
UNAMSIL--A Peacekeeping Success Lessons Learned

By RI Advocates Clifford Bernath and Sayre Nyce
October 2002
Refugees International is an independent, non-profit, humanitarian advocacy organization. RI generates lifesaving humanitarian assistance and protection for displaced people around the world, and works to end the conditions that create displacement.
A Peacekeeping Success: Lessons Learned from UNAMSIL

Introduction:
In June 2002, Refugees International (RI) completed its eighth mission to Sierra Leone in the last four years. Over that period, the country has undergone significant change. When we first went there in 1998, the country was still in the throes of a decade-long civil war marked by murders, amputations, mutilations, rapes and other atrocities.

In June 2002, we saw a country at peace. In May 2002, the country had its first peaceful, democratic election in more than a decade. Armed soldiers no longer lined the streets of the cities; opposing armies had been demobilized and, for the most part, disarmed. The rudiments of a democratic government were emerging. People were conducting business and going about their lives without fear, talking of a future of hope for the nation and for their livelihoods. And perhaps most telling, refugees who had fled Sierra Leone during the fighting were returning to their homes.

One of the major reasons for this transition from civil war to the beginnings of peace, stability and democracy is the success of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), which was deployed in 1999. Although this peacekeeping force faltered initially, it eventually became what is widely acknowledged as one of the UN’s most successful peacekeeping missions.

This study shows that UN peacekeeping missions can successfully end conflicts and help restore peace and stability in troubled states. The fact that Sierra Leonean refugees are now returning to the country also demonstrates the impact of peacekeeping operations on refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs – people who have fled their homes but remain within the borders of their home nation).

In 2001, RI was the first organization to visit villages in eastern Sierra Leone that had not seen international aid for a decade. RI interviewed hundreds of Sierra Leoneans who had been displaced by the ten-year civil war, including boys who had been forcibly recruited to fight, girls who had been gang-raped, and children who had their limbs amputated. The displaced people had lost their homes, their farms, their jobs and many family members.

In June 1998, a refugee told us what she had seen: “After looting all they could find, the soldiers took the daughter and the woman’s brother to the center of the village. ‘You did not want a military government,’ they said. ‘You voted for [President] Kabbah. Now go to him and ask for help.’ They grabbed the little girl and, holding the head of the mother to force her to watch, they hacked off the girl’s hand saying: ‘We will show you, starting with your daughter, what we will do later to you.’ The little girl fainted. Then the soldiers grabbed the mother and sliced her hand off as well. Next they grabbed the brother, this time cutting both hands off.”

RI published an account from a 13-year-old ex-combatant who was kidnapped by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) in 1998 when he was 10 years old. He was

---

1 RI report “Sierra Leone Refugees: Survivors of an Invisible War”
given an AK-47, but it was too heavy for him to carry, so they gave him a pistol and sent him to the front lines with the Small Boys Unit, some of whom were as young as six or seven. He refused to fight, but he was beaten until he submitted. He explained that he was made to take drugs and forced to sniff white powder. In 2000, he was reunited with his family in Guinea, and he exhibited violent behavior and signs of trauma.”

In yet another report, RI talked about the experiences of an 18-year old girl who had been a prisoner of the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council (AFRC), which fought alongside the RUF, for two years. Her abductors carved "AFRC" deeply into her skin so that that she could not run away without being identified and then murdered by rebel forces. “During my time with AFRC, they forced me to be a fighter. I went with them on mission with a pistol. I never killed anyone, but I did wound someone with a machete,” she explained. In addition to the traumas of being abducted, being forced to fight, and losing her family to the war, this girl was also raped almost daily during her two years with the AFRC.

It is against this background that RI undertook this study of UNAMSIL. UNAMSIL has been cited by Sierra Leoneans and the international community as a major factor in the remarkable recovery of Sierra Leone since May 2000. President Kabbah reinforced this fact at his inauguration. In his inaugural address on July 12, 2002, he said, “Today, we are enjoying a substantial level of safety and security, thanks to the support of nations and organizations some of whose representatives are here today, namely, the Federal Republic of Nigeria, the Republics of Guinea, Ghana and Mali, acting on behalf of ECOMOG, and the current support of UNAMSIL acting under the mandate of the United Nations Security Council, the United Kingdom, the Peoples Republic of China, and the United States of America.”

Clearly, a convergence of events, both external to UNAMSIL and within UNAMSIL, shaped its ultimate success. But it is also clear that the most essential success factors were:

1. Alignment of political will and resources: The international community has committed to the success of the mission with the right mandate and the resources (manpower, equipment, training) to carry out the mandate.

2. Alignment of military force with stability programs that help foster positive alternatives to conflict, such as Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), and civil affairs projects.

3. Long-term commitment: Ending conflict is the immediate goal of peacekeeping because without peace there can be no stability.

---

2 RI “Notes from the Field: Sierra Leone” by RI advocates Sayre Nyce and Michelle Brown, dated July 3, 2001

3 RI Report “Sierra Leone: Essential for Peace Process -- Psychosocial Programs” by RI advocates Sayre Nyce and Camille Bonnant, July 18, 2000

4 The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) is a non-standing military force consisting of land, sea and air components, that was set up by member states of the ECOWAS to deal with the security problem that followed the collapse of the formal state structure in the Republic of Liberia in 1990.
Stability is needed to allow the elements of good governance (such as democratic elections, system of courts and laws, credible police and national military forces) to be put into place. In the absence of good governance, conflict will reignite. Peacekeeping forces must remain in place long enough and in sufficient strength to allow the institutions of good governance to take root.

**Purpose of Study:**

“Everyone left Sinje two days ago because many guns attacked the camps. Most of the families scattered. We saw fighting by the LURD [Liberians United For Reconciliation And Democracy]. One refugee was killed that I saw. A young man, about 22 years old, was shot and died. I saw it. The government then came and they did the worst. They were looting everything. Now there’s just a few of us here. Many others are coming. Thousands and thousands.” Liberian refugee entering Sierra Leone after fleeing fighting in Sinje refugee camp, Liberia, June 22, 2002.

Wars and other military conflicts are the main causes of the flight of men, women and children from their homes and countries. Today, there are approximately 15 million refugees (people who have fled their countries) and asylum seekers (people awaiting a refugee status determination); and an estimated 22 million IDPs. 5

This linkage between military conflict and refugee/IDP populations prompted **Refugees International** to look at the relationship between UN peacekeeping operations and their ability either to prevent conflicts from occurring or to bring about their speedy resolution.

Our goal was to identify a “successful” UN peacekeeping operation, and then, by analyzing the factors that made the mission a success, determine if those success factors can be applied to future operations.

“Success” is a subjective term, especially if we apply it to an ongoing mission. But in selecting UNAMSIL as RI’s test case, we are applying the term in a narrow sense: Prior to May 2000, the country was engulfed in civil war. In June 2002, there was no war, the country had conducted its first peaceful democratic elections since 1996, and refugees who had left the country a few years earlier have begun returning home. In those terms, UNAMSIL has been a successful mission.

The 1990s was a decade of disasters and failures for United Nations peacekeeping operations. In Bosnia, UN peacekeepers stood by helplessly as Bosnian Serb soldiers took UN troops hostage and killed thousands of people in what were supposed to be UN safe areas. In Somalia, conflicting mandates and missions, disagreements among UN participating nations and a fractious political situation with Somali warlord Mohammed Aideed kept UN peacekeepers at bay. The world remembers the scene of an American soldier’s body being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. Perhaps the most egregious failure was Rwanda in 1994 where UN peacekeepers were unable to stop the Hutus from murdering more than 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus across the country. The decade of UN

---

5 USCR World Refugee Survey 2002
peacekeeping was about to end on another failure—this time in Sierra Leone.

UNAMSIL has emerged as an example of a successful United Nations peacekeeping mission. Why has UNAMSIL succeeded when so many other missions failed? RI talked to civilian and military leaders and implementers currently assigned to UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone; British military and civilian personnel in Sierra Leone, London and the British Embassy in Washington, DC; representatives from the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in New York; members of the Sierra Leonean government; and US government personnel at the Departments of State and Defense. RI also conducted an extensive literature review. The list of success factors in this report, unless otherwise indicated, is a composite of that research and is not accredited to any single person or source.

Sierra Leone Prior to May 2000:

“The United Nations was founded, in the words of its Charter, in order ‘to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.’ Meeting this challenge is the most important function of the Organization, and, to a very significant degree, the yardstick by which it is judged by the peoples it exists to serve. Over the last decade, the United Nations has repeatedly failed to meet the challenge,” according to Lakhdar Brahimi, Under-Secretary-General for Special Assignments in Support of the Secretary-General’s Preventive and Peacemaking Efforts. 7

The spark that ignited the armed conflict in Sierra Leone came in March 1991, when Liberian warlord (now president of Liberia) Charles Taylor armed a group of dissident Sierra Leoneans. 8 (See Appendix A for a Sierra Leone/UNAMSIL timeline of key events.) Over the next decade, the violence continued despite regional attempts to broker peace. Numerous agreements, elections and ceasefires were negotiated over the years, only to be derailed by more violence, coups and general destabilization. After a series of incoherent interventions by major powers, regional powers, and private military companies, national elections were held on February 26-27, 1996, long before there was any sign of a firm ceasefire or peace agreement. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party emerged as President, but

6 Adapted from Institute for Security Studies Monograph 68 (Jan 2001), titled “Peacekeeping in Sierra Leone: UNAMSIL Hits the Home Straight” by Mark Malan, Phenyo Rakate, and Angela McIntyre.


8 These rebels, under the leadership of then-Captain Foday Sankoh, became the Revolutionary United Front (RUF)

9 Executive Outcomes (EO), a now defunct mercenary firm that was based in Pretoria, South Africa, was manned mostly by former members of the South African Defense Force. In April 1995, two Sierra Leonean corporations, Sierra Rutile and Branch Energy, brought EO to the country with the blessing of Valentine Strasser, the military ruler of the country. In return, the mercenaries were guaranteed $1.5 million a month in profits from diamond mines in Kono, the eastern part of the country, near the border with Guinea. Once in country, EO employed traditional Sierra Leonian hunters as scouts and brought in two of apartheid-era South Africa’s most highly decorated air force pilots. Most reports indicate there were between 150 and 200 EO fighters in Sierra Leone.
this premature experiment with democracy ended on May 25, 1997, when his government was overthrown. Over the first few years of the war, the population had been growing suspicious of collaboration between the Sierra Leone Army (SLA) and the RUF rebels. The 1997 coup confirmed this suspicion when the Armed Forces Revolutionary Council allied itself with the RUF and overthrew President Kabbah and sent him into exile in Guinea. To protect themselves against the soldier/rebels, people in various regions formed local armed militia known as Civil Defense Forces. After President Kabbah was overthrown, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) called on ECOWAS to send in its ECOMOG\textsuperscript{10} force to provide some stability to the country and to defend the Government of Sierra Leone. ECOWAS started negotiating with the AFRC and, in October 1997, reached an agreement\textsuperscript{11}. This agreement called for a 6-month ceasefire that was to be supervised by ECOMOG and for the reinstatement of President Kabbah. When the agreement was breached by the AFRC in February 1998, ECOMOG attacked the AFRC forces, kicked them out of Freetown and deployed its forces throughout more of the country. As a result of the efforts of ECOMOG and ECOWAS, President Kabbah was reinstated in March 1998.

On 13 July 1998, the Security Council established the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (UNOMSIL), with the authorized strength of 70 military observers, for an initial period of six months. The number of military observers actually deployed, however, was only 41. The Secretary-General named Special Envoy Okelo as his Special Representative and Chief of Mission, and Brigadier-General Subhash C. Joshi (India) as Chief Military Observer. In accordance with its mandate, the mission monitored and advised efforts to disarm combatants and restructure the nation's security forces. This was an impossible mission, however, because there was no disarmament or restructuring taking place. Fighting continued, with the rebel alliance gaining control of more than half the country. Unarmed UNOMSIL teams, under the protection of ECOMOG, documented reports of ongoing atrocities and human rights abuses committed against civilians, but they had neither the mandate nor the resources to stop the atrocities and abuses. The Security Council was kept informed of the activities of the Mission. In December 1998, the rebels began an offensive to retake Freetown and in January 1999 overran most of the city. This led to the evacuation of UNOMSIL personnel to Conakry, and the subsequent downsizing of the Mission's military and civilian personnel.

In 1999, rebel forces attacked Freetown again and came close to taking the city. ECOMOG and Kamajor militia loyal to Kabbah drove the rebels back from the city. An estimated 5,000 people died in the fighting. Socio-economic conditions continued to deteriorate.

\textit{RI recommends that the UN Security Council review the roles of Military Observer Missions, especially in areas in which armed conflict still exists. The presence of UN military forces with no means of protecting}
themselves or the civilian populations is a recipe for disaster.

On October 29, 1998, Refugees International warned the international community that ECOMOG might not be able to defend the nation. “Widespread perception holds that ECOMOG is unable to effectively defend villages or engage in battle with rebel forces.” When Freetown was attacked in January 1999, ECOMOG could not prevent the deaths of approximately 5,000 civilians and the mutilation of several thousand men, women and children. At this point, ECOMOG began considering how to withdraw from Sierra Leone. The international community and the Government of Sierra Leone, concerned by the withdrawal of ECOMOG and the instability of the country, pushed for a peace accord.

The Lomé Agreement was signed in July 1999. It led to the withdrawal of ECOMOG and to the replacement of the observer mission (UNOMSIL) with a UN peacekeeping mission (UNAMSIL) in October of that year. The agreement called for a ceasefire, the inclusion of RUF members into the government, reconciliation and reconstruction, pardon and amnesty of members of the RUF (including its leader Foday Sankoh), humanitarian efforts, and certain military commitments, such as disarmament. The UN force arrived in piecemeal fashion (initially about 6,000), with a troop strength that was too low to allow a widespread deployment.

The RUF broke the Lomé Agreement in May 2000 when it took 500 UNAMSIL peacekeepers hostage. The United Kingdom landed a well-armed force in Freetown with a combat (rather than peacekeeping) mandate and was able to stabilize the situation in Freetown. UK forces, consisting of about 900 marines, paratroopers and commandos, were deployed on May 7, 2000 to evacuate UK citizens and secure the airport so that UN reinforcements could be flown in. Under its emergency powers the government arrested the leader of the RUF and more than 100 RUF personnel. During the year, the UK troop strength rose to 5,500, according to a report in the UK newspaper, The Guardian, on March 22, 2001. After the hostage fiasco, there was an effort once again to negotiate with the RUF. The Abuja Ceasefire Agreement (Abuja I) was signed in November 2000 with a goal of revitalizing the peace process. The agreement demanded various military tasks to be completed by the RUF, such as the return of all weapons and equipment that were taken from UNAMSIL in May 2000. However, it was not until the agreement was reviewed in May 2001 that the peace process moved rapidly forward. The Abuja Ceasefire Review Agreement (Abuja II), facilitated by ECOWAS, led to the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of the RUF and the CDF. In addition, Abuja II pressured the RUF to give the Government of Sierra Leone the opportunity to expand its authority throughout the country.

On February 7, 2000, the Security Council, by its resolution 1289, decided to revise the mandate of UNAMSIL to include a number of additional tasks. It decided to expand the military component to a maximum of 11,100 military personnel, including the 260

---

12 RI Bulletin “Sierra Leone: Humanitarian Crisis.”
military observers already deployed. The Council also authorized increases in the civil affairs, civilian police, and administrative and technical components of UNAMSIL, as proposed by the Secretary-General. The Security Council again increased the authorized strength of UNAMSIL to 13,000 military personnel, including the 260 military observers by its resolution 1299 of May 19, 2000. On March 30, 2001, a further increase was authorized to 17,500 military personnel, including the 260 military observers. The Council took this decision by its resolution 1346, and, by the same resolution, approved a revised concept of operations. (See Appendix B for details on the development of the UNAMSIL mandate with each of these changes.)

**Sierra Leone After May 2000**

In May 2000, as the RUF was taking UN hostages, another UN disaster was in the making. If the UN could not fix Sierra Leone, getting money and support for other peacekeeping missions would be very difficult, if not impossible. The international community drew a line in the sand. Although it did not wholeheartedly support the UN or its peacekeeping function, there was no better alternative. UN donor nations had to save peacekeeping.

Success in Sierra Leone was helped by several non-peacekeeping events that were occurring at about the same time.

- International pressure on Liberian President Charles Taylor’s ability to wage war in Sierra Leone was weakening. He was facing UN sanctions, and diamond and travel bans. Taylor was further weakened when he launched a disastrous attack on Guinea. The RUF suffered heavy losses in the attack and Taylor lost prestige and much of his ability to wage war outside his borders.

- Arrest of Foday Sankoh in May 2000. Sankoh, sponsored by Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front (NPFL), and trained by Libya’s Colonel Muammar Gadaffi, led the RUF and launched the insurrection in 1991 that developed into the civil war in Sierra Leone. He was a signatory to the Lomé Agreement. Once he was arrested and was no longer a potential presidential candidate, the RUF became less interested in Freetown. The absence of Foday Sankoh from the political scheme also left a rift in the Republic of Sierra Leone Armed Forces (RSLAF) between the doves and the hawks. The hawks lacked the personality and ability to push their agenda.

- Role of the British. The United Kingdom has had a long-term relationship with Sierra Leone and was committed to supporting its government. As a member of the P-5, it played a critical role in garnering support for UNAMSIL from the other members. According to the Brahimi Report, the United Kingdom also deployed troops to Sierra Leone at a critical point in the crisis (outside United Nations operational control), providing a valuable stabilizing influence. They came as combatants, not

---

13 The Permanent Members of the UN Security Council: United Kingdom, United States, France, Russian Federation, and China.
peacekeepers, and sent a strong message to the RUF that they were not to be messed with. When 500 UN peacekeepers were captured by the RUF in May 2000, the UK reacted with an immediate show of force. The British gave UNAMSIL time and space to improve performance by helping to secure Freetown. The British have continued to contribute to Sierra Leone’s successful transition to democracy. Those contributions will be discussed later in this report.

**UNAMSIL Success Factors**

Prior to May 2000, when the international community committed itself to success in Sierra Leone and the United Kingdom brought in combat forces to stabilize the military situation, UNAMSIL had been doomed to failure. After the RUF attack, the United Kingdom and the international community decided that Sierra Leone would not fall to the rebels and that the United Nations must not have another peacekeeping failure. The operation had to be almost totally revamped. **Without this international will to succeed, none of the following success factors could have occurred.**

1. **Proper assessment of challenges and mission.** Originally, according to a senior UN official in Freetown, “UNAMSIL did not do well because of a bad assessment of the situation. The UN leadership felt that all parties had accepted the Lomé Agreement, which the RUF clearly did not. Soldiers were not briefed on the guerilla warfare nature of the conflict involving armed women and children. These bad assessments led to bad decisions about the mandate and the size of the force. The “will” to win means that decision-makers properly assess the military and political situations in the area of conflict, agree on the degree to which UN peacekeeping is the proper solution, and then commit to the resources needed to enable the peacekeeping force to succeed.**

**RI Recommends:** That the UN Security Council refine its assessment procedures that define the types of conflicts that are most suitable for a peacekeeping solution, and that lead to consensus among donor nations as to the mandates, missions and composition of each peacekeeping mission.

2. **Deploy a strong enough force to accomplish the mission.** The Brahimi Report pointed out that when the United Nations does send its forces to uphold the peace, they must be prepared to confront the lingering forces of war and violence with the ability and determination to defeat them. According to the Brahimi Report, “A mission such as UNAMSIL would probably not have faced the difficulties that it did in spring 2000 had it been provided with forces as strong as those currently keeping the peace as part of KFOR in Kosovo. The Panel is convinced that NATO military planners would not have agreed to deploy to Sierra Leone with only the 6,000 troops initially authorized.”

   After May 2000, the UNAMSIL strength was increased from 6,000 troops to 17,500 troops. The Nigerians played a leadership role in ECOMOG to obtain that strength. This increased presence allowed UNAMSIL to deploy to saturate the country and made it difficult for

---

14 Brahimi Report, para 106.
anyone in the country to mobilize rebel forces. Ultimately, people felt safe to go about their daily lives.

**RI Recommends:** That donor nations agree to support missions at the strengths determined by UN Security Council assessments for the duration of the peacekeeping mission.

3. **Deploy with a strong enough mandate.** The military force must be willing to use force to go to unsafe areas and clear out the rebels. In the case of UNAMSIL, most authorities agree that its initial mandate was strong enough to accomplish the mission, but the interpretation of the mandate was weak. According to one senior UNAMSIL source, “At the time, UNAMSIL troops were brainwashed into thinking that peacekeeping meant not fighting. RUF boys could tell the peacekeepers to give them their guns and they did.”

   Afterward, they were told to get control. This was a major turning point for UNAMSIL. “After May 2000, they were told that ‘yes, they were peacekeepers, but they could not be pushed around,’” the official said. It is also important for all parties to agree on the mandate. In a recent speech in Washington, DC, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, said “When people assess the success or failure of the UN in Sierra Leone, they confuse two things: War-fighting Force (the use of force to change the military situation) and Robust Deterrence (having a force that’s strong enough to close off a military option.) Some members of the Security Council wanted the first option. Troop contributors wanted the second option. The 17,500 man force was a robust deterrent; not a war-fighting force designed to close on the RUF.”

4. **The Force must be properly equipped.** Some of the first countries to begin the UNAMSIL build-up from 6,000 to 17,500 were able to provide manpower but little else. Among these were India, Jordan and Bangladesh. In a Pentagon press conference on May 9, 2000, the Department of Defense announced its willingness to help equip and move these forces for duty in UNAMSIL. At that time, many countries deployed for UN missions under a “dry lease” arrangement, in which countries provided manpower and the UN (and member nations) provided training and equipment. This was often a slow and ineffective process. Now most countries provide UNAMSIL troops under a “wet lease” arrangement in which the donor country provides the manpower and all equipment (including administrative) they need to perform their mission.

**RI Recommends:** That the UN Security Council ensure that mission mandates provide peacekeeping forces with the latitude to protect themselves and civilian and at-risk populations, and that support overall mission accomplishment.
Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program.

5. **Speed of deployment is critical.** Brahimi\(^{16}\) points out that the first six to 12 weeks following a ceasefire or peace accord is often the most critical period for establishing both a stable peace and the credibility of the peacekeepers. In the case of UNAMSIL, the United Kingdom provided the credible rapid response in May 2000 because the UN did not have the ability to mobilize quickly enough. In his report, Brahimi calls for a rapid response capability within the UN. \(RI\) has supported House Resolution 938, dated March 8, 2001, which calls for a UN force composed of at least 6,000 volunteers who train together and are appropriately equipped expressly for international peace operations, including civilian policing; and who are able to deploy within 15 days of a United Nations Security Council resolution to establish international peace operations.

**RI Recommends:**
1. That the proposals contained in the Brahimi Report pertaining to “rapid and effective deployment” be implemented. These include developing the “operational capabilities to fully deploy traditional peacekeeping operations within 30 days of the adoption of a Security Council resolution, and complex peacekeeping operations within 90 days.”
2. That the UN Security Council follow up on its study of developing a UN Rapid Deployment Force and make its case to the donor nations.

3. **That Congress pass H.R. 938 endorsing establishment of a UN Rapid Deployment Force.**

6. **Agreement among warring parties.** Although the Lomé Agreement had been endorsed by the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF, the RUF had not ceased its military operations. Brahimi notes that “As the United Nations soon discovered, local parties sign peace accords for a variety of reasons, not all of them favorable to peace. ‘Spoiler’ — groups (including signatories) who renge on their commitments or otherwise seek to undermine a peace accord by violence — challenged peace implementation in Cambodia, threw Angola, Somalia and Sierra Leone back into civil war, and orchestrated the murder of no fewer than 800,000 people in Rwanda. The United Nations must be prepared to deal effectively with spoilers if it expects to achieve a consistent record of success in peacekeeping or peace-building in situations of intrastate/transnational conflict.”\(^{17}\) The combined effects of the British military presence, the arrest of Foday Sankoh and the increased size of the UNAMSIL force combined to bring the RUF to the bargaining table.

**RI Recommends:** That the original UN Security Council assessment of mission feasibility contain a specific assessment of the wills of the warring parties to support any peace agreements as a factor in deciding the feasibility of deploying UN peacekeeping forces.

7. **Unified Command Structure.** In the early days of the UNAMSIL deployment, a number of organizational

---

\(^{16}\) Brahimi Report, para 87.

\(^{17}\) Brahimi Report, para 21.
problems existed. Operational decisions had to be coordinated (some sources say “approved by”) the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG). But the SRSG was often traveling and not accessible to the UNAMSIL commander. That (and personality conflicts) created friction between the two leaders. There was also a lack of coordination between the UN’s military mission and its humanitarian mission. Thirdly, there was no formal coordination between UNAMSIL and the U.S. Embassy and Country Team.

After May 2000, the Secretary General replaced almost all of the senior leadership and created new positions and relationships. In October 2000, he appointed Lieutenant General Daniel Ishmael Opande as Force Commander of UNAMSIL. In November 2000, UNAMSIL got a new deputy force commander and chief of staff. In January 2001, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) in Sierra Leone, Ambassador Oluyemi Adeniji, created a second deputy position by naming Mr. Alan Doss as DSRSG for Governance and Stabilization. His second deputy, Mr. Behrooz Sadry, is DSRSG for Operations and Management. In a UN release, Adeniji explained that “Sadry had experience in handling a broad range of political and administrative issues and would be principal deputy. Doss would be expected to deal with specific matters such as national rehabilitation and elections.”

Under this structure, Doss is triple-hatted: As DSRSG and Director of the UN Development Group (which includes UNDP, UNICEF, the World Food Program (WFP) and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA)), he bridges the gap between UN military and humanitarian operations. In his third hat as Resident Representative, he coordinates with the Country Team. Doss and Opande have developed a relationship that enhances diplomacy and negotiation, according to a senior UNAMSIL official. The new command and control structure and new leadership gave more autonomy for sector commanders. A senior military officer in the Ghana Battalion (GhanBat) told RI, “This is my sector, I am responsible. Levels of alert can’t wait for UN Security Council decisions.”

RI Recommends: That DPKO continue the practice of assigning a DSRSG who is dual-hatted with responsibilities for both peacekeeping functions and humanitarian functions.

8. Civil Affairs Operations (Hearts and Minds). UNAMSIL leaders realized that stabilization of the country required winning the respect and confidence of the Sierra Leonean people and the warring parties. Hearts and minds operations make the UN presence more meaningful to the population. Some units are helping to rebuild churches and mosques. Others provide medical care out of their own supplies. The Bangladeshis have built a new mosque. Others have renovated schools, hospitals, and dormitories for orphans and disabled children. UNAMSIL has become very friendly with the population. It provides a substitute for local government support in some areas.

In September 2001, RI traveled with UNAMSIL military observers and

---

18 United Nations Daily Highlights, 01-01-30, “Highlights from the Noon Briefing by Fred Eckhard, Spokesman of the Secretary-General, UN Headquarters, New York.
Pakistani troops to the newly disarmed district of Kono in Eastern Sierra Leone to witness the return of refugees. The RI team was dismayed to find only one international agency present to help the returnees. However, RI witnessed that the Pakistani Battalion had not only provided security and stability, but had also undertaken various humanitarian activities. They had engaged in rehabilitating schools, mosques and churches, as well as provided medical care for as many as 200 Sierra Leoneans a day using medicines from their own supplies. In addition, Pakistani troops also cut their own rations in order to provide food to vulnerable Sierra Leoneans.

According to a senior Pakistan Battalion (PakBat) officer, “We have civil projects to win the hearts and minds of the people. It’s part of our policy to win the hearts and minds of the people. For example, it used to take 5-6 hours to get from Kenema to Daru. Now it takes 2 hours because of the road improvements we made. The same [is true] with the road from Kailahun to Daru. We have distributed 10,000 footballs (soccer balls) to schools and children.” One important principal is impartiality. “We talked with the RUF about whether their fighting has made life better for them. It has not. We convinced them it was better to work with us,” the PakBat officer said. Other officials also stressed that UNAMSIL negotiated with RUF rather than attacked, whenever possible.

**RI Recommends:** Currently, these civil affairs (“Hearts and Minds”) activities are left to the initiative and resources of donor nations and individual commanders. **RI recommends that DPKO institutionalize these types of activities in peacekeeping planning and operations.**

9. **Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR).** In February 1998, the Government of Sierra Leone, backed by the ECOWAS and the UN, instituted a framework to undertake the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of combatants of the SLA, RUF, CDF and AFRC. DDR became part of the peace process in Sierra Leone.

The first phase was undertaken from September to December 1998. The DDR program to be implemented was initially designed to be executed by the Government of Sierra Leone with the assistance of ECOMOG and the UNDP, targeting all persons who belonged to any of the armed groups that participated in the civil war following the coup of May 25, 1997, a total of about 75,000 combatants (10,000 ex-SLA/AFRC; 55,000 CDF; 7,000 RUF and 3000 child combatants as well as 300 disabled). It targeted about 45,000 combatants (6,000 SLA; 15,000 RUF, 15,000 CDF, 7,000 AFRC and 2,000 paramilitary elements). Only about 3,200 combatants were disarmed, mostly ex-SLA/AFRC who surrendered to ECOMOG. The process was interrupted following the deterioration in the security situation and a rebel attack on Freetown on January 6, 1999.

The second phase was implemented in the framework of the Lomé Peace Agreement signed on 7 July 1999 and Security Council’s resolution 1270 (22 October 1999) which established and

---

Based on information provided by the UNAMSIL DDR Coordination Center, Freetown
mandated UNAMSIL to carry out the disarmament of combatants. Accordingly, the program was to be further reviewed and redesigned to represent a multi-agency effort, through an agreed Joint Operation Plan involving the Government of Sierra Leone, ECOMOG, UNAMSIL, UNICEF, the World Food Program and other agencies and donors. Five demobilization centers were established: Lungi (ex-AFRC/RUF/SLA), Port-Loko South (AFRC/RUF), Port-Loko North (CDF), Kenema (CDF) and Daru (RUF). It is important to note that in this phase, ex-combatants received, as part of the reinsertion package, a transitional safety allowance (TSA) equivalent to $300 each, payable in two installments. A total of 18,898 were disarmed. This phase was interrupted by the resumption of hostilities in May 2000, which also resulted in the taking of over 500 peacekeepers hostages by the RUF.

The third, and most significant phase, was undertaken from 18 May 2001 through 6 January 2002. It came as a result of intensive concerted efforts by ECOWAS and UN to bring the peace process back on track. Subsequently, a ceasefire was signed in Abuja on 10 November 2000, and an agreement reached on 2 May 2001 between the Government of Sierra Leone and the RUF to resume the disarmament. Accordingly, the disarmament was simultaneously re-launched in Port Loko (CDF) and Kambia (RUF) on 18 May 2001.

**RI Recommends:** DDR is an essential element in restoring peace and stability after the resolution of conflict. The UN Security Council should consider DDR activities in all peacekeeping operations. Funding for DDR should be part of the assessed donor costs of the overall operation; as opposed to voluntary funding through the World Bank.

**Future Factors:**
Brahimi says that United Nations peace operations entail three principal activities: conflict prevention and peacemaking; peacekeeping; and peacebuilding. Long-term conflict prevention addresses the structural sources of conflict in order to build a solid foundation for peace. Where those foundations are crumbling, conflict prevention attempts to reinforce them, usually in the form of a diplomatic initiative. Such preventive action is, by definition, a low-profile activity; when successful, it may even go unnoticed altogether.

- **Peacemaking** addresses conflicts in progress, attempting to bring them to a halt, using the tools of diplomacy and mediation. Peacemakers may be envoys of governments, groups of states, regional organizations or the United Nations, or they may be unofficial and non-governmental groups, as was the case, for example, in the negotiations leading up to a peace accord for Mozambique. Peacemaking may even be the work of a prominent personality, working independently.

- **Peacekeeping** is a 50-year-old enterprise that has evolved rapidly in the past decade from a traditional, primarily military model of observing ceasefires and force separations after interstate wars, to incorporate a

---

20 Brahimi, para 10-13.
complex model of many elements, military and civilian, working together to build peace in the dangerous aftermath of civil wars.

- **Peace-building** is a term of more recent origin that, as used in the present report, defines activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war. Thus, peace-building includes but is not limited to reintegrating former combatants into civilian society, strengthening the rule of law (for example, through training and restructuring of local police, and judicial and penal reform); improving respect for human rights through the monitoring, education and investigation of past and existing abuses; providing technical assistance for democratic development (including electoral assistance and support for free media); and promoting conflict resolution and reconciliation techniques.

Following the successful elections in Sierra Leone in May 2002, some people announced the success of the UN mission and began calling for the drawdown of UNAMSIL. But as President Kabbah, Ambassador Adeniji and other leaders have said publicly, and as every person interviewed for this study has stated, if UNAMSIL were to suddenly withdraw, Sierra Leone would undoubtedly return to its previous state of civil war. The reason is that its democracy is new and fragile. The government is not fully established, nor are people in place to run it. The army is not fully trained or equipped and its commitment to the new democracy is not yet tested or trusted by the population. The police force is not ready, nor is the legal system of courts and penal institutions established. The government has few funds and no tax structure. For now, and for the foreseeable future, UNAMSIL provides the stability that holds the entire structure in place.

These points were underscored in a letter from President Kabbah to Secretary General Kofi Annan on August 8, 2002. He wrote, “The escalating conflict in Liberia is threatening to destabilise the entire area once again. The withdrawal process should be linked to … the fragile political and security situation and the repercussions for peace and stability in the region.” In the letter, Kabbah asked for a three-month extension of UNAMSIL beyond the September 30, 2002 deadline.

In his latest report on Sierra Leone, Annan called for a six-month extension of the UNAMSIL mandate, with a phased downsizing after that and continuing through 2004. He wrote “The considerable political, human and financial resources invested in Sierra Leone so far have brought us to the verge of success. However, if not properly addressed, the challenges remaining in the country could easily undermine this progress.”

---

RI recommends that the Security Council continue to assess the phased drawdown of UNAMSIL. The drawdown should be tied to specific milestones in Sierra Leone’s political and economic stability. (For example, when the Civilian Police force is fully manned, trained and deployed, UNAMSIL forces should be appropriately reduced. When the RLSAF is trained, deployed and deemed dependable, the UNAMSIL forces would be again appropriately reduced.) The UN and donor nations and the GoSL should determine the milestones and related UNAMSIL drawdowns.

The British, working alongside the UN but unilaterally, have continued to be a factor in Sierra Leone’s success.

- Through its International Military Assistance and Training Team (IMATT), the British continue to train and equip the RSLAF and help them deal with fundamental issues of national sovereignty. They also conduct senior-level training to rebuild the Ministry of Defense.
- The British put about six people in key jobs to reduce tension between UN and UK in Sierra Leone and to improve communication within UN and UNAMSIL. The British also occupy several key positions in the government. Their goal is to train Sierra Leoneans to assume those positions.
- Training the police force is critical. There was no effective police force before the British trained one.

These functions are important to note because training of police and military are essential elements of creating an infrastructure for continuing success of the Government of Sierra Leone. In considering future operations, if the UN does not assume these tasks, some other entity must do so.

Sierra Leone is now at the juncture between peacekeeping and Brahimi’s third phase of peace operations: peacebuilding. This is new territory for the UN and its members. It harkens back to the Marshall Plan in Europe. It is long-term, open-ended, and expensive and has virtually no support in the international community. The United States has been particularly non-supportive of long-term peacekeeping commitments and has expressed its reluctance to participate in any peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan.

The international community has not come together on this issue. Officials in Sierra Leone have lamented that, if civil war returns to the country, the international community would almost assuredly put together another peacekeeping mission, but it will not provide the resources needed to prevent that civil war from recurring.

Peacekeeping operations must be seen as part of an overall strategy that also includes nation-building (economics, humanitarian, political, police and judicial). In Sierra Leone, these nation-building functions have been shared by the British (military training and equipping, civilian police training) and UNAMSIL (DDR, civic projects). The international community must stay the course. The problems that cause conflict are long-term; so are the solutions. As
the United States has learned once in Afghanistan, and may be about to learn there a second time, it is not enough to merely resolve military conflict. Without building up the infrastructure that can maintain the peace and promote democracy, the problems that led to armed conflict initially will ignite again.

**RI Recommends:**

1. **That the UN Security Council, DPKO and donor nations incorporate the missions and activities Brahimi describes as “peace-building” into the overall planning for peacekeeping operations and that the assessed costs to donor nations include the costs of peace-building.**

2. **The Brahimi Report contains 20 specific recommendations for improving peacekeeping planning and operations. Donor nations should implement the Brahimi Report recommendations.**

**Conclusions:**

A. UNAMSIL was successful because, after a weak beginning, the mission had the strong support of the UN Security Council and the international community. That support was translated into a strong mandate and a force with sufficient strength, logistics, and training to carry out its mandate. It was also successful because the leadership realized “victory” meant more than defeating an enemy. Victory meant a long-term commitment to demobilizing and disarming combatants and then to reintegrating them into society so they would no longer pose a military threat to the stability of the country. Victory also meant winning the trust and support of the civilian population and working with the civilian population to help them develop and restore good governance at the local and national levels. The chart on the following page depicts UNAMSIL success factors across a timeline from initial deployment to factors that must be carried into the future.  **All of these factors are applicable to future peacekeeping operations.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre: May 2000</th>
<th>May 2000 - To Date</th>
<th>Future Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UN Effort was unsuccessful</td>
<td>1. International Will (including strong backing of P-5 member)</td>
<td>1. Victory has not been declared and UNAMSIL has not been withdrawn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Right Mandate</td>
<td>2. Realization at DPKO that some form of peace-building is necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Properly sized, trained, equipped force</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Command structure provided for effective decision making, and for links between UN peacekeeping and humanitarian operations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Realization that battle for hearts and minds of people is as important as the military battle (civil ops, DDR, community programs)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. We can also learn from UNAMSIL’s mistakes. Poor planning and a faulty understanding of the state of the warring parties were the roots of UNAMSIL’s early failures. Although the parties had signed the Lomé Agreement, it was a flawed agreement that did not cause cessation of fighting. But the initial UNAMSIL force size and mandate were aimed at “monitoring” the ceasefire and assisting the Government of Sierra Leone in the “implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan.” It took from October 1999 to March 2001 for the UN to build the force to the size needed to carry the peace outside Freetown to the rest of the country. It was not until February 2000 that the UNAMSIL mandate was revised to include “UNAMSIL may take the necessary action to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel and, within its capabilities and areas of deployment, to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, taking into account the responsibilities of the Government of Sierra Leone.” Compounding these problems were the lack of a command structure that allowed rapid reaction by commanders on the ground, lack of coordination with UN humanitarian operations and NGOs, and a host of other structural problems. The chart on the following page depicts these problems across the same timeline as the previous chart. **All of these deficiencies can be avoided in future peacekeeping operations.**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre: May 2000</th>
<th>May 2000 - To Date</th>
<th>Future Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Poor intelligence and preparation. No agreement among warring parties. No understanding of nature of this conflict.</td>
<td>1. UN Security Council did not bring troop strength to 17,500 until Mar 2001.</td>
<td>1. No plan in place for Phase III – Peace-building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Observer force (UNOMSIL): Sent in when peace had not been established. Not staffed, equipped for mandate.</td>
<td>2. Lack of funding for remaining portions of DDR.</td>
<td>2. Peace-Building is not viewed by donor community as part of peace keeping (costs are not assessed).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lack of understanding of mandate and authority to implement it.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. UNAMSIL: Too small, ill-equipped, and ill-trained.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. No links to Country Team or NGOs.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. No public affairs structure to communicate with civilian population.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Lack of unified command structure needed for responsive decision making.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C. Lessons Learned: UNAMSIL clearly demonstrates that international peacekeeping operations can restore peace and stability to warring parties under the right conditions. When those conditions exist, it is in the interest of the international community to support peacekeeping operations. It is cheaper in the long run to commit resources to building peace than it is to fund the products of war: millions of displaced persons, poverty, atrocities and abuse. Furthermore, as we have seen, these products of war are also the breeding grounds of discontent that nurtures international terrorism. The United Nations and the donor nations must weigh the following points:

- UN Peacekeeping forces cannot resolve every situation. UN Security Council must thoroughly evaluate each situation and determine if peacekeeping forces can resolve the conflict.
- Mandates must be strong enough to allow the peacekeepers to accomplish the mission.
- Once peacekeeping forces are deemed appropriate, the international community must support them: properly sized, equipped and trained.
- UN and donor nations must recognize the long-term nature of many peacekeeping operations. Operations must win the war AND win the peace.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Start of Civil War. Foday Sankoh and RUF capture towns on border with Liberia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991 (Sep)</td>
<td>New constitution adopted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Captain Valentine Strasser ousts President Momoh in coup. Announces plan for multi-party elections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1995 | • RUF laid siege to Freetown  
• ECOMOG established to restore peace |
| May 95-Mar 96 | Executive Outcomes (EO), South African-based private military company, defends Freetown and trains elements of SLA |
| 1996 (Jan) | Strasser ousted in coup by Julius Maada Bio |
| 1996 (Feb) | Kabbah elected President |
| 1996 (Nov) | Abidjan Accord signed with Foday Sankoh/RUF |
| 1997 (May) | Kabbah deposed by Major-General Paul Koroma/RUF. Kabbah flees to Guinea. ECOMOG deploys |
| 1997 (Oct) | • UN Security Council sanctions against Sierra Leone  
• 6-month peace plan agreed upon by ECOWAS and Koroma (in Conakry)  
• Called for supervision of ceasefire by ECOMOG and UN observers |
| 1998 (Feb) | ECOMOG drives rebels from Freetown |
| 1998 (Mar) | Kabbah returns to Freetown |
| 1998 (Jun) | Nigeria announces withdrawal from ECOMOG. Impending departure causes ECOWAS, US, Brits to work on peace agreement |
| 1998 (Jul) | UNOMSIL established for period of 6 months |
| 1999 (Jan) | RUF/Sankoh seize parts of Freetown from RUF. 5,000 dead; tens of thousands dismembered/raped; 150,000 people displaced |
| 1999 (May) | • Lomé Ceasefire Accord  
• UN authorizes UNAMSIL (6,000 military personnel including 260 military observers) |
| 1999 (Nov/Dec) | • First UNAMSIL troops arrive: 133 Kenyan soldiers plus 4 ECOMOG battalions that were converted to UNAMSIL (Rest of troops arrive over period of months)  
• ECOMOG troops are attacked outside Freetown |
| 2000 (Feb) | UN votes to increase UNAMSIL strength to 11,000 and expands mandate to Chapter VII |
| 2000 (Apr/May) | UNAMSIL troops are attacked in east. Several hundred captured. RUF captures 13 armored personnel carriers and begins advance on Freetown. |
| 2000 (May) | • Rebels surround Freetown. 800 Brits and 5 warships arrive to evacuate British citizens and help secure airport. Foday Sankoh captured.  
• UN votes to increase UNAMSIL strength to 13,000 |
| 2000 (Aug) | • 11 British soldiers taken hostage by militia group called West Side Boys  
• UNAMSIL Force Commander (Jetley) departs Sierra Leone |
| 2000 (Sep) | • British forces rescue UK hostages (Operation BARRAS)  
• India/Jordan announce withdrawal from UNAMSIL (4,800 troops)  
• RUF attacks in Guinea. ECOBAS deploys 1796 peacekeepers at border convergence of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. |
| 2000 (Nov) | • Abuja I Ceasefire Agreement  
• New UNAMSIL Force Commander (Opande) arrives in Sierra Leone |
| 2001 (Mar) | • UNAMSIL deploys to rebel-held territories  
• UN grants increase in force level to 17,500 (includes 260 military observers and 60 civilian police) |
| 2001 (May) | • Abuja II Ceasefire Agreement  
• Disarmament of rebels begin  
• RSLAF begins deploying to rebel-held territories |
| 2002 (Jan) | • War declared over.  
• Disarmament of 45,000 rebels complete  
• UN agrees to set up war crimes court |
| 2002 (May) | Kabbah wins national election |
Security Council resolution 1270 (1999) of October 22, 1999:

- To cooperate with the Government of Sierra Leone and the other parties to the Peace Agreement in the implementation of the Agreement
- To assist the Government of Sierra Leone in the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration plan
- To that end, to establish a presence at key locations throughout Sierra Leone, including at disarmament/reception centers and demobilization centers
- To ensure the security and freedom of movement of United Nations personnel
- To monitor adherence to the ceasefire in accordance with the ceasefire agreement of May 18, 1999 (S/1999/585, annex) through the structures provided for therein
- To encourage the parties to create confidence-building mechanisms and support their functioning
- To facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance
- To support the operations of United Nations civilian officials, including the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and his staff, human rights officers and civil affairs officers
- To provide support, as requested, to the elections, which are to be held in accordance with the present constitution of Sierra Leone

Security Council resolution 1289 (2000) of 7 February 2000, the mandate has been revised to include the following tasks (acting under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations):

- To provide security at key locations and government buildings, in particular in Freetown, important intersections and major airports, including Lungi airport
- To facilitate the free flow of people, goods and humanitarian assistance along specified thoroughfares
- To provide security in and at all sites of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration program
- To coordinate with and assist the Sierra Leone law enforcement authorities in the discharge of their responsibilities
- To guard weapons, ammunition and other military equipment collected from ex-combatants and to assist in their subsequent disposal or destruction

The Council authorized UNAMSIL to take the necessary action to fulfill those additional tasks, and affirmed that, in the discharge of its mandate, UNAMSIL may take the necessary action to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its personnel and, within its capabilities and areas of deployment, to afford protection to civilians under imminent threat of physical violence, taking into account the responsibilities of the Government of Sierra Leone.

Security Council resolution 1346 (2001) of March 30, 2001:

"The Security Council ...Welcomes the revised concept of operations for UNAMSIL as set out in paragraphs 57 to 67 of the report of the Secretary-General [S/201/228 of March 14, 2001] and the progress already made towards its implementation, and encourages the Secretary-General to proceed to its completion; "

"The main objectives of UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone remain to assist the efforts of the Government of Sierra Leone to extend its authority, restore law and order and stabilize the situation progressively throughout the entire country, and to assist in the promotion of a political process which should lead to a renewed disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and the holding, in due course, of free and fair elections."