, points to the need for a more robust partnership approach by peacekeepers.

Throughout the review process, successful partnership experiences between civil society and peacekeeping missions were identified at the level of logistical support, the provision of training and advisory services to civil society actors by peacekeeping missions, and in some cases, through the exchange of ideas between peacekeeping missions and civil society representatives. The factors often cited for informing the success of partnership efforts included individual commitment and initiative on the part of peacekeeping personnel, and persistence on the part of civil society actors to pursuing a relationship with the peacekeeping mission. However, such partnership successes rarely incorporated a deliberate strategy on the part of peacekeeping missions for mobilizing and the capacity of civil society actors to advance the broader agenda of peace-building.

At the other end of the scale, partnership challenges cited by both civil society representatives and peacekeeping personnel include the need to streamline some of the bureaucratic administrative and reporting procedures associated with implementation of QIPs projects in particular, of peacekeeping missions and thereby to facilitate more effective collaboration. Moreover, the lack of financial resources available to peacekeeping missions to support partnership-building with civil society was also identified as an impediment. Another common challenge cited by civil society representatives, pertains to the need for peacekeepers to invest in building a better contextual understanding of the social and political situation in the area of operation, in order to facilitate more appropriate responses and to thus avoid a “one size fits all” approach to peacekeeping, which tends to bypass local expertise and hampers the sustainability of the peace dividend. Where a relationship has been cultivated between peacekeeping missions and civil society, there is a need to ensure that it is based on a foundation of mutual respect and a shared vision of peace, rather than one in which the relationship is reduced to monetary exchanges, with peacekeepers assuming the role of service providers, and civil society serving as programme implementers for the peacekeeping mission in some cases.  

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8 This view was expressed particularly in relation to implementation of some Quick Impact Projects (QIPS) by some civil society organizations.
II. Rationale for Partnership-building with Civil Society

Peacekeepers have traditionally singled out state actors and other parties to armed conflict as key partners in efforts to facilitate transitions to sustainable peace in post-conflict countries. Given the increasingly civilian character of many modern-day conflicts however, a narrow partnership focus on warring parties alone, may close off other opportunities for building a broad-based peace dividend that draws on the inputs of civilian actors who have affected or been affected by a conflict. Furthermore, the role of civilians has largely been characterized in terms of their victimization during the conflict and therefore peacekeeping mandates have tended to underline the principle of responsibility to protect, with less emphasis being given to the need to build civilian capacities to intervene as enforcers of peace.\(^9\)

The reality of most internal armed conflicts today is that many sections of the civilian population are implicated in the conflict – either through force, through choice or by necessity. Experience of recent conflicts also points to the fact that local level power structures can often be as influential in shaping the course of a conflict as power structures operating at the national level. The fact that many civil society organizations are operational at local levels highlights their potential role in working to either incite or pacify conflicts through these existing power structures.

At a related level, the positive forces working for peace within civil society have the potential to make inputs and interventions that can complement formal level processes of peacemaking through the influence they wield at community levels, as is illustrated below. Additionally, the civil society actors under review can make important strategic contributions to the implementation of peacekeeping mandates through a sharing of their understanding and knowledge of the local environment in which peacekeepers are deployed, which can in turn enhance the outcomes of both strategic and operational decisions taken by peacekeepers. Civil society partners can also facilitate better outreach to the local population for purposes of informing and educating communities on the mandates of peacekeeping missions. This can in turn advance confidence-building measures, which are so important for fostering ownership of the peace dividend. Another important rationale for stronger strategic engagement with civil society derives from the actual and potential role they can play in acting as a check on possible government excesses and in monitoring government compliance with international standards on governance. Moreover, in some situations where government may lag behind in meeting established standards and targets, it may be politically more astute for civil society to bring this to light, than for peacekeeping mission to do so.\(^10\) Partnership with civil society

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\(^9\) Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security is distinct in this regard, with its emphasis not only on the protection needs of women affected by conflict, but also on the need to harness women’s expertise and talents in all efforts to build sustainable peace.

\(^10\) The strategic alliance developed between UNMIL and civil society to facilitate the constitutional review process in Liberia was cited as a good example to bolster this point.
further has the value of expanding the democratic space in post-conflict countries, thereby helping to build more inclusive societies in the long term.

**The Role of Civil Society during the Conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone**

The rationale for stronger partnership between civil society and peacekeeping missions is further evidenced from the experiences of the four civil society sectors targeted for this study. These experiences highlight the complex role played by civil society representatives, who served not as mere bystanders in the evolving conflict and the subsequent processes to negotiate peace, but rather as actors whose influence was felt at each stage of the process. The evidence confirms that civil society can work to either fuel a conflict by taking sides with warring groups, or can make significant and positive contributions to processes for ending a conflict.

**The intelligentsia**

In both Sierra Leone and Liberia, the intelligentsia and universities played a significant role in mobilizing wide segments of the population to challenge the status quo and to advocate for social justice and political change, which were precursors to the unraveling of the political systems in both countries, eventually resulting in the outbreak of civil conflict. In Sierra Leone in particular, the intelligentsia also played a significant role in giving intellectual credence to the war ideology of the rebel movement during the early phases of the conflict. During the conflict, some members of the intelligentsia played an advisory role to the rebels and also worked in that capacity during the peace negotiations. It is estimated for example that 80% of the representatives to the Lomé Peace Talks to facilitate an end to the Sierra Leonean conflict were academics. In the period after the signing of the peace accord in Sierra Leone, academics played a pivotal role in facilitating a series of country-wide consultations which laid the groundwork for the peacekeeping mission established subsequently. Academics have thus served as a resource pool from which architects of both conflict and peace have conveniently tapped to help shape and articulate their political agendas.

**The media**

The media in Liberia and Sierra Leone were not immune to the political divisions which informed the conflict. In Liberia, there was a clear split between the Monrovia-based journalists and those representing the rest of Liberia. Likewise, in Sierra Leone, there were divisions amongst the journalists – between those who were advocating for a change of government and those who supported the status quo. The media divisions persisted throughout the war, and there was clear evidence of political manipulation of the media by the warring groups. The implication of the media in the conflict resulted in some journalists becoming war casualties. Even those journalists who sought to uphold an independent voice often paid a price for their stance. The divisions that characterized

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11 Interview with cross-section of academics from Sierra Leone.
12 ibid
13 The representative of Star Radio in Liberia, who participated in the interviews, noted that the station was forced to close down at one point during the Presidency of Charles Taylor, as a result of the independent journalist stance they displayed.
the media establishments undoubtedly seeped into their reporting, with obvious negative consequences for bridging long-standing political divisions in the post-war period. At the same time, the post-conflict period also opened up immense opportunities for harnessing the force of the media to promote reconciliation and peaceful co-existence among divided communities.

Faith-based organizations

The role of faith-based organizations during the conflict also strengthens the rationale for closer engagement between civil society and peacekeeping missions. In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, inter-faith councils were established during the war with the purpose of facilitating a peaceful end to the conflicts. Faith-based organizations succeeded in initiating dialogue with the warring parties, facilitating dialogue between these parties, and also played a mediation role during the formal peace talks in both contexts. Throughout this process, their moral standing in society won them the confidence of the warring parties, which in turn facilitated their mediation role. The religious leaders interviewed noted that the message of peace, which is so central to the doctrine of religious teachings, was preached from the pulpits and mosques by religious leaders throughout the conflict. In Liberia, the blueprint for the Liberian Peace Process during the first war in 1990, was proposed by the inter-faith council and was later amended and adopted by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as the ECOWAS Peace Plan for Liberia. Faith-based groups in both countries also played a critical role in providing humanitarian assistance and basic social services including healthcare and education to communities during the war, thus filling an important gap in the absence of a functioning government. In Liberia, the efforts of the inter-faith council to disseminate the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) to populations across the country, and to facilitate discussions with communities around the contents of the CPA was very useful in laying the groundwork for the work of the peacekeeping mission which was established subsequently.

Women’s organizations

Women’s organizations in both Liberia and Sierra Leone also provided significant support to promote a peaceful resolution to the conflicts prior to the establishment of UN peacekeeping missions in both countries. In Liberia, women leaders, including those working under the umbrella of the Liberian Women’s Initiative, reached out and established dialogue with leaders of the warring factions at the height of the conflict. Liberian women also made bold approaches to regional leaders during the peace negotiations and played an instrumental role in the appointment of a woman, Ruth Perry, as leader of the interim government established in Liberia from August 1996-July 1997. In Sierra Leone, women’s groups were equally active in the search for peace. Working under the umbrella of the Sierra Leone Women’s Forum, they mobilized both women and men to march and advocate for peace, and played a significant role in pushing the agenda.

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14 Notwithstanding the positive role played by religious leaders during the war, the interview with representatives of the religious community in Sierra Leone threw light on the fact that the political divisions that characterized the pre-war period also infiltrated the faith-based community, with some religious leaders appearing to gain more favour with government than others. This problem has persisted in the post-war period also.
of “elections before peace” during the conflict, when the ruling Council was reluctant to cede power. At the regional level, women’s groups from Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea, through the Mano River Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET) helped to facilitate dialogue between the leaders of the three countries as part of efforts to secure a sub-regional response to the conflicts that had engulfed Liberia and Sierra Leone in particular.

III. The Partnership Experience between Peacekeeping Missions and Civil Society

The experience of partnership-building between the peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone and civil society - whether at the strategic level, or at the level of capacity-building has been satisfactory in those instances where the partnership potential has been sufficiently exploited. For the most part though, the potential has been insufficiently tapped. Moreover, the record of partnership engagement between the peacekeeping missions and civil society point to an uneven and inconsistent level of engagement with the four civil society sectors under review, thus underscoring the need to develop a clear policy framework to direct such partnerships in future. The examples of successful partnership experiences outlined below stand out as good practices which should inform more systematic and structured approaches in future. Likewise, the missed opportunities should also be reviewed in terms of the important lessons they hold for informing future policymaking.

Partnership with educational institutions

As outlined above in section two of this report, the role of the universities and the intelligentsia was significant in influencing the political processes leading up to the conflict as well as the processes for negotiating an end to the wars in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. The partnership record between academics and the peacekeeping missions was however less favourable in Sierra Leone than in Liberia. In the former case, following the signing of the Lomé Peace Accords, academics played an important role in facilitating a series of country-wide consultations which laid a good foundation for consolidation of peace as per the mandate of the subsequent peacekeeping mission. No clear strategy for partnership was developed however, between UNAMSIL and the academic community in Sierra Leone. At the political level, this presented a missed opportunity for building constructive dialogue between the mission and the academic community on the one hand, and between the academic community, government and the wider civil society on the other. A partnership strategy could also have enhanced the role of the academic community as agents for peace in the course of implementing their substantive teaching and training activities, given that their student population includes

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15 The partnership record was noted to have improved somewhat during the last two years of UNAMSIL’s mandate in Sierra Leone.
16 This point was highlighted during an interview with a cross-section of the academic community in Sierra Leone.
ex-combatants and future political leaders\textsuperscript{17}. At another level, the task of raising public awareness about the role and mandate of the peacekeeping mission was also one which could have been greatly facilitated through a partnership engagement between the peacekeeping mission and educational establishments (universities and teacher training colleges) in Sierra Leone, given the wide outreach capacity of this sector.

The experience of partnership between the peacekeeping mission in Liberia and the academic community has been relatively more positive and provides some good practice examples which can be institutionalized in future. This positive partnership has been particularly manifest in relations between UNMIL and the University of Liberia, which has been characterized as a “win-win” scenario\textsuperscript{18}. Through this partnership, some mission personnel have been providing pro-bono teaching services to university students and support has also been provided to build infrastructural capacity of the University. The recently-established Kofi Annan Centre for Conflict Transformation within the University of Liberia has also extended its board membership to include some mission personnel and has been collaborating closely with UNMIL on security sector reform issues. Additionally, UNMIL personnel participate in a monthly policy forum that engages the University, the government, civil society and the international community in discussing critical issues on the national agenda. The mission also ensured fruitful consultations with Cuttington University to inform its policy decisions during the apprehension and subsequent transfer of former Liberian President Charles Taylor.

\textit{Partnership with the media}

The partnership experience between the peacekeeping missions and local media in Liberia and Sierra Leone has evolved along similar lines. Both countries have witnessed an explosion in the media sector in the post-war period, particularly in the private media establishments. This development though has not been matched by enhanced levels of professionalism among the crop of expanding media practitioners. The partnership engagement with the peacekeeping missions has included investments in training and capacity-building for media practitioners and the provision of logistical support. In Sierra Leone, such training has facilitated a mainstreaming of the principles of human rights, good governance and accountability in journalist reporting. More recently, a media code of conduct on electoral reporting has been developed with support from the UN mission in Sierra Leone to enhance the level of professionalism in media reporting during the electoral period. In Liberia, training for media practitioners has also sought to enhance their reporting related to the truth and reconciliation process and there was much investment in training for media practitioners during the most recent elections in the country. The establishment of UN radio stations in both missions has also been a positive development that has facilitated standard-setting practices within the broadcast media. Additionally, the convening of regular information briefings to media practitioners by the peacekeeping missions was cited as a good practice that ensures that the local media are briefed on the operational activities of the mission. In this regard, media practitioners in

\textsuperscript{17} The academics in Sierra Leone berated the fact that the documentation and workshop reports accumulated by the peacekeeping mission were not donated to the universities during the draw-down of UNAMSIL.

\textsuperscript{18} This sentiment was expressed during an interview with the President of the University of Liberia
Liberia emphasized that the violence encountered during the early phases of the DDR process undertaken by UNMIL could have been averted if the media had been more strategically engaged at the very beginning of the process so that they could have served as conduits for transmitting messages that would placate the anxieties of the ex-combatants.

In addition to training activities, the mission in Liberia has also extended support to the local media in the form of payments to newspapers and community radio stations for advertisements they carry on behalf of the mission. The mission has also on occasion facilitated logistical support for journalists needing to travel outside the country and has provided access by journalists to the use of communication facilities at the UNMIL media centre. This support notwithstanding, a section of the media community in Liberia underlined the need for an enhancement of the partnership terms with the peacekeeping mission, to stress a "win-win" experience, rather than one skewed in favour of implementation of the agenda and priorities of the peacekeeping mission.

The investments made by the peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone to advance partnership-development with the local media, have principally emphasized training and capacity-building support. The potential of the media to serve as instruments to educate the broad public and disseminate key messages for peace-building and reconciliation has not however been sufficiently tapped. Given the delicate nature of the prevailing peace in both contexts, a strategic undertaking of this kind would have been necessary to facilitate a consolidation of the peace process, and would also guard against the dangers of the media carrying inflammatory stories that can incite violence. Thus at the strategic level, much scope remains for strengthening the partnership experience with a view to reinforcing the peace dividend.

**Partnership with faith-based organisations**

The prominent role which faith-based groups assumed during the war and in the course of the peace negotiations in both Sierra Leone and Liberia was not sufficiently mobilized to inform the work of the peacekeeping missions established subsequently. Thus, although faith-based groups continued to make interventions aimed at consolidating the peace process, this has oftentimes been independent of initiatives undertaken by the mission towards the same objective. In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, faith-based groups sought to support the DDR processes. With the support of UNMIL, the Liberian Council of Churches thus undertook some visits to the cantonment sites to provide counseling to the ex-combatants. Likewise, in Sierra Leone, religious leaders visited the cantonment sites and appealed to the ex-combatants to engage in the DDR process. The inter-religious council of Sierra Leone, together with Council of Churches also sought to facilitate the peaceful reintegration of ex-combatants back into their communities by conducting ceremonial cleansing activities. Inspite of these interventions, the wide scope

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19 One such ongoing initiative cited by faith-based groups interviewed in Sierra Leone, relates to the establishment of a sub-regional consultative committee, which draws participation of religious representatives from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea and Ghana, with the objective of evolving a sub-regional strategy spearheaded by religious leaders, for strengthening regional peace and security.
that existed for mobilizing the strength of the faith-based community to support the DDR process was not sufficiently tapped. In particular, religious leaders expressed the view that they could have facilitated the process of “mental disarmament” of the ex-combatants, which would have enhanced their reintegration back into their communities.

At the political level, religious leaders in both countries also made important contributions to further advance the peace process. In Sierra Leone, they facilitated access by UNAMSIL to the north of the country, and drew the attention of the mission to various atrocities in evidence in that region. This strategic engagement was not however sustained, and faith-based groups were not included among the partners in civil society which received the attention of the mission. In Liberia, faith-based groups played a very active role during the elections process by conducting civic education across communities and by using the platform of the church pulpits and mosques to propagate the message of peace. The outreach potential to ordinary citizens and politicians was very significant in this regard. Nonetheless the potential of faith-based groups to inform the political process through ongoing advice and helping to mediate political tensions in the transitional period was not sufficiently capitalized on by the mission. The leaders of faith-based institutions consulted during the research summarized the nature of collaboration with the peacekeeping missions and other international organizations as generally driven by a “fire-fighting” approach, where the inputs of faith-based groups are sought to mediate or intervene when a crisis or emergency situation arises, with very little investments in ensuring a mechanism for ongoing and sustained dialogue and cooperation.

**Partnership with women’s organisations**

The review process highlighted areas of partnership between women’s organizations and the peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia. A much more favourable partnership record was noted under UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone, where different components of the mission reached out to support and build collaboration with women’s organizations. The partnership largely stressed logistical and capacity-building support to women’s organizations, including the Sierra Leone Women’s Forum and the Sierra Leone chapter of the Mano River Union Women’s Peace Network (MARWOPNET). At the strategic level, women’s organizations were also invited on occasion to participate in some key meetings convened by the mission, including with visiting delegates. An ongoing process of information-sharing and dialogue was maintained to further consolidate this relationship. The Human Rights component of the mission in particular, greatly facilitated the partnership-building process with women’s organizations. Other mission components, namely Civil Affairs, Political Affairs and Public Information also ensured dialogue and collaboration with women’s organizations in the course of implementing their respective mandates. Thus overall, women’s organizations in Sierra Leone, whilst acknowledging challenges relating to the limited financial resources at the disposal of UNAMSIL to support capacity-building of civil society as well as the bureaucratic procedures of the UN, sounded a very positive assessment of the partnership record with the peacekeeping mission.

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20 One of the priests interviewed alluded to the fact that during the campaign period for the most recent elections in Liberia, she had a total of six of the presidential aspirants attending her church.
A more sober assessment of the partnership record emerged from the review of the experience in Liberia. As in Sierra Leone, important value was attached to the logistical support provided to women’s organizations by the mission. Whilst initial investments were made to establish strategic dialogue between the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and women’s organizations on a quarterly basis, this was not sustained after the first meeting. The Office of the Gender Adviser was singled out by women’s organizations as being the most active and reliable partner among the various mission components. The police component of the mission was noted as having also expanded outreach to women’s organizations in efforts to increase the recruitment of women to the Liberian National Police. The partnership experience with Civil Affairs was noted as being limited and largely superficial. Women’s organizations pointed to an otherwise ad hoc nature of collaboration with UNMIL wherein partnership efforts served as events rather than processes. An example provided in this respect related to the good collaboration which occurred between women’s organizations and UNMIL during the electoral period. Beyond that, the unsystematic nature of collaboration with the mission has resulted in missed opportunities for harnessing women’s capacities to support implementation of the mission mandate. Thus for example, during the DDR process, the specific needs of women associated with fighting forces were not sufficiently taken into account and the peacekeeping mission failed to tap into women’s knowledge of the local power structures to ensure more effective engagement with traditional leaders, some of whom served as commanders of the ex-combatants.

The record of partnership between women’s organizations and the peacekeeping missions in Sierra Leone and Liberia presents a mixed picture. The key ingredients cited as having facilitated a more positive review in Sierra Leone included the outreach by different components of the mission to women’s organizations, the contribution and commitment of women peacekeeping personnel to creating space for local women’s voices to be heard, as well as the persistence of women’s organizations themselves, in pushing for a stronger partnership. In Liberia though, women’s organizations noted less commitment by the peacekeeping mission to drawing on their local expertise. This, combined with a comparatively limited degree of persistence on the part of women’s organizations in their approach to the mission, resulted in a more modest partnership engagement.

IV. The Broader Partnership Context

Since the operations of peacekeeping missions are not carried out in isolation from those of other international partners working in post-conflict countries, any exercise to enhance the partnership experience between peacekeeping missions and civil society needs also to review the record of engagement between civil society and these other international organizations in order to ensure a complementary approach. Consequently, this study incorporated a brief assessment of the partnership experience between the four civil society sectors and some UN agencies, with a view to elaborating key lessons that could

21 This point was made during an interview with a cross-section of women’s organizations in Monrovia.
inform the work of peacekeeping missions in future. Although this exercise did not set out to review the partnership experience between civil society organizations and the former regional peacekeeping force ECOMOG, which was operational in both Liberia and Sierra Leone, the review generated significant information related to this experience which holds relevant lessons for UN peacekeeping missions.

**Partnership with UN Agencies**

The review of partnership experience between the UN agencies consulted (UNDP, UNICEF and UNIFEM) and the four civil society sectors of concern, highlighted some good practices in partnership-building. In Sierra Leone for example, UNICEF worked very closely with faith-based groups to implement a national campaign to end early marriage and to prevent HIV/AIDS. In this regard, UNICEF strategically drew on the influential role of religious leaders in society to disseminate its key messages to various communities across the country to good effect. Another example of a successful partnership experience pertained to the effective support provided by UNDP, UNIFEM and UNIOSIL to women’s organizations in Sierra Leone, to strengthen their advocacy for the passage of three bills to advance women’s rights (registration of customary marriage and divorce; inter-state succession; and domestic violence). The success of this undertaking underlined the critical need for partnership between women’s organizations and the UN in efforts to place critical issues of concern to women on the national policy agenda. It also emphasized the value of a coherent UN approach in working with civil society.

In Liberia, UNDP’s collaboration with the civil society organizations under review has included training support to the media, particularly during the elections. Another important example of successful partnership related to the facilitative role played by UNDP to support the development of an NGO Policy as a mechanism for ensuring a more coherent and stable framework to guide collaboration between the UN and civil society organizations, and also to facilitate a more active and meaningful participation of civil society in the peace process. This initiative has also drawn important inputs from UNMIL’s Civil Affairs component as well as from the Government of Liberia, and has the potential to enhance collaboration between NGOs and the government.

**Key Lessons**

The UN agencies elaborated a number of important lessons based on their longer-standing experience of partnership with civil society, which hold relevance for future partnership-building between peacekeeping missions and civil society. The key lessons highlighted included the need for an integrated approach among UN entities in efforts to partner with civil society so as to ensure a complementarity of efforts, and also to facilitate continuity and sustainability to the support provided by peacekeeping missions.

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22 In Liberia, UNDP and UNICEF made inputs to the review process, whilst in Sierra Leone, UNICEF and UNIFEM were consulted.

23 UNIOSIL also provided some much-needed political support during the latter stages of advocacy and negotiations for passage of the three bills.

24 The policy as it stands is framed as directed to NGOs and not the broader institutions of civil society.
The scope of a mission’s engagement with civil society should thus be determined at the mission planning stage in order to facilitate better coordination with UN agencies.

The broader outreach potential of peacekeeping missions due to deployments countrywide in post-conflict countries, was noted as an important facilitator of partnership-building between UN agencies and civil society. In the case of Liberia for example, the Civil Affairs component of the mission, due to its field presence across the country, has provided logistical support and ground information to facilitate partnership-building between UNDP and NGOs in the different counties.

Another important lesson shared by UN partners relates to the need for peacekeeping missions to undertake a capacity assessment of potential partners in civil society prior to engagement with them, and to invest some resources in capacity-development of civil society actors to strengthen their potential to serve as enforcers of the peace dividend. This kind of capacity-development should not be limited to training activities but should also stress a process of ongoing nurturing through technical, infrastructural and administrative support, as well as through facilitating access by civil society organizations to strategic meetings and processes that are aimed at advancing the peace process. Moreover, the partnership-building process would need to strike a delicate balance between the objective of drawing on the resources of civil society to inform the peace process on the one hand, and guarding against overburdening the most competent civil society organizations on the other.

**Partnership with Economic Community of West African States/Economic Community Cease-fire Monitoring Group (ECOWAS/ECOMOG)**

The partnership experience between the civil society organizations under review and the regional peacekeeping force (ECOMOG), deployed prior to the establishment of UN peacekeeping missions in both Liberia and Sierra Leone, also highlighted a number of good practices and some relevant lessons for peacekeeping missions. In this regard, representatives of women’s organizations in both countries pointed to the strategic engagement with ECOMOG troops, whereby they were consulted by the regional forces who sought their inputs to facilitate their intelligence gathering work. ECOMOG provided regular briefings to women’s organizations and consulted them in planning their military strategies, thereby identifying opportunities where women could facilitate access by the regional forces to warring factions. The regional forces also facilitated safe passage for women on a number of occasions to enable them to dialogue with, and persuade the warring factions to opt for a negotiated settlement. During the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process (DDR) conducted by ECOMOG in Liberia, the regional forces engaged women’s organizations to support sensitization of the ex-combatants to participate in the process. Representatives of women’s organizations also sometimes accompanied ECOMOG peacekeepers on their patrols and used the opportunity to sensitize women and girls in the communities on their human rights, as part of efforts to prevent them falling prey to sexual exploitation and abuse. Thus overall, the record of partnership between ECOMOG peacekeepers and women’s organizations in both Liberia and Sierra Leone was deemed positive and pointed to a “win-win” situation for all sides.
The interactions between the regional forces and faith-based institutions provided another successful area of strategic partnership in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. In both contexts, inter-faith councils were established to serve as engines to drive the peace process. Furthermore, the role of the inter-faith councils in supporting the peace process was formally recognized by ECOWAS and ECOMOG, such that in Liberia for example, a “Statement of Appeal for Peace” drafted by the inter-faith mediation council during the first war in 1990, was later adopted and revised by ECOWAS as the “ECOWAS Peace Plan for Liberia”. In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, the inter-faith councils were called upon by the regional facilitators to the peace process to play a mediation role during the peace talks between the various warring groups, a task which they performed to good effect and which won them the confidence of the various warring factions.

Although the relationship between faith-based groups and ECOWAS/ECOMOG was positive overall, the charge leveled against international organizations by faith-based groups, of their failure to meaningfully sustain the partnership at the end of the conflict, was evident in the case of relations with ECOWAS/ECOMOG following the signing of the peace agreements in Liberia and Sierra Leone, where the faith-based groups felt marginalized from the political process.

**Partnership with the National Government**

Within the broader partnership context, peacekeeping missions can work to foster good working relations between the government of the day in post-conflict countries and civil society organizations, a process which can in turn facilitate the effective implementation of a mission’s mandate. This may include drawing on the inputs and contributions of civil society to inform mechanisms and structures established to guide particular areas of post-conflict governance. This strategy can serve to strengthen the role of civil society in monitoring government compliance with internationally agreed standards and can also enhance the capacity of civil society as key stakeholders in the peace-building process. A good practice example of this effort was evident from the review exercise in UNMIL, where civil society has been informing the work of the Forestry Commission, as well as the mechanism established to review the national budget process. Likewise, in Sierra Leone, civil society is represented on the steering committee that has been established to oversee management of the Peacebuilding Fund. Moreover, some dedicated funding has been made available to support capacity-building of civil society within the framework of the Peace-building Fund, in recognition of the critical role of this sector to the governance process. Encouraging the participation of civil society in national governance processes thus contributes to sustaining the investments made by peacekeeping missions insofar as it works to promote a culture of democracy and also enhances the functioning of transparent and accountable governance systems in post-conflict countries.
V. **Key Lessons Learned and Policy Implications**

The review and analysis presented above highlight a number of important lessons which have implications for future policy decisions that can inform collaboration between peacekeeping missions and civil society. A summary of some of the key lessons is provided below:

*A context analysis is important to understand the role played by civil society during the conflict.* This requires that assessment missions deployed prior to the establishment of peacekeeping missions must extend their situation analysis to include an understanding of the role played by civil society in the conflict as well as in the search for peace. The findings of such a review should work to inform and shape the nature of relations developed between peacekeeping missions and civil society during the transition process.

*Civil society representatives are not innocent bystanders but actors who have affected or have been affected by the conflict.* Consequently, peacekeepers need to adopt a strategic approach to engaging with civil society, one that recognizes their influence within their communities – whether positive or otherwise. It also requires a recognition of the capacity of civil society to serve as partners, capable of providing essential information to peacekeepers based on their knowledge of the operational environment. This approach should also enable peacekeepers to recognize any divisions within or among different sectors of civil society as a result of the conflict, which could work to undermine the peace process. In this way, the inputs of peacekeepers can be framed to facilitate bridge-building among civil society, whilst also harnessing their capacities to support the peace process.

*Civil society has a key role to play in facilitating implementation of the mandates of peacekeeping missions.* A good illustration of this point was provided through the DDR process undertaken under the coordination of the regional peacekeeping force ECOMOG in Liberia, where women’s organizations provided strategic support to inform the process. Civil society organizations also have an important role to play in supporting the process of reintegrating ex-combatants back into society, including through the provision of psycho-social counseling services to support the process of mental healing, and ceremonial cleansing rites performed by faith-based groups - as was the case in Sierra Leone. To date however, UN peacekeeping missions have not fully capitalized on these available opportunities.

*The mission mandate provides the best starting point for defining partnership engagement with civil society.* By underlining the importance of partnership with civil society in the mandates of peacekeeping missions, the process of collective ownership among different components of the mission for this undertaking would be enhanced from the very beginning. This would also facilitate access to financial resources that are necessary to develop and sustain such partnerships.
The content of pre-deployment training packages targeted to peacekeepers needs to underline the value of partnership with civil society. This would ensure that peacekeepers are better able to capitalize on the local resources and expertise available within the operational environment to support implementation of mission mandates. It would also make more visible to mission personnel, the strategic ways in which they can mobilize the strength of civil society to advance implementation of the mission mandate.

An institutional approach is necessary to inform partnership-building with civil society. Given that partnership between peacekeeping missions and civil society has largely been driven by personality and individual commitment of peacekeeping personnel on the one hand, and a proactive and persistent engagement by civil society actors on the other, a more institutionalized policy framework is necessary in order to maximize the partnership potential and to set it on a sustainable footing. This effort requires that a structured mechanism be established to facilitate dialogue and communication between civil society and the leadership of peacekeeping missions on a systematic basis. The appointment of a dedicated officer within the Civil Affairs Section of UNMIL, who is responsible for supporting partnership engagement with civil society, stands as a good practice which should be institutionalized in other missions.

The mission leadership style can work to facilitate or hinder partnerships with civil society. In both Liberia and Sierra Leone, the representatives of civil society interviewed for the study noted that their ability to engage effectively or otherwise with the peacebuilding mission was significantly influenced by the leadership style of the SRSG, and referenced both positive and negative experiences in this respect.

The approach to partnership-building with civil society requires some capacity-building investments to enhance the functioning of this sector as a critical pillar to support the exercise of democratic governance. This requires a shift in policy emphasis to underline capacity-building of civil society as an important complement to the technical and logistical assistance that has largely defined the scope of partnership engagement between peacekeeping missions and civil society to date. Capacity-building of civil society should enable them to effectively monitor the exercise of accountable and transparent governance practices in post-conflict countries, which in turn facilitates sustainability of the investments made by peacekeeping missions to enhance good governance. Capacity-building should also include facilitating participation and access of civil society to key processes and mechanisms established to guide and inform the transitional process.

Capacity-building of civil society also requires the targeting of some financial resources to enhance the activities of this sector. This would require revisiting the rules and procedures that govern the use of peacekeeping budgets to ensure that some flexibility is provided through for example, the use of the quick impact project (QIPS) mechanism to facilitate capacity-building support to civil society.

Civil society actors are well-placed to facilitate outreach by peacekeeping missions to the wider population. The task of building broad-based confidence in the peace process
requires that the mandate of peacekeeping missions be well-understood by the population at large, which is often not the case. In this regard, civil society actors with the capacity to mobilize wide sectors of the population can serve as conduits for informing and educating the population on the mandate of peacekeeping missions. This effort also requires that interactions between peacekeepers and the local population be encouraged, in order to facilitate confidence-building with the local population.

*Enhancing the civilian face of peacekeeping offers an important entry point for better outreach to civil society.* A stronger engagement by civilian peacekeepers with the local population can help to dispel the perception that peacekeeping is a largely militaristic exercise, and can also facilitate closer relations between peacekeepers and the civilian population. In this regard, the deployment of more women peacekeepers can also help facilitate better interactions with women in the local population, as was underlined by women in both Liberia and Sierra Leone.

*The exit strategy of a peacekeeping mission should be informed by inputs of civil society in order to ensure that they can continue to engage with subsequent mechanisms established to support the process of peace-building.* In the case of Sierra Leone, civil society representatives noted that their limited input in the formulation of the exit strategy of the peacekeeping mission slowed down the momentum of their partnership engagement with the follow-on integrated mission.

*An integrated approach to partnership-building, which takes account of the role of other UN entities operating in the post-conflict environment, should inform efforts of UN peacekeeping missions to engage with civil society.* This approach is necessary to sustain the efforts of peacekeepers. It would also ensure that the inputs of peacekeepers complement those of other international partners and would contribute to promoting the objective of a one UN approach to support post-conflict peace-building processes.
VI. Conclusion

This study has provided ample illustration of the important role which civil society played during the conflicts, as well as in the search for lasting peace in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. It has highlighted the importance of partnership engagement between peacekeeping missions and civil society as an important strategy to complement governmental level processes for strengthening the peace process. The starting point for this engagement requires a recognition and understanding on the part of peacekeepers of the strength and influence wielded by civil society organizations within the wider population. It also calls for an understanding of the specific contributions made by civil society to supporting the peace process prior to the establishment of a peacekeeping mission, in order to identify avenues for building on this positive role in the course of implementation of peacekeeping mandates.

The representatives of civil society consulted during the course of this study repeatedly recognized the important stake they have in sustaining the peace process long after their international partners are gone. They note that the starting point for an effective partnership engagement requires that they be viewed not merely as victims of conflict, but as actors, and as potential peace enforcers, whose interventions are an important complement to those of their governments. The partnership agenda must therefore seek to build their capacities as much as those of their governments, and must emphasize a sustained, rather than ad hoc engagement. The basis for this partnership should, as they noted, be structured to promote mutual benefit and respect, and seek to draw on their wide outreach and mobilizing capacity to support the implementation of peacekeeping mandates. Ultimately, it should be based on recognition of the fact that in order to sustain the peace dividend and create a solid foundation for democratic governance, all available capacities in post-conflict societies need to be mobilized. Civil society organizations are clearly a critical resource in this regard.

Among the key recommendations highlighted in the research is the need to ensure that the role of civil society as key stakeholders in post-conflict environments is give due recognition in the mandates of peacekeeping missions, and that a clear policy framework is developed to guide partnership-building efforts between UN peacekeeping missions and civil society. Additionally, there is need for a stronger engagement with civil society during assessment missions, as a basis for identifying partnership opportunities, and once a mission is established, some limited resources must be made available within peacekeeping budgets to facilitate such partnership-building efforts.
VII. Bibliography


