Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) Sierra Leone

Pro-Poor Integrity (PPI) Programme

Baseline Study on the Health, Education, Water and Sanitation and Social Protection with Focus on Freetown, Koidu, Bo and Kenema

January 2010
1. Introduction and Background

Sierra Leone’s democratic process was revived in 1996 when the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) conducted successful Presidential and Parliamentary elections. Sticking to democratic creed preached upon assuming power, the elected government, on the advice of the British Government and other donor partners, pledged to deepen the democratic process by resuscitating local governance in the country. To actualize the dream, a separate Ministry of Local Government and Community Development was created to demonstrate government’s singular commitment to decentralize governmental powers and authority and to devolve functions to local councils. This move thus opened the way for local citizens to once more participate in the planning and implementation of their own political and socio-economic development.

The justification to hasten and fast-track the decentralization process were many. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report (TRC) of 2002 has clearly blamed the outbreak of one of Africa’s most brutal conflicts on the over-centralization of power and authority that witnessed the marginalization and exclusion of the vast majority living in rural communities. It further revealed that the war came as a result of the abysmal failure of the central government to provide much-needed services to rural localities. Resultantly, planners for the resuscitation of local governance argued that local governance system with effective, accountable and transparent local authorities would serve as a critical instrument in delivering the policies of government and to re-establish law and order at the grassroots.

Like in most post-war countries, the main focus of the Sierra Leone government in the immediate post-conflict era was to ensure the rehabilitation and reconstruction of battered communities; guarantee the resettlement of displaced persons and refugees; make certain the establishment of peace and security countrywide; reconciling communities and
engaging rural masses in their own development process. To them, therefore, only an established local government system with elected representatives would actualize this dream. It was also envisioned that an effective, efficient and strong system of local government would bring about the much-needed economic prosperity, improve the welfare of the people, train and build the capacity of elected council members to undertake development projects and to deliver on the promises of the government. In short, a devolved and decentralized system typified by established policies and legal framework not to mention with establish roles and responsibilities would make the institution of local governance more responsive to the realities of local needs and aspirations.

It was within this thinking and mindset that a Task Force on Decentralization and Local Government Reform, with the support provided by DFID and UNDP, was established in 2002 to advice on the process of decentralization and local government reform. Series of consultations, coordinated and organized dialogue were conducted between and among key stakeholders at the national, regional, district and local levels. The outcome of these consultations and coordinated meetings informed the policy options and discussions on local governance and decentralization.

The first attempt was made in 2003 to draft a policy document on decentralization. In May 2004, the Local Government Act was approved and enacted into law by parliament. The legislation clearly opened the way for the resuscitation of Local Government in Sierra Leone. The passage of the LGA in 2004 was successfully followed by the first local government elections in the same year after thirty years.

In 2004, the government of Sierra Leone attempted to disengage from the notorious centralized form of government that had characterized governance in the 1970s and 1980s to a decentralized system where decision-making processes and service delivery would be the responsibility of locally elected officials. Under Act No. 1 of 2004, the Local Government Act, local councils were created and charged with the responsibilities for promoting the development and general welfare of the people in their localities. Some
of these responsibilities included but not limited to, the delivery of services in the health, education, water and sanitation, agriculture, social welfare sectors among others.

The government of Sierra Leone recognizes the complexity and magnitude of decentralization and is aware that implementation needs to be carefully planned and that it will need commitment and long-term involvement and efforts of all stakeholders to succeed. Putting the legal framework in place is just the starting point. Implementation will necessitate adjustment of working mechanisms of the central government and the establishment of “new” relationships between the central government ministries and local councils. In addition, implementation will require institutional reforms at all levels, new skills and new ways of communication, monitoring and evaluation between the public sector, civil society and the public at large. Significantly, what is stressed today is the Integrity component of governance experienced both at the local and national levels.

1.2 Purpose of the research
The overarching aim of the study is to provide a baseline data on the selected PPI services and to provide a case study of the particular PPI service in the PPI locality. The specific purpose of this research is:

- To provide baseline data on the services in the localities in each PPI country
- To help all PPI partners know more about the services in the selected localities that could inform their intervention

1.3 Objectives of the Study
The specific objectives of the research are:

- To provide a background and an overview of the selected PPI services under review
- To identify the different stakeholders for each service under review and identify their role, knowledge-base and expertise in attaining the MDGs in that locality
➢ To consult with civil society on services they wish to monitor in selected localities
➢ To select a specific case study that reflects the delivery of that service in terms of performance and how the service is delivered. It should explore the integrity (competence, alignment and ethics) of the service delivery.
➢ To examine the challenges, prospects, limits of specific cases
➢ To examine lessons learned that can be useful in other contexts and used by PPI partners and service providers domestically
➢ To provide useful recommendations for future actions and one that could inform further PPI practice and policy

2. Methodology
To achieve the objectives of the baseline study, a qualitative research method is employed in the collection of data and eliciting information from the field. Specifically, the researchers will utilize the following instruments/techniques:

➢ Questionnaire: Three categories of questionnaires will be prepared targeting A. Civil Society Partners, B. Councilors and, C. Other stakeholders at national and local levels.
➢ Ranking exercises in which participants rank their perception/knowledge on the status of services delivered, the integrity component, the achievements, lessons learnt, recommendations and challenges
➢ Informal Interviews will form the main thrust of data collection for the study. This method will capture individual and organizational perspectives of both services provided (health, education, water and sanitation and social protection) and beneficiaries at the national and local levels. It is a discursive and open ended method that allows facilitators to lead on answers for further probing. Good facilitation will help identify the crux of the discussions and manage expectations and time. This method will be backed by a carefully drawn up discussion guide to help keep the discussions focused.
➢ Focus Group Discussions - this instrument will help bring together civil society groups and councilors in a perspective seeking and evidence gathering exercise on what has been the achievements, failures, lessons learned and challenges facing decentralization. It portends to give an opportunity to stakeholders and civil
society groups to identify sectors they would like to monitor, evaluate and comment on integrity issues and challenges.

- Desk research- This method provides opportunity for the researchers to identify and appraise relevant literature pertaining to the services identified, how they have been implemented and monitored and examine the prospects, challenges and lessons learned.
- Personal observations

2.1 Scope of the Study
The study was designed to focus on four PPI localities of Freetown in the Western Area, Bo in the Southern Province, Kenema and Kono in the Eastern province. To be sure, it specifically concentrated on the City and District Councils of the headquarter cities of these regions. A total number of one hundred and sixty questionnaires were administered in each locality.

2.2 Challenges of Data Collection
It is not unheard of among researchers that secondary data collections outside capital cities in Africa are difficult to come by. It is also not uncommon that conducting research such as a baseline study requires the cooperation of the target group, which is difficult to get largely due to mass illiteracy and sometimes lack of interest. Most, if not all, councils in the country lack a centralized information unit where information can easily be accessed. In the absence of such a unit, researchers have to gather information from various committee members, stakeholders and from other sources.

2.3 Expected Outcome
The baseline study will provide empirical and practical evidence on local governance and development as they unravel in Sierra Leone on the one hand, and knowledge base on selected PPI services such as education, health, water and sanitation and social protection, on the other. The study will be used as a research tool/instrument for the PPI activities, including training activities, community-based monitoring and joint working groups with local administrators.
3.0 Findings

3.1 Baseline Report for Kenema and Bo Localities
Bo, located in the South of the country, is the second largest city in Sierra Leone. During colonialism (1787-1961), the city used to be the capital of the then protectorate, which was established in 1896. The city has the oldest secondary school, the Bo School (established in 1906) in the provinces, and has contributed immensely to national development.
Kenema is the capital city of the Eastern region of Sierra Leone. The city is well known for the production of agricultural products such as cocoa, rice and coffee, and minerals such as diamond and gold.

3.1.1 Service Provision
A total number of 50 beneficiaries (mostly teachers, nurses, traditional rulers, civil society members, and marginalized groups were identified by researchers as those most informed about services, most affected if services are not available and probably better situated to answer the research questions), 50 service providers and 50 councilors were targeted in each locality under review. Interestingly, most of the data collected and the responses received were not very dissimilar in the two localities under examination. This is probably because the two councils have similar characteristics: they are located in the provinces; they share similar socio-economic and political problems/prospects and have similar challenges, lessons learned and experiences with decentralization and local governance. For instance, when people were asked whether education, health, water and sanitation and social protection services were provided in their localities, they (councilors and service providers) overwhelmingly, 50 out of 50, responded in the affirmative albeit with variations.
Respondents overwhelmingly agreed that all of the above services have been provided by the councils but at varying degrees and with varying results. While 55% of beneficiaries and councilors posited that they are fairly informed about the provision of education, water and sanitation and health services provided by councils, about 55% service providers and beneficiaries responded that they are poorly informed about social protection. The definition of social protection was given to the enumerators in anticipation that most, if not all, respondents had no knowledge about it. Social protection is the publics action taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk and deprivation. That it is the pursuit of justice and the challenge to the government to eradicate all forms of deprivation and poverty. Women respondents revealed that they are poorly informed about their rights to make decisions that affect their lives. In fact more than half of the respondents hold the view that they have been inadequately informed about issues relating to social protection.

3.1.2 Rating of Services Provided

Education was rated a bit higher than the other services provided. 79 respondents out of 150 have a favorable opinion about educational services available in the locality. According to observations, the opinion is highly likely due to the number of schools available, the increase enrolment and retention in schools. 71 out of 150 have a moderate opinion on health care delivery in the localities; 65 out of 150 have a low rating for social protection, which is nearly half of the respondents interviewed; health care received a moderate rating according to the analysis.

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<th>Services</th>
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<td>Social protection</td>
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3.1.3 Benefits of services to locality

About 85 to 90% of beneficiaries interviewed agree that education, health and water and sanitation provided are of immense benefit to their locality. Leading up questions reveal
that some of the benefits include their participation in decision making through their immediate elected representatives, monitoring of community project, empowerment and the availability of services. Interestingly, a good number of respondents observed that social protection is of no benefit to their locality. 19 out of 35 respondents negatively rated social protection as a benefit to society probably because they do not understand what social protection is about. Social protection was first defined and explained to enumerators who were instructed to explain to respondents and ensure full understanding before administering the questionnaire. Social protection is defined as the public’s action taken in response to levels of vulnerability, risk and deprivation which are deemed socially unacceptable within a given polity or society. It addresses issues such as the pursuit of social justice and equity, obligation on the part of the government to provide all citizens with a minimum acceptable livelihood, promotion of social cohesion, solidarity and stability, and increased security and equity to the deprived and poor.

### 3.1.4 Integrity and trust Indicators

Data collected among beneficiaries indicate that 31 out of 50 respondents agree that their councils have integrity. Respondents agree that councils have integrity because they are transparent, decision-making is broad-based and councils have some competent councilors; while they slightly disagree (19 out of 50 beneficiaries) that councils are subjected to checks and balances. The respondents also indicate that councilors have integrity because about 80% of beneficiaries say that councilors are transparent; 75% say they make decisions that are broad based and more than 50% say that they are somehow subjected to probity. What this analysis tells us is that councilors endeavor

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<td>Health</td>
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<td>Water and Sanitation</td>
<td>84.7</td>
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<th>Reasons</th>
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<td>Decisions are broad based</td>
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<td>They have check and balances</td>
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to be transparent and broad-based in decision making. However, civil society groups, the Ministry, the community people, and NGOs have to be effective in monitoring council’s activities from time to time to ensure that internal mechanisms that could guarantee councilors’ accountability and transparency are not circumscribed.

On the issue of trust, about 65% of beneficiaries say they trust what the performance of their councilors. Follow up questions indicate that most respondents believe the information councilors give out but the information flow is sometimes lost along the way. Or, councilors are not sometimes forthcoming. About 144 out of 150 beneficiaries interviewed hold the view that trust can be built when councils behave in a transparent and accountable manner; when they hold regular meetings where information is shared; and when councilors live by examples—when they practice what they say. 50 service providers and councilors interviewed on the same issue were unanimous that regular meetings and information flow, transparency and accountability and living by good examples are essential ingredients to build trust between and among councilors, beneficiaries and service providers.

### 3.1.5 Competence and effectiveness of councils

A total number of 26 out of 50 beneficiaries hold the view that councils are not effective in discharging their duties. Although it is just about 50 of the total number of beneficiaries interviewed, this is a wake-up call for councilors and their administrative staff. Beneficiaries opine that councilors are not effective because about 50% of the councilors are not motivated and educated, and that about 30% are just indifferent to change and new ideas. About 20% say councilors are not effective because they lack capacity and resources to discharge their duties.

On the issue of competence, 22 out of 50 say it is high while 28 out of the same total number interviewed say they are either low and or very low in competence. When asked further, beneficiaries agree that capacity deficiency might be the cause.
3.1.6 Monitoring
In terms of monitoring of councilors, the research reveals that civil society, NGOs and community people do monitor councilors’ activities than the Ministry responsible for Local Government. About 75% beneficiaries agree that civil society, NGOs and community people are more effective in monitoring councilors than the Ministry. About 65% of the respondents say the Ministry hardly monitors councils. It was revealed that regular visits by civil society groups and community people and their engagement and vigilance in council’s activities have been helpful in monitoring councilors. About one third of respondents continue to indicate that Ministry officials and NGOs have not played their monitoring roles effectively.

3.1.7 Civil Society and NGO Intervention
Representing the critical mass of society, the above groups are quintessential in ensuring that services are delivered to communities and that the activities of elected officials are continuously monitored and reported on. While councilors gave a favorable rating to civil society in monitoring their activities (about 100%), NGO intervention in council activities was negatively rated (almost 100%). Beneficiaries were very positive about the NGO role in monitoring councils (50%); while they gave a positive rating (93%) to civil society’s role for their monitoring and oversight functions.

3.1.8 Community Participation
30 out of 50 councilors and service providers interviewed agreed that there have been a moderate community participation in council work. About 20% of other councilors say their participation has been rather low. On the other hand, 42 out of 50 beneficiaries agree that their participation in council activities have been minimal. When asked to elaborate, some beneficiaries blamed their lack of participation on insufficient information flow from councilors to the communities, poverty, lack of leadership to organize them and indifference.
3.2 Baseline Report for Freetown and Koidu Localities

Enumerators targeted a total number of 50 beneficiaries (mostly teachers, nurses, traditional rulers, civil society members, and marginalized groups chosen on the basis as stakeholders and those most affected by service delivery in their localities), 50 service providers (chosen at random especially those contracted to provide much needed services such as construction) and 50 councilors (randomly chosen to reflect the different wards) in each locality under examination. In comparison to Kenema and Bo, most of the data collected and the responses received in Freetown were very dissimilar largely due to increased awareness of the residents, the educational level of the people, social interaction, the centrality of the capital, and more significantly, Freetown City Council is a class one council in the country. Koidu on the other hand, which has been seriously devastated by the eleven-year-old imbroglio and remains a battered city after the war, presents similar results like Kenema and, to some extent, Bo. Koidu's physical infrastructure have been dilapidated, social amenities such as schools, health care and social protection services in disrepair, and the general state of affairs in the city deplorable. It is, therefore, very evident and not surprising that responses from the two localities would be at variance.

3.2.1 Provision of Services

In Koidu, more than 70% of local councilors or council workers interviewed agreed that all of the services listed were being provided, and about 80% opined that the people were well informed about the services under review. Conversely, more than 80% of beneficiaries and services providers completely disagreed with the above assertion stating that the services have not been provided and even where they were provided, they were grossly insufficient. This clearly exemplifies the fact that the people are pretty unsatisfied with the services provided. The same percentage also opined that the people have been poorly informed about the services.

In Freetown, respondents confidently asserted that services such as health, education, social protection were provided by the council. About 45% of the beneficiaries
complained about the non-availability of water and sanitation in most part of the city. Some informed enumerators about the existence of bore holes from which some residents get their drinking water. About 50% of the respondents agree that the people are not well informed about the services provided. Councilors interviewed agreed that all of the services were delivered to the people, a statement completely at variance with those given by the beneficiaries.

3.2.2 Integrity and Trust Issues

In Freetown, about 22 out of 50 respondents condemned councilors as lacking in integrity. Lack of quality and functional education, awareness of current issues such as the achievement of the MDGs, unwillingness to share information and mismanagement of council resources were given as reasons for the lack of integrity. On the issue of trust, about 55% of beneficiaries and service providers reveal that they have trust in their councilors because the councilors seem to be fulfilling their promise. There is however, a high rate of civil society involvement in councils’ activities, which clearly provides avenues for the people to better understand council’s activities.

In Koidu, about 55% of the respondents agree that councilors have integrity and that they have avenues (through civil society movements) of checking their activities. What this analysis reveals is that respondents in Freetown are more aware of councilors’ responsibilities because of the relatively high rate of education, awareness and exposure of the residents to information. Equally, civil societies and NGOs are more vigilant in Freetown compared to the other cities.

About 44 out of 50 beneficiaries interviewed in the two localities hold the view that trust can be built when councils behave in a transparent and accountable manner; when they hold regular meetings where information is shared; and when the political space exist for CSOs and NGOs to monitor council activities. 39 service providers and councilors interviewed on the same issue agreed with unanimity that regular meetings and information dissemination, transparency and accountability and good local governance are essential ingredients to build trust between and among councilors, beneficiaries and service providers and to achieve the MDGs.
3.2.3 Monitoring

In Freetown, the Ministry of Local Government was given high marks (more than 80% of the respondents), compared to the provincial districts, for its monitoring role of the Freetown City Council (FCC) probably because of proximity and accessibility. About 85% of the respondents agreed that NGOs and civil societies have been very effective in their monitoring roles, albeit the fact that information flow from the council remains a thorny issue. Regular visits by CSOs and NGOs have intensified in the last few years when most of the responsibilities for the provision of services have been devolved to councils.

The same does not hold for Koidu. Like in Bo and Kenema, Koidu hardly gets the Ministry to monitor its activities. About 70% of the respondents agreed that NGOs and CSOs have played a key role in monitoring council activities particularly in Bid Openings, Contract Awards, and infrastructural development. About the same number of respondents agreed that such monitoring have been helpful in information dissemination among residents in the township and awareness creation. It was however revealed that CSOs and NGOs need to do more in terms of monitoring council proceedings where major decisions are taken. This was a thorny issue when raised with councilors who opined that non-council members are not allowed in councils meetings according to the Local Government Act of 2004. The Ministry of Local Government needs to intensify/redouble its monitoring role of the councils in the districts to ensure that the decentralization process is deepening and that people understand the critical issues of good local governance.

In terms of monitoring of councilors, the research reveals that civil society, NGOs and community people do monitor councilors’ activities than the Ministry responsible for Local Government. About 70% beneficiaries agree that civil society, NGOs and community people are more effective in monitoring councilors than the Ministry. About 55% of the respondents say the Ministry seldom monitors councils. It was revealed that
regular visits by civil society groups and community people and their engagement, intervention and vigilance in council’s activities have been helpful in monitoring councilors. About one third of respondents continue to indicate that Ministry officials and NGOs have not played their monitoring roles effectively.

3.2.4 Competence and effectiveness of councils
In Koidu, a total number of 32 out of 47 respondents hold the view that councils are not effective in discharging their duties. This was a bit alarming given the number of devolved functions already under the auspices of councils. It is therefore a wake-up call for both the political and administrative wings of the council. Nearly 75% of the interviewees agreed that their councilors receive low salaries, are not functionally educated and by implication, are ill-motivated to perform their duties. Beneficiaries again opine that councilors are not effective because most of them are indifferent to change, lack capacity and can hardly accommodate new ideas.

The situation was, however, different in Freetown where more 60% of the beneficiaries and service providers interviewed agreed that their councilors have been performing satisfactorily and they have proven to be effective in discharging their duties. The centrality of Freetown, availability of educational opportunities, concentration of civil society and NGOs in the capital city, resource availability and other related advantages were advanced as factors for the effectiveness of councilors. On the issue of competence, nearly half of the respondents disagreed that their councilors were competent. Competence was generally defined as the standardized requirement for an individual to properly perform and specific function. It encompasses a combination of knowledge, skills and behavior utilized to improve performance. It was also measured in terms of suitability of the individual to perform a job.

3.2.5 Civil Society and NGO Intervention
It is hardly arguable that CSOs and NGOs have played and continue to play a critical role in any development trajectory in Sierra Leone. They do not only serve as watch dogs but are also champions of the opinions of the mass of the people. Consequently, their
intervention at critical stages of councils’ activities is increasingly important. Councilors gave a unfavorable rating to civil society intervention in council’s activities (about 40%) because CSOs are largely viewed by councilors as threats. Similarly, NGO intervention in council activities was not entirely positive (48%). Beneficiaries were kind of split on the issue of intervention by NGOs (50% to 50%). They (beneficiaries) gave a positive rating to civil society (about 80%) for their intervention in the activities of the councils. The findings were very similar in the two localities under examination.

3.2.6 Community Participation

In Koidu, there are more community participation in council work compared to Freetown probably because Koidu is closely-knit, not much diversity and therefore is more homogenous and therefore not cosmopolitan. Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone, is more cosmopolitan, highly literate compared to other cities, and therefore very open to other influences.

It is not surprising that the results in Koidu (35 out of 50 interviewed agreed to this view) indicate that there is more community participation in council work. Follow up questions reveal that the people participate through their contributions in Ward’s decision making process, provision of community materials for infrastructural development, paying taxes and others.

Freetown presents a different picture. Because of its diversity and cosmopolitan nature, about 45% of the respondents reveal that community participation is not very active in comparative terms. This may be due to urbanization where people have regular employment and which takes most of their time. Another factor could be people live as individuals and not as a community except in rare cases say the outskirts of the city.
4.0 Summary of Focus Group Discussion and the Challenges Identified

Some of the critical challenges were identified in the focus group discussion organized in Bo where people were not limited to choose answers to questions but to articulate their ideas/proffer answers. Twenty adults mostly from the community (teachers, nurses, lecturers, chiefs, civil society members, students, women organizations, farmers again chosen on the basis of those who have some understanding of issues to be discussed and are directly affected by the services provided) were interviewed on a broad range of issues regarding integrity/trust/competence/effectiveness issues in the councils.

The group was divided on the issue of whether councilors have integrity. About 48% were positive while 52% believed that councilors lack integrity. Explaining why they lack integrity, some members opined that councilors cook reports on Ward Committee (WC) to claim the fee for WC meetings. They also disclosed that some councilors are only interested in projects where they are sure of kick-backs from contractors. Although majority agreed that no councilor has been openly involved in malpractice (financial or otherwise), 52% show that some integrity training is needed for councils.

On the issue of competence and effectiveness, more than half of Focus Group members believe that councilors are not competent and effective servants of the people. The reasons given for their incompetence include lack of capacity and resources, indifference to change (most of them believe in the old school phenomenon) and illiteracy. Skills training, basic education and sensitization were identified as ways of helping to capacitate councilors.

The role of civil society and monitoring of council activities was the next question discussed. More than 80% believe that civil society is doing a good job in monitoring council activities but that councilors sometimes frustrate CSOs in their quest to follow up on projects and programs. Councilors were accused of being covert in some of the activities and at times disdainful about CSOs. They recommended that CSO engagement,
capacity building was required to enable them understand where and when they intervene/monitor council activities. Councils should be transparent and be prepared to account for their stewardship, they opined. About 90% indicated that NGOs have not been playing a major role in monitoring and evaluating councils’ activities.

50% indicated that they trust the councilors as local leaders. Those on the opposite side complained that they do not trust their councilors because they are most of the time detached and not readily accessible compared to their Ward Committee members. The other issue raised was lack of information flow between the community people and councilors. It was revealed that most councilors reside in the bigger towns or in the provincial cities abandoning their people in villages. This has raised suspicion and indeed has become an integrity issue.

All of them agreed that to build trust, councilors and their administrative staff should be transparent, allow broad based decision making process in the communities, allow a free flow of information, have both internal checks and balances, give CSOs and NGOs a free hand to monitor council activities and deliver the services needed for development.
5.0 Challenges

One of the major challenges discovered during the research was the respondents’ (service providers, beneficiaries and most councilors) lack of clear understanding of concepts such as social protection and integrity. Enumerators, having being trained by the researchers, had to first explain the concepts before respondents could understand the questions posed. This poses a serious threat to the achievement of a credible, reliable and trustworthy local council administration in Sierra Leone.

Another major challenge is the disconnection between Ward Committees and Local Councils. Some councilors view some Ward Committee members as rivals and as such there is no effort to undertake joint projects with the view to educate the people, create understanding of the issues that affect the people and to draw up programs that could bring benefit to their localities. Most of the councilors and WC members are not functionally literate, this is a threat.

Formal and informal interviews, observations and discussions during the focus group discussion reveal that intermittent political interference from the central government and line ministries are also a concern to council members, civil society and council staff. Respondents complained that council decisions are sometimes overruled by the Ministry of Local Government or from directives from State House. They explain that council decisions are in line with felt and induced needs of the people and, therefore, are legitimately articulated to benefit their constituents. But decisions emanating from the center are only geared toward preserving either the status quo or politically motivated to satisfy certain parochial ends. As a result, people oppose or kick against such decisions when they are taken. This, to the respondents, has strained relationship between the people and council on one hand, and between the council and civil society, on the other.

Another worrying challenge pointed out is that of corruption and mismanagement of council resources. This was blamed on weak institutional framework and ineffectiveness
of internal control mechanisms that could curb the menace. Structures hardly exist within the council to forestall corrupt practices and establish rules for punishment. Although council has generally and immensely improved over the last few years, corruption, which is a national menace, cancer and curse, continue to pose a threat to development and security in the council.

 Corruption in Sierra Leone is endemic and has proven to be a serious challenge to national development. All of the Councils researched have not completely escaped the scourge. The Local Government Service Commission that is charged with the responsibility to recruit competent staff, train staff and oversee the smooth administration of the councils is currently sufficiently ineffective and incapacitated to carry out the responsibility. This is worrying to the sustainability of local governance.

 Accountability is *sine qua non* in the management of resources and providing correct information of the daily occurrences in an institution. Councils have an audit department responsible for internal control of council resources, preventing mal appropriation of funds and ensuring that council staff and administrators follow the financial and administrative not to mention council financial procedures/policies to the letter. There was no evidence of grave unaccountability on the part of the council staffs including the Mayors/Chairmen. However, revelations of lack of accountability on the part of councilors to their constituents, especially Ward Committees, were evident.

 In the views of many respondents, the LGA is replete with inconsistencies, ambiguities and unanswered questions. For instance, the local government was never referred to as the backbone of local governance or the least governing authority in local settings, which has left a fight between the traditional authorities and the councilors. Further, revenue collection was haphazardly dealt with in the document leaving room for conflict between grassroots actors. Additionally, no clearly defined roles exist between the councilors and the technical/administrative staff. This has posed serious problem wherein councilors (local political actors) have hijacked the roles of administrative staff.
6.0 Recommendations

Fundamental to local governance and decentralization in Sierra Leone is the transparent and accountable nature of the council and council activities to ensure effective and efficient service delivery to locals. Of particular significance is the councilors’ trustworthiness and integrity in carrying out their respective responsibilities on the one hand, and the provision of the space for civil society and NGOs intervention in critical issues, and monitoring council’s activities to guarantee sustained progress, on the other. To achieve these, the following are recommended.

1. The preparation of learning materials that could explain and provide meaning to concepts such as integrity, social protection, service delivery etc is essential for councilors and beneficiaries as stakeholders in local governance. Similar training programs is required for civil servants in the Ministry of Local Government.

2. Vigorous training of councilors, civil society groups and NGOs on integrity, trust and social protection issues is quintessential to their understanding of their responsibilities to the people, how they carry themselves as public servants and what the public perceives/expects of them as public servants.

3. The government, Tiri and other organizations working with councils should engage the lower tier of the council, the Ward Committee (WC) for obvious reasons. Ward Committees are below councils but form the bedrock on which councils depend for their operations. Interaction and interfacing between the councils and the WCs need to be a priority for Tiri’s program. It will be interesting/insightful if IPAM/NMJD jointly undertake a research on the role/importance of WCs in local governance. This recommendation is part of IPAM planned activities, which will also undertake a study to reduce tensions between the various traditional and local actors (Chiefs and Councilors).

4. Tiri to target beneficiaries and engage them in vigorous training programs on critical issues such as their understanding and experiences of receiving services from councils, the concept of empowerment, their interaction with councilors and
other stakeholders, civil society/NGO monitoring/intervention of council activities and many others.

5. CS/NGOs/CBOs and private sector should raise concern over crucial council decisions/activities through the media or other means in order to get their voices out, elevate the debate to solicit feedback from the people, and to justify their representatativity and participation on behalf of the rural masses

6. It is critical to note that activitism has been impeded by citizen’s lack of confidence to engage the authorities or lack of knowledge about the effective channels for complaint. As such, confidence building mechanisms should be put in place to capacitate civil groups across the country to not only be knowledgeable about justice institutions where they can address their grievances and dissatisfaction but also to be equipped with the facts, knowledge, and confident enough to face the authorities and question their roles and responsibilities

7. Civil groups should have access to and be allowed to monitor and track down council activities such as bid openings, contract agreements, development plans etc from the inception to the end. They shall act as advocates of the people by providing the people with regularly correct information on council activities It will be interesting if CSOs will engage the Sierra Leone parliament on the Freedom of Information legislation.

8. Councils should open space for gender mainstreaming and engagement with the view to harness the potentials of both men and women in their pursuits for equity, representation, group rights and self-advancement

9. NGOs and private sector should be part of the council’s planning process because they have the resources (human and material), the technical knowledge and skills in planning and have the drive to push projects through. They shall be seen as partners in the development of rural areas and should, therefore, be effectively involved in the planning process