

## **Governance and Institutional Capacity Building:**

### *Electoral Assistance:*

In the lead up to the 1996 Presidential and Parliamentary elections, the NPRC invited the Secretary General of the Commonwealth to send a planning mission to Sierra Leone to consult with the local parties to ascertain their level of support for the presence of a Commonwealth observer mission at the elections. Following a positive response the Commonwealth dispatched a team of twelve observers to Sierra Leone. The Commonwealth mission operated under the umbrella of the Joint International Observers Mission which was co-ordinated by the UN Electoral Assistance Secretariat and included observers from the African-American Institute, the OAU, members of the diplomatic community, the UK, the UN and the World Council of Churches. Overall responsibility for the conduct and supervision of the elections lay with the Interim National Electoral Commission (INEC) although this power was in practice shared with the outgoing NPRC regime.

Much of the initiative towards the elections stemmed directly from the people of Sierra Leone themselves who sought to capitalize on the momentum established by the two consultative conferences held by the NPRC. In each civilians ran considerable risks to publicly demand that elections be held, and during the first round of the elections civilians were seen battling soldiers in order to protect the ballot boxes.

### *Civic Education:*

During the elections a concerted effort was made to educate voters and parties about the electoral process. Overall responsibility for voter education lay with the INEC. It compiled handbooks about the electoral process and conducted information sessions with the press and political parties. The National Commission for Democracy also conducted a voter education campaign creating educational posters which were displayed throughout the country.

### *Institutions:*

While the years of civil anarchy has meant that much of Sierra Leone's public and private infrastructure was destroyed, the Kabbah government seemed to have quickly developed a good organizational capacity which resulted in many of the peacebuilding activities being coordinated at a national level. The assistance that international actors were able to provide to these fledgling institutions and ministries was therefore primarily of a technical nature. Since the coup - and the consequent general strike of public servants - much of this national capacity has disappeared with the poor security situation preventing its return.

## **Policy Development, Assessment and Advocacy:**

The peace process in Sierra Leone has generated a number of assessments which have assisted in the development of future peacebuilding strategies and have also had practical implications on the ground for ongoing peacebuilding initiatives. Both the Commonwealth Secretariat and International Alert have produced reports documenting and assessing their respective roles in electoral observation and early warning/conflict resolution initiatives.

A significant amount of *ad hoc* strategy assessment has occurred with regard to particular peacebuilding initiatives, particularly following the May 1997 coup. The