

Peacebuilding Support Office

Briefing Paper on Local Governance and Democracy in Post-Conflict Sierra Leone
Emerging Issues and Implications for Peace and Development

Executive Summary

The history of local governance in Sierra Leone since independence in 1961 suggests that failing to empower local governing bodies with the mandate and capacities to generate and manage financial resources for public service delivery can stifle effective and accountable local governance. Besides posing a developmental challenge, weak local democratic structures have also had a negative impact on peace and security. The alienation of particular groups, such as youth and migrants, and denying them access to land and other sources of income are viewed widely as some of the underlying causes of the conflict.

In post-war Sierra Leone, international partners have supported the restoration of the paramount chieftaincy and establishment of Local Councils to facilitate broad-based recovery and peacebuilding. Relations among the central government, the Local Councils and chieftain authorities remain unclear, however, on a number of key issues, such as tax collection and public service delivery. Although institutional frameworks have been put in place for the Local Councils to begin to deliver much-needed social services to war-affected populations, fiscal decentralization is lagging behind. It is imperative that the issue of revenue sharing between the center and regions, and between the Local Councils and the chieftain administrations, be addressed to avoid the Local Councils becoming a replica of the failed local governance schemes that existed prior to the civil war. For the Local Councils to become a legitimate and effective agency in providing basic services, administering devolved state functions and acting as a liaison between the citizenry and the central government, they need financial, technical and political empowerment so that they can perform functions assigned on a sustainable and independent basis.

This briefing paper considers several options for strengthening local democracy and governance in post-war Sierra Leone, by giving special attention to the role and challenges faced by Local Councils and the chieftain authorities. Among the key questions under consideration include:

- What is the role of traditional authority in post-conflict Sierra Leone? Can existing (pre/wartime) governance mechanisms be transformed to promote local democracy and governance?
- What are the specific issues and strategies that should be taken into consideration for local governance reform in post-conflict states?
- Given the multi-sectoral nature of local governance (development, justice, democracy), what kinds of mechanisms can be established to develop and monitor the implementation of a holistic approach to transforming local governance structures?

In support of on-going PBC engagement with Sierra Leone, this paper will provide an overview of these fundamental issues and offer concrete policy options for moving the country's local democracy and governance agenda forward.

Policy Options

I. For the 2008 Elections of the Local Councils:

Building on the progress made prior to the 2007 Elections and addressing the potential sources of dispute for the 2008 Elections:

- Amend the provision in the 1965 Ordinance to allow public meetings in chiefdoms to be held with the permission of the police and notification to the paramount chiefs.
- Ensure that the boundary delimitation carried out by the National Election Commission and approved by the Parliament for the 2007 elections is consistent with wardens to be represented on the Local Councils

II. To be completed before the 2008 Elections:

To ensure that voting in 2008 will be based on the merit of the Local Councils and their efficacy as the agents of service delivery and local development:

- Accelerate the capacity building of local councils so that they can take responsibility for the devolved functions from line ministries
- Resolve and set the ratio of local tax sharing between the Local Councils and chiefdom authorities
- Accelerate the transfer of government resources for service delivery by the Local Councils
- Decide the percentage of revenues from diamond and other mineral resources to be allocated to the Local Councils and begin transferring
- Complete the harmonization of conflicting legislations with regard to local governance (based on the list prepared by the Decentralization Secretariat for the consideration of the Legal Review Task Force).
- Revisit the recommendations of the national consultation organized in 2003 on the structure of local Governance, especially as they pertain to a quota for women.

III. Structural changes that can be sought in concurrence with constitutional referendum

Given the multi-sectoral dimensions of local governance, the demarcation of responsibilities between the Local Councils and chiefdom authorities may be explored holistically and structurally in the context of constitutional debates:

Formula A) Chiefdom authorities to concentrate on issues of customs and traditions and the Local Councils to assume all development and revenue-related functions

Possible measures:

1. Reappoint Paramount Chiefs to be presiding officers of the customary court, preserving their social authority;
2. Replace the court chairperson with an observer from the Local Councils trained in statutory laws and human rights to ensure a recourse to higher courts if necessary
3. Transfer chiefdom police functions under the auspices of the National Revenue Fund and reorganize tax inspection schemes (under which chiefdom police personnel will be fully paid and trained state agents)
4. Ensure that legal and constitutional reform provides for complete insulation of traditional authorities from active involvement in politics

Formula B) Accelerate the transformation of chieftdom authorities from within

Possible measures:

1. Schedule chieftdom elections regularly to facilitate the turnover of paramount chiefs, pending legal reform to change the current lifetime status of paramount chiefs
2. Change the rules of the chieftaincy election from an electoral college system to one of universal suffrage.

Local Governance in Post-War Sierra Leone: Emerging Issues and Implications for Peace and Development

Introduction

The analyses of the root causes of the civil war in Sierra Leone, including the public perceptions of the war uncovered by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, suggest that for many Sierra Leoneans, especially the youth, the main motivations in joining the rebellion were to gain access to basic needs—security, food and education—and the desire to express dissatisfaction with the level of corruption and nepotism that was prevalent in public administration and finance (2004c, Humphreys and Weinstein 2004). The post-conflict reform of local governance is therefore not only a developmental exercise to promote community-based delivery of social services and development, but a critical component of peace consolidation.

Since 2002, significant achievements have been made toward the establishment of local government structures with the restoration of paramount chiefs and the creation of the Local Councils. Yet the local governance reform process has been, and will continue to be, highly political and contentious. It will involve, among others, (a) the empowerment of the Local Councils, which will necessitate a transfer of certain resources and responsibilities from chieftom authorities and the central government, and (b) clarifications of the boundaries of customary authority, especially in the areas of justice, policing and land distribution within chiefdoms.

The emerging dynamics of local governance in post-conflict Sierra Leone encompass: (1) a tendency, especially among the youth and former combatants, to replace the existing structures of decision-making and resource (re)distribution symbolized by the system of the paramount chieftaincy (which they attempted to destroy through the civil war); and (2) the fact that chiefdom administrations continue to be one of the key players in village life while the role of the Local Councils slowly takes effect. The upcoming elections of the Local Councils in 2008 will be a litmus test to measure the level of perception among the constituencies with regard to their legitimacy and efficacy vis-à-vis chiefdom authorities.

Comparative Overview

Frequently, traditional authorities play a major role in post-conflict recovery and development. In many conflict and post-conflict countries, such as in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Rwanda, Somalia, Tajikistan and Timor-Leste, a range of traditional authorities—based on kinship, religion or neighborhood associations—have facilitated communal reconciliation and rehabilitation with the assistance of international actors. The delivery of aid through these alternative networks of solidarity has become an attractive policy option for donors who consider that “along with efforts to strengthen capacity and accountability at the central level, strengthening local or community capacity for service delivery is often a critical element of a state-building—and peace-building—strategy in fragile states”(2005:4-6).¹

¹ The World Bank's lending for Community-Based Development (CBD) or Community-Driven Development (CDD) increased from \$325 million in 1996 to \$2 billion in 2003 and the share of projects with a CBD/CDD component has grown from 2 percent in 1989 to 25 percent in 2003. Ghazala Mansuri and Vijayendra Rao, "Evaluating Community-Based and Community-Driven Development: A Critical Review of the Evidence," ed. Development Research Group (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2003), 2. UNDP's decentralization programs have evolved significantly over the past decade, expanding from administrative decentralization to the devolution of political, financial and executive responsibilities. From 1997 to 1999, the total resources committed by UNDP to local governance and decentralization increased by 81 percent over the preceding five years. "The UNDP Role in Decentralization and Local Governance: A Joint UNDP-Government of Germany Evaluation," (United Nations Development Programme Evaluation Office, 2000), 6-7.

However, research has also shown that despite the merits of immediate and decentralized outreach to local populations, the wholesaling of social services without strengthening mechanisms of accountability can constrain the participation and empowerment of marginalized groups such as women and the poor, and lead to the capture of aid benefits by local elites (2004b:23, Pozzoni and Kumar 2005). Especially when local development relies on historical forms of social cohesion such as chieftaincy, “building on what exists may enhance the legitimacy of community councils and the returns of project investments...the inclusion and active participation of marginalized groups may prove difficult” (Bermeo 2003, Strand, et al. 2003:6). The literature on aid effectiveness has also suggested that unless local governance is integrated into the political process in which accountability and transparency can be ensured over the allocation of internal (and external) resources, development will be viewed as a scarce private good and the legislature will become “the place to press for favors and patronage, rather than for policy outcomes, and this will once again tend to reinforce the patrimonial elements in the local political economy” (Moss, et al. 2006:16).²

The effectiveness of local governance hinges to a large extent on relationships between the center and the localities, and on the context of political and institutional reforms. In Ghana, one of the models for the design of local governance in post-war Sierra Leone, the political involvement of traditional authorities is constitutionally limited. The evolution of traditional authorities in Ghana followed a similar path as in Sierra Leone during the colonial era, whereby a Paramount Chief was the custodian of land, social development and justice, and the 1957 Constitution reserved one-third of the membership of local governments for chiefs. The post-colonial government reversed much of this policy. The 1992 Constitution categorically bars traditional authorities from engaging in party politics. Local Government Act of 1992 does not have a provision for the automatic membership of chiefs on district councils, except for a clause that not more than 30 percent of the district assembly membership may be appointed by the President in consultation with traditional authorities and other interest groups in the district.

Some scholars characterize decentralization in Ghana as “de-concentration” rather than “devolution,” in which the government built an extensive and powerful state apparatus in rural areas and staffed them with agents deployed from the center (Boone 2003). The role of chiefs in social and economic development has been minimal and chiefs appear to be reluctant to get involved in partisan politics. The alienation of chiefs, however, has led to local development based on the perceptions of government agents and their views of local needs, rather than those of local populations. Consequently, there is an increasingly popular demand for a greater role for traditional authorities as a way to explore more participatory and locally-driven approaches to development (Kwame 2001).³

In contrast, in Senegal, the central government devolved state structures more extensively, giving traditional authorities cash grants, loans for agricultural inputs and equipment, and other resources to develop the local economy. Although economic liberalization and the general decline in agricultural export since the 1990s have weakened the regime’s capacity to transfer resources into rural areas, the power sharing between the center and regions remains one of the main determinants of electoral politics in Senegal. Finally, decentralization in Uganda may be considered a middle ground: the delivery of

² Consequently, “instead of protecting the public interest, favoritism may dominate policy, resulting in narrow rather than broad-based reconstruction...despite its virtues, multi-party politics can degenerate into ‘money politics.’” Tony Addison, “Africa’s Recovery from Conflict: Making Peace Work for the Poor,” ed. UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (Helsinki: UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research, 2003), 3..

³ The World Bank is currently exploring how to integrate them into social and economic development through special lending facilities called Leaning and Innovation Loans to improve education, environmental protection and HIV/AIDS prevention in parts of southern Ghana.

primary health care and education has been decentralized, and staffing decisions are made at the district level, while district funding largely comes in the form of conditional grants from the center with explicitly identified instructions (2003).

Sierra Leone: Political Dimensions of Local Governance

In Sierra Leone, the pre-independence divide between colony and protectorate and the dissolution of local governments in 1972 left traditional authorities in a stronger political position than many of their counterparts in West Africa. Since the end of the civil war, Sierra Leone has made significant strides toward establishing accountability and transparency for the distribution and redistribution of resources at the local level by convening elections for paramount chiefs in 2002 and for the Local Councils in 2004.

While the 2007 elections—organized under the auspices of the National Electoral Commission (NEC)—have been hailed as a testament of commitment and capacities demonstrated by Sierra Leonean institutions to uphold democratic principles, local and international observers have noted that several potential sources of dispute remain unresolved. For instance, the Public Order Act of 1965 provides that any person seeking to convene public meetings in chiefdoms have to notify and receive an approval from paramount chiefs in advance, which opposition parties have frequently complained is discriminatory against them. Given the interference from chiefs and some government officials observed in the 2004 elections of the Local Councils, it is imperative that this provision is revised before the 2008 elections to allow campaign-related activities without the prior and discretionary consent of chiefs, pending the approval of appropriate authorities (such as the NEC and the police). Furthermore, boundary delimitation carried out by the National Election Commission and approved by the Parliament for the 2007 elections should be consistent with wardens to be represented by the Local Councils

Paramount chieftaincy

Although lineage structures of communal settlements had long existed in Sierra Leone, the organic form of the chieftaincy emerged from political and economic turmoil following the British arrival in the mid-19th century as means of self-defense and preservation (Richards, et al. 2004) The authority of the paramount chieftaincy was formally established in 1938 by the Native Administration Act based on an administrative model adopted by the British in Northern Nigeria. It granted paramount chiefs with fixed salaries, tax authority, the power to enact by-laws and issue orders for social services (e.g., voluntary labor) and organized customary court system. The system of chiefdom councils established by the Tribal Authorities Act of 1964, and is composed of the paramount chief, section and town chiefs, an electoral college of councilors, and chiefdom administration consisting of a varying number of staff, (including court functionaries and chiefdom police). Paramount chiefs were, and continue to be, the primary agents of tax collection at the local level. Tax collectors are usually accompanied by chiefdom police, and defaulters are brought to customary courts. Financed by grants from the central government as well as local tax and court receipts, chiefs have long provided a range of social services for their constituencies, including education, health, agriculture and forestry.

Since those who could afford to pay tax were related to certain families, only among them the position of paramount chief and resources associated with it were distributed. Particularly marginalized in this structure of hierarchy were migrants and people who did not have kinship connections to the taxpaying ruling families, which at present include some of ex-combatants and war widows. The youth were also affected negatively, especially those from less privileged lineages, as marriage was a matter of strategic alliance (especially among the village elites) and not only did it require the approval of chiefs but young

men had to labor for permission or for the families concerned, often for years without compensation or payment (Richards, et al. 2004).

Post-Conflict Restoration of Chieftom Administration

The government with the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement (1999) and the support of international partners began to explore the structure of post-war local governance. In consultations funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) mainly in accessible southern and eastern chiefdoms a variety of grievances were aired against the chieftaincy system. These included (a) persistent discrimination against women, the youth and other underprivileged families, (b) limited scope of participation in the selection of chiefs, (c) mismanagement of resources, including aid, and (d) corruption in local justice and service delivery (some chiefs had imposed informal fines and levies in lieu of formal tax systems that were no longer in use). A separate forum of consultation sponsored by UNDP echoed similar criticisms, as well as dangers of reconstituting alleged abuse of power and interferences by political parties and the government in the affairs of chiefdom administration (1999).

Despite these shortcomings, chiefdom administrations were reinstated in much of the south and east in 2000, supported by the DFID-funded Paramount Chiefs Restoration Project located in the Governance Reform Secretariat of the Sierra Leonean Ministry of Presidential Affairs. Richard Fanthorpe in his evaluation of the program for the DFID argues that “Fear of the consequence of a post-war power governance vacuum in rural areas prompted DFID to design a programme for restoring paramount chiefs. This was enthusiastically supported by the SLPP government, which was keen to re-establish political control over the countryside. These concerns and interests have so far overridden efforts to reform chiefdom governance in the light of grievances voiced in the above-mentioned chiefdom consultations” (2003:59). Elections for paramount chiefs were held between December 2002 and February 2003 to fill 63 offices vacated during the civil war

Yet soon after chiefs were reinstated, criticisms of their misappropriating humanitarian and development aid resources surfaced among international and local aid agencies. DFID commissioned evaluations found the widespread resentment against chiefdom administrations for the lack of accountability, transparency and inclusion in decision-making and resource management. Consequently, when the government pressed for continued international assistance following the 2002-2003 elections of paramount chiefs, on the ground that the same investment in houses should be made in the newly accessible areas of the north and east, donors decided to concentrate on supporting the government’s plan to establish local councils (Thomson 2007:21).

Local Governance Act and the Local Councils

A nation-wide consultation organized in 2003 to canvas public opinion on the structure of local government resulted in three main recommendations pertaining to the establishment of the Local Councils, including (a) election of candidates on a non-party basis, (b) no reserved seats for paramount chiefs and (c) a quota for women. Yet all of these were rejected by those voting for the Local Governance Act—predominantly males, chiefs and government officials—in March 2004 (Nickson 2004). The Act instead provided for a city council (Freetown), five town councils and 13 district councils. Councilors would include elected members and members nominated by paramount chiefs. Among twelve councilors in town and district councils, chiefs can select between one and three. The first

elections of the Local Councils were conducted in May 2004 and the Local Councils were formally inaugurated in June 2004 with 456 councilors (330 Councilors are members of the ruling SLPP, 115 are members of APC and ten are registered as independent).

The Local Councils are tasked to “promote the development of the locality and the welfare of the people in the locality with the resources at its disposal and with such resources and capacity as it can mobilise from the central government and its agencies, national and international organisations, and the private sector (2004: S21). A range of benchmarks have been achieved by the Local Councils, including the development of three-year rolling plans, organization of ward committees and technical planning committees, and preparation of financial statements. However, while political and administrative decentralization appear to have progressed, fiscal devolution is lagging behind.

Accountably and Transparency in Resource Management

The nature of fiscal decentralization was one of the main contentions among those involved in the establishment of the Local Councils. Some from international financial institutions advocated that the powers of the Local Councils should be limited to the administration of central government transfers, while others argued that independent authorities for taxation should be given to them. Some bilateral donors were of the view that chiefdoms should be allowed to receive their current allocations of income and that fiscal authorities should thus be lodged in both the new councils and the chiefdoms (2004a). The Sierra Leonean government also resisted pressure from some donors to reserve a fixed proportion of central state revenue for transfer to the Local Councils (Fanthorpe 2005). Ultimately, a grant system—including block grants for local investment and tied grants to finance primary health, waste management, agricultural services and water supply—was established, while (1) chiefdom administrations continue to collect local tax but (2) overall fiscal authority rests with the Local Councils, including power to raise user fees and charges.⁴ These financial arrangements resemble those of the failed pre-war arrangement.

The financing of local governance has been overly dependent on international donors and could be potentially unsustainable. The Local Governance Act of 2004 states that the central government is to provide: (1) Administrative Grants and (2) Grants for Devolved Functions (vertical sector-specific transfers); while donors, mainly the World Bank and DFID, co-finance (3) the Local Government Development Grant (LGDG) with the government, for which the Local Councils must raise 50 percent of project costs. Through the World Bank-funded Institutional Reform and Capacity Building Project, approximately \$17.2 million have been disbursed by donors since July 2004, but the total government contribution to the process has been small, at the level of approximately \$216,971 since 2005.⁵ Only recurrent expenditures have been devolved to date and not grants for service functions. Development funds being utilized by Local Councils are the externally funded LGDG for rehabilitation of roads, agricultural and markets. The recurrent (non-salary and non-interest) expenditures were disbursed at the rate of 4.4 percent and 8.7 percent of the total recurrent government expenditures in 2005 and 2006 respectively, but with significant delays—concentrated in the fourth quarter of the year—due to serious backlog at the Ministry of Finance.

The continued efficacy of Local Councils in designing and implementing participatory development will be untenable without political and financial commitment from the center. Furthermore, the ability of the Local Councils to mobilize alternative resources has been extremely limited: the own-source revenues as a percentage of their total revenues is only 18 percent or 7 percent of GDP at the meager per capita rate

⁴ In the transition period of 2004-2008, only service specific grants have been and will be available to the Local Councils.

⁵ Although the government has approved \$62,000 for 2006, no funds have been released as of the first quarter of 2007.

of \$0.29 (2007). The poor performance in revenue generation is a reflection of (a) the lack of clarity between chiefdoms and Local Councils in terms of their roles in revenue collection and management, thus creating tension between the two, and (b) the absence of improved service delivery, raising suspicions among taxpayers about the legitimacy of the Local Councils.

In order to avoid the failure of the pre-1972 District Council structures and its repercussions on local governance in pre-war Sierra Leone, resolving the question of revenue sharing between the Local Councils and chiefdom authorities will be of particular importance. Historically, local tax—which is a head tax levied on adults at the rate of Le 500 or 20 US cents—has been collected by chiefdom authorities.⁶ The 2004 Local Government Act provides that local taxes and mining revenues collected locally should be shared between chiefdom authorities and the Local Councils, and gives the latter the authority to set the rate and determine the share of the local tax that they receive as precept. Many of the Councils have raised the rate of local tax at a flat annual amount from Le 500 to Le 5,000 and there are variations in the proportion of revenue sharing between councils and chiefdom administration, ranging from 40/60 to 50/50 respectively, with the responsibility for collection falling on the chiefs.

Considering the low level of alternative revenues generated by the Local Councils thus far, prompt and full payment of local tax precepts—whatever the rates may be—will be critical to their success in performing devolved functions. Yet chiefdom authorities are unlikely to embrace the transfer of tax-related duties to the Local Councils. Although it is unclear to what extent in the past administrative expenses for chiefdom administrations were covered by grants from the central administration out of national budgets or local tax collected by them, as of 2002, grants for chiefdoms were able to finance salary costs for about one month in three, leaving many chiefdom staff under- or un-paid (Jackson 2007).

Partial revenues from mining have been also redistributed by chiefs. Since 1985, the Government's Gold and Diamond Office (GGDO) has been in charge of purchasing and trading of diamonds, and the government earns 3 percent of the total value of all diamonds exported, which is then redistributed in the following way: Consolidated National Revenue Fund (0.75 percent), GGDO operational costs (0.75 percent), Mining Community Development Fund established in 2001 (0.75 percent), Independent Valuator Fees (0.40 percent); and Mines Monitoring Fees (0.35 percent). Revenues from the 0.75 percent tax for the Mining Community Development Fund (DACDF) are distributed among the chiefdoms in the areas proportionately to the number of mining licenses held in each territory. By the end of 2004, 54 chiefdoms benefited from the total of \$1.9 million paid by the government (2006). Because no official rule was made about how the funds were to be used by chiefdoms, however, the money has been “mismanaged or embezzled by chiefs who were displaced during the war and have little attachment to their people” (Malan and Meek 2003:130). In line with the decentralization policy process, DACDF payments are expected to be channeled through the Local Councils in the future, but specific formulas for doing so seem yet to be established.

Conclusion

Many scholars and NGOs have cautioned that post-conflict reconstruction in Sierra Leone presents a risk of reconstructing the political-economic structures that caused and escalated the conflict in the first

⁶ The Chiefdom Council Ordinance of 1938 also provides that chiefs can make by-laws to impose general and other fees and set their rates to finance services they provide. While the Local Taxes Act and the amendment of the Chiefdom Treasures Act of 1972 redefined local tax as tax to be collected by a local authority and specified that their rates should be determined by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (later the Ministry of Local Development), given the abolition of the District Councils in 1972, chiefdom authorities continued to assume the role of tax collection.

place, including the role of the paramount chieftaincy and the collapse of local governance structures in 1972. Yet changes are taking place, albeit incrementally, within those restored structures of power. Forty-four percent of paramount chiefs have been elected since 2002 and some of the new members are highly educated (e.g., overseas during the civil war) and more amenable to working with the Local Councils. The Local Councils, when fully functioning, can be a potential growth engine by providing much need social services and directions for development

Traditional authorities such as chieftaincy can, and do, play a critical role in conflict situations by restoring order and providing a venue for aid distribution by external actors assisting in humanitarian and development aid. The extent to which they continue to be a constructive partner in post-conflict reconstruction is contingent on the existence of institutional and political frameworks that can facilitate accountable and transparent decision-making and resource management, as they by nature conserve and encompass traditional divisions between the strong and the weak. Organizing elections at the local level is therefore crucial to introduce competition and new choices, and the Government of Sierra Leone and those assisting should be commended for having done so in the early phases of transition from war to peace, despite financial, logistical and security difficulties. Furthermore, notwithstanding the restoration of chieftaincy that was unpopular from the beginning and divergent views over the scope and level of fiscal decentralization, donors and aid agencies have for the most part acted in concert with each other in supporting the Local Councils, rather than adopting a piecemeal approach to empowering different agents of local governance simultaneously.

However, complex challenges remain. For the Local Councils to become a legitimate and effective agency in providing services at the local level, administering state functions that are devolved and acting as a liaison between the citizenry and the central government, they need financial, technical and political empowerment so that they can perform functions assigned on a sustainable and independent basis. Moreover, given the multi-sector nature of local governance that involves not only technical and financial aspects of development but democratic participation, the Local Councils should be and can be a mechanism to identify, design and implement a holistic approach for the transformation of political, economic and social structures that affect people's daily lives. In this context, measures to facilitate the clear demarcation of responsibilities between the Local Councils and the chieftaincy may be explored in the context of the proposed constitutional referendum, such as the regulation of the customary court structures in relation to the statutory laws or the transformation of chiefdom authorities by accelerating the turnover of chiefs or changing the electoral college system in selecting them.

The upcoming elections of the Local Councils in 2008 will be a litmus test to measure the level of perception among the constituencies with regard to their legitimacy and efficacy vis-à-vis chiefdom authorities. Whether the Councilors can overcome political interests and interferences observed in the 2004 elections and compete on the basis of merit depends in large part on the progress of service delivery and local development, for which the accelerated fiscal decentralization and transfer of revenues from local tax and mineral resources need to take place in the immediate future. Furthermore, it is imperative that the issue of revenue sharing between the center and regions, and between the Local Councils and the chiefdom administrations, be resolved to avoid the Councils becoming a replica of the failed local governance schemes that existed prior to the civil war. Thus far, international commitment to improved local governance has prevented this scenario, but continued dependence on aid by a country that should not be poor given its mineral deposits, is slowly waning donor enthusiasm to continue providing the same level of aid.

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