

**Managing Economic Development in Post-Conflict Societies:
The Cases of Sierra Leone & Liberia**

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Introduction

Even though Sierra Leone and Liberia, two West African countries, have each been through devastating decade-long civil wars that resulted in the effective collapse of their governing institutions, very little research has been undertaken to examine their transition to functioning democratic developmental states. The present project seeks to contribute to addressing this gap. We will examine the capacity and legitimacy of institutions responsible for managing post-war economic reconstruction in Sierra Leone and Liberia, with a particular focus on the mandate, instruments and strategies of their economic development agencies.

After decades of poor economic management and years of brutal civil wars, development management in Sierra Leone and Liberia is primarily about building their nations from the ashes of war and absolute poverty (UNDP, 2008). Well over three quarters of their populations live below the poverty line of 1 US dollar per day, while about half their nations live in severe poverty. Access to and delivery of basic services such as health, education and potable water is severely restricted for most people in both countries. Collapsed national and local institutions and structures have resulted in very poor governance and widespread corruption. The complexities of governance in these post-conflict countries illustrate the truism that development and security are inextricably intertwined. Indeed, at the core of national development in Sierra Leone and Liberia are the challenges of deep and pervasive poverty.

The challenges of development management in Sierra Leone and Liberia, however, are not new. The political and administrative history of the two countries even before their civil wars was characterized by patronage, favouritism and tribalism in recruitment and placement – practices that had undermined the competence and quality of the public service, and in the case of Liberia worsened in the years immediately following the civil war as former war-lords reward their ex-combatants with government jobs. Since the end of their civil wars, the two countries have thus each embraced the ambitious goals of reforming their Civil Service with the aim of reversing the long process of institutional decay. The objective in both countries has been to develop a professional, merit-based, Civil Service system with well articulated standards, policies and procedures inculcated into the norms and practice of public servants.

The present discussion examines development management in Sierra Leone and Liberia, with a focus on economic development policy. Indeed, development management in the two countries must be understood within the context of efforts over the past decade to restore their devastated economies. Development management is integral to healing the socioeconomic fissures that have undermined the intricate fabric of their multi-ethnic societies. It is also key to addressing the limitations and constraints created by the fragile security situation, dilapidated infrastructure and low human capital resulting from a long disruption of education and training – lingering features of their civil wars.

The aspect of development management that is of most importance for the present discussion is organizational restructuring as it relates to issues of centralization, coordination, control, decentralization, devolution and responsiveness in economic development policy governance. The structural configuration of the civil service in both countries, it seems, consists of somewhat contradictory characteristics such as centralized coordination and control of policy and program development while at the same time seeking to promote decentralization and devolution of the implementation process towards subnational jurisdictions and greater citizen

participation. How are these apparent contradictions reconciled? This is the question that is addressed later in the discussion.

The significance of the proposed research on development management is to highlight the administrative complexities involved in achieving development policy goals, particularly in countries in which these goals involve dramatic political, economic and social transformation. The problem of economic development is a generic challenge across the developing world, but especially acute in countries whose governing institutions have been devastated by long-running civil wars. Another significance of the present research on post-war economic development is to highlight the institutional challenges of interorganizational coordination within the public sector as well as the crisis of legitimacy among public sector agencies as they seek to direct the trajectory of development. It will draw attention to the political and administrative requisites for achieving public policy goals, particularly in countries in which these goals involve dramatic political, economic and social transformation (Brinkerhoff, 1999; Heady, 2001).

Furthermore, the present study is important in that it involves a comparative examination of approaches to development coordination taken by two countries in West Africa which have been through very similar devastating civil wars. Such a systematic comparative identification of differences and commonalities in the instruments and strategies of development management will reveal certain models of policy coordination and program delivery in developing countries as they seek to consolidate the capacity and legitimacy of the state for democratic collective action. A comparative approach can help us relate different administrative roles, practices, organizational arrangements and procedures for maximizing development policy objectives.

The next section below provides a theoretical framework that will guide the rest of the discussion. Following that, broad overviews of Sierra Leone and Liberia are provided, including their geographic, demographic and historical, political characteristics and socioeconomic conditions. The rest of the discussion then examines economic development policy in the two cases as well as assesses their machineries of development management, drawing out similarities and weaknesses. The conclusion provides a restatement of key lessons drawn from the analysis of the cases.

Theoretical Framework

Public administration in development countries has seen major “paradigms” often originating from industrialized countries (Ayee, 2006; African Training Centre for Administration and Development, 1990; Balogun and Mutahaba 1991). Among these have been trends such as pragmatic institutionalism of the post-war years and on to the 1970s; the new public management (NPM) of the 1980s and 1990s; and more recently, governance (referring to the trend towards self-sustaining networks by which the state engages in sharing power and administrative responsibility with non-state actors) (Mutahaba, 1989; Adamolekun, 1991; Kaul, 1996; Macgregor et al, 1998; Olowu, 1999). During the post-war years, the focus was on developing administrative states equipped with all the institutional paraphernalia of a fully developed bureaucracy able to undertake large scale transformation of society (Waldo, 1984).

Under the NPM paradigm, structural adjustment programs targeted these same bureaucracies as being too large, complex and slow (World Bank, 1995). Countries in Africa were then advised to make their bureaucracy into more lean, effective and efficient central

government machineries. In this regard, the central bureaucratic machinery in the administrative capital would focus on policy development, regulation and formulating mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating programs. Moreover, implementation of programs would be decentralized to sub-national jurisdictions at the regional and local levels. Furthermore, the governments would explore alternative service delivery mechanisms such as outright privatization, outsourcing or, at least, public-private partnership arrangements.

More recently, the governance paradigm has softened the rhetoric of privatization and market-based mechanisms of service delivery. Instead, governance emphasizes decentralization, devolution and state-society partnerships, with horizontal structures of decision making and accountability in which ordinary citizens will gain greater ownership over the process of development management (World Bank, 2009). Given the recent focus on governance, new questions have arisen about the changing structures, principles and processes of public administration in the developing world (Hyden, 1983; Lewis, 1998, Ayee, 2001).

In the wake of all these reforms in developing countries, how should we understand the implications that these apparently contradictory trends may have for substantive policy issues such as economic and social development? Have recent administrative reforms resulted in the machinery and process of the civil service being too fragmented? Is there a move towards more integrated and inclusive public management? Indeed, departments or agencies are not self-contained entities but, rather, are part of a larger institutional framework. Public agencies are thus expected to develop governance arrangements for their engagement with the strategic environment within which they operate (Ayee, 2006).

Integrated service delivery suggests, among other things, that public management involves centralizing, coordinating and controlling the activities of partners across various levels of government and even outside the public sector. Moreover, the operational rules of public management centre upon workflow interdependencies of a pooled, sequential or reciprocal character, and the necessity of achieving consensual outcomes dictates strategies necessary to overcome obstacles to the interdependencies in question (Sproule-Jones, 2000). Decentralization and devolution of managerial authority, on the other hand, however, implies that the nature of public management is to be characterized by a complex mix of strategies focused on responding more effectively to disparate players and interests, including non-profit organizations, community coalitions as well as private sector organizations, as they increasingly stake their claims in program development and delivery (Aucoin, 2006).

Given that the structural features of public organizations affect the nature of policy implementation, to what extent has public administration in developing countries been able to balance its pursuit of integrated service delivery and devolution of managerial authority with the time-tested principles of hierarchy, specialization and standardization in constitutional democracies such as Sierra Leone and Liberia? In similar vein, with the emergence of a predominant governance discourse, questions can be raised about the complex relationships between administration, politics and democracy, and their implications for efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in the public service. Since the current model of public management in much of Africa operates within the framework of democratic development, the present discussion also examines the institutional infrastructure of the public sector and its engagement with engagement with society.

Sierra Leone and Liberia – An Overview

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is located on the west coast of Africa, bordered by the Atlantic Ocean in the West, Guinea in the north and Liberia in the southwest. The country's land mass is 71,740 km² (27,699 sq mi) with a population of about 6.4 million. Sierra Leone consists of three provinces and the Western Area, where the capital, Freetown is located. The country is further divided into fourteen districts. The districts are further divided into chiefdoms, with the exception of the Western Area. The country's administrative capital is located in Freetown (the largest city as well as the hub of the nation's economy) (Government of Sierra Leone, 2008).

Sierra Leone is a constitutional democracy with a directly elected president and a unicameral legislature. The 1991 Constitution is the parent document that provides the foundation for the country's republican system of government with separate and equal status for the three branches of government, namely, the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary (though in practice, the Executive branch dominates political life in the country) (Government of Sierra Leone, 1991). The 1991 Constitution dictates that supreme legislative powers rests in Parliament, the law making organ of the nation while supreme executive authority resides in the office of the president and members of his cabinet. Judicial power to interpret the constitution and laws of the land are vested in the judiciary, headed by the Chief Justice.

Although a former British colony, Sierra Leone's political institutions are closely patterned after the model of presidentialism in the United States government. The president in Sierra Leone is both head of state and head of government. He or she also enjoys the official title of commander-in-chief of the Sierra Leone Armed Forces and the Sierra Leone Police. The president appoints and heads a cabinet of ministers, subject to the approval of Parliament. Sierra Leone's Parliament has a unicameral chamber with 124 seats with each of the country's fourteen districts represented. The country's parliament has the distinct characteristic of having reserved 12 seats for Paramount Chiefs from each of the country's 12 administrative districts while 112 members are elected during the presidential elections.

Sierra Leone is rich in minerals, and diamond constitutes the country's economic base – a fact that got the world's attention because it was one of the primary engines that drove the intensity of hostilities during the civil war (hence the coinage of the term, "Blood Diamonds"). The country is among the top 10 diamond producing nations in the world with mineral exports still remaining its primary source of foreign currency. The past thirty years of endemic mismanagement and conflict have witnessed the dissipation of the country's economic and social life (UNDP, 2008). The current level of education, nature of economic activity and physical infrastructure are an apology by any standard of evaluation. Although the Sierra Leone Civil War is generally seen as resulting from the spilling over of the Liberian conflict into its borders, its intensity and prolonged devastation has been ascribed to a culture of endemic corruption in the government, political marginalization under an official one-party state and decades of government neglect of certain areas of the country's interior.

Liberia

Liberia is located on the west coast of Africa, right by the Atlantic Ocean and bordering Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. The country has a population of almost 3.5 million with

a land mass of about 111,369 square kilometres (43,000 sq mi). Liberia has a unique history compared to its African neighbours because of special historic ties to the United States (Government of Liberia, 1985). It is the only country in West Africa, and among one of the very few in Africa that was not subject to the European scramble for Africa. It was founded and colonized by ex-slaves from the US under the patronage of a philanthropic organization known as the American Colonization Society in 1821-1822. Liberia is divided into 15 Counties, which are subdivided into Districts. The Districts are further subdivided into Clans. Monrovia is the country's administrative and commercial capital.

The government of Liberia is modeled after the institutional infrastructure of presidentialism in the United States (Government of Liberia, 1985). In the regard, although Liberia and Sierra Leone have different histories (the latter being a former British colony), they have similar political institutions based on a presidential system of government. The government of Liberia has three branches (Legislative, Executive and Judiciary) which are separate and equal under the country's Constitution. Like its neighbour, Sierra Leone and, indeed, much of Africa, the Executive branch which is headed by the President of Liberia (who is both the head of state and the head of the government) dominates political life in the country. The Legislature of Liberia is a bicameral body with an upper chamber Senate and the lower chamber House of Representatives. The upper chamber has a total of thirty senators, consisting of two senators from each of the nation's fifteen counties. The lower chamber consists of 64 seats, distributed among the 15 counties based on the number of registered voters, with a minimum of at least two from each county.

The modern politics of Liberia dates back to the military-led coup of 1980 which ousted then-president William R. Tolbert (GOL, 2009). This event ushered in a period of political and social turbulence with strong tribal cleavages that eventually culminated in the country's devastating civil war lasting from 1989 to 2003. Moreover, like its African neighbours, Liberia has been plagued by widespread corruption, and after 1980, political instability.

Liberia's economy has historically relied heavily on iron ore and rubber exports, with some further dependence on foreign direct investment and exports of other natural resources, such as timber (GOL, 2009) The country's agricultural sector is largely subsistent, consisting of activities such as livestock, rice, and aquaculture (including inland fish farms and fishing along the coast). The history of the nation's economy is a case of dependent exploitation in which a small minority, the Americo-Liberian elite, enjoyed exclusive collaboration in trade and investment with foreign investors, marginalizing the vast majority of the country. A long history of exclusion of the indigenous Liberians manifested itself in the privileged and relatively wealthy Americo-Liberian class in the urban and coastal area and an underclass consisting of the indigenous peasantry. This socioeconomic crack along ethnic line eventually degenerated into a chasm that shaped the structure of the country's economy and politics.

Development Policy and Planning in Sierra Leone and Liberia

Sierra Leone and Liberia have made tremendous progress in transitioning back to civil societies. The civil war in both countries brought economic activities to a virtual standstill and devastated the countries' economic infrastructure. Since the cessation of hostilities, these countries have benefited from massive infusions of international aid to assist in their transition. The process of rehabilitation and resettlement following the end of hostilities in the region is

almost complete and by all account, it appears like these two countries are socially and politically positioned to make economic recovery. Despite their successful transition, however, Sierra Leone and Liberia still face significant challenges. Unemployment is extremely high in both countries, especially among the youth and ex-combatants. About two-thirds of their respective populations make their livelihood in subsistence agriculture, which accounts for 52.5% of national income.

Despite their social fragmentation, like most developing societies Sierra Leone and Liberia nurture certain developmental aspirations that they express in terms of material and social progress that amounts (in varying degrees) to a replication of the experience of industrialized countries. Moreover, the governing elites assume that the state is engaged in some sort of centralized undertaking to achieve those aspirations. Since the end of the civil war, Sierra Leone and Liberia have sought to make drastic and rapid social changes through the pursuit of the twin goals of nation-building (from out of the ravages of war) and socioeconomic progress (Government of Sierra Leone, 2003; Government of Liberia, 2009). The related goals of social and economic progress refer to sustained and widely diffused improvement in material and social welfare. The notion of development in Sierra Leone and Liberia, therefore, provides the underlying philosophy for the creation of a system of political and administrative institutions directed towards mobilizing the nation's human and material resources aimed at economic and social modernization. These collective aspirations often articulated and reinforced by the narratives of the governing elites, set the context and provide the justification for political and administrative action.

In the five years immediately following the cessation of hostilities, development goals in Sierra Leone and Liberia were focused on the basic reconstruction and consolidation of a sense of peace and security and a functioning society (Government of Sierra Leone, 2005; Government of Liberia, 2010). In more recent years in both countries, the narrative of development has gradually focused on longer-term goals, like rebuilding the economy by reviving its various sectors, such as commerce, manufacturing and mining.

A new policy framework of development management has also been introduced over the past few years in both countries. Like most countries in the developing world, the framework of development policy in Sierra Leone and Liberia is provided by the international financial institutions' (IFIs) development template – the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) (GOSL, 2009; GOL, 2009). The PRSP is an ambitious document that covers every aspect of social, economic and political development.

An interesting aspect of the PRSPs in the developing world is how similar they tend to be from country to country, despite the insistence of the World Bank and other international donors that the documents are based on locally driven consultative processes (World Development Report, 2009). Given the power dynamics of donor-recipient partnerships, it is hard not to wonder to what extent the PRSPs often reflect the ideational sensitivities of international donors. Nevertheless, the PRS is the centre-piece of development management in Liberia, and the document contains major policy issues such as Peace and Security; Economic Revitalization; Infrastructure/Services; Governance and Rule of Law. A significant part of the PRS as their respective National Development Plans is a vision of economic development consisting of promoting and sustaining broad-based private sector-led economic growth, investing in people-centred initiatives, and reducing poverty (GOSL 2009; GOL, 2009). This policy goal represents

Sierra Leone and Liberia's development vision of addressing the perennial problem of a private sector that operates within an inequitable and inefficient market structure in which a small number of foreign businesses dominate the formal sector.

Comparing Economic Development Management in Sierra Leone and Liberia

Over the past decade of development management in Africa, the rhetoric of privatization and market-based mechanisms of service delivery prevalent in the 1980s and 1990s has been somewhat softened in favour of emphases on issues like decentralization, devolution and state-society partnerships. These ideational shifts are not without practical consequences as administrative structures are reconfigured and principles and processes of development policy management in the developing world reflect these changes. Although Sierra Leone and Liberia are no exception to these phenomena, however, ideational rhetoric is often filtered through pragmatic constraints and other contextual features unique to each country.

Four key observations can be made about economic development management in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Firstly, as already noted earlier, Sierra Leone and Liberia have very similar economic development plans under the PRS framework. Both countries' vision of development fundamentally seeks to nurture a vibrant private sector that could serve as the engine of growth and development through employment creation, income generation and, ultimately, poverty reduction. As part of this strategy, their governments promise to provide support in the development of small and medium-sized enterprises through the provision of micro-financing, re-activating centres for skills training, and facilitating access to international markets for value-added products (GOSL, 2009, GOL 2009).

Also, development management in the two countries is set within a context of a high dependence on international aid, with over 50 percent of their operating and developmental budget financed by donors. The World Bank and United Nations Development Program (UNDP), along with a number of bilateral donor countries (especially the US's USAID and the UK's DFID), have been the principal international players in these arenas of development policy coordination and control.

Secondly, the general framework of development management in Sierra Leone and Liberia is relatively centralized, especially in terms of policy development and coordination. In Sierra Leone, the coordination of international assistance has been gradually but effectively centralized within the Office of the President (including the Vice President). Although there are several development policy coordination committees, including the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC), the Poverty-Reduction Steering Committee (PRSC) and the Poverty Reduction Working Committee (PRWC), in practice the Office of the President has effectively assumed control and coordination of development policy implementation (Government of Sierra Leone, 2009; Koroma, 2004).

The structure of development assistance coordination comprises the Sierra Leone Development Partnership Committee (DEPAC) as the policy organ, and the Development Assistance Coordinating Office (DACO), located in the Office of the President, serving as the technical support structure of DEPAC. The rationale given by the government for setting up DACO is that it will ensure "better and timely information on aid flows and their use; improve planning and monitoring of aid utilization to avoid duplication or gaps; increase aid effectiveness

and reduce transaction costs of aid management” (GOSL, 2009) Together, these institutional loci make up the key arenas of development policy coordination in Sierra Leone.

In Liberia, a Donors’ Conference held in 2004 (just after the war) to address Liberia’s Reconstruction concluded in a resolution for the creation of a government-led committee for the implementation and monitoring of the Results Focused Transitional Framework (RFTF) as part of the necessary steps to ensure effective use of resources and to review the status of RFTF implementation and cooperation among donors and the government. A two-track coordinating framework was put in place, consisting of; first, the RFTF Implementation and Monitoring Committee (RIMCO) which was to provide overall policy guidance and direction; and second, nine RFTF Working Committees (RWCs), providing technical level oversight over progress at cluster level and reporting to RIMCO, through the RIMCO Support Office (RSO).

Despite being an innovative tool for post-crisis management and coordination, the RFTF suffered from some technical, organizational and financial constraints primarily owing to inadequate skills available in key administrative and management. There were also widespread problems of coordination and accountability. A new coordinating structure known as the Liberian Reconstruction and Development Committee (LRDC) replaced the RFTF, with the hope that lessons would be drawn from the experience with the constraints of the RFTF. The LRDC structure provides the President with a means of enhancing first, partner coordination; and second, internal government management. The LRDC is thus aimed at enhancing coordination with external partners and also using its central location within the country’s management structure to monitor the implementation of the national reconstruction and development agenda through the cabinet and heads of autonomous agencies. The LRDC, in this regard, provides the President and cabinet a centralized institutional infrastructure for setting goals, identifying working resources, and working with partner agencies in their delivery of programmes.

The LRDC structure itself is composed of four Working Committees (WCs) formed around the four pillars of Liberia’s reconstruction and development strategy. The four committees are the Security Committee, Economic Revitalization, Governance and Rule of Law, and Infrastructure and Basic Services. To ensure government leadership, each of the WCs is chaired by a government minister in the respective pillar. The WCs are co-chaired by identified sector partners and are composed of line ministries/agencies, commissions, UN Agencies, donors and key NGOs active within the area. The WCs are responsible for coordination, monitoring, evaluation of projects and programs and regular reporting of progress. A Steering Committee (SC) serves as the over-arching body of LRDC. It is chaired by the President with membership comprised of key Ministers (especially the Chairs of the WC) and heads of major partner organizations (including regional partners). The SC provides overall direction, sets very specific goals for each group, and ensures that activities are consistent with the reconstruction and development strategy.

A third observation about development management in Sierra Leone and Liberia is that although they have a similar framework of policy coordination in terms of being relatively centralized under the Office of the President, however, their institutional infrastructure of economic development program management and delivery is differs between the two countries. In particular, Liberia has separated macroeconomic and monetary policy under the Ministry of Finance on the one hand and industrial, entrepreneurial and sectoral development under the Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs. Thus much of the strategic and proactive

engagement in economic development management aimed at economic diversification and private sector development in Liberia is primarily based in the Ministry of Planning & Economic Affairs (MoPEA). Although being one of the newest cabinet-level departments in the Liberian government, the ministry has enjoyed a central place in the institutional infrastructure of development management in the country. MoPEA is responsible or undertaking economic studies for planning and economic policy to foster, promote, and develop the Liberian economy.

MoPEA has three departments, namely; Administration; Economic Affairs and Policy; Regional and Sectoral Planning. The Department of Economic Affairs and Policy engages in National Economic Development Policy and Planning by undertaking economic studies for planning and economic policy; and preparing long-range and intermediate-range economic development plans. It is also responsible for National Development Coordination and Management. In carrying out this function, it is expected to analyze the interrelationship and internal consistency of various proposed programs and projects; review progress made on all programs and projects which have been adopted, and report findings and recommendations to the Executive Committee of the National Planning Council. Moreover, the department provides External Support Monitoring and Coordination by reviewing, coordinating the process and record all external aid and assistance programs (in consultation with the Ministry of Finance).

Beyond the core functions, the Ministry's Strategic Plan calls for a "strategic focus" on internal and external areas aimed at achieving the maximum impact in revitalizing the Ministry and refocusing its activities on the existing national agenda within the framework of the Poverty Reduction Strategy. One of the key strategic goals of the Ministry, in this regard, is to nurture effective partnerships (internal and external) through fostering harmonization and alignment of partner activities and implementing revised NGO Policy and forming strategic partnership on economic and growth strategy with World Bank.

The institutional infrastructure of economic development management and delivery in Sierra Leone is concentrated within the Ministry of Finance and Development (MFD). The administrative machinery's ability to actively engage in private sector development, however, appears to be undermined by the fusion of development policy with finance because unlike MoPEA in Liberia, the MFD's outlook is predominantly one of macroeconomic management. For instance, the main objectives of MFD are to; formulate and implement financial and economic policies to achieve sustainable economic growth for poverty reduction; identify and pursue revenue-generating sources for enhanced domestic revenue mobilization; formulate and implement budget policies consistent with prudent spending for improved service delivery; manage government's external and domestic debt to achieve lasting exit from the debt burden; and coordinate and manage bilateral and multilateral donor assistance to achieve timely interventions and effective utilization of donor resources.

While monetary and fiscal policy are important, and provide the bedrock for a sound market economy, the complexities of nurturing a private sector in such a fragile environment require a proactive engagement on the part of the state with organized businesses, small and medium-sized enterprises and organized interests within the informal sector in order to fully leverage the country's entrepreneurial talent. A proactive engagement or outreach would seek to extend the security and opportunities of the formal sector to the highly energetic and talented, but poorly organized entrepreneurial pool in the informal sector. Development management thus requires an administrative capacity for policy and institutional coordination, for analysis, and for

communication among public agencies and with key implementing partners. In particular, because of its close connection to the MFD, the overarching conservative policy environment of this ministry has imposed its operational culture on private sector development policy.

A fourth observation that can be made about development management in Liberia and Sierra Leone is the nature of interministerial coordination within their respective administrative machineries. Liberia's Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs (MoPEA) has a Department of Regional and Sectoral Planning with two offices (known as Bureaux), supervised by two Assistant Ministers. The Department proposes sectoral and regional policies, directs the formulation of plans, programmes and projects based on approved policies; directs the provision of advice to line ministries and local administration on the preparation of sectoral and regional plans. More importantly, the Bureau of Sectoral Planning interacts with all line ministries of Government, specifically consulting with line ministries in the preparation of sector plans in accordance with government priorities. The coordination of programs is grouped within four Divisions: Social Services Sector Planning Division; Infrastructure Planning Division; Productive Sector Planning Division; State- Owned Enterprise Planning Division.

In Sierra Leone, MFD plays a central role in ensuring interministerial coordination for economic development governance. The ministry is comprised of an Administrative Division, a Central Planning Unit and supervises the National Authorizing Office, a quasi-government institution. Also, another autonomous unit known as the National Poverty Alleviation Strategy Co-coordinating Office (PASCO) was established within the Ministry in March 2002 to coordinate the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). In terms of strategic management aimed at private sector development or economic diversification, MFD's Central Planning Unit, along with PASCO, the autonomous unit, are supposed to work with other ministries such as the Ministry of Trade and Industry in the planning process, formulation and coordination of sectoral policies and priorities. Although interministerial coordination is considered germane to the effective resource mobilization that could stimulate private sector development and economic diversification, however, the role of other ministries with related policy mandates remains unclear.

A fifth characteristic of development management in Liberia and Sierra Leone is their institutional arrangements for administrative decentralization. Both countries seek to strike a delicate balance between maintaining program coherence through centralized coordination and control on the one hand, and local adaptation, flexibility and ownership in service delivery on the other. Perceptions of an overly centralized management infrastructure within the capital city could delegitimize the state in the eyes of citizens, leading to public apathy and disengagement in countries that prioritizes nation-building in their development aspirations and rhetoric.

In Sierra Leone, although the hub of economic development management in general is the Ministry of Finance and Development (MFD), nevertheless, the Ministry of Local Government and Community Development (MLGCD) has the mandate to assist in the identification, planning, implementation and monitoring of development programs that foster poverty reduction and the socio-economic revitalization of the urban and rural sectors. The devolution of some of MFD's administrative and delivery functions are supposed to be housed with the MLGCD. However, the MLGCD is overshadowed by the hegemonic administrative control of MFD which renders dubious the reality of administrative decentralization and devolution.

In Liberia, even though there is considerable centralization of policy coordination, efforts have been made to promote decentralization and devolution of program delivery towards lower jurisdictions at local government levels and at the frontlines of the administrative machinery. For instance, the Bureau of Regional Planning within Liberia's Ministry of Planning and Economic Affairs plays a critical role in the area of national reconstruction and development. The Bureau is mandated to ensure that there is balanced, equitable development in Liberia, and that all regions in Liberia benefit from development projects. The Regional Planning Bureau spurs reconstruction and development at the regional level and provides assistance to local governments, including cities, counties, municipalities and districts with issues related to comprehensive planning, zoning and sub division regulations, land use planning, hazard mitigation programmes, environmental planning, community development, and the like.

Moreover, the Liberian government has developed what are referred to as the County Development Agendas (CDAs) – a mechanism of grassroots consultation that allows ordinary Liberians to articulate a future direction for their country. For instance, county-wide consultation exercises were undertaken in all fifteen counties between September and December 2007. Citizens representing the various clans, towns, districts and county government, along with our partners in development, interacted to identify the pressing needs and priority action areas to achieve sustained development. The CDAs represent an effort on the part of the Liberia government to achieve a more cohesive policy and strategy as well as reduce the highly centralized administrative and policy infrastructure away from Monrovia and on to the regions and counties.

Discussion and Conclusion

To the extent that structural features of public organizations affect the nature of policy implementation, public administration in developing countries must balance its pursuit of integrated service delivery and devolution of managerial authority with the time-tested principles of hierarchy, specialization and standardization in constitutional democracies such as Sierra Leone and Liberia. From the above analysis of the institutional infrastructure of development management in these two countries, one would conclude that each country struggles to balance apparently contradictory prescriptions of structural configuration for administering substantive policies such as economic development. In guarding against the machinery and process of the civil service being too fragmented, a considerable degree of centralization is maintained in both countries. Achieving integrated and coherent economic development policy, it seems, requires that public management involves centralizing, coordinating and controlling at the centre, and in the case of Liberia and Sierra, directly under the Office of the Presidency.

Moreover, the departments mandated with the task of managing economic development policy in Sierra Leone and Liberia are not self-contained entities but, rather, are part of a larger institutional framework. The operational rules of public management centre upon workflow interdependencies of a pooled, sequential or reciprocal character, and the necessity of achieving consensual outcomes dictates strategies necessary to overcome obstacles to the interdependencies in question. These agencies are thus expected to develop governance arrangements for their engagement with the strategic environment within which they operate – though in practice they still struggle to fulfil these mandates.

The current model of public management in much of Africa, including Sierra Leone and Liberia, however, operates within the framework of democratic development. This means that the institutional infrastructure of development management has to include structural arrangements for the public sector's engagement with society. Some level of decentralization and devolution of managerial authority to local jurisdictions is to be expected. Development management in the two cases is thus characterized by a complex mix of strategies aimed at responding more effectively to disparate players and interests outside the state (including community coalitions as well as private sector organizations), as they stake their claims in program development and delivery. With the emergence of the now predominant governance discourse, therefore, the complex relationships between administration, politics and democracy provides the institutional arena for the dance of development management in Africa. The emergent global rhetoric of administrative reforms guided by laudable principles of democratic development must often confront the dangers of rendering the machinery and process of public management too fragmented. Sierra Leone and Liberia are navigating these murky waters of discourse and pragmatism in their structural reforms for development management.

Finally, administrative centralization and decentralization are not without their tradeoffs. Although decentralization has been heavily promoted as consistent with principles and processes of democratic development management, it has its own difficulties, such as program fragmentation, loss of accountability and policy capture by powerful societal interests. The centralization/decentralization conundrum in public administration cannot, however, be resolved in the abstract. The "laws of the situation" often determine the best course of institutional design (Follet, 1951). In the context of post-conflict societies, some measure of centralization aimed at greater policy coordination and control is an essential part of enhancing the capacity of the state. However, attending to some measure of decentralized responsibility for program delivery would reinforce the legitimacy of the state and consolidate a sense of nationhood. Moreover, in breaking the long inertia of detached public management for which their administrative machineries were known, the public sectors in Sierra Leone and Liberia may need to give greater attention to their engagement with their environment. The relationship between the administrative subsystem and the political and social systems of which it is a part is even more significant in the post-war context of forging a new sense of nationhood in the aftermath of war.

Bibliography

In progress...