

to do so. Thus the IA's role went from being that of an impartial mediator to a partial advisor for one of the key antagonists, consequently drawing international criticism.

Humanitarian Relief and Emergency Assistance:

The humanitarian relief efforts in Sierra Leone prior to the May coup were well organized and demonstrated effective collaboration between international relief agencies, NGOs, and the national government agencies responsible for relief efforts.

In order to expedite the efficient delivery of relief supplies, a particular aid agency was allocated a chiefdom to which it would ensure the delivery of food assistance. There were many international actors involved, including the WFP, CRS, World Vision, CARE, German Agro-Action, and Concern Universal all of which had their own direct food pipelines into the country. Once the food was delivered to a particular chiefdom the distribution became the responsibility of another agency.

Much of the relief effort was co-ordinated by national agencies. The Ministry of National Reconstruction, Resettlement, and Rehabilitation (MNRRR) oversaw and co-ordinated humanitarian assistance and post-war recovery efforts, its activities sponsored by the UNDP and the World Bank. Within the MNRRR, the National Committee on Food Aid developed a sophisticated programme of relief assistance. In conjunction with relief agencies it developed a strategy whereby NGOs were authorised to provide one-off emergency rations to the vulnerable. This category was considered to include rural displaced persons, recently released ex-captives and those who were not registered in the relief programme. A number of Regional Food Aid Technical Committees worked in co-operation with community groups in order to register people considered vulnerable and in need of food assistance.

This programme was complemented by another which focused on longer term projects. Once people were registered in relief camps and provided with resettlement packages they became ineligible for food assistance but instead received practical forms of assistance such as tools and seeds, or employment in food for work programs. This registration process and system of having a tiered relief programme allowed the food agencies to ensure that emergency food aid was distributed only to the truly vulnerable. In this way, dependency on emergency relief was discouraged and the reintegration process was accelerated.

One typical relief initiative was conducted by CARE and provided 70,000 internally displaced persons (IDP's) with a monthly ration of food. This project was focused predominantly in the temporary relief camps in Bo, Bonthe, and Freetown. The project also had the additional benefit of building technical expertise for the national NGO implementing partners in food handling.

Post-Coup:

The political upheaval which occurred in May had a detrimental effect on the security situation in regions of the country and adversely affected the emergency relief efforts. Many aid agencies evacuated staff during the coup and the looting which followed. In early June an attempt was made to re-start food distribution programmes, but success was extremely limited.

A joint UN/NGO strategy was devised for Sierra Leone in response to the poor security situation following the coup as aid agencies became concerned that the distribution of food could endanger the recipients and make them vulnerable to looting and acts of violence.