

Together Yet Fragmented:

A Comparative Case Study of the Women and Disability Movements' Collective Identity Formation
and Maintenance in Sierra Leone



Photograph 1 Kubkoo / Via Getty Images.

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List of Acronyms

AGM	Annual General Meeting
AWWASL	Amputees and War Wounded Association Sierra Leone
CI	Collective identity
CIs	Collective identities
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CWDs	Children with Disabilities
DAAG	Disability Awareness Action Group
DM	Disability Movement
DRIM	Disability Rights Movement
DPO	Disabled People's Organization
DPOs	Disabled People's Organizations
EASL	Epilepsy Association Sierra Leone
ECOMOG	Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group
EFA	Education for All
EU	European Union
EVD	Ebola Virus Disease
FBO	Faith Based Organization
FDGs	Focus Group Discussions
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GGASL	Girls Guide Association Sierra Leone
GT	Grounded Theory
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
HDI	Human Development Index
HEPPO	Help Enable Polio Persons
HoJ	House of Jesus for the Disabled
HRCSL	Human Rights Commission Sierra Leone
HSL	Heal Sierra Leone
ICTs	Information Communication Technologies
UN IDPD	United Nations International Day for Persons with Disabilities
UN IWD	United Nations International Women's Day
KITE	Kyphoscoliosis Initiative for Therapy and Empowerment
LF	Liliane Fonds/Foundation
MARWOPNET	Mano River Women's Peace Network

MCM	Movement-countermovement
MSWGCA	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs
NCPD	National Commission for Persons with Disabilities
NCRPD	National Committee for the Rehabilitation of People with Disability
NDC	National Disability Congress
NDC	National Disability Coalition
NEB	National Executive Board
NGO	Non-Government Organization
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
NOW	National Organization for Women
OFP	One Family People
POCA	Polio Challenged Association
PRPs	Poverty Reduction Papers
PVA	Polio Victims Association
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RUF	Revolutionary United Front
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SILNAP	Sierra Leone National Action Plan
SLAB	Sierra Leone Association for the Blind
SLAD	Sierra Leone Association for the Deaf
SLAUW	Sierra Leone Association of University Women
SLUDI	Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues
SM	Social Movement
SMO	Social Movement Organization
SMOs	Social Movement Organizations
SMT	Social Movement Theory
UMWCA	United Methodist Women's Church Association
VIP	Visually Impaired Person
WAND	Women's Association for National Development
WF	Women's Forum
WM	Women's Movement
WMP	Women's Movement for Peace
WOMEN	Women Organizing for a Morally Enlightened Nation
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

Abstract

Despite global progress in reducing inequalities for women and persons with disabilities (PWDs) under the Sustainable Development Goals 5 and 10, in Africa progress has been slower for these two groups. Social movements are often successful in redressing these inequalities as they are affianced in activism and try to represent a group's collective grievances to governments. Collective identity (CI), or individuals' shared aspirations, values or interests, is known to play a key role in their success. The more individuals identify with a movement, the more it is able to mobilize and achieve its aims on the ground. Yet, there is a paucity of literature on CI processes from African contexts. Building upon Della Porta & Diani's (2006) concept of CI formation and maintenance, this study compared how two key social movement organizations of the disability and women's movements in Freetown, Sierra Leone—the Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI) and the Women's Forum (WF)—form and maintain their collective identities (CIs) to see if the same processes work in African contexts. The research is based on a six months field work and a range of qualitative methods. Using Grounded Theory and Historical Methodologies approach, the study reveals that both groups formed and have maintained their CIs in similar yet different ways to Della Porta and Diani's theory. In line with the authors theory, both groups formed during the brutal eleven-year Civil War (1991-2002) on the basis of their social traits, or physical characteristics, and a common solidarity. They have been maintained post-conflict (2002-present) through (i) face-to-face interactions at the community level and everyday spaces in order to foster relationships and build new networks, and (ii) creating common meaning and experiences over 'time' and 'space'. This suggests that Western CI concepts do work well in African contexts. Differently, I found that both CIs are maintained through information sharing via information communication technologies (ICTs) which help engender a 'online' CI, organize and spur lobbying and advocacy events. Within this information sharing tool, I also discovered that only the WF uses monthly meetings and it helps engender CI by reinforcing the group's cultural rituals and symbols. Also, I discovered that despite having CIs, fragmentation has been a part of both group's formation and maintenance processes based on (a) intergroup competition; (b) diversity related issues; and (c) ideological differences. The above listed discoveries as well as conflict is a catalyst in bringing social actors to form a CI are my contributions to the literature. The paper calls for identity work, for key organizations to take better stock of their members interests and for future comparative research to devote equal and more time between organizations, focus on current CI formation processes and use research tools that help to verify information.

Key Words: collective identity; disability movement; movement formation and maintenance; movement fragmentation; Sierra Leone; women's movement

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Setting the Scene

“Yes, I would strongly say that I belong to the Union [Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues]. I am able to share my opinion and be heard... We are speaking with one voice as a group... Whatever SLUDI says, whatever position SLUDI takes, everyone is working along together on that particular instruction.”— A senior male member¹ of the Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI)

“I don’t attend their meetings because I don’t have much faith in the Women’s Forum anymore. I think it is likely to die quiet quickly. The Women’s Forum is a failed attempt at actualizing women’s feminist leadership. We need to rethink that.”—A female member of the Women’s Forum (WF)

The two sentiments expressed above come from members of two different social movement organizations (SMOs) of two different social movements (SMs) in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The first quote comes from a member of the Women’s Forum (WF), a key social movement organization (SMO) for the women’s movement (WM). And the second quote comes from a member of the Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI), a key SMO for the disability movement (DM). In the first quote, the member feels belonged to the organization because he can express his opinion and be heard. Moreover, he feels members are supportive of the organization’s initiatives. As a result, they are speaking with one voice. As for the second quote, the member has expressed a sense of hopelessness for her organization because it has failed at having a feminist leadership. This has led her to not only attend its meetings, but to also think that her organization will quickly dissolve unless it implements a new strategy.

Both of their comments convey strong emotions and aspirations towards their organizations, elements of collective identity (CI). In a social movement (SM), ‘collective’ can be captured in the sense of individuals shared experiences, solidarity, interests, aspirations, to name a few dimensions (Flesher-Fominaya, 2010; Glass, 2009; Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Hunt & Benford, 2004; Melucci, 1989; 1995; 1996; Diani, 1992). The concept is particularly helpful in explaining the legal inclusion of individuals in society (Jasper, 1997) as well as a group’s identity, lifestyle and relations to culture and ideology (Melucci, 1989; 1995; 1996). In the former, SMOs who make up SMs can help to improve the lives of

¹ Due to the two movements being fragmented, in some places in my paper, information about the participants has been withheld to protect their identities.

marginalized groups (Bukenya & Hickey, 2014; Horn, 2013; Sabatello & Schulze, 2013; McAdam & Scott, 2005; Snow & Benford, 1988). They are affianced in activism for socio-political, economic and cultural change. The WF and SLUDI belong to two of the most marginalized groups in Sierra Leone and in the world—women and persons with disabilities (PWDs).

The marginality of women and PWDs is an endemic global issue. They continue to face multiple socio-political, economic and cultural barriers due to their gender and/or disability. Their issues are so dire that they form part of the 17 targets of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2018; UNStats, 2017; OECD, 2017). In particular, SDG 5 relates to ‘achieving gender equality and empowering women and girls’ by eliminating barriers that prevent them from enjoying their rights in private and public spheres; and SDG 10 relates to ‘eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity’, including reducing inequalities for PWDs (UNStats, 2017: 5 & 13). By 2030, it is hoped that both groups can live in a more inclusive society where they have equal rights and opportunities as everyone else.

Despite global progress made on the two SDGs, assessment of their progress in 2015 and 2017 suggest that progress has been slower in the Global South, or metaphorically known as the Indian sub-continent, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa (UN, 2018; UNStats, 2017; OECD, 2017; UNSDG, 2015; Thompson, 2015). In particular in sub-Saharan Africa, women and PWDs makeup the largest marginalized groups. In many African countries, women have yet to achieve equal representation in decision making bodies socio-politically, economically and culturally (UN Women, 2018). Many are also denied their basic human right to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, especially those living in abject poverty where access to information and services about these issues are limited (Globalfundforwomen, 2018; EAPN, 2018). “Some of the barriers to sexual and reproductive health and rights include discrimination, stigma, restrictive laws and policies and entrenched traditions (Globalfundforwomen, 2018: no page numbers). Moreover, they continue to be prime targets of wide spread gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful traditional practices in which there are few legal protections (UN Women, 2018; WHO, 2011). Due to these multiple barriers, women (and girls) continue to be seen as victims, incapable of self-agency (Tripp & Badri, 2017).

For PWDs, they face equal yet more barriers than women due to their disability. Broadly defined, a disability is an interaction between an individual’s impairment—both short and long-term physical and mental impairments—and his/her environment which hinder his/her full and active participation as an equal citizen (WHO, 2018). Of the global fifteen percent (one in seven people) that has a disability, most are said to be living in developing countries, including in many parts of Africa (SIDA, 2015). Also, “One in five of the world’s poorest is a [PWD]” (SIDA, 2015: no page number). Many of the barriers facing PWDs are due to (deeply) entrenched negative societal perceptions (WHO,

2018; Jackson, 2018; Rao, et., 2016; WHO, 2011; MacLachlana et al., 2007).

PWDs are often seen as a burden, objects of pity, helpless and vulnerable due to their economic unproductivity (Rao et al., 2016; MacLachlana et al., 2007). Disability is further associated with maternal failure, witchcraft (or black magic), misfortune, and religious punishment (Kuyayama, 2011; Powell, 2010). Due to these perceptions, PWDs are twice as likely to find inadequate health care facilities and providers, education, employment opportunities and social and legal support (Jackson, 2018; WHO, 2017; Bruijn et al., 2012).

The SDGs provide an important framework for collective action if we are to achieve gender and disability equality and empowerment by 2030 as set by the UN. While most countries have good legal and social policies for women and PWDs, the main problem is that they are often not implemented, reinforced or monitored (UN, 2018; OECD, 2017; UNSDG, 2015; Thompson, 2015; Horn, 2013). The people in charge of implementing these frameworks have little-to-no resources and lack the necessary skills and coordination. Compounding these problems is the lack of political will to make sure that the frameworks are working.

Many argue that the way to improve the above stated areas is by strengthening civil society organizations (CSOs) or SMOs² who are engaged in correcting social injustices and exclusion issues, and in challenging socio-cultural norms at grassroots, national and international levels through lobbying and advocacy activities (Horn, 2013; Bukenya & Hickey, 2014; Eckert, 2017; Sabatello & Schulze, 2013; Kaufman, 2011; Brandes & Engels, 2011; McAdam & Scott, 2005; Lewis, 2002). SMOs speak on behalf of marginalized groups to governments in order to advance their positions in society—be it by defending and safeguarding their rights, allowing their views to be expressed, and/or involving them in decision making processes about their lives. When SMOs comprising of both unregistered and registered organizations come together under one umbrella, they instantly form a SM on the basis of a shared CI (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Melucci, 1989a; 1995; 1996; Polletta & Jasper, 2001).

Research from Western contexts reiterates that CI plays a major role in the functioning of SM (organizations). Empirically, the term has been used in various ways in social movement theory (SMT). It has been used to understand the individual's experience (Melucci, 1989; 1995; 1996), collective memory (Gongaware, 2012) and identity work (Glass, 2009; Einwohner, Reger, & Myers, 2008; Snow and McAdam, 2000). Yet, *how* a movement forms and maintains its CI will largely determine its field of opportunities and constraints for lobbying and advocacy (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Flesher-Fominaya, 2010; Melucci, 1989, 1995, 1996). Della Porta & Diani (2006) in particular offer insights in to how movements form and maintain their CIs. I use their postulations in my research and explain their

² SMOs are often seen as CSOs because they also help to provide services for marginalized groups.

position in Chapter Two of my theoretical section. Nevertheless, a key assumption in the literature is that to be successful, movements need to have a strong CI.

However, empirical evidence of CI processes, let alone SM research, is often missing in the field of African Studies and the Social Sciences (Brandes & Engels, 2011; Eckert, 2017). SM research in African contexts has been limited to ‘identity politics,’ a Western phrase once famously coined by Anspach (1979) to describe collective action taken by PWDs to “[repudiate] societal conceptions of disability, to elevate the self-conceptions of [PWDs]” (p.765). The term is now often used to describe feminist movements in African contexts, such as the Liberia and Rwanda women’s movements. For example, in Liberia, which experienced a devastating Civil War (1989-1997), women were successful in mobilizing to elect their first female head of state, Dr. Ellen Sirleaf Johnson, as well as changing women’s status in society, including getting women access to education, land rights and stemming gender-based violence (GBV) (Fuest, 2009). Yet, very little has been mentioned as to *how* they collectively formed and achieved their aims. Whether the concept of CI also works similarly in African contexts remains a gap in the literature.

To help unravel the role of CI in explaining the success of a SM I traveled to Sierra Leone, West Africa and conducted six months (from July 2017-January 2018) qualitative comparative case study in the capital city, Freetown. In particular, I compared two key SMOs and their SMs: the WF and the WM; and SLUDI and the DM. A comparison allows for a better teasing out of patterns in the data with improved external validity.

My **research question** was: *How do SLUDI and the Women’s Forum build and maintain their collective identity?*

To conduct my research, I simultaneously spent three months with the WF and six months with SLUDI. In both groups, I employed a mixed qualitative approach of semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions (FDGs), participant observations and archival material. In total, I conducted eighty interviews, two FDGs (one per group), observed many formal and informal meetings, including protests and rallies, and consulted their archives for advocacy and lobbying related events. To analyze my data, I used Historical Methodologies and Grounded Theory (GT) to inductively conceptualize the phenomenon of CI, while also generating my own interpretations of the phenomenon.

Due to both movements having formed during the brutal eleven-year Civil War (1991-2002), I provide a brief context of the conflict in the next section, combining both literature review with interviews from my fieldwork.

1.2 Context of the Civil War (1991-2002)

During the war, an army called, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF)³ entered the country on March 23, 1991 from neighboring Liberia to overthrow the Joseph Momoh government (Penfold, 2012; Steady, 2011; Cockburn, 2007). Its combatants were a mix of Liberians and Sierra Leoneans led by the notorious war lord, Foday Sankoh. The RUF initially seized control of rich diamond areas of the eastern and southern regions of Sierra Leone. Their fighting tactics included targeting high-ranking officials, including “traditional chiefs and government officials, local traders, the more prosperous farmers and religious leaders, who were subjected to forced labor, various forms of humiliation and public beheadings” (Cockburn 2007: 34).

According to interviews and literature review, the RUF and Charles Taylor’s National Patriotic Front of Liberia invaded Freetown on two occasions. The first occasion was on January 6, 1996 in which the Sierra Leone Army succeeded in pushing them back to the Liberian border. However, the RUF recovered and continued to fight. They made a second attempt to seize the city on January 6, 1999 where fighting intensified, dividing the city into two parts: The Western Area and Eastern Area. Whereas the Eastern Area was occupied by the RUF, the Western Area was occupied by Nigerian led armed forces comprising of fighters from the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG)⁴ fighting the RUF. Alaji Jarka, an activist and former President of the Amputees and War Wounded Association Sierra Leone (AWWASL) recounted:

When they [RUF] came, they fight with ECOMOG forces for two weeks. The city was divided into two: the ECOMOG fighters occupying the Western part of the city, and the Eastern part was occupied by the rebels. The reinforcement was coming in from Nigeria, helping to force the rebels out of the city. On their way out, they went from house to house, knocking on doors, forcefully meeting us, and asking people to join them. They said, ‘When the ECOMOG forces come, you get to the streets to rejoice with them. But when we come, you hid yourselves. Get out of the houses. (interview 30/11/2017).

Many civilians were forced out of their homes only to face horrific and barbaric treatments. The RUF pillaged, raped and maimed tens of thousands of innocent people, including killing some 50, 000 people

³ RUF was also popularly known as the ‘sobels’, a mix of government military “soldiers” and “rebels” (Steady, 2006).

⁴ ECOMOG is an acronym for Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group, the first African sub-regional armed force created by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to enhance security and deescalate crisis in the region (Pitts, 1999).

(HRCSL, 2016; Cockburn, 2007). Many were maimed for their possessions. Mohammed Conteh, an activist and member of AWWASL remembers, “Young men lost their arms because they refused to give up their watches” (interview 30/11/2017). Boys were made into killing machines overnight through copious amounts of drugs and alcohol, killing even their own family members (Steady, 2011; Cockburn, 2007; interviews).

Women and girls also suffered horrendous treatments during the war. In times of conflict, they become prime targets for violence, especially GBV, increasing their level of suffering. Dr. Nemata Majeks-Walker, an activist and Founder of the 50/50 Group, reiterated, “Whenever there is a war, it is the women and children who suffer the most. During our eleven-year war, it was them who suffered the most, especially the women” (interview 4/10/2017). They are often raped, subjected to all types of other horrific violence and in some worst cases, killed. To demonstrate the level and plethora of atrocities committed against them, Edward Conteh, a former President of AWWASL remembers:

Women were raped, even with sticks in their privates. Pregnant women were *de-bowled*, their stomach being split open. They make a bet: this is a boy, this is a girl and they split the stomach leaving the woman there to die. Other women survived but many of them died. Young girl children were recruited as soldiers. (interview 30/11/2017).

Young girls were also abducted to serve as domestic cooks and carriers, as well as sexual objects and ‘wives’ (Cockburn, 2007). These violations inflicted severe psychological trauma, and in some cases, annihilation by their own communities, especially after the war (ibid).

Moreover, in many cases, women had the arduous task of taking care of their families and wounded soldiers. Dr. Majeks-Walter expressed, “women did not only take care of the wounded soldiers, they also had to take care of their men, their children” (interview 4/10/2017). The war also left many women without their menfolk, either because they were involved in the war, had migrated, or killed. As a result, women were left to take on the responsibility of protecting as well as providing for their households (Cockburn, 2007).

While many fled the violence, some of the PWDs I interviewed did not flee. ECOMOG fighters had provided them with vehicles to escape but because Freetown was their birth place, the only place they grew up knowing, they decided to stay. Alaji Jarka reiterated, “We did not want to leave because we are born here, *mann* [‘grew up’] here and will die here” (interview 30/11/2017).

Box 1: ASCL-LF Research Project

The project started in April 2015 and will end in 2019. It is entitled, “Breaking Down Barriers to Exclusion—Building Capacity for Lobbying and Advocacy for Children with Disabilities (CWDs)”. Its aim is to understand the internal and external factors that work (or not) for grassroots lobbying and advocacy for CWDs and their caretakers in Cameroon and Sierra Leone. Master Thesis students have been collecting data as a way to help strengthen the Liliane Foundation and its local partner organizations worldwide. In Sierra Leone, its local partner is One Family People (OFP).

The hedonic and barbaric crimes committed during the war “wreaked havoc on the country’s economy and its entire social fabric, exposing the citizenry to untold hardship and vulnerability” (HRCSL Report, 2016: XV). For many of my participants, the war wounds are still there. Their pain can be still felt today, including in the words uttered by Mohammed Conteh: “When I talk about this story I cannot feel happy. We lost parts of ourselves—emotionally and mentally. Since then we are struggling” (interview 30/11/2017). PWDs and the WF members I got to know during my research are some of the most resilient people I have ever encountered in my life. Their stamina to continue fighting for their rights is a mark of their true resilience.

That said, my research stems from a four-year-co-operative learning project between the African Studies Center of Leiden University (ASCL) and the Liliane Fonds (LF), a Dutch-based NGO (see Box 1). Although the project was and still is geared towards children with disabilities (CWDs), it was flexible enough to accommodate my interests on gender and disability advocacy.

In fact, during the nascent stage of formulating a research topic, I became interested in the disability movement in Sierra Leone. However, there was little to nothing written on it. This further triggered my interest to then see if there was material on other movements in the country. It turned out there was a plethora of material on the successes of the women’s groups and the WM. In fact, one of the leading scholars within the field of Gender Studies in Sierra Leone was Dr. Aisha Fofonah Ibrahim. Strangely, yet serendipitously, she and Dr. Willem Elbers, the projector director and my academic supervisor from the ASC, already knew each other and had supervised a previous MA student on the same research project. Without hesitation I explained to them that I wanted to incorporate the women’s movement in my research somehow.

After reading up on disability movements in other parts of Africa, I found that PWDs were not uniformed in speaking to their governments on their collective grievances. I assumed this might be the case also in Sierra Leone and might explain the difference with the success of the WM. After several skype calls between the three of us, my topic was formulated: I would use the success of the WM’s collective success as a learning trajectory to understand the lack of success of the DM. Once I arrived in the field, my assumption was not entirely correct. I was compelled to then drop my hypothesis and pose a new research question to capture what was going on within both movements. What is contained within these pages is the story of both movements.

Outline of Paper

My paper is divided into seven chapters. After this introduction, chapter Two presents several concepts and theories that I used to explain and understand the phenomena of CI, from which my sub-research questions are generated. Chapter Three presents my methodology, in which I discuss my

reasons for conducting research in Sierra Leone, my research design, the various instruments I used to collect my data, my method of analysis and data verification, some of the ethics involved in my research, as well as drawing on ‘epistemological reflexivity’ in which I confront the challenges of using Della Porta and Diani’s theory and how it affected my research and writing process. In Chapters Four and Five, I discuss and analyze my research findings. Chapter Six presents a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences of SLUDI and the WF’s CI formation and maintenance processes. And finally, Chapter Seven provides conclusions of my main findings, recommendations as well as my reflections on using Della Porta and Diani’s CI formation and maintenance theory and my research limitations.

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present a theoretical framework, which helps to explain and understand the collective identity (CI) of the disability and gender movements in Sierra Leone. I begin by delving into ‘new’ social movement theory (SMT) and define what a social movement (SM) is. Then I highlight the importance of social movement organizations (SMOs) in helping to advance the position of marginalized groups, while underscoring some of the issues they can experience, including inter group competition and group fragmentation. I then define CI, while showing its multiple uses empirically and explicating Della Porta & Diani’s (2006) mechanisms of movement CI formation and maintenance from which my sub-research questions are derived.

2.2 Social Movements

Despite many advances in SMT, there is still no consensus on what constitutes as a social movement (SM) (Larmer, 2010; Della Porta & Diani, 2011). While some argue that anything can be a SM—ranging from NGOs, self-defined movements to strikes and riots because there is always an element of ‘movement praxis’ (Larmer, 2010), others have tried to define it more concretely. Diani (1992) says it is “networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups, and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities” (p.1). His formulation is contested by Melucci (1996), who says it is “a network of active relationships between actors who interact, communicate, influence each other, negotiate, and make decisions” (p.72). Melucci’s definition is fitting for my own research.

Much of our understanding of SMs stem from the ‘new’ surge of ‘identity politics’ that was developed in Western Europe and North America in the 1960s and 70s (Flesher-Fominaya, 2010; Oliver, Cadena-Roa & Strawn, 2003; Melucci 1989; 1995; 1996; Tilly, 1978). During this time, there was increased recognition of a plethora of societal issues in which people struggled for “autonomy...in relation to technocratic apparatuses and corporate control over knowledge production” (Della Porta & Diani, 2011:6). Actors demanded their autonomy through social reforms on issues related to women’s rights, peace and solidarity, civil rights, and the environment. For instance, on women’s rights, women sought autonomy from male subordination within the family and from the church (ibid). A new crop of scholars sought to understand the emergence, significance and the effects of these new social movement identities. Old paradigms about social movement actors being anomic or pluralists willing to engage in any political process because their grievances would be heard and addressed were no longer valid in explaining the new dynamics that was occurring in SMs.

A plethora of theories were postulated to explain these new identities by various scholars. Among the many theories were resource mobilization theory (Gamson, 1975), how movements framed their issues for collective action (Dütting and Sogge 2010), “how a social movement succeeds or fails in becoming a collective actor” (Melucci, 1995: 55) and socio-political conflicts serving as catalysts for SM CI formation processes (Flesher-Fominaya, 2010; Adler et al., 2009; Melucci, 1989, 1995, 1996). In the latter, not only are people’s daily lives deeply immersed in the conflict (i.e. their time, interpersonal relationships, individual and group identities), they are also involved in “their autonomy in making sense of their lives” and their environment (Melucci, 1995: 41). In the process, “Conflict provides the basis for the consolidation of group identity and for solidarity, rather than shared interests” (Melucci 1995: 48). This postulation as well as how individuals come to build and maintain a sense of belonging to a movement over time (Della Porta & Diani, 2006) serve as the focus of my research. I will turn to Della Porta & Diani’s formulations after I explain the importance of social movement organizations (SMOs) in SMs.

2.2.1 Social Movement Organizations

Globally, SMs continue to provide marginalized individuals a platform for their collective grievances and demands to be heard (Amfred et al. 2007; Horn, 2013; Flesher-Fominaya, 2010; Melucci, 1989; 1995;1996). SMs comprise of (SMOs)⁵ who orbit around a key SMO that is formally set up to coordinate a movement's wider goals in order for it to survive and to be successful. SMOs can help to give citizens access to resources, political opportunities and social-psychological support that they might not otherwise have at their disposal (McAdam & Scott, 2005; Snow & Benford, 2000). Within the past decade, development and human rights-based frameworks formulated by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and donors have been looking to SMOs on how to create a more egalitarian and just world for marginalized groups (Horn, 2013). The main reasons are that SMOs can create a dialogue between governments and those marginalized, and act as their watchdogs to ensure that these policies and laws are implemented, monitored and reinforced (McAdam & Snow, 2005). As a result, SMOs can play an important role in redressing the inclusion and empowerment of marginalized groups through advocacy (Horn, 2013; Bukenya & Hickey, 2014; Eckert, 2017; Sabatello & Schulze, 2013; Kaufman, 2011; Brandes & Engels, 2011; McAdam & Scott, 2005; Lewis, 2002).

Within SM literature, SMOs are mainly concerned with increasing their membership and implementing social reforms they advocate for within society (Stern, 1999; Gamson, 1975). Although increasing membership can take various routes, including radical strategies based on violence and media attention for a specific cause, the assumption is that the greater the size of its members, the more likely it can make a difference (Banaszak & Ondercin, 2010; Hannan, Carrol & Polos, 2003; Andrews, 2002; Stern, 1999). This is a key assumption for my study. To achieve this, it is often suggested that SMOs should define a 'realized niche', or the resource space in which the organization can sustain itself without the presence of competition (Hannan, Carrol & Polos, 2003; Andrews, 2002; Stern, 1999). The smaller, or more specialized a SMO's niche is, the better it has a chance of surviving because it won't have much competition. But if two SMOs have identical niches, one of their sizes will be reduced for every member the other organization claims, "assuming that being a member of one organization excludes membership in another" (Stern, 1999: 96). If there is a scarcity of members, the competitor's size will increase while the other will be inhibited. Either SMOs adjust their niches in order to attract more members, or they may risk extinction. Either way, a SMO's CI will be adversely affected.

⁵ Term is sometimes referred to as civil society organizations.

Competition can also create movement-counter movement (M-CM) like groups. Zald and Useem (1983) claim that “Movements often provide the impetus for countermovements to mobilize” (p.1) because of their visibility to advocate for change and to achieve considerable impact. An MCM can be defined as “a movement that makes contrary claims simultaneously to those of the original movement” (Meyer and Staggenborg, 1996: 1630). According to Zald and Useem (1983), there are four conditions that generate a MCM: 1) movement progress and success; 2) the formulation of CM ideology; 3) resource availability; and 4) constraints and opportunities in the public arena (p. 4). In the former for instance, just as the second wave women’s movement in the US won policy changes on abortion in the 1970s, smaller sized anti-abortion (sometimes referred to as ‘pro-life’) movements reversed its policy achievements in the *Roe v. Wade* decision by not only staging dramatic, ‘guerrilla’ like theatrics, but also shifting the issue to prohibiting the use of federal funds for abortions (Banaszak & Ondercin, 2010: 2; Zald & Useem, 1983).

More often than not, the strategies and goals used by MCMs are the same as movements. Although both are interacting with each other in a “careful dance” (Banaszak & Ondercin, 2010: 1), their wider goal remains the same: to inhibit each other’s mobilizations (Zald & Useem, 1983). Inhibition may be in the form of “non-violent direct-action tactics” (Mottl, 1980: 623) (i.e. recruit the other groups’ members, lawsuits, competitive lobbying, etc.), obstructing or deterring the other from mobilizing, or direct destruction (i.e. produce negative images of the group, restrict flow of resources, gathering of information on dissidents, etc.) (Zald & Useem, 1983). Whichever is used, their endogenous relationship will produce various outcomes that neither groups would have anticipated from the get go (Andrews, 2002) and largely impact the movement’s CI.

A central outcome is group fragmentation. Group fragmentation is usually the result of a conflict of interest, individually and/or collectively (Özdemir & Eraydin, 2017; Adler et al., 2009). It can be based on several issues such as ideological differences or diversity issues. Ideological differences can be understood through boundary work. Although often used by activists to demarcate themselves from other activist groups based on political differences, such as political beliefs, values or ideologies (Regner, 2002), it can also be used within groups to construct boundaries between members. For instance, in a study by Reger (2002) on various National Organization for Women (NOW) chapters in the United States, members of NOW in New York City “drew boundaries between themselves based on the feminist ideology and strategies they embraced...some members viewed each in antagonistic ways, drawing a firm boundary between themselves and constructing the political and empowerment feminist identities” (p. 722). Flesher-Fominaya (2010) also argues that “boundary work can lead to fragmentation as strong group collective identities or different understandings of collective identity (such as whether or

not transsexuals belong in the women's movement, for example) can make building alliances between movement groups difficult" (p. 398) (also cited in Gamson, 1995).

Also, fragmentation can be due to issues of diversity. Reger (2002) argues that "social movement organizations struggle with and often fail at the task of representing and respecting a diverse membership" (p. 720). Diversity issues can take different forms including but not limited to race, ethnicity, sexuality and class. These issues are also tied to boundary work where individuals can use them to demarcate themselves from other members.

2.2.2 African Social Movements

(Un)Surprisingly, we often cannot find African social movements (SMs) within the field of African Studies and the Social Sciences, or Africa within social movement theories and debates (Eckert, 2017; De Waal & Ibreck, 2013; Brandes & Engels, 2011; Ellis & Kessel, 2009). Reasons abound but one central argument is whether SMs are a global phenomenon in which Africa naturally belongs to, or if SMs are unique to Africa that it "might be difficult to analyze in a comparative perspective" (Ellis and van Kessel, 2009: 1). Ellis and van Kessel (2009) propose two answers: if it is a global phenomenon then 'Western' SMTs can be applied to the continent. This would allow all past and forthcoming studies to fill in the gaps of empirical research. If it is not, then those theories cannot be utilized or adapted. The underlying assumption is that African movements are *sui generis*, operating in their own vacuums, irrespective of globalization or other external stimuli. Yet, this notion "...risks perpetuating the view that everything that occurs in Africa has its own special rationale, dictated by a context so radically different as to stand beyond global comparison" and therefore disallows comparisons to other parts of the world null (Ellis and van Kessel, 2009:1).

Some authors find the above-mentioned arguments too polarizing. Larmer (2010), Brandes & Engels (2011) and De Waal and Ibreck (2013) propose a combination of both: African movements are 'hybrid' entities that exist in their own ways, with their own mechanisms of mobilizing, but who also utilize and adapt Western concepts, funding, methods of activism within their movements and struggles. In the first argument, before the Arab Spring uprisings⁶ in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Morocco in 2011, activists and organizers "built upon more than a decade of protests about material issues including water and bread shortages that had shaped 'people's consciousness and organizational capacities'" (Ali, 2012, as quoted in de Waal and Ibreck, 2013: 304). This was partly supported by Western communication technologies and use of social media to quickly mobilize constituents for political change.

⁶ Also labeled as the 'year of the protestor' (Andersen, 2011).

These tools coupled with non-violent tactics to overthrow dictators revived a sense of ‘people power’ movements that inspired other African countries to learn from their brethren and revolt about their own material grievances and demand for systemic change (Waal and Ibreck, 2013). Countries, such as Uganda and Malawi staged peaceful protests against high food and fuel prices; although no real political changes were observed in those countries (de Waal and Ibreck, 2013). Other countries, such as Senegal saw the rise of youth movements—*Y'en a Marre* (‘We’ve had enough’) and *Mouvement 23* (‘June 23 Movement’)—made up of rappers and journalists fed up with the constant power cuts. The timeliness of this issue coupled with the upcoming elections in which the former President Abdoulaye Wade tried to extend his executive powers for a third term by trying to amend the Constitution, gave reasons for them to collectively mobilize (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Despite demonstrations quickly escalating into riots and over a hundred people injured, the event helped to elect a new President and gave voice to many citizens by letting them express their discontent in the “1,000 complaints to the Government” (UNRIC, 2017; Nader & Akwasi 2015;). Taken together, the events called for a deeper understanding of African social movement histories and sociopolitical contexts in which they arise and operate (de Waal and Ibreck, 2013; Larmer, 2010).

Today, like their European or American counterparts, African social SMOs play a key role in civil society.⁷ They act between citizens and states in order to guarantee marginalized individuals access to basic social services, including education and health (Lewis, 2002). Western agencies/NGOs increasingly support them financially and organizations themselves have become dependent on their aid to function. This dependency has created a host of issues, including movements that have to “articulate messages that chime with Western NGO priorities” (Larmer, 2010: 257), which can often reproduce the same inequalities and injustices that they are opposed. For Ellis and van Kessel (2009) aid dependency has become a feature of several African movements.

There are general limitations of applying orthodox SM theory within developing contexts, such as Sierra Leone. For example, social movements for people who are already “existing on the margins of survival” are often viewed as socio-political opportunities “...driven by desperation that leads to collective action rather than a conscious framing of options” (Thompson and Tapscott, 2010: 14). While this may be true, it is reductionist and patronizing as it ignores the capacity of grassroots activism as well as the history of mobilization in developing countries (Van Stekelenburg, Klandermans & van Dijk, 2009). Also, while SM studies have focused on movement level analysis, there continues to be a tendency to borrow Western theories to explain African contexts, even though these theories are sensitive to the unique socio-political, cultural or economic developments in Africa. But still, there is a

⁷ The term originated from democracy movements in Eastern Europe during the 1970s and 80s, and later gained significance in Latin America as well as an analytical tool to explain political processes in Africa.

gap in developing African based models. While my own study is borrowing a Western theory and assumption, its aim is to generate rich data using socio-cultural patterns of expressions in order to contextualize and give voice to the participants' unique lived experiences.

2.3 Collective Identity

Like many concepts of SMs and their widespread vernaculars, CI has no consensual definition (Flesher Fominaya, 2010; Saunders, 2008; Polletta & Jasper, 2001). It is often regarded as a 'slippery' label (Flesher Fominaya, 2010; Larmer, 2010) because 'identity' itself is a capacious concept. Identity can mean three things at any time: first, being 'too much' (i.e. strong identity); second, 'too little' (i.e. weak identity); or third, 'nothing at all' because it is so ambiguous (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 1). But these ideas are socially constructed and contested. Some scholars believe identities are primordial and biological, assuming that identities are fixed and homogenous; therefore, they argue that it makes sense for group coherence.

Despite the variance on identity, CI remains widely used in SMT and in various contexts. In theory, it explains many issues, including "...accounts for mobilization and individual attachments to new social movements" (Hunt & Benford, 2004: 437), the social and psychological aspects of the emotion of social actors (Melucci, 1989; 1995; 1996) and a movement's "emergence, trajectories, and impacts" (Polletta & Jasper, 2001: 283). Over all, it is both a process and an outcome of SMs (Della Porta & Diani, 2011; Flesher-Fominaya, 2010; Saunders, 2008) whereby social actors build their group identity through a set of rituals, practices and cultural artefacts in order to negotiate their position in wider society (Melucci, 1989a;1995;1996).

Empirically, CI has been used in various ways. For instance, Glass (2009) compared two Zapatista-inspired movements in Los Angeles and discovered that identity work, a term often used in tandem with CI, was important in maintaining the movement's unity during moments of internal discord. Whereas one organization had no contentions between activists, organizers and community members, the other organization had several mainly due to having different goals between activists and organizers (lack of identity convergence), class and race issues (lack of identity construction) and a large disproportion of activists and organizers relative to members. These issues suggested that if identity work is neglected, it can lead to the dissolution of organizations.

In another study, Gongaware (2012) investigated two Native American movement organizations and how they processed their collective memory. He discovered that the processes of associating and anchoring were instrumental to overcoming internal changes and interpersonal conflicts. Individual narratives of past and shared constraint(s) in particular helped to give credibility to a group's grievances,

while simultaneously anchoring the organization's focus and maintaining its status quo. More importantly, during periods of internal change, the study revealed that organizations had to actively engage and manage the connections between and among the group members because it is these connections that define collective and personal identities. These in turn can influence the direction of CI, including its cognitive, moral and emotional interconnections.

Lastly, combining Della Porta & Diani's formulations of CI formation and maintenance with social media platforms, Treré's (2014) two-year multimodal ethnographic study of the Mexican #YoSoy132 student movement revealed that students were able to reclaim their identity by opposing external fabrications, proclaim their CI rebellion culture in order to ground and strengthen their solidarity, and maintain their solidarity through low cost activism. Concepts of 'frontstage' (Twitter streams, Facebook posts, etc.) and 'backstage' (Facebook chats and groups, email lists, WhatsApp exchanges, etc.) were used as new digital concepts of CI. These channels not only served to generate and reinforce internal cohesion and identity formation, they also acted as complex, "organizational backbone of contemporary social movements" (p. 902). Like Treré, my study is also grounded in Della Porta & Diani's (2006) CI formulations to understand the disability and gender movements' CI's, which I will now turn to in the next subsection.

2.3.1 Della Porta & Diani's Theory of Collective Identity Formation and Maintenance

The first mechanism in CI formation requires that social actors involved in the conflict clearly demarcate who they are, apart from their adversaries. A "we" is formulated based on common traits and solidarity, while the "other" is seen as the group's reason(s) to mobilize. These traits are not necessarily defined by specific social traits (i.e. class, gender, ethnicity, etc.) or have to be in alignment with specific organizations. Also, even though social actors are often simply and routinely defined in those terms, they do not necessarily have to express any strong sense of feeling with any of the above-mentioned social traits. In fact, these traits can either define a type of identity of the group, whereby it rules out other possible forms of identification, or it can have multiple identities, allowing individuals to feel close to several types of collectives at once. Altogether, the construction of identity requires a positive definition by those in the group, as well as a negative identification of those they oppose.

The maintenance of the group involves two dimensions. First, the group must produce new networks of relationships—both in and outside itself. These networks can be created through "direct face-to-face interactions" at the community level, "and in the everyday spaces," as well as interactions

with the wider community (p.95). Networks help to spread information faster especially if they do not have access to the media. Although the authors argue that CI is less dependent on these interactions, as networks form, they help to develop "...informal communication networks, interaction, and mutual support" (p, 94), which end up guaranteeing the movement a wider range of opportunities. Support and trust between the group's networks can help it withstand many limits, even limited financial resources. Trust, in particular will determine the group's continuity because those who identify themselves within the movement—and are identified as part of the movement—must feel they can rely on help and solidarity from the group at any moment. Having trust "...make[s] it easier to face the risks and uncertainties related to collective action when the field of concrete opportunities seems limited and there is a strong sense of isolation" (p. 95).

The second dimension of maintenance requires that the group "connects and assigns some common meaning and experiences of collective action dislocated over time and space" (p, 95). This sometimes means that the group links together events from past struggles in order to remind itself why it needs to still fight on. While "space" is defined as the group's ability to connect its goals locally and internationally with other groups—further away—who share its struggle, "time" requires more dynamic involvement from its actors. "Time" is measured by the group's 'visible and 'latent' phases to mobilize its constituents. In the former, it is concerned with how often the group makes itself seen, either through demonstrations, holding media interventions, and/or other public initiatives. Within these events 'ritual practices' are promoted in the types of slogans chanted and banners or placards waved to ensure theatrical appeal and quality. Rituals are created inside the group away from public view. These can include signaling of new members, "rites of passage", or personal transformations of individual actors. The latent phase is marked by "...the hidden actions of a limited number of actions" (p. 96) involving small groups who are able to reproduce certain representations and models of solidarity to create conditions for new collective action.

While the above-mentioned phases are important in constructing and maintaining a SM's CI, a salient element within that process has to be emphasized—that is the identity of the social actors themselves because they are the proof in the pudding. The individual and the collective dimensions in fact interact in complex ways. According to Della Porta & Diani (2006): "On the one hand, through the production, maintenance, and revitalization of identities, individuals define and redefine individual projects, and possibilities for action open and close" (p. 92); on the other hand, what is constructed as well as what individuals come to discover and/or rediscover about themselves becomes part of the movement's social process. These two worlds can sometimes demonstrate existing social tensions, such as tensions between the constraints of the group world as well as the aspirations and desires of the individual world. For example, the more comprehensive, complex identity - beyond the simpler identity

of gender or disability - determines a given decision or response. This dynamic illustrates well the interconnections between 'who I am' and 'who we are'.

Furthermore, if the identity of 'who we are' is strong, issues of conflict and social relationships can exist (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). However, if it is not, it can inevitably leave the movement and the individual feeling marginalized; in the latter case, the movement can be reduced to a so-called "deviant phenomenon" (ibid). This is to say that constructing and maintaining the group's identity also requires a great deal of 'identity work' on and by the individual (Einwohner et al., 2008; Glass, 2009; Snow & McAdam, 2000). The above stated processes help to define my research sub-questions.

Research Sub-Questions

1. How do SLUDI and the Women's Forum demarcate their own group vis-à-vis opposing groups?
2. How do SLUDI and the Women's Forum produce new networks of relationships within and outside the group?
3. How do SLUDI and the Women's Forum create common meaning and experiences over time and space?
4. What types of membership constraints are SLUDI and the Women's Forum facing?
5. How do SLUDI and the Women's Forum resolved individual and collective differences?

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes and discusses how I went about gathering the necessary data and information in my study. It starts with my research locale and rationale, including reasons for conducting my research in Sierra Leone. Then it touches on my research design, specifically focusing on my reasons for choosing Grounded Theory (GT) and Historical Methodologies as methods. This is then supported by a range of qualitative research instruments I used in my research. A subsequent section is devoted to the types of methods of analysis I used to verify my data. Because every research has ethical concerns, I provide a section of two main ethical concerns I had in my own research. A final section is presented on reflectivity, where I focus on epistemological reflexivity in relation to using Della Porta and Diani's (2006) theory in the research field and writing process.

3.2 Research Locale and Rationale

3.2.1 Locale

My research was conducted in the capital city, Freetown, during a six-month period between July 12, 2017- January 12, 2018. To compare the collective identities (CIs) of the disability and gender movements, I studied the umbrella organization of each movement—namely the Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI) and the Women’s Forum (WF). I spent six months with SLUDI and three months with the WF, while simultaneously going between them whenever an event was occurring. A presentation of my research proposal prior to going into the field and of my preliminary findings were presented to them in order to elaborate how best to engage with participants in the co-production of knowledge (Chesters, 2012), get feedback and implement solutions within their organizations.

3.2.2 Rationale

Apart from Sierra Leone being one of the two chosen countries for the ASC-Liliane Fonds project, there were two other reasons I chose it for my research. First, despite being rich in mineral and agricultural resources and having achieved considerable economic growth after the Civil War (1991-2002) (World Bank, 2009), inequalities remain high in the country. One of the ways of understanding its inequalities is by looking at its Human Development Index (HDI) ranking, which measures health standards (i.e. life expectancy), educational attainment of the adult population, and standard of living (UNDP, 2016). Since 2012, it has ranked predominantly low (177 out of 187 countries). Over 70% of the population lives below the poverty line (UNDP, 2016; OECD, 2016). A large proportion of those living in abject poverty is women and persons with disabilities (PWDs).



Women represent 50.9% of the total population and suffer from inequalities related to reproductive health, resources and social and economic opportunities (WHO, 2018). In terms of employment, women are mainly employed in subsistence farming; in non-agricultural positions their representation is significantly lower in all levels, especially in decision making bodies where women occupy 13 percent compared to 87 percent men

(WHO, 2018). Women and girls with disabilities

Photograph 2: Map of Sierra Leone by Hammond World Atlas Corp.

often experience heightened discrimination on account of their gender and disability (WHO: 2018, 2017, 2011; Chataika et al., 2015; Adeola, 2015).

PWDs experience the same inequalities as women, but at higher levels due to their disability. Out of a total population of 7 million, 93,000 people have a disability (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015). In a study conducted by Trani and colleagues (2010) in the urban areas of Sierra Leone, the authors found that PWDs in general had higher rates of unemployment (at 69 percent), not attending school, and poor health and reproductive health outcomes when compared to non-disabled persons. In the latter for instance, 16.4 percent of PWDs did not have access to health care compared to 7.1 percent of non-disabled persons. Access to basic services for women and PWDs has yet to be adequately addressed by the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL).

And my second reason for choosing Sierra Leone is that despite having strong legal frameworks to protect women and PWDs, the frameworks have been partially implemented, monitored and enforced. While many women occupy appointed positions, including as Commissioners, Administrators, Chief Justice and chairpersons of several parastatals (Rogers, 2011), they continue to be marginalized in all sectors of society. Among the key policies that are trying to help advance their position in society are the ‘twin policies’ called, The National Policy on the Advancement of Women and the National Gender Mainstreaming Policy. They were reinforced by other key policies, including the National Gender Strategic Plan (2010-2013) and the Sierra Leone National Action Plan (SILNAP) regarding the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UN SCR) 1325 on Women, Peace and Security and the UNSCR 1820 on Sexual Violence (UN SD, 2014). Many explanations abound for explaining the gap in implementing these policies, including women living in a deeply patriarchal society, rampant corruption, collapsed formal institutions, to name but a few (McFerson, 2011).

As for PWDs, there are several policies protecting their rights. Among the policies are the Persons with Disability Act 2011, the National Social Protection Policy and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) (Adeola, 2015). But there is a gap in implementing these for two reasons. First, the experiences and realities of PWDs on the ground are often different from the rights enshrined in the national and global legal frameworks. Disability rights is in fact claimed to be often framed ‘within charitable and neocolonial approaches,’ (i.e. linked to poverty alleviation initiatives) where policy and practice pay lip service to PWDs’ actual voices (Chataika et al., 2015: 189). These elements add to their overall victimization, dependence and exclusion (Chataika et al., 2015; Berghs and Dos Santos-Zingale, 2011). And second, there is a deeply entrenched social stigma about PWDs in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leoneans, especially in the rural areas, believe that disabilities are caused by sin, voodoo, or black magic (Powell, 2010). Communities often view them as a ‘burden’ on their families and society as a whole (Berghs & Dos Santos-Zingale, 2011; Chataika et al 2015: 206). Overall, the context of Sierra Leone is highly relevant to observing the CI of organizations composed of the DM and WM seeking to improve the rights of PWDs and women (and girls).

3.3 Research Design

This study is a qualitative research. It is concerned with applying an existing Western theory in a non-Western context in order to understand and build on already existing understanding of collective identity (CI) processes. To understand the phenomena of CI, I opted for a historical methodology and grounded theory (GT) approach, a general method used in qualitative research to build theory through methodic process of coding (i.e. ideas, concepts or elements) from one's data and analysis. I will first explain why GT is beneficial for my research.

3.3.1 Grounded Theory

First, as an approach and a process in social movement (SM) research (Mattoni, 2014), GT is able to capture the social actors' "perceptions, meaning, and emotions" under study (p.38). I do this by locating the views and voices of the social actors in the gender and disability movements. Their frames serve as an emic perspective, in which I can provide "a holistic perspective within explained contexts, sustaining empathic neutrality... [using] personal insight [and] taking a non-judgmental stance" (Ritchie et al., 2003:4). Second, GT is able to see similarities and differences between individuals and groups, allowing for an inductive analysis (ibid). This is important because it shows how differences of opinions and approaches are handled between individuals within organizations and whether their approach(es) help or hinder the building and sustenance of individuals' sense of belonging to the group. Furthermore, GT helps to explain the similarities and differences of CI maintenance between the two organizations, and further illustrates the types of issues that lead to collective successes and failures for advocacy and lobbying. Third, GT works well with "what" and "how" research questions because "they frequently provide partial answers that also tackle the reasons why some social phenomena develop in a certain way within a specific context" (p.38), "providing tentative explanations and hypotheses about the causes that are behind such processes and mechanisms" (ibid). In my case, my core and sub-research questions deal with "how" and "what" questions in an attempt to either explain or refute my broader assumption that the women's movement (WM) has been more 'successful' than the disability movement (DM) in its advocacy and lobbying strategies as a collective. And finally, GT helps to make the research process more 'transparent' "especially when addressing ethical concerns", "explaining specific methodological choices" and "the value of self-reflection" (Mattoni, 2014: 38-39), which I touch upon in a later section of this chapter. I will now explain why I decided to use historical methodologies as an 'additional input' in my research (Bosi & Reiter, 2014: 137).

3.3.2 Historical Methodologies

Although different from most Social Sciences approaches (Bosi & Reiter, 2014), I partly employed a historical approach to data-collection mainly because the opportunities for the Women's Movement (WM) and Disability Movement (DM) to form their collectives were historically situated and subsequently maintained thereafter. The use of mainly archival sources (i.e. documents and images) and oral interviews help to explain specific events and the phenomenon under study (ibid). In my case, I was able to understand the phenomenon of CI by triangulating the social actors' accounts of their CI formations with material evidence in order to deduce the past. Also, I could historically trace their post-CI formations with event analysis to underscore their collective successes and constraints. I explain this more in depth along with my other methods—participant observations, semi-structured (oral) interviews and focus group discussions — in the next section to explain my approach to data collection. These methods allowed me to have close proximity to my participants almost on a daily basis, which were richly interactive and developmental, and enabled me to explore issues in my research findings as they emerged.

3.4 Sources of Data

I used four methods in my study: participant observations, semi structured interviews, focus group discussions and archival material, which are discussed below.

3.4.1 Participant Observations

In this method, I joined the WF and SLUDI in their formal meetings and activities to record their actions and interactions. Recordings were made in the form of written field notes, sketches/drawings, consented photographs and memos to myself. Initially, I made phone calls to the executive members and coordinators daily and often several times throughout the day. With time, I established trusting relationships with other participants who I trusted to keep me abreast of the organization's activities.

The opportunity to observe culminated when I was invited to attend several executive, national and political party's meetings, visit individual DPOs and women's organizations, press conferences, protests, rallies, launchings of key policies and international celebrations. I was able to observe interactions between key members (i.e. Founders and Presidents), organizers and activists, while noting their comments (often in Krio), patterns of behaviors, as well as ongoing collective issues. I was able to observe how the organizations functioned internally, how they were organized, how often they came together and what tools they used to communicate with one another. Early in my fieldnote observations,

I started singling out ideas, which in turn helped guide my future observations. Based on my notes I could form an “initial sampling” (Charmaz, 2006, as quoted in Mattoni, 2014: 27), or determine who I wanted to interview following general criteria (Mattoni, 2014), which led me to my next method.

3.4.2 Semi-structured (Oral) Interviews

In social movement studies, interviews in particular help to “...gain insight into the individual and collective visions, imaginings, hopes, expectations, critique of the present, and projection of the future on which the possibility of collective actions rests and through which social movements form, endure or disband” (Blee and Taylor 2002: 95, as quoted in Della Porta, 2014: 231). Individual perceptions “challenge, clarify, elaborate, or re-contextualize understandings of social movements...This is particularly useful for understanding understudied aspects of social movement dynamics” such as that of collective identity, and “...for studying social movements that are difficult to locate, generate few documents, or have unclear or changing memberships” (ibid: 94), such as the case of Sierra Leone.

Although they can be in-depth, semi or open, I choose semi-structured interviews because of the flexibility to be open yet focused (Jamshed, 2014). Before going into the field, I had already developed an interview guide (see Table 1) as a way to capture the participants “more systematically and comprehensively as well as to keep the interview focused on the desired line of action” (Jamshed, 2014: no page number).

My questions comprised of a core question and many associated questions related to my main research question, which were initially piloted with a few SLUDI and WF activist members so that I could get a feel for the interview process, my participants and their responses. While my questions served as guides, I went into my interviews with the intent of having them be conversational so that my participants could talk freely and openly, so I got the in-depth information that I needed. This approach allowed me to change the order of my questions, rephrase them during the interview and create new ones as new trajectories came up (Jamshed, 2014).

Based on the pilot interview, I discovered three main challenges. First, my participants sometimes had difficulty comprehending my questions; second, the interviews showed a strong internal disaccord between different groupings within the same organization, and third, the responses were often historically situated. These issues led me to re-design my interview guideline in order to further investigate the internal conflicts within the movement and to use a historical approach by changing the selection process of participants to get more in-depth information.

As the process continued to unfold, and my categories of analysis started to come together, I paid closer attention to my “theoretical sampling” (Charmaz, 2006, as quoted in Mattoni, 2014:27) to try to grasp the phenomenon of CI in the two organizations. This was often done by delineating certain

categories, checking my intuitive assumptions about the categories, distinguishing between categories and clarifying relationships between emerging categories. It also involved relying on snowballing techniques (Blaikie, 2000, as cited by Mattoni, 2014) to collect more data.

In the end, I interviewed male and female key members, organizers and activists of all ages—from as young as twenty years of age to seventy years old (and possibly older)—in each organization in order to capture a diverse array of voices from each organization.

The interviews were audio recorded. Most lasted between one to one and half hours long, a few lasted only thirty minutes. Almost all were done once; a few interviews were repeated to gather more information and/or for further clarification. My interviews took place in various settings: offices, private homes, restaurants/cafés, under the shade of trees, during protests, inside Parliament, workshops/programs and at press conferences. In total, I conducted 45 interviews with SLUDI and 35 with the WF, most of which were transcribed for analysis before the research process ended. (To view consent form see Appendix E.)

3.4.3 Focus Group Discussions

I chose to use FDGs in my research because as ‘collective conversations’ (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2008: 375), the method is flexible and can illuminate a group’s meanings and interpretations (Ritchie et al., 2003) of the CI phenomenon. In particular with CI, it can capture participants’ shared sense of belonging to a group as well as the group’s beliefs, experiences and practices. Moreover, FDGs help comb out cultural themes, such as indigenous terminology (Della Porta, 2014) which is useful in the Sierra Leonean context. To capture these elements, I thought a discussion with activists would be well suited because of their continuous involvement in collective action. The selection criteria were: anyone who considered themselves an activist and older than 18 years of age. Prior to organizing the FDG, I developed a guide (see Table 2) as a way to get closer to my research data by highlighting topics that needed to be covered (Ritchie et al., 2003). I used a snowballing technique where I asked those I had already interviewed to identify people they knew would fit my selection criteria. I also asked the organization’s leaders and organizers for help, emphasizing the importance of an inclusive group so as to have as many voices represented as possible.

After names and numbers were given to me, I arranged for one FDG per organization. Ten activists per organization were invited, along with a Krio translator; however, due to traveling distances and lack of transport availability that day, only seven made it to SLUDI’s FDG and eight to the WF’s FDG.

Each discussion was audio recorded, lasted between two to two and a half hours. The session was later transcribed for analysis. (To view consent form see Appendix F.)

3.4.4 Secondary Sources / Archives

It was difficult to collect data during this phase primarily because one of the presidents of the organizations refused to let me consult the organization's archives a day after I had started. He expressed his concern that "other members would not like what you are [I am] doing". Although I was alarmed, the statement was typical of organizations who not only wanted to protect the organization's 'collective memory' (Bosi & Reiter, 2014) "but also by the necessity of protecting the donors of material that may contain information that still today may provoke negative consequences for individuals" (ibid: 123). Despite this drawback, I was able to glean information from both organizations to support my findings.

In my consultation of their archives, I looked for information related to the two groups' organizational structures and their national lobbying and advocacy activities. Specifically, I looked for public demonstrations, media interventions and other public initiatives, which are all key in Della Porta & Diani's formulation of CI maintenance. From these events, I able to gather specific dates, organizational information, minutes of meetings leading up to and after the events, public documents, such as press releases, which could not be easily gleaned from direct observations or interviews (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Ritchie, 2003). These were then constructed into a table to get an overview of the lobbying and advocacy activities (see Appendix B & D). Analysis of these events gave me insights into SLUDI and the WF's broader mobilization dynamics (Oliver et al., 2003), including the frequency of their mobilization efforts and the impact of their collective actions within the movements' pre-existing networks (Diani, 2002). Although its archives were not well kept, I got a sense of the nature of the movement at various points of its history (Diani, 2002).

3.5 Data Analysis & Validity

Throughout the research process, I analyzed my data using Grounded Theory (GT) and historical approach techniques. Although the interviews initially provided rich data for the first step of my analysis, certain categories only became more apparent after I conducted my focus group discussions with the two organizations. From my focus group discussion results, I identified a general framework of results. This led me to conduct an open coding process whereby I named and categorized CI phenomena by breaking down the data into smaller parts. These parts allowed me to then examine and compare and contrast the pieces. I inductively identified concepts from the data and grouped them into categories. Immediately I was able to see and make connections between the categories and subcategories to create

primary categories. By coding, I was able to amalgamate the categories into a GT framework, providing a descriptive narrative of the phenomenon of CI in the two organizations. It allowed me to trace its trajectory over time in order to make inferences about how events are linked (Ritter, 2014). Most often, I checked the results of the GT analysis with both the focus group discussion data and interviews to make sure my framework was working. In the final step of data analysis, I examined my findings across individual and group interviews, participant observations and archival material as a way to enhance validity and reliability of my results. I was then able to identify parts of my data that were coded differently as disagreements. Through this process, I was able to pick up on the *meanings* produced by social actors, uncover particular “perceptions, identities, emotions and cultural dimensions” of both movement’s collectives (Della Porta, 2014:11).

3.6 Ethics

Every researcher is obligated to follow the three golden rules of research ethics: “do no harm”, “leave no damage” and “leave things as they found them (or better).” Social movement researchers in particular have a heightened sense of responsibility when they research marginalized or oppressed communities (Milan, 2014; Chesters, 2012; Diani, 2002). Not only must we treat social actors as knowledge producers in their own right (Chesters, 2012), we must also “take into account the ontological frameworks movements advance—the political imaginaries and alternative accounts of what might be possible within a given society” (Chesters, 2012: 148). What we produce from our selection of questions, methods and epistemology can have broader ‘political implications’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: 6, as quoted in Milan, 2014: 446) that can sometimes leave social actors and their communities more marginalized than before.

Some have tried to address the issue by privileging ontology over epistemology, even though ontologies are contested arenas (Chesters, 2012). For instance, while some scholars argue for a ‘relational’ ontology of how individuals and society are framed (Giddens, 1984), others argue a ‘realist ontology’ is most ethical because it allows social actors to produce knowledge on issues with real-life and urgent social and political implications, rather than having researchers write ‘about’ them based on their own cosmologies (Chesters, 2012). In both cases, we have to be more concerned with how we build upon theory and “with the promotion of social change and empowerment broadly conceived” (Milan, 2014: 448).

That said, I had two main ethical concerns with the findings from the two organizations in my research. First, it became clear very quickly that the organizations I was researching had many struggles, meaning that my research would not necessarily portray them in a positive light. This insight made me anxious that I had already formed a negative bias with deeper implications. This starting premise would

not only put the spotlight on those involved in a negative light but also create more internal distrust among movement members and potentially jeopardize future projects with donors, potentially further marginalizing the actors. To counteract this potential downward trajectory, I carefully verified the data with the participants during my interviews and in my transcriptions, made sure to protect their identities within my paper and highlighted the few positive aspects of the organizations, especially where their lobbying and advocacy achievements were concerned.

The other issue of ethical concern was the emotional pain of my questions on my participants (Bosi & Reiter, 2014). I discovered early on in my research process that both movements formations occurred during the Civil War. While I had a daunting task: to uncover the personal histories of those who experienced the war, especially those who became disabled during the war, and how their experiences led them to join the organization. The war was also a critical point for the women's movement (WM), in which they collectively took action to try to end the war; therefore, understanding the personal as well as group contexts was bound to happen. In these situations, my interview process was to establish a context so that my participants did not have to disclose their experiences if they did not want to. If they did share their painful experiences, I made it very clear that it would not be my intention to harm him/her (Bosi & Reiter, 2014).

3.7 Reflexivity

The concept of reflexivity is important when GT methodologies are used (Dowling 2006). It compels the researcher to continuously jump between internal and external processes, between the research topic and research participants. In this process, the researcher must become more aware of and understand her own emotions, assumptions, positions and social background (Palaganas et al., 2017) because these factors influence the research directions, the relationships with the research subjects and ultimately the conclusions of the research. The central premise of reflexivity is "to make the relationship between and the influence of the researcher and the participants explicit" (Jootun, McGheen & Marland, 2009: 45).

Although reflexivity can take multiple forms, I will touch on epistemological reflexivity, particularly related to methodology and theory. While reflexivity already has serious implications in any research in general, it is ever more serious epistemologically (Dowling, 2006; Palaganas et al., 2017). According to Dowling (2006) researchers can become inundated with a series of questions while in the field on epistemology. For instance, Palaganas and colleagues (2017) pose the following questions: "How has the design of the study and the method of analysis 'constructed' the data and the findings? How could the research question have been investigated differently? To what extent would this have given rise to a different understanding of the phenomenon under investigation?" (p.432). The authors

postulate that the questions not only help to push the researcher to reflect upon her assumptions about her world and knowledge in general, including her own beliefs and status in society in relation to her research participants, but they also help her to think about the implications of her research findings. The above stated questions at one point or another entered my head. But two were particularly profound in my research process.

The first epistemological reflexivity issue concerned my initial implicit positive use of Della Porta & Diani's theory in the study and how it later shaped my process of analysis and writing. The main reason I selected the authors' theory out of a plethora of others was due to its simplicity. Precisely, on the surface it looked like a good cooking recipe, with specific ingredients to follow. I thought if I followed these ingredients I would get a nice warm meal. But it goes without saying, "...the researcher should not predetermine *a priori* about what he or she will find, and what and how social phenomena should be viewed" (Engward, 2013: 37). And it proved to be a daunting task as the research process progressed. My assumptions were challenged because my participants had difficulty in understanding the concept of 'who they are as a group', or at least from my interpretations it seemed so. In every interview, my participants kept asking me: 'what do you mean who are we as a group?' It made me realize that what should be a simple answer was not so simple to others. It also made me realize that I was being too rigid in applying this theory along with my pre-formulated questions. A factor that made this difficult was my own academic training as a (Art) Psychotherapist. As a psychotherapist we are trained to assess people based on already established psychological labels. While there is room to maneuver, the diagnostic labels guide us in treating our patients. So, I felt compelled to abide by the authors' formulations and see where the nuances would lay. At the same time, I tried to retrain my psychotherapist muscle by making my interviews more informal and asking who they are in multiple ways. But no matter which way I went, I was still sticking to the authors' script. I stuck to their script, even during my writing process.

During the writing process, I felt cornered to write. On the one hand, what my participants had formulated were answering my research questions. On the other hand, I wondered if there wasn't another theory or theories that could best represent my story. I looked at the CI literature again but was unconvinced mainly because there were elements in theories that were not observed. Moreover, using a new theory would entail rewriting a whole new theoretical section which time did not permit me to do. The coding process was already tedious in itself. So, in trying to compensate, I decided to not be too rigid and add my own CI processes that the authors did not delve into, such as distrust or diversity issues which came up frequently. This largely also helped to contribute to the existing theory of CI.

The second epistemological issue I had concerned the process of coding. Coding was something completely new to me as a first-time social science researcher. But I found many lessons in it from

doing it. It not only taught me the value of precision and accuracy in identifying my categories and data appropriately, it also taught me to be mindful of my own interpretations during that stage of processing. I had to be careful with what I was selecting as fundamental data and which ones were not in order to appropriately capture the participant's voices in my results. As I listened to their interviews and articulations of the participants CI processes, I came to appreciate how similar yet different their voices were in defining who they are, understanding their personal and collective issues and how they tried to resolve them individually and collectively. In particular, I found that despite their differences, both organizations' members were still able to come together and push for their common goals. Moreover, I admired their particular resilience in dealing with their personal and group circumstances, which were often made worse by the (extreme) poverty in the country. The everyday struggles to access proper housing, education, or even to put food on the table, especially with people with disabilities not only made me examine my own experiences of having lived in poverty during my formative years in a village in Burkina Faso, but it also left me appreciating what I have now and the opportunities that been afforded to me since I left the village.

Chapter Four: The Disability Movement

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents my findings and analysis on how the disability movement (DM) formed and maintained its collective identity (CI). In particular, I pay attention to the formation of the Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI), a key social movement organization (SMO) representing disabled people's organizations (DPOs) in the DM. I employ aspects of Della Porta & Diani's (2006) formulations of CI formation and maintenance mechanisms.

The chapter is divided into two main sections: one deals with identity formation and the other with maintenance. Each section provides a short description of its aims. A final concluding section of both sections is provided at the end of the chapter.

4.2 Section One: Collective Identity Formation

4.2.1 Introduction

In this section I focus on how the DM formed its CI. In particular, I pay close attention to SLUDI's formation. For this part of the analysis, I use Della Porta & Diani's theory of CI formation, specifically the first mechanism on how members define and demarcate who they are as a group. A 'we' is formulated based on common traits and solidarity. Traits are not necessarily defined by specific social traits such as gender, class, ethnicity, to name a few dimensions. I also present a discovered mechanism—fragmentation—as an issue that affected SLUDI's post-formation process. A subsequent subsection is presented on how SLUDI tried to resolve these issues.

4.2.2 The Civil War (1991-2002): Forming Disabled People's Organizations

It has often been argued within social movement theory (SMT) that socio-political conflicts serve as a catalyst in bringing people together to form a collective identity (CI) (Melucci, 1995/1996; Flesher-Fominaya, 2010). The reason being that conflict affects people in adverse ways, including their resources, interpersonal relationships, and individual and group identities (Melucci, 1995: 41). Through the chaos, people try to make sense of their lives and their environment as best as they can (ibid; also cited in Flesher-Fominaya, 2010). In the process, people also start to think about how they can better

improve their situation—be it by trying to secure resources, finding shelter, or even finding ways to stop the conflict altogether. These reasons alone can serve to mobilize people to come together. Flesher-Fominaya (2010) argues, “Conflict provides the basis for the consolidation of group identity and for solidarity” (p.395, extracted from Melucci 1995: 48).

For persons with disabilities (PWDs), the eleven-year Civil War (1991-2002) served as a catalyst for bringing them together to form a CI. Seeing PWDs relation to the war context or environment where injured civilians were being cared for in makeshift refugee camps (Berghs, 2014; Berghs & Dos Santos-Zingale, 2011), PWDs seized that particular moment as an opportunity to come together, take stock of their shared interests and write to non-government organizations (NGOs) to secure their own resources. Eventually, they clustered into smaller groups of similar afflictions called, ‘disabled people’s organizations’ (DPOs). Forming the groups required no more than ten people, who then appointed a group leader ‘chairman/person’⁸ who was responsible for writing to NGOs for requests for food rations, clothing and medical supplies on behalf of the group. Mustapha⁹, a former President of SLUDI said, “DPOs formed when 5-10 PWDs were around ...[and] appointed someone as chairperson who will be writing to World Food Program, Red Cross, etc., for oil, bulgur, and other foods” (interview 9/11/2017). Not only was it easy for DPOs to form, there was also a sense of solidarity to work together to ‘achieve their common goals’. Mustapha added, “We had unity and eagerness for all of us to grow in our DPOs” (interview 9/11/2017). Joseph, a former President of SLUDI also said, “We had this sense of coming together to achieve our common goals [to secure food rations and medicines]” (interview #1 of 2, 9/11/2017). In some ways, PWDs “learned how to gather their resources in order to reappropriate what they recognized as theirs” (Melucci, 1995: 49).

The ease of forming and their unity eventually led to a ‘mushrooming’ or ‘proliferation’ of DPOs. Particular groups such as polio victims and visually impaired persons (VIP) formed many DPOs. For instance, Mustapha explained, “Before the war there was only one polio organization. When the war came, we had 20-25 organizations” (interview 9/11/2017). While such growth in numbers goes hand in hand with increased awareness, and is a positive development, the reality of such growth came at a cost. Melucci (1995) argues that “in social conflicts reciprocity becomes impossible and competition for scarce resources begins” (p. 48). The mushrooming created inter and intra competition between groups mainly because they did not have realized niches (Hannan, Carrol & Polos, 2003; Stern, 1999). Everyone was doing the same activity—namely writing to NGOs for support. As a result, DPOs began

⁸ I use inverted commas to demarcate words used by my participants throughout my paper.

⁹ Due to the disability movement being fragmented today and the sensitivity of my findings, some information about the participants has been withheld; I use pseudonyms in reporting their observations.

seeing each other as enemies. Mustapha, explained, “If I came to you for clothing, bulgur, etc., and other groups were doing the same, we would see them as targets” (interview 11/9/ 2017).

In some cases, however, some groups clustered into unions in an attempt to stem competition. Joseph said, “We had a lot of polio DPOs coming together. SLUPP [Sierra Leone Union of Polio Persons] came about as a result of too much proliferation” (interview #2 of 2, 9/10/2017). The number of union and non-union formations during the war were many. They included: Polio Victims Association (PVA, now Polio Challenged Association (POCA)) (1992), House of Jesus for the Disabled (HoJ) (1992)¹⁰, Polio Women and Girls Development Organization (PWDGO) (1997), Amputees and War Wounded Association Sierra Leone (AWWASL) (1999) and the Sierra Leone Amputee & War Wounded Welfare Association (SLAWWWA) (2000). The proliferation of DPOs also inspired further discussions to form an umbrella body, SLUDI, that could represent all DPOs. I discuss this organization’s creation in the next section, which helps to answer my first sub-research question on how SLUDI demarcates its own group vis-à-vis opposing groups.

4.2.2.1 The Impetus to the Form Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues

Like most new social movements (SMs) in the Global North post 1960s, PWDs wanted autonomy (Della Porta & Diani, 2011). They wanted to form a stronger presence, a union with palpable powers, to move away from being seen and treated as a ‘charity case’ or needing protection and care (Chataika et al., 2015; Jackson, 2018) to an ‘autonomous’ entity (Della Porta & Diani, 2011) that could take care of their own issues and speak unilaterally to the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) on their collective grievances (Gamson, 1975; Horn, 2013). Joseph said, “We wanted to help and speak for ourselves because the NGOs came in trying to help us, but as a charity” (interview #2 of 2, 9/11/2017). Ali, one of the founding members of the Sierra Leone Association for the Blind (SLAB) also explained, “Our experiences of the desire for people to speak on our behalf made us realize that we cannot continue like this. We wanted to come out and speak for ourselves and represent ourselves” (interview #2 of 2, 9/10/2017).

1) Collective Identity Based on Social Trait

To achieve their aim, blind and polio DPOs and Professor Emeritus Eldred Jones, a non-disabled member who had an interest in pushing the PWD agenda, held several meetings in 1994 to discuss why PWDs should unionize. Based on interviews, two elements became apparent. First, PWDs realized they shared a common trait, an element that is part of the ‘we’ mechanism of Della Porta &

¹⁰ HoJ is an organization for polio victims.

Diani's (2006) CI formation. "... We saw that even though we [had] different disabilities, we [had] a broader problem—that is we are disabled," explained Mustapha (interview 9/11/2017). Ismael, a senior member of SLAB remembers, "A single disable cannot achieve his or her goal. Therefore, we needed to come together from all forms of disability" (focus group discussion, 30/9/2017). Joseph also mentioned, "We all had different disabilities, but we were disabled. That was what brought us all together" (interview #2 of 2, 9/11/2017). Although disability is a broad term comprising an array of different afflictions (Jackson, 2018, Chataika et al., 2015; Couser, 2005; WHO: 2018, 2017, 2011), as a social trait, it served as PWDs "master status, their primary defining characteristic" (Couser, 2005: 3).

To distinguish their different afflictions, PWDs used more nuanced categories. I have compiled a list from my six months of fieldwork with SLUDI¹¹. They are: the 'blind', 'dumb' (deaf-mute), 'physically challenged' (people suffering from polio, leprosy, tuberculosis, cerebral palsy, and stroke), 'humpbacks' (kyphoscoliosis), 'amputees' (war wounded), 'epileptics', and 'albinos'. In conversations, PWDs often used 'fellow disabled' to address each other.

The above stated names could also be found today in Krio, the lingua franca of the country and other indigenous languages. In Krio, the most common name for *any* PWD is *crippled*, *die fut*, *die ahn*, or 'dead feet,' 'dead hands.' A person with a physical disability is called, *ghenkilenki*, a Temne word meaning 'crooked' or 'not upright.' A visually impaired person is called, *fieth* in Temne, or *blyn* in Krio. A person suffering from a mental illness in Krio is called, *craseman* or *ful ful*, or 'crazy person.' Those who had a hearing impairment are called *defyase* in Krio, or *boo-boo* in Mende. In Kuranko and Maninkakan, the word for an amputee is *sainkelain*, or 'one leg.'

2) Collective Identity Based on Common Solidarity

The second element that connected PWDs was that they shared similar experiences of social exclusion. They were discriminated and marginalized socio-politically, economically and culturally. Much of the discrimination stemmed from inaccessible environments and rigid societal attitudes (WHO, 2018; Jackson, 2018, Chataika et al., 2015; UN CRPD, 2015; Couser, 2005). In the former, they did not have access to (inclusive) education, employment opportunities, housing, to name a few perennial issues. Ali expressed, "We had [similar] experiences of discrimination and marginalization... apart from the blind having some schools, education for PWDs was not inclusive... many of our colleagues could not go to school. Very few who just came out of school and looking for work were refused" (interview #2 of 2, 9/10/2017). Many described their situation back then as 'deplorable'. For instance, Mustapha

¹¹ Even though mental disability is a category, it does not yet have an official group within SLUDI; infact, it is estimated that more than 420,000 people in the country suffer from some form of mental health issue (UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2011).

said, “Our situation was deplorable. 90% of our comrades were sleeping in dilapidated buildings, open markets, stalls, abandoned vehicles, etc.... We needed proper housing. Government was very discriminatory. Even taxis would not take you to your destination” (interview 9/11/2017).

These remarks not only highlight their sense of solidarity (Della Porta & Diani, 2006), but also the multitude of barriers PWDs generally faced in the past and continue to face. Research has shown that PWDs in general experience greater difficulty in accessing basic services even though they have the same general needs as non-disabled persons (Bruin et al., 2012; Jackson, 2018, Chataika et al., 2015; WHO: 2018, 2017, 2011). They are twice as likely to find inadequate education, employment opportunities, political participation, to name just a few.

These issues persist today in Sierra Leone and I would like to discuss two specific issues in detail from my field work related to the ongoing rigid attitudes that non-disabled hold of PWDs—namely (1) lack of employment opportunities, and (2) non-disabled generalizing the ‘problematic behaviors’ of one PWD to **all** PWDs.

a) Unemployment and its Effects on Persons with Disabilities

PWDs generally experience more difficulty in accessing the job market than their counterparts due to their disability. They state that prospective employers often ‘judge’ them based on their physical disabilities rather than looking at their skills or giving them the opportunity to prove themselves. Amadu, a SLUDI activist stated, “We are marginalized when we apply for a job. People [employers] don’t even look at what we can do. Rather, they look at our situation [physical appearance] and judge us that we can’t do this or that because we are disabled” (interview 12/11/2017). Often times employers will disqualify PWDs because they cannot physically reach their premises. Ismael, a senior member of SLAB also said, “When you apply for a job as a disable, they will look at you and [say] you are not fit [physically fit] to be in that office but rather give it to non-disable people. So, if you qualify, you have to fight for your right” (focus group discussion 30/9/2017). Kassim, a SLUDI executive member also said, “When we go for interviews, people say, ‘how can you make it up those stairs everyday’ even though we are qualified to do the job. They automatically assume our disability is a problem when we apply for a job. We are not given the chance to prove ourselves whether we can or cannot” (interview 4/9/2017). These elements create a disabling environment that rejects and renders PWDs as victims of circumstance (Linton, 1998; Oliver, 1996). Unfortunately, this negative environment has led many PWDs to find ‘quick ways to survive,’ including in engaging in what they often called, ‘humiliating,’ ‘frowned upon’ activities that brought ‘disgrace to [their] honor and dignity,’ such as begging on the streets.

For PWDs, begging is a negative activity because it devalues their sense of self-worth. “[As] soon as you go to the streets and beg, your value as a human [is] reduced drastically... begging disturbs

persons with disability and even the DPOs that are working,” expounded Kabil, a member of Heal Sierra Leone (HSL)¹² (interview 11/26/2017). Mada, a SLUDI activist also acknowledged, “No sane man likes to beg. We know it lowers our dignity” (interview 9/15/2017). Sadly, begging has created a vicious pattern where non-disabled persons treat PWDs like beggars, often kicking them out of their shops or rolling up their car windows whenever they see them coming. Cyprian, a House of Jesus (HoJ)¹³ member explained, “able people are always treating us like beggars. They kick us out of shops the minute we come around or roll up their windows when they see us coming” (interview 15/11/2017). In some cases, even though not all PWDs beg and can afford to buy goods from a shop, shop owners automatically assume that they are there to beg. Ismael said, “In fact when a disable person goes to a nearby shop to buy something, no sooner the shop keeper sees them he will start saying ‘I haven’t sell anything yet and I have no money’ thinking that they are there to beg...it is really embarrassing” (focus group discussion 30/9/2017).

Yet, begging continues to be seen as a means of livelihood for PWDs (Demewozu, 2005; Abebe, 2009). It not only provides the means to cover their own and their families’ basic needs, it also helps to send their children to school and buy medications when someone is ill. Pervasive destitution sometimes pits PWDs against each other for scarce resources—the alms—and leaves most to declare it as a matter of ‘survival of the fittest’. Without pro-poor policies and proper structures in place to enhance the individual lives of PWDs (Demewozu, 2005), most argued that begging will always be necessary to survive. Taken together, these factors have led PWDs to self-label as the ‘poorest of the poor.’

*b) Stereotyping **all** persons with disabilities as ‘troublesome’*

Non-disabled people perpetuated the cycle of stigma by generalizing the ‘problematic behavior’ of one PWD to **all** PWDs. “When a disabled [sic] person does something wrong, all disabled [sic] persons will be accused, which is not good,” said Ibrahim, a SLUDI activist (interview 11/9/2017). For instance, in 2012, a prominent PWD, was appointed as Deputy Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs (MSWGCA) but was later sacked in 2016. Although the public did not know why, speculation ran high that he was overstepping his role when he assigned a press officer to join him at a conference in the US without consulting his employer. Despite these accusations, non-disabled persons quickly labeled him and all PWDs as ‘troublesome’ ‘stubborn’ or having ‘an attitude’ problem. Often times, non-disabled would say, “*den wan ya tranga es*” (‘they are stubborn’) and “*den wa ya get mot*” (“These people here got an attitude/they are mouthy”). Part of this sentiment is tied to the belief that

¹² HSL is an organization geared towards the development of PWDs.

¹³ HoJ is an organization for polio victims and their families.

PWDs should be silent. Bangura, the founder of Disability Rights Movement (DRIM)¹⁴ said, “PWDs are not expected to talk loud because when you are loud, they say you are arrogant, aggressive and troublesome” (interview 10/13/2017). This silence is synonymous with acquiescence which, in turn, is seen as being peaceful and not being greedy for more money. Kadiatu, a SLUDI woman representative, stated, “When we do advocacy, people see us as trouble causers and think we just want money” (interview 10/28/2017).

The above stated treatment of PWDs and many others left some to feel ashamed (Linton, 1998; Oliver, 1996) that they questioned their own identities. They sometimes wondered if they are creatures from another planet, or ‘aliens.’ For instance, Cyprian expressed his feelings: “Am I real? Am I a human being? Or am I an individual coming from another planet? It’s like [society shows us] that we are a different people, from a different planet” (interview 15/11/2017). The devalued and deviant status imposed on PWDs left debilitating effects on their minds to the extent that they ‘do not feel part and parcel’ of Sierra Leonean society. The above stated issues coupled with their disability trait served as PWDs’ sense of ‘we’ (Della Porta & Diani, 2006) to form SLUDI in 1995.

Today, SLUDI is a key SMO formally set up to coordinate the DM’s wider advocacy and lobbying goals (McAdam & Scott, 2005) and to protect the welfare of its constituents. In the former, its constituents comprise of a “network of active relationships between actors who interact, communicate, influence each other, negotiate, and make decisions” in the DM (Melucci, 1996: 72). In the latter, it acts as a watch dog to ensure NGOs, the State and others working on disability issues adhere to standardized treatment protocols for PWDs. According to its archives, “SLUDI acts as a sniffer dog, who is unleashed by DPOs to detect criminality and to growl or bark at offenders and defaulters of state and [international] actors who do not abide by standard treatment of PWDs” (archival data). From an antagonist frame (Benford and Snow; 2000), it holds the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) responsible for PWDs’ plight, and international organizations with resources for improving the lives of PWDs. To foment its position with GoSL, it is registered with the MSGCA in which it is embedded as a disability wing in the Deputy’s Office.

Also, SLUDI attempts to advance the position of PWDs by implementing developmental and cultural activities “in order to make the duty bearers and other humanitarian organizations realize that PWDs are a critical constituent of the society” (archival data). Like most social movement organizations (SMOs), SLUDI tries to achieve its aims by depending on national and Western aid agencies for funding (Larmar, 2010; Ellis & van Kessel, 2009)¹⁵. Among the many projects it has implemented are: micro-

¹⁴ DRIM is a development-based NGO working on alleviating the suffering of PWDs in the Southern, Eastern and Northern regions of Sierra Leone.

¹⁵ For more organizational information including on its specific aims and activities see Appendix A.

credit schemes, agro-food processing and marketing, skills training, advocacy campaigns, and physical rehabilitation (fieldnotes, interviews and archival data).

In addition, SLUDI is set up as a semi-professional organization. It is governed by mostly volunteers who are elected to positions every four years at the two-time annual general meetings (AGMs) in January and June. Governing its structure is the National Executive Board (NEB)¹⁶, who sometimes receive stipends called, ‘days service allowance’ (DSA). NEB is made up of approximately fifteen individuals¹⁷ who meet once a month, sometimes more in case of emergencies. It also has four sub-committees, comprised of members within and outside SLUDI in charge of: a) prevention and rehabilitation; b) education and advocacy; c) research; and d) fund raising (archives). Essentially everyone in the organization is responsible for making PWDs socio-politically aware of their human rights (Sabatello & Schulze, 2013; Bukenya & Hickey, 2014).

Also, SLUDI has a wide network across the country. It has some one hundred and twenty registered DPOs who pay annual fees of 100,000LE¹⁸ (approx. \$US 13)¹⁹. Nationwide, it has branches in the Northern, Southern and Eastern provinces²⁰ that collaborate closely with it in promoting the interests and welfare of PWDs.

Following SLUDI’s formation in 1995, it experienced two issues that were causing frictions within the group. These issues were related to inter-group competition and diversity. I discuss them within the broader framework of fragmentation in the next section that answers my fourth sub-research question on the types of constraints SLUDI was facing.

¹⁶ NEB in particular, has multiple and crucial roles. They include: (a) governing the entire administration and management; (b) developing projects and reports to the National Assembly; (c) conducting Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and general elections every three years; (d) continuously engaging with the Government; and (e) sometimes engaging with DPOs in the districts and provinces during conflicts. Also, when executives organize the two-time AGMs in January and June, in which elections are conducted and general issues are discussed, they try to revise the Constitution in order to make new social reforms related to their needs, including translating the document into various indigenous languages so that all ethnicities can understand it. Including the executives, everyone is responsible for capacity building, fund raising, training, and

¹⁷ These members are: The President, Vice President (VP), Assistant VP, Treasurer, Auditor, Youth Leader, Women’s Leader/ ‘Chairlady’, Secretariat (general and deputy secretaries), public relations officer and five unofficial members.

¹⁸ Fees may be more or less, depending on the DPO’s individual PWD members, associated non-disabled members, associated institutions and relevant departments, and individual non-voting members

¹⁹ All calculations in this paper are based on local exchange rate of 7,750 Leones to \$US 1.

²⁰ Within these branches are district branches, of which it has branches in fourteen (of sixteen) districts; each branch has its own District Assembly. Each district has a Zone, with its own Zonal Executives. In some cases, such as the Western Area, the region is divided into two zones: Zone 1 and Zone 2, each with its own executives.

3) Fragmentation as a Collective Identity Formation Issue

A few scholars within social movement theory (SMT) pinpoint to the causes of fragmentation. For example, Özdemir & Eraydin (2017) and Adler and colleagues (2009) argue that fragmentation can occur due to conflicts of interest, including individual or collective ones. Those differences can be due to differences in values, needs, ideology or simply for dominance (Adler et al., 2009). These issues are endemic to SMOs (Flesher-Fominaya, 2010; Larmer, 2010; Adler et al., 2009; Melucci, 1995; Dobson, 2001). From my data, inter group competition and the issue of diversity are both related to individual and collective conflicts of interests. I explain both issues in the following subsections.

a) Inter Group Competition

Scholars suggest that whenever individuals decide to form a group, they must be able to demarcate who they are from others in their environment (Della Porta and Diani, 2006; Hannan, Carrol & Polos, 2003; Stern, 1999; Melucci 1989, 1995, 1996). They must have something that distinguishes them from other groups, even among groups with shared interests. For SMOs, this is often done by establishing a realized niche, or defining its actual role and the resources it can access without external competition (Hannan, Carrol & Polos, 2003; Stern, 1999). In particular, it must “carve out a niche for itself in the larger environment of other organizations pursuing similar objectives” (Dobson, 2001: no page numbers). If it fails to do so, it can face much competition, even to the point of dissolving (Stern, 1999; Glass, 2009; Polletta and Jasper, 2001).

For SLUDI, inter group competition was created by the organization itself (i.e. individual interest). Like its constituents, SLUDI was carrying out very similar roles during the war—namely writing to NGOs for support. Joseph said, “We [SLUDI] did not really have too many activities. We were mostly writing letters for support” (interview #2 of 2, 3/9/2017). This however made its constituents doubt its role to the extent that they thought it would replace their own DPO roles. For instance, among the members of SLAB, Ali said, “There was a lot of feelings that SLUDI was going to take over the work of SLAB or other DPOs” (interview #1 of 2, 8/9/2017). DPOs in fact started seeing it as an ‘enemy’ and a ‘target’. Mustapa expressed, “Even DPOs saw SLUDI as [an] enemy because we were [...] writing to the same donors for support... everyone was competing for the same aid. It was really difficult to stop everyone from competing with each other” (interview 9/11/2017). While unionization was essential in curtailing the competition for limited resources and helped foster unity, those very same forces can lead to friction and fragmentation.

b) *Diversity Issue*

Reger (2002) argues that “social movement organizations struggle with and often fail at the task of representing and respecting a diverse membership” (p. 720). Diversity issues can take different forms including but not limited to race, ethnicity, sexuality and class. These issues can crop up at any stage of a movement’s life. For a just newly formed organization, SLUDI’s constituents doubted its ability to represent their ‘diverse voices’. Their diverse voices were equated to their different disabilities. They argued that their disabilities were too diverse in nature to share a ‘common goal.’ Mustapha explained, “Because of the different categories of disability, we saw ourselves as different people. We did not see ourselves as a unit that could have a common goal” (interview 9/11/2017). The diversity of voices was also expressed in PWDs’ different needs. Ismael reiterated, “Our main difference was that we had different disabilities... The physically challenged need different things than the blind. We all need different treatments, supplies, etc. So sometimes we didn’t think we had a common goal in the organization” (interview 21/8/2017). While diversity is an important element of inclusion and an active form of solidarity for a movement to thrive, it can also work against a movement. In fact, Couser (2005) argues that PWDs differences in afflictions and needs “can create potential fault lines within the whole” (p.2)²¹. But when a SMO is presented with an issue such as this one or intergroup competition, Dobson (2001) argues it “...must diagnose the problem in a way that resonates with members... propose a plausible solution that could be accomplished by movement participation” (no page number). I explain how SLUDI tried to address its issues in the next subsection which serves to answer my fifth sub research question on how differences are resolved.

c) *Resolving Fragmentation Issues*

To resolve its issue of inter-group competition and diversity issue, SLUDI took three measures. First, it made requests for DPO leaders to remind their members that it was only a ‘rally point’ for PWDs. Mustapha expressed, “We [executive members] reminded DPO leaders to remind their members that...SLUDI was only an umbrella organization that would protect our human rights” (interview 9/11/2017). DPO leaders carried out its request. For instance, in SLAB, Ali said, “...We made it clear that it was a rally point, an umbrella and that there was no need for [SLUDI] to take over the work of SLAB” (interview #1 of 2, 8/9/2017). Although their solution did not stop the competition, it an important step nonetheless.

²¹ Sometimes during my fieldwork, certain individuals would identify differently from others. For instance, hearing-impaired individuals and albinos sometimes semi-rejected their identification as disabled because they only required very few aides. This was a stark contrast to polio victims who completely identified as disabled because they needed to financially invest in their rehabilitation and a cure (Couser, 2005).

As for resolving its diversity issue, SLUDI members decided to conduct its first elections in 1996 to elect a President and NEB members. Elections were conducted to not only show its constituents that it was ‘serious’ about representing and leading all PWDs as a group but to also have various PWDs represented within the organization. Ali expressed, “We [...] staged our first elections to elect a President and executives to show DPOs we were serious... Only when you have elected officials can people take you seriously” (interview #1 of 2, 8/9/2017). Professor Eldred Jones emerged as SLUDI’s first President who then took to mobilizing PWDs for collective action.

Collective agency is a key to engendering a CI, especially in a group where its members doubt its ability to represent them. To begin mobilizing, Professor Eldred Jones met with several DPOs to see how they can try to advance the position of PWDs. Ali added, “Under Professor Eldred Jones’ leadership we came together to look at how we could go forward, approach and engage authorities for change to occur” (interview #1 of 2, 8/9/2017).

Increasingly, PWDs began seeing their issues as ‘human rights’ issues. They saw that they had the same human rights as every non-disabled persons—that is the right to access education, job opportunities and housing. Mustapha lamented, “We [had] human rights like everyone else. To go to school, find work and housing... We discussed in our meetings how to go about [achieving] them” (interview 9/11/2017). From this standpoint, NEB members decided to frame disability issues within a human rights framework (Dütting and Sogge, 2010) and embarked on their third measure—namely to sensitize their communities that they have a right to be recognized as a person before anything and protest for policies and laws that would be inclusive of PWDs. These modalities of their collective action framing (Benford & Snow, 2000: 614; Snow & Benford, 1988; Thompson & Tapscott, 2010) are discussed in the next section.

i. Framing Disability Rights as Human Rights

The first collective action frame involved sensitizing their communities that they have a right to be recognized as a person before anything. To go about this, PWDs began trying to change non-disabled persons perceptions of disability by highlighting that, they too, could also become disabled at any moment of their lives. Mustapha said, “Our advocacy started from educating people in our communities that no one is disability proof. You can be able today and disabled tomorrow. You can get into an accident and become disabled” (interview 9/11/2017). In Sierra Leone, non-disabled persons believe that disabilities are caused by sin, voodoo, or black magic (Powell, 2010). These beliefs are particularly and deeply entrenched in the rural areas. By trying to change people’s perceptions, PWDs hoped that could then be accepted-including children with disabilities- as ordinary citizens. Mustapha added, “We wanted

people to accept us as normal people. Even parents were looking at their children who are not useful, not important. There was no acceptance at all” (interview 9/11/2017). The ‘useful’ part of Mustapha’s comment is related to communities often viewing PWDs as a ‘burden’ on their families and society as a whole due to their economic unproductivity (Rao et al., 2016; MacLachlana et al., 2007).

The second collective action frame SLUDI took involved staging its first ‘massive’ protest at State House²² in order for GoSL to create policies and laws to that would guarantee their rights and provide a framework for them to claim their equal human rights and inclusion within their society. Their argument was that aside from the National Constitution, which outlined that everyone was equal, there were no specific laws and policies for them. To explain the need for their laws, Bangura explained, “We [were] like animals. But even animals [had] animal rights back then. There were policies for animals. That is why people care for them today. So, we [needed] our own special laws” (interview 10/13/2017). This need was compounded by their already existing deplorable situation.

To highlight and underscore these issues to the public and to the (GoSL), PWDs staged a non-violent protest (de Waal & Ibreck, 2013) on every issue that affected them. Mustapha reiterated, “We had more than 1,000 PWDs holding placards on anti-discrimination, our right to employment, education...” (interview 9/11/2017). Although the event caught President Joseph Saido Momoh’s attention, who then asked to speak to five key leaders of the group, it did not influence any policy outcome (de Waal & Ibreck). In fact, the President tried to bribe them by offering monetary sum, which can be seen as a government cooptation tactic to appease them because they posed as a ‘problematic group’ (Dobson, 2001: no page number). Mustapha remembers, “We told him [the President] the issues and he offered 50,000Leones²³ to help us, but we refused. We said we are here to establish action-oriented programs that will address the affairs of PWDs, not money” (interview 9/11/2017). The idea of establishing ‘action-oriented programs’ was then pushed to the Ministry of Social Welfare, but it went nowhere. Despite the drawback, the event was heralded as ‘a success’ by movement participants because this was the first time they had raised awareness about their issues publicly and to the GoSL. Mustapha claimed, “It was a successful protest because before people did not know about PWDs. They didn’t want to care about the existence of SLUDI or PWDs. We [...] raised their awareness as well as the Government” (interview 9/11/2017). Altogether, while fragmentation can occur following an organizations formation, it is essential for its leader to reconcile differences. Collective action is key to unifying divided members and for engendering a movement’s CI.

²² From interviews and archives, I could not discern when the protest exactly took place. While for some, it was in 1990, others said it was been 1996-1998.

²³ This is equivalent to \$ US 8,000 today based on local exchange rate of 7,750 Leones to \$ US 1.

4.3 Section Two: Maintaining a Collective Identity Post-Civil War (2002-present)

4.3.1 Introduction

Maintaining a movement in the long haul is an arduous yet important task for key SMOs. Maintenance is one way of marking a movement's 'trajectories' more broadly, including understanding why members remain (or do not get) involved in activism overtime, its strengths as well as challenges (Melucci, 1995; Polletta and Jasper, 2001).

In this section, I present the various ways SLUDI has tried to maintain its collective identity (CI) since the end of the Civil War (2002) until the present. For my analysis, I choose two mechanisms in Della Porta & Diani's (2006) CI maintenance that are relevant to my study. These are: (a) using 'direct face-to-face interactions at the community level and in everyday spaces' (p.95) to create networks and (b) creating common meaning and experiences over 'time' and 'space'. Also in this section, I present a 'discovered' CI maintenance mechanism—namely information sharing via information communication technologies (ICTs) from my data. I then touch on fragmentation as a 'discovered' CI mechanism in the section based on (1) internal power struggles and (2) distrust. A final concluding section is presented, drawing on an analysis of the DM's CI formation and maintenance.

4.3.2 Producing New Networks of Relationships Within and Outside the Group

Post-Civil War, SLUDI has used several avenues to maintain its membership. First, it depends on its executive members to make 'direct face-to-face interactions at the community level and in the everyday spaces' with DPOs and individual PWDs as often as they can (Della Porta and Diani, 2006: 95). (This mechanism as described by Della Porta and Diani serves to answer my second sub-research question.) Their visits involve several activities, including helping to conduct DPO elections, reconciling internal disagreements between members and providing moral support. Mohammed, a member of the Epilepsy Association Sierra Leone (EASL) said, "Like when there is conflict between the members and the leader, they will call on SLUDI to come in and solve the problem" (focus group discussion 30/9/2017). Visits to individual members has often been about resolving personal issues, such as domestic disputes between PWDs themselves, or between PWDs and non-disabled persons. For instance, Kassim, a SLUDI executive said, "Sometime even [...] personal issues like between landlord and tenant, if the tenant is disable and renting a house then they will call on us if the payment is not done to go and talk to the person [the landlord] to not kick them [PWDs] out" (interview 24/8/2017). Through these actions, members are able to rely on help and solidarity from executives (Della Porta, 2006). They

have also helped to create new networks (Della Porta & Diani, 2006) for SLUDI, a goal that (key) SMOs are mainly concerned with (Gamson, 1975; Stern, 1999; Reger, 2002).

4.3.2.1 Creation of Networks

The creation of networks is a result of the second dimension of Della Porta & Diani's (2006) first stated mechanism of CI maintenance. Although DPOs continue to form and members are joining them, post-rehabilitation efforts from 2002 onwards helped to widen SLUDI's base. Government had requested PWDs to better organize themselves so that the National Committee for the Rehabilitation of Persons with a Disability, comprising NGOs and ministries, could help to distribute aid and provide treatments. SLUDI's executives seized the opportunity to visit disabled groups and persuade them to form DPOs in order to access these services and supplies. Mustapha said, "National Committee for the Rehabilitation of PWDs asked us to organize ourselves. So, we the executives visited disabled persons to set up their own organizations. When they formed they then registered with SLUDI" (interview 9/11/2017). Of the many DPOs that emerged were: Progressive Initiative for Pademba Road Disabled Unit Organization (PRDUO, now Help Empower Polio Persons Organization (HEPPO)) (2003), Kyphoscoliosis Initiative for Therapy and Empowerment (KITE) (2004), Handicap Action Movement (2005), Sierra Leone Association for the Deaf (SLAD) (2005) and Stroke Victims Association (SVA) (2007). The last DPO to have formed was the Albino Savers Association in 2008. As stated earlier, today, SLUDI has some one hundred and twenty registered DPOs nationwide. These various networks help to guarantee the DM a wider range of lobbying and advocacy opportunities (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

4.3.3 Creating Common Meaning & Experiences Over 'Time' and 'Space'

A second avenue that SLUDI uses to maintain its membership is by creating 'common meaning and experiences over time and space', the second mechanism in Della Porta & Diani's (2006) CI maintenance, which also serves to answer my third sub-research question. This can mean linking together events from past struggles in order to remind movement members why they still need to fight on. 'Time' is the group's 'visible' and 'latent' phases for collective action. The visible phase applies to my data, which is concerned with how often the group demonstrates, holds media interventions, and other public initiatives. I discuss in the next subsection.

4.3.3.1 ‘Time’: Establishing Key Policies and an institution

Since its first massive protest during the Civil War, SLUDI has been able to mobilize its constituents in several cycles of protest, hold various media interventions and other public initiatives²⁴. These have mostly resulted in establishing key state level policy outcomes (Rochon and Mazmanian, 1993; Gamson, 1975) and institutions²⁵. I will touch on one key policy and one institution in the next subsections that serve as illustrative examples of how SLUDI mobilizes its membership.

1) Establishment of the Disability Act 2009

The idea to create a Disability Act came about in 2005 when Professor Eldred Jones and Dr. A.D. O Wright tried to push forward for the inclusion, promotion and protection of the rights of PWDs in a draft policy and an accompanying legislation to Parliament (interviews and archival data). Two drafts were presented to the National Committee for the Rehabilitation of People with Disability (NCRPD), a committee set up in 2001 to manifest the government’s commitment to the concerns of PWDs in Sierra Leone.

The two drafts should have been followed by a National Consultative workshop, which would have brought PWDs together for their inputs on the documents and agree on a finalized Draft Bill and Policy. However, according to SLUDI’s archives, “the process was stalled due to funding challenges and Government attitudes.” In a statement to the High Commission, Professor Jones expressed dismay about the delay of the documents as Government officials dismissed the importance of disability issues but handled them with ‘shame’ and ‘guilt’ instead of as serious matters. His statement is also supported by Joseph, who remembers “the Bill was not being seriously taken by the Government” (interview #2 of 2, 3/9/2017). In fact, Sierra Leone was receiving considerable funding to support PWDs, but they continued to live on the margins as those who had access to the funding were living lavished lives. Professor Eldred Jones observed: “millions of funds were coming to Sierra Leone every year exclusively for disability issues, yet PWDs were suffering and languishing in poorly constructed homes and poor economic status whilst people controlling these funds were becoming rich” (archival data). To reverse

²⁴ For a complete list of its public initiatives, see Appendix B.

²⁵ SLUDI has also been able to mobilize its constituents in other key areas: 1) ratifying the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2011); 2) securing Sierra Leone Grants (SLG) for disabled students in tertiary education; 3) attaining scholarships for PWDs to perform Hajj/pilgrimage to Holy Land of Mecca every year (from 2001-2017); 4) establishing easy movement of PWDs to and from the Lungi airport area (2015); 5) aiding the movement of mobility aids and other assistive devices for PWDs in the Port Loko and the Kambia Districts (2015); 6) appointing a PWD as board member of the National Youth Commission (2015); 7) raising reasonable awareness about disability issues; 8) increasing representations at local and international conferences; 9) writing a Complaint Manual, in collaboration with the Human Rights Commission (HRC) and the NCPD (2017); and 10) drafting of the Disability Manifesto (2017).

this, Joseph, who after being elected as SLUDI's President in June 2007, made it "[his] responsibility to make it an Act" (interview #2 of 2, 3/9/2017).

The NCRPD received funding from the World Bank in June 2007 for a two-day consultative workshop on the "Draft Policy Notes for People with Disabilities" (archival data). DPOs at regional levels gathered at the Youth Centre in Freetown to discuss the Act's contents. Civil society organizations (CSOs) working with disabled people, such as One Family People (OFP), various human rights consultants, MSWGCA and NGOs were invited to help aid the process. A 'hybrid' strategy of local and Western activism tools was used (de Waal & Ibreck, 2013; Brandes & Engels, 2011; Larmer, 2010), or what Tilly (1978) calls, "repertoires of contention" to persuade the public, PWDs and the Government to support its claims. They ranged from seminars, going on media platforms, to one-to-one interactions. Joseph recounts, "We conducted a series of seminars and other engagements with DPOs" (interview 3/9/2017). Adding to that, Ibrahim, a SLUDI executive said, "We did a lot of radio discussions, television, workshops, one to one engagement, and getting more [...] PWDs to join the Union" (interview 11/9/2017). There were also speeches about the importance of unity. Mustapha explained, "We preached on the issue of peace, about coming together—what would be the benefits at the end of the day" (9/11/2017). The end result was that more PWDs joined in on the action and together, they carefully deliberated on their key issues. These were: (a) the right from discrimination in employment; (b) the right to access public buildings; and (c) the right to free education (archival data; also mentioned in Adeola, 2015). PWDs then attempted to table the Bill to Parliament alongside the promotion of women with disabilities' rights (archival data). However, due to the 2007 elections, it did not go through as planned.

Following the election of Ernest Bai Koromo in 2007, PWDs tried to send the Bill to Parliament again. Yet again, it was rejected for unknown reasons, prompting PWDs to not only stage a protest at State House but to also promote it through mass sensitization of PWDs and the public nationwide. For some PWDs, getting the Disability Act passed became a 'serious' 'advocacy business', particularly because it was important that PWDs speak unilaterally to the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) as a group. "It was an advocacy business that we all spoke with one voice, one language as a pressure group for government to take cognizance that it was important for the Disability Act to be passed," said an anonymous SLAB member working on the document (interview 16/1/2018). By speaking with one voice, PWDs realized they could then achieve their aim. Mustapha explained, "Getting the Act passed was a serious affair. Our advocacy for the Act was built around the idea that without unity we knew that we would not make it. It's only when we are united that we can be successful in achieving it" (interview 9/11/2017). Through more collective sensitization of PWDs, the Act was eventually enacted in 2009.

Although the Act “continues to be hailed as a praiseworthy and enduring achievement” (archival data), PWDs argue that it still remains to be implemented and its contents are still ‘not specific enough’.

With respect to its content, the Act does not address specific issues. For instance, on the electoral process, it remains to be clarified of how PWDs can vote and be voted for. Rather it only touches on making provisions for PWDs to access polling stations and registration centers. Joseph explained, “The Act does not specifically address the electoral process for PWDs, that is in terms of voting and being voted for. What is in the Act is only focusing on accessibility to polling stations, registration centers” (interview #2 of 2, 9/11/2017). Under this specific issue, PWDs wanted to see ‘affirmative action quotas’ for PWDs within political parties, Parliament and other decision-making bodies. Without being voted for, PWDs cannot contribute to any nationwide decision-making processes.

The keywords in this agenda became the precise advocacy goals in the 2018 election campaigns. To foment their goal for success (Dobson, 2001), PWDs not only agreed on a minimum of 5% political representation (3% for men and 2% for women) because ‘Rome was not built in a day’ kind of thinking, they also consistently went on TV and radio programs weekly to strategically reinforce their message. For example, in a televised interview, Ibrahim said, “We are not only making the call now, we have been making it. This time we are not only calling for 5% but a minimum of 5%. We have people that can deliver well. So why can’t we appoint them?” (Tv interview dated 25/8/2017). They also produced and presented the Disability Manifesto to political parties with the 5% figure enshrined in it. Despite their efforts, not a single PWD was appointed or won any political positions.

PWDs said that the Act was not implemented due to a lack of political will. Common sense has it that once something becomes a law that it should take immediate effect. However, this has yet to happen with the Act. A Disability Awareness Action Group (DAAG)²⁶ member said, “There is no political will. If an Act has been passed, there should not be a five-year window period before it is implemented. Once something has been established it should start immediately” (interview 24/11/2017). Part of the failure is also tied to the Government appointing individuals, particularly ‘outsiders’ to run the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)²⁷ in order for the Act to be implemented. A member from House of Jesus (HoJ) said, “The first mistake the Government did was to choose who to become the Chief Commissioner after the Act was established. I believe the Government should have allowed SLUDI and the DPOs to choose who to run their affairs” (interview 24/11/2017). A SLAB member also chimed in, “The Commissioner is an outsider, he is from America. He has spent all of his life in America. He only knows about the early days when he was a school going pupil, a youth

²⁶ Since this is government sensitive information, I have removed the names of participants to protect their identities.

²⁷ The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) is a Government agency whose establishment PWDs fought for.

and a teacher. Since he has gone, many changes have happened then” (interview 12/11/2017). Next to appointing a Commissioner, the Government also made the mistake to appoint regional commissioners to manage the Act’s implementation. The same SLAB member added, “After the Commissioner was appointed, [ex-President Ernest Bai Koroma] then chose the regional commissioners, that was a second mistake by Government” (interview 12/11/2017). All this is to say that there is a gap in policy implementation for the Act. Not only can the gap be traced to the vagueness of the policy itself, but also to the people Government has chosen to implement it. To enhance its implementation, PWDs want to see issues specified and have the choice to appoint the individuals themselves, specifically individuals who are versed in the policy environment.

2) Establishment of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities 2012

According to Dobson (2001) the establishment of commissions in modern democracies is regarded as a “symbolic reassurance” as their role is to “address a particular concern or grievances” (no page numbers). In 2012, the DM protested at State House, calling for the establishment of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD). Their stance was that most other developing countries already had a Commission to help implement the Disability Act and that Sierra Leone should not be an exception to the rule. Kaba, a SLAB member said, “We...advocated that other countries [have] a Commission that seek the interest of disable persons, and Sierra Leone is not an exception...Therefore, we thought if we have a Commission, it will give voice and represent disables [PWDs] in government and internationally” (interview 23/8/2017).

However, the NCPD’s establishment kept on being delayed by Government for various reasons which prompted PWDs to re-strategize their tactics. They used many repertoires of contention (Tilly, 1978), including seminars, radio discussions and other public initiatives to make it happen (Della Porta and Diani, 2006). Joseph remembered, “We fought very hard to get this Commission into action. We advocated, held seminars and workshops for it to happen” (interview #1 of 2, 9/10/2017). These however failed to convince Government to support their claim. This later led them to stage a ninety-day ultimatum in a press conference. Mustapha recounted, “But despite our efforts, Government was still not listening to us. We then gave a press conference [on March 12, 2012] giving a ninety-day ultimatum for it to establish the Commission or we won’t vote during the elections” (interview 9/11/2017). Ex-President, Ernest Bai Koroma, eventually listened to their pleas and established a technical committee to help steer the NCPD on June 2012, in which he later appointed Frederick Kamara, a visually impaired person (VIP) and an ‘outsider’ as Chief Commissioner to run its affairs. The Commissioner remembers the day he got called to take up the position: “I was in the United States when the Commission was established in 2012 and I got an email from the Secretary to the President that the President wanted to

appoint me as Chairman of the newly established Commission. So that was how I came back” (interview 18/9/2017).

Although closely related, the NCPD is a separate entity from SLUDI. It is a Government institution that provides financial and moral support to DPOs, policy guidelines and makes sure that PWDs get equal opportunities to access basic services such as basic healthcare, education, transportation, to name a few. According to the Commissioner, “the Commission is a statutory body established by the Government...[that] can give SLUDI moral and if necessary financial support...in most cases...we can only try to provide policy guidelines. [It is] responsible for [ensuring] that PWDs gain access to all opportunities, such as education, employment, healthcare, justice, access to public infrastructures, transportation, etc.” (interview 18/9/2017). To carry out its mission, the NCPD depends on Government subsidies released by the MSWGCA.

However, subsidies are sometimes delayed for various reasons. Dobson (2001) argues that modern states normally resist social movements (SMs) in favor of elite interests by employing various ‘cooptation’ tactics, such as blocking strikes, withholding of funds and police intimidation (no page number). During my fieldwork, a two-month national drama (from October to November 2017) unfolded between the MSWGCA and the NCPD over unreleased NCPD 2015-2016 financial reports to the Ministry. As a result, MSWGCA withheld the NCPD’s subsidies. The drama went to such extremes that the Minister took to social media platforms to insult and accuse the Commissioner of corruption because 1.3 billion Leones (or \$US 167,642) were unaccounted for in its 2015 report. In a forwarded message from a PWD to me, she said: “*This man Blind but ee day TIFF and LIE so...What if this man bin day see now? Ee bin for don get mind TIFF we Cotton Tree²⁸ & go!*” (“This man is blind but look at how he steals and lies...what if that man can see now? He would steal our Cotton Tree and go!”). Although I did not witness the Commissioner attacking her back on these platforms, I did notice that he often seized media opportunities to defend himself and denounce her accusations. The issue was eventually reconciled in a public hearing in Parliament on November 14, 2017, involving the two sides where the NCPD was requested to send its reports to the Ministry; subsidies were released but the Minister was later sacked from her post for reasons undisclosed.

4.3.3.2 ‘Space’: Celebrating United Nations International Day for Persons with Disabilities

Part of the second avenue that SLUDI uses to maintain its memberships also involves the second dimension of the second mechanism of Della Porta & Diani’s (2006) CI maintenance theory. It is about creating common meaning and experiences over ‘space’. ‘Space’ is defined as the group’s ability

²⁸ The Cotton Tree is an important landmark for Sierra Leone. Not only is it rumored to be hundreds of years old, it also served as a key resting place for the first freed slaves coming from Nova Scotia in 1787 (Lonelyplanet, 2018).

to connect its goals locally and internationally with other groups who share its struggle. For SLUDI, it uses the annual December 3rd United Nations International Day for Persons with Disabilities (UN IDPD) to bring all of its members together to observe the day and as an important opportunity for it connect its goals locally and internationally with the wider international disability community that is fighting for disability rights. But before I delve into this, it is worth mentioning why UN IDPD is an important event for PWDs in general.

UN IDPD helps to promote and sensitize the general public on the rights and well-being of PWDs in the socio-political, economic and cultural spheres (UN, 2017), and highlight the achievements of PWD issues thus far. Since the adoption of the UN CRPD in 2006, the UN has tried to enhance PWDs' rights by connecting it to the wider "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other international frameworks, such as the Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in the Humanitarian Action, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development and the New Urban Agenda" (UN, 2017: no page number). Under the 2030 Agenda, the UN pledges to "leave no one behind," and urges all sectors of society to collaborate together in order to achieve the SDGs.

Furthermore, the UN comes up with an annual global theme for everyone to follow. Since 2004, SLUDI has followed these themes, including: "Nothing About Us Without Us" (2004), "Descent Work for [PWDs]" (2007), "Break barriers, Open Doors: for an inclusive society and development for all" (2013) and "Inclusion Matters" (2015) (archival data). During my fieldwork in 2017, the theme was, "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient society for all." In a press conference, SLUDI described it as, "This celebration aims at amplifying the voice of the disability community in Sierra Leone for additional and concrete commitments and actions from stakeholders on the recommendations of the PWD Agenda for Sierra Leone with a focus on increased participation and inclusion of PWDs in the electoral and political participation for a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient Sierra Leone for all" (field notes 3/12/2017).

To commemorate the event each year, SLUDI normally selects a district to coordinate various activities. Activities often include: peaceful protests, friendly football matches amongst PWDs and non-disabled persons, exhibitions of PWDs' arts and crafts items, and sensitization of the public on their plight on radio, television and newspapers (interviews and archives).

To successfully mobilize its constituents nationwide, SLUDI covers many costs. First, SLUDI covers PWDs' refreshments, meals and transportation costs, which can vary. For instance, transport costs for members can range anywhere from 10,000Leones to 100,000Leones²⁹ (approx. \$US 1.30-13)/person, depending on the distance of travel. Second, it pays to air its advocacy and lobbying

²⁹ Based on local exchange rate of 7,750 Leones to \$US 1.

messages on media platforms. To participate in a thirty-minute radio discussion program for instance, it must be able to cover anywhere between 40,000 to 80,000 Leones (or \$US 5-11). For its messages to reach the distant districts, these costs triple, sometimes even quadruple. It also incurs the costs of weekly or monthly TV and radio programs, and newspaper publications in the lead up to the event (i.e. press releases and newspaper articles), which can cost anywhere from 40,000 to 200,000 Leones (or between \$US 5-26), depending on the agency's fees. Even though some radio stations have allowed SLUDI to go on their shows for free, most often it has to leave out certain media activities in order to balance its finances. These costs can be quite burdensome for an organization that depends on membership fees and national and external funding; in fact, funding has become problematic. For the 2017 UN IDPD, SLUDI lacked the necessary funds to organize its activities in Makeni³⁰ on time. It got funding last minute from the NCDP, Westminster Foundation, UK AID, Shared Vision and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which made it not only delay the celebration to December 4th, but it also had to change the location to Freetown. Despite funding constraints, UN IDPD day is an opportunity for SLUDI and its members to reconnect with one another, which helps to engender greater solidarity.

4.3.4 Information Sharing

4.3.4.1 Information Communication Technologies

A third avenue that SLUDI uses to maintain its members is information sharing, a maintenance tool that I discovered which is not addressed by Della Porta and Diani specifically. Like many African SMOs and their SMs today, SLUDI uses modern information communication technologies (ICTs) to share information with its members and to spur lobbying and advocacy activities (Treré, 2015; Thigo, 2013; Bennet & Segerberg, 2013; de Waal and Ibreck, 2013; Larmer, 2010; Dobson, 2001). ICTs include emails, telephones and social media platforms, such as Facebook (FB) and WhatsApp. Despite extreme and rampant poverty in Sierra Leone (CIA, 2017), many members possess smart-phones and belong to one or more FB and/or WhatsApp groups. SLUDI has a general WhatsApp group that is used for discussing general PWD related 'issues and concerns'. Ibrahim, a SLUDI executive said, "WhatsApp group for the Union... We share issues and concerns on there" (interview 11/9/2017). Members actively contribute in this general WhatsApp group, even PWDs whose disabilities prevented them from participating directly on these platforms. They have family members who could help them. For instance, Ibrahim who is visually impaired explained, "I have my nephew and wife who can interpret the information. They read the messages to me and I give my contribution. Other visually impaired people can read these messages too" (interview 11/9/2017).

³⁰ Makeni is the largest city in the Northern province of Sierra Leone.

Also, SLUDI uses its general WhatsApp group as an ‘organizing agent’ (Bennet & Segerberg, 2013) for its advocacy and lobbying events. They help with coordination of events as everyone including executives and activists from the districts can give their own input. Kassim, a SLUDI executive said, “We use WhatsApp to plan and execute our lobbying and advocacy goals. We have coordinators from the districts and the National Executive on there who help to plan our activities” (interview 24/8/2017). Coordination of the events can help to generate a ‘new sense of belonging’ (Treré, 2015) where everyone is contributing and exchanging ideas with each other.

In some cases, however, they can reveal disunity between group members. In particular, they can reveal lack of support of members and interpersonal conflicts (Gongaware, 2012; Polletta and Jasper, 2001). These issues serve to answer my fifth sub-research question on how individual differences are resolved within SLUDI. In a WhatsApp group created by an executive member in December 2017 to promote PWD political aspirants for the 2018 elections³¹, a certain SLUDI member vying for a Parliamentary seat complained he was not being supported. Apparently SLUDI and the NCPD staged a press conference to political parties advocating for 5 percent (5%) political representation for PWDs *after* he had lost his bid for the position to one of the political parties. Without rallying behind him, he felt SLUDI preferred to work with certain individuals; as result, he felt it was not nationally unified. In his defense, he said, “You don’t build society rights on sentiments but on a principle of fact and mutuality. When it comes to one’s [his] right you abandoned and when it comes to another, you call for galvanization in the name of national unity...Unity without solidarity is just a joke.” In trying to reconcile differences with this individual member, several members of the forum, including the executive who set it up, tried to convince him to work with SLUDI rather than oppose its tactics. The executive administrator said, “Oh [undisclosed member’s name] ...*always dae try for dotty di water* (‘always trying to dirty the water’). It’s best to work with these institutions [SLUDI and the NCPD] rather than working against them.” From the executive’s comment, it appears that the member has a history of working against SLUDI. His history is also revealed by another PWD in the group: “We need to fight for disabled people, not fight against them. It is going to be advocacy for ALL aspiring candidates. Your strategy to simply oppose everything NCPD or [the Movement] does will continue to fail.” Despite another PWD trying to console the member by saying that, “Since the base was not productive, SLUDI used other methods that can see our colleagues [PWDs] in councils and Parliament”, the individual ended up leaving the forum, a sign of unresolved emotions. The same technologies that create group identity are potentially also the ones that create group discord/fragmentation. In fact,

³¹ I was added to this Group by one of the executive members.

fragmentation is an issue for SLUDI and I touch on it as a CI maintenance issue in the subsequent section.

4.3.5 Fragmentation as a Collective Identity Maintenance Issue

As stated earlier during SLUDI's formation section, fragmentation can arise due to individual or collective differences. Those differences can be due to differences in values, needs, ideology or simply for dominance (Adler et al., 2009). In the latter, there have been several internal struggles for dominance within SLUDI. I discuss two examples in the subsequent subsections.

4.3.5.1 Internal Struggles for Dominance

The first internal struggle for dominance occurred in 2002 when SLUDI blocked a DPO³² from registering with it. Reason being that many of its members had left to join the DPO because it was providing real economic opportunities for PWDs, including *gara* ('tidying'), blacksmithing, tailoring, manufacturing assistive devices (i.e. crutches and wheel chairs) and agriculture. The founder of the DPO explained why he established his DPO: "If I only provide physical assistance, if you do not back it up with social transformation and economic empowerment, then those [assistive] devices will be thrown out...and PWDs [will be] begging" (interview 10/13/2017). Using a single objective—improved economic empowerment for its members—as its mission (Zald & Useem, 1983), the DPO's founder formed the 'National Disability Congress' (NDC), which had the characteristics of a movement-counter movement (M-CM) like group. It began mobilizing its constituents by means of "non-violent direct-action tactics" (Mottl, 1980: 623) against SLUDI. The shift in objectives not only resulted in competition for constituents whereby it gained more members while inhibiting SLUDI's membership (Stern, 1999), it also left the founder vying for complete power as SLUDI's 'true leader'. "All SLUDI representatives belonged to the NDC. It was like America within the United Nations. It was the true leader for PWDs," the founder said (interview 10/13/2017). He also imposed that SLUDI's executives be removed so that a new body could take its place.

These efforts completely derailed SLUDI's advocacy aims. At that point in time, SLUDI was trying to galvanize PWDs to increase political participation and driving to get its members elected into key governance and decision-making bodies country-wide. Mustapha explained, "We wanted to get PWDs into decision making seats so that they can help us move forward on our issues. But he continued to go against us" (interview 9/11/2017). SLUDI's tactic around the 2002 elections, in particular, had

³² To protect the identity of the DPO I have not provided its name.

multiple objectives: to devalue the DPO's position, to re-engage with its constituents (Zald & Useem, 1983: 9) and to win back members who had left.

To achieve its aims, SLUDI sought reconciliation with the DPO. A meeting was set up, and mediators were asked to facilitate dialogue. However, efforts at reconciling failed as both sides continued to give ultimatums. Mustapha said, "We even had a mediation with him, but he [...] wanted us to dismantle our team. But we could not because elections were not for another two years" (interview 9/11/2017). The battle continued for another two years, until the NDC dissolved due to lack of resources to sustain itself (Stern, 1999). The DPO still exists today and is a registered SLUDI member, both organizations often do not see eye to eye on many issues. An example was discussed earlier in the WhatsApp forum of this section.

The second major internal struggle for dominance also involved a MCM like group. This struggle occurred during my fieldwork as a 'reaction to the actions' (Zald & Useem, 1983) of SLUDI in the drama that involved the NCPD and MSWGCA, described earlier in this section. Since this conflict came out into the open while I was in Sierra Leone, I had the opportunity to witness the events quiet closely.

I will briefly explain why the reactionary group was formed to show how CI is forged, especially for a new group. SLUDI and its constituents had fought hard for the establishment of the NCPD and decided to put pressure on the Ministry for the NCPD to receive its subsidies. Joseph explained, "I was ready to fight so that the Commission will stand. We fought for it to exist. And we will defend it whenever the need arises" (interview 9/10/2017). And indeed, SLUDI took several measures to define it. It first staged a press conference at SLAB headquarters on October 2, 2017, giving an ultimatum for the subsidies to be released within two weeks or it would protest. The Minister was not moved, which prompted SLUDI to then mobilize its DPO leaders to protest at State House on October 23, 2017 for the release of the NCPD's subsidies (see Photographs 4-6).

I was able to attend the protest to make observations. During SLUDI's protest, roughly thirty PWDs were present—mostly polio victims, VIPs and war wounded/amputees. Often dispersed in small numbers and un-uniformed, PWDs sporadically chanted, "[the Minister] must go" and banged stones against the railings to generate noise. For heightened theatricality, a few of them held colored posters that read: "Dishonorable [Minister], you can't destroy our institution SLUDI, NCPD", "SLUDI is legitimate, Mr. President. We should be listened to", and "[The Minister] is a heartless Minister. You are not the mother of the disabled" (fieldnotes).

These slogans represent some of the 'ritual practices' that Della Porta & Diani (2006) discuss in their second mechanism of CI maintenance. The rituals of the protest were presented in the different types of slogans chanted and posters waved to ensure theatrical appeal. In particular, the posters serve to

convey PWDs' different facets of negative perceptions of the Minister: first, they present the Minister as trying to destroy both the NCPD and SLUDI, making her a 'dishonorable' Minister; second, PWDs say she has no heart for them, and therefore, she is not the mother of PWDs.

Both complaints seem to serve their outcry for the removal of the Minister from her post. To legitimize their voices on these issues, they proclaim SLUDI is a legitimate institution and therefore demand that the Government should be listening to their complaints. Although the protest did catch the attention of ex-President Ernest Bai Koroma, in which he spoke to key SLUDI leaders and promised to release the subventions on October 27, SLUDI's feelings of elation were short lived because the very next day on October 24, a group of '762 frustrated PWDs' comprised of mostly street beggars, called the 'National Disability Coalition'³³ (NDC), protested at State House in support of the Minister (see Photographs 7-8).



Photograph 3: SLUDI protestors sitting and chanting, "Sylvia must go."



Photograph 4: SLUDI protestors waiting for the President's decision about the NCPD's subsidies.



Photograph 5: SLUDI poster saying: "We voice for Space. Sylvia must go. Long live SLUDI."

Although I was not able to observe the event that day because I was not well, I held subsequent interviews with its leaders and supporters, some of who were SLUDI members, to understand why and how it managed to form quickly. Two main factors leading to the group's rapid creation became evident:

³³ The name of the group was similar to one of the political parties in the 2018 elections called, the National Grand Coalition (NGC). It is debatable whether the choice of name was coincidental or not.

(1) the NCPD and SLUDI were said to be ‘misrepresenting’ PWDs because their lives remain unchanged; and (2) they wanted accountability and transparency from the NCPD for unaccounted monies and monies it was receiving to help improve PWD lives but were still unaccounted for. One of its leaders explained, “The current Union and Commission has been misrepresenting the voices of the disabled... a lot of PWDs are suffering. And the money, which the Commission is receiving is for PWDs. If they [the Commission] cannot account for the sums they received than we will stand with the Minister. This is our stance” (interview 30/10/2017). One of its supporters and an ex-SLUDI member said, “We formed the NCPD. From 2011 up to date, we no see no benefit, no effort for people with disability... *money wae kam na de Commission, we no dae see de money, we dae sofa* (‘money that has come to the Commission, that we have not seen yet. We are suffering.’). NCPD is not transparent at all” (interview 11/15/2017).



Photograph 7: 762 National Disability Coalition (NDC) protestors.



Photograph 6: NDC banner asking for accountability of the NCPD's 2015-2016 funds.

Participants revealed that the Minister had been involved in the group's quick mobilization. The group's support for the Minister was based on two factors: first, she mobilized them by convincing them that the Commission was not sending its subsidies to PWDs, especially those in the streets, in order to help them improve their lives. The Minister told NDC supporters that each one of them in the streets was supposed to have received 700,000 Leones (approximately \$ US 90) per year. An NDC supporter said, “Silvia [the Minister] sent people on her behalf to the streets and told us that the Commission was given 2 billion Leones [equivalent to \$US 260,000] for PWDs and this money was not given [to us]. We in the streets [are] suffering. We should have received this 700,000 [every year] or 3million Leones [for a total of \$US 450]. But we not get anything. That is not right, and we support her when she call for us” (interview 17/10/2017). Because they did not receive their funds, the Minister suggested to PWDs that the Commissioner should be removed from his post. Another NDC supporter commented, “I am part of the Minister's group because she went and registered us. She tried to tell us that the Commission is consuming a lot of money for PWDs. So this time around she didn't want to sign the *pet-forms*

[‘subsidies’] for them because the *moneys* [‘money’] the Commission has been receiving has not been accounted for... She is insisting that all these old Commissioners should go... She is saying that we should change them” (small focus group discussion outside Parliament 11/23/2017).

The second element behind the NDC’s support for the Minister was her generous promises to PWDs in exchange for their anti-SLUDI protest. After registering and providing them with identification (ID) cards, she convinced them that their IDs would allow them to access funds that are given to the NCPD for them as well as get them (free) access to hospital treatments, jobs and business opportunities. One supporter expressed, “She [the Minister] registered us and gave us ID cards and said, *where anything com fo we, after 2, 3 months we fo check na bank let we get money dem* (“if any money is available for us, after 2, 3 months we can go collect it at the bank”). These IDs get us access to hospital, to jobs because *som of we lack job fo we sef* (“some of us do not have jobs”). *Don we build* (“We can build”) a workshop for the disabled. Frankly, this now *mek* (“make”) sense, so we support her” (interview 11/23/2017).

In line with Dobson’s (2001) argument about modern states resisting SMs through the use of ‘cooptation and absorption’, the comments of the NDC reveal a government official coopting an already vulnerable group of people to oppose the NCPD. The Minister used the registration as an opportunity to tell them that the NCPD was misusing money, inciting reasons for them to collectively mobilize against the NCPD. At the same time, she made promises that their ID cards could open up opportunities for them, including accessing medical treatments and job opportunities.

Her tactics, however, divided the DM which I discuss in a later section. The situation created by the Minister was a valuable opportunity for me to observe what measures SLUDI would take to unify its membership. Gongaware (2012) argues that during periods of internal change, organizations have to actively engage and manage the connections between and among the group members. It is these connections that define collective and personal identities. These in turn can influence the direction of CI, including its cognitive, moral and emotional interconnections. I discuss this process in the next subsection as it addresses my fifth sub-research question on how differences are resolved within the group.

1) (Not) Resolving Internal Struggles

Based on my observations and interviews with SLUDI executives, in this situation dialogue seemed like a plausible solution to resolving the internal struggle (Dobson, 2001). Yet, SLUDI executives viewed it as an ‘intractable conflict’ (Adler et al., 2009) that could not be resolved because the NDC leaders were vocal about contesting SLUDI’s 2017 election results. A SLUDI executive said,

“We are ready to unite with them, talk with them but we are not ready to compromise with them. They will have to wait after three years to come and contest [the elections] again” (interview 21/12/2017).

In fact, this was not the first time the same leaders became upset over a SLUDI election result. A SLUDI executive who ran against one of the leaders in another election remembers: “When I was vying for presidency there was a power struggle against another aspirant [an NDC leader]. When I won, he was not satisfied. So, they backed out of the Union. I had to work to get him back on board. These are the same people today” (combination of informal and formal interviews: 27/11/2017 & 9/11/2017).

Moreover, SLUDI executives mentioned that the NDC leaders and their supporters have generally not been supportive of SLUDI. They have tried to reconcile with these members before; however, to no avail. A SLUDI executive said, “We will talk with them, but we know they will not listen to us. They have always stood against our [SLUDI’s] progress...they are part of the sections within our constituents [who are] not cooperative at all” (interview 9/10/2017). This goes to show that members who part of a movement do not have to be in alignment with specific organizations, even if they are key organizations for the movement (Della Porta and Diani, 2006).

These conflicts show that within SLUDI there is a complex web of contestations for power, “each interacting and influencing the other as well as the whole” (Glass, 2009: 20). This particular conflict illustrates that “when there are multiple, conflicting factions involved—collective unity is not simply a matter of allegiance to a group...their combined interaction [leads] to conflict” (ibid; Snow & McAdam, 2000). In fact, the DM’s inability to resolve issues amicably coupled with the Minister’s cooptation and divisive tactics have created issues of profound distrust within the DM, particularly with respect to the NCPD.

4.3.5.2 Distrust

Within the SM literature, little to nothing is written on the lack of trust as a CI process or issue. Della Porta & Diani (2006) make mention of its opposite—trust. They state that trust is key to withstanding a group’s many limits, including financial limits, and can determine the continuity of a movement. While these statements may be true, my contention is that distrust is an equally important, but destructive, force that can lead to a group’s demise. Distrust can leave movement members to feel more marginalized than before, and in some worst cases, make a movement a ‘deviant phenomenon’ (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). Even though the distrust is aimed at the NCPD in particular, it has had a corrosive effect on the DM’s overall CI.

To understand why there is distrust in the NCPD, I discuss two issues in particular: PWDs believed that nepotism was rampant, and that the NCPD preferred to work with certain DPOs, especially those founded for polio victims and VIPs, while excluding other DPOs. This preferential treatment has

left some to feel ‘isolated’ and ‘not listened to’ when they go to it to express their concerns. A member³⁴ of an amputee DPO mentioned, “To be honest, Commission only cares about VIP and some polio groups. They don’t care about us. They have isolated us. Every time we tell them our problems they push us away” (interview 21/11/2017). Supporting the member’s comment, a polio DPO member said, “Well the Commission, they have a particular set of people [some polio and visually impaired persons] that they care for ... but for us [polio DPO] we do not get any benefit that is serious... they don’t listen to our cry, we explain to them our problems, our pressing issues, but they are not making any action so that is why I said they do not really care for us” (interview 05/12/2017). These comments highlight the need for the NCPD to be more inclusive in its work with DPOs. Without inclusivity, members feel isolated and not cared for.

The second reason explaining the deep distrust of the NCPD was that PWDs believed it was misappropriating the subsidies it was receiving from the GoSL to help with DPO activities. These beliefs were based on two leaked-out documents that circulated among them during the drama between the NCPD and the Ministry, which I was also made privy to. One of the documents revealed how the NCPD was allocating its funds: it was spending over eighty percent of its annual budget, or an equivalent of 200 million Leones (equivalent to \$US 25,806) on office rent.

I discovered during an interview with the Commission’s Financial Secretary that such a disproportionate share of funds was spent on rent because of the difficulty of DPOs to find affordable office space. Able-bodied landlords do not want to rent their properties out to PWDs. The Finance Secretary explained:

Di problem wen people no say disable related issue, nobodi willin fo rent property to u. (“the problem is when people say it is for disability related issue, nobody is willing to rent their property out to you”). I negotiated with that woman for 6 months, to eventually be told they will not rent it to us. There was another place for \$20,000 because they were more spacious. But as soon as we told them we are disabled, they raise their rent up to \$25,000. We begged but nothing. (interview 2/11/2017).

The numbers the Finance Secretary gave me was in American currency and not in Leones, which is another indication of the corruption in the system. Regardless, because the NCPD was spending most of its money on rent, little was left to spend on DPOs. In fact, per region DPOs received on average 8 million Leones (or \$US 1,032) per year. The Northern region, with five districts, received 20 million Leones (or \$US 2,580). These numbers also illustrate that the NCPD did not consider the number of DPOs per region.

The second leaked document revealed the Commissioner and other DPO-MSWGCA representatives agreed about **not** funding a medical board—ostensibly because available funds were

³⁴ Due to the sensitivity of my data, I have withheld the names of my participants.

insufficient. This revelation however, ‘shocked’ and ‘baffled’ PWDs because according to the Disability Act, it is the role of the Commissioner to set up a medical board. Establishing a medical board which would allow PWDs to get medical assessments and certificates in order for them to receive reduced fees on medical care (archival data).

Based on these two documents, PWDs-including SLUDI’s constituents- felt so aggrieved that they wanted the Commissioner removed from his post. They felt it was a ‘betrayal’ to them. A member from the NDC said, “The Commission’s actions are a betrayal to the disabled community. He should be sacked” (interview 30/10/2017). During the hearing in Parliament where the NDC again protested, a member from a hearing impaired DPO (that had once belonged to SLUDI) said, “*Disability Commissioner, Frederick, automatically, wan mek wi kam naya so todae, fo kam tell Parliament fo sae wi people with disability, we no need the Chairman Frederick Kamara fo komot from the [NCPD] because of money wae kam na de Commission, we no dae see de money.* (“Disability Commissioner, Frederick Kamara, automatically, has made us come here to tell Parliament that we the people with disability, we do not need the Chairman Frederick Kamara. We want him to come out from the [NCPD] because of money that has come to the Commission that we have not seen yet”) (interview 14/11/2017). In some instances, PWDs felt the Commissioner was not qualified for the position. At the same public hearing, a polio DPO leader said, “We want to tell the President that the person he chose to lead the people with disability is not competent nor qualified to lead people with disability. We feel wilful to come and protest against him, so he may step down” (interview 14/11/2017). Distrust and betrayal damage the sense of belonging and solidarity, which are the root cause of group fragmentation.

Moreover, the social and psychological aspects of emotion of social actors is an important attribute of a movement’s overall CI (Melucci 1995, 1996). Emotion helps to reveal the solidarity of movement members, which can in turn help to determine a movement’s sense of continuity. In the next section, I try to capture the emotions of PWDs in the DM by highlighting their sense of belonging to SLUDI prior to and after the drama with the NCPD-Ministry that created distrust in the DM.

4.3.5.3 Fragmented Sense of Belonging

According to Brubaker & Cooper (2000) identity can mean three things at any time. They can be: ‘too much’ (i.e. strong identity); ‘too little’ (i.e. weak identity); or ‘nothing at all’ because identity is so ambiguous. My field interviews revealed that PWDs were emotionally divided into two camps based on their sense of belonging to SLUDI. The first camp felt ‘strongly belonged’ (i.e. ‘too strong’). They felt they could express their opinions, be heard and that whatever SLUDI initiated, its constituents

would support the initiative in order to speak with one voice. One senior member³⁵ expressed, “Yes I would strongly say that I belong to the Union. I am able to share my opinion and be heard... We are speaking with one voice as a group... Whatever SLUDI says, whatever position SLUDI takes, everyone is working along together on that particular instruction.” In a similar vein, a youth activist remarked that he is being heard and that everyone comes together to fight the same cause. He said, “Well yes, my voice is heard and so is everyone else... In the aspect of fighting for the general cause we all come together.” Having a strong CI within an organization entails individuals sharing their opinions and being heard. These two elements help individuals to feel included and fighting along the same cause as the organization. Also, allowing members voices to be heard helps an organization to collectively mobilize its members for action, an important element in spawning group CI.

The second camp however did not feel belonged (i.e. ‘weak identity’). This camp believes that their voices are not being heard because there are differences in opinion in how to achieve SLUDI’s goals. Young women in particular felt their voices were not being heard. For instance, a young woman activist said, “I am there but I don’t feel belonged to SLUDI. We have divided minds. Everyone has their own idea of how things should be. Some people will not want to hear your voice.” She recognizes being part of SLUDI but does not feel belonged to it because some people within the organization will not listen to the dictates of others, including her. As a result, she says members are divided within her organization. Another woman activist expressed similar sentiments of not being heard, especially when it comes to decision making. She said, “There are people [men] who will not dance to the dictates and tune of any other person. That is really the problem with SLUDI. When we women... say something, we are not listened to. Even when we tell them [men] our advice on important decisions.” Even though women contribute to decision-making processes, their input often goes unheard by the men in the organization. In both of the women’s comments, not being heard is equated to not feeling belonged. Without a sense of belonging, they view the organization as having a weak CI.

Also, in some cases, PWDs were so aggrieved in not having their voices heard that they claimed ‘SLUDI does not exist’ (‘nothing at all’). This is not only a strong emotional statement, it also highlights that for some social actors, SLUDI and the DM are a ‘deviant phenomenon’ (Polletta & Jasper, 2001). In other words, their experiences of solidarity have not been positive. There is a need for identity work (Glass, 2009; Einwohner, Reger & Myers, 2008; Snow & McAdam, 2000) particularly in integrating these different or multiple identities into the organization, and into the movement as a whole.

³⁵ Due to the sensitivity of the fragmentary issues presented in this section, I have decided to conceal the interviews names, their DPOs and dates of my interviews as a way to protect their identities.

4.4 Conclusion

As my research has demonstrated, SLUDI formed during the Civil War (1991-2002) and has tried to maintain its CI post-conflict in various ways. In the former, the war was a catalyst for them to form a CI. It first brought PWDs to form DPOs as a way to secure resources by writing to NGOs aiding wounded civilians. Through DPOs, PWDs had a sense of unity to work together to achieve their common goals. Their shared sense of unity ignited the idea of forming SLUDI for self-representation in 1995 so that PWDs could also speak unilaterally on their collective grievances to GoSL in order to advance their position in society.

To come together, two elements connected PWDs: their social trait as disabled and solidarity through shared experiences of discrimination and stigmatization, two dimensions in Della Porta and Diani's (2006) CI formation theory. To begin addressing their collective grievances, SLUDI framed its issues within a human rights framework and mobilized its constituents to sensitize their communities that they have a right to be recognized as a person before anything and protest for specific policies and laws that would be inclusive of them. These two activities were important in engendering its CI, particularly when its members doubted its role and its ability to represent their diverse voices.

Post-Civil War (2002-present), SLUDI has tried to maintain its CI in three ways. First, it depends on its executive members to make face-to-face interactions at the community level and in everyday spaces in order to build new networks, two dimensions found in Della Porta & Diani's (2006) first mechanism of CI maintenance. Executives pay visits to DPOs and individuals, including conducting DPO elections and resolving domestic disputes between PWDs. These visits have enabled its members to rely on it for help and created new networks for SLUDI. Second, SLUDI participates in UN IDPD to show how it creates common meaning and experiences over time and space, the second dimension of Della Porta and Diani's (2006) second mechanism of CI maintenance. Although it often has financial constraints to fund the event because it depends on membership fees and donor funding, the event is an opportunity for gathering PWDs in different locations to participate in various activities and for mobilizing PWDs to establish key policies and institutions, such as the establishment of the Disability Act in 2009 and the NCPD in 2012. And lastly, SLUDI uses information sharing, a maintenance tool which I discovered that is not discussed by Della Porta and Diani. ICTs such as social media platforms are cheap activist tools that help to engender a 'online' CI, organize and spur lobbying and advocacy activities. Sometimes, they can reveal existing tensions, revealing that the same technologies that engender a CI also have the potential of creating group discord.

That said, SLUDI's CI has been fragmented since its inception until today for four reasons. First, it struggles with inter group competition. Its members early in its formation viewed it as an adversary for limited resources because it was not able to carve out a niche for itself within the larger

environment of DPOs. While unionization was essential in curtailing the competition for limited resources and helped foster unity, those very same forces lead to friction and fragmentation. Second, it struggles with diversity related issues. The first instance was when PWDs doubted its ability to represent them due to their different afflictions and needs. And the second instance was that members did not feel their voices were being heard. Women in particular felt that the men in the organization do not listen to them, even when they contribute to decision making processes. In a few cases, some members were so aggrieved of not being heard that they claimed the organization was non-existent. Although diversity is key in a movement, if not managed well, it can also act as a dividing force. And lastly, since 2002 until my fieldwork, it has had two counter-movement like groups form in an attempt to control it. The first NDC group had a different vision for SLUDI—namely to provide real economic opportunities, such as *gara* (‘tidying’), blacksmithing and tailoring. And the second NDC group, wanted accountability and transparency from the NCPD for funds it was receiving from the Ministry to enhance the welfare of PWDs because PWDs position in society has not drastically improved. In both groups, issues were not resolved; in fact, it was revealed that the leaders of the second NDC have always been in opposition to SLUDI’s progress. Unresolved membership issues crept up in a different way and impacted the SLUDI/ the DM’s CI.

Chapter Five: The Women's Movement

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents my findings and analysis on how the women's movement (WM) formed and maintained its collective identity (CI). In particular, I pay attention to the formation of the Women's Forum (WF), a key social movement organization (SMO) representing women's organizations in the WM. I employ aspects of Della Porta & Diani's (2006) formulation of CI formation and maintenance mechanisms.

The chapter is divided into two sections. Each section provides a short description of its aims. A final concluding section of both sections is provided at the end of the chapter.

5.2 Section One: Collective Identity Formation

5.2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I focus on how the WM formed its CI. There have been many organizations concerned with women's issues; I will briefly touch on the inception of the WM in 1915 when the first woman's organization, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), was founded. I devote special attention to the WF's formation in 1995. Here, I employ the first mechanism of Della Porta & Diani's CI formation—namely how members define and demarcate who they are as a group. A 'we' is formulated based on common traits and solidarity. Traits are not necessarily defined by specific social traits such as gender, class, ethnicity, to name a few dimensions.

5.2.2 The First Women's Solidarity Issue

Since 1915, there have been many women's groups. They have focused on 'traditional'³⁶ social issues related to the advancement of women and girls. Education, in particular, served as their first solidarity issue. It became a central social issue because it was (and still is) believed that women should not be educated. Instead, her role, let alone her place in society, is confined to the house, tending to household chores, working on the farm, and raising her children.

³⁶ I use inverted commas to demarcate words my participants used during interviews throughout the paper.

In 1915, the first women's organization called, the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)³⁷, a faith-based organization (FBO) took up the issue of educating women and girls. Sarah³⁸, a senior member of the WF said, "There has always been a women's movement in Sierra Leone. But they are more into traditional things like education, literacy and health for women and girls... Back in the days of the YWCA women came together to have women and girls educated" (interview 8/1/2018).

Of the many activities the YWCA was involved in was mainstreaming education. It built pre-primary schools for girls *up-country* ('rural areas') as well as vocational training centers. Its success inspired the formation of other FBOs and service delivery organizations to provide education and other services for women and girls nationwide. Some of the organizations that emerged since the founding of the YWCA were the Girl Guides Association Sierra Leone (GGSL)³⁹ United Methodist Women's Church Association (UMWCA) (1968) and the Sierra Leone Association of University Women (SLAUW) (1976).

Overtime, education became a means and an end to empower women so that they could be less dependent on their male counterparts. Jasmin, one of the Founders of SLAUW and the WF commented, "We wanted to make sure that many [...] women got an education and became generally empowered, and not too dependent on others, including men as in our tradition" (interview 12/9/2017).

Although more women are educated today, there is still a cultural stigma about educating women and girls. I would like to touch upon it in detail from my three months of fieldwork with WF members in the next subsection (see Photograph 2).

5.2.2.1 Education

Based on my interviews, it is a common belief in Sierra Leone that females should not be educated. This belief is especially and deeply entrenched in the rural areas, particularly in the Northern and Eastern parts of the country, which account for over four million, or over half of the population's total seven million (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015; Commonwealth of Learning, 2015). In these areas, women are traditionally bound to the household, occupied with domestic chores such as cooking, subsistence farming, fetching water, raising children, and a variety of other functions. Miatta, a 50/50 Group⁴⁰ representative said, "Traditionally, the dynamic is that you do not educate women, especially

³⁷ The YWCA is an offshoot of the Young Men's Christian Association, a ecumenical Christian movement organization based in Geneva, Switzerland but founded in England in 1844 by missionaries to provide programs, education and services to empower young men (YMCA, 2018).

³⁸ The women's movement is fragmented and contentious. Therefore, I feel an obligation to protect the privacy of my participants and use pseudonyms in reporting their observations.

³⁹ It became a full member of the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts in 1963.

⁴⁰ The 50/50 Group is a non-partisan organization working on increasing female leadership, especially in politics.

women from the North because women should be looking after their children and doing house chores” (interview 15/10/2017).

It is widely agreed that educating a woman is equated to giving her a voice. In the eyes of traditionalists, this is a problem, or possibly the anthesis of what a woman should be. Saffiatu, a Mano River Women’s Peace Network⁴¹ representative said, “In the North, they believe women don’t deserve education and that women should be silenced. She will become too loud if she is educated” (interview 3/10/2017). Even if a woman becomes educated, her duties will still be confined to the home because the expectation is for her to get married and move away to the husband’s household where she will become his property and subjected to his will. Abdul, a 50/50 Group representative said, “women are baby makers. Their role is confined in the kitchen. Traditionally, men do not see a benefit in educating women because... at the end she will definitely get married and be subjected to the will of the husband” (interview 23/8/2017).



Photograph 8: The Women's Forum presenting to school girls.

Expanding women’s education has been an important goal of the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL). It has made special efforts to send girl children to school in the Northern and Eastern provinces. It has created new policies to meet international goal of Education for All (EFA) (Nishimuko, 2007). The GoSL has provided free primary education and school materials, and created public awareness campaigns, sensitizing women to enroll in schools. As a result, there have been rapid increases overall in primary education enrollment.

However, statistically women and girls still lag behind their male counterparts. While 96 percent of rural children (ages 6-11 years) are enrolled in primary school, with girls outnumbering boys in enrolment by 3.2 percent, this number significantly decreases as girls get older (Statistics Sierra Leone,

⁴¹ MARWOPNET is an NGO based in Sierra Leone, comprised of members from Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea and Cote D’Ivoire. It formed in 2000 as a way to promote peace and development, especially in the Mano River region (Issat, 2018).

2015; Commonwealth of Learning, 2015). For instance, according to Statistics Sierra Leone (2015), the national Senior Secondary School (SSS) enrolment was 68.3 % of which urban enrollment was below fifty percent; girls enrollment was 37.6 percent compared to boys at 64.2 percent. The difference in rates is due to high dropouts of adolescent girls. Also, female adult literacy⁴² was 33.65% compared to 55.53% in male adults. Factors contributing to female disadvantage are poverty, low access to educational resources and paternalistic culture (Statistics Sierra Leone, 2015; Pessima et al., 2009).

Since the establishment of the YWCA in 1915, several SMOs with a focus on women's social issues have come together to create an umbrella body where women could speak unilaterally on their social grievances. In discussing why these various groups formed, Jasmin noted, "The idea was growing that with women in these other organizations, such as SLAUW, the YWCA, we could come together. Then we will make our presence felt better and speak with one voice on women's concerns and issues" (interview 12/9/2017). Of the many women's-focused SMOs that formed were the Women's Movement Sierra Leone (WMSL) (1966), Women Association for National Development (WAND) (1987), the National Organization for Women Sierra Leone (NOW) (1988) and the Women's Forum (WF) (1995). Each organization's CI was reconstituted to suit the environment that women were exposed to. The WF, which pertains to my research, is one such example. I explain women's impetus to form it in the next section.

5.2.3 The Civil War (1991-2002): Reconstituted Solidarity

Like the Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI), the WF also formed during the Civil War (1991-2002). As researchers have observed, conflict gives a good enough reason for consolidating a group identity and expressing group solidarity (Melucci 1995: 48; Flesher-Fominaya 2010). Women experienced many atrocities, including gender-based violence (GBV) and bore the burden taking care of their children, men, as well as wounded soldiers. Their suffering became reasons for them to come together, serving as part of their sense of 'we. Mary, a 50/50 Group Founder explained, "We came together during the war because we were suffering the most. Whenever there is a war, it is the women and children who suffer the most, especially the women because they did not only take care of the wounded soldiers, they also had to take care of their men [and] children" (interview 4/10/2017).

Their suffering also served as their reason to mobilize, a dimension that is defined within Della Porta & Diani's (2006) first mechanism of CI formation. Specifically, women mobilized because they wanted to put an end to the war. Hawa, a MARWOPNET representative said, "The women were tired of the war. Different women's organizations suggested to come together as a force and make a stop to it"

⁴² Literacy was calculated as the ability to read, write and understand in any language(s).

(interview 26/9/2017). Women began meeting secretly at the YWCA. Mariatu, a GGSL representative expressed, “We were given a place at the YWCA. So, we [...] hide and [went] there to hold our meetings secretly” (interview 22/9/2017).

Although they were already meeting at the YWCA, the idea to form a collective to end the war came to fruition after a few women’s organizations under the guidance of SLAUW were given an opportunity to attend a “Women Organizing for Change” workshop in Geneva, Switzerland in 1994. After the workshop, the women who attended organized a training workshop in order to cascade the information and replicate what they had learned to other women’s organizations. Jasmin said, “We... invited women nationwide. We got about 20-30 women and organized a training workshop” (interview 12/9/2017). There were several tangible outcomes that resulted from the workshop, including the establishment of a ‘sustainable’ umbrella body because no government entity taking care of women’s specific needs existed. At that time, there was a women’s bureau housed in the Ministry of Social Welfare, but it was nearly inactive, as it was controlled by a military government that was fighting a war. Saffiatu said, “It [the Ministry] was not strong enough...the Ministry did not want to have anything to do with women’s organizations because as a military government it did not have specific shoes for women” (interview 3/10/2017). As a result, women began debating the potential shape of the umbrella body, how it would be run, its logo and motto. An examination of these elements is useful in describing the beginnings of the WM’s culture (Melucci; 1996). I discuss them in the in the next subsection, with a focus on how the WF was formed.

5.2.3.1 Forming the Women’s Forum

Women were conflicted about the precise shape of the WF. On the one hand, some agreed it should be a ‘forum,’ a term that denoted a public space for open discussion. In practice, the openness of the term meant that some of the women interviewed had a different definition. For example, Rematu, a MARWOPNET Founding member said, “...Our idea was to have a forum that is inclusive, participatory and interested in giving voice to every woman regardless of whether [they] are illiterate or not” (interview 27/9/2017). Sarah, on the other hand expressed, “It was a forum that [brought] people together so that the issue of the day can be channeled” (interview 8/1/2018). While Rematu’s comment illustrates her belief that a forum had to be inclusive, participatory and give voice to both literate and illiterate women, Sarah’s comment shows that a forum would serve to bring women together solely for the purpose to discuss a specific issue. A few other women saw the term to mean a ‘loose’ organization. And even within this definition, this term carried multiple nuances. For example, Saffiatu commented, “It was supposed to be a very democratic, participatory and loose federation of women’s organizations... a space for women to nurture one another, network and [collaborate]” (interview

3/10/2017); while Yvonne, a WF representative, said: “It was a loose organization, a social and psychological counseling center wherein women should come with their problems and see how we can address it. And as women we should not be ashamed of ourselves but rather explain our stories to one another for counseling, so that we pray together and forge ahead” (interview 23/8/2017). Saffiatu’s definition of looseness is essentially about nurturance, networking and collaboration and Yvonne’s is about a psychosocial support center where women could address their psychological issues. Based on the “group’s interactive construction and negotiation” of their CI (Gongaware, 2012: 7), it can be gleaned that they all represent different ‘cognitive definitions’ (Melucci, 1996) and emotional attachments (Hunt and Benford, 2004; Melucci, 1989a; 1995; 1996) and it can be difficult for an SMO to meet these various needs if there is no consensus on what it is about.

The comments also imply that an organizational CI does not have to be necessarily ‘unified and coherent’ (Melucci, 1996: 71); it assumes that not all social actors involved in the conflict must share the same ideology or beliefs, interests or goals in order to take collective action (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Melucci, 1996). Instead, it is their relationship to one another that helps to establish an emotional involvement, allowing them to collectively take action (Melucci, 1989a; 1995; 1996). From this logic, it is possible to deduce that the WF’s definition of their CI is based on “a network of active relationships between actors who interact, communicate, influence each other, negotiate, and make decisions” (Melucci, 1996: 72).

The WF had not yet been officially established, but women came up with rules and regulations, including ‘leadership relationships’ for it (Melucci, 1996:72). These rules were: 1) the WF would preside over all future meetings and that meetings would take place at the Annie Walsh School in Freetown; 2) meetings would be conducted in Krio, the *linguae franca* of Sierra Leone to ensure inclusivity; 3) for distance reasons, meetings would be held on the last Saturday of every month so that those coming from more distant provinces could plan ahead; 4) there would be a rotating chair so that each women’s organization could get a chance to share about her organization’s history and aims, and provide secretarial services, including taking minutes of the meeting; 5) organizations would pay a registration fee in order for the WF to sustain itself; 6) organizations could only send two representatives to the meeting, who would then be responsible for cascading information to their members; and 7) elections would be held every four years to elect a President and a national executive board (NEB). (See Photograph 2)

As for its logo and motto, a small group worked to produce them. Images were brought in and women consulted with each other about what it should be. To explain, Sally, a WF senior member said, “Pictures were brought in by some women artists. [We imagined] some of the women in a long cue marching forward, all under the same umbrella” (interview 12/9/2017). For the motto, women settled on

“Women everywhere for equality, development, and peace”; today it has changed to “solidarity for empowerment equality and development” (archival data). Once these pieces were put together, the WF then registered at the Ministry of Social Welfare⁴³ in 1995 as a non-government organization (NGO).



Photograph 9: One of the early Women's Forum monthly meetings at the YWCA.

Today, more than twenty years later, the WF is semi-professionally set up the same way. It has an office at the YWCA and some paid staff. NEB members are elected to positions every four years at the annual general meeting (AGM) in June. NEB is made up of eleven members that are similar to SLUDI's setup. These members meet once a month, sometimes more if there is an emergency, and they sometimes receive stipends called, 'days service allowance' (DSA). Aside from sensitization, NEB members are also responsible for helping to implement projects and raising funds⁴⁴. Next to fundraising activities such as galas, carnivals and 'in-kind donations' during its monthly meetings, the WF, like SLUDI, is mostly dependent on national and external funding.

The WF has a wide network across the country. It has an estimated three hundred and seventy-five⁴⁵ registered women's organizations who pay an annual fee of 250,000 Leones (equivalent of \$US 32.26⁴⁶) or more, depending on the size of the organization. Nationwide, it has branches in all four provinces—namely the Northern, Southern and Eastern and Western provinces respectively that collaborate closely with the WF in promoting the interests and welfare of women and girls. Within these branches are district branches, of which the WF has branches in almost all fifteen districts; each branch has its own District Assembly.

After it formed in 1995, the WF played a key role in ending the war. This seminal achievement is one way of understanding how its CI worked after its formation. I discuss this in the next section.

⁴³ The institution is now called, the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA).

⁴⁴ For more organizational information including its aim and activities, see Appendix C.

⁴⁵ I only give an estimate because the WF's archives as well as interviews all said something different.

⁴⁶ Based on local market rates of 7,750Leones to \$US 1.

1) Collective Agency to End the Civil War

An important element in SMT is the construction of collective action and unity (Melucci, 1989). Melucci (1989) argues that social actors continuously construct collective action and unity in various ways. In doing so, collective actors, or movements are not seen as characters or subjects. Rather, they are agents, actively and cognitively reconstituting collective action and their group identity within the limits and possibilities of their ‘complex society’. As a result, collective action is viewed as an active creation, a product and accomplishment of social actors.

During the war, the WF was active in constructing collection and unity. To achieve this, its main role was to give internal physical resources, including on how to organize various women’s organizations to achieve their goals. Whenever a group needed more women to take up an issue, the WF would provide it. Dorine, one of the WF Founders said, “The WF was more [or] less giving support to these organizations to achieve their aims and objectives. If they needed women for support, we would provide them” (interview 22/9/2017).

This support allowed groups to maintain their autonomy, which was particularly helpful as new groups formed to take anti-war activities in order to bring about socio-political changes within the existing political system (Von Walter, 2014). Sarah added, “a new crop of women activists came up working on issues that one way or another related to the conflict” (interview 8/1/2018). Acosta (2012) argues that this type of “fluidity is enough to influence policy makers through various channels, which may include, lobbying, hypermedia campaigns and marches” (p.159). In the following subsections, I will discuss three groups and their activities that the WF supported to end the Civil War.

a) The First Peace Process: Bintumani I

In 1996 when the war intensified and engulfed Freetown, women became increasingly active in articulating ways to end the horrors of what they called, ‘a senseless war’, by visualizing a peace process. As the literature points out a key element of civil society actors- that includes social movements is “to not overtly challenge the existence of the state itself or seek to initiate violent regime change” (Von Walter, 2014: 3). A section of the WF formed the “Women’s Movement for Peace” (WMP) and undertook several activities such as crossing the Aberdeen Bridge in Freetown to meet the late Sierra Leonean warlord, Foday Sankoh, in his mansion. This act is known as, ‘Bintumani I’⁴⁷.

The main focus of Bintumani was to mobilize as many women as possible. “The Forum made announcements for us to come out in our numbers because [the war] was too much,” remembers Sally (interview 12/9/2017). First, some thirty women met at the YWCA and began marching on the streets in

⁴⁷ Bintumani I is named after a Hotel in Freetown, the Bintumani Hotel.

the direction of the Bintumani Hotel. Although they made it to the bridge, the rebels would not let them through. “We passed through the mouth of the gun. When we got to the Bridge, the RUF [Revolutionary United Front]⁴⁸ said they wouldn’t allow us to cross. So, we dropped over [fled and hid in the drains],” recalled Hawa (interview 26/9/2017). Several women were killed and injured in the process. Yet, the group sustained their campaign and regrouped, using another repertoire of contention (Tilly, 1978; Kaufmann, 2011).

In the second round, the WMP along with support from the WF mobilized the women in a peace march across key cities and towns of Freetown, Kenema, Makeni, Kabala, and Bo. In the history of Sierra Leone, this was the first organized event that unified women across the country. Yvonne said, “It was the first-time all women joined hands and sang songs of solidarity” (interview 23/8/2017). In Freetown, female soldiers, petty traders and students joined in to sing and dance. Together they sang, “try peace to end this senseless war.” Bystanders had also joined in, including rebels who were now sympathizing with them, making it a true grassroots SM phenomenon (Tilly, 1978). Specifically, the “public representation of movement participants in unity, large numbers and with a sense of commitment contributes to the recognition and visibility of the movement” (Kaufmann, 2011: 168). Although it seemed that peace was finally on the table for the military government forces and rebels to settle matters, the event did not influence power holders to end the war (McAdam & Shaffer Boudet, 2012). But women remained adamant and turned to another tactic.

b) The Political Process: Bintumani II

The WF’s second anti-war action was less through public displays, but rather through a discreet political process. Von Walter (2014) interpreting Lewis (2002: 582) says that civil society actors “play an important role in political bargaining processes between citizens and state” (p.1). The first women’s organization to take up politics and demanding elections was, the Women Organizing for a Morally Enlightened Nation (WOMEN). In 1996, it looked like elections were not going to happen due to the war. The aim of WOMEN was to insist on free and fair elections and with them the removal of the military government. To get full support, the group joined the WF who then mobilized various groups including market women through a series of workshops to try and get everyone on board. Remembering how it formed, Sarah, one of the WOMEN’s founders said:

I was amongst others to work on the first women’s organization that actually identified itself to work on politics. And the politics was basically to get the military out of office. All of us were brought under the banner of the Women’s Forum in order to get support from everybody. The women all mobilized around

⁴⁸ The RUF was popularly known as the ‘sobels’, a mix of government military “soldiers” and “rebels” (Steady, 2006).

that issue. We had a series of workshops. We brought the issue to market women and all the other traditional women. And they rallied around us to work towards the elections—to campaign for a successful and peaceful elections. (interview 8/1/2018).

From their very formation, WOMEN members argued that having elections would be vital for two reasons. First, elections would finally create a clear starting point that would no longer allow rebels to exert violence and power indefinitely. Sarah explained, “Our campaign was that we didn’t feel the military was fighting the war genuinely. We thought that they had advocated that we shouldn’t have elections until they had peace. We didn’t know how long the war would continue” (interview 8/1/2018). Second, elections were seen as the most reliable way to usher in the democratization process, which in turn would lead to peace negotiations and post-war reconstruction. Civil society actors, within this context, were described as “protectors of constitutional frameworks” (Von Walter, 2014: 3); post-war reconstruction would involve all sectors of public life in the process of nation building. Sarah added, “A democratically elected government can pursue the peace process and thereafter embark into a post war-reconstruction in which we could have an equal participation of civil society, private sector, everybody else contributing to nation building...” (interview 8/1/2018). Democratization would also give women the chance to seek their own political interests in order to advance their position in society. Women wanted 50 percent political representation in all decision-making bodies and to be involved in any peace negotiations after the war. Political representation meant allowing even illiterate women to be elected as local councilors, despite what the National Constitution ordained. Zainab remarked, “We realized that many of us could not reach that height [Government level], so we lobbied and advocated against it. We argued that it was enough for a woman to articulate an issue in her own local language” (interview 28/9/2017)⁴⁹.

To achieve their goal, with support from the WF, WOMEN organized a national conference and mobilized the nation to register and vote—an effort called, ‘Bintumani II’⁵⁰ in 1996. Its main mandate was to bring all levels of society on board with the political process. The European Union (EU) funded and collaborated on the event. A few weeks before the event was to take place, the EU handed the women a list of attendees. The list confirmed that women were hugely underrepresented. Sarah remembers:

In the beginning when the list was published it was organizations who were invited, political parties, private sector organizations. Because women were not heads of those organizations, these organizations elected their leaders to go. Political party leaders, chamber of commerce, bar association, medical and dental association. These were all headed by men. So, we realized that when we were doing the

⁴⁹ Consequently, this was later adopted in local government council through the Local Government Act.

⁵⁰ Bintumani II also took place at the Bintumani Hotel, located in Freetown.

calculations, we realized that the number of women who were actually participating in the Bintumani Conference were very limited (interview 8/1/2018).

Women wrote to the EU asking for more funding to include thirteen women who could also act as representatives of their districts, including having a representative from the Western Area district which is normally divided in to two districts.

To make sure their voices were going to be heard during the conference, women went over a forty-page document that was given to them and provided their own recommendations. But there were aspects of the document that they did not understand, such as proportional representation as a new form of election. Sarah remarked, “We didn’t have the slightest idea what that was. So, we had to bring in professionals to explain to us what that was. We went through the document and decided to summarize it to 3 pages. We thought that if we could go through that document and provide our recommendations on each of the questions that were going to be answered, the delegates could also hear our voice” (interview 8/1/2018).

With regards to the organization of the conference, the WF was engaging other groups in several repertoires of contention (Tilly 1978; Della Porta, 2013). These included: holding a peaceful march, staging demonstrations at State House, and engaging in discussions on television and radio to explain what was going to be discussed at the conference in order to highlight what positions women took and why they took them. Women then presided over the conference discussion and were able to influence political decisions (Zimmerman, 2015; Acosta, 2012). Sarah said, “I think it was 10 or 12 points [that] were all accepted by the conference delegates” (interview 8/1/2018).

Due to their tireless efforts, elections were held on time. Yet, women had mixed emotions about their achievements and the political outcomes. On the one hand, most agreed that they achieved their advocacy goal because elections were conducted and there was a democratically elected civilian President. Sarah said, “We achieved our goal. We had successful elections. We got the military out of office” (interview 8/1/2018). Mary also said, “We had a democratically elected government after three decades, the first democratically elected government. So yes, we were successful in our aims” (interview 4/10/2017). On the other hand, they felt that their advocacy efforts did not help to advance women’s position in society in general (Gamson, 1975) mainly because women were hardly appointed to any political seats. Mary said:

We did not succeed in getting any positions. Most of the positions were given to men. So, there was no equality. The Government did not show any recognition of the work that women did. We are never given the recognition that is due to us. (interview 12/9/2017).

Despite this disappointment in the aftermath of the elections, women persisted to lobby again for peace in a final attempt to end the war for good.

c) The Second Peace Process

The third activity that women took was to lobby for a peace agreement between all factions in order to completely stop the war. Since Bintumani I had not worked, they attempted in 1998 to get a peace accord in Abidjan, Cote D'Ivoire, to no avail. On July 7, 1999, finally the 'Lomé Peace Accord' was finally signed in Lomé, Togo.

The success of the Accord inspired different women's organizations within the sub-regions of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea to form a collective. Their stated mission was to bring peace to the Mano River region, a hotbed for the ongoing war. The logic was that all border communities needed to be in sync and want peace for the region. Hawa explained, "If everybody is not involved, it [peace] won't work. If you have women in the border communities trafficking arms how will there be peace? It won't work. We relied on them and the communities" (interview 26/9/2017). In 2000, various women's groups traveled by road to Abuja to discuss their formation because everyone realized that by collectively coming together they could make a bigger impact to end the war. Hawa added, "We went to Abuja in 2000 to get a meeting. At the meeting, we suggested to come together as a full force because when we come together we can conquer and penetrate and bring the war to an end" (interview 26/9/2017). In another meeting in 2001, the three countries decided to come together to form MARWOPNET⁵¹, the first female led peace negotiating organization in the West Africa region with headquarters in Freetown, Sierra Leone (Steady, 2011). As a result of the meeting, each country sent ten women from different sectors—from business, politics, and NGOs—to form a strategic front. In the end, the group came up with three specific pillars: 1) the peace process and peace mechanism; 2) security; and 3) reconstruction and economic empowerment.

With funds from donors, such as ECOWAS, the African Movement, the United Nations and the West African Women, MARWOPNET lobbied various stakeholders for them to be part of the peace negotiations. Hawa reiterated, "We wanted to make sure that women were central to all peace negotiations and decision making. So, we lobbied with different stakeholders, including secretary of states and their deputies" (interview 26/9/2017). Sadly, those efforts were unsuccessful. Knowing there was going to be an international conference in Bamako, Mali, women seized the opportunity to then send six representatives- two members from each country- by road to meet with the Minister of Defense in Mali. There, the women were given a platform to voice their concerns. They pleaded for everyone's support to 'give peace a chance in the sub-regions'. When the women went back to Sierra Leone, they once again lobbied various stakeholders. "We lobbied in all directions—United Nations, heads of states,

⁵¹ Cote d'Ivoire/the Ivory Coast was later added as a member of MARWOPNET in 2008.

and local authorities”, recounted Hawa (interview 26/9/2017). Even though the war lord, Charles Taylor, had signed the Lomé Peace Accord, he was not abiding by it; there continued to be spasmodic and wonton shootings.

As a last resort to end the war, women decided to meet Charles Taylor in person. A two-day peace building workshops was held. Its stated objective included writing a position paper. The women then traveled to Liberia by road to meet Charles Taylor at his mansion and present their paper, asking for peace. Hawa recounted the visit at his mansion, “He said, ‘Oh my mothers, my sisters, the moment I saw you, you have broken my spirit. I will listen to you. But tell the other heads of state in Sierra Leone and Liberia that we should meet but not in our sub-regions. I will meet with them outside our sub-regions’” (interview 26/9/2017). Eventually the heads of states met in Morocco and brought the war to an end. In 2002, it was declared *war don don* (‘war was finished’). In 2003, MARWOPNET was awarded the United Nations Nobel Prize for Human Rights for helping to end the war.

Aside from the three above stated examples of the WF’s collective efforts to end the war, I also took the opportunity to ask the women to reflect on what made them succeed as a group. I present their responses to explain the CI outcomes—a contested topic in SM theory because of its ‘slippery’ definition (Flesher-Fominaya, 2010) and because scholars cannot confirm whether it really strengthens and sustains a movement.

2) *Collective Success Based on ‘Discipline’ and ‘Spirit of Volunteerism’*

Andrews (1991) and Whittier (1995) argue that the participation of activists can potentially transform the activists’ biography to the extent that the individual continues to talk about it, even after the movement has ended, whether or not this is an explicit goal of the movement. This was the case for many of my participants who participated in the WF during the war. Two CI outcomes in particular remained with them: discipline and ‘spirit of volunteerism.’

Discipline was described in various ways—ranging from obeying rules, seeking advice, to being serious. In one example, women were disciplined because they were adamant to achieve their aims. To do so, they sought advice from others. Sally explained, “Before there was much discipline. Women could obey by rules and seek advice from everyone. We just did what needed to be done” (interview 12/9/2017). In another example, discipline was defined as working hard and being serious about the work. Zainab said, “We worked hard together and were disciplined about it. We were serious in everything we did” (interview 28/9/2017).

The second CI outcome was that there was a ‘spirit of volunteerism.’ This term was also expressed in different ways. In one example it was used as a kind of mentorship in which young women looked up to older women and worked together to achieve their goal(s). Rematu remarked, “There was

much volunteerism. Young women looked up to older women to learn from them. We all wanted to work together to achieve our goals” (interview 27/9/2017). In another sense, volunteerism was not about asking for rewards but about willing to give one’s expertise and time. Jasmin added, “There was a shared sense of unity that was based on volunteerism. That was what sustained all of the organizations in the past. We believed strongly in voluntarism. We did not ask ‘what’s in it for me?’ When we started we were willing to give our expertise, time and do things for each other” (interview 12/9/2017). Based on their comments, it would seem that discipline and volunteerism help to explain “...social action on the basis of social relationships” (Melucci, 1996:45) and group unity as they seemed to have steered the group towards collective success.

5.3 Section Two: Maintaining a Collective Identity Post-Civil War (2002-present)

5.3.1 Introduction

Maintaining a movement in the long haul is an arduous yet important task for key SMOs. Maintenance is one way of marking a movement’s ‘trajectories’ more broadly, including understanding why members remain (or do not get) involved in activism overtime, its strengths as well as challenges (Melucci, 1995; Polletta and Jasper, 2001).

In this section, I present how the WF has maintained its membership post-conflict since 2002 until the writing of this paper. I focus on two dimensions of Della Porta and Diani’s (2006) CI maintenance formulations. They are: (a) ‘direct face-to-face interactions at the community and in everyday spaces,’ (p.95) and (b) creating common meaning and experiences over ‘time’ and ‘space.’

To the established methodology my analysis adds a new tool of CI maintenance tool: information sharing via (i) information communication technologies and (ii) monthly meetings. Given the high levels of fragmentation of the WM today, I discuss fragmentation as a CI maintenance process based on three crucial factors: (i) the presence/absence of conflict; (ii) ideological differences; and (iii) diversity related issues. These are followed by concluding remarks of the chapter.

5.3.2 Producing New Networks of Relationship Within and Outside the Group

Similar to SLUDI, the WF also employs the first dimension in Della Porta & Diani’s (2006) first mechanism of CI maintenance. Specifically, it depends on its executive members to make ‘face-to-face interactions at the community level and in the everyday spaces’ (p.95). These visits help to answer my

second sub-research question on how the WF produces new networks of relationships within and outside the group.

Executives pay visits to members for moral support, especially when a member is ill or bereaved. Visits help to engender a sense of belonging to the group as women can share their sympathies with members in need. Yvonne, an executive member said:

Well we do visitations. It is part of the work that I am doing...Some people are in the hospital, admitted to the hospital. We used to go there as a group and make sure we see the problem of that person even if we don't give money. Because when you belong to a group, when you have a problem you look towards those people that are in your group and that is part of the activities we do normally. We visit our companions. We visit our partners for them to feel at home and feel belong to the group. (interview 23/8/2017).

In some cases when people are ill, executives will call upon members to make *a purse* ('contributions'). Dorine said, "Sometimes if you are ill we contribute within ourselves and give a purse" (interview 21/9/2017). Bereaved members are also given a purse and cards. Members attend funeral services to offer their condolences and part-take in the ceremony. Fatu, a WF representative said, "When people are bereaved we normally give a purse, cards and go to the homes to offer prayers. We also attend the funeral. We give readings [funeral prayers] and so on" (fieldnotes 7/10/2017). These various activities help women to show solidarity for one another and foster deeper social bonds that are instrumental to sustaining a movement's CI.

5.3.3 Creating Common Meaning & Experiences Over 'Time' and 'Space'

Like SLUDI, the WF also maintains its membership through the second mechanism in Della Porta & Diani's (2006) CI maintenance theory. This mechanism serves to answer my third sub-research question on how the WF creates common meaning and experiences over 'time' and 'space.' This can mean linking together events from past struggles in order to remind movement members why they still need to fight on. 'Time' is the group's 'visible' and 'latent' phases for collective action. The visible phase applies to my data, which is concerned with how often the group demonstrates, holds media interventions, and other public initiatives. I discuss it in the next subsection.

5.3.3.1 'Time': Establishing the Women's Declaration

Since the war, the WF has been active in mobilizing its constituents on key issues which have resulted in many state level policy outcomes (Rochon & Mazmanian, 1993; Gamson, 1975)⁵². These efforts are key to assigning common meaning. Some of these policies include: two Women's Manifestos

⁵² For a complete list of its public initiatives, see Appendix D.

(2002 & 2007) published jointly by National Organization for Women (NOW) and the 50/50 Group, the Women's Declaration, reviewing and adding to the Constitutional Bill of Rights⁵³, and several Poverty Reduction Papers (PRPs), and the Women's Declaration.

A very important exercise in assigning common meaning came in the drafting of the Women's Declaration. To create the document, there was a mass mobilization drive of women and concentrated effort to find a common thread between their different voices. Urban women went to the rural areas to begin discussing the issue. After consulting with them, they received additional training from women's groups, such as the 50/50 Group⁵⁴. Zainab, an ex-President of the 50/50 Group and a current representative remembers the dynamics of the event: "People came from the chiefdoms to talk to the women. They [were] doing the work on the ground and then they [came] here to Freetown and we [trained] them. We [urban women] also went to them to discuss the issues" (interview 28/9/2017). Since they were a diverse group working on different issues, it was decided that each organization produce their own position paper first. This way each group had an opportunity to present their needs, and similarities and differences could be highlighted when they reconvened. The end result would be a document representing their diverse voices. Mariama, a former 50/50 Group President and a current representative who helped to write the Declaration explained: "We engaged women from all other organizations that had produced their own position paper. We said, 'Ok, we all have interests. We all have issues. Let's look at them and see where the lapses and overlaps are. Then we can present one paper as women'" (interview 29/11/2017). Although a tedious task at first, women saw the benefits of the process, especially as it was an 'inclusive process.' Mariama added, "People were moved and understood the process. They were involved because it was an inclusive process... They were willing to go the extra mile and say, 'Well let's leave this or let's add this'. People were not saying, 'Oh my paper is lost in your paper.' That did not come up because most of the issues are the same anyway. It is not about your paper or my paper, it is **our** paper" (interview 29/11/2017). Eventually, all papers were compiled and called, the 'Women's Declaration', with a subtitle of 'Many Messages, One Voice.'

⁵³ In the Constitution, women wrote the following key points: affirmative action of 30% quota for women in elected and appointed positions; set up of an independent Gender Commission to promote gender equitable development, advocacy as well as action-oriented research; domestication of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); increase in micro-credit facilities, providing training and implementation matters as well as capacity building of women through education, training and access to capital (GoSL, 2008). Although a key document, it has yet to be amended and has several caveats, which Adullah and Fofana-Ibrahim (2010) have pointed out in their article, "The meaning and practice of women's empowerment in post-conflict Sierra Leone."

⁵⁴ The 50/50 Group is a non-partisan women's organization seeking to achieve gender parity through training and advocacy.

5.3.3.2 'Space': Celebrating United Nations International Women's Day

Another important opportunity for the WF to retain its membership is by gathering members to participate in the March 8th United Nations International Women's Day (UN IWD) and the 16 Days of Activism to end gender-based violence (GBV). Both events help to highlight the concept of 'space' in the second mechanism of Della Porta & Diani's second dimension of CI maintenance.

"Space" is defined as the group's ability to connect its goals locally and internationally with other groups who share its struggle. UN IWD has been particularly useful for the WF in pushing forward its gender agenda to the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) and implementing their social policies (Gamson, 1975). Initially, IWD emerged from labor movements' activities in Europe and North America in the twentieth century. It seeks to achieve "gender parity...by motivating and uniting friends, colleagues and whole communities to think, act and be gender inclusive" (IWD, 2018: no page number). The day is also meant to be reflective of the progress made in the advancement of women and to call for further change.

Since 1995, the WF has more or less followed the global themes set forth by the UN. Some of the themes have been: "Women and HIV/AIDs" (2004), "Women in decision making" (2006), "Equal rights, equal opportunities: progress for all" (2010) and "Pledge for parity" (2016) (archival data). In 2015, it adapted the "Make it Happen" campaign to fit the Ebola crisis by calling it, "Make it happen for EVD [Ebola Virus Disease] affected families especially for women and girls."

In 2018, the theme was also adapted from #PressforProgress to "Time is now: Transforming women's lives in rural areas." The theme changed after the WF and the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs (MSWGCA) consulted women in their various communities on how to promote gender equality and empower women generally. They specifically tried to pinpoint cultural barriers that were hindering women's advancement and discussed building of a rural women's network in the chiefdoms to make rural women come together and work on activities that could generally empower them and transform their societies. Dorine, who was engaged in the process, explained, "the aim was to reflect on our progress and our cultural barriers so that we can move forward to promote gender equality and make women empowered. Especially, we wanted to establish a rural women's network in the chiefdom and launch it so to promote the advancement of rural women's achievements and also for rural and urban women to work together to design activities that can transform our societies and their lives" (interview 21/10/2017). The theme was used to highlight the WF's national agenda of popularizing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and gender-based violence (GBV) in the country. Although several 'visible phases' or activities were planned for that day in Freetown, including holding rallies, discussions on TV and radio and other public initiatives (Della Porta

& Diani, 2006), the event was only observed in the provincial towns because it coincided with the March 8, 2018 elections process.

As mentioned earlier, UN IWD is also important for advancing and implementing social policies at national, regional and provincial levels. For instance, in 2011, the WF presented a position paper to the Government demanding a variety of actions. Their demand to reduce maternal and infant mortality rates in the country resulted in a launching of the Free Health Care Act for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under the age of five. Two other demands from this position paper which remain unfulfilled were the 30% quota for women in decision making positions and the Chieftaincy Act 2009 for women to participate in chieftaincy elections without being discriminated against. Jasmin remarked, “We asked Government for a 30% quota for women to be at all levels of decision making... We also asked for it to review the Chieftaincy Act 2009 because women were being discriminated against when they contested for chieftaincy” (interview 12/9/2017). I will discuss another maintenance mechanism in the next section that I found which Della Porta & Diani do not touch on.

5.3.4 Information Sharing as a Collective Identity Maintenance Tool

A ‘discovered’ key maintenance tool that the WF uses relates to information sharing. The WF continually uses monthly meetings as well as information communication technologies (ICTs), such as emails, telephones and social media platforms. Because of the popularity of social media platforms, and their continuous use, this form of information sharing is possibly the most effective way of maintaining a CI. They bring womens’ groups together, give them opportunities to represent themselves and help coordinate around its own needs and the needs of the members. I discuss the information-sharing tools in the subsequent subsections.

5.3.4.1 Monthly Meetings

Since its inception, the WF has held monthly meetings. Its location has however changed from the Annie Walsh School to the YWCA headquarters in Freetown. As in the past, meetings are held on the last Saturday of every month, at 4PM in a quaint sized room. Attending members are generally the heads/presidents of organizations and their secretaries who are responsible for cascading the meeting’s information to their own members; if they cannot attend then other members are asked to go in their place (See drawings 1-2 of the September 30th meeting I attended).

According to the literature, in every meeting there are observable ‘cultural materials’ (Polletta and Jasper, 2001: 285) expressed as rituals and symbols (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Melucci 1989a; 1995; 1996). Both elements help to attract and welcome new members, as well as sustain the group’s CI.

In the WF, the first noticeable element was the physical space in which the meeting is held. Identification with this particular place can have a direct impact on the WF's CI as members, including new ones, can define themselves with reference to this particular place. Second, the meeting is conducted in Krio, the lingua franca of the country, ensuring inclusivity.

Three, there is a preset agenda of action items which help both old and new members to follow the meeting. Within this agenda are multiple opportunities for members to participate and exchange with each other. The first agenda item involves the President of the WF symbolically welcoming everyone as a 'sister', including new organizations and foreigners, such as myself. This spirit of sisterhood is created within the space, allowing everyone to be seen as equal members. This is then followed by Muslim and Christian prayers recited by willing members. In Sierra Leone, Islam is the dominant religion and Christianity (and animism) is the second largest, albeit a minority religion. By volunteering, members can make their presence felt.

Then there is a welcome by the President of the last meeting, which helps remind members who the last host was. Like in a relay race, the old host hands the baton over to the new host of the month. The host is given the opportunity to give a brief history of her organization, including its aims and current activities. Since there are many organizations within the WF, the presentation is key for organizations to learn about each other. The host is also given the opportunity to write up the meeting's minutes, helping them contribute meaningfully to the meetings.

Then a reading of the last meeting's minutes is taken up. Members are given an opportunity to give their input by making corrections and/or adding elements that were left out. This activity not only helps to remind everyone of the last meetings activities, it also ensures that everyone is updated on the WF's internal affairs. The floor is then given to organizations, including the WF, to give their own updates, including activities they have recently concluded, activities they plan to do as well as a quick summary of their own administrative matters. For the WF, for every conference it sends members to, a report is typed up and distributed during the meeting. This is key to creating transparency within the group, especially since it has an extensive network of women's organizations. Moreover, the updates serve as another opportunity for members to learn about another's activities and to solve their problems collectively, with everyone allowed to provide input.

From the four meetings that I attended during the months of July, August, September and October, I observed a wide spectrum of being taken up by various organizations, ranging from holding prayer groups, to planning entertainment for peaceful elections to fundraisers. Fundraisers included luncheons, carnivals and galas. For these activities, members could purchase tickets at the end of meetings if they were interested. Not only is this an effective way for groups to promote their activities, it is also an opportunity for members to engage in each other's activities.

After the updates are done, a call is made for the next host to host the next meeting, giving members a chance to volunteer their organizations to host. Symbolically, the passing of the baton to the next host allows for the cycle of organizational information sharing to continue. The meeting ritual is adjourned with Muslim and Christian prayers where women can again volunteer to lead them.

Four, while the meeting is officially over, the space is still open for members to continue sharing information with one another. They are encouraged to do so over meals and refreshments provided by the host, or by the WF if it does not have sufficient funds. This ritual serves to enhance members' bonding experiences in an informally festive way.

And lastly, in between the meeting's agenda items, the President sometimes leads the group in chanting/singing the WF's slogans and songs. The slogan/songs are: "Proper Planning Prevents Problems," (also known as 'the 4Ps), "We Don't Agonize, We Organize," "The More We Are Together, The Happier We Shall Be", and "Let Sisterly Love Continue." These songs/chants not only reflect the visions/character of the group and serve to introduce new members to the WF's rituals and promote further solidarity (Della Porta & Diani, 2006; Melucci, 1996).

In fact, these songs are often used in many other situations. I observed their use in two contexts: first during the national "Consultative Women's Meeting for the 2018 Elections" in Kamakwie, Karena District (on October 7, 2017) (see Drawings 3-5 and Photograph 9⁵⁵) where women discussed their plans for the elections; and second during the "Women's Loose Lapas" rally in which women were rallying for a minimum of 30 percent quota in electoral positions in the lead up to the 2018 elections (on December 21, 2017) (see Photographs 10-11). Altogether, these various activities during the WF's meetings help to engender its culture and CI, especially as they give members many opportunities to be seen and to be heard.



Drawings/Sketches 1: Celebrating the return of five Muslim women from the hajj.



Drawings/Sketches 2: Presenting a gift to one of the Muslim women who went on the hajj.

⁵⁵ As an Art Psychotherapist, I often find joy in capturing moments of events. I made these two sketches right after I left the meeting. They helped me to process what went on during the meeting as well as my own emotions.

5.3.4.2 Information communication technologies

Most, if not all contemporary protests and revolutionary movements use modern information and communication technologies (ICTs) (de Waal and Ibreck, 2013). More so, ICTs serve as an organizing and ‘emancipatory’ tool for marginalized groups (Thigo, 2013: 256). Like SLUDI, the WF uses emails, telephones and social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook (FB) to inform members of meetings and to spur lobbying and advocacy activities. Social media platforms are particularly useful as a low-cost activist tool (Treré, 2014) because they have the ability to send messages in real time to hundreds of people at a time. On why the WF uses WhatsApp, Yvonne said, “It’s very cheap and we have 365 registered organizations that we are operating with. So, if we are to call it is a lot. So, we send messages on WhatsApp and those who are interested can cooperate” (interview 23/8/2017). That said, the WF has several WhatsApp groups to coordinate its members: there is a special group for coordinators, executive members and the general membership⁵⁷.

Although it has been argued that Facebook and WhatsApp platforms allow for a hybrid and autonomous CI as it combines online and offline activists in one space (Larmer, 2010), there is a certain limitation to this thinking. I argue that members are not entirely autonomous on these spaces because they are being managed by one or several ‘Administrators’. Administrators are gatekeepers who control who is added or deleted to the group, as well as what is allowed and not allowed.

This sense of control by an elite within the group can impact a member’s sense of belonging to a group, feelings ranging from mild irritation to the complete social exclusion. In a WhatsApp group concerned with female genital mutilation (FGM), a member complained of having been deleted for expressing her opinions. The member said, “It is only on the WhatsApp group for FGM that they deleted me from because I was talking about LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender] issues. I pay 250,000Leones (equivalent of \$US 32⁵⁸) every year but they just deleted me” (interview 9/10/2017). Although I was not able to follow up on the story, it is clear that this member was offended by the Administrator’s actions. If not managed well, the same technologies that create community identity are potentially the ones that create community discord/fragmentation. This now brings me to the next section on fragmentation as a CI maintenance issue.

5.3.5 Fragmentation as a Collective Identity Maintenance Issue

⁵⁷ I was added on to the “Women’s Forum General” membership group in December 2017, which had some one hundred individuals, both in and outside the WF.

⁵⁸ Based on local market exchange rate of 7,750Leones to \$US 1.

As already discussed in the disability movement (DM) chapter, fragmentation in SMOs can take multiple forms (Ozdemir & Eraydin, 2017; Adler et al., 2009). They can arise due to conflict of interests, including differences in ideology. Whatever the issue is, it can have adverse effects on a group's cohesion as well as continuity. From my data, three issues were impacting the WF's cohesion: 1) the presence/absence of conflict; 2) ideological differences; and 3) issues of diversity. These issues led many of my interviews to describe the WF and the WM as 'crawling', serving to answer my fourth sub-research question on the types of membership constraints the WF is facing.

But before I address these, it is worth mentioning beforehand that the fragmentation should not deflect from the progress the WM has made towards the advancement of women in Sierra Leonean society. On the contrary, women's organizations have made considerable progress since they came together twenty-three years ago (in 1995). But because Sierra Leone is a developing country with many obstacles in every aspect of its economic, political and social spheres, the WF (and other women's organizations) are not separate from the country's under-development. Funding and implementing projects are especially problematic. The interview with Edleen, a 50/50 Group representative, best captures the complexity of the situation:

Sierra Leone is a developing country. There are struggles everywhere, in... every sector—whether it is CSOs [civil society organizations], NGOs, Ministries, etc. The strides that women have made is good and we might be crawling in the Women's Forum, but we have crawled with some results over [twenty-three] years. That's what people should be looking at... Yes there are struggles, and there will always be. There will always be struggles for funding, for you to implement everything. If you don't have the funds, you will hardly be successful in what you are doing. Within the women's movement, we are not divorced from it. We still have to face the struggles and move on. (interview 7/9/2017).

My participants, and myself included, contend that the WF as an **organized movement** is responsible for some of the fragmentation. Apart from the WF, women continue to form their own organizations informally. These newly formed groups most often do not formally join the WF umbrella. Mariama expressed this well when she said, "The women's movement is there. Women are forming their own organizations. They are joining others and working towards women's empowerment in general. But an **organized** movement is maybe what is crawling" (interview 29/11/2017). With that, I now turn to the specific issues why the WF is said to be crawling and fragmenting.



Photograph 11: Women's "Loose Lapas" rally supporters gathered near the infamous Cotton Tree.



Photograph 12: one of several posters at the rally.

5.3.5.1 The Presence/Absence of Conflict

A central reason for the current fragmentation in the WF is the absence of a national crisis. Only a conflict provides a ‘common goal’ or ‘common enemy’ for women. This relates back to the reason why the WF formed in the first place—that is women came together during a national crisis, the Civil War. Conflict is a catalyst for groups to form a CI. One member⁵⁹ expressed, “A lot of the time, something bad has to always happen to bring us together. The urgency of the war, of working against it, that was our common enemy. We could say we didn’t have a common enemy afterwards because sometimes things like that brings people together when we focus on achieving one goal”. Apart from the war, Sierra Leone has also experienced other national crisis, including the 2014-2015 Ebola outbreak and a recent mudslide tragedy that occurred August 14, 2017 during my fieldwork. The mudslide

⁵⁹ Due to the negativity associated with the fragmentation of the WM, and the ease by which certain participants can be identified, all information, including their names, organizations and interview dates has been withheld in reporting their observations.

tragedy claimed an estimated 1,000 lives and left hundreds missing and without a home (Inveen, 2017). The last two crises added to the list of crises that mobilized women for collective action. For instance, a member said, “Whenever there is a big issue, like Ebola, the war, etc., we come together. We were the ones who set up hand washing [during Ebola] ... we made a lot of contributions. For the mudslide [occurred on August 14, 2017] we gave psychosocial counseling, raising funds, etc. When we come together, we are very powerful force to reckon with. We are very good to rally around each other.” The same feeling was expressed by another member: “When Ebola struck we all came together. When the landslide occurred, we came together again. But you know something has to happen for us to come closer together.” The members comments suggest that not only does conflict unite them (Melucci, 1989a; 1995; 1995; Flesher-Fominaya, 2010), but it also continues to make them stay together.

Without a crisis, women say they are each independently doing their own activities without reliance on a group. A member said, “If they [women] do not have anything to attack, nobody cares... We always need an issue to come together” (interview 26/9/2017). Another member stated, “When there isn’t a big catastrophe, we do our own little things” (interview 4/10/2017). In sum, a national crisis has to occur to unit women otherwise the group is not cohesive.

5.3.5.2 Ideological Differences

Boundary work is often used by activist groups to demarcate themselves from other activist groups (Reger, 2002). In the WF, members drew boundaries between themselves based on feminist ideology. Feminist movement members and those who work closely with the WF but who are not members, tended to view most women in the group as not being feminists; they believed the WM was lacking a feminist ideology.

When I asked what feminism was, I received a wide variety of answers. One member of the WF defined it as women being aware and understanding that they are disadvantaged in every sector of society and taking action in order to bring about change within the system. The member said:

Feminism is about understanding the status of women...that socially, culturally, politically and economically women are side-lined and [...] want to do something about it. Feminism is an ideology and an action... If you understand why you are being discriminated or understand that we are being discriminated against is a first step. It is the awareness that this is not right. It is the norm, but it is not a right... We can see this for example just now when lots of women came out and said they want to aspire for positions. It means they are aware that they should be in those places, otherwise change will not take place. (interview 16/10/2017).

For another member, the core of feminism meant something entirely different—namely ‘valuing’ their feminine virtues of empathy and nurturance. She said, “feminism is [valuing] what is supposed to be feminine virtues...empathy and nurturance.” And lastly, another member defined the term as women

‘occupying’ positions next to men at every echelon of society. She said, “women [being] at every level of society...occupying posts along with men.” Their comments support what Rupp and Taylor (1999) argue, which is that “feminists do not always agree on the definition of feminism or on feminist strategies or practices” (p. 364).

Feminists said women’s groups- in the absence of a coherent sense of the definition of feminism-were perpetuating the same cycle of patriarchy. To them patriarchy is about power which is being misused and abused by WF leaders for various reasons. For one member, the abuse of power was manifest in leaders who were using tactics that only benefited a few, and not the whole group. She explained, “Most women’s organizations do things that are very patriarchal [because] patriarchy is about power...and power games. If you cannot use power to benefit others, then I am not impressed. We have to have leaders that understand that these are women, and not about people, or individuals.” Similarly, leaders abuse their power because they stay too long in their position, often leading to negative results, such as bullying because leaders do not see the limits of their power. This in turn does not help to advance the position of women in general. One member said:

In fact, if you don’t work in a feminist way, you don’t do anything for women. You simply replicate the male patterns of behaviour and those who have power stay in power, they don’t leave. They bully other people. They do horrible things to other women. They have no limits. They fight by any means and the mass of the women continue to suffer. That is what we have in Sierra Leone. (interview 18/08/2017).

These examples show that feminism is a political identity (Della Porta & Diani, 2011; Rupp & Taylor, 1999) that “...does not dictate one ideology or political style” (Rupp & Taylor, 1999: 366). It has also offered unique insights into the interplay of power and abuse of power within the WF that affects some of its members.

The WF’s CI is further weakened due to feminists not attending its meetings. For instance, one member says that she no longer attends meetings because the WF does not have ‘a feminist strategy’. She said, “I don’t personally go now because I don’t see the direction that it is going. You need a feminist strategy. That is what they need. And they don’t, that is why I don’t go anymore.” Another member doesn’t attend meetings because the organization has failed to understand what a feminist leadership is. In fact, she sees that the WF will dissolve soon if it does not strategize its position on feminism. She remarked, “I don’t attend their meetings because I don’t have much faith in the Women’s Forum anymore. I think it is likely to die quiet quickly. The Women’s Forum is a failed attempt at actualising women’s feminist leadership. We need to rethink that.”

Her remark highlights the negative consequences of identity work. Identity work involves the convergence of multiple identities (Glass, 2009) in a movement. Without identity work, issues such as

ideological differences can negatively impact a group's continuity; in some worst cases it can dissolve and become a 'deviant phenomenon' (Polletta & Jaspers, 2001).

5.3.5.3 Diversity Issues

Reger (2002) states that "social movement organizations struggle with and often fail at the task of representing and respecting a diverse membership" (p. 720). Diversity in relation to fragmentation in the WF deals with three different issues. The first issue concerns its member organizations having different aims and objectives. Although they are all advocating for gender equality and empowerment, they each go about it in different ways. Because of this, I often heard women complaining that the WF was not uniform. One member said that due to their differences, they did not share a 'common goal' or 'value'. She said:

It is very difficult to say the women's movement is unified with similar aims. We all want equality, but we go about it in different ways. We have to recognize our fundamental differences between our organizations. Each group has its own distinct characteristic. We don't share a common agreed value. We all have our different values. (interview 18/08/2017).

Another member said that because of the diversity, the WM will never be uniformed. She said, "People always say that the women's movement is one, united, but we are diverse in reality. We have to accept that. We will never have the uniformity. We all have different aims and objectives" (interview 4/10/2017).

Without shared aims, organizations said they do not participate on various causes because they do not fit their aims or objectives. One member said, "There are issues that tend to impact women from forming. The cohesion has been weakened because some people will sacrifice to a greater extent than others because the cause does not meet their aims" (interview 24/9/2017). Compounding this is that women will gossip informally about the cause instead of officially addressing it in group meetings or in other public domains. The same member added, "There are people who think that issues are cropping up that they are against. But that they will sneak [prowl] about it, which is a big problem...instead of addressing them" (interview 12/9/2017). These comments reveal that there are different voices in the WF who do not see themselves as aligned with the WF because of their different organizational aims and objectives. They remain in the WF because they are each fighting for gender equality, a reason for their solidarity (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

The second diversity issue is related to inter-group competition. While increasing their size is a goal of many social movement organizations (SMOs) (Stern, 1999; Gamson, 1975), the diversity of organizations can also breed inter competition, especially if organizations are financially constrained. Many, if not all, members of the organizations I spoke with, including WF executives, complained their

organizations needed funding. In some cases, strong words such as, ‘scrambling’ and ‘crawling’ were used to describe their predicament. For instance, Mary explained, “We are all scrambling to survive. Every organization seeks its own interests. If there is funding for an organization and it’s not really their mandate, they will accept it and do it.”

I argue that much of the inter group competition is because groups have overlapping mandates without a realized niched (Hannan, Carrol & Polos, 2003; Stern, 1999). Stern (1999) argues that “social movement organizations compete with each other as do other organizations.... competition between social movement organizations can be modeled with regard to the degree to which organizational niches overlap” (p. 91). Organizations that do not have a realized niche can experience greater competition (Hannan, Carrol & Polos, 2003; Stern, 1999). But the smaller, or more specialized a SMO’s niche is, the better it has a chance of surviving because it won’t have much competition.

Many of the groups I got to know, including the WF, have wide reaching aims. The WF’s mission to ‘information sharing and influencing policy’ (archival data) is essential to maintain its membership. Principally all women’s organizations are trying to do this in one way or another. As a result, groups viewed the WF as a competitor, competing for projects and implementing them, instead of ‘coordinating’, ‘facilitating’, or ‘regulating’ projects. As a facilitator for instance, it would then be able to call on its members when projects come in. But if it does not, fewer organizations will continue to join the organization. One member remarked, “The Forum is implementing. It isn’t calling on the member organizations anymore to say, ‘This has come in’. It has become an organization that competes with its own members. Lots of people have decided they don’t want to be bothered with this” (interview 18/08/2017). Similarly, on top of allocating projects, another member added that the WF should try to delineate the roles of organizations as a way to stem the competition:

I don’t think the WF should be an implementor. When they have funding to implement they implement. No body stops them. But they should be an overall body disseminating/allocating funds, or picking out who should be facilitating projects, programs. They should have been able to regulate each organization’s role so that there is no inter competition. (interview 4/10/2017).

In some instances, WF leaders will hijack their member’s projects by making decisions without consulting them first. In an executive meeting which I observed, an individual member burst through the door in anger because a decision was made without her, even though she was amongst the members in her organization to have initiated the project. The project was to gather all women’s organizations for a consultative meeting to take stock of who is doing what for the 2018 elections. But instead the WF took the project idea to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children’s Affairs (MSGCA) who then took the lead. In an interview, the member explained her anger:

We approached the WF to bring all the women together to have a stock taking and mapping of the women's movement as we approach [2018] elections... the President took the matter to Ministry [MSWGCA] who basically kidnapped the whole idea and turned it around. We lost our opportunity to lead. The meeting stopped being about the women's movement and became the Ministry's project. But the Ministry has nothing to do with it because it is the Government. The women's movement is non-governmental. You can't be in the women's movement and be part of the Government. The Government can't be in the women's movement unless we are living in a feminist state, which we are not. If you [the WF] are going to give out money why don't you give the money to the people who have been in the movement, who have been doing and holding it together? Why give it to people who are just consultants? This is not democratic.

The member's comment reveals two other layers of contention within the WF. First, when government bodies get involved in a movement's affairs, including in its projects, the movement loses its sense of self-agency. While the state can provide political opportunities and depend on SMOs to achieve their goals in relation to complex issues (Brandes and Engels, 2011; Larmer, 2010; Oliver, 1996;) engaging them in contentious interactions with movements, in particular with SMOs means they must depend on the state to organize its own affairs. Second, when a movement decides to distribute funds from a project to those who are not directly involved with the movement to help implement a project, it disturbs the solidarity of the movement. It robs its members of their hard work in helping to maintain the movement's momentum and efficacy.

The discord helps to answer my fifth sub-research question on how individual differences are resolved in the WF. To resolve the issue, three steps were taken: first, the WF president explained during the executive meeting that the member was not involved at a group meeting where decisions were made on the matter (fieldnotes 19/9/2017). Second, after the meeting, executives made phone calls in an effort to console her. And third, her organization was amongst two other women's groups that helped to implement the project, entitled, 'Consultative Women's Meeting For the 2018 Elections', which was implemented in Kamakwie, a small town in Bombali District in the Northern Province. Needless to say, it is important for a key SMO and its constituents to have a (smaller) niche in order to reduce inter-group competition (Reger, 2002; Stern, 1999). Without realized niches, fragmentation will continue to the extent that some SMOs can dissolve (Stern, 1999; Reger, 2002).

The last diversity issue within the WF is related to minority⁶⁰ members not being well integrated into the group, especially during monthly meetings, which is an opportunity for members to address all types of concerns, including personal and organizational ones. They often attend these meetings as

⁶⁰ The term 'minority' was derived from my participants, which includes lesbian, gay and bisexual women, as well as Muslim women. Because of the sensitivity of the issue I have removed all identifying markers, including names and interview dates.

group leaders in order to push their own agenda forward. But often times, they are ‘afraid’ to speak up out of fear of the negative perceptions of others due to their minority status. One minority member said, “We are forcing our way. We belong there but they are treating us with contempt. They tolerate us, but they don’t encourage us to be there.” Similarly, another member expressed: “The last meeting, I went there with 5 ladies. But they didn’t speak up because they are afraid...other women in the group don’t like us because of our [undisclosed minority status].”

I had a similar experience during the July meeting. After I introduced myself to the WF members, one of its executives whispered in my ear to not speak with a particular minority member. She had said, “Don’t talk to her, she has nothing to say because she is lesbian. She is always talking about lesbian things” (fieldnotes 29/7/2017). Her comment revealed internal group tensions (Polletta & Jasper, 2001) and reflected how some members viewed each other. The executive’s comments showed a prejudice towards that one member and about lesbians in general. Because of the member’s status as a lesbian, the executive believed she did not have a voice or that her voice was not important for my research.

When minority women do speak up in meetings, they still felt not listened to for three reasons. First, because they often present a different perspective from the rest. A member expressed, “Yes, I speak [in meetings], although at times they will not listen because I try to give a radical perspective on many issues.” And second, they felt that some executive members in particular were not looking out for their best interests, but only their own interests. A member said, “Yes, once or twice I have [spoken up during meetings]. But they don’t listen to me...The people in the organization [heading the WF] are just there to manage themselves individually and not for the whole organization, not even the people they are fighting for like us, minority women.” And lastly, they are not consulted for their opinions on group matters due to differences in religion. A member said, “They don’t really ask [undisclosed religion] women for [our] opinions on many things...They are tolerant of [us], but they stick to themselves.” Altogether, the comments made by minority women show that there are multiple identities within the WF. They require a level of identity work involving identity convergence in order to integrate them into the group (Glass, 2009; Snow & McAdam, 2000). Since their identity of ‘who we are’ is not strong, issues of conflict and social relationships has made individuals to feel more marginalized than they are (Polletta & Jasper, 2001).

5.4 Conclusion

As my research has demonstrated, since 1915 women have formed national groups based on their gender trait and a common solidarity, two dimensions described in Della Porta and Diani’s CI formation theory. The first group was the YWCA in 1915, in which their solidarity rested on the social

issue of education for women and girls. The last group to have formed was the WF in 1995 during the Civil War, where women reconstituted their CI to meet the needs of their environment.

The Civil War was a catalyst in bringing women together because they were suffering the most. To ease their suffering women banded together to try and end the war. They established the WF's culture with rules and regulations, such as holding monthly meetings and having a rotational leadership where different women's organizations could get a chance to lead the organization. As an entity providing physical resource support, it allowed for 'new crops of women activists' (Sarah, interview 8/1/2018) to form groups and take up various anti-war activities. Its tactic also allowed for these groups to remain autonomous. The three groups that formed were—the WMP, WOMEN and MARWOPNET. They used various repertoires of contention (Tilly, 1978) to try an end the war, including trying to bring peace to the country and staging elections in 1996 when they seemed like they were not going to happen. In combination with the relentless advocacy efforts of MARWOPNET, the discipline and spirit of volunteerism of WF members, women helped to end the war in 2002.

Post-conflict, the WF has tried to maintain its CI in three ways. First, its executives conduct face-to-face interactions at the community level and in everyday spaces, the first mechanism in Della Porta and Diani's CI maintenance theory. They pay visits to members when someone is ill or deceased and will sometimes make a *purse* (or donations) to those members. These various activities help to engender a CI. Second, the WF partakes in celebrating UN IWD and the 16 Days of Activism to end gender-based violence (GBV). Both events showing the continuity of the WF's collective actions over 'time' and 'space,' a dimension found in Della Porta & Diani's (2006) second mechanism of CI maintenance theory. In terms of 'time', the WF has effectively mobilized its constituents on various key issues that have resulted in many state level policy outcomes. Some of these policies include: two Women's Manifestos (2002 & 2007) and the Women's Declaration. In terms of 'space', UN IWD is funding constraint, but it has helped women to come together to discuss their plight on various media platforms and push for implementation of their policies to Government. In 2011 for instance, it succeeded in launching the Free Health Care Act for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under the age of five. Third, the WF uses monthly meetings and ICTs such as social media platforms for information sharing, two maintenance tools that I discovered which are not discussed in Della Porta and Diani's maintenance theory. The meetings provide the WF an array of opportunities to show its cultural rituals and symbols that engender CI, including conducting meetings in Krio, the lingua franca of Sierra Leone, as a method of inclusion and having a preset agenda that gives multiple opportunities for members to be seen and be heard, ranging from volunteering to conduct Muslim and Christian prayers, hosting the meeting, to sharing organizational activities and concerns. As for ICTs, they are inexpensive tools that help to organize and spur the WF's lobbying and advocacy events, while engendering an

'online' CI. Yet, the same tools have also corroded the WF's CI as administrators often censor what is allowed and not allowed and decide who gets deleted from the group.

That said, the WF's CI pre and post-conflict has been fragmented for three reasons. First, the only way for women to come together is through a national crisis. Apart from the Civil War, women have also come together during other crises, including the 2014-2015 Ebola Crisis and the recent mudslide incident. While crisis is a catalyst for CI, the absence of a crisis suggests that women are not unified. Second, there are ideological differences within the WF. Since its formation, women have had different definitions of the WF. While some called it a 'forum', others saw it as a psychosocial support center for women to discuss their psychological issues. Today, the contention includes feminists in and outside the WF who say the WF (and the WM) lacks a feminist ideology and that most women, especially WF leaders, are not feminists because they are perpetuating the cycle of patriarchy which is about misusing and abusing their powers to only benefits a few members, and not the whole group. Their stance on a feminism has led them to not only see themselves as different from others but to also not attend meetings.

And lastly, the WF is fragmented due to three diversity related issues. First, WF members do not see themselves as sharing a common aim, despite the fact that they are all advocating for gender equality and empowerment in various ways. This has impacted women from coming together on specific issues when issues are not related to their aims. Second, the WF competes with its members for projects because it has not been able to carve out a niche for itself within the wider environment of women's groups. In some cases, some groups do not want to join it. Finally, minority groups are not well integrated into the group, especially during monthly meetings. They feel they are not heard, are not consulted on group matters and are afraid to speak up because of their different viewpoints. Altogether, there are multiple and diverse voices within the WF, and they need a great level of identity work and management.

Chapter Six: Comparative Analysis

6.1 Introduction

This chapter's main aim is to compare the similarities and differences of how the Women's Forum (WF) and the Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI) have built and maintained their collective identities (CIs). Their formation similarities and differences are presented first, followed by their maintenance phase. A third section on fragmentation is presented as the last comparison.

6.2 Similarities and Differences Between the Two Organizations

6.2.1 Formation

Similarities

There are many similarities between the WF and SLUDI's formations. First, the eleven-year Civil War (from 1991-2002) was a catalyst in uniting their members. Both persons with disabilities (PWDs) and women's lives were adversely affected by the war in one way or another. For instance, while PWDs scrambled to form disabled people's organizations (DPOs) in order to secure humanitarian resources by writing to non-government organizations (NGOs), women bore the burden of taking care of their children, husbands and wounded soldiers. My finding on conflict as a catalyst in bringing people together and solidifying group identities is supported by social movement literature and is my contribution to the collective identity (CI) formation processes.

Second, both groups formed their CIs based on their social traits and a common solidarity, two dimensions found in the first mechanism of Della Porta & Diani's (2006) CI formation. In the former, traits can be understood in terms of class, gender, ethnicity, to name a few. For the WF, women identified with their gender trait; for SLUDI, persons with disabilities (PWDs) identified with their disability trait. Each disability category has a common meaning in Krio and different dialects. For instance, the most common name for all categories of disability in Krio was *crippled*, *die fut*, *die ahn*, or 'dead feet,' 'dead hands.'

As for their solidarity, they each had different reasons to come together. For women, they formed the WF in 1995 because the war was too much for them, primarily for reasons I already stated in the opening paragraph. To ease their suffering, women wanted to try and end what they called, 'a senseless war'. For SLUDI, PWDs shared similar experiences of discrimination and stigmatization, including being discriminated against in the job market where employers often automatically disqualify them because they are unable to physically access their offices. Their shared experiences mobilized them to form SLUDI in 1995 for self-representation so that they could move away from being treated as

‘charity’ cases by non-government organizations (NGOs) to speaking unilaterally to the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) on their collective grievances.

Third, both groups share similar organizational structures. This can be broken down in terms of the way they are structurally set up, their roles and sources of funding. In the former, apart from volunteers making up their organizations, both are governed by elected officials, encompassing of a president and a national executive board (NEB). These members are elected during annual general meetings (AGMs) (for SLUDI elections occur every three years; for the WF it is every four years). Both of their NEB members meet once a month, sometimes more in case there is an emergency. Moreover, NEB is in charge of maintaining the group’s solidarity as I will touch upon later in the maintenance section. In terms of their mandates, both groups are formally set up to achieve the wider lobbying and advocacy goals of their movements. They are both concerned with advancing the position of their constituents, who are made up DPOs and women’s organizations. To partly achieve this aim, they implement projects and programs, in which they both rely on the same sources of funding: membership fees, national and foreign funding. Nationally, they both depend on the Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children’s Affairs (MSWGCA) for annual subsidies (for SLUDI that happens through the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD)). Funds are also used to pay executives’ daily remittances.

Differences

There are two main differences between the two group’s CI formations. First, SLUDI’s formation had two issues—namely inter-competition and diversity issues. Inter-competition was created mainly due to SLUDI not being able to carve out a realized niche, or a specific aim, within the larger environment of DPOs. Having a niche enhances the survival of a SMO because it will not experience too much competition from others. In SLUDI’s case, it was carrying out the same activity during the war as its constituents—namely writing to NGOs for humanitarian resources. This resulted in DPOs seeing it as a competitor and doubting its role. In terms of diversity issues, PWDs have different afflictions and needs. Because of these differences, PWDs felt SLUDI could not represent their diverse voices.

And the second difference was that WF members were ideologically divided on the WF’s purpose. Women defined the WF in different ways, ranging from a ‘forum’ where any and all issues could be discussed, ‘loose organization’ in which women can come to nurture one another, network and collaborate, to ‘a psychosocial support center’ where women could address their psychological issues. Although not all members must share a SMO’s CI, it can become difficult to manage if it does not meet these different expressions/needs.

At the same time, the differences expressed above did not hinder the collective agency of both groups during the war. In fact, both groups went on to mobilize their constituents using various repertoires of contention (Tilly, 1978) in the form of protests, rallies and media interventions to try and bring about socio-political change for themselves (and the country). For example, SLUDI mobilized PWDs to frame their rights as human rights by sensitizing their communities that they have a right to be recognized as a person before anything and protest for policies and laws that would be inclusive of PWDs. As for the WF, three groups formed and took up various anti-war campaigns in an effort to end the war. Partly due to women's tireless efforts, discipline and 'spirit of volunteerism', the war ended in 2002. Altogether, differences during a group's CI formation—be with different women's ideologies or multiple categories of disability—can be mitigated through collective action. It is through collective action that a group's CI is engendered.

6.2.2 Maintenance

Similarities

Post-Civil War until the writing of this paper, the DM and WM maintained their memberships in very similar ways. First, they both depend on their executive members to make face-to-face interactions at the community level and in everyday spaces. This is the first dimension of Della Porta & Diani's (2006) CI maintenance theory. While SLUDI's executives pay visits to their membership for moral and professional support, including resolving issues between PWDs and conducting DPO elections, WF executives provide support to those who are ill or bereaved. In particular, they call on their members to make *a purse*, or a contribution to those suffering members. Both of these activities help to engender a CI.

Second, the two groups use information communication technologies (ICTs) such as telephones and social media platforms as forms of information sharing, a maintenance tool that I discovered that is not touched upon by Della Porta and Diani. In terms of social media platforms, they are used because they are inexpensive activist tools that help to not only deliver messages instantly to many members at once, but also because they help to organize and spur lobbying and advocacy events. While these tools have the power to engender a 'online' CI, they also have the potential to create group discord/fragmentation when group members leave forums because they do not feel supported, or when administrators censor what is allowed and not allowed, as well as who gets to be deleted.

Third, both groups create common meaning and experiences over 'time' and 'space', the second dimension of Della Porta and Diani's (2006) second mechanism of CI maintenance theory. While 'time' is measured by how often ('visibly') a group makes itself seen through protests and other public initiatives, 'space' is how the groups try to connect their lobbying and advocacy aims with international

networks who share their struggles to underscore the reasons why they must still fight on. In terms of ‘time’, both groups have been successful in mobilizing their constituents through various repertoires of contention (Tilly, 1978), including staging rallies and discussing their plight on media platforms to achieve several key policies. For instance, for SLUDI, it established the Disability Act in 2009 and the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities (NCPD) in 2012; and for the WF, in collaboration with other women’s groups, it produced Two Women’s Manifestos (in 2002 and 2007) and the Women’s Declaration.

That said, both movements in general suffer from the implementation of relevant Government policies. The key reason being due to lack of political will. For example, although the Disability Act was enacted in 2009, PWDs are still unable to access basic services, such as proper housing and education or to be voted for in politics. In the latter, without being voted for, PWDs cannot contribute to any nationwide decision-making processes.

Regarding ‘space’ in Della Porta and Diani’s theory, both groups participate in the United Nations (UN) international day celebrations for women and for PWDs. For SLUDI, it partakes in the December 3rd United Nations International Day for Persons with Disabilities (UN IDPD), and for the WF it is the March 8th United Nations International Day for Women (UN IWD) and the 16 Days of Activism to end gender-based violence (GBV). Since their formations both groups have followed the UN’s global themes, with sometimes adapting the themes to fit their goals. Although both experience funding constraints due to their dependency on membership fees and national and external funding which are often delayed, the event is necessary in engendering a CI. They both bring their members together in various locations, discuss their plight on various media platforms (i.e. newspapers, television and radio) and stage rallies in order to push their agendas forward to the GoSL.

Different from SLUDI though, the WF has used UN IWD to present position papers in order to implement their policies. For instance, the WF in 2011 presented a position paper asking for the reduction of maternal infant mortality rates which resulted in a launching of the Free Health Care Act for pregnant women, lactating mothers and children under the age of five.

Differences

There is one distinguishing difference between SLUDI and the WF’s maintenance tools: SLUDI does not conduct monthly meetings like the WF. WF meetings are held on the last Saturday of every month at the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) and provide the WF an opportunity to employ several cultural rituals and symbols that engender CI, ranging from conducting the meeting in Krio, the lingua franca of Sierra Leone, as a method of inclusion, singing slogans such as “Let Sisterly Love Continue,” to having a preset agenda in which members are given multiple opportunities to be

seen and to be heard, ranging from volunteering to conduct Muslim and Christian prayers, hosting the meeting, to sharing organizational activities and concerns.

At the same time, both the WF and SLUDI have fragmented CIs today. I touch on fragmentation as part of CI maintenance processes in the next section, while underscoring the similarities and differences between the two.

6.3 Fragmentation as part of collective identity processes

Similarities

Both the WF and SLUDI share four similarities regarding their fragmented CIs. First, they both struggle with inter group competition. As I have already mentioned earlier in the formation section of this chapter, a main reason for SMOs to compete with each other is if they do not have realized niches, or specific aims. The more they overlap in their aims, the more competition they will experience. Organizationally, both the WF and SLUDI have aims and objectives that are similar to their member organizations, which is largely translated as advocating and lobbying on issues related to the advancement of their members. Sharing these overlapping niches is particularly problematic for a movement because they must compete with members for funding in order to implement their projects.

For SLUDI, competing with its member organizations has been an issue since its inception in 1995. For instance, after it formed, DPOs were afraid that their roles would be replaced by it because it was performing the same activity as them—namely writing to NGOs for humanitarian support. As for the WF, competition has left many of its members dissatisfied. They would rather have a coordinating body who can call on them when projects come in. Having realized niches for both organizations would not only help to minimize inter group competition, but it would also help them to look out for their members best interests.

Second, the WF and SLUDI have diversity related issues. Most SMOs struggle with this issue and SLUDI and the WF are no exceptions to the rule. Even though DPOs and women's organizations, as well as SLUDI and the WF, are all working to advance their positions in society, they all go about it in different ways, with different aims and objectives. As a result, members often feel that they do not share a common goal within the WF or SLUDI. For instance, following SLUDI's inception, members doubted its ability to represent their diverse voices because of their different afflictions and needs. Similarly, women's organizations often do not join WF projects because they do not fit their aims, weakening the group's overall cohesion.

Third, the WF and SLUDI struggle with ideological differences between their members, specifically related to the group's CI. For the DM for example, one member formed a countermovement like group called, the National Disability Congress (NDC) in 2002 because it believed the DM should be

an economically based movement, providing real economic incentives to PWDs, such as *gara* ('tidying'), manufacturing of assistive devices (i.e. crutches and wheel chairs) and agriculture so that they can advance themselves in society. But because most of SLUDI's membership left to join the DPO, SLUDI blocked it from registering with it. The end result was that they engaged in a power struggle for two years until the NDC dissolved due to lack of funding.

As for the WM, feminists in and outside the WF drew boundaries around themselves because they felt the movement lacked a feminist ideology and said that most of the women were not feminists. Although they argued for feminism, each of the feminists I interviewed gave a different definition of the term—ranging from tackling patriarchal attitudes through collective action, honing feminine virtues of nurturance and empathy to having women represented in every echelon of society next to men. Their varied statements suggest that between feminists, feminism does not have a consensual definition. They argue for a feminist ideology because it would prevent leaders perpetuating the cycle of patriarchy which is about misusing and abusing power. Lack of a feminist ideology has not only made feminists to see themselves as being different from the rest of the group, but they also do not attend WF meetings, which is weakening both the WF and the WM's CIs.

Four, in both groups, minority groups do not feel that they are being heard. For SLUDI, women with disabilities (WwDs) in particular feel that the men in the organization do not listen to them even when they contribute to decision-making processes. This has resulted in them saying that they do not feel belonged to the group and that SLUDI has a weak CI. As for women, the minority groups—lesbian, bisexual, transgendered and Muslims women—feel they are not being heard, especially during meetings because they often express a different view on matters and are not consulted for their opinions on issues. In some cases, they are afraid to speak during meetings because of the reactions of others in the group.

Differences

One fragmentary CI difference between the two groups is that SLUDI has unresolved issues with certain members of its constituency. Some of these members have often tried to contest SLUDI's elections and obstruct its tactics. For instance, some of these members were involved in a counter-movement like group formation, called the National Disability Coalition (NDC), which occurred during my fieldwork. They formed on October 24, 2017 in reaction to a protest SLUDI made at State House the day before on October 23, 2017 for the MSWGCA to release the NCPD's subventions. MSWGCA had withheld the NCPD's subventions because it had failed to send its 2015-2016 financial reports. The formation of the NDC has not only divided the disabled community but has won over some, if not many, of SLUDI's members. For SLUDI, the situation is an intractable affair to the extent that a dialogue will not resolve the issue mainly because the NDC leaders want to take over SLUDI.

In summary, there are very few differences between SLUDI and the WF in terms of their CIs. They both formed during the Civil War on the basis of their social trait and a common solidarity and have maintained their members in almost identical ways. Despite being able to mobilize their constituents for collective action and having achieved several key policy outcomes, they share similar CI struggles with regards to funding and managing multiple identities within their organizations.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions, Recommendations & Reflections

7.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present my conclusions, recommendations and reflections. The conclusions section provides a summary of my research, including its relevance and main findings. The second section draws on recommendations based on interviews as well as my own. And in the final section, I reflect on using Della Porta and Diani's (2006) collective identity (CI) theory in my research, as well as the limitations of my research, while also contemplating further directions for future research.

7.2 Conclusions

7.2.1 Summary Introduction

My research focused on the CI formation and maintenance of the disability and women's movements in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Specifically, I looked at their key social movement organizations (SMOs): The Sierra Leone Union on Disability Issues (SLUDI) and the Women's Forum (WF). I chose these two movements and analyzed their organizational structures because they are among the most marginalized groups in Sierra Leone/Africa.

Despite global progress, in Africa women and persons with disabilities (PWDs) continue to face multiple socio-political, economic and cultural barriers. Women are often denied their basic human right to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, especially in areas where poverty is extreme, and access to information and services is limited. PWDs face double discrimination due to their disability. In particular, PWDs suffer severe negative societal perceptions as burdensome, helpless objects of pity. Mostly unable to find work, and therefore economically unproductive, they stand virtually no chance to find adequate health care, education, or further employment opportunities. To address these limitations, the United Nations (UN) has prioritized the needs of people living in poverty - including PWDs - in the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): SDG 5 pertains to achieving gender equality, and SDG 10 relates to reducing economic inequalities.

One way of closing the inequality gap is by strengthening SMOs who act as civil society organizations (CSOs) who are a bridge between the state and marginalized groups. SLUDI and the WF are two key SMOs who try to represent their groups to the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) in order to advance their positions in society. How they go about achieving their aims on the ground is contingent upon the strength of their CIs, or their member's common interests, experiences and solidarities.

Existing research on CI processes in Western contexts show that they play a key role in the success of social movements (SMs). The larger the number of individuals that identify with a SM, the bigger the probability that it is able to mobilize and achieve its aims. There is, however, a gap in the research on CI processes in African contexts. Building upon Della Porta & Diani's (2006) concept of CI formation and maintenance, I conducted qualitative research in Sierra Leone for six months to see if the same processes work in non-Western contexts.

My main research question was: *How do SLUDI and the Women's Forum build and maintain their collective identity?*

7.2.2 Main Findings

My research has four main findings that have added to the literature of CI processes in African social movements. First, I found that (socio-political) conflict is a catalyst for bringing social actors to form a group CI. When people's daily lives are adversely affected by a conflict, it provides a good enough reason for them to come together and form a CI. This was the case with the WF and SLUDI. They both formed their collective identities (CIs) in 1995 during Sierra Leone's brutal eleven-year Civil War (1991-2002). Although women first came together in 1915 through the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) - based on 'traditional' social issues such as education - they reconstituted themselves in 1995 with the formation of the WF to fit the needs of their environment. (I use inverted commas to demarcate words used by my participants throughout this section.) The atrocities of the war adversely impacted the lives of women and PWDs, especially in terms of securing limited resources and their emotional suffering. These reasons served to mobilize them to come together and form their groups.

Second, forming a group identity is often based on common traits (i.e. gender, class, ethnicity, etc) and solidarity. For the WF and SLUDI, the members social traits, or physical characteristics and solidarity served as their sense of 'we'. These two dimensions are highlighted in Della Porta and Diani's (2006) CI formation theory. For women, they came together as women and their solidarity was based on the fact that they were 'suffering the most' as they had the burden of providing for their families and taking care of wounded soldiers. To curtail their suffering, they wanted to make an impact and try to end what they called, 'a senseless war.' Thus, they formed the WF in 1995 and took up various anti-war activities.

As for PWDs, their disability trait and shared experiences of stigmatization and discrimination connected them. In the latter, from my sixth months with SLUDI, I found that each disability has a common meaning in Krio, the lingua franca of Sierra Leone, and in different dialects. For instance, the most common name for **any** PWD in Krio was *crippled*, *die fut*, *die ahn*, or 'dead feet,' 'dead hands.' In

terms of discrimination, PWDs described their situation during the war as ‘deplorable’ because they were discriminated against in every sector of society— excluded in mainstream education, living in dilapidated housing, not finding employment. Based on my fieldwork, I saw first-hand how many of these issues persist today. Prospective employers automatically disqualify PWDs because they cannot physically reach their premises, which results in them begging in the streets in order to meet their daily needs and take care of their families. Their collective grievances during the war mobilized PWDs to seek self-representation to move away from being treated as charity cases by non-government organizations (NGOs). They mobilized to become autonomous entities who could speak unilaterally about their issues to the GoSL.

Third, maintaining a group’s identity is key to its continuity. Maintenance is produced through various activities that in turn help engender the group’s CI and produce new networks for it. Post-conflict (2002-present), both SLUDI and the WF partake in many similar activities that help to engender their CIs. Both depend on their executive members to make face-to-face interactions at the community level and in everyday spaces to foster relationships and build new networks - two dimensions in Della Porta and Diani’s (2006) first CI mechanism of maintenance theory. For SLUDI, its executives conduct DPO elections and resolve personal issues between PWDs, and between PWDs and non-disabled persons. These visits produced several new networks, especially during post-rehabilitation efforts. For the WF, executives pay visits to and make *a purse* (‘donation’) for members who are ill or bereaved, helping to foster deeper bonds between women in the group.

Also, both groups create common meaning and experiences over ‘time’ and ‘space’, the last mechanism of Della Porta and Diani’s (2006) CI maintenance theory. ‘Time’ is captured by the group’s mobilization tactics, including demonstrations, holding media interventions, and/or other public initiatives. Since their formation, both groups have successfully mobilized their constituents to establish several key policies and institutions, including establishing the Disability Act in 2009 and the Women’s Declaration.

‘Space’ is the group’s ability to connect its goals locally and internationally with other groups – further away—who share its struggle in order to underscore why it must still fight on. For both groups, their lobbying and advocacy goals are connected to wider United Nations (UN) annual celebrations, which seek to advance the position of PWDs and women: the December 3rd UN International Day for Persons with Disabilities (UN IDPD); and the March 8th UN International Women’s Day (UN IWD), and the 16 Days of Activism to end gender-based violence (GBV). Despite facing financial constraints to organize these events, the events are an opportunity to enhance their group’s solidarity. They gather their members in different locations to celebrate, going on various media platforms to discuss their plight, and stage rallies and protests.

Moreover, both groups use information-sharing - with the help of various information communication technologies (ICT) - as a maintenance tool. This aspect of CI maintenance is a direct outcome of my research and is not touched upon by Della Porta and Diani. ICTs, such as social media platforms in particular, help to organize and spur lobbying and advocacy events, and provide member support. Monthly meetings are another maintenance tool; again, this is an important finding from my research, not touched on by the authors. WF meetings have been part of its culture since 1995 and continue to provide an opportunity for it to employ several cultural rituals and symbols that engender CI, such as using Krio, the lingua franca of Sierra Leone, as a method of inclusion and establishing a preset agenda where multiple opportunities are given to members to be seen and to be heard. These range from volunteering to conducting Muslim and Christian prayers, hosting the meeting, to sharing organizational activities and concerns.

Finding number four: fragmentation can be part of a group's CI formation and maintenance processes, an issue that is not discussed in Della Porta and Diani's theory. Fragmentation is counterintuitive for groups, yet an important factor to consider as it can cause frictions within the group, impacting the group's cohesion and continuity. It can arise in different ways, even across a movement, be it a highly organized or loosely held one. Both SLUDI and the WF share three specific fragmentary issues: (i) both have inter-group competition issues: during SLUDI's formation it was competing for humanitarian resources, even with its own members. The WF post-conflict is also competing with its members, even sometimes hijacking its members' projects. Key SMOs who are not able to carve out 'realized niches' (Stern, 1999), or a specific goal, within their larger environments will not be able to look out for their members best interests - leading to fragmentation. (ii) Both groups struggle with diversity issues in similar ways. Similarly, minority groups in the WF and SLUDI feel they are not being heard. When individuals feel they are not heard, it can lead them to feel more marginalized. Also, group members feel they do not share a common goal with their key SMOs. Since SLUDI's inception, its members did not believe they shared a common goal due to their differences in afflictions and needs. Similarly, for the WF, its members feel they do not share a common goal because of their different aims and objectives, even though they are all advocating for gender equality. This has resulted in some organizations not taking part in collective issues because the issues do not fit their aims. Although members do not have to share the same aims and objectives, it can be difficult for a key SMO to mobilize its constituents on an issue if they do not all agree. (iii) Both groups' members share ideological differences over their CIs. Ideological differences can result in a battle for power or members drawing boundaries between themselves and others. In the former, the National Disability Congress (NDC), a movement-counter movement (M-CM) group, formed in 2002 in an attempt to make the disability movement (DM) an economically based movement by providing real economic

opportunities for PWDs, such as *gara* ('tidying'), manufacturing of assistive devices and agriculture so that PWDs can be self-empowered. The result was that SLUDI lost many of its members to the NDC and both engaged in a two-year internal power struggle until the NDC dissolved. Ideological differences within a group can pit members against each to the extent they battle each other for control, splintering a movement's CI. In the WF, feminists in and outside the WF drew boundaries around themselves because they felt the women's movement (WM) lacked a feminist ideology and claimed that most of the women were not feminists. Despite the absence of a consensual definition, they argued that without a dogmatic feminist ideology, WF leaders perpetuated the cycle of patriarchy with its misuse and abuse of power. The result was (and continues to be) that they see themselves differently from others and do not attend WF meetings, further weakening the WF/WM's CI. Taken together, the above stated processes help to understand how CI processes work in African social movements.

7.3 Recommendations

Throughout my research process I actively engaged with my participants to identify possible solutions for the issues that they themselves raised. I first present one of their recommendations, which also follows logically from my own findings. This recommendation is particularly suited for the WF. Its members advocated that it should focus on being a coordinating body instead of an implementer. A concrete way that was suggested by participants, is that the WF develop a database of the sectors its member organizations are working in. These sectors could include politics, education, health, micro-finance, to name a few. By doing so, whenever funding is available for a project, those working on that sector could then decide how the funds can be used and lead the project. For example, during elections, whichever organizations are working on politics should take the lead while everyone else is there to give (extra) support.

As for my own recommendations for the two organizations, I recommend they engage in 'identity work' (Glass, 2009; Einwohner, Reger & Myers, 2008; Snow & McAdam, 2000). Identity work is a process that involves social actors in negotiating and regulating their CI. For Glass (2009) it is also about 'identity convergence' or integrating those who feel left out into a group (Glass, 2009). How to go about this can involve a plethora of strategies and I propose two of my own.

First, I recommend the two groups raise the consciousness of those who feel they are not being heard due to their identity status (i.e. minority groups, or PWDs who are underrepresented). This can be done in three ways: first, the leader or a member who is versatile or trained in discussing sensitive issues can conduct a group workshop. The workshop should be given before/during a group's meeting where there will be a good turn-out. By giving such a workshop, members will be given valuable insights and

new perspectives, which in turn can help a group to move forward in the work that it is involved in. Second, group members should try to attend workshops geared towards managing diversity. Like conducting a workshop, attending a workshop can also provide unique insights that can then be shared with the group. And lastly, in order to give space for these members, members who often take the lead in many decision making should sometimes take a step back and be quiet. This “entails not setting the group’s agenda, assuming leadership, or determining priorities” (Starhawk, 2017: no page number). It also entails including them in leadership positions, not just as members within the group (ibid). The key to achieving these three suggestions is to make those who feel excluded to feel more welcomed in the group, not more marginalized.

And second, I recommend that SLUDI and WF leaders establish some kind of system where members can give their input—comments and/or suggestions. Suggestions help to improve an organization’s internal processes by providing ideas—big and small. One tool that many organizations often use, including non-profit ones, is suggestion boxes—they can be in the form of a physical box or an online suggestion box since almost everyone possesses a mobile phone. Not only is a suggestion box a safe way for keeping messages private, it also helps to motivate members and give them opportunities to contribute to decision making within their organizations. Taking it a bit further, the box can be tailored to suit specific organizational needs, such as how to boost membership morale, motivate them, or even what group activities members can do together to engender group CI. From here discussions can be held to decide on a point of action for moving the group forward.

7.4 Reflections

7.4.1 Use of Della Porta and Diani’s Collective Identity Theory

The use of Della Porta & Diani’s (2006) theory in a non-Western/Sierra Leonean context has proven to be useful in my research. In general, the mechanisms they describe were consistent with my observations, suggesting that the same/similar ‘Western’ mechanisms work in African contexts.

One possible factor for the applicability of Western descriptors to the Sierra Leonean context is that their mechanisms are static in the sense that they can always be found within most, if not all, social movements today, and even across time. In my research for instance, for the women’s movement which has been in existence since 1915, the topics that form the core of women’s solidarity - such as education and women’s health - have remained unchanged over time, despite their ever-changing socio-economic environment. While they reconstituted themselves during the Civil War to fit their specific needs (and continue to do so), their CI is still based on the same general issues—they continue to work on socially based issues, including education, women’s health, to name a few. One possible explanation for this ‘time-static’ state of the women’s movement is that “many organizations, especially older ones that may

be susceptible to inertia or those dominated by one or two powerful individuals with set views, do not frequently revise their sense of ‘we’” (Saunders, 2008: 231).

The maintenance mechanisms described by Della Porta and Diani were particularly fitting for the Sierra Leonean environment. Sierra Leone is a country with very deep and active communities at its base. People often visit one another and participate in many socially based activities. The authors’ description of ‘direct face-to-face interactions at the communal level and in everyday spaces’ (p.95) was very fitting as a way to maintain the two (WM and DM) groups’ CIs.

In addition, Della Porta and Diani’s use of the word “culture” was useful in understanding both groups’ ‘ritual practices’ and symbols, such as the types of slogans chanted, and banners waved during their protests to heighten theatricality. In fact, I observed that elements of SLUDI’s and the WF’s protest culture were the same—namely their continued use of the same ‘repertoires of contention’ (Tilly, 1978). Shared symbols and rituals across movements suggest that if they are active within the same environment they will resemble each other across many features. In fact, as I discovered there are very few differences between the two groups CI formation and maintenance processes. Altogether, at a group level, CI tends to be a static, or a permanent phenomenon, especially in environments where social actors have traditionally defined themselves with one CI and have predominately used the same set of cultural practices.

7.4.2 Research Limitations

In reflecting on my research, I find there are several limitations, but I will only focus on three. First, to understand the identity formation processes of the disability and women’s movements from a historical perspective, I had to rely heavily on those who were there to witness their formations. Those people were few in number; most were either deceased, had relocated to the outskirts of Freetown or were too aged to talk about the event. Sometimes, people I interviewed had difficulty recalling precise dates and events. In some cases, I had to re-interview people twice in order to make sure my information was valid. Future research should either try to study movements when they are in the process of forming to get a better understanding of the specific issues involved in creating a CI or focus on their present-day CI formations.

Second, my data for the two groups were unbalanced, particularly for the WF because I spent less time with it. Whereas I could go more in depth with the DM about its issues, for the WF it was mostly on a ‘touch and go’ basis. Also, I conducted my research with the WF during the wet/rainy season. Often, I would schedule interviews, but they would be canceled due to the rain. Also, because of the rain, the WF had very little activity from July to mid-September. Thus, it would have been better to

get more data during the non-wet season. More so, making adequate comparisons between groups requires spending equal time with their organizations.

And finally, although I intended to verify my interviews with archival data, it was difficult for two reasons. First, both movements did not keep good records of their lobbying and advocacy activities. Most of the time, I was able to discern their activities based on press releases and receipts of events, which did not significantly add to my data analysis. Keeping records of their activities is an area that both organizations can work towards because having a file on lobbying and advocacy activities can help to see which ones worked well and which ones did not; ones that did not work can be learning lessons for them. And second, I was limited to how much archival information I could see in the WF. While I was initially given the green light early on in my research process, it was halted only after two days of consultation for privacy reasons. As a result, I relied heavily on interviews throughout my data collection phase. It would have been better to use another research method for verification, such as focus group discussions (FDGs); although I did use FDGs in the disability movement (DM) chapter, they were not entirely helpful for the WM. Altogether, future comparative research should devote equal and more time between organizations, while focusing on current CI formation processes using enhanced research tools in order to help to represent CI processes from different angles.

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Annex

List of Tables

Table 1 Interview Guide for Movement Founders, Organizers and Activists

The structure provides a table for each of the issue areas that I addressed during the interview. The topic is displayed in light purple color and the interview question(s) in the main-field/body. Three smaller fields are added at the bottom of the table to show the key issues, entitled “subject matter”, “perpetuation questions” (incase the interviewee does not understand the question and/or is not talkative) and “specification questions” (used to narrow down the question in order to address its specific issues and to get the interviewee to expand on their perceptions and beliefs) (Peters, 2014: 9):

TOPIC: A history of the interviewee’s involvement with the particular organization and with activism more broadly.		
<p>So you are involved in an organization. The organization seems to be important for many people, including yourself.</p> <p>How would you describe your involvement in the organization? What does the organization <u>really</u> mean to you, as a Founder/ key member, or organizer?</p>		
Subject Matter	Perpetuation	Specification
<p>Key issues:</p> <p>Individual definition,</p> <p>Involvement/Activism</p>	<p>How long have you been involved in the organization?</p> <p>Can you recall the context?</p> <p>Why did you found/join the organization?</p> <p>What motivates you to still be involved in the organization?</p>	<p>Do you remember exactly when you joined the organization?</p> <p>Is there a specific reason/reasons why you founded/decided to join the organization?</p> <p>Is there a specific reason or reasons why you are still involved in the organization?</p>
TOPIC: The interviewee’s reflections on the role of the organization—its structure and processes in		

determining its aims and participation in activism.		
The role of an organization is not always easy to understand. What do you think is the role of your organization? How do you think it has managed to achieve its aims and take action collectively?		
Subject Matter	Perpetuation	Specification
Key issues: Role of organization, structure, participation	<p>How would you define the organization?</p> <p>How is the organization different from other organizations in terms of its culture, aims, goals, and strategies?</p> <p>How would you define success within your organization?</p> <p>How has the organization achieved or tried to achieve its aims either on the ground and/or internationally in the past 5-10 years?</p> <p>Which events do you think were successful, and why?</p> <p>In what ways has the organization gotten involved with other organizations locally and/or internationally?</p>	<p>What is the organization trying to do? (Or What does it do?)</p> <p>Can you give specific examples of some of the aims and strategies of the organization?</p> <p>What does success mean to you for this organization?</p> <p>What activities has the organization participated in either locally and/or internationally in the 5-10 years? Can you give me a few examples? Are there some events that stand out for you?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>What are some of the ways the organization tries to get involved on the ground and/or internationally?</p>
TOPIC: The interviewee’s reflections of what it means to be a woman/girl or a person with a disability, or an organizer for a woman’s/ PWDs organization.		
Sometimes being a woman, a person with disabilities, and/or both, or working for such an organization can be difficult. What does it mean to be a woman/ a person with a disability in the organization, or someone working for the organization? How has your experience been?		
Subject Matter	Perpetuation	Specification
Key issues:	What kind of support is there	Can you give specific examples

<p>Informal communication networks, interaction, and mutual support</p>	<p>for the members of the organization?</p> <p>How do people within the organization communicate or get support for their needs? How are resources spent on developing and maintaining relationships, either within the organization or with its allies on the outside? Are there specific tools that you think would be more helpful to the organization and its members but it is not being used due to lack of resources? What are they?</p>	<p>of how you get support or how others get support?</p> <p>What kind of communication tools do you use mostly in the organization? Are there some that could be used more often? How much time and money do you spend on developing and maintaining relationships in and outside the organization? Can you give specific examples?</p>
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TOPIC: The challenges that participants experienced as a result of differences and conflicts between various actors in the movement due to difference in ideology, goals and strategy.

Often times people in an organization do not see eye to eye, or agree on everything all the time. There will be ideas, goals, and strategies that you will not agree with but that others will, and vice versa. This can sometimes cause internal problems. How would you describe your own experience in dealing with this issue? How would you describe the organization’s strategy to handle this?

Subject Matter	Perpetuation	Specification
<p>Key issues: Conflicts/differences, reconciliation</p>	<p>Has there been a situation or situations where you or others did not agree with the organization’s idea, goal or strategy?</p> <p>How was the situation dealt with?</p>	<p>Can you give a specific context in which you disagreed with the organization on an issue? Have others disagreed? Why? What did other people say about the situation /situations? Were there specific comments on the cause of the problem?</p>

	<p>What do you think was the reason/cause of the problem?</p> <p>Could the situation been dealt with differently or in another way?</p>	<p>Do you agree with how it was dealt? Why, or why not?</p>
<p>TOPIC: The challenges of the interviewee in trying to organize around intersections of class, gender, and so on.</p>		
<p>Within your organization there are other factors such as class, gender and so on, which can affect the way people come together, how it organizes itself, and achieves its aims. What are some of your experiences in trying to organize around these issues? What are some of the challenges and solutions to mitigating these issues?</p>		
Subject Matter	Perpetuation	Specification
<p>Key issues:</p> <p>Gender, class, age</p> <p>The classification of contentious identities</p> <p>The broader implications of multiple identities in a movement</p>	<p>How easy or difficult has it been to organize people based on gender, class and age within the organization?</p> <p>How do you make sure everyone is represented or given a voice when you for example decide to take action or come together for a meeting?</p> <p>What opportunities are given to people to be represented and get involved in the organization?</p> <p>What do you think motivates people within and outside your organization to mobilize</p>	<p>What have some of the issues been specifically about? Can you give an example or a few?</p> <p>What are some of the ways in which you engage everyone?</p> <p>How do you make sure people are included on decision-making or in the final result?</p> <p>Why do you think people continue to be involved with the organization? What do you think are some of their reasons?</p> <p>Why would you say that?</p>
<p>TOPIC: Interviewee reflections on the future possibilities and opportunities for feminist activism/ PWDs activism in Sierra Leone.</p>		
<p>Looking ahead and into the future, how do you see the organization? Are there some aspects that you think can be worked on/ improved or new ideas that need to be implemented?</p>		

Subject Matter	Perpetuation	Specification
<p>The key issues: Individual desires, future goals, progress</p>	<p>What are some of your thoughts about what's going on now in the organization?</p> <p>Would you say you are satisfied with the current situation, with the way things are going on inside the organization?</p> <p>What kinds of things would you like to see happen in the future?</p> <p>Are there other things you would like to say before we wind up?</p>	<p>How do you feel about the way things are going in the organization?</p> <p>If satisfied: What are you satisfied about exactly? Can you give an example? Why is that?</p> <p>Are there things that you are dissatisfied with, that you would like to see changed?</p> <p>What are some of those examples?</p> <p>Is there something else that you would like to add that I have not asked in this section (or other sections?)</p>

Table 2: Focus Group Discussion Guide

<p>Selection criteria: <i>men-women, youth and elder activists</i> (anyone who believes strongly in bringing about socio-political change and participates in activities, such as public demonstrations to try to make this happen.)</p> <p>Research Question: What are the opportunities and constraints for the WM and DM to form and maintain a collective identity?</p> <p>Sub questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do members of a movement—Founders, organizers and activists—define themselves as a group? 2. How is conflict resolved in a movement?

3. What steps has the movement taken in the past 5 to 10 years to maintain its collective identity?; or to use a pre-formulated question: “What is the relationship between a movement’s collective identity and action?” (Snow and McAdam, 2000: 42)

4. What types of relationship networks exist in a movement?

Topics:

1. What does it mean to be an activist?

- a. What is an activist?
- b. Why are you an activist?
- c. How often you join the group in activist activities?
- d. What makes you unique as a group of activists?

2. Who are your adversaries?

- a. What do you want to change?
- b. Why is making change important to you? As a group?
- c. How do you bring about change?

3. What are your individual experiences as activists?

- a. What are your experiences as a person with disabilities/woman, youth or elder activist?
- b. Do you feel a part of the group/movement?
- c. Has there been a time during a meeting or another event that you did not agree on a decision being made?
- d. Were you satisfied with how it was handled? If no, how else could it have been handled differently?

4. What do you think about the advocacy and lobbying strategies of your group?

- a. Which activist activities do you remember most as an activist?
- b. Would you say these events, or this event were/was successful? Why, or why not?
- c. What types of activist tools does your group use?

d. Do you think your group is doing enough activism?

5. How do you get support as an activist from your group?

- a. What kind of support exists for your group?
- b. Do you get support as an activist? Is it enough?
- c. How do you stay in touch with other members in your own group?
- d. When there is an issue that you care about, how do you voice it?

6. What motivates you to still be an activist in your group today?

- a. Are there some challenges to being an activist? Can you give an example(s)?
- b. Do you have suggestions to improve your experience as an activist in the group?

Probes for Discussion:

- e. *Gender*
- f. *Age*
- g. *Culture*
 - a. *Relationships, camaraderie, solidarity*
- h. *Participatory conditions*
 - a. *Access to resources—i.e. supplies, equipment*
 - b. *Action, events*
 - c. *Planning*
- i. *Respect/recognition from Key organizers/ management or others*
- j. *Opportunities, achievements*
- k. *Management and supervision*
- l. *Is there a sense of ownership of outcomes?*
 - a. *Work/participation content, responsibility/responsibilities*
- m. *Work/home balance*

Appendices

Appendix A SLUDI Organizational Information

Mission: to generally promote issues and support programs and activities aimed at raising the status and welfare of the disabled of Sierra Leone

Objectives/aims:

To perform its role, it abides by nine objectives:

1. To bring together various associations and organizations of and for the disabled, and to speak on behalf of all the disabled, at national level. This organization should in no way conflict with the work of any other organization but should serve as a rallying point.
2. To educate the society as a whole, as well as disabled individuals on disability issues.
3. To promote and/or conduct research into statistics, provision, opportunities, facilities, prevention, rehabilitation and other matters related to the disabled (archival data).
4. To develop new legislation, monitor, evaluate and improve existing legislation to protect and implement the rights of disabled persons (archival data).
5. To work for equalization of opportunities for all disabled people.
6. To promote cordial relationship and understanding between the non-disabled and the disabled
7. Shall monitor existing provision and facilities, and offer advice to relevant ministries and other organizations so as to facilitate total social integration
8. To identify and forge useful linkages between similar national and international unions for the promotion of the interests of the disabled wherever they may be
9. To be partners in planning and decision making in all areas affecting the lives of people with disabilities

Appendix B SLUDI's Lobbying and Advocacy Activities

Activity/Intervention	Frequency	Year										
		2017	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007
Campaigns		International Day for Persons with Disabilities (IDD) NCPD event: World Day Against Child Labor (June 12) CGG Voter Registration Mobilization Campaign (Mar 10-April 31)			Health Sensitization Campaign (one day) (May)			Sensitization /Awareness Raising on the Content of the Disability Act 2011 (June)	Sensitization campaign on Young Voices 1GOAL Campaign for Education for All 2011 (June)			
Newspaper/Press Release		The Informant Newspaper: "SLUDI Plans for Inclusion of Members in Electioneering Processes" (July 20) IDD Publications IDD Publicity = 38,700,000(L)	New Citizen "SLUDI & SightSavers Discuss Health Insurance for Disabled" (June 22)			Press conference on "Access to Employment and Work for Persons with Disabilities" (June 15)	Position of PwDs on the Second Term of President Ernest Bai Koroma in Government (Nov 27) Press Briefing "Update on the position of SLUDI and other DPOs on the formation of National Disability Commission" (Feb 23)	Press conference on the IDD celebration at regional levels	International Day of Persons with Disabilities "Keeping the Promise: Mainstreaming Disability in the Millennium Development Goals" (Dec 3)			
Conferences		Press Conference (Oct 2) "SLUDI plans for inclusion of Members in Electioneering Process" (July 20)	SLUDI National Peace Conference (Jan 16) Forum on inclusion of PwDs in the Proposed Health Insurance Scheme (20 DPOs represented) (June 21)	Peace Conference (Sept 19) General Consultation on Reappointments on the Commission (Aug 15)	Health Sensitization Campaign and National Delegate Conference (May 22) supported by SightSavers and European Commission National Delegate Conference (May 22) NSG/SLUDI Conference (July 14)	Disability Aid Sierra Leone Presentation and Press Conference (Jan 6/7) Persons with Disabilities Commission launch (Mar 23) Press Conference at Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (Dec 17)	Press Conference on the Hajj Mission 2012 (Nov 12) SLUDI-OPP Bi-Monthly Forum (Aug-Dec) Regional Consultative Conference for the Formation of CPWD (April 24-May 7) Dialogue Forum with MDAs, private sector (June 28) SLUDI Endorses President Koroma's Second Term of Office (Nov 17) Press conference on Disability issues (Mar 20) ?	Disability Act Forum (June 16) Public Sensitization on the Disability Act 2011 (June 24)	Dialogue Forum with Parliamentary Budget Oversight Committee (Nov 1) Dialogue Forum with Ministries of Labor and Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs (Nov 8) Dialogue Forum with Ministry of Finance (Nov 15)	Attended: DECISPH Workshop, Dakar, Senegal (Nov 9-14) National Press Conference (4, 680,000LE)	National Consultative Conference (Dec 3)	
Radio		IDD Discussion in all Regions IDD X7 days	IDD X7 days				Discussions on Persons with Disabilities Act 2011	IDD sensitization: 14 radio/print Popularization of the UNCRPD and Disability Act 2011; 10 programs in 4 regions	10 radio stations			
Television		IDD Programme	IDD Talk show X3					IDD Sensitization Popularization of the UNCRPD and Disability Act 2011; 3 program	SLBS (500,000 LE)			
Comic Relief												
Marches/Rallies								Visit to the State House to express profound gratitude for President's keen interests on disability issues (Mar 30)				
Advertisements (i.e. flyers, billboards, etc)		IDD Banners, programmes (4 T-shirts)	IDD Flyers X 50	Public Notice flyer for National Delegates Conference				Voter Education posters, tactile ballot guides, and Observer tags IDD: T-shirts, banners (4), notices, flyers Popularization of the UNCRPD and Disability Act 2011; banners (8)				
Music		IDD Jingles—in all districts ; Brass	IDD Jingles									
			Accountability Platform with State Authorities Towards Handle Issues on Persons with Disabilities in Sierra Leone Commemoration of the International Day of Disability December 3, Climax With Exhibition Show Demonstrated By Persons with Disabilities" (Oct 20)	National Commission for Persons with				Project proposal: " Vocational Skills Training of Disabled Girls and Boys for Self-Reliance and Socio-Economic Independence in the Rokups Community" (Mar 22)	SLUDI Activity Report "Decisiph Regional Workshop—tackle issues of rights, equality, citizenship, solidarity, and inclusion of PwDs			

Research / Reports			The National Commission for Persons with Disabilities in Collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs: A Concept Note for the Celebration of the International Day for Persons with Disabilities, 2016	Disability (NCPD) in collaboration with Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs: Southern Region End of Tenure Report 2012-2015 (July)	Health Sensitization Campaign (May 22)	Haji Report 2012 for His Excellency Dr. Ernest Bai Koroma (Mar 25)	Haji Performance Report (Oct)	Concept Paper on "Regional Consultation on the Formation of Persons with Disabilities Commission" (April)	Report on SLUDI activities (April-May)	Report on the 1 st National Consultative Conference on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (Nov 3-5)	
Open Letters	SLUDI's Upcoming Election to Include Validation & Adoption of Reviewed SLUDI Constitution (Jan 17)	Letters to various institutions: "A call to salvage disability exclusion and neglect by the Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs (Dr. Sylvia Olayinka Blyden)" (Oct 9)	Report Against Mr. Francis Kabia, Director of Social Welfare for inciting rival organization against the management of Sierra Leone National Association of the Deaf (SLNAD) (May 3)		Formal Complaint on Police Brutality on One of Our Blind Group (Aug 22)		Speedy Trial and Justice of Hassan Mansaray's Matter (Sept 4)	Request for Union Dues (June 13)	List of Students (16) whose acceptance were not provided timely by their respective institutions (Mar 8)	Letter of Acknowledgement for funds provided by Handicap International towards implementation of Day of the African Child (June 16)	Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs: "Courteous Request for Meat from Mecca" (Feb 21)
Training	PwDs Training of Trainers sensitization on voter registration (Apr. 6)	Voter registration sensitization in 7 Districts (Apr. 7-15)	"Sensitization workshop on Disability & Rights and other mainstream Development Networks" (Sept 22)			Stakeholders workshop "Promoting Inclusive Health Services for All" (July 25)	Training of Trainers Workshop on Political Participation of PwDs (Sept 24-25)	Seminar on the role of PwDs in the 2012 Elections	Awareness Raising Workshop on the Content of the Disability Act 2011 (June 24) : skit performances by Young Voices, presentation, statements		
	Meeting with Department Heads and specific Community Members (Aug 14)	Meeting with National Commission for Person with Disability (NCPD) for IDD (Oct 15)	Meeting with West African Civil Society General Meeting (Jan 15)		Executive meeting (Dec 6)	AGM (July 127)	SLUDI, DPO chairpersons, PwDs Commission representatives and other stakeholders to discuss crucial matters pertaining to operations of the Union (Sept 24)	Regional Focus Discussion with PwDs: Democracy and Disability Awareness Action Group (Sept 5)	International Day of the Disabled Planning (Sept 16)	Social Welfare Meeting (6 attended, including women leader) (Jan 26)	Administrative Meeting (9 attended) (Feb 22)
	Meeting with LOCASL (Aug 15)	Partners Meeting (July 14-15)	AGM (May)		Roadmap for the post election allegations over validation of the SLUDI Revised Constitution and Annual General Meeting Including National Executive Elections (June 2)	SLUDI Strategic Planning (April 24)	Stakeholders Meeting of PwDs (May 28)	Urgent Executive Meeting (Aug 15)	Constitutional Review (June 10)	New SLUDI executive and management of COOP (2 attended: Kabba Bangura and General Secretary) (Feb 25)	Executive meeting (7 attended: SG, Women's Leader, PRO, Chairman, Treasurer, pas president) (Jan 10)

<p>Meetings: Annual General Meetings (AGM) + other</p>	<p>Executive meeting (Mar 23)</p> <p>National Election Network Meeting (June 20)</p> <p>Executive Board meeting (Mar 11)</p> <p>AGM (Feb 25-26)</p> <p>Handicap and SLUDI meeting (Apr 19)</p> <p>Persons with Disability (PWD) Agenda Engagement with Members of Parliament (Oct 26)</p> <p>Training on Voter Education in Kailahn District (April 10)</p> <p>PwDs Voter Registration Sensitization across the region in Pujehun (April 12)</p> <p>Meeting at House of Jesus to dissolve old executive members and prepare for new elections (Aug 24)</p>	<p>SightSavers Partners Meeting (Dec 13-14)</p> <p>"Sensitization meetings (North, South and East)</p>	<p>Meeting with NSG/SLUDI (Sept 19)</p> <p>Executive Meeting (June 20)</p>	<p>Proposed Elections By the NCPD and MSWGCA (July 14)</p> <p>AGM (May 19)</p> <p>Stakeholder meeting (Mar 13)</p> <p>AGM (June 13-14)</p> <p>Emergency Meeting to look into official attitude (July 14)</p> <p>Executive meeting (Dec 10)</p> <p>Meeting on Bidding of the Vehicle (Dec 10)</p>	<p>Meeting on Project entitled: Awareness raising on inclusive employment for PwD in Kissy Area of the Western Area District of Sierra Leone" (June 20)</p>	<p>Board Meeting (Aug 15)</p> <p>Meeting at the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs on "Activity Community Center for the Handicapped at King Harman" 19 attended (June 26)</p>	<p>Meeting with two Southern Region DPOs: DRIM and SLUDI BO (Branch) to harmonize relationship between two dominant groups</p> <p>Meeting with Parliamentary Committee on Education, including supporting disability issues for swift enactment of Draft Disability Bill</p> <p>Meeting with Ministry of Health to gather support and services for disabled persons i.e assistive devices for polio victims</p> <p>Signing of MOU Agreement between Leonard Cheshire Disability and SLUDI in EU funded project</p> <p>Parliamentary CSO steering Committee on promotion of human rights in Sierra Leone</p> <p>Executive meeting to keep body abreast of signed MOU</p> <p>Meeting with Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs</p> <p>Executive meeting in preparation to receive Libertain National Union of Organizations of the Disabled (NUOD); signing of Communique on formation of the Mano River Federation of the Disabled (MaRiFeD)</p> <p>Meeting of Advocacy Committee to facilitate SLUDI's implementation of Young Voices 1GOAL Education for All.</p> <p>Meeting with German Leprosy Relief Association (GLRA) on preliminary discussions for partnership and signing of MOU</p>	<p>Executive Meeting (4 members: Sec. Gen, VP, Pres, Treasurer) (Aug 15)</p> <p>SLUDI meeting (Jan 10)</p>		
<p>Other activities:</p>	<p>Launching of the "National Agenda for Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in the elections and political processes of Sierra Leone" (Aug 16)</p> <p>IIDD football matches</p>	<p>International Day of Persons with Disabilities (Dec 3)</p> <p>"Achieving 17 Goals for the Future we Want with Persons with Disabilities in Sierra Leone"</p>	<p>International Day of Persons with Disabilities (Dec 3)</p>	<p>International Disabled Day "Make Sierra Leone Ebola Free For Sustainable Development for PwDs" (Dec 3)</p> <p>Emergency General Meeting (July 14)</p>	<p>International Day of the Disabled "Breaking barriers, open doors, for an inclusive society and development" (Nov 28-29)</p>	<p>African Child Day (June 15)</p>	<p>International Disability Day (IDD) "Together for a Better World for All: Including Persons with Disabilities in Development" (Dec 3)</p> <p>Opening Ceremony of the Polio Village in Bombali District / Polio Persons Development Association (PQPOA) (Marc 29)</p> <p>International Day of the Deaf (IDD) (Sept 24)</p> <p>World Sight Day</p> <p>White Cane Day</p> <p>World Polio Day</p> <p>African Childs Day (June 16)</p> <p>International Women's Day</p>	<p>International Disabled Day "Keeping the Promise, Mainstreaming Disability in the MDGs towards 2015 and beyond" (Dec 3)</p> <p>IDD Soccer Games (Dec 4)</p> <p>World Aids Day (Dec 1)</p>	<p>12 Provincial Visits (3,000,000 LE)</p> <p>Constitutional Review (1,960,000LE)</p> <p>International Day of Persons with Disabilities "Making the MDGs Inclusive"</p>	<p>International Day of Persons with Disabilities (Dec 3)</p> <p>International Day of Persons with Disabilities "Decent work for PwDs" (Dec 3)</p>
<p>Recognitions/Awards</p>				<p>Haji Scholarships (4) ?</p>		<p>Haji Scholarships (2) and Submission of Candidates for the Pilgrimage (Sept 25)</p>				

Appendix C **Women's Forum Organizational Information**

Mission: To maintain a virile network of women's organizations, associations and groups through information sharing and influencing of policy.

Aims and objectives:

1. The advancement of the status of women, the promotion of Gender Equality and Empowerment of women and girls in Sierra Leone
2. To promote a platform for building effective alliances among women, by sharing information and ideas on current and emerging issues of common concern to women in Sierra Leone, taking collective action on issues affecting women and children.

Activities:

1. Training and sensitization for capacity building and awareness raising.
2. Creating self-awareness among women on their rights and responsibilities.
3. Strengthening collaboration and partnership with local and national authorities
4. Monitoring the impact of women's involvement at local and national levels (archives).
5. Sensitizing girls and their respective communities on the values of education
6. Engaging traditional, religious and community opinion leaders on the significance and mitigation of women and girls
7. Sensitizing on women's political participation
8. Monitoring of the 2012 electoral process through the Women's Situation Room (WSR)
etc.

		<p>Day of the African Child...Women's Forum Mentors Pupils in 5 Schools' (June 20) New Citizen</p> <p>Day of the African Child...Illuminating Ladies Donate 50 Bags of Cement to Maranatha School' (June 20) New Citizen</p> <p>MCSL Women's Network Ends 13th Biennial Convention' (May 3) Success Newspaper</p> <p>'At the Grafton War Wounded Camp: Women's Forum Visit Victims of Sexual Violence' (April 21) Standard Times</p> <p>'As Prosperity Girls High Observes First Prize Giving...Maude Peacock urges Girls to focus on their studies' (April 21) Standard Times</p> <p>Women's Forum Sutors Susan's Bay Fire Victims' (June 13) New Citizen</p> <p>Women's Forum Elects New Executive: Maude Peacock scoops 78% Votes' (April 5) Awareness Times</p> <p>Women's Forum Advocates for Survivors of Sexual Violence During the War' (Mar 21) New Vision</p> <p>Women's Forum Advocates for Survivors of Sexual Violence During the War' (Mar 20) Standard Times</p> <p>At the War Wounded Camp in Grafton...Women's Forum Visits Victims Of Sexual Violence' (April 13) New Citizen</p> <p>'As Prosperity Girls High Observes First Prize Giving...Maude Peacock urges Girls to focus on their studies' (April 13) New Citizen</p> <p>'As part of IWD Celebrations...Women's Forum Advocates For Survivors of Sexual Violence During the War' (Mar 21) New Citizen</p> <p>Methodist Church Women's Network Trains 25 on Leadership' (Mar 11) Awareness Times</p> <p>'MCSL Women's Network Ends 13th Biennial Convention' (May 3) New Vision</p> <p>Women's Forum Launches Conjugal Slavery in War Project' (April 19) Success Newspaper</p>										
Conferences						<p>Logical Conclusion and Reporting Committees Women's Situation Room-Sierra Leone (Jan 5)</p> <p>African Women's Caucus (Mar 4-11)</p> <p>Commission on the Status of Women, New York, USA (Mar 4-15)</p>						

Radio			<p>Mar 29: Star Radio (60,000LE); Radio Democracy FM 98.1 (35,000LE) 6 slots; Universal Radio FM 98.7 (70,000LE)</p> <p>Nov 24: The Society For Radio Democracy 98.1 FM (600,000) 50 slots; SLBC radio (1,000,000LE) (30 mins, 2 discussion)</p>	<p>Oct 6 & 8: SLBC Airtime on Sexual Reproductive Health Issues (5,000,000LE)</p> <p>Sept 22: Radio Democracy FM 98.1 (40,000LE) 8 slots; Star Radio (30,000LE)</p> <p>June 25: Radio Democracy FM 98.1 (20,000LE) 4 slots; June 23: Star Radio (50,000LE) 3 slots;</p> <p>July 2: Radio Maria (40,000LE)</p> <p>July 22: Radio Democracy FM 98.1 (30,000LE) 6 slots; Universal Radio FM 98.7 (25,000LE) 5 slots</p>	<p>Jan 6: Radio Democracy FM 98.1 (10,000LE) 2 slots</p> <p>April 3: SKYY Radio 106.6 FM (50,000LE)</p> <p>April 14: Universal Radio FM 98.7 (50,000LE)</p>								
Television			<p>Mar 29: SLBC* (60,000LE) 12 slots</p> <p>Nov 8: SLBC (1,500,000 LE)</p>	<p>Jan 2: SLBC (radio and TV) (100,000LE) 3 slots</p> <p>Oct 9: SLBC (3,000,000 LE) 1 hour TV</p> <p>Sept 22: SLBC (30,000LE) 6 slots</p> <p>June 16: SLBC (20,000LE), 4 slots</p> <p>July 22: SLBC (30,000) 6 slots</p> <p>April 3: SLBC (65,000LE) 12 slots</p>	<p>Mar 3: Believers Broadcasting Network (40,000LE) 6 slots</p>								
Comic Relief													
Marches/Rallies													
Advertisements (i.e. flyers, billboards, etc.)			<p>Banners, reports, invitation cards (14,600,000LE) (23-25 Nov)</p>		<p>Banners (1,400,000LE)</p>								
Music													
Research/Academic			<p>Monitoring and Evaluation of Safe Spaces in Bombali and Tonkolili (Feb-May)</p>	<p>Facilitator's guide- training of women for leadership and electoral processes (nd)</p> <p>Training Guide for Empowering Women at District Level</p>	<p>Psychosocial Counseling as an intervention for the Ebola epidemic: Concept Note (Oct 13)</p> <p>Report on the Girl Power Programme Plan Sierra Leone (April 14-15)</p> <p>Life Skills and Leadership Training For Adolescent Girls in Bombali and Tonkolili District (Dec 15-17)</p> <p>Training Manual for Life Skills: Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy Project</p> <p>Report on Training of Family Support Unit on Evidence Gathering And Filing Charges To Court (nd) in collaboration with USAID and ActionAid</p>	<p>Monitoring Report on Adolescent Reproduction and Maternal Health in the Context of the Ebola Outbreak in Bombali and Tonkolili District (Feb 5th)</p> <p>Gender Equality Bill and Discussions on Women's Empowerment Issues (Sept 3)</p> <p>Report on Millennium Challenge Co-Operation (MCC)</p> <p>Report on Community Sensitization: Plan Sierra Leone/Women's Forum SI (Sept 20) (Duba Community) –Girl Power Project</p>	<p>Mapping Exercise for Female Signants For the November 2012 Elections (May 23): survey/questionnaire in collaboration with UN Women</p> <p>Activity Implementation Reporting (Sept) on the Girl Power Project</p> <p>A Comprehensive Report Port Loko: Capacity Building Workshops for Youth Leaders by the Women's Situation Room-Sierra Leone (Oct 12)</p>						
Open Letter													
			<p>Training for Local Council and CSOs and Ministry of Social Welfare Gender and Children's Affairs on Gender Justice Laws and Gender Based Violence to Strengthen the capacity and increase awareness prevention and redress violations at district and chiefdom levels, support by USAID (Aug 30)</p>	<p>Teko Ward Center Bombali District Mahens' "Lost and Found Safe Space" (40 children) (Mar 3)</p>	<p>Workshop (Nov 27-28) on Community Members Pledge (3,000,000LE)</p>								

<p>Training</p>	<p>2 day training on Gender Justice Law for Local Councils Staff 2</p>	<p>Strengthening of Safe Spaces for adolescent girls and mentors/HR mentors in Bombali and Tonkolili (June 2015-June 2016); training on Life Skills, Supplies (i.e. bags of rice, packets of soap, cooking oil, clothing, etc) for Ebola Survivors (50 orphans and survivors, creation of 8 safe spaces, training on Reproductive Health Mentors and Peer Educators, psychosocial counseling, (budget 137,250,000.32LE/ \$30,000)</p>	<p>Training of Women For Leadership and Electoral processes Kenema & Port Loko (Nov 20-23)</p>	<p>Workshop Session for Girls "Safe Space" (Dec 17)</p> <p>Training of Adolescent Girls, Teenage Mothers, Community Leaders of Tonkolili and Bombali Districts on Life Skills, Leadership, Reproductive and Maternal Health in the Context of the "Ebola Outbreak" (Dec 15-17)</p> <p>"Implementation workshop of Teenage Pregnancy Project": mapping of communities meetings with stakeholders in 4 areas (Nov 5)</p> <p>Mapping of Communities and Identification of Vulnerable Girls Groups Signing of Contract Ceremony (Nov 28)</p> <p>Report/Workshop on the Girl Power Programme (2011-2015) funded by Plan Sierra Leone (April 14-15)</p> <p>Reducing Violence Against Women and Girls in Sierra Leone Project (Kono, Moyamba and Tonkolili Districts) funded by USAID through Action Aid International Sierra Leone: 2 day training for 40 Family Support Unit (FSU) staff of the Sierra Leone Police on evidence gathering and filing charge suits; 2 day training for 40 FSU of Sierra Leone Police on sign language to deal with victims that are deaf and mute; 1 day training for 45 women leaders on approaches to support victims on Violence on HIV/AIDS; Training of 60 courts monitors; train 90 women paralegals on identifying and reporting cases of sexual and domestic violence against women and girls; 2 days training for 45 members of community psychosocial support groups on counseling skills; 3 face to face dialogue sessions with 45 traditional leaders, 15 from each community on the legal provisions combating violence against women (Mar-May)</p>	<p>Training of Adolescent Leaders, Community Leaders and Teachers/Western Area (Sept 30-Oct 2)</p>						
	<p>Monthly Meeting (June 24): 23 attended</p> <p>(July): over 30 attended</p> <p>(August): no meeting, executive meeting held instead to respond to mudslide</p>	<p>Women's Forum Executive meeting: (Jan 9): 16 attended</p> <p>Monthly Meeting (9th Feb): 16 attended</p>	<p>SLAUW monthly meeting (May 16)</p> <p>Summary of discussions at various meetings attended on behalf of the women's forum SL on diverse dates (May 16)</p>	<p>Monthly Meetings: Feb—United Church Women and Women's Network; MCL; Mar—Women in the Media; April—Women and Sports; May—SLAUW; June—FWCA; July—NCOMO</p> <p>Commemoration of UN Open Day: Impact of the Ebola Virus Disease Outbreak in Sierra Leone: Gender Dimension and Impact on Women, Peace and Security (Nov 27)</p>	<p>WF (May 29)</p> <p>Meeting (July 27): 23 attended</p>	<p>Preparatory Meeting for the Women's Situation Room Sierra Leone (WSRSL) (June 25): 13 attended</p> <p>WF Retreat Meeting: 46 attended</p>			<p>AGM—end of year activity (Dec 31)</p> <p>AGM meeting (Nov 26)</p>		

<p>Meetings: Annual General Meetings (AGM) + other</p>			<p>Validation Meeting on the Qualitative Research on Effectiveness and Efficiency of Referral and Redress Mechanisms Protecting Women and Girls in Sierra Leone, organized by ActionAid, UN Women and WF (Oct 28): 4 attended</p>	<p>Monthly meeting: 37 attended (May 30)</p>		<p>Meeting June 29: 23 attended</p>	<p>Reflection Meeting (NSR Stakeholders): SWOT Analysis of the Women's Situation Room Activities & Way Forward (Dec 18)</p>					
<p>Other activities:</p>		<p>Launching Report on the Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Referral and Redress Mechanisms For GBV in Sierra Leone (Nov 29)</p> <p>WF celebration: Hall Decorations, food and refreshment (2,000,000 LE; 9,000,000 LE; 15,600,000; 13,000,000; 1,600,000): 130 attended (Nov 22-24) over 20 attended</p>	<p>International Women's Day (Mar) theme: "Pledge for Party"</p>	<p>April (25) Monthly meeting (host: Diocesan Mother's Union): 45 attended</p>	<p>International Women's Day (Mar 8): presidential dinner to welcome international guests; 8th declared a public holiday; interactive session + international, regional and national luncheon sale</p>	<p>Presentation of "A Pupil's Promise" Awards (May)</p>	<p>1st Meeting: Logical Conclusion and Reporting Committees Women's Situation Room- Sierra Leone (Dec 18)</p> <p>2nd Meeting of the Logical Conclusion & Reporting Committees (Dec 18): 15 attended</p>	<p>International Women's Day (Mar 8)</p>				
<p>Recognitions/Awards</p>			<p>International Women's Day of Prayer lead by Federation Methodist and Unity Church Women (Mar 4)</p> <p>Memorial Service for Pamela Williams daughter and husband (Jan 10)</p>			<p>International Women's Day (Mar 8) (budget: 3,370,000LE)</p> <p>Certificates of participation in Life Skills Training for Adolescent Leaders for the Reduction of Teenage Pregnancy in Sierra Leone (Oct)</p>	<p>Special Court for Sierra Leone Certificate of Appreciation Women's Forum (Nov 30)</p> <p>Society for Peace Development Movement for Youth Empowerment "Reconciliation Peace Awards" for their strategic role in breaking the peace that ended in Sierra Leone 11 years old civil conflict from 1991-2001 (Oct 25)</p>					