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The role of INGOs in meeting educational rights in
conflict-affected fragile states: the case of
ActionAid International Sierra Leone

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Acronyms

AAI	ActionAid International
AAISL	ActionAid International Sierra Leone
CAFS	Conflict-affected Fragile States
CEF	Commonwealth Education Fund
CfBT	Centre for British Teachers Educational Trust
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
EFA	Education for All
EFA- SL	Education for All Sierra Leone
EMIS	Education Management Information Systems
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
IET	International Education Team
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INEE	Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergency
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
IRC	International Rescue Committee
KaDEF	Kambia District Education Forum
LEP	Local Education Partner
LIC	Low Income Country
LICUS	Low Income Country Under Stress
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
NEP	National Education Partner
NFE	Non-Formal Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
RBA	Rights Based Approach
REFLECT	Regenerated Freirian Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques

SMC	School Management Committees
SC	International Save the Children's Alliance
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UPC	Universal Primary Completion
UPE	Universal Primary Enrolment
WABEAN	Western Area Budget Education Advocacy Network
WB	World Bank

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Abstract

This qualitative case study uses interviews, questionnaires and documentary analysis to examine how ActionAid International Sierra Leone (AAISL) engage in post-conflict settings to ensure children's rights to education are met. Two components of 1) Capacity Building and 2) Service Delivery are used as a conceptual framework within which to analyse the themes that emerge from data analysis. The report argues that AAISL fulfils a mixture of service delivery and 'rights-based' roles and that ActionAid International (AAI) needs to integrate service delivery in its international policy to improve accountability to donors and tax payers. AAISL is engaged in successful partnerships at international, national and local levels, but expanding government capacity to administer the private sector, stronger links with other INGOs and an international strategy that makes specific provision for post-conflict engagement would allow a more cohesive approach, better quality education and greater enrolment, particularly at post-primary levels.

Introduction

Strategies for meeting every child's right to education are high on the development agenda, with a specific focus on populations affected by conflict¹. At the World Education Forum and United Nations (UN) World Summit in 2000, international and bilateral agencies pledged to work together with governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in addressing the needs of education systems affected by conflict. 'Fragile and conflict-affected' states have been given increasing priority in the 2008 and 2009 Education for All (EFA) global monitoring reports in recognition of the additional challenges they face. Despite such commitments, the educational rights of children in conflict-affected fragile states (CAFS) are not being met. This failure is partly due to the international community's struggle to engage with governments lacking the capacity or will to deliver education services.

The importance of external actors' engagement in CAFS is unquestionable; often government budgets are insufficient to reconstruct education services and urgently need donor funding. International NGOs (INGOs) such as Save the Children (SC) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) have been instrumental in researching, planning and implementing educational programmes and prioritising conflict on the international agenda. However, the role of INGOs in supporting education systems in post-conflict states remains unclear, and is difficult to investigate given the lack of reliable data, and variation in contexts and INGO approaches. Thus, more research is required into INGOs' strategies for engagement in such settings.

The present study investigates how INGOs work to ensure educational services are delivered in CAFS, looking at the example of ActionAid International Sierra Leone. AAISL was chosen because I worked as an intern on ActionAid International's (AAI) 2009 Global Education Review. I had an existing understanding of AAI's approach to education, areas of work, and partnerships at international, national and local levels as these were key focuses of the review. Contacts made within the international education team (IET) gave me access to internal documents and connections with country level staff. Sierra Leone was chosen as AAISL's country programme is well established, and the responses from their education staff during the review gave me a foundation of existing data to build upon. Also, I was aware that INGO assistance is crucial in ensuring effective delivery of education services in Sierra Leone.

¹ For the purpose of the study, Buckland (2005, p5) definition of conflict 'violent conflict including civil and interstate wars and armed rebellions' is adopted.

Since Sierra Leone emerged from civil war in 2002, there has been a concerted effort on behalf of the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and international actors to reconstruct basic services, including education. The government is dependent on external financing, and international aid constitutes 40% of the overall government budget. Challenges due to conflict include a lack of infrastructure, qualified teachers, resources, finance and government capacity. Sierra Leone is unlikely to meet all the EFA goals and faces some of the greatest inequities in education worldwide (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation; UNESCO, 2009).

This study concentrates on AAISL's operationalisation of educational policy and practice at international, national and local levels, as macro level strategies ultimately affect service delivery (SD) within communities. AAISL's involvement with INGOs, bilateral and multilateral agencies, government and local organisations, allows a detailed depiction of interactions, challenges and gaps between and within policy and practice at each level. The research aim of the study is:

To better understand how INGOs such as ActionAid International Sierra Leone work in conflict-affected fragile states to meet children's educational rights.

The report is organised into six chapters. The first critically examines the literature on conflict and education, addressing definitions, the relation between education and conflict and effective INGO engagement strategies. Conclusions drawn from the literature review are used to present the conceptual framework that underpins the study. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the political, social and economic context in Sierra Leone, and the role of INGOs in this environment. Chapter 3 details the research methods of the study, including design, limitations and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 presents AAI's approach to education and AAISL's educational policy and programmes. Chapter 5 critically analyses the data and Chapter 6 presents conclusions and recommendations for the future. The focus throughout is primarily on post-conflict situations, although the inextricable connections and relevance of literature and issues on fragility and countries before and during conflict mean they are not altogether disregarded.

Chapter 1: Literature Review: Conflict, education services, education rights and INGOs

1.1. Conflict and education

Although definitions differ, there is a consensus amongst international organisations that 'fragility' is indicated by 'a state's lack of capacity and/or willingness to effectively govern, deliver services to, and protect the human rights of its citizenry' (Bakarat et al, 2008, p1, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development; OECD, 2008). Due to its high correlation with lack of government capacity², fragility is often linked to conflict. SC (2006) have defined a specific category of 'conflict-affected fragile state' (CAFS)³. This term is adopted within the study, in recognition that CAFS are separated from other low-income countries (LIC) and fragile states by the additional challenges caused by conflict. The increasing international focus on CAFS is due to their inadequate performance on a number of indicators in comparison to other LIC; with significantly lower average incomes, levels of education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels and a greater educational gender gap (Chauvet and Collier, 2007). A third of out-of-school children live in CAFS (SC, 2007), which are the furthest from meeting the two Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) relating to education, as illustrated below:

Table 1.1: Performance of CAFS, other LICs and Developing Countries on the two education MDGs

		CAFS	Other LICs (non-CAFS)	Developing Countries
	Out of School Primary Aged Children	43 million	32 million	95 million
MDG2	Net Primary Enrolment Rate	67.80%	71.20%	83.20%
MDG3	Primary Education female: male enrolment ratio	0.87	0.91	0.95

Source: Bird et al. (2006, p32)

² Capacity is considered to be 'having the core features that enable the state to mobilise resources for such key objectives as economic development and poverty reduction' (INEE, 2009)

³ CAFS are countries that appear on two or more of the following lists: (1) Project Ploughshares' list of states having experienced at least one armed conflict during the period 1995–2005, (2) Failed States Index 2006, (3) World Bank LICUS (low-income countries under stress) 2004.

1.2. Education in post-conflict settings: The 'two faces'⁴ of education

Education can both reproduce the conditions which underlie civil conflict, hence exacerbating and perpetuating violence, and help transform society by challenging the deep-rooted prejudices and inequalities at the heart of the conflict.

(Leach and Dunne, 2007, p11)

This quote highlights the complex dynamic between education and conflict. Understanding factors that mitigate and exacerbate conflict is important, to identify strategies for using education to positive effect. Smith (2007) separates explanations into three categories: political, economic and socio-cultural. Political explanations emphasise the need to develop “political literacy” to understand conflict at all levels of society. Economic perspectives see economic development and equal resource distribution as effective in reducing tensions that can lead to conflict. Socio-cultural views purport that differences can cause conflict, or rather aggravate it. However, as numerous conflicts have erupted in rich countries with high levels of education⁵, caution must be exerted in generalising between specific political, economic or socio-cultural factors and conflict (Smith, 2005).

Coletta and Cullen (2000) present a conceptual framework of 'social capital' and 'social cohesion' that allows a more holistic conceptualisation, by linking social components to economic and political models of conflict. Social capital is defined by *horizontal* relations 'the norms, values and social relations that bond communities together' and *vertical* relations 'the bridges between civil society⁶ and the state' (ibid, p4). Social cohesion is the dynamic between the two, and education an important force in promoting social cohesion (Smith and Vaux, 2003; Tawil and Harley, 2004). This dynamic allows the kind of education in place and the attitudes and values it reproduces to be considered. Education can exacerbate conflict if curricula are manipulated for political purposes, and inequalities and stereotypes deepened through segregated or unequal distribution of education (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000). Conversely, education can aid post-conflict reconstruction and prevent relapse into conflict by developing democratic principles, liberal ideals and nation building; providing skills for economic development, and transmitting social, cultural and moral values that are conducive to peaceful negotiation (Smith, 2005; Buckland, 2005). Investment in education in post-conflict settings can be

⁴ Bush and Saltarelli, 2000

⁵ For example World Wars I and II

⁶ Civil society is understood as 'the political space between the individual citizens and the government, expressed in the participation in public life and debate through formation of social groups, associations and NGOs' (Brorson, et al, 2005)

more important than in countries with similar development indicators not emerging from conflict; restoring education systems can increase citizens' confidence that peace is durable (Chauvet and Collier, 2007, p8). Education can help reconstruct the social contract between state and citizen that is broken in times of conflict (Rose and Greeley, 2006). Considering the challenges of post-conflict educational provision is necessary to build social capital and cohesion.

1.3. Education provision post-conflict

1.3.1. Education and post-conflict reconstruction: challenges and opportunities to meeting educational rights

INGOs and UN organisations have influenced rights discourse since the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, by producing lists of economic, civil, social and political rights against which to hold governments accountable. The right to education is endorsed by Article 26.1 of the declaration:

Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

(UN, 1948)

Conflict does not preclude these rights (Sinclair, 2003), but inadequate levels of enrolment, access, gender parity and quality demonstrate that in CAFS, they continue to be violated. Therefore, educational stakeholders must go beyond the challenges of 'poverty, economic crisis mismanagement, or neglect' faced in most developing countries (Buckland, 2005, p26) to consider the specific challenges in post-conflict settings. These are many, and include rebuilding infrastructure, management systems, resourcing, teacher training, policy and curriculum development, that all take time to address, and come with high expectations of being done in a way that builds peace, respect for diversity and social cohesion (Buckland, 2005). Despite these challenges, some argue that post-conflict contexts 'create a window of opportunity to address pre-existing deficiencies and establish new education systems' (SC, 2006, p19), as political space opens up, bureaucratic resistance is weakened, and new resources become available (Buckland, 2005). However, this argument seems contentious if viewed as using weakened government systems to impose external agendas. The international community must take opportunities to renew education services while exerting care not to impose externally

conceptualised education systems.

This is particularly relevant in CAFS as numerous stakeholders implement programmes, with different agendas and reasons for education. In CAFS, there has traditionally been differentiation between 'humanitarian' activities in which food, shelter and healthcare are provided, and a 'development' phase following stability where education is included (SC, 2006). Following a push by the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) to recognise the importance of meeting educational rights in CAFS, and schooling's role in peace building and conflict resolution, education is increasingly considered one of four pillars of emergency humanitarian response (INEE, 2004). Further efforts are needed to bridge gaps between phases (Winthrop, 2009), as education is 'from the beginning a development activity and should be oriented towards social, economic, and political development, and the longer term interests of the learners and the society' (Buckland, 2005, p30). This is not widely adopted into policy or practice, as many guidelines for education interventions focus on the more immediate aftermath of conflict (Buckland, 2005)⁷. Such differentiation can be argued as largely political, as 'aid designations applied by international actors to different countries at different times have little impact for communities' (Macrae, 1999, xix). Furthermore, categorising education as an emergency response can threaten sustainability, as short term interventions divert funds from longer term development programmes (Smith and Vaux, 2003). Because education can mitigate or exacerbate conflict, and is key to long term development, educational reconstruction activities should start immediately (Buckland, 2005). Therefore this study does not differentiate between humanitarian and development phases, considering that educational rights should be met before, after and during conflict.

In addition to the significance of implementing humanitarian versus development programmes, international actors may focus on any number of issues that affect CAFS, for example gender equality, fragility, or child protection (Canadian International Development Agency; CIDA-INEE, 2006). The priority given to a particular aspect makes coordination challenging, which 'most actors would agree' is necessary to 'achieving overarching and wide-ranging goals in education' (CIDA-INEE, 2006, p26). Realisation of the EFA and MDG goals are considered two factors that make education important in fragile states, in addition to security and humanitarian interests (Rose and Greeley, 2006). However, the grouping of the 'EFA *and* MDG goals' as a single set of international targets⁸ can be problematic. The

⁷ See for example UNESCO, 2002; Sinclair, 2003, Nicolai and Triplehorn, 2003.

⁸ Rose and Greeley, 2006; CIDA-INEE, 2006; Buckland, 2005 refer to the 'EFA *and* MDG' goals

MDGs' sole focus on primary education and gender parity is more restrictive than the EFA goals, which encompass early childhood through to adult education, and focus on wider notions of equity and quality. Priority is often given to targets with the most significant overlap, notably UPE and gender parity (Hayman, 2007), and increased focus and spending on these areas affects education outcomes.

Post-conflict, primary enrolment rates recover rapidly in comparison to secondary and tertiary levels (Buckland, 2005), despite the potential for the latter to build indispensable economic and human capacity for employment, growth and regeneration (UNESCO, 2009). Post-primary education can mitigate the likelihood of relapse into conflict, as 'the lack of secondary and higher education, as well as non-formal opportunities and vocational training, creates tensions and frustration' (Brannelly et al, 2009, p51). Furthermore, tertiary education can help rebuild the population of skilled professionals, including teachers, that can be destroyed during conflict. Rwanda lost over two thirds of primary and secondary teachers, Cambodia nearly all of them (Buckland, 2005). Nonetheless, international education goals with a wider focus than UPE and basic education *can* be useful as global benchmarks of minimum standards that *should* be achieved in each country, and highlight that educational rights are equally important in CAFS as other developing countries. Although the EFA deadline of 2015 may be excessively ambitious, long term objectives should not aim for less than equitable opportunities for children to complete quality education and adults to be literate - and this should apply whether the country is 'post-conflict', 'LIC' or 'developing'. There is a need to clarify which 'agenda' CAFS are working towards, so that basic education is not prioritised to the detriment of a wider development agenda and coordination between education stakeholders, including INGOs.

1.3.2. The role of INGOs in ensuring the delivery of quality education services

There is a 'Catch-22' in the education/ conflict paradigm: education has a role in transforming society, equalising power relations, preventing relapse into conflict and enabling states to overcome instability, but governments lack the capacity to ensure education services are delivered. Understanding the role of different education actors is key both to reform and reconstruction and to the transition from inadequate capacity to accountable, transparent governance and effective SD. INGOs have an important role in this process:

INGOs [can] rapidly mobilize and manage resources, [...] provide multi-sectoral assistance [...] bring new perspectives and experience [...]. For [...] long-term education planning, INGOs can

help build the capacity of local NGOs and government.

(INEE, 2003, p1)

There has recently been a cooperative effort to clarify how different education stakeholders, including international agencies, donors, governmental and NGOs should proceed in fragile states. The table below outlines different agencies' specifications, and how they relate to each other:

Table 1.2: INEE, Education For All-Fast Track Initiative (EFA/FTI), SC and OECD DAC principles for engagement in fragile and conflict-affected countries

INEE	EFA/ FTI	Save the Children	OECD DAC
Provide coordinated, situation specific, rapid response	Sector assessment, planning and coordination	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Incorporate local context, innovation and good quality. 2. In post-conflict phase, capitalise on and scale up innovations in most effective way and mainstream them into a rebuilt education system. 3. Develop a comprehensive plan. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take context as the starting point. 2. Do no harm. 3. Agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors.
Build technical and operational capacity for the long term	Resource mobilisation and financial management	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International donors provide direct aid to enable basic services to function and provide technical support to guide them. 2. Engage with national authorities and address system-wide issues. 3. Link education with protection. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Focus on state building as central objective. 2. Prioritise prevention. 3. Recognise links between political, security and development objectives. 4. Promote non-discrimination.
Ensure educational services for all	Service Delivery -Access & Learning Spaces - Teaching Personnel - Learning Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reach children in hardest-to-reach areas, whether in humanitarian crises or post-conflict reconstruction. 2. NGOs can provide basic services, often demonstrating innovative mechanisms for service delivery. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Align with local priorities. 2. Act fast... but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance. 3. Avoid pockets of exclusion.
	Monitoring System Improvement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Focus on access and quality. 4. Put local communities and children at the centre of education 	

Sources: INEE, (2003); SC (2006); FTI, (2008); OECD DAC, (2007)

The table demonstrates the overlap between recommended strategies. There is a consensus that a context-specific, coordinated response is necessary to build capacity and improve educational outcomes via service delivery indicators.

National level INGO involvement is crucial, given the objective of a government capable of delivering its own quality, equitable education services (SC, 2006). Ascertaining the role of INGOs is important, and to avoid repetition and duplication of efforts, interventions should 'complement one another, with

NGOs, donors, communities and government perhaps taking on different aspects, but all working towards the same overall [...] goal' (INEE, 2009, p33). Furthermore, 'multiple actors undertaking parallel or competing projects exacerbates fragility' by weakening government capacity and resilience (FTI, 2008, p5). Therefore, where governments have some capacity and willingness, INGO programmes should be a) coordinated with the context and other education stakeholders, b) run in partnership with the state and c) undertaken with the view of long term, sustainable development that strengthens accountability without devolving responsibility (OECD, 2008; INEE, 2009). INGOs must consider the political context, and the potential for existing government systems to mitigate or exacerbate fragility (INEE, 2009). INGOs should remain as politically impartial as possible: perceptions of siding with unpopular government factions can increase divides, going against the principle of 'do no harm'⁹. Although considered the most important element of capacity building, how exactly INGOs 'state build' is unclear, as there is no definitive agreement on 'what works best where and when in terms of aid approaches, modalities and instruments in fragile states' (Dom, 2008, p2).

There is an argument that capacity building must go beyond technical support and individual training to focus on the political, social and economic context, contributing to greater equity, social cohesion and social capital (INEE, 2009; Coletta and Cullen, 2000). INGOs access education stakeholders from government ministers, civil society organisations to local authorities, teachers, parents and children. INGOs can increase cohesion, by addressing the different aims and expectations of government (to provide low cost services that maximise positive views of policies in society), parents and children (to access free, high quality education) and teachers (to have a structured curriculum and fair pay; OECD, 2009; INEE, 2009). INGOs can help governments implement transparent, accountable, democratic principles and build links with local communities (Coletta and Cullen, 2000). At national levels, this involves strengthening state capacity to plan and regulate education systems, and developing the capacity of teachers (INEE, 2009). In addition to taking into account context, strengthening government capacity can take place on two levels; organisational (building efficiency of ministries, report writing, financial management) and institutional (analysing norms of power, from family to state levels and of governance systems; INEE, 2009). Recently, increased importance has been given to local-level engagement and civil society involvement (Dom, 2008, p2).

⁹ Do no harm is taken as the definition of DAC principle 8 'that the international community should seek to avoid activities which undermine national institution building' (Berry, 2009)

This is consistent with a general move away from 'top-down' approaches, to INGOs building national and local partnerships, to increase the relevance and ownership of educational policy and practice at local levels. Communities value schooling, and demonstrate surprising resilience in retaining some form of education during and after conflict (Buckland, 2005), in many cases becoming the main education provider (SC, 2006). Where authorities lack capacity or presence, communities engage with INGOs, for example to negotiate payment of teacher salaries, but the lack of infrastructure, financing and trained teachers restrict local ability to provide quality education (SC, 2006). Civil society participation is key to social cohesion: INGOs can build social capital by strengthening human, institutional or organisational capacity to influence and transmit issues to national levels, therefore solidifying ties between communities and government. INGOs can strengthen local capacity to regulate and hold schools to account by forming school management committees (SMCs), parent-teacher associations (PTAs), providing adequate office equipment and training local-level organisations on report writing and budgeting (INEE, 2003). Capacity building at local levels can take the form of community interventions, for example implementing non-formal education (NFE) programmes in adult literacy, to increase human capacity for participation in political and economic fora (O'Sullivan, 2007). Nonetheless, INGOs must ensure interventions are sustainable, as they are largely reliant on donor support. If funding for teachers' salaries or NFE programmes is withdrawn, and governments do not take over the running of programmes, communities may be left without education. Strengthening capacity is necessary for communities to continue running programmes after INGOs' departure.

INGOs holding financial control can lead to them dominating partnerships and education agendas rather than engaging in mutual collaboration (O'Sullivan, 2008). The notion of power and finance in CAFS is also relevant at national and international levels as 'the power to make decisions and the power over other actors to enforce one's agenda, quickly becomes a central factor in the processes of coordination of education' (CIDA-INEE, 2006, p26). Donor agendas influence INGO strategies, as they are required to meet certain requirements to receive funding. The same applies from INGO headquarters to national branches that are required to operate within an international strategy. Therefore true partnerships may be difficult to implement in practice, and for effective collaboration partners should be engaged in all stages of a project, from conception, to implementation and evaluation and monitoring (O'Sullivan, 2008).

Financing is a particularly relevant issue, as due to perceptions of poor capacity and governance, CAFS are inadequately funded, receiving US \$1.6 per capita compared to \$3.3 in non-CAFS (Bird et al., 2006 Sperling, 2006), with a lower proportion of overall aid allocated to education (Turrent and Oketch, 2009). Fragility further impacts financing as 'weak financial management systems and capacity' mean donors find disbursement difficult (Turrent and Oketch, 2009, p362). For example, the EFA/ FTI, designed to accelerate progress towards Universal Primary Completion (UPC), endorsed nine CAFS for funding. However, as CAFS struggled to meet requirements for a cohesive sector plan and experienced disagreements on funding modalities, only three have received funds (Dom, 2008). INGO involvement is pertinent, as they may finance projects directly, or in partnership in 'pooled funding' situations, jointly managing 'a project, programme, trust fund or budget support' (Brannelly et al. 2009, p22). Governments may sub-contract projects they lack the capacity to implement themselves to INGOs, and donors may consider channelling funds through INGOs or supporting their programmes 'less risky' than directly delivering funds to government (Brannelly et al. 2009; Turrent and Oketch, 2009). However, channelling funds through INGOs can mean donors 'by[pass] the opportunity to build the capacity and transparency of government systems' (Turrent and Oketch, 2009). INGOs' role in building capacity at national levels is important, both to increase donor confidence in allocating funding, and to ensure they do not undermine the government. Despite indications that donor funding to fragile and conflict-affected states may increase (Dom, 2008), there is a discrepancy between the increasing policy and funding attention to CAFS, and the lack of effective disbursement mechanisms needed to move beyond rhetoric, to finances reaching communities where educational rights are unrealised (Pavanello, 2008).

INGOs can increase donor confidence by strengthening central government information systems, and build capacity to collect reliable data that can be communicated on an international level. Data sources in CAFS are usually unreliable, as administrative systems collapse, and official data sources may be deliberately destroyed or modified (Buckland, 2005). Therefore 'identifying key indicators, collecting and processing data, and utilizing that to track progress' is problematic (FTI, 2008, p6). For example, in Burma the official NER is estimated to be 90% for primary and 37% for secondary, with 'near gender parity' by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), but much lower by agencies working on the ground (Watchlist, 2009). Access to remote areas makes local branches or partners well-placed to verify the accuracy of existing data, and feedback information to national levels. Currently, there is an

inadequate understanding of the contributions INGOs make to education in CAFS (Rose, 2009) and stronger data systems can help address this knowledge gap.

1.4. Conceptual Framework

INGOs have an important role to play in post-conflict education reconstruction, due to their involvement in a variety of capacities and their links with educational actors at international, national and local levels. Context relevance is key, and strategies should be tailored in consultation with the appropriate education stakeholders to ensure they support a coordinated approach. Yet despite their extensive involvement, the impact of INGOs on post-conflict education development is difficult to gauge. Given the importance of context, and the differing approach each INGO has to education, studies of a single organisation and country can provide in-depth analysis of engagement strategies and mechanisms. This can help move the discussion, beyond 'what' INGOs should be involved in, towards the more critical question of 'how' INGOs can engage effectively. Thus, the guiding focus for the study is *how* AAISL is/ can engage effectively in Sierra Leone to ensure quality education delivery, taking into account the specific political, economic and social dynamics. How AAISL operates and interacts with key stakeholders from international to local levels is examined. At each level, AAISL's policy and practice are critically discussed as follows:

1. Capacity building:

Capacity building is given the highest priority by major international education actors (WB, DfID, the INEE, SC), due to the objective of a government capable of delivering quality education services in transparent, accountable ways, with a civil society that participates and influences national decisions. Given the variety of stakeholders at international, national and local levels, INGOs' strategies should be aligned with those of the government, the development goals of the country and the international community. This is important to ensure sustainability, relevance and the involvement of civil society. This can in turn strengthen social cohesion, as increased social capital given by education builds the relationship between communities and government, and increases participation and engagement in social and political activities. The study seeks to examine how AAISL can build technical, operational and human capacity as a key component of reconstruction in Sierra Leone at:

- Local levels (teacher training, developing SMCs, PTAs, adult literacy programmes)

- National levels (This may involve facilitating national civil society organisation's engagement in high-level education policy and donor meetings and identifying appropriate advocacy strategies. With regards to government, this could mean assisting in the formulation of an education strategy, ensuring participation, accountability and transparency, assisting in budgeting and finance mechanisms).

A further consideration is the extent to which engagement facilitates communication from local to national and international levels, whether communities are given voice, whether space is provided for civil society and the approaches are conducive to participation.

2. Service delivery

This area examines monitoring and support to educational service delivery (for example ensuring the government has allocated sufficient funds to the education sector, that inequalities between groups are addressed, or monitoring teacher salaries, quality, enrolment rates and curriculum content).

The report now examines educational provision in Sierra Leone, and the role of INGOs in this environment.

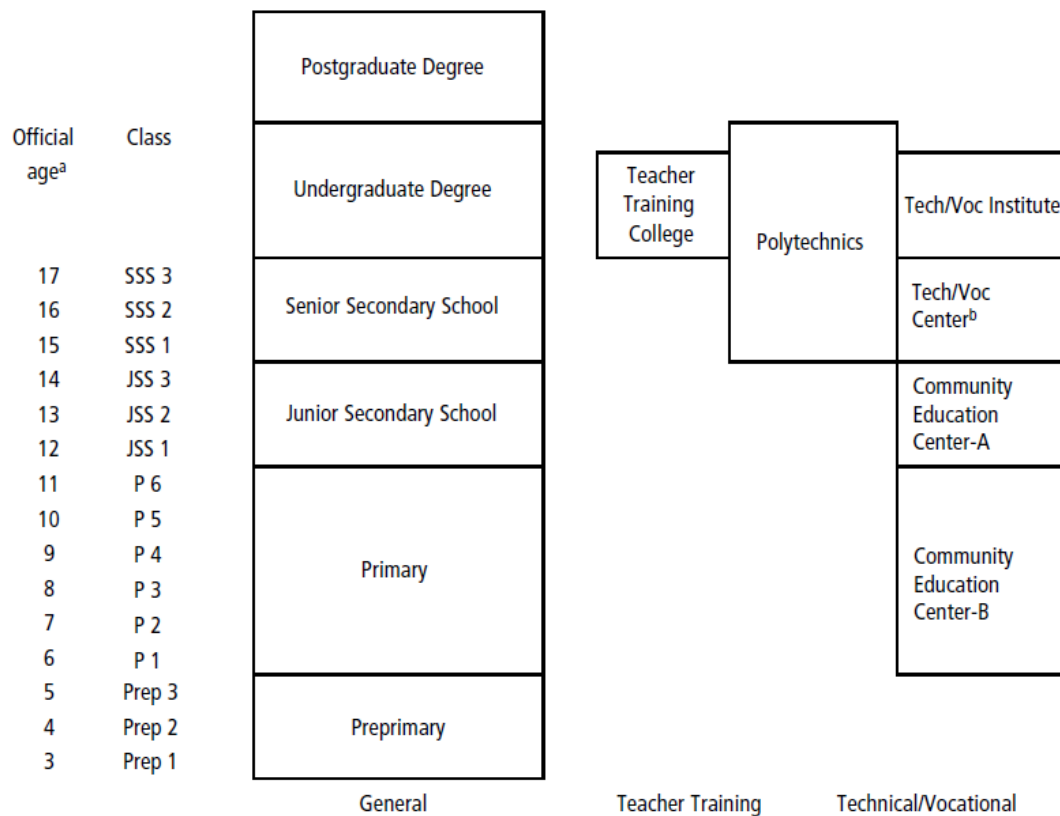
Chapter 2: Sierra Leone: The role and challenges of INGOs in providing education for marginalised children

2.1. Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone is recovering from the eleven year civil war that ended in 2002 'in which 50 thousand citizens lost their lives and in which the country lost most of its social, economic and physical infrastructure' (WB, 2007, p1). Since 2002, the GoSL has endeavoured to rebuild its education system and meet the MDG and EFA goals with the aim of stimulating economic growth and reducing poverty (Nishimuko, 2007). Its commitment is evident in the passing of the 2004 Education Act, which made schooling free and compulsory up to the third year of secondary school (GoSL, 2004). Reports on the GoSL's financial backing of the Education Act vary, with allocation to education reported at 20% of overall expenditure between 2000 and 2004 (WB, 2007) but more recently as little as 11% (AAISL Education Coordinator, interview). The number of students enrolled in post-primary education has increased substantially (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport; MEYS, 2007). Despite the progress, many challenges remain for Sierra Leone to ensure equitable access to quality education.

The current education system operates on a '6-3-3-4' system, comprising 9 years of basic education (6 of primary and 3 of junior secondary school); 3 years of senior secondary school followed by 4 years of tertiary education (MEYS, 2007). Senior secondary school and tertiary levels have a 'strong scientific and vocational orientation, focusing on quality, relevance, and gender equalities' (WB, 2007, p35). The education system is presented below:

Figure 2.1. The education system in Sierra Leone



Source: Staff of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology.

a. This is the official age for general education. However, there is a wide range of ages currently enrolled at the different levels of general education. These ages are not applicable to TVET programs.

b. The Vocational Trade Center is part of the Technical Vocational Center.

Source: WB, 2007, p35

Despite abolishing fees, and introducing fines for parents or guardians who do not send their children to school, the government lacks the capacity to provide quality basic EFA (Nishimuko, 2007). Sierra Leone is far from meeting its target of UPC and Universal Primary Enrolment (UPE); currently between 30 and 40% of children fail to complete primary school and around 470,000 children aged 6 to 17 are out-of-school, most of whom have never attended school (WB, 2007, p48). Inequalities in education are prevalent, with fewer girls enrolled at all levels of education (WB, 2007) and insufficient government funding making schooling unaffordable for those who cannot meet the indirect costs of uniforms, textbooks, and the upkeep of buildings (Beardon, 2009). It is crucial not only to provide education, but to provide *quality* education. In a study of 27 primary schools, Nishimuko (2007, p 22) reports that all (apart from one private school) 'had many difficulties in meeting the minimal conditions

that schools need to provide for quality education'. Class sizes over 100 are common in the poorest areas of Sierra Leone, and even in areas with the least poverty, the recommended pupil-teacher ratio of 40:1 was only achieved in 19% of schools (Nishimuko, 2007).

2.2. The role of NGOs in Sierra Leone

The MEYS states in the foreword to its education strategy that the 'successful implementation of this plan is not only dependent on the partnership of GOSL ministries, but also on the partnership of civil society, NGOs, UN agencies, bilateral and multilateral organisations' (MEYS, 2007, vii). AAISL is one of several INGOs in Sierra Leone¹⁰. The INGOs considered principal education actors in the MEYS education strategy, along with its description of their involvement, are outlined in the following table:

Table 2.1. Principal INGOs in Sierra Leone

INGO	Areas of Work
AAISL	This organization is gradually increasing its involvement in education. It is an implementing partner in the Sababu Education Project.
Concern	This organization is involved in school construction and support for primary education activities. It is an implementing partner in the Sababu Education Project.
IRC	IRC focuses on children vulnerable to child labour, refugees and marginalized young people, providing them with education and skills training through education supplies, teacher training and sensitization on girl child education.
PLAN-Sierra Leone	This organisation is currently engaged in community development projects as well as in providing support for the education of children in the various communities. Outside of the WB., African Development Bank and UNICEF, it provides the largest support for education in Sierra Leone. Its support includes school construction, furniture and book supplies and capacity building of MEST District Education Offices (DEOs).
SC	SC is working with the most vulnerable children in Kailahun, Pujehun and the Western Area to improve quality of education through promoting participatory approaches to learning, training teachers in alternative forms of discipline, mobilising communities and training school management committees.

(Source: MEYS, 2007, pp. 14-15)

The MEYS education strategy mentions partnership with NGOs as key to achieving goals relating to equity, quality and capacity building in the education sector (MEYS, 2007). The role of INGOs is needed and recognised, with high expectations of results; effective engagement strategies are necessary to ensure they live up to these.

¹⁰ The focus on AAISL and word limitations of this report make an in-depth comparison of INGO approaches and areas of work impossible here.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

This section details the research methods and methodology employed, presenting the principles and ideas that guided the design, research questions and techniques used for data gathering and analysis. Further to that, the limitations and ethical issues encountered are considered.

3.1. Design

In order to decide the most appropriate design for the study, I first considered the subject of the research, which is:

To better understand how INGOs such as ActionAid International Sierra Leone work in conflict-affected fragile states to meet children's educational rights.

Qualitative methods were chosen as they are aligned with my wish to give a rich description and analysis, from the perspective of education actors in the field of post-conflict education and in Sierra Leone. Qualitative methods allow a 'thick description', of participants thoughts, feelings and perceptions (Cohen et al., 2007). The information, views and insights from staff at AAI, AAISL, experts, academics, bilateral and multilateral agencies guided the study. The individual experiences and subjectivity they brought to the project were important to enrich the analysis.

Yin (2004, p2) notes that 'the case study method is pertinent when your research addresses either a descriptive question (*what* happened?) or an explanatory question (*how* or *why* did something happen?)'. This corresponds with the current research question, which seeks to understand *how* AAISL works in CAFS. The second factor considered was the contextual nature of the research, bound within Sierra Leone's specific political, cultural, and social environment. Case studies enable such factors to be taken into account 'contexts are unique and dynamic, hence case studies investigate and report the complex dynamic and unfolding interactions of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance' (Cohen et al., 2007, p253). The project involves an analysis of the different education stakeholders involved in the wider context of AAISL. The clear delineation of 'temporal, geographical, organisational and other contexts' that defines a case study is present (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995, p319). The report focuses on a specific organisation (AAISL) and period of time (now). Geographical delineation is less clear, as AAISL is the national branch of an INGO, and analysing the impact and views of other educational stakeholders is necessary to present a complete picture of the interactions and tensions experienced at AAISL and how this influences policy, planning and practice. The research

questions investigated within the case study method, and techniques for analysis are now outlined.

3.2. Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

- 1) What is the role of INGOs in CAFS?
- 2) How does AAISL engage to build capacity and support service delivery in Sierra Leone?
- 3) What lessons can be learned from AAISL and applied to other contexts, to inform future policy, practice and research?

3.3 Techniques

A good case study 'involve[s] looking at a case or phenomenon in its real-life context, usually employing many types of data' (Robson, 2002, p178). Therefore, the project uses semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and a range of documents as data sources. Using a variety of sources of information allows triangulation '[i]n collecting case study data, the main idea is to “triangulate” or establish converging lines of evidence to make your findings as robust as possible' (Yin, 2004, p9).

3.3.1. Interviews

The primary method of data collection were interviews, as they give access to individual knowledge, values, attitudes and beliefs (Tuckman, 1972). The conversational nature of interviews allow more flexibility in the formulation and adaptation of queries than questionnaires. I used open-ended questions, as closed quantitative interviews would have prevented an in-depth, flexible discourse, being more suited to simple data analysis - short questions that are easily compared and aggregated (Cohen et al., 2007). As such I chose a 'semi-structured approach', deciding on areas of questioning in advance, but consciously deciding to let interviews follow a natural path.

I. Interview Questions

I focused the areas of questioning around the research questions as follows (a full interview schedule can be found in Appendix 1):

1. *Background information:*

This factual introduction was informative, and an easy start to the interview, aimed to put participants at ease. Questions relating to the participants and organisation's position and engagement on CAFS were designed to elucidate different roles of education actors, in particular INGOs, in these settings.

2. Partnerships:

This area of questioning revolved around perceptions of the role of INGOs in CAFS, and partnerships at local, national and international levels. This was important to situate participants within the case study context, in particular their relationships and challenges with different education actors, including AAI and AAISL. When questioning AAI and AAISL staff, this allowed the question 'How does AAISL engage to build capacity and support service delivery in Sierra Leone?' to be addressed directly. Responses to open-ended questions on INGOs' roles determined whether aspects drawn together from the literature to form the conceptual framework are considered important roles for INGOs in CAFS, and if so what are effective engagement strategies.

3. ActionAid International:

This section of the interview contained questions on different actors' knowledge and perceptions of AAI's education work in CAFS, in particular Sierra Leone. This provided detail for the research questions and conceptual framework: how AAI coordinates with different external actors, if they are perceived to build capacity and support service delivery.

4. Future directions:

These questions related to lessons learned from AAISL and their application in other contexts, as well as directions for future policy, practice and research.

II. Sampling

Once the areas of questioning were decided, I considered which organisations to contact for interview. Purposive sampling was used to select participants, as 'the concern is to acquire in-depth information from those who are in a position to give it' (Cohen et al. 2007, p115). The study sought to gain insights, knowledge and information from those in the field of education and conflict generally, and within AAI and AAISL more specifically. Three categories of participants were identified: those within AAI's education team (at international and country level); external organisations involved in CAFS as policy makers, donors, or implementers of projects and experts in the field of education in post-conflict settings. Participants were selected as follows:

Table 3.1. Interviews requested

Type of Organisation	Position	Location	Interview	Interview Date	Gender	Type of interview	Reason for interview
AAI	Senior Education	London, UK	Yes	20/07/09	Female	Phone, recorded	To give perceptions at the international level on

	Research and Policy Analyst						policy, education in post-conflict contexts and partnerships.
	Head of Education	London, UK	Yes	31/07/09	Male	Phone, recorded	
AAISL	Education Coordinator AAISL	Freetown, Sierra Leone	Yes	20/07/09	Female	Phone, recorded	To gain information on AAISL's policies, challenges and interventions within the national context.
	Country Director, AAISL	Freetown, Sierra Leone	Yes	04/08/09	Male	Phone, recorded	
AAISL - NEP	EFA-SL (NEP)		No	n/a	n/a	n/a	National and local perspectives of partnerships, challenges and areas of work.
AAISL - LEP	WABEAN (LEP)		No	n/a	n/a	n/a	
	Bombalili (LEP)		No	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Other INGO	Head of Education (IRC)	Washington	Yes	03/08/09	Female	Phone, recorded	External perspective on education in situations of conflict, AAI and AAISL's work in post-conflict education.
	Education Coordinator until December 2008, Sierra Leone (SC)	London	Yes	21/07/09	Female	Phone, recorded	
	Education Advisor, CAFS (SC)	London	Yes	03/08/09	Female	Phone, not recorded	
	(SC)	Sierra Leone	No	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Bi/ Multilateral Organisation	Head of Human Development, DfID	London, UK	Yes	16/07/09	Male	Phone, recorded	DfID is the largest donor to Sierra Leone
	Lead Education Specialist, WB	Juba, Sudan	Yes	15/07/09	Male	Phone, recorded	The WB helped the GoSL develop their education sector plan, and initiated the FTI for which SL has been approved
	UNESCO Official, Post-Conflict and Post-Disaster Situations	Paris, France	Yes	21/07/09	Male	Phone, not recorded	Key in researching and publishing in the area of post-conflict education and reconstruction
Expert	Academic A	Withheld	Yes	16/07/09	Male	Phone, recorded	Research specialisation in education and conflict
	UNESCO Chair (University of Ulster)	Ulster, UK	Yes	16/07/09	Male	Phone, recorded	Specialist in the relation between education and conflict
	Senior	Reading,	Yes	20/07/09	Female	Phone,	Has conducted research

	Education Finance Specialist Trust (CfBT)	UK				recorded	on aid modalities in fragile states.
Total Interviewed: 13, No response: 4, Other: 1							

The table outlines the semi-structured interviews carried out. Unfortunately, AAISL's local and national partners, and staff working in Sierra Leone for SC were contacted, but did not respond. Communication with staff at AAISL and SC revealed that significant technological and communication constraints were probably responsible. The second method of data collection, questionnaires, is now discussed.

3.3.2. Questionnaires

I was fortunate to have worked as an intern on AAI's 2009 Global Education Review and have permission to use the data collected for the current project. This included four questionnaires distributed at country and local levels, designed to gather information on: 1) areas of education work, 2) external relationships, 3) perspectives on AAI's IES and 4) how the RBA to education was understood and implemented. The questionnaires combined qualitative and quantitative data and were distributed to four groups:

1. Lead Questionnaire: This was distributed to the country level education coordinator. The first part gathered data on education work, including perceived level of influence, details of partnerships, and links between education and other thematic areas. The second part of the questionnaire assessed perspectives regarding an RBA to education, budgetary issues, views on the IES, and links with the IET.
2. National Education Partner Questionnaire: This was distributed by education coordinators to selected national education partners (NEPs). This questionnaire focused on NEPs' conception of AAI's work in education and future areas of work.
3. National Actor Questionnaire: National actors did not have a formal relationship with AAI, (and were also selected by the education coordinator), but unfortunately did not respond in Sierra Leone, so this data was unavailable.
4. Local Partner Questionnaire: This questionnaire ascertained local education partners' (LEPs) areas of education work, priorities, influence of local work on national and international work

and how it is influenced by these partnerships in return.

The questionnaires consisted of one lead questionnaire, one NEP questionnaire and three LEP questionnaires and greatly enriched the analysis. The quantitative and qualitative data collected allowed triangulation between reports from the education coordinator during interviews and in the questionnaire, which made the findings more robust. This was an opportunity to gather data from LEPs and NEPs unavailable for interview. In particular, the three LEP questionnaires were valuable, as the only source of local level data.

3.3.3. Documentary Analysis

Yin (1994, p81) states that 'documentary information is likely to be relevant to every case study'. Therefore AAI and AAISL external and internal documents were analysed, including annual reports and evaluations, international and country level strategic plans, quarterly education evaluations, speeches, training reports amongst others (a full list can be found in Appendix 2). Documents should be used to extend, corroborate and contrast with other sources of information (Yin, 1994); in this case the interview and questionnaire data aforementioned. AAI documents (with the exception of the 2009 Global Education Review which is still in draft form) were gathered through their website, where they are publicly available. AAISL documents were sent by the education coordinator in Sierra Leone, and the IET in London, who were extremely accommodating in making these available.

3.4. Data Analysis

'Qualitative data analysis involves organising, accounting for and explaining the data, in short making sense of data in terms of the participants' definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities'

Cohen et al. (2007, p461)

This section outlines how the data from interviews, questionnaires and documents was organised and analysed. During the process, I endeavoured to remain reflexive. The awareness that my preconceptions, values and expectations would impact the selection and interpretation of the data was present as I conducted interviews, gathered data and began analysing. The assumptions, thoughts, connections, theorisations and themes that arose during the research were noted and revisited, considering whether my interpretations reflected personal values and expectations, or what the data communicated. Rather than formulate a set of hypotheses at the start of the project, the literature review shaped the response to the first research question, but the data guided the study in relation to research

questions 2 and 3, as 'the theoretical framework of the research project is not predetermined but based on the incoming data' (Holloway and Wheeler, 2002, p11). I wished to describe the situation, interpret participants views, generate themes and patterns, explore issues, discover similarities and differences and examine the application of these to the same issues in different contexts (Cohen et al. 2007).

As the research questions were open, a large amount of data transpired during interviews. The first process was to partially transcribe the conversations. This was useful, as it was possible to begin noting emergent themes and associations. Once the interviews were transcribed, I began making sense of the large amount of data I had collected. Miles and Huberman (1994) identify twelve strategies for creating meaning from transcribed data, and those identified as most appropriate for the current study are:

- 1) *Noting patterns or themes*: A wide number of themes initially emerged, and were refined by amalgamating information into more specific themes relevant to the research aim.
- 2) *Clustering*: This helped refine the themes represented. More specific clustering helped make further connections by comparing issues that emerged.
- 3) *Seeing plausability*: This involves 'using informed tuition to reach a conclusion'. I endeavoured to revisit the clustered themes and gain a deeper understanding of the information.
- 4) *Building a logical chain of evidence by making inferences*: Together with 'seeing plausability', this method required the most reflexivity, being most prone to individual interpretation. I therefore referred back to notes, questioned my assumptions and went back to the data, in its original recorded form and transcriptions.

The strategies above such as clustering were helpful in grounding the analysis in as objective a way as possible, remaining reflexive and ensuring recurring themes were not omitted. The data is presented in themes that seemed most dominant, due to the similarities, differences and priorities expressed by participants. In order to be faithful to the words expressed by participants, I have included verbatim excerpts to support statements. This allows future readers to decide if a true interpretation was made of what the participant wished to express. The qualitative and quantitative data from questionnaires was analysed using the same methods. Themes that recurred between questionnaires, for example challenges and benefits of working with AAISL were noted. Responses were compared to data gathered in interviews, to see if reports at local and national levels corresponded with those from AAI's IET and AAISL. The documents from AAI and AAISL were important as a point of reference for information

on education activities objectives, evaluation and monitoring carried out at international, national and local levels, and were also compared to questionnaire interview data.

3.5. Limitations

The following limitations should be noted:

1. *Time*: Some individuals invited for interview were not available within the time frame, which limited the views and data.
2. *Financial*: Greater availability of funds would have allowed a field visit to AAISL, and first hand experience of their education work. Time and financial constraints prevented a larger scale research project being carried out. Ideally, this could have incorporated research across several fragile states and a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. This may have provided more generalisable results, and a comparison of contexts and stages of post-conflict recovery.
3. *Bias*: Prior experiences and background have inevitably affected data interpretation. Another researcher using the same data may reach different conclusions, present different themes and judge meaning differently. During the analysis, I considered 1) that documentary content may vary according to organisations' policies and the intended audience, and 2) that data is notoriously unreliable in fragile states due to the lack of government capacity and accurate data information systems.
4. *Documentary sources*: The internal documents used are restricted to those provided by staff at AAISL, AAI and other organisations and may not represent the full range of those available. AAI's decentralised nature extends to their information systems, and as there is no central system for storing information, AAI's IET staff were unaware of whether AAISL compile annual education reports, as this is decided at country level. Some documents were inaccessible as they are still in draft form: I was unable to obtain the MEYS guidelines for INGOs/NGOs that AAISL's country director revealed are being released in September.
5. *Response rates*: The sample was unrepresentative, as NGO partners in Sierra Leone were not interviewed. This was due to relying on London based staff for contacts as well as technological limitations. Questionnaire data was limited to respondents from AAI's Global Education Review, and did not include National Education Actors. The questionnaire data was further limited and prone to bias as respondents were selected by AAISL's Education Coordinator,

potentially because of good working relationships, and expectations of positive responses that would be communicated to the IET.

6. *Data*: Official data for CAFS is often unreliable or incomplete (Buckland, 2005). This is particularly challenging when INGOs are studied, as local interventions may be undocumented due to technical constraints and remote locations. This makes evaluating the impact of AAISL's work difficult, and means that data used for the study is likely to contain inaccuracies.

3.6. Ethics

This project conforms with the University of Sussex' ethical requirements, which were discussed during the design stage with my supervisor. The following precautions were taken:

1. *Access*: Planning and preparation was required to gain access to the individuals I wished to interview; identifying which organisations would form a representative sample in addressing the research question, who to contact, the time frame for interviews and questions to be asked. Policy and research documents published by organisations were consulted, in order to be well-informed prior to interview. Following this, participants were sent an interview request via email which detailed the purpose and content of the project.
2. *Informed consent*: The objectives of the study were reiterated at the start of each interview. Consent was asked prior to recording and quoting, and interviewees sent a final version of the report to ensure they were happy with the quotes. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any time. As such, the ethical requirements of competence (being fit to participate and cognisant of meaning), voluntarism (giving the choice to participate or withdraw at any time), full information and comprehension were fulfilled (Cohen et al, 2007, p53).
3. *Anonymity*: Participants were mostly happy to be identified using their job title and organisation. However, one participant felt this would make him vulnerable, asking to be referred to as 'Academic A'. As such, this is how he is referred to throughout the report.

The report now details AAI and AAISL's vision and areas of work in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4: ActionAid International and ActionAid International Sierra Leone

4.1. ActionAid International

ActionAid was founded in 1972 in London, and is now present in 42 countries worldwide. In 2003, ActionAid became 'ActionAid International', and moved its head offices to Johannesburg. This reflected a commitment to partnership between north and south affiliates and redistribution of control from London to regional and national levels (AAI, n.d.). Education has always been an AAI priority, but its approach to education evolved after internal reviews of SD and NFE work revealed little impact on enrolment rates, achievement or teaching quality (Archer, 2008). In 1998, AAI adopted an RBA, focused on transforming power relations, lobbying at national and international levels to ensure governments meet human rights obligations (AAI, 2007). AAI considers it essential to remember the power a large INGO can wield, and develop comprehensive accountability strategies for policy and planning so that it can 'remain a positive force in the struggle for the right to EFA' (AAI, 2007, p9).

4. 2. AAI Sierra Leone

In order to recognise the state's role, and not divert responsibility for education delivery away from government, AAI sets out six strategic objectives, strongly anchored within an RBA, that it believes will help eradicate poverty and inequality. As AAI is heavily decentralised, these are adapted at regional and country levels to ensure context relevance in the Africa Strategic Goals, AAISL Country Strategy Goals and the AAISL Education Strategy (an overview of goals can be found in Appendix 3). AAISL is engaged in various activities to meet education rights in Sierra Leone. These are detailed briefly below (see Appendix 4 for a list of AAISL projects):

1. *Local:* AAISL's work in communities includes supporting NFE centres, Regenerated Freirian Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT) circles, basic skills training for youths affected by the civil conflict and building the capacity of SMCs and PTAs to ensure community participation in education debates (AAISL, n.d.).
2. *National:* At national levels, AAISL is engaged with the MEYS to improve access and quality in education (AAISL, n.d.), as one of several INGO implementing partners of the Sabubu project, and supported the drafting of the Education Strategy (MEYS, 2007). AAISL has a

strong partnership with the EFA- Sierra Leone (EFA-SL) coalition, in building and reviewing management structures and increasing capacity to engage in campaigning and advocacy. AAISL act as funders and facilitators, with support from donors such as DfID (EFA-SL, 2008). AAISL is involved in national level partnerships, for example on Global Action Week as a funder and facilitator of EFA-SL together with UNICEF, the MoEYS, INGOs, NGOs and teachers' unions.

3. *International:* AAISL was the lead INGO for the Commonwealth Education Fund (CEF) project, jointly managed with SC and Oxfam from 2002-2008. The CEF promoted free primary education and facilitated local level advocacy and lobbying (as with EFA-SL). AAISL also supports networks to campaign on the rights of the girl-child to education and conducts advocacy and research on International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionalities and impact on the education sector (AAISL, 2009a).

Chapter 5: Analysis of Results

Before beginning the analysis, the issue of terminology touched upon in section 1.1. is revisited, due to the political, pragmatic and ideological implications for individual countries. Consensus on definitions of 'fragility' and types of 'fragile state' is lacking. Several interviewees considered these terms disempowering, patronising and externally imposed by donors grappling with difficult situations (UNESCO Chair, Academic A, UNESCO Official). However, AAISL staff considered Sierra Leone fragile as a country and in relation to education, a state exacerbated by conflict:

Sierra Leone is one of the poorest countries in the world[...]. The quality of life is low, mortality rates are high among children and women, technology is very low, I think Sierra Leone would qualify certainly as a fragile state. If on the other hand you have been through war, that the war has had devastating effects on every aspect from economy to life, human life, institutions are weak, potential for investments are low, again, [Sierra Leone] could qualify as a fragile state.

(Country Director, AAISL, Interview, 04/08/09)

From the education angle, I would say [Sierra Leone is fragile], because we have a high rate of unqualified teachers, children out of school, macroeconomic issues of IMF that is restricting funding of the public sector; [...] education [is] affected by these conditions.

(Education Coordinator, AAISL, 20/07/09)

As AAISL staff did not consider Sierra Leone's 'fragile' categorisation misused, perhaps the terminology is less problematic than its use to categorise a multitude of countries, and contexts. What matters to AAISL's Country Director is not Sierra Leone's 'fragile' status, but its capacity to move out of this state *'there has to be a deliberate effort to determine whether it has graduated from the category of fragile state'* (Interview, 04/08/09). Although the potential for categorisation to affect funding is recognised, as one interviewee clearly stated there is a need to 'clarify terminology and move beyond it' (UNESCO Official, Interview, 21/07/09). Macrae's (1999) assertion that definitions are largely politicised and do not change country level needs seems relevant here. In Sierra Leone, there is a need to build capacity *and* support service delivery, both components identified in the conceptual framework.

5.1. Capacity Building

The overarching theme that emerged in interviews in relation to capacity building was INGO partnerships with government, national and local education partners, with a lesser but nonetheless

important emphasis on AAISL's capacity.

5.1.1 Partners in capacity building

I. Local Partnerships

Engaging local partners was considered crucial to INGO engagement '*[i]f you are not able to get the local actors engaged and on board, I don't see a lot of interventions going anywhere*' (UNESCO Chair, Interview, 16/07/09). INGO support was considered important in facilitating local level advocacy and capacity building (Head of Human Development, DfID; UNESCO Chair). This mirrors AAISL's approach: '*[AAISL] work in partnership to advocate for the rights of children in schools. [Partnerships are the] only way, [we] cannot be in every village at the same time, so [we] enable [communities] to implement strategies on the ground*' (Education Coordinator, AAISL, Interview, 20/07/09). Working with LEPs rather than establishing local AAISL branches demonstrates AAI removing itself from direct SD work. The three LEP questionnaires (from Bombalili, Kambia District Education Forum; KaDEF and the Western Area Budget Education Advocacy Network; WABEAN) were important in projecting local perspectives of capacity building.

1. Areas of Work:

AAISL fund LEPs, share publications and plan and implement work together. Feedback on partnership evolution since 2005 was positive, as AAISL has increased information sharing (WABEAN), trainings (Bombalili), devolved responsibility and listened to LEP views on improving interventions (KaDEF). These activities suggest that AAISL seeks 'mutual collaboration' type partnerships over exerting their power through financial control. When asked which area of work best described AAISL's work, Bombalili and KaDEF responded it 'provides voice to poor people/ specific excluded groups', while WABEAN reported capacity building and training on RBA. These areas fit within AAISL's education strategy objectives, indicating alignment with partners work, and that AAISL puts excluded groups at the centre of interventions rather than duplicating government provision. All LEPs saw capacity building as an important reason for partnership, and agreed that AAISL provides regular capacity building and training on RBA.

An example of capacity building at local levels is AAISL's involvement with SMCs in Kambia district (AAISL, 2008). AAISL provides training for SMCs, whose role is to '*provid[e] management direction to the schools, [and monitor] qualified teachers in schools, [so] that there is awareness of who is*

recruited, how many teachers are recruited, and the education level of teachers.' (Education Coordinator, AAISL, Interview, 20/07/09). Building capacity for sustainable funding, schooling and resourcing is considered crucial to AAISL's strategy with SMCs:

[I]t is SMCs that donate money, raise funds from activities to support [community] schools. AAI is working on NFE, we are supporting communities that don't have funds to take care of their school activities. [AAISL] makes sure we have very strong community links with the SMCs, the PTA, the village development committee. All of these work together so schools have adequate furniture, textbooks, trained teachers, can get recognition from government.

(Education Coordinator, AAISL, Interview, 20/07/09)

This quote projects a true sense of collaboration and local ownership of projects. At community levels AAISL is building human, operational and institutional capacity, and it is worth noting that although activities are directed at SMCs, the issues covered indicate a wider influence on communities, authorities, teacher training and recruitment.

2. Benefits and challenges of working with AAISL:

All three LEPs had positive views of AAISL, agreeing it was effective, process orientated, transparent, a good collaborator, a facilitator and an organisation that creates space for civil society organisations to share their views. The LEPs reported capacity building as the major benefit of working with AAISL, followed by increased linkages and recognition. Increased linkages can strengthen communication between civil society and government, and potentially increase social cohesion. Challenges reported by two LEPs¹¹ were consistent in the areas of inadequate funding and lack of office equipment, which had meant meeting deadlines and completing reports was difficult. One LEP reported they had partnered other NGOs to make up the funding gap. Further challenges included a lack of human capacity, which was addressed by sending staff on training programmes. The consistency in positive and negative aspects of partnerships indicates that AAISL's approach is uniform. Nonetheless, the challenges encountered may weaken coordination if organisations are engaged with other NGOs that have different priorities and agendas. AAISL must ensure LEPs have the capacity to produce quality reports (and thus strengthen the evidence base transmitted to national levels), and that time spent attempting to meet deadlines with inadequate equipment, does not detract from programme implementation.

¹¹ One LEP did not complete this section of the questionnaire.

II. National partnerships

With National Education Partners

AAISL's capacity building is exemplified through their engagement with EFA-SL (who completed the NEP questionnaire). Although a single response is not generalisable, the insights are valuable, in providing a contrast with LEP reports. The most important reasons for EFA-SL partnering AAISL were 'AAI has a good understanding of education in our country', 'AAI provides expert knowledge', 'we can access training and funding' and 'AAI has a powerful name which is useful for our work'. These show that AAI is perceived to have a good understanding of the country context, and able to build institutional capacity and visibility at national levels, both considered important aspects of engagement in CAFS (as demonstrated in the overview of agency guidelines in table 1.2).

The NEP questionnaire revealed that EFA-SL have partnerships with local organisations (WABEAN and KaDEF), and AAISL's capacity building has significantly increased the coalition's engagement with national education actors. A key benefit of capacity building is that it creates links from local to national levels, and strengthens civil society at national levels to make connections to international fora. These contribute to building social capital and cohesion.

1. Areas of Work:

Areas of work were very similar to those with LEPs and partnership with AAISL was considered positive due to their unique focus on education advocacy:

AAI is the only organisation that has [education advocacy] as a critical theme to its engagement. This has provided the opportunity for the coalition to look in a similar direction and work in a similar way. In terms of experiential learning, AAI's approach is unmatched in creating that space for sharing at national as well as international levels.

(NEP Questionnaire)

AAISL was reported as engaged in many activities that demonstrate attention to capacity building (catalysing and organising civil society into action, generating research on education issues, providing training and capacity building, providing voice to poor people/ excluded groups) and filling gaps in Sierra Leone's educational provision (providing alternatives for education delivery, delivering education services). AAISL was reported as being best known amongst other organisations for its strong position on education rights.

2. Benefits and challenges of working with AAISL:

Three perceived benefits of working with AAISL were 1) acquiring knowledge on advocacy work that had helped strengthen the coalition's visibility, 2) partnership 'opening doors' to high level forum meetings, and 3) AAISL acting as a resource base and facilitator for coalition work. These link to areas AAI consider are their traits, of capacity building and advocacy. The two challenges denoted were significant, as they mirror difficulties encountered at local levels. First, that sustained engagement was compromised by the funding base: '[s]upport to the coalition from AAI has waned considerably and opportunities for grant seeking for education advocacy are quite limited' (EFA-SL, NEP Questionnaire). Second, that 'education interventions at community level remain distant and unconnected to national course. Education initiatives at community level must seek to build synergy with national level initiatives' (NEP Questionnaire). Failure to do so may undermine the social capital building which is crucial in post-conflict settings and requires communication and coordination between local and national levels.

With government

The importance of working with government was considered necessary to successful engagement as *'[w]herever possible you should try and use government systems and [...] work in collaboration and under the direction of the government'* (Lead Education Specialist, WB, Interview, 15/07/09). This is consistent with AAI's vision and RBA, and strongly stated in interviews with the IET and AAISL *'if the communities have a dire need for a school [...] you should be sensitive to that need. However, that need should be provided with the understanding that it is the government that has ultimate responsibility for providing access to education. [...] It is a complementary role that we should be having'* (Country Director, AAISL, Interview, 04/08/09). AAISL (2007b) recognises the importance of governance, which is the theme of its 2007-11 Country Strategy Paper, 'Enhancing Governance and Accountability to end Poverty'. Adaptation of AAI's goals at country level allows AAISL to align their objectives with the governments, as demonstrated below:

Table 5.1. Mapping of the MEYS's objectives with AAISL's

AAISL Goal: All children have free access to quality education within an equitable system where children's rights, especially of girls, are respected, injustices challenged and children's lives transformed.		MEYS Objective: To provide basic education of quality for all in a phased manner, starting with the realisation of the right to primary education, whilst at the same time providing marketable skills training and the relevant and appropriate tertiary education needed for advancement of the society and poverty reduction.
AAISL Strategic Objectives	AAISL Outcomes	MEYS 'Major Strategies'
1) Work with excluded	- Poor and excluded people claim	- Developing a policy to address, amongst other things, the

groups to secure free access to quality education as a basic right	<p>their rights to quality education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Government and donor respond appropriately to demands of excluded groups - Increased attendance of girl-child and other excluded groups 	<p>gender issues which negatively impact on the education sector such as gender inequality and gender based violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Directly tackling the problem of out-of-school children with targeted responses which break down the barriers preventing children from going to school and thereby reach those disadvantaged children who have special needs, come from underserved rural areas or live in extreme poverty
2) Secure adequate resources from governments and donors to ensure effective delivery of education for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved allocation and accountability in the delivery and use of resources - Greater alignment of expenditure with priority needs of educational institutions - Greater participation of CSOs in educational processes, policies and practices - Removal of conditionalities of international financial institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing the capacity of education actors at all levels – national, district and school – and promoting the decentralization process - Improving on quality, mobilizing and making effective use of resources, including the promotion of public-private partnerships and cost recovery, at the tertiary level
3) Secure sustained and meaningful citizen participation and increase transparency, accountability and responsiveness of education systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Greater involvement of communities in decision making resulting to better management of schools - Effective EFA coalition undertake education advocacy and campaign work - More professional, motivated and trained teachers - Enhanced citizens capacity to analyse problems and identify solutions - Strong links with women's groups established and maintained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building up infrastructure and an adequate qualified teaching force to cope with the present and future requirements for UPE
4) Support schools that respect all children's rights and provide good quality education that is empowering and relevant.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Revised school curriculum to make education empowering for both boys and girls - Reduced violence on girls in schools - Increased girl-child attendance and retention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reviewing the curriculum and making it more relevant to the needs of individuals, communities and the nation as a whole
5) Challenge the reduction of the EFA agenda to primary schooling and ensure investment in adult learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improved spending on adult literacy programmes - Increased levels of adult literacy at local and national levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting post-primary education as a linchpin for the education sector and society as a whole – since post-primary education produces skilled personnel and technicians such as administrators, qualified teachers and female role models essential for the healthy development of the nation - Making increased provisions for literacy and skills training, including the establishment of a book policy

(Sources: AAISL, 2007, pp7-9; MEYS, 2007, x)

AAISL's objectives are in the main aligned with the MEYS's vision and major strategies. Nonetheless, two areas are discordant. The first relates to the MEYS's strategy of 'improving on quality, mobilizing and making effective use of resources, including the promotion of public-private partnerships and cost recovery, at the tertiary level' (MEYS, 2007, x). As identified earlier, secondary and tertiary education

often suffer most post-conflict, with increased focus on primary education in reconstruction efforts creating further comparative disadvantage. Public-private partnerships are not referred to in AAISL's education strategy, nor does it provide vocational education or training for adults, youth programmes or secondary education, although there is high involvement in literacy work through REFLECT (Lead Questionnaire). Although the government's responsibility for education delivery cannot be disputed, addressing the dearth of post-primary opportunities via private-public partnerships is an improvement on current shortcomings in enrolment at these levels. The MEYS considers such partnerships necessary given the challenging context and need for funds: '[t]he GOSL will also seek alternative ways of financing education such as by promoting private schools and universities and by engaging in cost recovery at the tertiary level' (MEYS, 2007, xiii). An increasing focus on post-primary education would not only improve coordination with the government but also with partners, as KaDEF and EFA-SL indicated this should be prioritised '[m]ost of [AAISL's support] is at primary level but no support to secondary level [...] most [of] the children that go through AAI supported community primary schools may drop out of school after grade six' (KaDEF, LEP Questionnaire). This may be addressed, as AAISL's Education Coordinator states 'we have not started working on secondary education' but that it is one of three priorities for future work (Lead Questionnaire).

The second area of dissonance relates to the MEYS strategy of 'improving data collection and analysis for monitoring, planning and accountability purposes through the recently established education management information system' (EMIS; MEYS, 2007, x). Although it is not stated in their education strategy, AAISL *are* engaging in research and data collection/ verification that links with the government's EMIS strategy. AAISL's study on girls' education investigates enrolment rates in the Moyamba district, establishes baseline information on the girl-child and reasons for girls dropping out, for the purpose of Government and NGOs (AAISL, n.d.). Without an efficient EMIS, the GoSL will be unable to effectively administer the education sector, and monitor progress in education quality, access, enrolment and completion rates. This study would strengthen the government's information base on gender disparities in Sierra Leone, enable more coordinated and context-specific targeting of education interventions, and more accurate monitoring of progress. Making such findings more public would increase civil society's access to information and help to strengthen accountability, and clarify AAISL's alignment with government strategies. The MEYS values AAISL's contribution to education, mentioning them as one of seven NGOs that were supporting partners 'in the implementation of policy

on education' and 'made valuable comments on the initial draft' of the education strategy paper (MEYS, 2007, viii). Partnership at this level seems effective with potential to strengthen alignment and accountability with a greater focus on information systems and post-primary education.

III. Partnerships with international organisations

The general view amongst multilateral and bilateral agencies and academics is that INGOs should complement international agencies' strategies and research (in particular UN agencies, seen as the principal actors; Academic A, UNESCO Official, Interviews). AAISL receives funds from UNICEF and DfID, engages in advocacy work, research, and is an implementing partner with UNICEF (Lead Questionnaire). AAISL reports having a very strong influence on UNICEF at local and national levels (ibid). Despite collaborating with international agencies on high level projects, AAI's work in CAFS generally, and AAISL's national level work, had surprisingly low visibility amongst interviewees. None of the participants had sufficient knowledge of AAI to comment on their education work. This hindered the analysis of partnerships and external perceptions of AAI at international levels.

The UNESCO official interviewed had no perceptions of AAI's work, because they have no operational relationships and are not very active on the same cluster mechanisms. This seems to be the case for other agencies *'I haven't had direct dealings with [AAI] on any of the fragile situations, which is more a reflection on me and the circles I am involved in, because I know they are involved in quite a few of the countries I have been involved in'* (Lead Education Specialist, WB, Interview, 15/07/09). AAI's Head of Education suggested this was because AAI predominantly play a facilitative role *'[s]ome of the multilaterals and bilaterals might be aware of some of the things that we are doing [without] knowing that it is AAI that is doing that work, because we have tended to try to play a facilitative role to bring forward voices of others'* (Interview, 31/07/09). This is a positive indication of a commitment to capacity building and strengthening civil society voice. However, more surprising was that the interviewee based at SC in Sierra Leone until December 2008 had little perception of AAISL's education work except *'some quite interesting work'* on education financing advocacy (Education Coordinator, SC, Interview, 21/07/09). AAI's Head of Education indicated surprise at this as SC and AAI collaboratively managed the CEF in Sierra Leone, and that this may reflect SC wanting to be perceived as the main education actor in CAFS.

Low visibility was not a concern *'I think if the Ministry of Finance is calling up the AAI country director when the IMF are coming, and asking for advice on how to deal with them on education financing [...] that is more significant than being able to have a high media profile'* (Head of Education, AAI, Interview, 31/07/09). Nonetheless, low visibility may restrict AAI in several ways. First, it may limit their influence with multilateral and bilateral donors, and therefore the funding and sustainability of projects. Second, it indicates that AAI may have low presence in high level donor meetings, policy and planning. Access to such meetings, and 'AAI's powerful name' was considered a significant benefit by EFA-SL, and high visibility would facilitate this. It also indicates a possible gap in engagement between international, national and local level advocacy and campaigning, with awareness of AAI's work restricted to a few specialist areas. Increased information sharing at international levels would ensure AAI are coordinated with other education actors, which links to perceptions that more national level lobbying and using international influence more effectively would increase AAISL's influence (NEP Questionnaire).

III. AAISL

The issue of capacity also related to INGOs' technical and human capacity, to provide adequate support and training to their own staff, manage large donor funds, and engage effectively at international, national and local levels. It was suggested that national branches of INGOs needed to have the capacity at national level to rapidly scale up programmes, and deal with large sums of money (Senior Education Finance Specialist, CfBT, Interview, 20/07/09). Also advised, was a shift in human capacity, towards expertise in policy implementation support: *'We will [...] have a learning curve, to start employing people that have more a policy implementation support skills than policy development and micro service delivery'* (Lead Education Specialist, WB, Interview, 15/07/09). This issue was difficult to investigate given interviewees' inadequate knowledge of AAI and AAISL's education work.

IV. Equal partners in capacity building?

AAISL's engagement with multiple educational stakeholders raises questions as to whether there is consistency between local, national and international capacity, or if agendas and priorities are subject to power imbalances. AAISL must work within AAI's education strategy, report to donors, compete with other INGOs over funds and 'niche' areas, and ensure they neither replicate or duplicate other education

stakeholders' efforts. The concern that competition for funds influences INGOs was clearly encapsulated by Academic A:

'The hierarchy [between international education actors] is clearly about funding. Because ultimately if you're dishing out 2 or 3 hundred million you're going to be in a stronger position than if you are receiving 50,000'

(Interview, 16/07/09)

AAI's Senior Education Research and Policy Analyst felt that AAI priorities should not change to access funding: *'I'd like to think that just because there is a lot of money available we are not just going to all of a sudden change our strategies'* (Interview, 20/07/09). Nonetheless, competition for funds exists, as AAISL is one of several INGOs engaged in Sierra Leone. AAI's Head of Education's viewed competition as healthy: *'there is a bit of a sort of pummelling out of different areas of expertise which are complementary. That is a good thing, and it is almost deliberately done in order to avoid competition'* (Interview, 31/07/09). This may explain why AAI has not adopted a specific post-conflict strategy that may 'step on the toes' of other INGOs specialising in this area. The UNESCO Chair suggested forming education clusters could mainstream INGO involvement effectively while minimising competition in the future: *'its less glamorous, simply to be supporting another agency [but] that is what the necessity is'* (Interview, 16/07/09). One way of improving coordination and mainstreaming may be for AAI to support agencies that specialise in post-conflict states – for example SC - more directly, rather than having national offices in these locations. SC is already a key education actor in Sierra Leone, and could scale up existing programmes with AAI's support. A second option is for AAI to develop their 'niche' areas of adult literacy and education financing more clearly in relation to conflict, to add their expertise in a context relevant way.

LEP and NEP questionnaires were interesting when considering perceptions of power between AAISL and education actors in Sierra Leone. NEP perceived AAISL as having a very strong influence on Teacher's Unions and EFA-SL through partnership and advocacy work, and with DfID in seeking funding. This suggests that AAISL has a degree of independence in prioritising their agenda, accessing donor funding, and has influence over other civil society organisations. A strong influence was perceived with UNICEF in partnership and SD, and at local levels of government through supporting schools. Limited influence was seen at national levels of government, with AAISL viewed as a collaborator rather than partner, which again indicates 'mutual collaboration' and attempts to equalise

power relations rather than exert pressure to work to AAISL's agenda. Although it inevitably affects power and partnerships to an extent, financing does not seem to dictate AAISL's ways of working.

INGOs' capacity building at local levels was considered important in equalising power relations, enabling local communities to demand their right to education, and holding duty bearers such as the government or schools accountable (Senior Education Research and Policy Analyst, AAI, Interview, 20/07/09; AAISL, 2009). LEP Questionnaires revealed significant differences in LEP's perceived level of influence on external actors at local and national levels. Bombalili reported strong influence on AAISL, government, bilateral agencies (at local levels), and other national civil society organisations. In contrast, WABEAN reported strong influence on AAISL and teachers unions (at local levels), but weak/ limited influence on government and other national civil society organisations. This inconsistency needs to be further examined to ensure that AAISL systematically fulfil their remit of bringing local issues to national levels, and reverse traditional power relations in favour of local communities.

LEP questionnaires permitted consideration of how AAISL deals with issues of power, and ensure collaborative, egalitarian partnerships. Only one LEP reported taking on work at AAISL's suggestion, whereas all three reported choice was affected by community issues, indicating that AAISL is not exclusively dictating areas of work. AAISL's Education Coordinator demonstrated an understanding of the power they held as funders, but this still posed problems as LEPs considered AAISL a donor rather than a partner: *'[In] partnerships, you come with your skills, I come with my skills, I come with my resources, you come with your resources, we have [...] a mutual agreement [...] It is not like you are looking at me like a donor [...] and forgetting your own agenda. We have to make [partners] understand that'* (Interview, 20/07/09). Although AAISL wishes to engage in collaborative local-national partnerships, its role as a donor creates a power imbalance.

To summarise, AAISL's engagement with multiple educational stakeholders raises questions of power and 'whose agenda' has more influence. At international levels, AAI seems to retain independence from donor's agendas and view competition positively. Nonetheless, at national levels, there is an inadequate level of communication sharing to assure high visibility and coordination. AAISL has influence on

other education actors and is engaged in what is generally a mutually collaborative partnership with government and LEPs. Even so, LEPs' capacity to exert influence remains inconsistent and AAISL's position as a donor creates tensions as it fails to satisfy partner's funding expectations. Therefore what emerges clearly is a discrepancy between local, national and international levels of capacity, that creates difficulties in practice. This may be due to the additional post-conflict challenges present *'contexts like Sierra Leone, Liberia, Somalia, Congo, the DRC, they are unique'* (Country Director, AAISL, Interview, 04/08/09) that have implications for budgeting, reporting and procedures *'the cost of printing one document in Sierra Leone may be twice [...] elsewhere in Africa and probably three times in the UK [...] you [have no] email services for 40 days, 60 days, and yet you are expected to deliver as your colleague in the UK or Kenya'* (ibid). This likely impacts on the funds available for partners, perhaps partly explaining LEP and NEPs' perceptions of insufficient financing. At local levels, the lack of resources and institutional capacity creates tensions and hinders efforts to transmit local messages to national levels. This is exacerbated by the loss of human capacity Sierra Leone experienced during conflict *'AAI is championing working with partners [so that] CBOs, national NGO, are strong enough to carry on after AAISL has left. But the reality is the partners, the institutions are very very weak. Most qualified people can afford to leave the country. Those who remain are probably the least qualified, or unqualified, so it is going to be a different requirement altogether to build capacity'* (Country Director, AAISL, Interview, 04/08/09). The lack of capacity and Sierra Leone's post-conflict status presents challenges to effective functioning. Although AAI and AAISL value equal power relations, until the vicious circle of disparities in human, institutional and organisational capacity between local, national and international levels is broken, mutual collaboration, effective communication, civil society participation and sustainability will remain elusive.

5.2. Service Delivery

Within the category of service delivery, two themes emerged. The first is that of tensions experienced in implementing an RBA in Sierra Leone. AAISL, AAI staff and LEPS all gave this importance. A second theme is the importance of education financing for effective SD.

5.2.1. Tensions in implementing an RBA

Country level strategies link to how service delivery fits within an RBA. Several interviewees agreed that situations of low government capacity such as Sierra Leone, require INGOs to support education

service delivery (Head of Human Development, DfID; Lead Education Specialist, WB). The main difficulty was considered ensuring SD was sustainable and did not undermine state responsibility *'[o]ne of the problems of service delivery through NGOs [...] is that it does not develop capacity [...] so the critical challenge [...] is to reconfigure that relationship, so the state has a role. Not necessarily in providing the services, but ensuring the services are provided'* (Lead Education Specialist, WB, Interview, 15/07/09). AAI felt that adopting an RBA was key to ensuring sustainability, long term development and capacity building: *'[h]ave you heard the expression in humanitarian work? You say the crisis after the crisis is when all the INGOs and the NGOs come in, and it is immediate service delivery and then they all leave. [...] So they have done a lot of good, but they don't leave a good structure'* (Senior Education Research and Policy Analyst, AAI, Interview, 20/07/09). This demonstrates that AAI consider engagement a long-term endeavour and focus on development outcomes rather than emergency response, but AAISL's RBA creates tensions in implementation with partners.

Although LEPs reported having rights training, and agreed that AAISL had built capacity to implement an RBA, they all 'struggled' to do this (LEP Questionnaires). Bombalili agreed that 'the majority of its funding was for SD work', and that 'SD was a necessary component of an RBA' as 'it provides an entry point into communities', whereas WABEAN and KaDEF disagreed with both statements. Therefore understandings of rights and SD roles and practice at local levels are discordant. The top two tensions in implementing an RBA were community expectations and levels of poverty (Bombalili and WABEAN) and political context and influence of other NGOs and their approaches (KaDEF). In situations of low capacity and high poverty, community expectations are of higher funding support and SD. For these reasons, AAISL has already adopted SD roles *'[s]ervice delivery is part of our RBA right now. [...] We still provide schools for communities, we still provide water and sanitation facilities for communities, because they are just not there. So we cannot be talking about rights when these services are not available'* (Country Director, AAISL, Interview, 04/08/09). AAI's current RBA identifies SD as a last resort, but due to the GoSL's lack of capacity to deliver services, AAISL must engage in SD roles. This creates dissonance between international policy and local practice, in addition to tensions in implementation with partners.

Despite the difficulties encountered, LEPs still considered adopting an RBA preferable because *'it*

promotes sustainability [and] transparency' (Bombalili), *'communities are motivated and organised to take their development in their own hands for sustainability'* (KaDEF) and *'it legally guides our processes and helps to build capacity of people to demand their right from state actors'* (WABEAN). This indicates a strong local will to implement an RBA, but that the focus may need to shift to incorporate SD, and be implementable in a way that means LEPs do not 'struggle'. Interviews with the IET identified that they were aware of the discrepancy between the conceptualisation of rights put forward in AAI's international education strategy and the amount of SD work at country level. AAI has therefore decided to remodel its RBA, to include SD. The Head of Education stated that the education strategy would be reviewed, to fit around three core themes: education financing, adult literacy, and working towards quality, rights respecting schools by *'producing a simple chart of around 10 central rights that schools should respect'* (Interview, 31/07/09). These core rights would be embedded in international treaties and conventions, simplify the RBA, improve accessibility at local levels and clarify methods of implementation (Head of Education, AAI, Interview, 31/07/09). In Sierra Leone the RBA has already been adapted to the context. A clear strategy would allow greater alignment between international and national strategies and transparency to education stakeholders and donors. Furthermore, the three core aforementioned themes are all relevant in Sierra Leone. It is worth investigating whether this could be a niche area for AAI to develop within a post-conflict strategy that can be put into effect across the gamut of conflict-affected states they work in.

5.2.2. Education financing for effective service delivery

AAI and AAISL staff identified education financing as their largest area of advocacy work, that impacts SD via the influence of budgeting at national levels. Education financing cuts across international and national levels, in research on the impact of caps on public wages and teacher recruitment, macroeconomic literacy training and policy engagement (Beardon, 2009). This links closely to capacity building, and AAISL has been active in providing EFA-SL with training on economic literacy and public financial analysis to ensure civil society has the skills to demand good financing and policies in education (AAISL, 2009, n.d.2). Government capacity is important in Sierra Leone, as currently, effective financing of the education sector, and reaching UPE and UPC by 2015 is dependant on donor funding. The government, 'compelled by serious economic distress' finds it difficult to challenge WB and IMF policies (AAISL, 2007a). The WB is highly involved in national agenda setting, with the MEYS stating its Education Strategy Paper is 'one of a pair' and a 'sister

document' to the WB's (2007) 'Education in Sierra Leone – Present Challenges, Future Opportunities' (MEYS, 2007). For AAISL, challenging macroeconomic policies is a priority:

Budgetary allocation to education keeps changing, the national standard allocation is 20%, [but the government] are not able to meet their commitments. In 2009, budget allocation was down to 11.3 %, which makes it so ridiculous. So we are putting together a task force which is going to monitor the budget, [...] to see how they are able to influence the budget process for education.

(Interview, Education Coordinator, AAISL, 20/07/09)

The Senior Education Finance Specialist at CfBT was critical of AAI's education financing work '*at times they [have] just assumed that wage caps / cuts are why teachers don't get paid. The issue's more complex than that*', asserting that SC's research had found that '*[wage cuts are] not set predominantly in the education sector; the government still has the room to decide whether to cut teachers or to cut defence*' (Interview, 20/07/08). Again, increased information sharing would ensure that work is not duplicated, and coordination of findings. Although evaluating INGO's influence is difficult, as many factors influence national and international policy, since the research was launched the IMF '*have officially dropped their promotion or condition of public-sector wage bill ceilings in poor countries. However, in practice the ceilings are still in place in many countries, including Sierra Leone*' (Beardon, 2009, p7). The MEYS also made a public commitment to lower pupil-teacher ratios to 40:1 through increased teacher training as a result of public pressure (Beardon, 2009). This is an instance of successful international-national partnerships, as EFA-SL was highly involved, and much advocacy work took place in collaboration with civil society actors around the Global Week of Action (Beardon, 2009). However, while the change in the IMF's official policy is encouraging, it remains to be translated into improved SD outcomes through increased teacher training, educational quality and lower pupil-teacher ratios. AAISL should continue working to ensure changes in policy are affected in practice.

To summarise this section, AAI's current view is that service delivery threatens sustainability, but the needs in Sierra Leone rule out an approach without an element of SD. Although local views of the RBA ideology and policy are positive, understandings at local level differ and LEPs grapple with implementing an RBA in practice. Incorporating SD within AAI's rights framework will reduce tensions between international, national and local levels, which the IET is already considering. AAISL is engaged in education financing advocacy, and although progress has been made the government has inadequate capacity to challenge macroeconomic power over the education sector.

Chapter 6: Summary of findings

Considering the level of engagement in Sierra Leone, it is surprising that AAI has not developed a specific post-conflict strategy. One reason given by the IET was that this was unnecessary *'partly because we don't have a big presence in those countries, and partly because we also thought that wasn't necessarily our niche'* (Senior Education Research and Policy Analyst, AAI, interview, 20/07/09). Avoiding duplication is important, but this statement is inconsistent with the reality as AAI has education programmes in 15 CAFS (see Appendix 5 for a full list). The Head of Education maintained that strategies are devolved to country level, and a post-conflict strategy is adverse to a context-specific approach: *'It probably would be [useful to have a specific strategy, but] because there is huge diversity between countries, one of my fears is making generalised statements [when] what might constitute a conflict-affected state might be immensely diverse and the approach it involves and strategies you might follow might be just as diverse as they would be in any other set of countries'* (Head of Education, AAI. Interview, 31/07/09). It is worth noting the contradiction within this quote: 'we probably ought to' contrasts with the fear of restricting a flexible response. This contradiction, and the difference in responses amongst the IET indicate that AAI's arguments for not adopting a specific post-conflict strategy need to be clarified.

AAISL's Country Director believed a post-conflict strategy could be useful in Sierra Leone, sufficiently so for this to have been *'sounded [...] in our meetings or when I have a conversation with colleagues'* (Country Director, AAISL, Interview, 04/08/09). While acknowledging that contexts differ, the IRC's Head of Education (Interview, 03/08/09) considered that post-conflict situations' similarities justify a specific strategy, which would increase preparedness and sustainability, a statement corroborated by AAISL's Country Director:

Fragile states need to be considered different. What is feasible [for AAI is to] look at countries whether they are in conflict, or emerging out of conflict differently from those that have never experienced conflict. [Because] we are dealing with human beings, who could be feeling oppressed, who may not be satisfied [and] could react. And in that situation what do we do? Do we close our offices and leave? Or do we show solidarity with people? These are hard questions.

(Interview, 04/08/09)

Although a homogenising approach would be inappropriate, by not adopting a post-conflict strategy

AAI's engagement lacks finesse. An international post-conflict strategy is adaptable - as is AAI's current education strategy- at country levels, and the IET needs an approach that reflects country needs.

Implications

This research project set out to investigate three research questions, the answers to which have implications for policy, practice and future research at ActionAid International, ActionAid International Sierra Leone and for INGOs more generally. The answer to the first '*What is the role of INGOs in CAFS?*' is complex, as INGOs are part of a wider international community involved in post-conflict educational reconstruction. International education actors should be engaged in capacity building at national and local levels and supporting service delivery. Considering the political, economic and social context is necessary not to undermine government and inadvertently 'do harm' by weakening capacity and resilience. The approach, purpose and vision of education adopted by an organisation will affect these issues, and interventions should be implemented within a framework of long term development for increased sustainability. Hence the importance of the second question '*How does AAISL engage to build capacity and support service delivery in Sierra Leone?*'. AAISL is involved in a multitude of capacity building and service delivery support roles, including advocacy and lobbying, research, direct service delivery, and as donors. Partnerships are generally collaborative, but the deep-rooted lack of human, institutional and organisational capacity at local and government levels impacts on AAISL's ability to implement projects, creating tensions related to power, financing, effective communication and coordination.

This allows consideration of the third research question '*What lessons can be learned from AAISL and applied to other contexts, to inform future policy, practice and research?*'. Three implications for AAI's policy emerged from the findings. First, the formulation of a new strategy on rights would strengthen coordination and context relevance, which the IET is already considering as service delivery roles are at odds with the current education strategy. This would ensure greater alignment between international level policy and national implementation, and a reduction in tensions with education partners. Second, formulation of a post-conflict strategy rooted in a wider conceptualisation of an RBA, specialising in adult literacy, financing advocacy and capacity building would be an opportunity for AAI to capitalise on their strengths, share expertise with international education actors and recognise the specific challenges faced in CAFS. Third, AAISL should consider including post-primary education and supporting public-primary partnerships in its policy. This would increase alignment with the MEYS's

objectives, and has the potential to increase secondary and tertiary level enrolments.

Three future implications for AAISL's practice can be identified. First, stronger partnerships and information sharing with other INGOs in Sierra Leone are needed for greater coordination, reducing the likelihood of duplication or repetition of others' efforts and increasing AAI and AAISL's profile in international fora. Second, better information sharing is necessary within AAI; the lack of a centralised document storage system meant it was difficult to gauge if documents existed, and if they did staff could not always access them. Third, IFI advocacy work in Sierra Leone has resulted in changes to official rhetoric; further engagement is needed to secure concrete commitments that are translated into practice. Findings relating to AAISL also have relevance for other INGOs engaged in post-conflict education. Namely, issues of power and competition at national and local levels are complex and affect the relevance and ownership of interventions. Mutual collaboration is difficult to achieve when INGOs fulfil the role of donor and partner.

As regards future research, implications from the study are also relevant to other INGOs. Sierra Leone can be used as a reference point for CAFS with inadequate data information systems, and INGOs should consider the importance of building national capacity for data collection and analysis in CAFS. This is a small scale research project, and the generalisability of findings is limited. Future research might consider the role of different INGOs in Sierra Leone and other CAFS, to increase understanding of engagement, context relevance, coordination and SD. Furthermore, a compendium of INGO engagement in different post-conflict states would improve the international community's knowledge of the impact of INGO's work, an understanding that is particularly difficult to overcome as most national and local INGO evaluations and reports are not made public.

Conclusions

The relation between education and conflict is dynamic and complex, and the challenges CAFS face in achieving education rights and meeting international development goals, have made them an increasing focus of international research, policy and planning. In the aftermath of conflict, Sierra Leone faces serious challenges to meeting educational rights, with high levels of adult illiteracy, inadequate infrastructure and low civil society capacity. The Government is far from being able to meet its commitment to free quality education for all. This report has shown that INGOs have an important role

to play in Sierra Leone in building capacity, and supporting service delivery mechanisms. Educational rights are being violated in CAFS. INGOs, as part of the wider international community have not only a role but a responsibility to ensure civil society's voice is heard, and overcome the lack of government capacity to provide quality, equitable education for all.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Schedule – Non ActionAid Staff

The questions were subject to elaboration and adaptation during each interview, but are hoped to give an indication of the types of questions that were asked.

1. Background information:

- What is your position at (name of organisation)?
- Does (name of organisation) have an official document or policy that states their position on Fragile States?

2. Partnerships:

- What would you see as the role of NGOs and INGOs in fragile states?
- What kind of partnerships does (name of organisation) have at local levels in fragile states?
- What kind of partnerships does (name of organisation) have at national levels in fragile states?
- What kind of partnerships does (name of organisation) have at international levels in fragile states?

3. ActionAid International:

- Are you aware of any of AAI's education work in fragile states?
- What are your perceptions of their education work in fragile states?

4. Future directions:

- What do you see as directions for future INGO education work in fragile states?
- Is there anything else you would like to say, or any questions you have for me?

Appendix 2: AAI and AAISL Documents used for analysis

Table A7. AAI and AAISL documents used for analysis

<u>AAI documents:</u>	<u>AAISL documents:</u>
Annual reports (2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007)	Country Strategy
Education Strategic Plan (2005-2010)	Education Strategic Plan (2005-2010)
Education Annual Plan and Budget (2007-2009)	Global Action Week Report (2008)
Education Annual Reports (2004, 2005, 2006)	SMC Training Report (2008)
Accountability, Learning and Planning System	Second Quarterly Report: Education (2009)
Global Education Review 2002	Speech delivered by AAIAL Country Director at the launching of the National Accountability Report on Corruption in Primary Schools (2 nd April 2009)
Global Education Review (2009 draft version)	CEF Sierra Leone Country Update
Education Rights: A Guide for Practitioners and Activists (2007)	Moyamba District Girls' Education Report
Africa Strategy	Macro Economic Literacy Training
	Education Financing Strategy (Draft)
	The Right to Education Strategy (200-)
	ActionAid International Sierra Leone Strategy on IFIs (2007 – 2008)
	Statement by AAISL to GOSL and Education Actors on the Global Action Week on Education

Appendix 3: AAI Education Strategy Goals, regional African Strategy Goals, AAISL Country Strategy goals and AAISL Education Strategy Goals

Table A2: Action Aid International Education Strategy Goals 2005-2010, regional African Strategy Goals 2005-2010, AAISL Education Strategy Goals 2005-2009.

AAI Education Strategy Goals 2005-2010	AAI Africa Strategic Goals 2005-2010	AAISL Education Strategy Goals
<p>Objective 1: We will secure constitutional rights to basic education where these are not in place and ensure they are enforceable in practice</p> <p>Objective 2: We will work with excluded groups to secure free access to quality education as a basic right</p> <p>Objective 3: We will secure adequate resources from governments and donors to ensure effective delivery of education for all.</p> <p>Objective 4: We will secure sustained and meaningful citizen participation at local and national levels, and increase the transparency, accountability and responsiveness of education systems.</p> <p>Objective 5: We will secure schools that respect all children's rights and provide education that is empowering, relevant and of good quality.</p> <p>Objective 6: We will challenge the reduction of the EFA agenda to primary schooling and ensure balanced investment in early childhood education, adult learning and secondary education.</p>	<p>Goal 1: Poor and excluded people in Africa, their organizations, alliances and movements will organise, demand and secure their rights.</p> <p>Goal 2: African women and girls will demand, secure and exercise their rights</p> <p>Goal 3: States (countries) and their regional and sub-regional institutions will respect, protect and fulfil African people's rights</p> <p>Goal 4: Rising HIV infection rates will be reversed and the pandemic's impact on African peoples and their development reduced</p>	<p>Strategic objective 1 Work with excluded groups to secure free access to quality education as a basic right.</p> <p>Strategic objective 2 Secure adequate resources from governments and donors to ensure effective delivery of education for all</p> <p>Strategic objective 3 Secure sustained and meaningful citizen participation and increase transparency, accountability and responsiveness of education systems</p> <p>Strategic objective 4 Support schools that respect all children's rights and provide good quality education that is empowering and relevant.</p> <p>Strategic objective 5 Challenge the reduction of the EFA agenda to primary schooling and ensure investment in adult learning</p>

Sources: AAI, 2005; AAI, 2005a; AAISL, 2007.

Appendix 4: AAISL education programmes

These projects are direct extracts from AAISL sources, in order to provide a first hand account of projects conducted. They are sourced from AAISL's (2009b) Second Quarter Review. This document was chosen as the most up to date compendium of activities.

CONDUCT REFLECT TRAINING TRAINERS WORKSHOP

A ten days REFLECT Training of Trainers(ToT) workshop was organized in the Bombali DA geared towards enabling AAISL to effectively implement, manage and monitor adult literacy programmes within the DAs. This training was the first step towards having a pool of trainers to provide quality training for community facilitators and a national REFLECT network.

GLOBAL ACTION WEEK ON EDUCATION

The week commenced on 20th April 2009 and a press release from the Coalition was published in four leading news papers- AWOKO, Premier Media, Awareness Times and standard Times. On 21st a radio panel discussion comprising adult learners about their experiences as learners and what have changed in their lives was done. Four panellists testified about their experiences. Two of the learners are now in formal schools and at different stages-Mabinty Bangura now a Junior Secondary School student, Bailor Wanu and Sahr Filli at Senior school level and Mohamed Lamin Gbandi now a Facilitator at one of the centers. During the radio discussion on CTN radio, Mohamed Bah who has transformed from a business man to a third year university student shocked the public with his testimony. To enable Mohamed complete university education, the Coalition and ActionAid presented his case to the student secretary during one of the planning sessions and appealed for a scholarship on his behalf. Mohamed is now a proud and fulfilled determined young man whose dream to be graduate will become a reality by 2011.

“**The BIG READ**” event brought on board over 300 primary school children, 100 students from Technical and Vocational Institutes, 200 learners from 12 adult literacy centers in a bid to take action against illiteracy. Action for this year was focused on the 12 adult literacy benchmarks which were read by adult learners. Key areas of focus on the benchmarks for Sierra Leone are to expand advocacy on benchmarks 3, 5, 9 and 12 for a sustained literacy programme. ActionAid appealed for “**Action Now**” and that it is time to “**walk the talk**”. Mabinty an adult learner appealed to government to put in place a policy to accept learners into secondary schools with “**no demands for a national school certificate result**”. FAWE appealed to government to take action about the situation of “**high illiterate levels amongst women who form 70% of the illiterate population in the country**”. The Minister confessed that that the cost of getting Sierra Leoneans out of illiteracy cannot be covered by government alone as they do not have funds. He therefore appealed for a “**team work**” and requested all agencies to come on board. He made a comparison of the fight against illiteracy to a “**football team**”. He however noted the need for reliable data as a first step to solve the problem.

REPORT ON PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING THE EFA GOALS IN SIERRA LEONE LAUNCHED

The coalition presented the report (a research study funded by Education Watch through ANCEFA) which showed that little progress has been made by government to achieve the six EFA goals in Sierra Leone. Testimonies from learners showed that learning materials and payment of their facilitators form their major constraints. Amidst this, they have been dedicated in their quest to be literate. The event was widely covered on both electronic and print media and was on national news on 23rd April 2009. It is hoped that these appeal to government will be monitored and followed up before the next GAW for any positive change or progress.

CHILDREN'S EMPOWERMENT TOOL LAUNCHED

At the West and Central Africa Regional Education Network meeting in Accra from 17th to 18th March 2009, the International Director for Africa introduced the concept of developing a methodology for children as Africa's contribution to ActionAid Global. All participants made brilliant contributions toward the development of this tool but also agreed to pilot at country levels in one or two DAs. Sierra Leone was the only country that did this initial pre-test and made a presentation at the WACAR meeting in Cameroon. This gave the methodology a wide recognition amongst members and a working group was put in place at WACAR. The CP till then has worked relentlessly to ensure that the methodology kicks off in Sierra Leone. We have therefore formed one CREST circle in Kono to enhance children's participation in education planning, decision making activities, advocacy for the protection of the rights of other children and other social issues affecting their welfare. Circle meeting was held with the children and issues such as child labour, violence against women and school governance were key issues discussed. The children have successfully engaged their community elders to advocate on these issues and the elders have agreed to stop violence against their wives and allow all children to attend school and stop child labour in the mining sites. This initiative is in response to the WACAR call to pilot the methodology for a wider use of ActionAid international. This will be replicated in the other DAs and the BO and WADA DA have already started community mobilization. Fifteen key agencies working on child protection including UNICEF Save the children and the Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs Ministry were also provided copies of the release. So far, very good feedback and acknowledgement has been received and people are eager to learn more about the methodology. We hope that our sponsorship work will be accorded the quality it deserves through this initiative and that Africa's children will be transformed for poverty alleviation.

RESEARCH COMMISSIONED ON VAG IN AND OUT OF SCHOOL

As a result of the continuous abuse of girl's rights in and out of school a study on VAG was conducted so as to enable the education, Women's right, HIV & IADs themes plan for possible interventions to curb the problem amongst right holders. Based on girl's challenges, AAISL decided to commission a study to verify the actual violations and development areas in which these occur most. The aim of the study is to identify and analyse the causes and consequences of violence against girls in

schools and the effectiveness of preventive measures and to come up with research based recommendations. The scope of the study covered Kambia, Kono, Bo, Kenema, Western Area and Koinadugu. Four out of the six areas are Action Aid's development areas and the study has proven that violence is more prevalent in Kambia, followed by Kenema, Bo, Western Area, Kono and Koinadugu. Recommendations have been suggested by the researchers and a validation workshop will be held in the next quarter for which details will be provided in the next report.

SEVEN UNICEF SUPPORTED SCHOOLS COMPLETED IN KONO

The unit provided support to the Kono DA to facilitate the closure of the UNICEF 2008 school project. Seven schools toilets, water well facilities and furniture have been completed and awaiting handing over. Training of Mothers' clubs on girl child education rights, family planning care and support, teacher training and training of community care takers for hand pump water wells were also key components of the project. This project has improved enrolment and retention of girls in schools and has restored hope in the children of these communities. It has also helped mothers to be more sensitive on issues dealing with girls continued education and have mobilized other women who do not send their children to school to do so. They also provide financial assistance in the form of loans to help poorer women who because of lack of resources could not send their children to school. They are also engaged in house to house monitoring to keep children especially girls in schools, sensitization on safe motherhood practices and immunization of children to avoid infant mortality and maternal deaths. The children have also organized a school governance system which enable them to interact with each other and address issues affecting their well being and education. They have different ministers for various issues such as education, health and sanitation, agriculture social welfare etc. The women however need further support to ensure that their initiatives are sustainable. Some documentation of best practices of this project have commenced with the communications officer.

SUPPORTED WADA TO TRAIN VAG CLUBS ON VAGS AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

In collaboration with the Women's Right and VAW Co-ordinators, we conducted a three days VAGS and Reproductive Health Right training for VAG clubs within WADA. The children were able to identify VAG issues affecting their performance, retention and completion. The causes and effects of VAGs were analyzed through participatory approaches and the children came out with tangible advocacy actions for implementation within their communities. It was strongly recommended that Mothers' Clubs be formed in nine communities to monitor the girls' progress in schools, retention and completion rates. A detailed work plan for commemorating the day of the African child was also developed and the children will host a mock funeral service on 15th June in memory of all children who were violated and who died as a result of the war in Sierra Leone. It is hoped that these children will be ambassadors to stop violence against girls within their countries.

SUPPORT TO WADA TO TRAIN AND FEDERATE SMCS

The role of school management committees in ensuring quality education should not be underestimated. In a bid to facilitate their active role and function, WADA with support from the

Ministry of Education and the EFA - SL coalition organized a two days training for 30 School management committee members. The major output of the training was the formation of a federation of SMCs within the WADA sponsorship communities. This federation will be mandated to lobby at national level for the timely payment of fee subsidies to schools, recruitment of trained and qualified teachers, recognition of community schools and the 20% allocation of the national budget to education. The training also provided skills on budget planning, tracking and analysis, school planning and management, Rights to and Rights in education, networking, and data collection and the roles and responsibilities of SMCs.

TWO BORDER SCHOOLS COMPLETED IN KAMBIA

The general objective of the project was to provide adequate and suitable teaching and learning environment and increase access to schooling by providing additional classroom buildings for Roman Catholic Primary School, Mapotolon, Samu Chiefdom, Kambia District. The specific objectives of the project were to construct 2 three-classroom blocks with office and store, construct 2 three-drop hole toilet for each school building, construct a hand dug well fitted with hand pump and supply furniture for pupils and teachers (120 set for pupils, 8 set for teachers and 2 cupboards for the offices). The project targeted children between the ages of 6 –14 within Mapotolon community and the surrounding villages within Sierra Leone and neighbouring Guinea who have limited access to formal educational system and also high incidents of child trafficking. As a result of this intervention, access to school and retention of children in school has been increased as the children and their parents are very happy for the new school environment that they now have in their community. The newly constructed buildings for R.C. Mapotolon are now a source of pride for the community and this has led to a cordial working relationship between the Teachers, the School Management Committee members and the parents. Official handing over is yet to be made.

TASK FORCE ON MONITORING THE 20% BUDGET ALLOCATION TO EDUCATION

A task force comprising UNICEF, ActionAid, the Education for All Sierra Leone Coalition, National Accountability Group, The ministry of Finance and Ministry of Education has been formed in a bid to monitor the commitment of government in ensuring that the 20% allocation to the education sector is made. The budget allocation to education has dwindled for the past two years and quality has significantly dropped. The task force was formed to track the flow and monitor the use of the 20% allocation of the national budget to the education sector. The tracking and monitoring exercises will be focusing mainly on the quota allocated to the primary education sector, since that sector was the main concern and interest of all organizations present. She also furnished attendants with UNICEF's aim to partner with NGOs and government departments to work with the Ministry of Education in achieving quality, adequate and timely service delivery in the primary sector, which is the foundation of the entire education sector. Three organizations were recommended to develop terms of reference related to capacity building, Monitoring and Research and Advocacy. These organisations ActionAid, the National Accountability Group (NAG) and the Education for All Sierra Leone Coalition respectively developed them and NAG tasked to develop the TOR for the Task Force. After three meetings the group have already developed and submitted a proposal to UNICEF which is geared towards building the capacity of ten councils, education committee members and Parliament to influence the education budget allocation for 2010.

ELBA TRAINING FOR EDUCATION AND GOVERNANCE NETWORKS

AAI, as part of its commitment to its new strategy of "Rights to End Poverty" views economic injustice as one of the core elements constituting denial of rights and views economic literacy and budget

accountability work as a crucial instrument for strategic intervention in issues related to governance and public policy across sectors and issues. As policy instruments, government budgets have crucial role in the planning and control of the economic activities of a nation and poverty eradication. Economic Literacy and Budget Accountability work seeks to promote opportunities, strategies and alternatives for transformative change that will result from redistribution of resources in favour of policies, programmes and projects that improve the quality of life of the poor and excluded and enhance their participation in governance. One of the strategic objectives of the education unit is to secure adequate resources from governments and donors to ensure effective delivery of education for all. Funding is one of the major problems facing the Ministry of Education. The need to transform the present reality by increasing citizen's participation in the budgetary process; utilizing the budget to reduce inequality and poverty; promoting transparency; accountability and basic rights could not be overemphasized. To advance this course, the governance and education these hosted a five days intensive ELBA training for education and governance networks in Bo. This was geared towards building the capacity of network members to train other members of their communities on pro-poor budget formulation, preparation, monitoring and tracking. They have been able to acquire skills to be able to strategically influence the 2010 budget preparation process as we await the budget call circular for 2010. Practical exercise included preparation of a school budget and analyzing the impact and consequences of an ambitious budget. Due to our work on education financing ActionAid has been recognized by UNICEF and other agencies for their role in budget advocacy and research.

TENDERS TRAINING

Sierra Leone being considered a fragile state and considering the economic down turn, ActionAid Sierra Leone is working relentlessly to acquire additional funding to back the sponsorship funding so as to reach out to poor communities within her operational areas. Preparing and equipping staff with the right skills to apply for tenders was part of the fundraising measures taken. The training provided resourceful information to enable ActionAid compete with other bidders for tenders within the country. It is hoped that participants will provide support to the partnership unit whenever such an opportunity arises.

RECESSION PROJECTS

In response to the call for projects using the economic situation globally as an opportunity to fundraise, two projects on education financing and REFLECT were developed for the education unit and submitted to the partnership coordinator.

PARTICIPATED IN 21st ANNIVERSARY

The unit participated in the 21st celebration of the country's existence in Sierra Leone and this provided a good opportunity to showcase our education work and also bring to light some of the key issues affecting the sector. The unit participated in a radio discussion, press conference and photo exhibition where information about our work, research materials, reports and activities were showcased. Materials were also distributed to visitors who took part in the celebrations.

DEVELOPMENT OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS-The unit developed key performance indicators in order to enable effective monitoring of the country strategy paper and the education activities within the country programme. Consultations were made with the IASL coordinator, DA managers and major documents including the CSP, the Educations Sector Plan, the education rights pack and the education strategic plan so as to be able to ensure quality control.

Appendix 5: AAI Country Programmes in CAFS

Table A8. AAI Country programmes in CAFS

AAI Education Programmes in CAFS
Afghanistan
Burundi
Cambodia
DRC
Ethiopia
Haiti
Liberia
Nepal
Nigeria
Pakistan
Rwanda
Sierra Leone
Sri Lanka
Uganda
Zimbabwe
Total: 15

Sources: AAI, 2009; SC, 2006