

Acknowledgements

Worthy of acknowledgement is the American Embassy who has funded this project and other related projects for one year, Ms Isabella Dowden, an intern from The London School of Economics for her input in formulating the questionnaire and answer sheet before returning to London. Ulric Quee for setting up the database and giving strong technical advices, and our respondents for making the Opinion Poll worth the while.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The most costly thing that could happen in Sierra Leone would be a recurrence of the civil war. It is in this light that every effort should be made to prevent such a catastrophe. Two institutions have been created in a bid to bring closure to the events of the last decade. These are the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Special Court.

The TRC on the one hand was established in order to obtain an impartial historical record of violations and abuses of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law relating to the conflict in Sierra Leone, from the beginning of the conflict in 1991 to the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement in July 1999; to respond to the needs of victims; to promote healing and reconciliation; and to prevent a repetition of the violations and abuses suffered.

On the other hand the Special Court's specific mandate is to address impunity by bringing to court those who bear 'the greatest responsibility' for the atrocities committed since 30th November 1996 as a means of deterring future insurgence.

For these two institutions to succeed it is vital for the people of Sierra Leone to understand, co-operate and support them in their quest to bring justice and lasting peace to the country.

In order to achieve this success it is essential to conduct research measuring the extent to which Sierra Leoneans understand these institutions, whether or not they are willing to co-operate and how far they support the TRC and the Special Court. Furthermore, it is necessary to assess people's perceptions of these institutions and gauge their concerns. This needs to be addressed so that as the TRC and the Special Court continue their operations they have the greatest potential for achieving their goals.

In a bid to break away from the norm of giving Freetown priority we conducted the Opinion Poll first in the provinces in November and in the Western Area in January.

Throughout this exercise, we maintained our position as a non-partisan, non-Governmental Organisation and as usual we do not intend interpreting the results but rather allowing the results to speak for themselves.

There are certain pointers however, that are worth mentioning, as they bring to light the magnitude of the suffering caused by the war. 1047 (82%) of our respondents admitted that they had to leave their homes because of the war and about the same number of people suggested that more priority should be laid on jobs, roads, housing, health and education.

The mode of dissemination of information also indicates that the radio has proven to be one of the most effective mediums of communication with 648 (71%) respondents hearing about the TRC over the radio and 628 (73%) of our respondents hearing about the Special Court via the same medium.

The hopeful message that the opinion poll brought about is the fact that Sierra Leoneans believe that both Institutions will benefit their country. 61% say so about the Special Court as opposed to 8% thinking the benefit was for the international community, 5% for the Sierra Leone Government etc and 60% saying that the TRC will be beneficial to every Sierra Leonean.

As an Advocacy Organisation we are pleased that Sierra Leoneans accept these institutions as this is paramount, and we will continue to ensure that their voice is heard in any decision making in this country.

Governance Department
Campaign for Good Governance

METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted to conduct this opinion poll was of random sampling questioning 100 people in each of the twelve districts dividing Western Area into two districts giving a total of fourteen districts. The research was conducted over a period of three weeks (Nov 2002) using field monitors trained in undertaking this kind of research in the provinces. For the Western Area (Jan 2003) we used students and an interviewer from the first opinion poll we conducted before the elections.

Initially, topical issues concerning the TRC and the Special Court were decided upon. These included the level of understanding, purposes, costs and benefits of the institutions. Following this, the questionnaire was constructed. It was decided to use the questionnaire format as this enables quantitative analysis of qualitative data. Additionally, questionnaires are a fast and efficient way of obtaining information from a large number of people over a relatively short period of time.

Most of the questions were closed answer so that results could be used quantitatively. Unfortunately, a disadvantage of closed questions is that often the respondent has his/her answer pigeon holed to suit the researchers criteria. Therefore, in order to minimise the impact of this; each question was phrased so that the respondent could either abstain from answering it or answer "don't know/unsure" etc. Furthermore, throughout the

questionnaire open questions were asked in order to gauge the opinions of the individual in greater depth and also to keep them interested in answering the questions.

With information available to us through our field monitors we were able to formulate a Timetable wherein every sector of our society could be reached either at home, on the street, in office or at the market depending on the time of the day. (Shops, garages and workshops were categorised under "offices".)

We ensured that in every district residents of the districts with profound knowledge of their district and the language spoken were used as Interviewers.

Campaign for Good Governance has twelve field monitors permanently based in all the twelve districts. These monitors were trained adequately and equipped to train four people each in every district to conduct the opinion poll. They worked for three weeks starting on November 1, 2002, approaching individuals on the streets, offices, their homes and on farms in their respective districts. During the entire exercise the interviewer randomly selected and approached the interviewee, explaining to them the essence of the opinion poll seeking their consent before progressing.

(Specific questions were constructed under certain criteria, which involved ensuring that each question could be effectively translated into Krio or the dialect of that locality.)

In attempting to conduct a completely random sample, cognisance was taken of the estimated population in each district, their occupation and approximate percentage of women, men and youths.

Controlling for Districts

For this opinion poll to be truly representative, priority was placed on ensuring that each district was proportionally represented in the poll. As it is presumed that the demographics of the country including tribal background, income, and political views vary significantly by province or district as the case might be.

It should be noted however; that due to the recent resettlement and repatriation programmes it is difficult to get an exact population number of any district.

Controlling for location within District

The next most significant demographic variation would be among people in different locations at any given time, such as on the street, in an office or at the farm. This varied by District and with the help of our resident field monitors we were able to obtain a fairly good assessment of "where about of most people at a particular time". It is in the light of this that interviews were conducted even at night in some areas as a means of capturing every facet of society.

Controlling for Gender

For an opinion poll of this nature to be truly representative attempts should be made to obtain an equivalent number of male and female interviews, gender therefore was another strata in randomising this poll. In order to achieve this, our focus groups with the field monitors revealed that women were to be found in their homes during the night and in the market place or the farm during the day.

Controlling for Time of Day and Day of Week

During focus group discussions with our field monitors we realised that based on several factors it was unrealistic to draw a strict time schedule for all the Districts. Therefore, different schedules were drawn for each district for example at chiefdom levels most of the youths were likely to be found in the market place, on the farms and in fishing communities at the wharf therefore their time was regulated to fit thus.

Selection Protocol: (Randomly Choosing Interviewees)

As in the first opinion poll we conducted on the "Elections and the Peace Process" interviewers were trained in rigorous randomising selection methods in order to eliminate any personal biases they might have in people whom they approach to interview. When interviewing on the street, interviewers had to turn alternatively left and right, choose a person, then count 11 people away from that person in order to choose the next person they approached. They had a similar procedure for selecting houses, offices / shops. Once in a home or office/ shop, interviewers were required 3 times out of 4 to ask to speak to someone other than the person who greeted them, by asking 1 time out of 4 to speak to someone of a different gender, and 2 times out of 4 to speak to someone older or younger. This was to avoid a gender bias.

Training, Approach and Questions

The 12 Campaign for Good Governance field monitors who are constantly monitoring Human Right violations and governance issues in the 12 Districts of Sierra Leone and the governance staff of the Campaign for Good governance who had already done an opinion poll late 2001 and an intern from the UK participated just in the development of the methodology, approach and drafting of the questions for the poll. Radio and Television programmes, newspaper commentaries and ongoing debates were used as sources for the questions. The approach was the standard approach used in our last opinion poll as in every case we wanted to assure the interviewee of their anonymity and non-partisanship, and prepare them to answer controversial questions.

A time was set apart where the trained interviewers were given the opportunity to practice the approach and polling techniques in trial interviews. On their return we discussed problems faced and built on them. All our interviewers had letters of introduction stamped and signed by the Coordinator.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The 12 Campaign for Good Governance field monitors were asked to train 4 interviewers in each District and were responsible for discussing any problems encountered and closely scrutinised their answer sheets for errors or irregularities. Data was then inputted into a database, which was designed using the Microsoft Access package. We acquired our results by setting up a database through which every question was sorted under the category of which they were asked.

Problems Encountered

Even though trained personnel conducted the interviews, the results obtained were not without their limitations: -

Firstly, the responses to some questions could not be analysed statistically because they were not recorded under the defined categories, and as a result, we had a very wide range of responses. For instance, "Question 24. As a Sierra Leonean what should be your contribution for the success of the TRC?"

Secondly: - due to the unavailability of accurate and up to date population statistics per district, we were unable to obtain a sample that was proportionate to the true population of the district to make it representative, we therefore standardised it using 100 people per district.

The final problem encountered is that even though we expected to have responses from 1,400 people, we only received responses from 1279 people. This means that some interviewers failed to interview their expected quota. We also detected that for some questions, the total number of responses were less than 1,279 which means that the recording of responses was poorly done by some interviewers. These problems were detected during the inputting. Therefore, calculations were done based on the total number of responses per question. For example, the total responses for question 21 is 1147 instead of 1279.

CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

A total of about 1280 people were interviewed in the 14 Districts of the country.

Sex

Sex	Male	Female
% of Sample	56%	44%

Educational Background

Read and Write	Yes	No
% of Sample	57%	43%

Age		
Under 25	246	19%
26-35	410	33%
36-45	334	26%
45 and over	282	22%

THE RESULTS

1. Gender M: 714 56%
F: 565 44%

2. Age Under 25: 246 19%
26-35: 410 33%
36-45: 334 26%
45 and over: 282 22%

3. Where were you born?*

4. a) Did you have to leave home because of the war?
YES: 1047 82%
NO: 232 18%

b) If so where did you go?

5. Where are you living now?*

6. What is your ethnic background? **

7. What is your occupation? *

Farmer, Businessman, Unemployed, Student, Policeman, Nurse, Retired, etc.

8. Can you read and write?

YES: 680 53%
NO: 599 47%

9. What level of schooling did you reach?*

General

10. Out of all the things that need doing/addressing in Sierra Leone what do you feel are the most important - up to three. Eg. jobs, roads, housing, health, education etc *

TRC

11. a) Have you heard about the TRC?

YES: 941 74%
NO: 338 26%

b) If yes where did you hear about it?

NEWSPAPER: 36 4%
FRIENDS/FAMILY: 120 13%
RADIO: 675 71%
TELEVISION: 25 3%
OTHER: 85 9%

12. To your knowledge has any member of the TRC visited you/your village/your area recently to inform you about the TRC?

YES: 435 34%
NO: 129 10%
UNSURE: 715 56%

13. How far do you understand the purpose of the TRC?

FULLY: 221 17%
PARTIALLY: 595 47%
NIL: 462 36%

14. Is the TRC necessary?

YES 831 65%
NO: 307 24%
UNSURE: 141 11%

15. Should it be mandatory for people to testify in the TRC?

YES: 618 49%
NO: 440 34%
UNSURE: 221 17%

16. Are you willing to testify in the TRC?

YES: 747 58%
NO: 420 33%
UNSURE: 112 9%

17. Do you believe the TRC will be independent/devoid of government interference?

YES: 549 43%
NO: 438 34%
UNSURE: 292 23%

18. a) Do you think the TRC will be able to provide security and confidentiality for its witnesses?

YES: 482 40%
NO: 360 31%
UNSURE: 337 29%

b) If No why not?

19. Would the TRC be beneficial to every Sierra Leonean?

YES: 769 60%
NO: 341 27%
UNSURE: 169 13%

20. Do you think the TRC will help make up for what was lost during the war by victims?

YES: 247 19%
NO: 708 56%
UNSURE: 324 25%

21. How long do you think the TRC is going to last?

Less than a Year: 253
1-2 Years: 354
More than 2 Years: 540

22. How long do you want the TRC to last?

Less than a Year: 218
1-2 Years: 353
More than 2 Years: 532

23. Should the TRC be decentralised or located in Freetown?

Decentralised: 958 83%
Freetown: 89 3%
Unsure: 69 8%
Either: 34 6%

24. As a Sierra Leonean what should be your contribution for the success of the TRC? *
Special Court

25. a) Have you heard about the Special Court?

YES: 856 67%
NO: 432 33%

b) If yes how did you hear about it?

NEWSPAPER: 28 3%
FRIENDS/FAMILY: 137 16%
RADIO: 621 73%
TELEVISION: 11 1%
OTHER: 59 7%

26. How far do you understand the purpose of the Special Court?

FULLY: 127 10%

PARTIALLY: 608 47%

NIL: 544 43%

27. Is the Special Court necessary?

YES: 800 62%

NO: 250 20%

UNSURE: 229 18%

28. Should it be mandatory for witnesses to testify in the Special Court?

YES: 611 48%

NO: 484 38%

UNSURE: 184 14%

29. Are you willing to testify in the Special Court?

YES: 718 57%

NO: 453 35%

UNSURE: 108 8%

30. If you were called upon to testify in the Special Court would you feel protected by it?

YES: 603 47%

NO: 395 31%

UNSURE: 281 22%

31. a) Do you know the main differences between the Special Court and the National Courts?

YES: 302 24%

NO: 870 68%

UNSURE: 107 8%

b) If yes what are they?

32. Are you aware that the Special Court may only prosecute for crimes committed since 30th November 1996?

YES: 492 38%

NO: 787 62%

33. How far do you agree that this is acceptable?

Totally Agree: 369 30%

Partially Agree: 170 13%

Unsure: 218 17%

Partially Disagree: 196 15%

Totally Disagree: 326 25%

34. Are you in support of the notion that only those who bear the greatest responsibility should be tried in the Special Court?

YES: 749 59%
NO: 364 28%
UNSURE: 166 13%

35. Do you think that those who are prosecuted by the Special Court should face the Death Penalty?

YES: 330 26%
NO: 547 43%
UNSURE: 402 31%

36. What positions if any do you think Sierra Leoneans should hold with regard to the running of the Special Court?

a) Only top positions: 159 12%
b) A mixture of positions: 426 34%
c) Any position: 238 19%
d) No position: 184 14%
e) Unsure: 272 21%

37. Do you think that the Special Court is intended for the benefit of:

a) The people of Sierra Leone: 791 61%
b) The international Community: 101 8%
c) The Sierra Leonean Government: 59 5%
d) No one: 49 4%
e) Don't know: 279 22%

38. How far do you think that the Special Court will provide justice for the people of Sierra Leone?

a) Will provide justice for all:
701 56%
b) Will provide justice for some:
127 10%
c) Won't provide justice for any:
39 3%
d) Will make people relive the past and reopen wounds making things worse for them:
95 7%
e) Don't know:
234 18%
f) Other:
83 6%

39. What things other than justice do you think the Special Court should provide for Sierra Leoneans? *

40. How long do you think the Special Court will last?

Less than a Year: 189

1-2 Years: 305

More than 2 Years: 636

41. How long do you want the Special Court to last?

Less than a Year: 231

1-2 Years: 329

More than 2 Years: 770

42. Do you believe that the Special Court will stand as a deterrent against future conflict in Sierra Leone?

YES: 752 59%

NO: 370 29%

UNSURE: 157 12%

TRC and Special Court

43. Should testimonies in the TRC be admissible in a court of law or the Special Court?

YES: 484 38%

NO: 385 30%

UNSURE: 410 32%

44. Which should have been set up first: The TRC or the Special Court?

TRC/SPECIAL COURT/SHOULD HAVE BEEN SIMULTANEOUS/DOESN'T MATTER/UNSURE

45. Which should have received more funding: The TRC or the Special Court?

TRC: 500 45%

Special Court: 316 28%

Equal Funding: 171 15%

Unsure: 133 12%

46. Which will provide you with a greater sense of justice: the TRC or the Special Court?

TRC: 293 23%

Special Court: 426 33%

Both Equally: 259 20%

Neither of them: 8 1%

Unsure: 293 23%

** It was decided that this results would not be of relevance to the opinion poll.

* Wide range of answers that were not perfectly defined to be sorted out statistically.