

Civil Society Organisations in Liberia and Sierra Leone during the Ebola Epidemic: A Cross-Section of Changes and Responses

Research team

Gonne Beekman

Erwin Bulte

Bram Peters

Maarten Voors

Development Economics Group - Wageningen University

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List of Abbreviations

5C	Organisational capability analysis framework
BSC	Business Start-up Centre
CAC	Community Action Committee
CAST	Community Awareness and Support Team
CLEA	Community-Led Ebola Approach
CSI	CIVICUS Civil Society Index
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCR	Dutch Consortium for Rehabilitation
DEN-L	Development Education Network - Liberia
ECAP	Ebola Community Action Platform
ECDPM	European Centre for Development Policy Management
ETU	Ebola Treatment Units
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FCI	Foundation for Community Initiatives
FIND	Foundation for International Dignity
GoL	Government of Liberia
ICCO	Interchurch Cooperative for Development Cooperation
IFC	International Finance Corporation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MFSII	Dutch development cooperation funding system
MSME	Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise
NAWOCOL	National Women's Commission for Liberia
NERC	National Ebola Response Center (of Sierra Leone)
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
RHRAP	Rural Human Rights Activist Programme
RSPO	Roundtable for Sustainable Palm Oil
SAMFU	Save My Future Foundation
SESDev	Social Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development
SESEZ	Social Enterprise Special Economic Zone
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
UNMEER	United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response
UNMIL	United Nations Mission in Liberia
VSLA	Village Saving and Loans Association
WASH	Water, Sanitation Hygiene
WHO	World Health Organisation

Executive Summary

The Ebola epidemic that raged throughout West Africa between 2014 and 2015 has been widely recognised as an emergency that required enormous efforts of national governments, the international community and development organisations. The Ebola outbreak demanded the attention of the entire civil society arena in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Civil society organisations (CSOs), as non-state, non-private sector interest groups, are key actors in this space and were heavily involved throughout the epidemic. This study presents case studies of a number of Liberian and Sierra Leonean CSOs that were approached to explore the question: "How has the Ebola outbreak affected Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil society, and how did civil society organisations react and adapt to the Ebola outbreak?"

Several CSOs were asked to share their experiences from the past years—before, during and after the Ebola outbreak—through collective staff reflection sessions, interviews with key staff members and document review. Leading questions were how the external environment changed, how they worked to achieve their goals, how they responded to challenges and how they adapted to the Ebola epidemic. The study draws on CIVICUS Civil Society dimensions to approach the way in which civil society organisations operate. This approach was supplemented with interviews based on 5 Capabilities assessment methodology.

Even before the Ebola outbreak, Liberia and Sierra Leone were considered challenging environments to work on developmental goals. The Ebola outbreak and the national emergency measures that were taken in both countries made it more difficult for organisations to operate. Similarly, demands placed on civil society organisations by their constituents and beneficiaries changed: as the Ebola epidemic spread, increasing requests focused on provision of food, health and sanitation materials. The Ebola outbreak accentuated the fragile context in which the post-conflict states Liberia and Sierra Leone operate: cases of quarantine and distrust of population about the existence of Ebola illustrate this precarious situation.

The Ebola epidemic placed demands on CSO capabilities in Liberia as well as Sierra Leone. The struggles of national civil society organisations are not new. Studies of civil society in both countries noted that many organisations have challenges related to operational capacity, leadership, uncertain sources of funding and lack of connection with constituent bases. During the Ebola outbreak these were stressed for some, while others received an impulse. Especially the nationally-based Liberian CSOs in this sample experienced issues related to withdrawal of funding, stalling of programmes and extraction of expatriate staff. Other organisations were activated by the influx of Ebola response funding and projects. A number of CSOs tried to grasp opportunities the situation offered to represent their stakeholders. Some CSOs have broadened their strategies and are now building on these new relations.

Collective effort of all different types of actors in society was required during the Ebola outbreak. Whereas civil society actors were initially shunned from the Ebola response, gradually various CSOs from different backgrounds and expertise raised awareness and sought to prevent new cases. As such, they formed a valuable contribution to the centralised approaches of government and the technical approaches of the World Health Organisation. New partnerships were initiated that operated under the national Ebola taskforces. Initiatives such as the Social Mobilisation Action Consortium were formed based on fully involving communities in the struggle against Ebola and used the diverse expertise and strategies of CSO partners.

The Ebola outbreak and the diverse responses of CSOs potentially gives rise to new possibilities and initiatives as a basis for addressing cross-cutting societal challenges. This includes the realisation that strong cooperation between stakeholders across society is needed to tackle such challenges and that constructive relations with communities are essential.

1. Introduction

The outbreak of the Ebola Virus Disease in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea in 2014 has been the most intense and severe epidemic that West-Africa ever witnessed. The registered cases of Ebola in the region numbered up to 28,598, with as many as 11,299 deadly casualties (WHO, 2015b). The Ebola epidemic has had wider impacts and consequences. It revealed the fragile condition of government healthcare and basic service provision, challenged state response mechanisms, negatively impacted trade and business, and put trust of citizens in each other and in their institutions to the test. By the second half of 2015, the most immediate threat of the epidemic has declined in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone has been declared Ebola-free on the 7th of November 2015 (The Guardian, 2015b). However, caution is still required: Liberia was declared Ebola-free on the 3rd of September 2015 but on 24 November three new cases emerged (The Guardian, 2015a; WHO, 2015c).

Civil society organisations (CSOs) can fulfil a key role in the event of national emergencies, providing contributions to the dynamic societal arena referred to as 'civil society'. These organisations and social collectives represent shared interests and values of manifold stakeholders and citizens. In the context of civil society, they supplement, support, or challenge the efforts of family, government and private sector spheres. During the Ebola outbreak in Liberia and Sierra Leone many CSOs sought to contribute to the prevention and mitigation of the deadly virus, in defence and representation of their beneficiary households and communities. National governments, international organisations, NGOs, and community-based organisations actively worked together throughout this period.

This research seeks to explore how CSOs were affected by the Ebola outbreak, how they responded to the crisis, and how they tried to continue their work on diverse societal goals. Organisations may have incurred setbacks regarding their impact, changed the way they represented their stakeholders, generated new strategies and areas of focus, or established new linkages with others. By approaching CSOs from a range of backgrounds, this report aims to generate a deeper understanding of the way CSOs operate during difficult times of emergency and crisis.

To this end, the research explores the following research question:

"How has the Ebola outbreak affected Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil society, and how have civil society organisations reacted and adapted to the Ebola outbreak?"

The main research question can be split into three sub-questions:

1. *How did the Ebola crisis affect organisations and their stakeholders?*
2. *How did CSOs work on their efforts to strengthen wider civil society?*
3. *How were organisational capabilities changed throughout this period?*

The research seeks to increase understanding of how CSOs have reacted and adapted to the Ebola outbreak while trying to strengthen civil society. This report builds on insights from prior evaluation research conducted for the Dutch development co-financing system (MFSII). The MFSII supported a number of Liberian CSOs throughout the period of 2010-2015. The objective of this development co-financing was threefold: support attainment of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Liberia, build organisational capacity of Liberian partner organisations, and support the strengthening of Liberian civil society. In addition to the Liberian organisations, a number of CSOs in Sierra Leone were visited. This gave the opportunity to highlight similarities and differences between the Liberian and Sierra Leonean environments and to explore the key factors and events that might have influenced the CSOs in diverse ways.

Data collection was conducted between July and November 2015. The research made use of CIVICUS Civil Society Index dimensions and 5C capacity assessment methodology. Nine CSOs were approached for a staff reflection session and questionnaires. The findings were analysed by

comparing them to prior insights from earlier evaluation rounds in the MFSII study, organisational documentation and broader civil society studies of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Main findings are that the Ebola outbreak heavily affected the work of CSOs from a broad range of backgrounds. The Ebola epidemic and the emergency measures put in place made it difficult to achieve goals and implement strategies. These deepened the already challenging circumstances in which Liberian and Sierra Leonean CSOs work. Some development areas experienced setbacks. However, many CSOs responded flexibly, by contributing to the Ebola response or by seeing opportunities to get their stakeholders involved. As such, many CSOs made valuable contributions to the efforts of governmental and institutional partners. If they did not have expertise to tackle Ebola, they could contribute community relations and knowledge of the context. For some organisations this period meant changes in funding, strategies and operational procedures, and to positive outlooks depending on how well the organisation could adapt. The Ebola outbreak gave rise to new possibilities and initiatives that could be built on. It was realised that strong cooperation between stakeholders across society is needed to tackle such great challenges, and that engaging and including communities constructively during health interventions is essential. During the epidemic, cooperation in broad coalitions with CSOs from diverse backgrounds and expertise emerged. These might rally around cross-cutting societal challenges in the future.

The report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 discusses the main research approach, including civil society research, and the Civil Society Index approach. Chapter 3 provides a description of the research sample, methods, and reflections on the research. Chapter 4 gives an overview of the context of Liberia and Sierra Leone and includes a brief history of the Ebola epidemic in these countries. Chapter 5 presents the results of the fieldwork in an overview table with key findings from every organisation. Chapter 6 discusses key insights from the results table and the implications from these findings. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes with a concise summary of main findings.

2. Research approach

2.1 The concept of civil society

Civil society is a diverse and dynamic space. The CIVICUS Civil Society Index defines it as "the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests" (Heinrich, 2004, p. 13). This description captures much, but also implies that civil society is a highly ambivalent concept that is difficult to grasp (Malena & Heinrich, 2007). There are a number of issues that have to do with this: the origin of the civil society notion, the normative values attached to it, and the way in which the concept of civil society should be utilized.

The concept of civil society has caused heated debates on its meaning and importance. The concept arose at the end of the 18th century in Europe. Political theorists explored the idea of a space where people gathered around common interests and values, parallel and separate to the space of the state (Carothers & Barndt, 2000). It reflected ideals related to liberty and economic development. Later, from a Marxist perspective, civil society was considered the space where independent citizens could oppose the tyranny of the state. After the Second World War, activists from Poland, Czech Republic and Hungary rallied under the umbrella of civil society in their struggle against Soviet oppression (Carothers & Barndt, 2000, p. 19). In contemporary development practice, civil society has been embraced widely in a broad spectrum of development agendas. It is associated with values such as democracy, and human rights and freedom, and is considered to play a key role in development processes in countries all over the world. Not all civil society actors are collectives that strive for 'noble causes' and 'universal ideals'. CSOs can consist of a wide range of interest groups that seek both positive and negative outcomes in society. These groups may struggle about ideals and contest conventions of what is considered 'public good'. The way in which civil society takes shape differs greatly between countries and regions depending on societal values, history and political contexts (Carothers & Barndt, 2000).

These considerations have implications for the way civil society can be studied. The CIVICUS Civil Society Index (CSI) is considered a guiding framework. Heinrich (2004, p. 11) noted that the CSI approaches civic action in a non-historical sense, and is seen as a heuristic tool to understand social and political dynamics in contemporary societies. The CSI draws on four overarching dimensions to take a wide perspective of all different types of civil society actors within a country. The CSI takes into account that the sphere of civil society is flexible. Some organisations might be both profit- and value-based, or politically rooted while promoting social activities. For instance, the sphere of the family is generally considered separate from civil society, but it can reach into the CS arena through organised clan initiatives. The CSI distinguishes whether organisations are a part of civil society on the basis of function rather than form (Heinrich, 2004).

2.2 Civil society dimensions

This research draws on the four CSI dimensions used by the CIVICUS index (Malena & Heinrich, 2007, pp. 341–345).

1. Structure
2. Environment
3. Values
4. Impact

Structure refers to civil society's structure and composition. This dimension explores the size, organisation, importance and resources within the national arena. It assesses the main characteristics of the civil society actors and the relationships between each other. **Environment** entails the context in which CS actors operate: the external factors that impact the work of civil society actors. This means assessing political, judicial, social and economic dynamics within a

country. This dimension also pays attention to the relationships between CS and the state, market and family spheres. **Values** focus on the principles and values that are promoted by civil society actors. This dimension looks at how certain key values are enacted within CSOs, such as transparency, tolerance and democracy. **Impact** refers to the way CSOs affect people's lives and wider society. This last dimension can be divided into 5 sub-dimensions: influencing public policy; holding state and private corporations accountable; responding to social interests; empowering citizens; and meeting social needs. Each of the four dimensions contains a wide range of indicators.

The current study focuses on CSI dimensions specifically related to the CSOs and their impact areas. The study relates to previous evaluation rounds in the MFSII evaluation, which do not include other civil society actors such as government and private sectors. Although this selection does not provide a complete oversight of all civil society arenas in Liberia and Sierra Leone, it does provide an idea of how the CSOs operated and what they achieved in recent years.

Drawing from the MFSII Civil Society Liberia Baseline study (Wageningen University and Research Centre, 2013) this study focuses on the following elements within the CSI:

- External Environment (within CSI dimension 'environment')

External environment pays attention to contextual factors unfolding within society relating to social, economic, political and cultural conditions. Changes in these factors have an impact on how civil society operate and prioritise.

- Perception of Impact (within CSI dimension 'impact')

Perception of impact reflects notions of how citizen interests and engagement have led to changes within the arena, such as building constructive relations with public and private actors, and policy influencing.

- Civic Engagement (within CSI dimension 'structure')

Civic engagement refers to the ways in which citizens engage with public and common interests within the civil society arena. Engagement can be on a structural or individual level. The priorities of CSOs are often to further the common interests of citizens they represent. This element explores how CSOs have done that.

- Level of Organisation (within CSI dimension 'structure')

Level of organisation explores how CSOs maintain and strengthen capacities in order to represent the interests of their beneficiaries and stakeholders. This includes relations and partnerships with other CS actors in society such as public and private actors.

- Practice of Values (within CSI dimension 'values')

Practice of values relates to how an organisation works with defined (often considered to be universal) norms and motivations such as human rights, democracy, accountability, social justice and equality, and how these are implemented within an organisation. It also assesses how an organisation aligns these values to public and cultural ideas of norms and values.

3. Methods

3.1 Civil society organisation selection

For Liberia, CSOs were selected on the basis of their participation in previous data collection rounds conducted by the Wageningen University in Liberia throughout 2012, 2013 and 2014¹. These studies provided the opportunity to observe how change processes have been taking place since 2013. For Sierra Leone, no such previous baselines were available. The Sierra Leonean organisations were selected on the basis of an expressed interest to understand civil society action during the Ebola outbreak and learn from this episode. All CSOs in this research engaged in a range of different humanitarian and development activities, but adapted their actions during the time of the Ebola outbreak².

The following organisations were visited:

Liberia

- Business Start-up Centre Monrovia (BSC)
- Development Education Network - Liberia (DEN-L)
- National Women's Commission for Liberia (NAWOCOL)
- Rural Human Rights Activist Programme (RHRAP)
- Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI)

Sierra Leone:

- Social Mobilisation Action Consortium (SMAC), represented by:
 - o GOAL Sierra Leone (GSL)
 - o Restless Development
 - o FOCUS1000
- Welthungerhilfe Sierra Leone (WHH)

Data collection took place during two country visits. The first two workshops were conducted in Liberia between 20th and 24th July 2015. The second field visit comprised of a two-week visit to Liberia and Sierra Leone between 8th and 22nd of November 2015. The research focused on trends in civil society and the perceived responses of other actors in civil society such as government, international development community, business and local community structures. Specific organisations were asked how they adapted to this changed environment in terms of perceived impact, funding, networks and relations with beneficiaries.

The study consisted of **two components**: a brainstorm reflection session with CSO staff, and interviews with staff members. The workshop drew from the CSI themes introduced in the previous section. The interviews focused specifically on the CSI themes 'Level of Organisation' and 'Practice of Values'. Since these two aspects stress internal organisation dynamics, these were approached through the 5 Capabilities methodology (5C), explained in Section 3.3.

¹ In 2013 a baseline was conducted on the topic of 'civil society strengthening' (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013), and in 2012 and 2014 two 'organisational capacity assessments' were performed at these four organisations (WUR Centre for Development Innovation, 2015). The latest study was done just prior to the intensified spread of the Ebola epidemic after July 2014.

² It should be noted that though GOAL SL and Welthungerhilfe are CSOs, they are also international NGOs which makes them somewhat different from the Liberian CSOs researched.

3.2 Brainstorm sessions and document analysis

Workshops with CSO staff, including management, programme staff and field staff consisted of a reflection session and individual structured interviews.³

- 1) Through discussion and debate based on elements of 'External Environment', 'Civic Engagement', and 'Perception of Impact' (drawn from the CIVICUS Civil Society Index), the workshop explored the following elements:
 - a. Trends in civil society in Liberia (generally, but most specifically during and after the Ebola epidemic)
 - b. Relations with other civil society actors such as government, international development organisations, private sector and beneficiaries
 - c. Coping strategies of organisations
 - d. The influence of the CSO on the civil society arena
- 2) The subsequent structured interviews focused on how the organisation adapted to civil society dynamics within the organisation. The review of organisational capacity indicators drawn from the 5C methodology complemented the workshop discussion with more specific information.
- 3) Document analysis was done on the basis of organisational documents and, for Liberia, previous MFSII evaluation studies. This complemented the brainstorm session.

3.3 5 Capabilities methodology

The 5 capabilities (5C) approach was used specifically to address the dimensions of 'Level of Organisation' and 'Practice of Values'. The 5C framework is valuable because of the way the CSI dimensions relate to the way CSOs are capacitated (what they aim for, and how they work to achieve this) (ECDPM, 2011). Capacity covers the overall ability of an organisation to create value for others. Capabilities contribute to organisational capacity, and are defined as: "the collective ability of a group or a system to do something either inside or outside the system" (ECDPM, 2011, p. 13). A combination of five overlapping capabilities allows an organisation to create social value.

Four of the Liberian CSOs were assessed in a similar way in 2014. The MFSII Liberia Capacity Assessment Endline used 33 indicators to address organisational capacity change (WUR Centre for Development Innovation, 2015). Since detailed information from 2014 is available it was useful to make a 'before - after' comparison, while paying specific attention to the Ebola outbreak in Liberia. The 5C indicators were used as a basis for the organisational questionnaires. The questionnaires include questions on how these indicators had changed since 2014, whether this was a positive or negative trend, and what factors, events or other happenings led to change.⁴

3.4 Methodological reflections

Few caveats need to be mentioned. First, Heinrich (2004, pp. 16–17) warns that "civil society definitions that focus on organisations fail to account for such informal and ephemeral forms of collective action". This is not a study of 'the state of civil society' in Liberia or Sierra Leone as the CIVICUS CSI generally studies. This research attempts to take a snapshot glance at a number of organisations functioning within the CS context. It attempts to see how they have *acted within*, and

³ Unfortunately, it was not possible to conduct brainstorm sessions with all CSOs. In Sierra Leone, GOAL, Restless Development and FOCUS1000 were not able provide enough staff to participate in 1-day workshops within the research period. See Section 3.4 for further elaboration.

⁴ Please refer to Annex 1 for the full questionnaire

in what way they *contributed* to, the arena of civil society during the past 2 years. The CSOs approached here are mostly considered 'non-governmental organisations' (NGOs). Carothers and Barndt (2000) noted that NGOs are often seen as the core of civil society, when in fact civil society consists of multiple 'interest groups'. Civil society can also be composed of community-based, faith-based, labour-based organisations. Though NGOs play an important role, the risk is that they can be dominated by professional elites and might not have a solid basis in national society due to external funding and agenda setting.⁵

The organisations that were addressed during this research included five Liberian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) supported by Dutch development funds. These organisations were chosen due to the fact that they received Dutch funding support, focused on strengthening other forms of civil society in Liberia, and participated in various evaluation and learning processes. Since the Civil society sample for this study is based on previous CSO selections by Dutch implementing agencies no specific other organisations such as religious, labour or political interest groups were taken into account.

Secondly, the criteria of a precise evaluation could not be followed to the full extent. This research departed from evaluation research conducted on behalf of Dutch MFSII funding. However, the current research took a more exploratory and reflective perspective due to the articulated interest in the Ebola outbreak. In addition, a number of practical factors made it difficult to conduct a precise evaluation. The Liberian organisations were highly preoccupied with the aftermath of the Ebola outbreak, funding from Dutch organisations had ceased in 4 out of 5 CSOs in Liberia, and many of the Liberian and Sierra Leonean CSOs stated that they had limited time to cooperate in the research. Not all organisations were able to participate in the collective workshop during the field visits. This gap in data collection was mitigated by adding additional questions to the interviews and through document analysis.

A final general reflective note is that this research is largely perception-based. Though information was triangulated using document review and separate interview groups, it is based on the interpretations of CSO staff members. This means that it is difficult to assess the proof of statements. Although these insights may not be simply extrapolated to general conclusions, the perspectives do give an insight of certain experiences and events within the civil society context of Liberia and Sierra Leone.

⁵ This will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

4. Liberia and Sierra Leone

4.1 Liberia

4.1.1 Context

Liberia is still in the process of restoration and reconciliation after the civil war that raged between 1989 and 2003. Though the country has remained relatively stable, many challenges lie ahead. Many structural drivers of conflict continue, such as political and economic power in the hands of a small elite, strong patronage networks, wide-scale corruption, and high unemployment levels (Search for Common Ground Liberia, 2014). In the past decade, much international support has been given to Liberia. This has taken the form of military presence (the United Nations Mission in Liberia, UNMIL), budgetary support and many international development interventions. Pajibo (2012) states that the dependency on international initiatives is still very high, especially in the areas of government budget support and with UNMIL overseeing security matters until 2017. Solà-Martín (2011) writes that although the country has managed to achieve a certain degree of stability, it has failed to change its economic model of 'growth without development' that characterised the Liberian economy before the civil war. The Liberian economy is highly dependent on the natural resources sector, especially the export of iron, diamonds, timber, rubber and palm oil. Solà-Martín argues that key underlying 'development fundamentals' need to be addressed urgently. These include the sustainable development of the agricultural sector, fair management of natural resources and the creation of essential services. Under current circumstances, the wealth of the country will remain in the hands of a small elite while underlying conflict drivers remain unattended (Solà-Martín, 2011). For instance, the agricultural sector is said to provide for 70% of Liberian household income. Yet, yields for Liberian farmers have not improved significantly since the 1980s. Unemployment, or underemployment, is extremely high, as close to 85% of Liberian people do not have access to formal employment (Hettinger & James, 2014).

4.1.2 Civil society in Liberia

By the end of the war, many Liberian CSOs were actively engaging with the peace process in Accra in 2003. In the process of establishing a democratic political system, development of civil society has slowly expanded. This development has been steady, but challenges remain. In 2007, a civil society study by Search for Common Ground revealed key issues related to leadership, organisational development and funding (McKeown & Mulbah, 2007). Most funding and capacity is concentrated in Monrovia, promoted by international donors that are based there as well. Strategic future attention areas were noted to be: leadership, participation of marginalised groups such as women and youth, the creation of stronger membership-based organisations, and the development of stronger civil society networks to articulate views (McKeown & Mulbah, 2007).

A 2014 Civil Society Rapid Assessment report showed that the Liberian government has made various steps to instate and reform laws to tackle structural challenges in Liberia (Search for Common Ground Liberia, 2014). The institution of diverse reform commissions (such as the Liberian Anti-Corruption Commission and the Constitutional Review Committee), ongoing security sector reform and the passing of new laws (such as the Freedom of Information Act) show that progress is being made. These developments have given space to CSOs. Key challenges for the civil society arena are:

- A split between Monrovia and the rest of Liberia
- High vulnerability to funding streams (especially among Monrovia-based CSOs)
- Limited capacity of CSOs
- Information technology challenges
- Public infrastructure

Regarding the first challenge: Monrovia-based CSOs have access the most skilled professionals, more funding, and better programme implementation capacity compared to CSOs in the rest of

Liberia (Search for Common Ground Liberia, 2014). The second challenge shows that Liberia is a country with a highly competitive NGO-sector. Many organisations that were established after the Liberian civil war with support of the international community compete with each other for donor support and programme finances. Many CSOs can be considered as NGOs, which give a high priority to finding funds to exist as institutions. Many of these CSOs do not have the chance to develop long-term perspectives and are dependent on short-term projects (Holmberg, Yengbeh, Christoplos, & Rothman, 2013). The third challenge refers to the fact that many CSOs encounter issues with lack of reporting and programme management skills, monitoring and evaluation systems, and information technology proficiencies (Search for Common Ground Liberia, 2014). According to a SIDA evaluation, more attention is needed for capacity building for CSOs, and CSOs need more long- and medium-term support (Holmberg et al., 2013).

The fourth challenge relates to lack of access to information technology and communication means, including unreliable electricity and internet connections. This makes it difficult to report on progress and issues on the ground. The fifth challenge shows that public infrastructure is still being reconstructed. Though some roads have improved, mostly around the capital, reaching rural counties remains a time-consuming and demanding task.

In addition to these challenges, the steady withdrawal of multi-year funding schemes since 2012 has been affecting many Liberian CSOs. In the last few years the status of Liberia as a post-conflict / fragile context was re-evaluated by many large international organisations. Especially those with a mandate for post-conflict aid and reconstruction were reassessing their purpose, some announcing withdrawal at the end of their current multi-year programmes. This has affected some of the CSOs included in this study.

4.2 Sierra Leone

4.2.1 Context

Sierra Leone has been slowly transitioning towards a stable political system and economic development after the end of the civil conflict between 1998 and 2003. Since the independence from British rule in 1961, the country has had its share of political turmoil, including six elections and five coups d'état (ACAPS, 2014). However, the first independently organised Sierra Leonean elections of 2012 were deemed relatively fair and peaceful (BCC News, 2015). The Sierra Leonean economy largely depends on export of raw resources, and was heavily affected by the global financial crisis in 2009. The key industries include diamond, iron ore, rutile and bauxite mining, but also cocoa and coffee (ACAPS, 2014). The country is highly dependent on foreign development funding: up to 50% of investment programmes is from international sources. Key factors that affect national development are related to an unchanged economic system which includes smallholder agriculture as the main sector for household income, gender and education challenges, poor infrastructure and a small business sector. Unemployment is high, with around 70% of young people either underemployed or unemployed (UNDP, 2015).

4.2.2 Civil society in Sierra Leone

Civil society in Sierra Leone has grown significantly since the end of the civil war in 2002. Sierra Leone hosts four different types of CSOs (Campaign for Good Governance, 2014). These are 1) non-profit, membership-based professional bodies; 2) not-for profit service delivery and development organisations; 3) Civic organisations seeking to promote good governance and increased citizen rights representation; and 4) mutual benefit organisations seeking welfare benefits for their members.

Regarding institutional leadership broad progress has been made to improve accountability and guidelines in many CSOs, especially service and development oriented organisations. However, challenges relate to lack of oversight of Boards and supervisory bodies. Factors that can contribute

to this are not only internal, as there is a lack of government and international donor regulatory frameworks. The resource base of CSOs in Sierra Leone is generally weak. Member-based professional bodies and mutual benefit organisations tend to have a measure of income security through membership dues and fundraising activities. Service and development organisations and CSOs are highly dependent on international sources of funding. Currently, many service delivery and development CSOs have had to close due to lack of funding. Networking and collaboration among CSOs is generally low between different CSOs. CSOs mostly engage with each other if there is a potential to share funding. Networks and coalitions are largely unable to meet expectations of training, resource sharing and collective fundraising. On many fronts there is a duplication of mandates and memberships. Network-based advocacy is affected by this. For example: many networks depend on radio and newspapers to share information with the public, and research in support of advocacy initiatives is rarely done.

In order to address the high future expectations of Sierra Leonean civil society, internal governance building and programme management capacities of CSOs need attention. Donors and government need to pay more attention to financial sustainability of CSOs, through supporting alternative revenue-sourcing, accountability, and developing clear regulative frameworks (Campaign for Good Governance, 2014).



Figure 1: Map of Liberia and Sierra Leone⁶

⁶ Source: Accord (2012)

4.3 The Ebola epidemic

The Ebola epidemic between July 2014 and November 2015 caused a national emergency that highly impacted all layers of Liberian and Sierra Leonean societies. The response and further prevention demanded huge efforts and different approaches. Actors in civil society contributed in multifaceted ways, through flexible adaptation and cooperation. In some cases the outbreak offered opportunities and lessons which are valuable for future emergency and development scenarios.

When the Ebola emergency hit Guinea in March 2014 it quickly crossed the porous borders into Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Ebola virus spread quickly during the months between June and September 2014, setting in motion national states of emergency and sparking an international response to contain the epidemic. By 20 March 2015, a year later, most of the EVD cases were declining but more than 24,000 people were infected and more than 10,000 casualties were counted (McCandless & Bouchet, 2015). Liberia was declared Ebola-free two times in May, and in September. However, by the end of November 2015 new cases resurfaced. As of November 2015, Sierra Leone was declared free of Ebola. In Guinea no new cases have surfaced since 16th of November and is hoping to be declared Ebola-free after 42 days (BBC News, 2015). In total, the registered cases of Ebola in the region numbered up to 28,598, with as many as 11,299 deadly casualties (WHO, 2015b).

4.3.1 Liberia

The Ebola virus entered Liberia between April 2014 and May 2015. Its initial discovery in Nimba and Lofa Counties in April 2014 was seen as a frightening development. However, in the first months hardly any new cases surfaced, leading to a decrease in media attention, interpretations that the spread had stabilised and slow government action. By the end of June it became clear that the virus had spread unchecked and uncontrolled to the main capital and various other counties. By August 2015, 15 out of 16 counties reported Ebola cases. Confusion and fear ensued in Monrovia while the Liberian government, UN, WHO and international organisations sought to organise a response. The World Health Organisation (WHO) reported that in the initial period of calm between April and the end of June the virus was simmering under the radar, giving the virus a head-start. A detrimental factor that contributed to difficulties to address the sickness was that many victims were doctors and medical staff. In August the President declared a state of emergency. This included the closing of markets, curfews and banning large social gatherings in the name of national security. In a controversial series of events the Monrovia West Point slum area was quarantined for two weeks by Liberian military, leading to widespread (international) concern over the harsh measures imposed by the Liberian government (Time Magazine, 2015).

Gradually, international support arrived in Liberia in the form of international community materials and expertise, including the deployment of US military and health squads. By December, the number of cases decreased in Monrovia and in rural communities. The WHO reflected that the combination of improved case reporting and awareness raising, increased technical capacity, community engagement and strong leadership were key in the Ebola response (WHO, 2015d).

4.3.2 Sierra Leone

In Sierra Leone, the epidemic began slowly, leading to an increased number of cases in May and June 2014 in the hot spot areas of Kailahun and Kenema, in the south east of Sierra Leone. In June a state of emergency was declared in this area. In a short period of time in July a large amount of cases and deaths occurred, among which many health workers (WHO, 2015a). In August the WHO asked the international community for support to deal with the epidemic. At this time, health care professionals in the hotspot areas lost confidence due to dangerous working conditions and unpaid salaries. Gradually community-based solutions were found to temporarily isolate potential Ebola patients from infecting other community members. Isolation tents were provided to community members while they waited for their diagnosis.

Unfortunately, the Ebola virus was not contained in Sierra Leone. Following cases reported all over the country, a national emergency was declared in August. In September the Ebola outbreak spread to the capital of Freetown and nearby districts. The number of cases exploded rapidly, with a major lack of capacity in health facilities, beds and logistics. The international response got under way as the United Kingdom, World Food Programme and UNICEF gradually expanded health service capacity and brought provisions to Ebola-affected communities. Mobile community care centres were set up and manned by community volunteers and local nurses under supervision of experienced staff from Kenema. The Sierra Leonean government organised the Western Area Surge operation in December 2014. This operation raised awareness about Ebola and attempted to restore the public's confidence in the government response. The operation was preceded by a large scale malaria campaign. During this time increased attention was paid to mobilising communities, by engaging traditional leaders, healers and religious leaders, and by training community volunteers (WHO, 2015a). Gradually the emergence of new cases went down, and concentration was on a few key districts. After a long period in which only few new cases popped up, on the 7th of November 2015 Sierra Leone was declared Ebola-free (The Guardian, 2015b).

4.3.3 Impact of Ebola in Liberia and Sierra Leone

The EVD outbreak has had a wide range of impacts in both countries. Peace and state-building initiatives have been put under pressure. The Ebola crisis put government institutions in Liberia and Sierra Leone to the test and revealed that they were hardly able to respond to the crisis. Especially health and basic service systems turned out to be weak. State-society relations were shown to be brittle, as lack of coordination and communication reinforced feelings of distrust and disbelief (McCandless & Bouchet, 2015).

Economic development suffered in both Liberia and Sierra Leone. In many senses, the Ebola outbreak intensified the key economic challenges that both countries face: weak national businesses, low levels of financing, and poor governance of companies. According to estimates of the World Bank economic growth in Sierra Leone has slowed heavily in 2014 as international export decreased (Davis, 2015). This also means that financial capital of businesses is low. Unemployment and underemployment has risen. In both countries, emergency measures such as travel restrictions, evening curfews and bans on public gatherings highly affected businesses. The agricultural sector was affected due to the difficulties farmers had to mobilise labour and sell produce on markets. However, most negative outcomes were largely due to the emergency restrictions. Some studies have found that farmers have been able to cope and set up for the 2016 harvest. The mining industry suffered set-backs, but Ebola might not have been the main contributing reason for that. Low global iron ore prices since 2013 have led the industry to contract, leading to loss of tax revenue for both Sierra Leonean and Liberian governments (Davis, 2015).

Due to the Ebola epidemic people sought healthcare less due to less trust and perceived inability of health facilities to cure Ebola. This affected not only Ebola patients but also patients suffering from common, well-treatable diseases such as malaria and cholera. The death of many health workers also has a future negative impact as the healthcare systems need to be rebuilt. Schools and universities were closed for a long time, leading to set-backs in education goals and challenges getting children back to school. The Ebola outbreak has left behind many orphans and families without breadwinners. Ebola survivors will need much support in the future due to stigma and limited means (United Nations Development Programme, 2015).

Both in Liberia and Sierra Leone governments did not have the capacity to act fast in the beginning of the outbreak. In Liberia it was said that the international community, led by UNMEER and the WHO, largely took charge of the response during the height of the outbreaks. Eventually, in both countries Ebola taskforces and response pillars were set up under the ministries of health which managed to structure the response more thoroughly. Initially, CSOs were hardly involved in these taskforces, which might have lessened their reach and effectiveness. Communities were only actively involved much later. A key lesson drawn in both countries was that the involvement of a

wide range of actors, including communities and CSOs was instrumental in durably stopping the epidemic (McCandless & Bouchet, 2015).

5. Results

This section presents the results from workshops with a cross-section of CSOs working in Liberia and Sierra Leone.⁷ The workshops aimed to reveal how the selected CSOs are working towards a wide range of societal goals, what common interests are, and how they have been affected by the Ebola outbreak. This study neither gives an overview of civil society as a whole in these countries, nor does it necessarily evaluate the efforts of the respective organisations throughout the past years. The analysis shows that CSOs have tried to make the best out of the situation and tried to do what they could to contribute. It also shows that the Ebola outbreak and the emergency measures that followed adversely affected the external environment to different degrees, and reveals the impact areas and the internal organisational structure of the visited CSOs. In some cases, the Ebola outbreak offered opportunities for organisations.

The table on the next page presents an overview of the changes and responses per CSO. Short descriptions per CSO are divided into the categories 'Environment', 'Engagement' and 'Organisation'. These three categories capture the main sub-questions, and are drawn from exploration of the five CSI dimensions presented in the methodology. The Environment column captures 'external environment'. The engagement column captures 'Civic Engagement' and 'Perception of Impact' findings. The organisation column collects findings from CSI 'Level of Organisation' and 'Practice of Values' themes.

⁷ Full CSO cases are presented in Annexes 2-8.

Overview table: Key changes from the perspective of CSOs

	CSO		
	Environment	Engagement	Organisation
Business Start-up Center (BSC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General Liberian business environment slightly improved in the last few years - The most important challenges remain related to governance, infrastructure, entrepreneur capacity and access to finance - Liberian small and medium sized businesses were affected by Ebola: many had to close temporarily. Some could not reopen - BSC saw the Ebola outbreak as a heavy challenge, but also used international attention to broadcast business possibilities in Liberia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BSC contributed to the business environment by linking international businesses to Liberian entrepreneurs and vice versa - Contributed to Liberian commercial policy development - Had difficulty organising trainings and coaching for youth and entrepreneurs during the height of Ebola. Mostly due to emergency measures - Linked up four entrepreneurs to the UNMEEER emergency response to fulfil private contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explores new models for training young entrepreneurs based on interests of youth and perceived potential in the Liberian market - Faces recurrent difficulties with Business Plan Competition winners unable to repay loans - Closed doors temporarily during the height of the outbreak - High priority on organisational sustainability. A few new partnerships and programmes seem concrete
Development Education Network Liberia (DEN-L)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very slight improvements regarding women participation in national political processes, women economic empowerment in Bong County communities - During Ebola, it was impossible to conduct farmer trainings and other community gatherings due to changed community priorities and the Liberian state of emergency - A national assembly organised by DEN-L together with the Ministry of Gender on women's rights and political participation was cancelled due to the Ebola outbreak and the state of emergency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DEN-L has a range of programmes involving training and education: women empowerment programmes, community organisation development, education development and agricultural interventions - Projects were suspended during the outbreak. Partners like IREX reoriented projects to Ebola sensitization - During the Ebola crisis DEN-L worked as the representative of CSOs of Bong County as part of the County Ebola Taskforce - Got involved with Ebola social mobilisation with local community partners - Currently concerned with accountability of Ebola funds: if CSOs cannot account for Ebola funds - how can they ask the government to be accountable? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has been dealing with a lack of core programme funding by developing a different strategy since 2013 - Used to be mainly active in Bong and Lofa Counties. Now, all over Liberia on a wide range of training, facilitation and mediation topics - Miriam T. O'Brien training centre closed for a long time in 2014. This limited organisational capacity, trainings and income generation - 'Non-essential staff' sent home during the height of the Ebola due to lack of projects and closure of centre. Ongoing concerns of staff about job security in 2016
NAWOCOL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The state of women's rights, empowerment and political participation is in poor condition in Liberia. Civil society reports indicate that attention to gender mainstreaming and sexual reproductive health rights is very low, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NAWOCOL worked on ICCO women business empowerment and school peace clubs in Margibi County - Worked on SGBV/HIV/Aids awareness for African Women Development Fund - Due to concerns of the target groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Affected by loss of network function as representative of women CBOs for a long time - Closed doors temporarily during the height of the outbreak - Reorienting towards programme

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - even among CSOs - Ebola had a wide range of consequences for Liberian women: difficulty to access healthcare, difficulty to sell due to the closure of markets, fewer transport possibilities - The Ebola outbreak made it very difficult to visit programme locations for training 	<p>NAWOCOL reoriented funds from projects, and a Ministry of Health subsidy to distribute health-related materials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attended National Ebola Taskforce information sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - implementation strategy focused on women empowerment in a broad range of areas - Experienced increased operational difficulties due to departure of programme manager, lack of funding and reconstruction of office
RHRAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Taskforce on Ebola was started by July 2014 to allow coordination and sharing of information during the response - Liberian CSOs decided to contribute to the effort to raise awareness on Ebola and Ebola prevention due to widespread misinformation and lack of trust in government messages - International donors initiated networks and coalitions: ECAP, CSO taskforce - Human rights CSOs generally supported the state of emergency imposed by the government - In cases like in the West Point slum quarantine, CSOs protested against the policy measure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Human rights-based organisation working on issues related to human rights, peace building and accountability of governance - Worked with Community Action Committees in Bong and Gbarpolu counties on the criminal justice sector and peace mediation - Became a sub-implementer for the ECAP in Gbarpolu County to be involved in Ebola social mobilisation - Government sharing of the message of Ebola was met with distrust; communities were more likely to believe CSOs - Community Action Committees were organized as a structure to share Ebola information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The organisation was having trouble in 2014: the withdrawal of key long-term funders led to a decrease in projects and many staff were working as volunteers - The Ebola outbreak proved an impuse for the organisation: international partners turned to national partners they knew to implement Ebola response fast - The strategy of RHRAP has increasingly widened to not only focus on human rights and advocacy, but also natural resource governance and sustainable livelihoods - Now, RHRAP is working on accountability projects in the Liberian oil sector, concessionary community rights, and livelihood support in Ebola affected communities. More activities are taking place in Gbarpolu County
SDI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Key issues that affect the natural resource governance sector are non-implementation of laws, high unemployment among Liberian citizens; the difficulty of being critical about Liberian growth policy - The case of oil palm company Golden Veroleum Liberia (GVL) showed that major concessionaires have not stopped operations during the Ebola outbreak, or even used it to their benefit - The signing of GVL MoUs with four communities to get access to land happened late 2014, and CSOs stated that free prior informed consent was neglected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SDI has been a key natural resource governance civil society organisation in Liberia since 2002 - SDI has been successfully combining empirical research to advocacy initiatives and public awareness creation. A key example was the contribution to the development of the Liberian Land Rights Policy - Formed the Community Awareness Support Team (CAST) together with partners FCI, SEDDev and SAMFU to provide Ebola prevention materials to communities in two remote counties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Office closed temporarily during the Ebola outbreak, time-shifts were introduced to minimise amount of people present - A number of expatriate staff went home. This impacted organisational capacity for research and advocacy - Core funders have restarted programmes and new partners are coming in - GVL coalition started with SDI to closely monitor and mediate the GVL case

Sierra Leone

<p>SMAC</p> <p><i>GOAL Sierra Leone (GSL)</i></p> <p><i>Restless Development</i></p> <p><i>FOCUS1000</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A number of issues limited national Ebola response: an initially uncoordinated and 'military' government response; a fragile healthcare system leading to many deaths among healthcare workers and distrust of people to use healthcare; lack of leadership, capacities and materials to organise a wide-scale response - The National Ebola Response Center (NERC) was structured with support of international actors, with subdivisions in districts (DERC) - Eventually, the concerted Ebola response and the links built with communities and local organisations could form the basis of increased trust in healthcare and basic service systems - Reorganisation of activities and personnel was necessary for many CSOs: some nationally based NGOs mobilised health workers, while others used volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There were setbacks on issues related to healthcare, sexual reproductive health and education due to less attention, fewer activities and the measures imposed by the Sierra Leone state of emergency - SMAC was established to respond to lack of awareness and prevention of Ebola in Sierra Leonean communities. It focused on collective action to do awareness raising and mobilisation - SMAC worked with the Social Mobilisation Pillar of the NERC - Each organisation in the SMAC contributed own expertise: - GOAL SL was well-positioned as a health sector-oriented INGO to lead SMAC - Restless Development saw the outbreak as a key moment for the youth of Sierra Leone to show worth and build capacity - FOCUS1000 combined research on health-related issues and links with religious leaders and traditional healers to collect information and convince communities to get involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Each organisation developed new capabilities: GOAL SL and Restless Development noted that the Community-Led Ebola Approach proved its worth; FOCUS1000 learned that the combination of research and community needs being addressed was valuable - SMAC organisations were bolstered in terms of funding. All organisations hired more community workers and volunteers - Increased networking and new partnerships are being built surrounding rallying points of preparedness, rapid response, and health as rallying points - SMAC members are currently contributing to the set-up of Rapid Response mechanisms under UNICEF
<p>WHH</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Sierra Leonean economy was affected by the Ebola outbreak - Agricultural production was affected. Some sectors more than others. Emergency measures such as quarantines had significant negative effect on agricultural production - Key groups supported by WHH experienced set-backs: many farmers had trouble accessing markets, credit, and labour to prepare agricultural land. - Many EVD-affected communities experienced food shortages due to imposed quarantine measures - The national response was highly uncoordinated in the beginning, with much duplication of efforts and lack of knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WHH has been working on a wide range of interventions to contribute to sustainable livelihoods. These include food security, agriculture, WASH, and natural resource management - A number of interventions related to agriculture, livelihood and WASH were stalled - Local partners such as RECTOUR had had to stop activities related to tourism promotion in the Western Area - WHH got involved within the NERC and the World Food Programme to provide food packages to quarantined Ebola communities - WHH contributed to the Social Mobilisation pillar of the National Ebola Response Center (NERC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WHH Sierra Leone was first led from Liberia, but operated more autonomously since 2014 - WHH Kenema office was closed temporarily due to the heavy incidence of Ebola in 2014 - WHH set in motion decentralisation which means more programmes will be under the responsibility of regional offices - Initially, WHH only worked in the south and east of Sierra Leone, but now intends to expand to the north and west of Sierra Leone as well, due to new experience in those areas - Capacities of local partners such as RECTOUR were built and were connected to new networks

6. Discussion

6.1 Challenges to the civil society organisation environment

- *Liberia and Sierra Leone are challenging environments to work in for CSOs (even before the Ebola crisis)*
- *The Ebola outbreak made this even more difficult - the effects of the EVD and the emergency measures needed to prevent it made it challenging for civil society actors to manoeuvre and achieve societal goals*

The Ebola outbreak has affected a diverse range of sectors and development areas. For instance, realising goals within natural resource governance, business development, and women empowerment was difficult. This was due to a variety of reasons: changed community priorities towards basic needs and healthcare, difficulty to access remote districts, and restrictions due to the states of emergency in both countries. These factors found expression in the stalling of activities and funding, temporary withdrawal of expatriate staff, and full focus on Ebola response and prevention. However, many of the underlying challenges that affect these development areas were present before the Ebola epidemic and will continue to remain so in the coming years.

Some development arenas incurred set-backs which will take time to counter. An example of this came up in discussions with the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI). During the Ebola epidemic the palm oil company Golden Veroleum Liberia continued to sign MoUs with local communities in Sinoe County to gain land access. SDI and partners stated that this was clear violation of the free, prior and informed consent protocol of the Round Table of Sustainable Palm Oil. This was compounded by the concern that this happened during the height of the Ebola outbreak, when CSOs were not present to help. Natural resource governance CSOs now set up a new coalition surrounding the GVL case. However, manoeuvring has become much more difficult after a long silence from the CSO side and due to polarised interests within communities. This case also showed that a number of large concessionary companies have carried on business as usual, even during the height of the epidemic.

- *The situation of lack of trust and effectiveness of states in relation to society was exemplified by the epidemic, exposing the fragile peace building situation that still characterizes the countries*

The case of West Point quarantine posed another interesting event in Liberia during the outbreak. Following the declaration of the state of emergency, public gatherings were banned and travel between counties was limited. CSOs involved in human rights supported the national response to end Ebola. However, the fragility of state-society relations became clear when Ebola patients in West Point slum escaped the health facility and disappeared. Concerned that the EVD would spread like wildfire the government quarantined the entire area – home to more than 50,000 people. The quarantine was enforced by the Armed Forces of Liberia. Demonstrations and unrest followed as food and medication ran out. The government was forced to lift the quarantine after international outrage. This precarious situation exemplified the uneasy relationship between Liberian citizens and their government. It also potentially placed the human rights CSOs in a difficult position since they supported the emergency state during the Ebola outbreak.

6.2 Ebola Responses

- *The Ebola outbreak formed a situation that required the contributions of not only government and international organisations - but all types of CSOs*

The Ebola response was of the first times that governments, international organisations and CSO actively contributed to a single cause. CSOs and NGOs had the potential to reach places where the government could not come. In Sierra Leone CSOs had trouble being recognised as valuable partners in the Ebola response. However, once they were involved, different approaches to reach communities in order to encourage knowledge and behaviour change were valued.

- *After the initially chaotic Ebola response, the systems that were set up seemed to be the first broad cooperative effort in which CSOs were seen as a valuable asset*

The cases of the Liberian organisations (with the exception of the BSC) showed that they engaged with the Ebola response in some form. DEN-L got involved in the Bong County Ebola Taskforce, as one of the representatives of CSOs of Bong County. In that capacity they engaged with their community-based partners to provide Ebola prevention materials and social mobilisation. RHRAP was approached by a former international funder to become part of the Mercy Corps USAID funded Ebola Community Action Platform (ECAP). This was a huge mobilisation programme to raise Ebola awareness in almost all Counties of Liberia. Due to connections and long presence in Gbarpolu County, a remote district, RHRAP was asked to raise awareness and provide information here. This was a positive contribution, especially since communities in this area were initially not reached by government agencies and did not trust the messages that reached them. RHRAP saw that community-members were more ready to accept the messages brought to them by CSOs, due to the perception that CSOs were more able to represent the interests and rights of the communities.

- *New partnerships were organised around the Ebola taskforces, not based on technical expertise, but on knowledge of intervention areas, relations with community stakeholders and diverse approaches*

New (temporary) partnerships were established during the Ebola epidemic. In Sierra Leone, the Social Mobilisation Action Consortium (SMAC) comprised of GOAL Sierra Leone, Restless Development, FOCUS1000 and BCC Media Action, is an example of such partnership. This coalition was funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). The strength of this coalition did not necessarily lay in the technical health expertise of organisations. Rather, the combination of knowledge of healthcare (and the surrounding social context), good connections with communities all over Sierra Leone, and a clear commitment to a grassroots approach made it possible to mobilise communities in order to stop the spread of EVD. The organisation Restless Development showed that the young community volunteers already in place in districts all over Sierra Leone could be mobilised quickly to spread awareness and provide information to the Ebola coordination structures. FOCUS1000 mobilised the relations with religious leaders and traditional healers to contribute to Ebola awareness and refer cases to health facilities.

Another temporary cooperation was the Community Awareness and Support Team (CAST) including SDI, FCI, SESDev and SAMFU in Liberia. This cooperation was set up with individual and partner donations to prevent the spread of Ebola in Grand Bassa and River Cess Counties. This was not necessarily within the expertise of the CAST CSOs. However, it allowed these natural resource governance organisations to contribute to the urgent needs of communities, while maintaining relations and creating goodwill among concessionary communities. After the end of the Ebola outbreak, this initiative ended and organisations returned to their original goals.

- *Increased recognition that communities need to be strongly involved and motivated to contribute to the Ebola response and prevention, now and in the future.*

It was increasingly recognised that communities needed to be involved and motivated to find their own solutions to the epidemic. The Community-Led Ebola Approach developed by SMAC partners was an example of how community engagement can be both participatory, socially oriented and offer clear advantages in breaking the chain of infection. These types of approaches and issue-based coalitions might prove a key learning point for the future. Using common rallying points,

based on community needs and goals, collectives of CSOs can jointly approach the issue from different perspectives.

6.3 Organisational changes

- *Already existing challenges in terms of organisational capacity, leadership, sources of funding and constituent bases*
- *Lack of network building and strong coalition cooperation*
- *Sustainability and institutional survival is a constant concern for CSOs*

The case studies underline the delicate state of Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil society and the key challenges CSOs face. Previous civil society studies in Liberia and Sierra Leone highlight the challenges regarding organisational capacity, leadership, sources of funding and lack of strong constituent bases. Lack of network building and actively operating coalitions is a further constraint (Campaign for Good Governance, 2014; McKeown & Mulbah, 2007; Search for Common Ground Liberia, 2014). Many of these challenges apply to Liberian and Sierra Leonean service delivery/development sector CSOs, including the CSOs in the current study. Sustainability and institutional existence are a concern for many of the CSOs researched. These challenges will remain highly relevant as a changing development context, changing funding priorities and future trends will highly affect the work of these CSOs in the future.

During the Ebola epidemic the CSOs experienced a number of organisational changes. Most of these changes affected the way the organisation operated and the themes they operated on. For many of the Liberian organisations these changes had underlying causes from before the epidemic. DEN-L, RHRAP and NAWOCOL were highly dependent on large multi-year programmes from donors they had a long standing relationship with. In 2014 these organisations experienced trouble in finding replacement funding for the following years. As such, each organisation sought its own solutions to secure organisational sustainability as well as to maintain their relations with their beneficiaries. DEN-L sought to widen its operational reach by venturing out of their base in Bong County, while simultaneously seeking a wider portfolio of short-term projects to maintain staff capacity. RHRAP engaged in similar strategies. The rewriting of new strategic plans includes a widening of organisational scope to address a number of challenges that the organisation had not engaged in before. Many organisations reinterpreted their mission to allow them to work on Ebola response.

The challenges of CSOs, including organisational capacity, infrastructure, constituent bases and financial sustainability will likely persist in the near future. Lack of strong coalition building on solid bases continues to splinter Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil society, meaning that limited capacity to challenge government, formulate broad advocacy statements and durably connect with citizen interests will remain. However, the Ebola epidemic has demonstrated the need and the potential for increased cooperation, sharing of perspectives and combining of approaches. Some of the successful collaborations that occurred within the civil society arena, which included state, private and civil actors and most importantly also households, show much promise to build on.

- *There is a need to develop stronger operational procedures in terms of health and safety in times of emergency*

All organisations mentioned the need for stronger Standard Operating Procedures and emergency safety measures. The level of discussion differed: WHH talked about further decentralisation of programme management. DEN-L and SDI talked about procedures and contracts containing 'force majeure' clauses. Overall, the CSOs agreed that the mainstreaming of health, safety issues need to be mainstreamed in future interventions.

- *Need for accountability was recognised by some. In order to hold others accountable, the CSOs need to be accountable, too*

Accountability of programmatic choices during the Ebola response was not brought up often. Only DEN-L spoke about this a number of times due to the experience they had with the Bong County Ebola Taskforce. The DEN-L example of the accountability of Ebola funds confirmed that CSOs should be accountable in order to be able to challenge corruption and accountability within the government. CSOs need to work on this issue in order to improve their operations, and pay additional attention to clear communication with coalition partners.

- *Some organisations saw the focus on Ebola as a temporary change due to the emergency, other organisations saw it as an opportunity to develop new focus areas and renew contacts with international partners and donors*
- *The Ebola outbreak diverted attention from programme and organisational concerns: many organisations received funding to do projects related to Ebola*

The CSOs showed extraordinary flexibility in using their expertise to contribute to Ebola responses. Practically, much more funds were available for Ebola response. However, some respondents noted that this incentive was interpreted in different ways, as some organisations 'marketed' their interventions as 'Ebola responses', changing their original goals. DEN-L and NAWOCOL recognized this pattern in the changing development context in Liberia, where many long-term core funders are withdrawing, and service delivery CSOs are moving from one short-term project to the next.

During the Ebola outbreak, many organisations stalled the projects they had and started focusing on Ebola response. They wanted to contribute to the national emergency and funding and international partners were concentrated on this. However, many organisations had limited capacity in terms of managing funds, knowledge about Ebola, and cooperation with new partners. Many small CSOs focused on the provision of Ebola prevention materials such as soap, buckets and chloride. The main advantage that the Liberian CSOs brought to the table was that they knew their working areas well and were trusted by communities there. Some organisations are continuing to build on this recognition. For instance, RHRAP intends to work more closely with post-Ebola livelihoods and intends to move operations closer to Gbarpolu County.

In Sierra Leone, the SMAC and WHH organisations were bolstered by the influx of Ebola response funding. GOAL SL and WHH, as internationally connected organisations, had access to institutional funding and well organised structures. Their background expertise in health care and food security made them well positioned to contribute to national Ebola response. For instance, GOAL SL Community health workers were deployed to focus on Ebola. Currently, both these organisations are planning post-Ebola interventions related Ebola survivor support, Rapid Response systems and resilience. Restless Development and FOCUS1000 said that their staff size as well as funding flows had doubled in the past years. This gave the organisations the opportunity to work in more areas, build more capacity for staff and realise new network partnerships.

- *Some organisations used the Ebola epidemic to underline the values of their constituents and to build on the opportunities that were there.*

The Ebola outbreak has also offered opportunities not related to direct response. The Business Start-up Centre had some trouble engaging with young entrepreneurs during the height of the Ebola outbreak. However, Liberia received much international publicity and the BSC and its partners tried to draw attention to business opportunities. Also, many international organisations were coming in for some form of Ebola response. The BSC saw potential business opportunities for four entrepreneurs they supported. Through coaching by the BSC these entrepreneurs prepared their bids and were able to win contracts. Examples are building of Ebola Treatment Centres and provision of health materials such as scrubs and medication.

In Sierra Leone, Restless Development saw this epidemic as a valuable way by which youth of Sierra Leone could demonstrate their worth. Due to the past conflict the high unemployment rates of youth are a key challenge in reconstruction and future development. Many young volunteers were mobilised all over the country. This enabled young people to build capacities and experiences while making a valuable contribution to society.

7. General conclusion

This research set out to explore the main question: *"How has the Ebola outbreak affected Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil society, and how have civil society organisations reacted and adapted to the Ebola outbreak?"* A number of Liberian and Sierra Leonean civil society organisations were approached to explore this subject. This research describes some of the changes, efforts and challenges these organisations have undergone. All organisations participated in a workshop and interviews based on CIVICUS Civil Society Index dimensions and 5 Capabilities methodology. This approach made it possible to address the external environment, manner of civic engagement, perception of impact and organisational capability changes. These cases were compared, when possible, to previous evaluation research and supplemented by organisational documentation.

Some general insights emerge. The Ebola virus epidemic has caused a huge change in the ways CSOs function in Liberia and Sierra Leone. The contexts of these countries already presented many challenges, i.e. related to governance, security, economic development and social cohesion. In this environment, governments, civil society actors and communities were unprepared to deal with this health crisis. The outbreak accentuated the issues that civil society actors engage with and stalled many interventions that sought to improve the situation of, for instance, natural resource governance, women's rights, economic and political development of communities and youth empowerment. Many organisations working on these topics incurred obstacles related to either the epidemic or the tough measures that were put in place in response to it. These measures, such as quarantines, travel limitations, and bans on public gatherings made social engagement very difficult. Examples are the quarantining of West Point neighbourhood in Monrovia, and the case of Golden Veroleum Liberia in Sinoe County.

Many of the civil society organisations in this research tried to find ways to adapt. Initially, this meant the stalling or closing down of projects and programmes. However, as the Ebola outbreak continued, many CSOs sought to either contribute or find ways to make the best of the situation. New initiatives with potential to be successful in the future emerged. For example, the Ebola taskforces in Liberia are seen as the first broadly organised initiatives in which the role for CSOs was fully recognised (instead of seen as a hindrance from government perspective). Also, new non-governmental partnerships were built to support national efforts. Examples were the SMAC coalition in Sierra Leone and the ECAP programme in Liberia. Intimate knowledge of geographical terrains, strong stakeholder relations and community-oriented approaches were recognized as important contributions in these partnerships. The SMAC coalition used the Community-led Ebola Approach to underline this importance.

For many organisations the Ebola meant a reorientation for funding and programmes. For some this was temporary, such as shown by SDI. Other organisations such as DEN-L and RHRAP have used the Ebola response as a potential resurgence to create new networks, reconnect with donors and broaden organisational strategy. The Ebola outbreak has led to organisational changes, especially when it comes to emergency precautions and safety manuals. Some organisations made use of the Ebola outbreak to grasp potential opportunities from it for their beneficiaries: The BSC promoted Liberia to the international business community and sought contracts in the Ebola response for its entrepreneurs. Restless Development saw the epidemic as a way for the young people of Sierra Leone to show their value towards the rest of society.

The Ebola outbreak underlined the significant challenges Liberia and Sierra Leone face. Civil society actors play a key role in addressing these challenges. While the Ebola outbreak has been a trying episode, lessons for the future can be learned. The versatility demonstrated by CSOs, strong cooperation between actors across civil society, and community-oriented approaches might prove essential components for the forthcoming development agenda.

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Annex 1: Civil Society Interview Format

The key goal of this workshop and interview is to collect information about how Liberian/Sierra Leonean civil society has changed due to the Ebola epidemic and how organisations have reacted to this situation. 'Civil society', as a concept, can be seen as "the arena, outside of the family, the state, and the market, which is created by individual and collective actions, organisations and institutions to advance shared interests".

The objectives to achieve the research goal are:

- 1) Assess the trends in broader Liberian/Sierra Leonean civil society to the situation of the Ebola Virus epidemic;
- 2) Record perceptions and interpretations of the impact of the Ebola epidemic on the (international/national) development community, government response and cooperation with civil society, local community structures;
- 3) Assess organisational changes following the Ebola epidemic

The following questionnaire is based on elements of the 5 core capabilities (5C) approach in order to address how organisations have adapted to the Ebola epidemic and its social, political and economic effects. The indicators selected are in line with two of the five dimensions under the CIVICUS Civil Society Index called 'Level of Organisation' and 'Practice of Values'.

This interview will take around 45 minutes. Please note that this information will be treated confidentially. Only the evaluation team will be able to see which respondent provided which answer. Any information that we will give back to the organisation will be compiled, and will not be related to individual respondents.

Before we start we would ask you some general questions.

Name of the organisation	
Date of interview	
Name and contact details	
Function/role in the organisation	

1. What do you consider some of the most important changes in Sierra Leonean civil society in the past year?
 - a. Can you give examples?
2. How is your organisation led, and has this **leadership** changed in the past year?⁸
 - a. Has this changed positively or negatively? Please tick one of the following scores:
 - -2 = Considerable deterioration
 - -1 = A slight deterioration
 - 0 = No change occurred, the situation is the same as last year
 - +1 = Slight improvement
 - +2 = Considerable improvement
 - b. Please describe what exactly has changed since last year (2014):

⁸ Each question carried the a, b, and c sub-questions. Questionnaire was shortened to fit in the Annex.

- c. What factors, actors and other events explain this change? Please tick and describe what interventions, actors or factors influenced this indicator, and explain how. You can tick and describe more than one choice.
- Factors, actors and other events at the level of or by SPO:
 - Factors, actors and other events at the level of or by funders:
 - Factors, actors and other events at the level of or by government or private actors:
 - Factors, actors and other events at the level of the beneficiaries:
 - Other factors, actors and other events:....
 - Don't know.
3. How has programme and field staff received guidance on important and changing issues in the past 2 years?
 4. Have you seen changes in **staff turnover** in your organisation? How have other civil society organisations experienced this?
 5. Where does your funding come from, and have these **funding sources** changed in the past year?
 6. Has the way you acquire **funding** changed? Has there been a different use of funds already received?
 7. Did your organisation engage in any **critical reflection** within the organisation or with other partners?
 8. How did your organisation **keep track of developments** in the operating environment?
 9. How did you **respond to demands from stakeholders**?
 10. Did **operational planning procedures** change in the past 2 years?
 11. Was there a change in **beneficiary needs** that you saw?
 12. Did stakeholder engagement in policies and strategies change? Was there a case where new stakeholder influenced a strategy change?
 13. Was there a change in the level of engagement of organisation in **networks, alliances and collaborative efforts**?
 14. Has your way of **engagement with Target Groups** changed in the past 2 years?
 15. Did your organisation **revise its vision and mission**?
 16. Are new **projects since last year aligned with your vision and mission**?

Annex 2: Business Start-up Centre Monrovia (BSC)

Introduction

The Business Start-up Centre Monrovia (BSC) is an organisation with the mission to contribute private sector development in Liberia. In order to reach this goal, the BSC develops and stimulates entrepreneurship in Liberia through training, empowerment of young Liberian students and entrepreneurs, and links small and medium-size businesses to finance and international businesses. The organisation is based in Monrovia and was established in 2011 with the support of SPARK, a Dutch international organisation focused on promoting entrepreneurship in conflict-affected settings. In the beginning of 2013 it was stated that the BSC was going to focus on small scale business, with special attention to agriculture and food-related businesses (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013, 2015). The programme was supported by Dutch development funding until 2015⁹. After that period the BSC strives to be independent, set out its own strategy and source its own funding.

The beneficiaries of the BSC are generally young Liberians: students, university graduates, and entrepreneurs who want to start a business or have just started a business. The BSC organises Business Plan Competitions each year, organises trainings and workshops, and coaches entrepreneurs in their business development. The operations of the BSC have been largely centred in Monrovia, the capital of Liberia, but the entrepreneurs are based all over the country. In 2013 and 2014, due to funding provided by Chevron, the BSC was able to establish three satellite offices in Gbarnga (Bong County), Buchanan (Grand Bassa County), and Harper (Maryland County). Through these offices it was possible to approach young entrepreneurs in these areas to provide training and select a number of them for business support.

External Environment

In the interviews with BSC staff members it came forward that quite a few changes have occurred within the Liberian business environment in the past four years. Since the Liberian civil war ended in 2003 the country has been slowly seeking to recover and reconstruct from the civil war. Most economic institutions and infrastructures were destroyed during that time, while many businesses closed operations.

BSC members stated that in the past years the business environment outlook is slightly better than in 2013. This related to the instatement of new laws stimulating small Liberian businesses, the attention that has been paid to the issue of youth employment, and the slightly increased efficiency of tax collection. With regard to the first issue: in December 2014 the government of Liberia passed the Small Business Empowerment Act. In this Act the government pledges to procure 25% of service and product contracts from Liberian micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). In the last example, the Liberian tax authority has been working with improved data-management software and allows businesses to fill in forms online.

There is still much to work on in the sector. Especially when it comes to the perspectives of young people in Liberia there has always been much concern. Liberian youth are often connected to their perceived role during the civil war, and idleness of youth is considered a security issue. According to BSC staff, this makes the efforts of the BSC even more essential. In 2014 there were youth demonstrations surrounding the President's pledge to provide jobs to young people. The young people felt that the Monrovia City Corporation youth employment programme was not delivering the sustainable and useful jobs they hoped for. In the recent MSME conference, organised by the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Youth and Sports, the theme was "From Vision to

⁹ The BSC is one of three organisations part of the United Entrepreneurship Coalition, organised by SPARK and BiD-Network. The other two organisations are the Association of Liberian Universities and the Liberian Better Business Fund. This coalition intended strengthen relevant local partners; facilitate entrepreneurship activity; and create and enabling environment for the private sector in Liberia.

Implementation, Buying Liberian, and Building Liberia" with a special focus on Youth Innovation for Economic Empowerment (Frontpage Africa, 2015). The BSC director stated that it is important to change the mindset of young people, since many university and high school graduates are keenly focused on getting jobs in the public sector. It is essential to redirect their energy and creativity towards developing their own businesses and creating their own jobs. When it comes to the engagement between international businesses and Liberian businesses some small steps are being made. The BSC director mentioned that currently a 'Local content policy' is being developed, which will require concessionary businesses to source and procure a certain level of goods and services from Liberian companies.

The Ebola outbreak affected many households and businesses in Liberia. A case study in Monrovia, Nimba and Lofa Counties by Mercy Corps found that in Liberia households had much less access to basic items and had less money at their disposal; markets were less well supplied due to border closure and transportation difficulties; and farmers had trouble to finish their planting and harvesting activities. For many households this led to food shortages, while many increased credit borrowing to finance basic needs. Imported goods coming in from the Monrovia Freeport increased in price (Mercy Corps, 2014).

The BSC members felt that this was a challenging period, especially since it also affected their own programmes and activities. The office was closed for a while during the height of the Ebola outbreak in August 2014. Later the office operated with a skeleton crew due to the announcement made by the Liberian government that all non-essential staff should stay at home. Many activities and trainings could not take place. However, the BSC staff said they still tried to work with many of their entrepreneurs from a distance. The BSC has tried to find ways to work on concrete issues within their own expertise. However, the lack of access to finance that many entrepreneurs have in Liberia is something that they cannot easily solve. The BSC and SPARK are careful in stating that they do not provide grants or loans, but staff perceived that often people come to visit their offices in search of financial grants without interest in training or coaching. This is tricky, especially went linked to the fact that BSC Business Plan Competition winners have trouble repaying their loans - even those who received them in the first rounds more than 3 years ago.

Civic Engagement

In 2013, young people and entrepreneurs the BSC represents were able to state their needs and they were informed about the issues the BSC was working on. The entrepreneurs they worked with become part of their network and are continuously informed about events and activities taking place (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013).

In 2013, BSC staff said that they had a score card by which the progress of business development was recorded and evaluated (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013). In 2014 this method was replaced by Salesforce software, since the scorecard did not seem to be working that well: there was a stronger need to monitor entrepreneur progress more accurately and continuously. This also related to the difficulty Liberian entrepreneurs had to repay loans and to invest in their business and the fact that Liberian banks were demanding that loans should be repaid faster (WUR Centre for Development Innovation, 2015). To assess the needs of entrepreneurs the BSC used training reflection forms which allowed training participants to give feedback on the training.

- Efforts during the Ebola outbreak

During the Ebola outbreak quite a number of businesses the BSC was working with had to pause or shut down activities. The business support went down to a minimum for a short time, and contact was mainly via phone calls and emails. When it came to trainings most activities were stopped, and did not pick up until the worst of the epidemic seemed over in February/March 2015. Entrepreneurs that needed help could call and ask questions, and they would receive some advice - but pro-active

coaching did not take place then. Monitoring visits by BSC staff to entrepreneurs did not take place for a few months in 2014. The BSC does not necessarily represent a group of citizens in political processes. However, it was said that during the Ebola outbreak the BSC wanted to do something to contribute. In fact, the BSC and SPARK staff have largely tried to see the crisis as an opportunity for Liberian businesses, government and international businesses to draw attention to private sector development.

Two cases highlight some of the efforts that were made during the past year during the Ebola outbreak. The first was that BSC and SPARK together made efforts to promote the plight of Liberia in the international arena. By the end of 2014 the urgency became more and more apparent in the world that the epidemic had to be contained. Furthermore, the wider socio-economic consequences needed to be addressed as well. SPARK and the BSC invited the Liberian minister for Commerce at the Annual SPARK conference in Amsterdam. Here the minister was able to speak with the Dutch minister for Foreign Trade and Development. Also SPARK and BSC actively worked to connect Dutch companies and investors to work in Liberia. A project that is currently being developed by SPARK, supported by the Liberian Better Business Forum, is the plan to organise Social Enterprise Special Economic Zones (SESEZ) in Liberia to attract investors.

The second case more specifically relates to how the BSC tried to link some of their entrepreneur protégées to the Ebola prevention interventions that were flowing into the country. The BSC saw that various taskforces were being set up in various pillars to address the epidemic. Pillars such as 'social mobilisation', 'Ebola case management', 'contact tracing', and 'burial' task forces were set up by GoL. These pillars needed a huge amount of materials for the building of Ebola Treatment Units (ETUs), sourcing sanitary and medical supplies, and logistics. The Ebola response was willing to pay for a number of items that BSC entrepreneurs might be able to provide. Four entrepreneurs that BSC and SPARK had been working with for a while were asked to prepare a pitch and bid for contracts. The contracts were won and the entrepreneurs were able to work with the taskforces. The four entrepreneurs provided rice and food to communities, produced scrubs, helped build ETUs, and provided small medications. This was a good result, but there was a slight difficulty due to the fact that SPARK and BSC had to pre-finance the entrepreneurs to start operating. It was hoped that they would be able to repay the loan by the end of the year.

BSC staff was asked whether they saw any change in beneficiary needs since the last couple of years. They responded that they did see some slight changes in needs. These related to three issues: the kinds of products and services that were perceived as valued in the Liberian market; the type of skills that Liberian entrepreneurs highly lacked; and the expansion of the BSC target group. Regarding the first topic, Liberian aspirant entrepreneurs saw the need to focus on issues like packaging and providing logistically-oriented services. In terms of skills, it was said that negotiation, bidding and procurement capacities were much needed. This was since many contracts were coming in during the Ebola crisis from other countries, but Liberian entrepreneurs had difficulty accessing these contracts.

Perception of Impact

The BSC stated that the organisation did not intend to strategically strengthen civil society or get involved advocacy. The main fields of impact, they felt, was more on getting more business start-ups off the ground, building the capacity of entrepreneurs to manage businesses and deliver services, and including these entrepreneurs in international supply chains (WUR Centre for Development Innovation, 2015). The MFSII Liberia country report on Liberia (2015) found that some of the entrepreneurial capacity gaps were being addressed but that impact is yet to show clearly (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2015). The introduction of Salesforce software in the monitoring of entrepreneurs seems to help somewhat - but access to finances, and the repayment of loans still seem to be key issues that will require further attention in the future. Right now, the monitoring officer said that the BSC is looking to find other creative ways of helping

grantees to repay their money. This could be by looking very closely at the progress of the entrepreneur, decreasing the amount of repayment per month, or linking them to new procurement or business models that can generate revenue. The M&E officer mentioned an example of a businessman in Ganta who was into making uniforms for school children. In the past year he was encouraged to not just wait for people to come to his shop and instead go to the schools themselves, even in different counties. He was also helped to think about other places where people need uniforms such as hospitals, especially during the Ebola. The entrepreneur was currently exploring these possibilities and had received an order from a school in a nearby county.

When it comes to how the BSC impacts civil society the connections are less strategic, but effects on civil society can be seen. There are a number of examples how the BSC engages with state and private sector spheres. The MFSII Liberia 5C endline noted that the BSC has increased networking efforts with both government and private actors when it comes to accessing funding and starting new projects. It was found that many of the BSC staff had increased networking experiences by participating actively in these activities. Notable events that the BSC has been helping to organise have been MSME conferences together with the Ministry of Commerce, Netherlands Africa Business Council visits to Liberia in 2012, and organising matchmaking events for entrepreneurs with the support of SPARK and BiD-Network (WUR Centre for Development Innovation, 2015).

New networks have been taking shape often since 2013, with new partners and agencies the BSC is in contact with. A number of organisations that the BSC is now in contact with that are new compared to the 2013 baseline:

- Global Communities
- Small Business Administration Agency
- Fula Business Association
- Liberian Marketing Association
- United Nations Development Programme
- African Development Bank

In the interviews conducted for this civil society study the BSC members noted that in the past two years the BSC has also been able to contribute to the drafting of new policies, and lobbying with government to formulate new guidelines for business. The main example mentioned was the cooperation in drafting the 'Small Business Empowerment Act', which was enacted in December 2014. They mentioned promoting the work on 'Local Content Policy' for concessionaires to source from Liberian businesses, and are active in the network with SPARK and the Liberia Better Business Forum on promoting the Liberia Social Enterprise Special Economic Zones (SESEZ).

The main outcome of these events and their involvement in these networks means that the BSC is an organisation that people know how to find, and their input on matters related to private sector development is valued. The pro-active approach that the BSC and its main support SPARK has when it comes to seeking new partnerships has led to a positive outlook for the organisation after 2015.

Level of Organisation

The BSC was stated to have grown in the period 2012 and 2014 (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2015). Positive changes were that the development of staff skills, organisation leadership and the diversification of funds had improved throughout that period. The BSC is a relatively small organisation, employing around 5 staff at the main office and 1 per location at the three sub-offices. Main changes in this area are that two of the core staff left to other jobs and the financial administrator was on leave for a few months. Two new staff members replaced them since the beginning of this year. According to staff members this has not negatively impacted the work of the organisation. However, it was mentioned that there were some delays in the payment of salaries. This was stated to be linked to SPARK, the main funder, transferring the funds later than

expected. Later it became clear that this was due to the fact that BSC staff were delayed in finalising their reporting and financial overviews. This was partly attributed to the temporary absence of the financial administrator, but also due to the fact that BSC staff was busy with various programmes and donors.

When it comes to the guidance of the organisation it was said that the Board had not been very active in the past months. This was not necessarily due to the Ebola outbreak, but due to the fact that they had not been called together often and the BSC members had not been able to give them regular updates due to other pressing priorities. When it comes to operational procedures and programme management the BSC staff said that not much had changed since 2014. Monitoring entrepreneurs happens through Salesforce software and personal visits to companies by the monitoring officer. Operational documentation changes related the finalisation of the business plan document, and the addition of a security plan to the operational manual. The latter addition was in response to the Ebola outbreak and in the case of other events that might jeopardize staff and operations. It contains 4 different levels of threat and matching procedures for each level.

At the moment of this research much attention was oriented towards how to deal with the ending of the MFSII funding by SPARK at the end of 2015. BSC staff members said that now they were heavily involved in proposal writing to get new projects by 2016. In the past SPARK was a partner they could depend on. Even now SPARK is not far away - they still share the Monrovia office with the BSC due to renovation of their building. This helps the BSC, because though they are independently operating they can easily connect and brainstorm with SPARK on new initiatives. BSC often functions as a sub-contractor for SPARK's Liberian activities. The BSC has actively been working with a number of organisations in the area of business development and trainings. In the Civil Society baseline (2013) the organisations Building Markets, Liberia Better Business Association, International Finance Corporation, Association of Liberian Universities were active collaborators. These are still mentioned as partners. In the past years SPARK has heavily invested in capacity building trainings, which allowed the BSC to be trained in programme management, training and facilitation skills and business knowledge.

A wide range of both government and business actors work with the BSC. In 2013 it was said that the BSC interacted with the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the Ministry of Education. Especially the Ministry of Commerce is still a key institution the BSC engages with through provision of input for draft policies concerning entrepreneurship. Several private actors have worked with the BSC in the period 2012 - 2015. Chevron International, International Finance Corporation (IFC), the World Bank, Virgin Unite and BiD-Network have been large international private actors that have done activities with SPARK and the BSC in the past 3 years. With the World Bank programmes were organised as part of the Youth, Employment, and Skills (YES) programme - training 250 young people all over Liberia. Virgin Unite and BiD-Network have been supporting SPARK and the BSC to connect promising Liberian businesses to international funders and partners. Other civil society initiatives that were supported in 2013 were the Kriterion project which sought to organise a cinema in Monrovia, promotion support to the Liberia Marathon, and the co-organisation of the Social Impact Tour in 2014. In the last initiative clients receive a tour of various Liberian businesses around Monrovia.

In new developments by the end of 2015, cooperation is with Mercy Corps and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) on a programme on IT business. According to the director a large programme with the African Development Bank is in the making which includes the development of a new business centre in Nimba County. SPARK and BiD-Network, together with Single Spark, have been working a new business training model called 'Business in a box'. In this programme 50 young entrepreneurs will be trained and supported in business development within the 10 selected focus areas. As such, the BSC actively works on the intersection of private business and civil society.

Practice of Values

The main values that the BSC seems to be oriented towards are related to equal participation within the organisation, an open tradition of discussion and cooperation, and commitment towards those Liberian entrepreneurs that are considered change-makers and catalysts of development.

The BSC has maintained its flexible and open staff structure, allowing all core staff members to provide input to the programmes the BSC engages in. Though staff members have particular roles, they are often asked to fill in for colleagues. The organisation has regular Monday morning meetings to discuss weekly plans and divide tasks¹⁰. Staff mentions that they feel able to actively comment and discuss on how programmes are going. The new staff members that joined in since 2015 said they noticed the good team spirit that exists at the BSC. The BSC staff members said that in the past year the vision and mission did not change, and the Ebola outbreak did not affect this. The main consideration has been on creating sustainability, for the organisation and for long-term support for Liberian entrepreneurs. This has been a focus of the BSC for a long time now. This means being keenly open to national and international trends and initiatives that affect the Liberian private sector, and actively networking with potential partners and funders.

When it comes to the addressing of needs of beneficiaries and eradicating poverty, the BSC has shown an interest to increase reach across the country - exemplified by the three satellite offices it has in different counties, and the potential opening of a new one in Nimba County. The BSC has also been orienting itself toward promising sectors: the agribusiness sector and the IT sector. Currently it is working with SIDA and Mercy Corps to implement IT business trainings. The BSC has been seeking to broaden its focus from young students and entrepreneurs to also target high school youth. This is a category of beneficiaries they have not worked with before, but is an interesting area of work since much attention in Liberia is now going out to youth empowerment and employability.

In terms of knowing what beneficiaries want, the main activity that was undertaken in the past year was a survey done among young Liberians in Monrovia. Students and youth were asked to list 10 business sectors which seemed to have the most value, and 10 which were the most challenging in the Liberian environment. Based on this survey 10 promising business focus areas were chosen. This survey was done in anticipation of the 'Business in a Box' programme. The BSC staff stated that in the future the trainings they do need to be more oriented towards what young entrepreneurs feel they need. In the past years the BSC and SPARK have been trying to fill that in themselves, based on assessments of promising sectors and services.

Conclusions

The business environment in Liberia was seen to slowly offer more opportunities than in 2013, as more businesses have become interested in investing in Liberia and the constraints to do business have become slightly less. The main concerns that were relevant in 2013 are still pressing in 2015: especially for young entrepreneurs the lack of access to finance, infrastructure and business development capacity is still highly present.

The Business Start-up Centre (BSC) developed its capacity as a full-fledged civil society organisation since its start in 2011, but still maintains close ties to Dutch organisation SPARK. BSC has been organising Business Plan Competitions and other business development trajectories for young entrepreneurs since 2012. Recently, in 2014/2015 more sector-based business plan competitions have started: such as the IT business programme with SIDA, and the new SPARK 'Business in a Box' programme. However, many business plan loan receivers still have trouble repaying their debts, even those who received them in 2012. Key priorities is now related to

¹⁰ It was noted that these meetings occurred less often during the height of the Ebola epidemic

creating organisational sustainability. This the outlook seems good: at the end of 2015 BSC no longer receives MFSII funds, but new programmes with SPARK, Chevron and new funders such as the African Development Bank are likely.

BSC did not have an active strategy to influence or strengthen civil society in 2013. However, throughout the past 4 years the organisation has been actively seeking to influence policy on Liberian small and medium sized enterprises through active networking and partnerships with international businesses such as Chevron and International Finance Corporation (IFC), and Liberian ministries of Commerce and Youth and Sports. An example of a policy contribution was the development of the Liberian Small Business Empowerment Act, which obliges the Liberian government to procure 25% of its contracts from Liberian enterprises.

During to the Ebola outbreak the BSC closed down for a short time and staff worked from home. Many activities that involved transport and public gatherings such as training and capacity-building sessions were paused. These were resumed in the beginning of 2015. The BSC did not actively get involved with Ebola response, but saw possibilities for four entrepreneurs to win contracts with UNMEER and the National Ebola Response.

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Annex 3: Development Education Network - Liberia (DEN-L)

Introduction

The Development Education Network - Liberia (DEN-L) was established in 1999 by a collective of Liberian activists and two Irish nuns in Bong County. It was formed as a grass-roots organisation providing training and capacity building in the areas of development, community engagement and political participation at community, district and county-level. Initially the organisation focused on providing humanitarian assistance to refugees in the Liberia civil war, but later focused on training and facilitating development processes. The key themes the organisation has been working on in recent years were around gender, economic empowerment, education and human rights/peace-building (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013). In the past years DEN-L has been focusing more on local economic development and strengthening community capacities; in line the Liberian government's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

DEN-L was supported by a wide range of partners in the past. Between 2012 and 2015 DEN-L was supported by two Dutch development coalitions, one led by ICCO, the second was the Pamoja programme by the Dutch Consortium for Rehabilitation. These coalitions were supported through MFSII funds. With the ICCO programme, called 'Giving Visibility to Women's Ingenuity', DEN-L's focus was to enhance knowledge of organisational development and leadership of women's organisations and community groups.

External Environment

A factor that has affected the organisation in the past few years has been the slow, but permanent, withdrawal of several core funders, including Dutch partners, Irish Aid and Trocaire. This factor was said to be due to changed donor priorities and a decrease in donor government funding. The development context of Liberia is changing from relief to development and from peace-building to economic empowerment (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013). In 2014, during the fieldwork for the MFSII Liberia Country Endline, DEN-L expressed that their organisation was highly focused on diversifying funds since long-term partners were withdrawing from Liberia. This meant that DEN-L was working in more different areas besides their home bases of Bong and Nimba counties, and they were engaging in more small, short-term ad hoc projects. A key strategy that was developed at that time was to develop their training centre, the Miriam T. O'Brien centre, into a full-fledged social enterprise. This meant developing agricultural activities, guesthouse, training facilities and conference halls that could be used to generate additional income (WUR Centre for Development Innovation, 2015).

In the past years other constraining factors were mentioned: the lack of infrastructure which made it difficult to reach communities; the uncertain security situation depending on UNMIL withdrawal in 2017; the political will to promote good governance and implement laws. Many of these issues are still relevant, though it was clear that the road from Monrovia to Gbargna, in Bong County, was much better than a few years ago. This at least helped DEN-L staff to travel to Monrovia in order to attend meetings and gatherings.

When it comes to the attention to gender in Liberian civil society much needs to be done. (Holmberg, Yengbeh, Christoplos, & Rothman, 2013) composed a review of Swedish civil society support in Liberia. It stated that in Liberia gender equality and sexual and reproductive health rights of women and girls are in an extremely bad state, and require much more attention than they currently receive. Within their sample of government institutions and civil society actors gender awareness was deemed rather low (Holmberg et al., 2013, p. 26). This has consequences for some of the issues that DEN-L is focusing on. For instance, when it comes to local decision making processes, traditional leaders and religious leaders play an important role when it comes to rural development and decentralisation. The latter issue is a key focus of the Liberian government strategic vision. These traditional leadership systems are not expressly gender sensitive (Holmberg

et al., 2013, p. 24). On the topic of gender, Holmberg et al finally wrote that it was worrying that so few actors seem to focus on the living conditions of women, their basic rights and their economic empowerment. Goals in this field seem to primarily be on women membership in politics and in organisations.

During the workshop at DEN-L for this fieldwork the Ebola epidemic was heavily on the minds of DEN-L staff. When asked to recap on the past two years, and recount some of the major events that affected their organisation and their work, the Ebola outbreak was heavily discussed. It was noted that the Ebola outbreak had personal, organisational and societal consequences. When it came to personal issues, staff mentioned that they were afraid due to the deaths that took place in the communities they worked in. They also said that people were mistrustful of each other, even colleagues. When it came to the organisation other effects were noted: the DEN-L training centre closed for a while in August 2014, and only reopened to allow a few 'essential' staff to work. As a result of the Ebola outbreak the government of Liberia declared a state of emergency, which made it difficult to gather many people together for trainings and workshops. Many programmes were stalled or paused. The ICCO programme is a case of this, as the programme was stopped earlier than expected in October 2014.

Civic Engagement

DEN-L mentioned that they have a wide range of stakeholders they engage with in civil society. In 2013 DEN-L stated that many of its key beneficiaries in communities were female. This could be cross-border traders (as part of a project for UN WOMEN) or farmers being trained in business development. This was still the case in 2015, as DEN-L worked with the Dutch Consortium for Rehabilitation on providing 'farming as a business' trainings in various communities in Bong and Margibi counties.

Staff members reaffirmed that they often worked with a variety of community-based organisations (CBOs) on many different topics. This was on women's empowerment in Lofa and Nimba counties, but also with community Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) in Bong County. Other CSO partners were community radio and media stations, and local community organisations.

The key role they see themselves to have is the role of trainer and facilitator of development. They often engage as 'trainer of trainers' and invite CSOs and other NGOs to their training centre to have workshops and conferences. Since 2013 the DEN-L training centre hosts a Resource Centre that can be used by CSOs to access the internet, read reports and write proposals. This was in the context of a programme with IREX. IREX started the Civil Society and Media Leadership programme in 2010 with 7 Liberian partners including DEN-L. The focus of the programme was to build the capacity of civil society organisations in terms of organisational development, information gathering and dissemination, and social enterprise strategising.

During the Ebola outbreak it was felt that the manner of engagement with community members changed. The emergency pushed aside other concerns that we wanted to talk about. It was not possible to bring many people together. In hindsight, this had negative consequences. For instance, when it came to women empowerment DEN-L staff members saw an increase in teenage pregnancies and girls could not go to school for a year. DEN-L staff members were now trying to talk about this, trying to get girls back to school and providing women with financial support.

- Efforts during the Ebola outbreak

During the Ebola outbreak the organisation decided to get involved in promoting Ebola awareness and prevention. The UN Women project that DEN-L was doing was suspended for 8 months, and a project with agricultural development was called off. IREX was one of the partners that reoriented its project. The project focused on promoting media, radio and civil society capacity building was reoriented towards Ebola awareness and sensitisation (IREX, 2014). The DCR also adapted many of

its activities and took part in the Ebola Action Platform (E-CAP). This meant that DEN-L also got involved in bringing sanitary materials such as buckets, chloride and soap to communities. DEN-L accessed its long-standing connections with Irish (catholic) donors to collect money for prevention materials. A fundraiser in Germany provided materials for DEN-L as well.

New projects were attracted with the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) and the American Jewish World Service. The Liberian government and CSOs of Bong County know how to find DEN-L as well. The organisation was asked to represent the CSOs of Bong County in the Bong County social mobilisation taskforce. Because social gatherings were not allowed under the state of emergency mobilisation had to be creative. One staff member recalled that in order to spread information radio and audio messages were mounted on cars to repeat sensitisation messages over and over in a community. This way, community members did not have to come together in a big group, but were able to listen to the messages individually.

DEN-L staff members mentioned DEN-L worked with other Ebola mobilisation CSOs in training them on how to manage Ebola funds as well. Accountability of Ebola funds was a major issue that DEN-L was engaging in at the time of the research. An interesting example of a heated discussion was given. Apparently CSOs had received a (small) amount of money from the Bong County Authorities to carry out social mobilisation and awareness-raising in that county. This amount was around 50,000 US Dollars. The CSO network of Bong County had divided opinions about whether to accept the money and on what conditions. Different organisations had various opinions about it and in the end the conditions were unclear. As a consequence of this, some small actors had signed for the money even though the final collective decision was not made. Later, it turned out that some NGOs and CSOs could not account for the money they spent on Ebola. DEN-L staff lamented that many different kinds of organisations tried to get their hands on these funds by calling every intervention they were already specialised in essential for Ebola awareness.

Finally the case had broader implications. Firstly, it made it difficult for CSOs to demand accountability from government institutions. It was said that County Authorities had allegedly misplaced more than 200,000 US dollars worth of Ebola intervention funds.¹¹ But since CSOs were not fully accountable, it was very difficult to criticise the government about this. Secondly, DEN-L was embroiled in these events with the risk of suffering reputation damage. Since DEN-L was the active representative of all Bong CSOs the organisation was asked to invite other CSOs on board. The negative experiences with the Ebola fund distribution led to some distrust. Other CSOs felt that DEN-L had received more funds than expected and did not share information about this. Others felt that DEN-L was pushing around the CSOs without being accountable towards them. For DEN-L management this was a lesson that communication about roles and responsibilities during such ad hoc coalitions needs to be much clearer.

Perception of Impact

During the MFSII Liberian country endline in 2015 much focus was on strengthening community-based organisations, women's groups, other local CSOs through various programmes. However, due to the Ebola outbreak many of these engagements had to be paused or stopped. When engagements continued they had a different topic which had to do with Ebola response. Staff members said that there were fewer projects to work on, and some projects did not resume after the Ebola epidemic.

- Education and women empowerment civic impacts

DEN-L worked with the DCR on improving educational facilities in a number of communities in Bong and Margibi counties, in which they most actively worked with Save the Children. As part of their activities DEN-L tried to influence government institutions to pay attention to Early Childhood Care

¹¹ Note that additional evidence to substantiate this was not found: it was a story that demanded the attention of DEN-L staff.

Development (ECCD) centres. In these centres specific attention was given to newly-born children in terms of nutrition, health and early education.

With the Dutch partner ICCO DEN-L worked on improving women empowerment and access to decision-making processes in Lofa, Nimba and Bong counties. In discussions at DEN-L during this fieldwork it was said that, with regard to this outcome the situation had improved. Two examples were mentioned: that a woman, a former-marketing superintendent had become a paramount chief in Jorquelleh District in Bong County. The second example was that a woman is now serving as district commissioner in Yellequelleh district in Bong County. When it came to community-level impacts DEN-L staff stated that there are much more women groups and women-oriented organisations working on issues that affect them. As such, it was staff experience that women were becoming more active and speaking up during community meetings. Regarding women's economic empowerment some progress was made. The Central Bank of Liberia provided around 43,000,000 Liberian dollars worth of loans to women empowerment initiatives. At the community level, the reported success of Village Saving and Loans Associations (VSLAs) by the DCR Pamoja programme allowed women to actively save and credit for business and agriculture.

The Ebola crisis has negatively affected a number of the women's issues that DEN-L working with. In the final report for ICCO in October 2014 it was said that the areas in which they worked on the ICCO project were heavily affected by Ebola. The senatorial elections, set to be held in October 2014, were postponed to December. As women in the region were focusing on family care and safety, less attention would be paid to the elections. The status of women's access to decision making in national politics is still low. Though a Gender Equity Bill was proposed for 30% women's representation in parliament was put forward, this has not been enacted. An example of how the Ebola crisis negatively affected DEN-L national work was when an assembly organised with the Ministry of Gender in February 2015 had to be cancelled. This was a yearly assembly that was set up with UN Women.

However, in local level decision-making circles, some small gains were:

- Through trainings and awareness campaigns women's groups gained some skills and knowledge in communication, team building, shared leadership, advocacy and networking.
 - Women's organisations were supported in developing organisational and legal documents to allow for their operation.
 - Increased number of forums organised by women's organisations led to some increased engagement with local leaders, and led to new contacts with County leadership.
 - Action plans developed by participating organisations were supported in the implementation by DEN-L.
-
- Relations with partners and stakeholders

The Ebola outbreak affected the intended plans and progress of DEN-L. Staff said that during this period there was no need for development training: all the focus was on safety, basic needs, and health and sanitation. This had a priority for every community that DEN-L worked in. Also the trainings that were given to other CSOs were paused. One staff member recalled that a three-part training was being given on data management to a number of CSO members. The first two trainings were given, but the third and final training could not be performed until much later - by that time much knowledge was forgotten.

DEN-L has a number of partners for a long time. It is still part of the DELTA Network, and actively works together within the Women Non-Governmental Organisations of Liberia (WONGOSOL) network and Women in Peace-building Network (WIPNET). The CSO organisations of Bong County actively worked together and sought each other throughout the Ebola outbreak. It was said that this also allowed DEN-L to work more actively with other CSOs from different sectors on the Bong County Taskforce. This was seen as a positive experience for DEN-L in terms of networking. Many

organisations worked in the health sector for instance and DEN-L had not worked with them before. It was stated that networking with the CSOs of Bong County has become a higher priority than before. The need to organise pro-actively as a broad coalition of CSOs seemed important, especially during crisis situations.

DEN-L staff noted that due to lack of core funding the organisation needs to be creative in finding funds and partners. DEN-L is looking for programmes all over Liberia. Natural resource management has drawn DEN-L. One staff member said that they were working with Arcelor Mittal, an ore mining company. The project was on land reallocation for community members that were affected by the building of a railway track through their land. DEN-L was mediating and purchasing land for these community members. DEN-L is exploring which potential partners might be valuable in this area. DEN-L management mentioned talks with the Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), but not much has come out of it yet.

Level of Organisation

Interviews with DEN-L staff on the organisation's capabilities showed that DEN-L had both positive and negative changes in the past year. The issue mentioned often was that the MTOB centre was closed for a long period of time: August 2014 until January 2015. No guests were received at the guesthouse and workshops were not being held at that time. The management made the decision to send 'non-essential staff' home. People realised that if projects did not go on they could not work. However, it did lead to some concerns among staff: who is essential? In the end it was understood that lack of funding for certain parts of DEN-L was the main criterion. Debates are still ongoing since DEN-L will most likely need to let many staff go in 2016 if no new big projects come in.

Leadership was felt to be solid during the Ebola crisis. At the time of this research, the director finally found the time to study abroad. Management functions are taken over by the deputy manager, financial manager and the human resource manager. The board was said to be functioning less than before, but this might have been due to the chairperson being elderly.

DEN-L members stated that they were slowly coming back to normal modus operandi. DEN-L management said that they still wanted to finish the projects they started before the outbreak. However, many funding sources had withdrawn and necessitated DEN-L to look to new projects. The organisation recognised that if there is no core funding then the work is not too constant. But the past period has offered lessons to be learned. Now the issue of accountability of Ebola funds is an issue the organisation is paying attention to. They also are once again providing support to community action plans, but also know that other support is needed to realise community action plans.

DEN-L staff members stated that they had gained valuable skills in the past year. These were skills like psychosocial support and applying leadership to personal safety and hygiene. The latter issue is now something that the DEN-L trainers want to pay attention to in all future training topics. Interviewees also mentioned that health and safety is important. There is a need to give health tips not only about Ebola but also general health tips. Trainers need to be more proactive when it comes to addressing these issues during trainings.

Practice of Values

Overall vision of DEN-L has not changed much in the past years. The organisation still strives for peace and stability in Liberia. In the past years the strategic attention has been shifting a bit however. The way to address peace and stability has been shifting from peace-building and humanitarian aid to issues related to economic empowerment and community development. It was

recognised that DEN-L had diverted from its normal strategy during the Ebola outbreak. It was felt that the outbreak had broad implications for the Liberian population which could also threaten the stability of Liberia. DEN-L management said that the same strategy document was used in the past years, but that the organisation will soon come together in a general meeting to discuss the new organisational strategy. CAFOD, an organisation that has been supporting DEN-L for a while, will provide support in the form of consultants to guide the strategic review.

The theme of sustainability has been a major focus of DEN-L in the past few years. Within the changing development context DEN-L has set in motion a process of becoming a 'sustainable development institute'. In the MFSII Capacity Endline it was seen that significant steps had been made in developing the Miriam T. O'Brian training Centre. The guesthouses were expanded, the conference and workshop spaces were actively rented out, and the Resource Centre was built with IREX. During this research, talks were on how to separate the MTO'B centre organisationally and financially from the organisation. Apparently, now funds were flowing back and forth between DEN-L and the centre. This could lead to confusion in the financial records. In the tough times ahead, the centre needs to have funds to invest in its facilities.

In the next few months some tough choices have to be made at DEN-L. As the Ebola response interventions are finalised, new sources of projects have to be found. DEN-L was actively writing proposals for that purpose. Staff members said that in the past year more programme managers have been spending more time writing and preparing reports and proposals. There might be a need to let more staff go as well. DEN-L has sought to keep everyone on board, calling non-essential staff back in to help with Ebola response occasionally. Many staff has come back to the organisation, but this is likely to change next year as many staff members can only be hired on a part time basis. Staff capacity will need to be supported, DEN-L staff said. In the face of emergency situations some mechanisms should be built in to prepare for this. During the workshop staff often came back to the need for a 'force majeure' in contracts with donors and partners. Staff felt that though they were trained in education and awareness-raising for years, they had limited experience with health-related issues. They felt that they were sent to the field with inadequate knowledge and had to learn during the process. This was difficult and somewhat risky.

New areas of strategic focus are to be expected at DEN-L. The organisation has been interested in a number of post-Ebola issues: supporting communities demand accountability from their local governments, helping Ebola survivors, preparing and sensitising about Ebola if it should come back. Another area of focus is on building capacity of communities regarding the natural resource sector.

Conclusion

DEN-L has been working on a wide range of issues related to training and capacity building of community-based organisations and civil society organisations. In the past 3 years, DEN-L has been implementing programmes for two Dutch MFSII coalitions (ICCO and the Dutch Consortium for Rehabilitation). These were related to empowerment of community women groups and basic education systems. DEN-L noted that within the field of women empowerment some gains have been made, though much is still to be done. However, it is noted that within the Liberian context, many gender-related outcomes still largely centre on the participation of women in national and county-level politics.

In the past 3 years, even before the Ebola outbreak, many core funders have withdrawn from Liberia. This has led the organisation to seek short-term projects all over Liberia to gather funds, but also greatly stretched the organisation in terms of vision and operation.

During the Ebola outbreak, many projects were stopped and some partners re-focused funds to allow DEN-L contribute to awareness and prevention activities. The Miriam T. O'Brien training centre, which also generates a deal of income for the organisation, was closed until December

2014. Non-essential staff was sent home during the first months of the Ebola outbreak. This latter led to some confusion among staff: who is considered 'essential'.

During the Ebola outbreak DEN-L became active in the social mobilisation of Ebola awareness in Bong County. The organisation was asked to represent the CSOs of Bong County on the Bong County Ebola taskforce. Accountability of Ebola funds was a key issue being addressed now. It seems that the Government of Liberia has misplaced funding meant for Ebola response. However, it was difficult to demand accountability since many CSOs had also taken Ebola funding they could not account for. In the post Ebola time, DEN-L mentioned that the most important priorities are to ensure this accountability, to develop security protocols and to integrate general issues of health in all the trainings DEN-L does.

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Annex 4: National Women's Commission of Liberia (NAWOCOL)

Introduction

This chapter discusses the National Women's Commission of Liberia (NAWOCOL). The organisation is a membership organisation aiming to empower the women of Liberia. NAWOCOL is an umbrella network organisation for women representative groups from all over Liberia. NAWOCOL was established during the Liberian civil war with support from international donors such as UNHCR, UNICEF and USAID. During the war NAWOCOL focused on relief services to help women livelihoods and peace-building activities. NAWOCOL supported more than a hundred community-based organisations during that time. Since the war ended in 2003 funding has become less and less, and member organisations have become more independent. In 2013, NAWOCOL had 32 member organisations in Liberia (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013b).

The organisation is composed of a general assembly, a board of directors and an operations management team. The original operational strategy was to mobilise resources on the basis of community-based organisations' needs, link them to donors and provide technical support. In 2014 it was noted that NAWOCOL had been shifting its attention and was moving in the direction of programme implementation. In the new strategic plan for 2014-2016 NAWOCOL intended to implement projects on women empowerment in a wide range of areas: social, economic and political empowerment; natural resources; access to justice; HIV/Aids (WUR Centre for Development Innovation, 2015).

The Dutch development organisation ICCO has supported NAWOCOL since 2005. Between 2012 and 2015 NAWOCOL was part of the Liberia Community Development and Governance Programme. For this programme NAWOCOL worked on strengthening business capacities for 300 women in Margibi County. This is done by giving them business management training and connecting them to small business microcredit. A second part of the project is the organisation of peace clubs in a number of schools in Kakata, the main city of Margibi. These groups were trained in conflict management and leadership skills (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013a; WUR Centre for Development Innovation, 2015).

NAWOCOL has been in a precarious situation, which was already noted in the Civil Society Baseline and in the MFSII endline in 2014. Especially since ICCO funding stopped (at the end of 2014), the decline of the organisation has been increased due to the departure of the programme coordinator and the closure of the office for reconstruction. This section is based on discussions and interviews with the former programme coordinator (who was willing to come to NAWOCOL again), the board chair, and two interns.

External Environment

In 2014, NAWOCOL noted that the major external constraints the organisation was facing were related to lack of funding and a changing context of Liberia from post-conflict relief to development. This has changed the nature of development goals and priorities, and NAWOCOL has had trouble adapting to this. The function of the umbrella network has largely disappeared. Though the general assembly was brought together in 2014, the only real changes were that the strategic plan was approved; board members were decreased in number and small amendments to the operational manual. Many of the original constituencies of women organisations have moved on, with independent funding and own networks. NAWOCOL has adapted to this by focusing on only two Counties: Margibi and Montserrado, and trying to develop a programmatic implementation approach (WUR Centre for Development Innovation, 2015). This approach has so far largely yielded a subsidy from the Liberian Ministry of Gender, and a sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)/health awareness programme with African Women Development Fund.

The effects of the Ebola virus outbreak impacted more than the victims, NAWOCOL staff said. General healthcare access was limited as health care workers were afraid to treat any patients or refused to come to work. Trade and businesses were hampered in their activities as Liberians were afraid to go to markets to buy and sell. Travel between counties was restricted due to border checks, an evening curfew, and travel around the city of Monrovia was discouraged. International businesses closed shop permanently or temporarily. Many international staff members of large organisations were temporarily extracted. Food prices went up, while the payment of salaries to employees was delayed. Social and political activities were largely halted.

Civic Engagement

The organisation saw the Ebola outbreak as a 'global disaster', and it led the organisation to change focus on emergency response. Since NAWOCOL worked on issues such as female business management, agricultural development and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) it was said: "how can we work on that issue for the women and girls if they are not in good health? We needed to adapt to this". Another reason was that five members of community organisations linked to NAWOCOL died from Ebola in various counties.

The organisation tried to maintain connections with target communities and respond to the demands placed upon them by these communities. During the Ebola outbreak NAWOCOL was less able to visit its member organisations in Margibi. Community members said that they wanted NAWOCOL to intervene and help to prevent Ebola. NAWOCOL decided to work on sensitising these communities about Ebola, providing buckets, soap and chloride. NAWOCOL used a portion of the related Ministry of Gender subsidy and donated U\$2,000.00 worth of mattresses, buckets and sanitizing items to the Island Clinic Ebola Treatment Unit on Bushrod Island and the Women Training Centre in Kakata, Margibi County (WUR Centre for Development Innovation, 2015). 40 community leaders were trained to offer psychosocial support to Ebola-traumatised victims. The funds to do these activities came from a reorientation of the Liberian government subsidy and the project funds from the African Women Development Fund.

In order to keep track of developments in the operational environment NAWOCOL made much use of telecommunication by phone. NAWOCOL staff regularly monitored government websites for the latest updates, and attended various EVD response meetings such as the National Taskforce on Ebola and related County-level taskforces. Other meetings that the NAWOCOL management attended were the WHO-organised meetings and CSO taskforce meetings. NAWOCOL staff members said that the main advantage of attending the Ebola taskforce meetings was to get updates, learn best practices and to minimise the overlap of communities addressed. It was important to NAWOCOL that organisations maintained relations with communities they had been working in before, not be 'forum shopping'.

Perception of Impact

NAWOCOL staff said that during the Ebola outbreak outreach to their partners and the communities in which they worked was limited. In 2014 NAWOCOL was running three projects in a number of communities in Margibi. These were related to the provision of business training to women, peace-building among youth. A second project was the monitoring and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) cases, sponsored by the Liberian Ministry for Gender. The third project was related to HIV/Aids prevention activities and was supported by the African Women Development Fund.

The way beneficiary needs were addressed changed due to the Ebola outbreak. The NAWOCOL programme manager said that due to the Ebola the community women NAWOCOL was working with wanted to know how to keep their family safe. The business training that was done in those

communities was paused or concluded, as markets were less busy. Instead NAWOCOL tried to address immediate needs: protective gear and hygiene measures. Before, NAWOCOL asked communities / beneficiaries about community needs, developed project proposal, trained them and then left. But during 2014, NAWOCOL not only trained the communities / beneficiaries, but also held community meetings with stakeholders, did Ebola prevention jingles, went in the field with beneficiaries and distributed Ebola awareness materials – flyers and campaigns; members on outreach team personally assisted some beneficiaries with cash based on need; monitoring project monthly, using defined data tracking sheet. Notwithstanding, during all this period, there was limited travel in the field and limited direct and/or close engagement with target group(s).

Level of Organisation

Leadership changed significantly in the past year, although largely by factors that preceded the Ebola outbreak. The programme coordinator/deputy director left the organisation by June 2014 to work for a different Liberian NGO. However, she was still running some of the affairs as a part-time consultant. The organisation had already had some trouble finding new finances after the ending of a multi-year contract from ICCO in 2014. As a consequence, two staff members left between 2014 and 2015.

NAWOCOL staff said that they took the time to engage in critical reflection regarding their organisational activities. The last Annual General Meeting in early 2014 invited county CBO members from all over Liberia to give their input on the direction of NAWOCOL. This led to the finalisation of a strategic plan for 2013-2017 and decreased the amount of board members from 15 to 7 in order to stimulate quicker and more dynamic steering processes. In response to the Ebola epidemic and the Liberian state of emergency the organisation decided to cease meeting regularly at the office, instead meeting only when necessary.

NAWOCOL said they engaged and participated in several new networks and alliances, largely organized around the fight against Ebola. NAWOCOL met and interacted with some new organizations and professionals within civil society, government and the international organizations. Compared to 2014, NAWOCOL actively attended and participated in more networking activities, especially meetings with other organizations and networks including: Women in Peacebuilding Network (WIPNET); Women NGO Secretariat of Liberia (WONGOSOL); Rural Women; Ministry of Gender and Development. NAWOCOL met and/or interacted with new actors including: American Jewish World Service (AJWS); WHO; Ministry of Health, Sanitation and Water; Kvinna till Kvinna (Swedish organisation 'Woman to Woman').

The operational guidance of the organisation changed along with the decrease in project activities. The office was temporarily closed on two occasions: during the height of the Ebola outbreak in August, and due to reconstruction of the office building between May and July 2015. The fact that the programme manager left to work for another organisation, the closure of the office and the lack of funds led NAWOCOL downscale its activities.

Practice of Values

NAWOCOL did not revise her new vision and mission in the past year. According to staff members, NAWOCOL's vision and mission remained relevant even during the EVD crisis. However, something that did change was the extension of the duration of the strategic plan, to last 5 years instead of 3 years.

NAWOCOL's Ebola education, prevention and control project was aligned with the organization's community health education program. Although this traditional health program focused on SGBV and HIV/AIDS awareness in schools, NAWOCOL was still responding to the health needs of the

target group of young people who were no more in school (as schools were closed as part of the EVD prevention and control measures). Because of the high risks of spreading the EVD through contacts with other persons the families of these young people were also involved, since could not remain safe from the disease if they were not sensitized on the EVD prevention and control measures.

An example of a topic of overlap between NAWOCOL's mission with HIV/Aids and EVD prevention was mentioned. One of the means through the EVD spreads is physical body contact. Sexual intercourse is one means through which HIV/AIDS spreads. Abstinence from sex or sexual intercourse is one of the measures promoted for preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS. This same measure was one of the measures that can prevent the spread of the EVD. Therefore, the promotion of the prevention and control of EVD also promoted the goals of NAWOCOL's SGBV and HIV/AIDS programme.

Conclusion

In Liberia the Ebola outbreak was considered a national emergency by the government, international donors and, at a later stage many Liberian civil society members. The consequences of Ebola had huge effects on the Liberian people that many civil society organisations were seeking to represent, making it difficult to discuss topics that did not relate to Ebola and basic livelihood support, especially in rural areas. This impacted the operations of civil society organisations as well.

Many civil society organisations decided to contribute to the effort to raise awareness on Ebola and Ebola prevention due to widespread misinformation and lack of trust in government messages. NAWOCOL, in response to the urgent requests from people in Margibi, decided to reorient a subsidy from the Liberian Ministry of Gender toward Ebola awareness and prevention. These funds were initially assigned to raise awareness on sexual and gender-based violence, but it was felt that the Ebola threat was too urgent. In the past year NAWOCOL did not revise their vision and missions, but instead chose to reinterpret their mission and strategies to include a focus on Ebola. NAWOCOL interpreted that their mandate to support women also included health awareness. They linked their strategies to tackle SGBV and HIV/Aids to the Ebola virus through the idea that the basic health of women should be supported.

NAWOCOL had significant problems staying active, between the end of July and October the organisation largely closed its doors and many project areas could not be reached as travel was limited. The Ebola outbreak was not the only challenge the organisation was facing. The organisation had trouble operating due to gradual decrease in project funding, the departure of the programme manager, and the loss of its role as an umbrella network function.

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Annex 5: Rural Human Rights Activist Programme (RHRAP)

Introduction

This chapter describes the Rural Human Rights Activists Programme (RHRAP). The non-profitable, non-governmental and non-political organisation Rural Human Rights Activists Programme (RHRAP) was established in 1997 to educate the rural inhabitants on issues of human rights, peace and social developments. In 2002 RHRAP added peace building and conflict transformation, focusing on ethnic tribal discrimination and religious intolerance to its regular human rights protection programme and started to work on reducing harmful traditional practices that are connected with the Poro and Sande secret societies, e.g. female genital mutilation (FGM). RHRAP is cluster lead for the Democratisation cluster of the Liberia Community Development and Governance Programme coalition, supported by ICCO (WUR Centre for Development Innovation, 2015).

The mission of RHRAP is to 'build an environment where human rights and democratic principles will take firm roots and flourish at all levels within Liberian society'. The strategy focuses on human rights promotion and protection, peace-building and conflict transformation. Since 2013/2014 natural resource advocacy has become an addition to the RHRAP strategy (WUR Centre for Development Innovation, 2015).

RHRAP has been working with the Dutch partner ICCO since 2005. Until 2011 RHRAP headed the ICCO cluster on Reconciliation and Peaceful Coexistence. In 2012 this became the Liberia Community Development and Governance coalition, also headed by RHRAP as main signatory. Under the 2012-2015 ICCO programme RHRAP has been working to improve the human rights situation of the criminal justice sector in Bong and Gbarpolu Counties¹².

External Environment

In 2013, the Civil Society Baseline stated that the socio-political situation in Liberia was slightly improving after the civil war years. This related to the perception that more national government actors are willing to act on policy with influence from civil society organisations (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013b). Noted changes in laws such as the Freedom to Information Act make it possible for civil society actors to engage with government to understand policy processes and the status of Liberian development. The Liberian government has attempted to protect civil and political liberties in the past years (Search for Common Ground Liberia, 2014). Examples of efforts include the instatement of the Constitution Review Committee, a Local Governance Act is being formulated to decentralise authority, and the Land Rights Act has been signed since 2013. A national strategy (the Agenda for Transformation) has been designed in 2014 and is to be used as a guide to Liberian development (Search for Common Ground Liberia, 2014).

The period between July and September 2014 was seen as a chaotic period by RHRAP staff members. Programmes were delayed and paused as the CSO members tried to grasp what the Ebola outbreak meant for them, their families and their country. A period of limited public life followed as the government urged non-essential government staff to stay home and discouraged the Liberian people to travel. In early August 2015 a 'state of emergency' was declared by the Liberian president, suspending public gatherings, closing market places, instating a 9 PM evening curfew and increasing police and military presence on the streets. There were not enough places to treat Ebola cases and many families with sick family members travelled all over town to find treatment (WHO, 2015).

The effects of the Ebola virus outbreak impacted more than the victims, RHRAP staff said. General healthcare access was limited as health care workers were afraid to treat any patients or refused to

¹² This chapter describes information gathered in July 2015 and emphasises the changes that occurred during the Ebola outbreak between 2014 and 2015.

come to work. Trade and businesses were hampered in their activities as Liberians were afraid to go to markets to buy and sell. Travel between counties was restricted due to border checks, an evening curfew, and travel around the city of Monrovia was discouraged. International businesses closed shop permanently or temporarily. Many international staff members of large organisations were temporarily extracted. Food prices went up, while the payment of salaries to employees was delayed. Social and political activities were largely halted. For instance, the Senatorial elections, initially planned for October 2014, were paused until December 2014. It was announced that a large gathering of people was irresponsible, while at the same time not enough polling staff was available and a low voter turnout was expected (The Guardian, 2014).

Civic Engagement

In 2013 RHRAP mainly worked with community-level target groups in Bong and Gbarpolu Counties (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013a). Since 2012 RHRAP worked on challenging issues in the criminal justice sector in these counties with ICCO. This programme specifically focused on prison circumstances and the role of local police and judiciary. The organisation set up Community Action Committees (CACs), made up of citizens to review and challenge problems in relation to the criminal justice sector, natural resource exploitation and human rights abuses. The CACs were a key entry point in communities to address sensitive issues.

In 2014, RHRAPs operations were slightly down in relation to addressing government agencies on the topic of human rights. Since the Ebola outbreak these activities are more low-key, since RHRAP now prioritised immediate health awareness and basic livelihood support. It was said: "RHRAP gave priority to collaborating with the government and other actors to fight and defeat the Ebola virus disease".

In the discussions with CSOs on civic engagement it was seen that a sort of turning point existed, as gradually all Liberians saw the threat of Ebola and worked on different levels on sensitisation and prevention. The WHO noted that a key approach working well in Liberian counties was combining Ebola control interventions with active community engagement and ownership of the response (WHO, 2015). RHRAP staff said that a positive thing was that schools were closed before the outbreak gained momentum. Secondly, through cooperation between the government and CSOs community awareness was spread all over the country, including the provision of basic hygiene supplies. A useful approach was said to be the use of visual aids, radio awareness and the personal contact with community members. Furthermore, the instatement of the National Taskforce on Ebola was deemed valuable, since it brought many different stakeholders together to inform each other and to complement each other's efforts.

RHRAP tried to express a voice when it came to the sometimes harsh and chaotic interventions of the Liberian government. However, this was difficult to do in a context of a national emergency situation in which public gatherings were forbidden. A case was mentioned related to the quarantining of West Point neighbourhood. This large slum community close the Monrovia city centre was quarantined following the release and escape of potential Ebola cases from the local Ebola Treatment Unit. For more than a week the neighbourhood, where more than 50,000 people live were stopped from leaving the area. The Liberian government was strongly criticised for this measure as news of the quarantine was picked up internationally. The Foundation for International Dignity (FIND), a former partner of RHRAP, was one of the key national voices strongly urging the Liberian government to cease the quarantine. They said that at least food and medical provisions should be sent to West Point if the quarantine continued (All-Africa, 2014)¹³. RHRAP supported these statements and engaged with the Ministry of Justice on the excess of force used by the armed forces. This was not only in West Point but also on the borders of Nimba County, where Liberian armed forces tried to limit travel between counties.

¹³ <http://allafrica.com/stories/201409100973.html>

As the amount of cases of Ebola went up, cooperation of civil society with the government increased. Civil society organisations, according to RHRAP, sought to abide by the safety measures and policies suggested by the government and the WHO. Many organisations consequently sought to get involved to help, appealing to funders and partners for support. The director of RHRAP noted that it was "the first time in history that they (government, international partners and local organisations) came together to have a joint mission". Some groups were doing campaign activities. Other CSOs were engaging with accountability of the money to stop Ebola was spent rightfully. Again other people sought to work on the labour rights of health workers and burial team members. RHRAP contributed to the social mobilisation efforts, provision of basic health materials and sought to talk with government on communication with citizens as well.

Perception of Impact

In the MFSII Civil Society Baseline RHRAP stated that it intended to work on strengthening civil society through strengthening the role of Community Action Committees in Bong and Gbarpolu Counties. These were trained in human rights issues and advocacy. The engagement between the police, the judiciary and communities was encouraged.

A changing perspective of government is gradually helping CSOs to become more involved with policy and challenging government action. Especially on important issues of corruption, decentralisation, justice and natural resource management the involvement is becoming more accepted (Search for Common Ground Liberia, 2014). In the environment of RHRAP some of these elements were recognised: between 2012 and 2015 RHRAP has been able to engage more constructively with the Ministry of Justice on the criminal justice system. For example, this had the practical advantage of allowing RHRAP access to County prisons to perceive and possibly improve the living situation of inmates (WUR Centre for Development Innovation, 2015). Also, through gathering together police representatives, judiciary officers and community representatives training and awareness was conducted in Bong County. These led to exchanges of experience and knowledge: community members became aware of procedures in the criminal justice sector and could monitor proceedings. On the other hand, police and judiciary officers were able to see the perspective of communities to approach them more sensitively with better communication.

- Efforts during the Ebola outbreak

A National Taskforce on Ebola was instated on the 26th of July 2014. The National Taskforce brought together high government officials, major donors and partners such as the WHO and UN, and members of Liberian civil society. Specific County taskforces were set up to coordinate and align Ebola operations at county level. RHRAP staff said that the manner of consultation was quite strong and should be maintained. Especially the space given to community members for feedback and personal experiences was essential. The taskforce collected ideas at the county level from the field, about contact tracing, awareness raising etc. These ideas were brought together in the national taskforce meetings, enabling CSOs to show what they did, learning what other organisations were doing and complement each other's efforts.

RHRAP staff felt that a number of these developments would still be valuable in the future, even if RHRAP went back to its original mandate. Firstly, in Gbapolu telecommunication is hugely problematic. The taskforce meetings were essential to get everyone together physically to share scarce information. It brought RHRAP in connection with donors at the national level and allowed them to raise the issue about the rebuilding of the radio station in Gbarpolu. Secondly, the flexible use of community-based health teams was valuable. It was important to have community structures able to become active again during an emergency situation. RHRAP management suggested that there should be an effort to have structures maintained. It may be necessary to give extra training on health, but the main point is that it is able to identify health issues at the grass roots in order to get ideas moving, before national organisations impose or implement an intervention that does not work well.

At the county-level new alliances were formed. RHRAP took part in the Gbarpolu County Task Force on Ebola, which comprised of government agencies, civil society organisations, UN and other actors active in that area. The main advantage RHRAP said they could offer in this case was that they were already working on concessional rights monitoring in certain areas in Gbarpolu County. RHRAP said that this was especially urgent in the light of the fact that many of these communities were hard to reach.

Initiatives such as the CSO Taskforce under the National Democratic Institute (NDI) started to raise community awareness on Ebola (National Democratic Institute, 2014). The Ebola Community Action Platform (ECAP), directed by Mercy Corps and funded by USAID, was organised for social mobilisation of communities to spread the Ebola message (ECAP, 2014). Through a previous collaboration with FinChurchAid, RHRAP was included as a sub-partner in the large ECAP programme to provide Ebola awareness and sensitisation messages in 15 counties in Liberia. Under the lead of FinChurchAid and ZOA, RHRAP was responsible for Gbarpolu county and some areas in Monrovia.

The needs of community members changed during the Ebola outbreak. Since RHRAP is an organisation working on human rights this meant a change in perspective as well. More needed to be done on direct Ebola awareness and sensitisation, but also on the indirect consequences of Ebola: food insecurity and difficulties to get income. Along with health-related issues, social and economic consequences were becoming apparent. Provision of food and income became urgent requests from community people. Monitoring human rights temporarily came second to raising Ebola awareness. Now it was a challenge for RHRAP to tell people that in the case of such an emergency they might have to forgo certain rights. An example: the right to move and travel was limited. The government of Liberia had imposed restrictions on travel in order to contain virus cases. But this directly affected the business opportunities of community members. RHRAP felt the need to side with government policy on this and encourage people to wait and stay where they were. The important thing that civil society organisations could do in this respect was explain what the government was trying to do and try to dissolve some of the tension. The relations with the CACs was important to RHRAP, as they relayed information, highlighted community priorities and were able to act on RHRAP's guidance. It was said by RHRAP staff that during the Ebola outbreak the CACs were still active, but were also relevant for RHRAP's work on Ebola sensitisation activities. Following their choice to work on Ebola prevention RHRAP organised a community stakeholder forum about EVD.

Level of Organisation

RHRAP decided to work on prevention and stop of Ebola in addition to their strategic orientation towards human rights promotion and governance accountability projects. RHRAP managed to gain more projects due to close relations with donors from earlier programmes. Many donors and large organisations were aligning to the Ebola emergency situation, and RHRAP accordingly aligned activities to donors on health issues for instance. For many of the donors it was important that RHRAP had an established presence in the counties prior to the Ebola epidemic.

The following projects were added to the portfolio of RHRAP in the past year:

- Ebola Community Action Platform (ECAP).
- IREX (a long-time partner supporting RHRAP with capacity building), asked RHRAP to contribute to the Ebola awareness messaging in Montserrado communities. These IREX funds were initially to be used for Liberian Senatorial election campaign awareness.

Post-Ebola projects:

- Since March/April 2015 a project was started up with Defence for Children International to work with children affected by the Ebola epidemic. This includes support to children with school scholarships, and parents in affected communities with livelihood activities.
- FinChurchAid RHRAP engaged in a project in Gbarpolu on food security and livelihood development.
- Since January, through recommendations of former partner ICCO, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) invited RHRAP to work with the National Oil Company of Liberia (NOCAL) to work on accountability of the Liberian oil sector.
- Started working recently with the Fund for Global Human Rights in Bong County.

In order to be able to fulfil these new project demands RHRAP staff members were trained on Ebola sensitisation messaging and Ebola treatment unit promotion to perform these activities. This was via the ECAP programme. In order to work on food security and business training in Ebola communities a new expert was taken on board. Though these projects slightly diverged from RHRAP mission and strategy, management accepted the opportunity to participate. It seemed that the RHRAP office was revitalised compared to 2014. In 2014 many staff members were almost operating as volunteers. However, due to the influx of Ebola and post-Ebola recovery projects the staff reported that they were at least getting paid now. They were also getting more of a taste of project management since the RHRAP projects were diversifying. More staff members were at work and more staff members had been hired in the past year.

RHRAP reported that the organisational leadership was the same as in 2014, meaning that the director was still leading the organisation capably and stably. In 2014 the director of RHRAP was seeking other job opportunities within Liberia and abroad, but his options were limited due to international flight restrictions. The leadership of RHRAP intended to organise a staff retreat soon to discuss the new strategic plan, now the Ebola epidemic had seemed over. RHRAP staff said that there were no major changes to organisational management. The same board was in place as in 2014. In that time there were plans to restructure the board following the adoption of a new strategic plan in December 2014. These plans were postponed due to the Ebola crisis and were now scheduled to happen within the next few months.

Practice of Values

At the beginning of July 2014 a staff meeting was called to discuss that RHRAP staff would only come into work 3 days a week and try to keep each other informed of news via mobile phone as much as possible. Since each member lived in a different area they also tried to stay informed about what was happening in their neighbourhoods.

RHRAP has an open atmosphere in which any staff member can contribute and play a role. The small amount of staff the organisation has helps with this. Staff members said that they reflected on what Ebola meant for their work. They discovered that many Liberians were denying the existence of Ebola, due to fear and government mistrust. Considering these facts, RHRAP members felt that as a human rights group they could reach out to community members they were working with. It seemed that community members trusted the organisation working on human rights more, and would listen more attentively to them than a government official. This realisation spurred RHRAP to not only talk about human rights or concessional agreements in Gbarpolu but also on Ebola topics.

RHRAP staff reflected that many CSOs walked away from their respective 'mandate silo's' to collaborate with others on responding to the EVD. Programmes such as the ECAP brought together all types of organisations. Other examples were the Mano River Union Youth Parliament, the Youth in Action for the Prevention of HIV/Aids and Women Campaigns International. The strength of these organisations was that they had good contacts with youth and women leaders in the communities. These could form additional groups to spread the message of Ebola awareness.

The new strategic plan, developed for the period 2014-2017 was postponed due to the events of last year. RHRAP management said that the re-alignment to Ebola and health-related projects fit within that mission statement. The mission of RHRAP has thus been reinterpreted from rights related to extractive industry and criminal justice system accountability to issues of 'right to food and health'. RHRAP administrative staff explained that "it is called justice and human rights, and health is a part of human rights". Regarding the new projects on food security and livelihood provision it was also said that food security is a human right as well. Programme staff of RHRAP said that "development is about so many things - and rights without basic needs are still difficult". It was said that due to donors shifting their focus to these topics as well, it might be the case that the mission statement will be revised during the next staff retreat.

Conclusion

The Liberian government was seen to not have the capacity to reach all communities in Liberia. National Taskforces on Ebola were started by July 2014 to allow coordination and sharing of information among many CS actors, chaired by the Liberian Ministry of Health. Also, many parallel initiatives were started by international donors, especially from the USA. RHRAP was active in the Ebola Community Action Platform (ECAP) led by Mercy Corps. This platform brought together and funded large-scale community awareness and sensitisation messages in almost all Liberian counties.

Many Liberian civil society organisations decided to contribute to the effort to raise awareness on Ebola and Ebola prevention due to widespread misinformation and lack of trust in government messages. RHRAP stated that in the communities where they worked, in the county of Gbarpolu, the message on Ebola was more easily accepted by community members when RHRAP told them about it, as compared to government officials.

RHRAP mentioned that in the case of the National Taskforce and the ECAP it was "the first time in history that they [government, international partners and local organisations] came together to have a joint mission". However, some events did show the fragility of the national response. The government was criticised for calling a national emergency situation in Liberia, especially in the case of West Point neighbourhood. Small organisations raised their voices to protest against the circumstances in the quarantined area - lack of food and medicine, excess of violence of the Liberian armed forces. RHRAP engaged with the Ministry of Justice on the excessive use of force at border checkpoints in Nimba County.

Civil society organisations themselves were highly affected by the Ebola outbreak. RHRAP had significant problems staying active. It closed its doors between the end of July and October 2014. Many project areas could not be reached as travel was difficult. RHRAP decided to engage in projects on the topic of Ebola in districts familiar to them, and managed to finance new projects through relations with previous donors and partners. For RHRAP the crisis led to a resurgence of project funds - proposals were accepted more quickly and funds were made available in a quick manner. In exchange for that quicker reporting was necessary. RHRAP did not revise its vision and mission, but instead chose to reinterpret their mission and strategies to include a focus on Ebola.

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Annex 6: Sustainable Development Initiative (SDI)

Introduction

The Sustainable Development Institute (SDI) has the vision that "Liberia is a country in which natural resource management is guided by principles of sustainability and good governance, to the benefit of all Liberians". SDI was initially conceived in 2002 as a vehicle to publish a key report on the illegal timber export under the regime of Charles Taylor. In 2004 the organisation was formally established. The mission is to transform the current Liberian decision-making processes in the natural resources sector and to ensure equal access to the benefits accrued from natural resource extraction (Pailey, 2014)¹⁴.

SDI strives to:

- Allow communities to exercise constitutional rights to be included in decision-making processes surrounding natural resource governance
- Train and organize people including local communities in engaging with natural resource management processes that affect them, by securing land rights and ownership
- Provide the public with evidence-based information about how natural resources are managed in Liberia
- Promote citizen participation in national and local decision-making processes
- Promote good governance and democratic culture in communities SDI works in

These strategies are concretised in three SDI core programmes. These are the Forest Governance programme, the Community Rights and Governance programme, and the Community Land Protection programme.

The Forest Governance Programme (FGP) aims to improve the governance of Liberia's forests and improve benefit sharing for forest communities. It focuses on forest policy, access to forest sector information, forest management corruption and illegal logging. SDI tracks and tries to influence policy-making processes through monitoring and reporting on forestry operations. SDI works with international NGOs like FERN who monitor the EU responses to illegal logging and timber-related trade in the natural resource sector. The two most important international frameworks are the FLEGT Action Plan and the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). A key measure to control illegal logging trade is the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA). SDI tries to build CSO capacity in monitoring and reporting on the VPA impacts.

The **Community Rights and Corporate Governance programme (CR&CGP)** involves the promotion of inclusive and equitable development by supporting community rights and challenging government and corporate interests that threaten those rights. This means analysing policies and practices of government and business sectors regarding the concessionary and natural resources. The social, economic and environmental effects of policy are actively monitored, evaluated and disseminated. The information gathered serves to support advocacy for increased fund-sharing with community owners, educating communities and demanding accountability.

The **Community Land Protection Programme (CLPP)** supports communities in the protection, documentation and governance of customary lands and the natural resources on them. By trying to protect these lands in policy and law, community control and ownership of land is improved. Communities are thus empowered to realise their rights, strengthened their partnership position in relation to government and corporate actors, and stimulates sustainable land use. Civil society actors are trained to help communities realise this.

¹⁴ This chapter on SDI was realised with the contributions of staff members from SDI, Foundation for Community Initiatives (FCI), Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU), and Social Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development (SESDev).

ICCO, a Dutch international organisation, cooperated with the SDI Forest Governance programme during the period 2012-2014 (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013)¹⁵. Programme activities focused on support to 9 Community Forestry Development Committees (CFDCs) in River Cess, Grand Bassa and Gbarpolu Counties. At a national level SDI supported the National Benefits Sharing Trust Board, which is instituted to oversee the sharing of forest concession benefits.

External Environment

In the Civil Society baseline study (2013) the key external factors that affected the work of SDI were unemployment, lack of political space, the attitude of citizens. Unemployment was important to the work of SDI because especially the young people of Liberia were finding employment in oil palm plantations, rubber farms and logging. This consideration made SDI work more difficult when they were addressing communities as a whole. Some community members are interested in letting companies extract natural resources if it will lead to development, employment and basic services. Others want to be more critical and ensure the legality of the company activities. SDI felt that the government was not very supportive in allowing Liberian citizens to participate in these decision-making processes. Citizen participation was seen to be limited since many Liberians felt that the government could not be challenged when it came to the natural resource sector.

In January 2014 a report was published which described 10 years of SDI. Key external challenges mentioned were the so-called 'virus of non-implementation', high levels of corruption, and difficulties challenging the Executive arm of government (Pailey, 2014, p. 19). The first challenge related to the difficulty in getting from accepted legislation to implementation and monitoring of these laws. Laws are used as smokescreens by both government and companies to show that they are acting responsibly, while major violations of laws often occur. Secondly, high levels of corruption are present in the natural governance sector. Especially in the granting of contracts in logging this is highly present. Companies are given contracts even though they do not meet the legal requirements to bid, but not much is done about it. The last challenge relates to the difficulty challenging the Executive branch of government to work more intensively on improving the natural resources sector. This relates somewhat to the issue of non-implementation, but has also to do with the difficulty of criticising the government. The Sirleaf administration receives much international praise for its law-making capacity, but this is said to leave little manoeuvring space for organisations that try to criticise and push the government further (Pailey, 2014, p. 20).

Currently, many of these external factors and challenges are still relevant. Though in the past years a number of laws and mechanisms were instated, the lack of implementation is still seen. SDI continuously seeks to find a delicate balance to both be critical and constructive towards government agencies and companies at the same time. Finally, the Ebola outbreak affected the work of SDI in a number of ways. It became difficult to reach remote rural areas, partner activities were brought to a standstill, finances were stalled, and SDI could not publish a number of reports or organise stakeholder meetings.

Civic Engagement

SDI actively works with communities and civil society organisations affected by natural resource extraction attempts. SDI trains local community members and committees to organise themselves, know their rights and work to voice these in discussions with companies and government agencies (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013). SDI actively tries to take a 'bottom-up perspective' when it approaches communities. Local beneficiaries and community representatives can approach SDI to help them with their cases. In some instances SDI approaches communities, and pays much attention to community organising. This means focusing on community

¹⁵ SDI partnered with SAMFU, FCI and the NGO Coalition in the ICCO Natural Resources Cluster.

transparency, training members on entitlements and laws, and training local animators (Pailey, 2014). Depending on the issue at stake, SDI consequently tries to bring together issue-based coalitions that can provide expertise and draw attention to the case. These can include Liberian civil society organisations and NGOs as well as international actors.

SDI develops a wide range of cases for their research publications and information dissemination. The organisation hosts workshops, seminars and training modules. In October 2013 the radio-show 'Development Talk' was launched, a bi-weekly programme discussing national activities in the Liberian natural resources sector. In the programme civil society actors, government, companies and community representatives are invited to share their views (Pailey, 2014). SDI makes use of existing laws and frameworks to hold government agencies and companies accountable for their actions. Using the National Forestry Reform Law (accepted in 2006), SDI tries to mediate between communities and concessionaires so that communities can receive 30% of land rental fees. Under Community Rights Law (accepted in 2009) SDI mediates for communities to receive 55% of logging concession revenues from their forest land. Groups such as Community Forestry Development Committees are instated in order to represent their local communities. The Freedom of Information Act and the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) also helps SDI to enhance transparency and improve the role of civil society in the natural resources sector (Pailey, 2014, p. 14).

In the past years the manner of engaging with beneficiaries and stakeholders has not changed significantly. SDI staff feels that the needs of beneficiaries in terms of the natural resource sector are still largely the same. However, the tools, mechanisms and constellation of actors the organisation works with change constantly. SDI staff members stated that the core programmes of SDI are still the prime foci of the organisation. Occasionally, unfolding developments receive particular attention. For instance, during the period 2012-2014 SDI was highly involved in research, advocacy and guiding the development of the Land Rights Policy. This long-standing engagement contributed to the passing of the policy in 2013.

New additions to core programmes are made as well. For instance, in 2014, SDI decided to expand its efforts by offering legal support to communities. This was based on requests from communities that wanted to pursue legal action against companies. Together with the International Senior Lawyers Project, the Legal Aid for Communities and the Environment (LACE) programme was established. The understanding of the Liberian law is an issue many communities. Since many communities do not fully understand the Liberian law, it is difficult to see how it can work for them. This initiative is to provide legal aid to communities for every step of natural resource development taking place, and to offer counsel during discussions with government agencies and companies. This project was stalled due to the Ebola outbreak but both partners are still looking ahead to prepare for future collaboration.

- Efforts during the Ebola outbreak

During the year 2014-2015 the Ebola outbreak had many implications for the way SDI engaged with civil society and communities. At the community level priorities were changing due to fear and panic. The virus affected family, friendship and community relations intimately. Security and prevention mechanisms were instated which limited travel between countries and Counties. Community members were highly focused on basic needs such as food, health and safety. At the same time, many community members did not want to hear about the natural resource programmes. For SDI the Ebola outbreak meant that almost all projects came to a standstill: planning was extremely difficult and it was hard to reach communities. Projects and publications were stalled or postponed as donors and partners waited to see what would happen. Expatriate staff of SDI was withdrawn from Liberia.

The interviewee from SAMFU explained that their work on accountability of County Social Development funds in Grand Bassa was not continued. SDI staff mentioned that the timing of the Ebola outbreak in July 2014 was unlucky for their efforts to address issues within the mining sector. In that period they were preparing to launch a major report and organise a big assembly,

but it was decided to postpone this until the epidemic was not on everyone's minds. SDI still used community animators to monitor the natural resource situation in the communities they were working, but staff had great difficulty to go to these areas. Another concern was that staff safety could not be guaranteed.

The CSOs of Liberia felt they had to contribute to the Ebola response. The GoL's perceived lack of capacity to adequately address the epidemic as well as the consequences to security and development, led many Liberian CSOs to get involved and ask for international support. SDI and its partners also decided to contribute to the response. Through individual and Friends of the Earth partner donations the Community Awareness and Support Team (CAST) initiative was started in September 2014. The CAST initiative comprised of SDI together with Foundation for Community Initiatives (FCI), Save My Future Foundation (SAMFU), and Social Entrepreneurs for Sustainable Development (SESDev). The purpose of CAST was to contribute to the awareness and prevention of Ebola in several Liberian Counties, especially Grand Bassa and River Cess Counties. In September CAST printed and disseminated educational guidelines on how to protect one's self against Ebola. Before giving the prevention materials an awareness session was conducted on Ebola infection, preventive measures, and how to help sick community members. In 37 villages in Grand Bassa and River Cess each household received Ebola protection kits. The information gathered during the intervention was shared with the County Health teams of River Cess and Grand Bassa Counties and the National Civil Society Taskforce on Ebola in Monrovia.

Perception of Impact

SDI stated in the MFS Civil Society Baseline (2013) that the organisation intended to work on strengthening of civil society. The main fields of focus were:

- Strengthening of capacities of local committees in the forestry sector;
- Building the capacity of the National Benefit Sharing Trust Board to distribute funds fairly;
- Collecting evidence on the sales proceedings of concessions and exposing illegal activities;
- Involving communities and advocating for their rights
- Development and implementation of fair and sustainable policies

The development of the Land Rights Policy was mentioned by staff as a key contribution of SDI to the natural resource sector. In 2012 and 2013 SDI was heavily engaged in a policy advocacy campaign to pass the Land Rights Policy. Key provisions in the Land Rights document are that Liberian law recognises customary land ownership of local communities and defines it as equal to private land rights (Kaba & Madan, 2014, p. 7).

SDI strategy was reflected to be successful due to a combination of approaches (Kaba & Madan, 2014):

- Generating and using empirical evidence to support SDI advocacy
- Letting community members talk with policy makers about their realities and concerns;
- Working together with many other civil society organisations instead of acting alone;
- Using well-known media sources to stimulate debate and put pressure on politicians to respond;
- Keeping in close contact with the Land Commission to avoid serious confrontations;

Relation management is important for SDI. SDI works with many government agencies and companies on issues that are potentially controversial. In the past, SDI was often seen as a 'troublemaker' and it was said that SDI publications were largely one-sided and provocative. This meant that the relationship with certain government agencies such as the Forest Development Agency was difficult (SDI, 2014: p.20). Recommendations were made in 2014 that SDI should not focus all attention to the Executive branch of government, and pay more attention to balancing relations with various agencies and legislators. SDI staff members said that the work on the Land

Rights Policy changed that slightly - SDI was involved more constructively, and in close cooperation with the Land Commission. SDI staff said that now they were actively building the capacity of government agencies as well and involved in many consultations.

- *The Golden Veroleum Liberia case*

There have been other developments during the Ebola outbreak that affected the impact of natural resource civil society organisations negatively. This included the delay of reforms, delays in the process of VPA implementation, and companies continuing with 'business as usual'. According to one staff member the Liberian government has increased activities in the oil sector in order to receive revenue to fight the Ebola outbreak. This included putting up four oil blocks for bidding, the first of which was granted in December 2014 (Global Witness, 2015).

During the Ebola outbreak it became clear that some concessionary companies continued claiming and preparing land for plantations. The case of Golden Veroleum Liberia (GVL) has been an example of this. According to Global Witness, the palm oil company obtained Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) from 4 communities spanning more than 13,350 hectares of land (The Guardian, 2015). This was during a time when organisations such as SESDev, FCI and SAMFU were not able to reach those communities in Sinoe and Grand Kru Counties during the Ebola outbreak. This was a clear breach of the 'free, prior and informed consent' clauses demanded by law according to the Global Witness report. The GVL case has been developing for a long time, and was suspended for 2 years at the request of the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) pending further investigation. In April of 2015, the RSPO's Complaints Panel released its preliminary findings and decisions on the Liberian cases. It recommended that the CSO/NGO community try to find a way to engage the companies, including GVL, in an effort to resolve some of the conflict issues. SDI was not explicitly involved before this recommendation. However, with regard to this case SDI was involved and started up an issue-based coalition specifically on the GVL case. According to interviewees from SESDev and SAMFU the GVL case demands a sensitive approach in the communities. It seems that these communities are divided in their perspective on GVL. The company is providing employment to community members, provided support during the Ebola outbreak and promised basic services. This makes it tricky for CSO trying to pause and renegotiate with these companies. Interviewees said that incidents have occurred where young community members who tried to talk to a GVL manager were arrested by local authorities. In some places, threats articulated towards CSOs have made it difficult to engage communities.

Level of Organisation

SDI has been steadily developing and maturing since its start in 2002. The number of staff members increased quite a lot since then. During the Baseline in 2013, SDI mentioned that maintaining good relations and building coalitions with natural resource CSOs and NGOs is a key part of their approach. Due to the international network the organisation has built up over the years the organisation is well-known in Liberia and has the connections to generate international attention to the cases it works on. In 2013 SDI was seen to successfully adapt to a programmatic approach (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013). In 2014 SDI was seen as an organisation that is able to bring together a range of stakeholders for dialogue (Pailey, 2014).

SDI has a diversified funding basis. The relations with international (funding) organisations such as the Department for International Development (DFID), FERN, Friends of the Earth and Global Witness have remained solid (Pailey, 2014). Trocaire, Australian government and the European Commission supported SDI within the Forest Governance Programme. Since 2013, SDI has received support for its three programmes from these donors, among others. SDI has also been part of a programme with SIDA and Search For Common Ground called 'Strengthening the Capacity of Civil Society to Promote Sustainable governance in Liberia'. Other funding was given by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa. According to SDI staff, the organisation overall funding

increased since 2014. In 2015 new funding partners came in including the Leonardo DiCaprio Fund and the Goldman Environmental Prize. On the down-side, some core funders such as ICCO withdrew from Liberia, and Search for Common Ground was not able to provide funding for the year 2015.

In the Civil Society Baseline SDI cooperated with a number of regular partners. On the issue of County Social Development Funds it worked with the Federation of Liberian Youth, the Liberia Media Center, and the Association of Evangelicals in Liberia. Within the Forest Governance Programme SDI often works with FCI, SAMFU and the NGO Coalition (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013). Now in 2015, SESDev, FCI and SAMFU are regular partners that come together often in meetings and programmes. This was exemplified in their cooperation in CAST. Another key Liberian partner is Green Advocates (on the GVL case for instance).

During the Ebola crisis some small organisational changes were seen. SDI operated with a skeleton crew during the height of the Ebola outbreak. The staff that remained was allowed to alternately come to the office in the mornings and afternoons to minimise the amount of people present. SDI sent expatriate staff home. This did lead to capacity gaps at the organisation. Some partners, such as Rice and Rights Institute and Search for Common Ground reoriented funds to support operational costs at SDI. This allowed the organisation to maintain administration and logistic operations during the Ebola outbreak.

Practice of Values

SDI initiated a non-hierarchical leadership structure in 2012. The founder, Silas Siakor, stepped down as director, and the organisation is now led in a more team-based way (Pailey, 2014). Some organisational changes were added to contribute to this structure since 2014. This included a reshuffling of employee tasks. Now, the SDI coordinator no longer leads a core programme. Instead, these are headed by three programme managers while the coordinator has hands free to oversee the whole organisation. These three programme managers have a relatively decentralised role, including responsibility to raise funds and account for their programmes more independently.

In 2013, the Civil Society Baseline reported that the SDI board of directors consisted of key individuals of notable NGOs in Liberia. The board also included a local community member as well (Wageningen University and Researchcentre, 2013). The board includes two well-known female Liberian activists from ActionAid Liberia and IREX. It was noted however that gender could be mainstreamed within the organisation more: now women participation was limited, and natural resource advocacy mostly takes place without women explicitly being given a voice (Pailey, 2014).

SDI staff stated that the vision and mission did not change after the Ebola outbreak.

After the Ebola outbreak a few lessons were picked up. Regarding the organisation specifically:

- Staff safety measures needed more attention: currently a general safety and security protocol for the organisation is being developed.
- Staff contracts need to have provisions on what do with payment and temporary freezes of projects.
- SDI needs to further develop the programmatic approach - making the organisation less dependent on individual projects and to enable the organisation to keep operating during times of emergency.

Other issues that might have potential in the future relating to SDI's core foci were:

- The national CSOs in Liberia worked together well during the Ebola outbreak and this shows much potential for further collaboration when it comes to addressing government accountability and policy implementation.

- However, cooperation and networking should improve especially when working in the same communities.
- The CSOs can complement government action to go to places where they cannot reach or are not trusted fully.
- When it comes to working with communities it is especially urgent to maintain constant contact and follow-up - especially since relations within communities can become tense.
- There is an urgent need to document everything that happened in the past year during the Ebola outbreak in order to develop 'Early Warning Systems'.
- International support was valuable, and it became clear that raising funds via international platforms on the basis key issues has a lot of potential.

Conclusions

Sustainable Development Institute has been a key civil society organisation in Liberia since 2002. SDI focuses on natural resource governance, specifically within the forestry, concessionary and mining sectors. SDI has been refining its approach of combining empirical research to advocacy initiatives and public awareness creation. A key success story that SDI contributed to: the development of the Land Rights Policy. This was accepted in 2013, and is positive in the sense that communal land is recognised on the same level as private land. SDI's approach regarding the Land Rights Policy was to bring community members to talk to politicians, to build issue-based coalitions, to use media actively, and to mitigate serious conflicts by continuously communicating with the Land Rights Commission.

Throughout the past years SDI mentioned that key issues that affect the natural resource governance sector have been related to the non-implementation of laws; high unemployment among Liberian citizens; the difficulty of being highly critical of Liberian economic growth policy. Though the situation has improved somewhat, these key challenges, along with widespread corruption are still highly present. During the Ebola outbreak issues within the natural resource sector did not stand still. The case of Golden Veroleum Liberia demonstrated this. While many national CSOs were distracted and unable to visit communities, the palm oil company sealed four Memoranda of Understanding with local communities for use of their land. This was considered a clear breach of the right to free prior informed consent.

SDI has been challenged by the Ebola outbreak. Many programmes were halted and stopped. Some long-term partners and funders of SDI allowed the organisation to re-direct funding to maintaining administration and logistics. SDI initiated the Community Awareness and Support Team (CAST) to provide support to communities in the form of sanitary materials and awareness flyers about Ebola.

Now the Ebola outbreak has subsided, SDI has continued its engagement with community members in the same way as before. However, cases like the Golden Veroleum Liberia mean that SDI mediates between communities and the company rather than supports the community itself - since these communities are highly divided. SDI has been trying to get back to monitoring and challenging issues in the sector, and has found support for the continuation of its core programmes.

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Annex 7: Social Mobilisation Action Consortium (SMAC)

Introduction

This chapter discusses the Social Mobilisation Action Consortium in Sierra Leone. It was seen as an interesting case of collective initiative undertaken by civil society organisations during the Ebola outbreak. The consortium consists of five organisations: GOAL Sierra Leone (GSL), Restless Development, FOCUS1000 and BBC Media Action¹⁶. In this chapter organisational backgrounds, consortium formation, collective civic engagement and perceptions of impact will be described. As such, it demonstrates how civil society organisations have used their expertise and past experience to deal with the challenging Ebola emergency as it unfolded¹⁷. This chapter is based on interviews with staff members of GOAL Sierra Leone, Restless Development and FOCUS1000, as well as documentation provided by the respective organisations.

Organisational profiles

- GOAL Sierra Leone

GOAL, an international NGO from Ireland, has been active in Sierra Leone since the end of the 1980's. During the Sierra Leonean conflict GOAL organised three emergency missions between 1990 and 1996. GOAL initially started with contributions to construction and maintenance of displaced people's camps in Freetown. GOAL established itself permanently in Sierra Leone in 1999, and works on rehabilitation, development and relief programmes in both rural and urban settings. Currently, GOAL Sierra Leone (GSL) focuses on two overall goals:

- Community Health and WASH
- Child Empowerment and Protection

These intervention areas include integrated primary healthcare programmes, child protection, water and sanitation interventions, and health and nutrition programmes. These interventions have largely taken place in the Western Area of Freetown and Kenema district. In healthcare, GOAL focuses on reducing the incidences of diarrhoea by training community volunteers in managing, referring and reporting cases. WASH interventions are geared towards Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) approaches. Addressing teenage pregnancy and malaria prevention is also part of the health focus of GOAL. When it comes to child protection, GOAL has been working to address the needs of street children in Freetown through provision of shelter, food, and non-formal education.

In the annual report (January - December 2014) it was stated that GSL made significant progress towards achieving the 2015 objectives. Within Health, WASH and Child Empowerment and Protection goals the organisation was able to work as usual for the first half year of 2014. For instance, in Health GSL supported community Care Givers about good hygiene and nutrition for children; 19 Peripheral Health Units received support in management of acute malnutrition; and Community Health volunteer support to screen children under five years old. In WASH, communities were encouraged to develop sustainable strategies for water infrastructure through construction of boreholes and connecting water storage to taps. For Child Empowerment, GSL outreach teams sought to engage street children to stimulate their enrolment in formal and non-formal education.

¹⁶ It was not possible to visit the fourth member of the SMAC, BCC Media Action during the fieldwork period. This organisation is therefore not included in the organisation discussions. This obviously does deny the efforts made.

¹⁷ Unfortunately no baseline data was recorded for this research but through reflection and analysis of documentation an idea of the changes might be presented. This chapter starts with an overview of each organisation visited for this research.

Due to the Ebola outbreak the organisation reoriented activities in order to respond to the fast-changing needs and circumstances. For instance, Care Groups that worked with child health and nutrition adapted materials and discussions to include Ebola topics. Screening for malnutrition was difficult due to the Ebola policy of 'no touching': only passive screening was possible. Other healthcare activities were hampered because public gatherings and house-to-house visits were restricted by the government state of emergency. To deal with the Ebola emergency the GSL team was expanded greatly: staff numbers were doubled in both Kenema and Freetown from September 2014 onwards. Within the Child Empowerment and Protection focus more drastic changes took place: many schools and non-formal training centres were closed after the summer. GSL was not able to work on children education until May 2015, when restrictions were relaxed. This focus area was thus fully reoriented towards Ebola response, with special attention to child protection in emergencies. Later in the Ebola outbreak the GSL psychosocial team gave support to children and families affected by EVD.

- Restless Development

Restless Development is an international organisation focused on placing youth at the centre of development and change. The organisation is led by young people, and promotes the interests and rights of young people. In Sierra Leone Restless Development has been present since 2003. There are three key focus areas:

- Sexual and Reproductive Health
- Livelihoods and Employment
- Civic participation

Sexual and reproductive health is addressed through the volunteer peer educators that Restless Development trains and sends to all the districts of Sierra Leone. Young Sierra Leoneans are given the opportunity to spend 8 months doing volunteer work in rural communities. In the process, they engage in peer instruction sessions dealing with sexual and reproductive health rights, life skills, career advice, HIV prevention, and sexual- and gender-based violence (SGBV). Drama teams perform shows that educate young people through humour and drama.

Livelihood and Employment is an issue that many Sierra Leonean young people find important. Restless Development works in communities in Western Rural District, has a business development centre in Newtown, and runs a National Graduate Internship programme. Key strategies to encourage youth employment are professional skills trainings, advanced business development services training, internship programmes with institutions in the private, public and development sectors, and linking business plan competition winners to microcredit loans.

Within civic participation the idea is that young people become important contributors to the national debate on citizen participation. This included the launch of research reports on the 2012 pre-election campaigns and on youth inclusion in decision-making in Sierra Leone. On the latter subject Restless Development held radio shows in four areas to discuss the role of young people in the decision-making of local councils. Civic engagement means that the programme also addresses adult community-members such as teachers, religious leaders and health workers to make sure they promote the interests and choices of young people.

The programmes of Restless Development were challenged by the Ebola outbreak. Public gatherings were not allowed and awareness raising had to focus on Ebola. Especially the closure of schools during the outbreak meant that the targeting of schools and students was much more difficult. These setbacks proved a serious risk to the efforts made by Restless Development. However, efforts were made to find creative local solutions to these issues. The organisations had many community volunteers in districts all over Sierra Leone. These were asked if they wanted to stay and help with the response. Many agreed and a large number of Restless Development 'alumni' came back to help as well. The sexual reproductive health programme identified volunteers

and educators to host small community sessions, and talk about Ebola-related prevention as well. In the urban slums of Freetown, Restless Development received support from Comic Relief Foundation to raise awareness of Ebola, SGBV and sexual reproductive health. Community youth were trained to locate Ebola cases, do contact tracing, door-to-door sensitisation and referring cases to health authorities.

- FOCUS1000

FOCUS1000 was established in 2003 as an organisation focused on the first 1000 days of a child's birth. This is seen as a crucial period in which diseases and malnutrition can heavily affect physical and mental development. According to FOCUS1000, investing in nutrition and health during this period has a lasting impact on a child's life. The intervention areas are:

- Maternal and child nutrition
- Teenage pregnancy
- Utilisation of services

Maternal and child nutrition interventions entail the promotion and implementation of evidence-based activities to improve the nutrition of mothers and their children. This is done by stimulating behaviour change (like stimulating exclusive breastfeeding until the baby is 6 months), but by providing vitamin supplements and de-worming tablets. Teenage pregnancy is deemed a key issue in Sierra Leone: over half of the girls in Sierra Leone are married before they are 18 years old. FOCUS1000 tries to raise awareness on the health implications of early pregnancy and campaigns against child marriage. Utilisation of services means that the organisation tries to stimulate the demand and use of health services in local communities. This is based on the challenge that the usage of services is generally low in Sierra Leone: many mothers deliver outside of health facilities and many do not attend all the necessary antenatal visits.

FOCUS1000 has four key approaches to address its intervention areas. The first is **evidence generation**: through gathering information on maternal and child health care in Sierra Leone key research gaps, barriers and boosters are identified. Evaluation and monitoring research is conducted on best practices and concerns. The second approach is **advocacy**. FOCUS1000 engages with government actors on parliament, national, district and community levels. FOCUS1000 is a member of the Health Sector Steering committee and the Health and Nutrition civil society platform. Through these committees the organisation works to improve the influence of civil society on the national healthcare system. The third approach is **capacity development** of national and local civil society organisations in the areas of nutrition, immunisation and healthcare systems. This also includes capacity development for religious leaders and journalists so they give accurate information. The fourth approach is **social support**. This is intended to bridge the gap between communities and the health services that are offered. Through working with the Kombra Network - a network of (female) helpers trained to register pregnant women, provide social support and health education - interaction between community members and Peripheral Health Units is encouraged.

FOCUS1000 became a member of the SMAC when it started by the end of October 2014. A key contribution that was mentioned during the interview with FOCUS1000 was the use of connections with religious and traditional healer groups and marketing associations to involve them in social mobilisation. For instance, in Port Loko and Kambia districts a meeting with indigenous traditional healers was organised by FOCUS1000 and SMAC to ask their support in searching for Ebola cases and referring them to health centres (FOCUS1000, 2015). Other valuable contributions were the four Knowledge Attitude Practice studies conducted from August 2014 until July 2015. This research intended to map changes in the way people showed knowledge and how they acted on Ebola-related practices.

External environment

The Ebola epidemic has kept the country of Sierra Leone highly occupied since it was first seen in June 2014. In November 2015 Sierra Leone was declared Ebola free. In total 14,122 cases were registered by the World Health Organisation, and 3,955 people passed away from the virus (WHO, 2015). The concern with Ebola was high due to the impact it had on the country's already fragile health system. The combination of high mistrust of that system, high numbers of deaths among health workers, lack of knowledge about EVD and the fact that many people choose not to use health facilities contributed to the difficulty of tackling the epidemic.

- *Changes in wider civil society*

The GSL interviewee noted that when taking into perspective the arena of civil society many changes were seen. In the past, before the Ebola epidemic, civil society actors spoke rather generally about cohesion and cooperation. It was present, but rather fractured. During the Ebola crisis, even though it separated people from each other physically, it brought many civil society actors together from all kinds of directions. It seemed that working together in the SMAC with new organisations such as BCC Radio and FOCUS1000 was successful.

Many civil society organisations have had the chance to build capacity in the past years. Many smaller organisations have gained much experience from the engagement with new partners and interaction surrounding the EVD. This was not only related to medical and health related knowledge, but also in general programmatic capacities. This included topics such as coordination and finding new ways to engage with local communities. The last issue could be extremely relevant in the future. The engagement with communities on Ebola turned out to require a highly sensitive approach - this gave valuable lessons on how to communicate with key actors and realise behaviour change in communities. For example, the work of Restless Development was mentioned as highly valuable due to the fact that the organisation had many community volunteers in place in many districts all over Sierra Leone. This enabled them to get active very quickly once volunteers decided to stay. These volunteers knew the communities they were temporarily living in well and knew how to approach people.

For many local and community-based organisations the Ebola outbreak was a key opportunity to show their work to larger networks and funders. For instance, district-based organisations such as Needy Today in Kambia suddenly had high level connections and support, receiving the largest amount of fund they have ever received. For Restless Development and FOCUS1000 the influx of international support led these organisations to double their staff and reach. It is expected that this will decrease after the end of 2015, but it was seen by these organisations as a learning experience.

New cooperation is constantly being set up. Now the Ebola epidemic seems over (for now), other actors such as UNICEF and the Sierra Leonean government are setting up Rapid Response initiatives. The idea is that various organisations contribute team members to rapid response teams that get active if a new emergency situation pops up. Different SMAC partners are set to provide people for this initiative. It seems that the government is not leading these initiatives - the idea is still that government may not be ready to take full control of all rapid response measures. International organisations are now setting up these structures as a parallel default just in case.

Civic participation

GSL became the lead agency in the Social Mobilisation Action Consortium (SMAC). The GSL interviewee noted that the GOAL was well-placed to work alongside government initiatives to stop the Ebola outbreak. This was due to the long-standing connections with community structures, the flexibility of staff and the institutional networks that were built earlier. For the organisation it meant a shift in original activities. Many of the GSL community health workers were trained to

become social mobilisers. They were able to use their knowledge and experience with Community-Led Total Sanitation to introduce the Community-Led Ebola Approach (CLEA). This approach is used by the members of the SMAC. Though many originally planned activities could not take place, GSL anticipated that the increased involvement with Ebola response may have improved the organisations position in the future. This means that WASH, nutrition and health messages can be brought to a wider public through the SMAC.

The Community-led Ebola Approach (CLEA) was seen by the SMAC partners as an important approach that helped mobilise the ownership of communities to help prevent the Ebola outbreak. Interviewees from Restless Development and FOCUS1000 illustrated that the initial 'almost military' approach to the Ebola outbreak by the Sierra Leonean government had adverse effects. Communication about what communities should do was quite heavy-handed, and many stakeholders that had the potential to contribute were ignored. Interviewees mentioned that not only the government was guilty of this - many NGOs went in with the same approach. The idea existed that telling people what to do, to obey the laws, was the most effective approach. Traditional leaders, paramount chiefs, healers and religious leaders had a role to play, but they were only involved much later. And eventually many civil society organisations sought the input of communities on how deal with the challenges and opportunities that were there.

SMAC used a combination of methods to reach communities and allow them to contribute. The idea of CLEA is that communities do their own analysis and devise their own actions to become Ebola-free. This makes use of the capacities of key individuals within communities, such as leaders, volunteers and community champions. This way, the urgency of the Ebola is recognised and the steps that are possible become much clearer. Social mobilisers, such as GSL Community Health workers, Restless Development youth volunteers and religious leaders contacted by FOCUS1000, facilitated the CLEA process. Coordinators from SMAC were provided motorbikes and cell phones to contact each other quickly. The key is two-way communication. Radio shows done by BBC Media Action, household visits and community gatherings provided information about EVD. Feedback on the provided information was given by communities and passed up the line through the social mobilisers to become available at district and national level. The idea is that eventually the community volunteers and champions take up the role of social mobilisation after the SMAC coalition is ended.

Perception of impact

In the immediate reflections of SMAC it was felt that the key result realised by the social mobilisation efforts were that the trust of communities and Ebola survivors has been partly rebuilt in national and international institutions. SMAC tried to let communities modify norms and beliefs around Ebola response on their own terms, by making use of the solidarity and cooperation that exists within Sierra Leonean communities. As such, the slogan used was 'communities have the power to stop Ebola'. This meant not only providing information about Ebola, but tackling social effects of fear, distrust and stigmatisation. The idea that communities hide potential Ebola casualties or seek to bury family members with respect needed to be understood - in order to ask communities to change behaviour and practices.

The involvement of religious leaders and traditional healers was deemed important by FOCUS1000. Islamic and Christian Action Groups were asked to interpret the Ebola epidemic from a religious perspective and align their messages to contribute to Ebola awareness. Cooperation between Islamic and Christian religious leaders was also stimulated through support to develop horizontal cooperation mechanisms. A series of workshops were done in which lines of communication were established and networks were structured. This also demanded of religious leaders to account for their expenses accurately, which was something new for some. It is hoped that these action groups will continue exchanging dialogue on other future issues.

The approach of Restless Development in combining a grass roots approach with contributions to national level strategic Ebola response was highly recognised. According to Restless Development staff the Ebola outbreak represented a key strategic moment for the organisation and for the young people it represents. As such, for young people this emergency formed an excellent chance to show their worth in society. Especially in the context of Sierra Leone, due to the past conflict and the high demographic presence of young people, this was an important issue. Throughout the Ebola response the organisation noted that it had a presence in over 55% of districts in Sierra Leone

Knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) studies were done to understand the changing knowledge and practices of communities regarding Ebola. FOCUS1000 noted that evidence-based research is one of their strategic foci, and they see this as an important way to influence policy. SMAC was involved in the four longitudinal KAP studies that monitored these changes. Through these studies it became clear that the initial Ebola messages were discouraging: if there is no cure for Ebola, why go to the hospital? People were scared of what would happen if they went to clinics and use ambulances. The studies asked the question why people were still did not report if someone passed away. It seemed that male deceased were reported, but female were not. It turned out that communities did not want all-male burial teams to bury women. Also the use of black body bags was seen as distressing. These issues could now be addressed more quickly, and community members saw that their suggestions were followed-up on. According to FOCUS1000, it was a fast way to influence decision-making, made possible through the good connections with the National Ebola Response Center (NERC).

Partners from SMAC noted that many health-related issues such as teenage pregnancies, immunisation and sexual reproductive health (SRH) have suffered set-backs. An increase in teenage pregnancies was attributed to the closure of schools and lack of awareness-raising. For Restless Development the main issue is now to maintain the energy and capacity of the young people that contributed for future community development leadership. FOCUS1000 sees the post-Ebola time as a key moment to build increased trust in health care. This means doubling efforts for nutrition and immunisation through broad packages and paying more attention to community needs in terms of basic services. GSL staff noted future rallying points to maintain the level of cooperation among CSOs. These are issues like Health Seeking Behaviour, basic personal hygiene, and usage of health facilities. These need to become cultural and social norms. Much attention will need to be paid to post-Ebola issues: Ebola survivor stigma, and setting up of Rapid Response systems. Accountability seems less of an issue in Sierra Leone among international organisations, though that will be an issue when it comes to national NGOs that received much more money than before.

Level of organisation

The Social Mobilisation Action Consortium (SMAC) was established with the financial support of the Department for International Development (DFID) from October 2014 until December 2015. GSL was assigned as the consortium lead. During the Ebola outbreak GSL was well-placed to use its experience with emergency response and healthcare provision to focus on Ebola social mobilisation. GSL staff said that initially social mobilisation was a new concept that meant a slight reorientation of their programmes. This was because GSL has been focused on developmental work, but as the emergency became extremely urgent the organisation decided to get involved. GSL worked with the partners of the SMAC to train, equip and mobilise 2,558 Community Mobilisers across the country with intensive training on interpersonal communication and facilitation. These mobilisers were equipped with tools and materials such as smart-phones and audio-visual materials to help with bringing about behaviour change to prevent Ebola from spreading. GSL was responsible for implementation in Western Area and Kenema.

The different SMAC members provide team members to the consortium. The focus is on key emergency areas where social mobilisation is deemed especially urgent. As such, the current SMAC

coordinator was the GSL assistant director for programmes until she focused on this consortium. Each organisation brings its own expertise to the coalition and manages its own assigned budgets and logistics. A central coordination unit manages information flows from the contributing organisations. Each week a memo is passed around and is used to update social mobilisation efforts at the community level. Once in a while the central coordination unit visits key districts. At the time of the research a visit was planned to Kono, a district close to the border of Guinea. Recently an Ebola scare occurred there. Though it turned out to be something else, the possibility of Ebola popping up in Sierra Leone was very much possible. Another district, in Kambia, posed another potential hot spot. The area is close to Guinea, and on the other side of the border it seems the attitude towards Ebola is very different. On the Guinean side not all communities have completely accepted the existence of Ebola.

District and community members involved in social mobilisation call community meetings and discuss the content of the memos. SMAC reports to district level meetings organised by the District Ebola Response Centres (DERC). At a national level SMAC reports to the Social Mobilisation Pillar of the National Ebola Centre (NERC). The social mobilisation is one of the four pillars of the Sierra Leone Ebola response strategy (Government of Sierra Leone, 2015). The SM pillar is jointly chaired by the ministry of Health and Sanitation and UNICEF. The SMAC members often come together twice a month to discuss progress and invite members from government, United Nations or other agencies to attend.

Conclusion

The Ebola epidemic has kept the country of Sierra Leone highly occupied since it was first seen in June 2014. In November 2015 Sierra Leone was declared Ebola free. The concern with Ebola was high due to the impact it had on the country's already fragile health system. Besides the effects of Ebola other setbacks were seen. Issues related to healthcare, sexual reproductive health and immunisation received less attention and fewer activities. Many interventions were difficult due to the measures imposed by the Sierra Leone state of emergency. For instance, GSL health related interventions were made more difficult due to the state of emergency measures. These included 'no-touching', ban on public gatherings and the quarantining of whole communities.

Interviewees from Restless Development and FOCUS1000 illustrated that the initial uncoordinated and 'almost military' approach to the Ebola outbreak by the Sierra Leonean government had adverse effects. Communication about what communities should do was quite heavy-handed and many stakeholders that had the potential to contribute were ignored. Interviewees mentioned that not only the government was guilty of this: many NGOs went in with the same approach. Later, an improved, large-scale coordinated approach which fully involved communities and local CSOs was seen as more successful. The concerted Ebola response and the links built with communities might hopefully form the basis of increased trust in healthcare and basic service systems.

Reorganisation of activities and personnel was necessary for many civil society organisations: some nationally based NGOs mobilised health workers, while others made use of volunteers already in districts all over Sierra Leone. Frequent communication was seen as very important: evidence gathering, feedback to community leaders, and demonstration of how this knowledge was used, was essential to gain community trust and cooperation. For individual organisations this crisis was seen as the chance to show their worth and the value of the people they represented. An example of this was the youth volunteers working with Restless Development. For many local and community-based organisations the Ebola outbreak was a key opportunity to show their work to larger networks and funders.

The Social Mobilisation Action Consortium (SMAC) was set up in October 2014 with four organisations to increase awareness and knowledge in communities about Ebola. The Community-led Ebola Approach (CLEA) was seen by the SMAC partners as an important approach that helped mobilise the ownership of communities to help prevent the Ebola outbreak. The idea of CLEA is that

communities do their own analysis and devise their own actions to become Ebola-free. This makes use of the capacities of key individuals within communities, such as leaders, volunteers and community champions. This way, the urgency of the Ebola is recognised and the steps that are possible become much clearer. SMAC tried to let communities modify norms and beliefs around Ebola response on their own terms, by making use of the solidarity and cooperation that exists within Sierra Leonean communities.

Each organisation in the SMAC contributed own background and expertise. GSL brought expertise in health interventions and a strong organisational structure to lead the SMAC. Based on experiences from GSL and Restless Development the CLEA approach was developed. Restless Development provided valuable connections to the grassroots through their community volunteers and their open participatory approach. FOCUS1000 contributed experience in healthcare as well as connections with religious and traditional healer groups to involve them in social mobilisation. Other valuable SMAC contributions were the four Knowledge Attitude Practice studies conducted. This research mapped changes in the way people showed knowledge and how they acted on Ebola-related practices.

Many changes in the arena of civil society were seen throughout the Ebola outbreak. In the past, before the Ebola epidemic, civil society actors spoke rather generally about cohesion and cooperation. It was present, but rather fractured. It was hoped by SMAC members that cooperation and networks will become more coherent in the future. Future rallying points to maintain the level of cooperation among CSOs might be issues like Health Seeking Behaviour, basic personal hygiene, and usage of health facilities. Also, much attention will need to be paid to post-Ebola issues: Ebola survivor stigma, and setting up of Rapid Response systems. Currently, new cooperation is being set up to Rapid Response systems under UNICEF.

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Annex 8: Welthungerhilfe (WHH)

Introduction

This chapter describes Welthungerhilfe Sierra Leone (WHH) and one of its local partners Responsible Ecotourism Community organisation (RECTOUR)¹⁸. WHH has been active in Sierra Leone since 2003. Since then it has been working a broad number of livelihood goals in Sierra Leone. Key focus areas:

- Food and nutrition security
- WASH
- Healthcare
- Natural habitat conservation

In the past years before the Ebola outbreak WHH has been working on various developmental programmes involving agricultural development, improving the quality of cash crops, conservation of the Western Area Peninsula Forest Reserve, and building sustainable water and sanitation systems. Originally WHH operated with its main regional office in Liberia, but since 2014 the organisation has increased its presence in Sierra Leone to a full-fledged headquarters.

During the Ebola outbreak WHH decided to get involved quickly to contribute to prevention of the virus spread, help communities that were quarantined, and provide support to Ebola survivors. Together with World Food Programme, United Nations Mission Emergency Ebola Response (UNMEER) and the National Ebola Response Center (NERC) WHH supported Ebola-struck communities with food packages. Food packages were delivered to more than 20,000 slum residents in Freetown. WHH also engaged in social mobilisation on Ebola awareness through local and community-based organisations such as RECTOUR in the Western Urban Area. This combination of basic needs provision and social mobilisation formed the basis of a strategy to stop Ebola in these areas while maintaining food security.

External Environment

Staff members of WHH stated that in the past two years much in their operating environment has changed. The Ebola outbreak had a wide impact on the Sierra Leonean economy: borders were closed, airplane travel was restricted, and markets were less accessible. The state of emergency was initiated, infected communities were quarantined and two times a national lockdown occurred.

Farmers that WHH was helping experienced some challenges in managing their fields and exporting their goods. For instance, the cocoa farmers in the east of Sierra Leone were located near several Ebola hotspots by the end of November 2014. The government restrictions made it difficult for farmers to attend their fields and perform husbandry activities. Many farmers experienced difficulty finding labourers: many communities refused to let strangers stay. However, the effect of the outbreak was not as negative as it could have been: the most labour-intensive periods were just before the outbreak in June and July (Welthungerhilfe, 2014b).

In August 2014, WHH, the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Food Security, and the FAO conducted a study on the effect of EVD on food security and livelihoods in Kenema and Kailahun districts. These two districts were the hardest hit by Ebola cases in 2014. A key finding was that 97% of the surveyed households said their incomes had dropped since May 2014. Food production was expected to decrease and EVD limited the availability of food while increasing the costs. Access to credit had decreased according to market vendors. The volume of traded goods has been decreasing significantly. On a positive note, by that time rural communities were much more aware

¹⁸ This chapter is based on a short brainstorm session and interviews with staff from WHH and RECTOUR

of the dangers of Ebola and claimed to know details of how it is transmitted (Welthungerhilfe, 2014a).

WHH staff said many organisations were not prepared for emergency situations. When the Ebola struck, there was a lot of duplication of resources, limited coordination and the lack of knowledge was very big. Eventually this got better, and the building of coalitions to complement each other's strengths was important. For the future many CSOs are thinking more actively about the integration of emergency systems.

Civic Engagement

Initially WHH had to stall a large amount of its operations. Operations were shut down in the south-eastern part of Sierra Leone for a while. The WHH office in Kenema was closed for a while in October 2014. It became difficult to gather people together for trainings and collective activities. During the time of the Ebola outbreak WHH sought to find much more funding to expand the reach of its Ebola response. For many other CSOs in Sierra Leone the influx of international development funds was a positive impulse.

WHH engaged in the following activities as part of the fight against Ebola:

- Education and prevention: using radio sessions and drama performances, and through training community members to give advice on EVD. Disinfection stations were set up
- Public hand washing stations were built to make hand-washing easier
- Food was provided to quarantined and hard to reach communities. In some areas telephone cards were given to families to stay in touch with family members

WHH's first main operational areas were in the south and east of Sierra Leone. During the Ebola epidemic WHH started working more in the northern and western districts. These were areas that were affected by Ebola, especially in 2015. WHH operated within the Social Mobilisation pillars of the National Ebola Response, coordinated with UNICEF and the Sierra Leonean Health ministry.

Now that Sierra Leone has been declared Ebola-free WHH considers maintaining its presence in the northern and western areas. This includes new projects in those areas related to WASH (waste management for instance) and post-Ebola support to communities and survivors. The Disaster Preparedness and re-activation of Agriculture and Trade project (DiPAT) in Ebola affected Districts intends to help Ebola survivors overcome social, cultural and economic barriers they face due to stigmatisation and loss of livelihoods. In post-Ebola care centres counselling, life skills, training and information is provided to Ebola survivors. The DiPAT project started in December 2014, with support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

WHH staff mentioned that throughout the Ebola epidemic some opportunities were grasped to build strong relations with both national and local partners. Examples of strengthened partnerships since 2014 were with Women Advocacy in Agricultural Development Organisation (WAADO), the Network Support for Peace Education (NeSPE), and the Environmental Foundation Africa (EFA). In the past 2 years much stronger links with various Sierra Leone government ministries were made, working together on topics related to WASH, agriculture, and food and nutrition security.

Perception of Impact

WHH was heavily involved in various initiatives related to social mobilisation and food security provisions. The WHH contributed to the food security provision in quarantined areas. WHH staff mentioned that the way WHH assembled the food package was seen as a best practice approach. It

was taken up by NERC in all food distribution interventions. After the initial temporary shut-down of the Kenema area, this area became a key focal point of the Ebola social mobilisation activities. Eventually, many lessons were learned from this on how to improve contact tracing and do Ebola checks. The WHH was also able to build the capacity of district health management teams.

Regarding some of the food security and basic needs interventions, WHH staff mentioned that it was difficult to cater to the needs of the communities. The usual manner of operating is that resources are never provided for free, so communities know the cost of services and can maintain this sustainably. However, during the Ebola outbreak the cases in several communities was heavy, and food packages were provided for free. Some of the challenges now are that communities have expectations of this, and there might be more resentment. According to staff WHH tries to mitigate this by involving communities more closely in the design of interventions. This means

The local partner RECTOUR described that they are working to promote tourism in a number of coastal communities in the Western Area of Sierra Leone. As a community-based organisation they work with representatives of several communities. Before the Ebola outbreak RECTOUR had been working with WHH to promote sustainable tourism by keeping the beaches clean, organising activities and travelling tours. In the past 2 years tourism has not been very active and it was not allowed to organise collective activities. The RECTOUR communities prioritised food and hygienic material as well - it was impossible to talk about other issues. RECTOUR decided to work to keep their communities Ebola-free. The organisation mobilised a host of volunteers to work in social mobilisation: telling people about the dangers of Ebola, identifying potential cases and referring them to health stations. The organisation was able to motivate a large group of volunteers to become active. Also, the organisation started to work in new communities such as in Port Loko, which they had not done before. The organisation received more financial means than before. Now the Ebola outbreak is over RECTOUR wants to diversify and make use of the new contacts it has. As such, the plan is to do more in the areas of waste management, recycling, energy production and hygiene in their communities.

Level of Organisation

WHH is in the process of decentralising its organisational structure. This followed the decision to have WHH operate separately from Liberia since 2014. According to staff members this process is set to continue in 2016. The decentralisation process entails a new director coming in, and a devolving of programme responsibilities to Sierra Leone key districts. It also means that implementing partners are coming to the forefront more than before, and the programme officers have increased responsibility for programme planning, budgeting and fundraising. At the same time, central coordination departments such as the Human Resource division take over the role of hiring new staff. These changes are within the context of the new strategy for 2017.

The organisation has been growing since the Ebola outbreak - the increased amounts of funding meant that many more staff needed to be hired to contribute to food disbursement, social mobilisation and support to health care units. However, this was off-set by a number of expatriate staff leaving the country temporarily. Fortunately, many did come back as the greatest peak subsided.

Key issues that WHH is trying to build on from lessons during the Ebola are:

- Increased attention to create ownership of communities in programmes, since top-down approaches were seen to work negatively during the Ebola outbreak
- The further development of Standard Operating Procedures during emergency situations and within (inter)national coalitions
- Development of organisational protocols dealing with security and health during emergencies

Practice of Values

The practices of values were not reported to have changed according to WHH staff. Sustainability is a key value that is applied in all programmes - whether it is WASH or agriculture. This has remained the same during and after the Ebola outbreak.

The mandate of WHH was increased in 2015, and the organisation is reaching out into new approaches and sectors. Staff mentioned that WHH is now getting involved in more advocacy-related topics. Building on cooperation with Green Scenery, WHH has been involved in development of responsible governance of land, fisheries and agriculture. This has taken the shape of a contribution to national policy intent on linking smallholder farmers to large agricultural companies. Other sectors WHH is interested in include energy projects, sustainable tourism, and environmental management.

Conclusion

Welthungerhilfe (WHH) has been active in Sierra Leone since 2003, working on sustainable livelihoods through a range of sectors. A number of activities and interventions had to be stalled and stopped. The regional office in Kenema, in the southeast of Sierra Leone, had to be shut down for a few months during the height of the Ebola outbreak.

The Ebola outbreak had a wide impact on the Sierra Leonean economy: borders were closed, airplane travel was restricted, and markets were less accessible. The state of emergency was initiated, infected communities were quarantined and two times a national lockdown occurred. Many EVD-affected communities experienced food shortages due to imposed quarantine measures. Farmers that WHH was helping experienced some challenges in managing their fields and exporting their goods. Many farmers had trouble accessing markets, credit and labour to prepare agricultural land for the new season. However, the effect of the outbreak was different per sector. For the cocoa farmers that WHH supported the outbreak was not as negative as it could have been: the most labour-intensive periods were just before the outbreak in June and July.

WHH adapted to the Ebola outbreak with new activities such as supporting food provision to quarantined and hard-to-reach communities. This was in cooperation with the World Food Programme and the Sierra Leonean Ministry of Health. WHH contributed to the Social Mobilisation pillar of the National Ebola Response Center (NERC). This was done through radio shows, drama performances and the training of community volunteers to spread information and identify cases. Some local partners, such as the Responsible Ecotourism Community organisation (RECTOUR), have had to stop activities related to tourism promotion in the Western Area. However, through WHH, they were able to become active with social mobilisation in many communities, even in the Port Loko area. This greatly built their capacity, and they are now exploring further intervention areas such as waste management, recycling and energy.

WHH is currently preparing its new strategy for 2017; in which further decentralisation of offices is a key focus. This means further roles for district-level programme managers in terms of reporting, planning, budgeting and proposal writing. Initially WHH only worked in the south and east of Sierra Leone, but throughout the Ebola response the reach of the organisation expanded to the north and west of Sierra Leone as well, following the Ebola hot spots.

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