

RESTORATIVE APPROACHES TO JUSTICE: STRATEGIES FOR PEACE IN SIERRA LEONE

Although Sierra Leone is culturally diverse, composed of at least 14 different ethnic groups and a culturally hybrid Krio population (Hirsch, 2001: 22), restorative responses to wrongdoing resonate with many (though certainly not all) cultural traditions relating to remedy in Sierra Leone. As such, restorative justice may represent an approach to justice that is more adaptive to indigenous cultures than formal justice institutions. In Section One, I consider an *existing* restorative strategy in Sierra Leone for dealing with wartime criminality (“restorative transitional justice”), and then consider *existing* restorative mechanisms that deal with minor criminality in peacetime (“restorative criminal justice”). Restorative approaches to minor criminality are an important component of peacebuilding by offering meaningful and more comprehensive access to justice in a situation where decades of the denial of justice contributed the emergence of conflict (Fletcher, 2003). In Section Two, I draw on existing models within the Sierra Leonean context to pose possible new strategies to innovate and institutionalise restorative justice in Sierra Leone both for serious and minor criminality. Finally, in Section Three I suggest ways in which best to protect human rights in restorative justice practice, as well as ways in which restorative justice can help advance a culture of human rights in Sierra Leone.