http://dx.doi.org/10.47019/2022.RR8

Research Report

"Giving Is in Our DNA": Continuity and Change in Sierra Leone's Community Philanthropy Landscape

Felix Marco Conteh

Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment (CAPSI), Wits Business School, Johannesburg, South Africa

**Correspondence to: felixconteh1@gmail.com*

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This report was supported financially by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation.

ABSTRACT

Sierra Leone has a long history of community philanthropy. However, not much is known about citizens' pattern of giving, the recipients of gifts and the sociopolitical and economic factors that shape the trajectories of community philanthropy in the country. Drawing on field-based research undertaken in Bo district in the South, Bombali district in the North, Freetown in the Western Area and secondary data, this report analyses Sierra Leone's community philanthropy landscape. It identifies two broad and enduring patterns of community philanthropy – associational philanthropy and individual philanthropy. The report argues that while the different forms that community philanthropy assumes at any given time are embedded in sociocultural expressions of kindness and mutual dependence, they are also fundamental adaptation strategies to evolving socio-economic shocks and structures that shape people's lives and resilience, whether in the colonial or postcolonial era. These shocks have included adjusting to colonial rule's policy of "divide and rule" and post-independence state failure – leading to underdevelopment, civil war and complex emergencies. The report reveals striking patterns of continuity and change in Sierra Leone's philanthropic landscape, with a progressive decline in public trust in state-led philanthropic schemes, especially during national emergences or crises.

Keywords: Sierra Leone, community philanthropy, associational philanthropy, individual philanthropy, giving

INTRODUCTION

Sierra Leone has a rich historical and contemporary context that shapes its community philanthropy landscape. In fact, one can argue that the country is itself the result of philanthropy, given that Freetown was used by British philanthropists as a safe haven for the resettlement of freed slaves in the late eighteenth century, as part of the abolitionist movement (Harris, 2013; Kilson, 1966; Land and Schocket, 2008). However, official British colonial rule did not begin until 1808; and the country would later exhibit great promise, serving as a trailblazer in several areas of development, including Western education (Mamdani, 1996; Alie, 1990). For instance, Fourah Bay College which became the first higher education institution in sub-Saharan Africa was established in 1827 (Kilson,

1966; Alie, 1990; Harris, 2012; Mamdani, 1996; Alie, 1990) producing teachers and preachers who went on to serve in The Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria (Mamdani,1996; Alie, 1990). Nevertheless, British colonialism was never a benign experience for Sierra Leoneans. As a Settler Colony, the country simultaneously experienced decades of exploitation of its vast natural resources (Forde, 2011; Reno, 1995; Zack-Willaims, 1995) and deplorable levels of underinvestment in services (Kilson, 1966; Zack-Willaims, 1995; Reno, 1995; Conteh, 2014a). Furthermore, British default policy of "divide and rule" (Mamdani, 1996) meant that individual ethnic identities were emphasised over a national identity (Kilson, 1966) and by independence in 1961, the country was deeply divided with "politicised ethnic identities" (Kandeh, 1992; Kilson, 1966).

With independence, the country's postcolonial leaders did little to reverse the debilitating impacts of British underinvestment and "divide and rule". In fact, ethnic identities became politically instrumental, and leaders' lack of a coherent vision for nation building enabled and accelerated the obliteration of the basic governmental and social institutions inherited from the British. The lack of respect for democratic principles (Harris, 2012, 2013), suppression of fundamental human rights, exclusion of majority of the citizens from governance and development and high levels of corruption (Reno, 1995; Richards, 1996) would eventually set the stage for the civil war (1991–2002). By the end of the war in 2002, the country required substantial support from the international community which "ended up literally taking over the governance function from local actors" (Fukuyama, 2004: 125; Conteh, 2017; Zack-Williams, 2012). While the country has made commendable progress in rebuilding governance institutions and basic infrastructure after the war, progress has been slow and interrupted by recurring complex emergencies – including the 2014–2015 Ebola epidemic, 2017 mudslide and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

This historical and contemporary context is useful in understanding the factors that have shaped the country's philanthropy landscape. As with other contexts where sociologists have studied and documented the occurrence of philanthropy and its trajectory (Horvath and Powell, 2016; Barman, 2016, 2017), there are striking patterns of continuity and change in Sierra Leone's philanthropy landscape, with present day gifting mirroring long-standing trends dating back to the colonial period, while accommodating new features – illustrating philanthropy's dynamism. The report identifies two broad and enduring patterns of community philanthropy in Sierra Leone – *associational philanthropy* (Box 1) and *individual philanthropy* (Box 2). Associational philanthropy is organised around people's collective desire to collaborate in ways that secure their socio-economic and cultural interests and those of others, whether or not they belong to the same association, very much akin to Murisa's findings in Zimbabwe (Murisa, 2020a). Individual philanthropy, on the other hand, rests on individualised expressions of kindness, including financially and in kind, which are often reflections of the need to meet one's familial obligations and the desire to "give back to the community" (Interview, Head of Local NGO, 30 June 2021, Freetown) or complement the work of government or local authority. The report argues that while the different forms that community philanthropy assumes at any given time are embedded in sociocultural expressions of kindness and mutual dependence (Interview, Senior Government of Sierra Leone official, 8 June 2021, Freetown), they are also fundamental adaptation strategies to the evolving socio-economic shocks and structures that

Box 1 Polio Persons Development Association

The Polio Persons Development Association (POPDA) was founded in 1996 during the civil war by Matthew Tholley and his wife. Both wheelchair users, the couple were fortunate to have received a gift of US$ 350 from a Swedish philanthropist to purchase food for themselves and friends, while they were displaced in Freetown. They instead bought 3.5 ac of land in Makeni. After the war, the couple returned to Makeni and secured a job with the Catholic relief agency, CARITAS. Disturbed by "the plight of polio persons", Tholley quit his job to focus exclusively on building POPDA, "lobbying and soliciting support from Catholic priests and other well-wishers, with the aim of restoring the dignity of our members" (Interview, Matthew Tholley, 25 July 2021, Makeni). His first success was the renting of a house in Makeni to accommodate "polio persons", but soon realised the need was immense. Tholley then focused on establishing the POPDA Centre in Makeni, for which he received support from the Swedish philanthropist who was impressed that they had bought a piece of land, instead of food. The Centre opened its doors "to polio persons in 2010 and is now housing 350 polio persons". It has two long structures with eight workshops dedicated to the training of polio persons in shoe production, tailoring, soap making, phone repairs, carpentry and baking. Through a US-based philanthropist, POPDA has recently established "a medical insurance scheme through which members can access medical care".

Although POPDA continues to face challenges, including the stigmatisation of its members, its model has recently attracted the interest of the Ministry of Social Welfare which is exploring the possibility of replicating the model in other parts of the country. However, there are risks such a model might contribute to the establishment of "enclaves" for persons with disability instead of integrating them into mainstream society, further reinforcing stigma. Also, with POPDA initially established to address a "public policy gap", such a model cannot continue to be successful without the intervention of the state, local and external philanthropists.

shape people's lives and resilience, whether in the colonial or postcolonial era. These shocks have included adjusting to colonial rule's policy of "divide and rule" and the need for intra-ethnic solidarity, given the limited influence of "tribalism" in urban settings (see Ekeh, 1975); state failure – leading to underdevelopment, civil war; and more recently complex emergencies, including Ebola and the COVID-19 pandemic (Box 3).

Several informants, including senior government officials, academics and NGO staff, interviewed for this study suggested that giving among Sierra Leoneans is almost "innate and visceral" (Interviews, May–July 2021, Bo, Freetown and Makeni; Interview, Senior Government of Sierra Leone official, 8 June 2021, Freetown). As one Academic put it, "giving among us is part of our DNA. It is something that is innate and we do so without thinking, because it is who we are" (Interview, Lecturer, University of Makeni, 16 June 2021, Makeni). However, few studies have attempted to investigate philanthropy in Sierra Leone – often briefly, with giving either covered as part of a bigger study of other social phenomena, or part of a survey of countries (see, e.g., Campaign for Good Governance (CGG) with Christian Aid, 2006; Mati, 2016a). Also, the incentives influencing giving have not been explored or well documented, a fact that makes this study extremely important. In fact, the paucity of data or literature on community or horizontal philanthropy (Mati, 2016b; Fowler, 2017; Murisa, 2020a) is an Africa-wide challenge which has given rise to the misleading perceptions that Africans do not give as much as other citizens in other regions of the world (Mati, 2020; Fowler, 2017). Tellingly, the tendency to only attribute generosity to Europeans or Africans who have adopted the "Western way of life" can be traced to the colonial period, when as Little put it, being civilised among everyday people, meant one had to be:

> a "book man," "one who knows book," that is, one who can read. In a more general and quite neutral sense, it also means someone who practices European ways or someone who has given up farming and who earns his living in some other way than on the land. It has, in addition, the favorable implications of "knowledgeable," "well-traveled," "neat in appearance," and "generous with money" (Little, 1948: 15–16).

This misnomer has somewhat persisted to this day, and has been reinforced by the dysfunctions of the state, requiring and depending on external actors such as Western NGOs and agencies whose ubiquitous presence litters the country (Conteh, 2014b); and seen by many as their saviours particularly during crises (Harris and Conteh, 2020). This perception has undervalued everyday Sierra Leonean philanthropy as less structured and almost non-existent – largely because it has been less studied. It is within this context that this research on community philanthropy in Sierra Leone was conceived.

The study sheds light on how giving has evolved and continues to evolve across different socio-economic contexts. In doing so, it builds on academic research and contributes to the literature on community philanthropy. It also contributes to profiling successful community philanthropy in Sierra Leone and aims to attract the interests of local philanthropists and outside funders to the opportunities that exist for the expansion of philanthropy. The report shares a broad view of community philanthropy involving citizens taking responsibility for what goes on around them, including building networks of mutual dependence and solidarity (Murisa, 2020a; Aina, 2013), without constrains of physical space and time. In other words, the report's framing of community philanthropy is embedded in social relationships that are unrestrained by geographical boundaries, expressed in a variety of ways – including giving of time, monetary and material gifts, knowledge sharing, asset and labour pooling and voluntarism (Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler, 2009; Murisa, 2020a).

Data collection was based on a mixed-method approach and included a desk review of the literature on community philanthropy, especially in Africa. Qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) with a diverse set of informants, including government officials, NGO officials and civil society activists, academics, heads of community-based foundations and ordinary citizens engaged in community philanthropy. Participants for key informant interviews were selected based on their involvement in philanthropy or its regulation, either as individuals or through associations or organisations for which they work. In total, 21 adults between 25 and 78 years, who have been involved in philanthropy, with varied socio-economic backgrounds – including marital status, religion and educational level – were interviewed. In-depth interviews were complemented with 10 FGDs, in Bo, Freetown and Makeni and their environs, which expanded the level of community participation in the study. Quantitative data was collected through a randomised survey, and a total of 450 survey questionnaires were randomly administered among female and male adults in Bo, Freetown, Makeni and their environs. The limitations placed on the research by the COVID-19 pandemic meant that there was limited access to senior citizens, many of whom were shielding. Therefore, while the analysis of philanthropy during the colonial period is derived from some interviews, much of the analysis relies on secondary data. Whereas face-to-face interviews were prioritised where possible, due to a spike in COVID-19 infections which at some point resulted in travel restrictions, where possible flexible and innovative data collection methods such as online platforms/social media and phone calls were used. Also, health and safety protocols were fully complied with in the conduct of FGDs and one-on-one meetings, including the wearing of masks during interviews and FGDs; as well as conducting meetings in well-ventilated buildings.

The report is divided into five main sections. Following this introduction, it briefly surveys the literature on community philanthropy. In the second section, the report examines community philanthropy in the colonial period drawing on two examples of associational and individual forms of giving – illustrating philanthropy's multidimensional and instrumental purposes, including that of adjusting to rapid sociopolitical change and subtle resistance to colonialism. The third section examines contemporary philanthropy, drawing out aspects of community philanthropy that have survived colonialism, as well as those that have evolved in the post-independence era. The section also examines themes of faith, morality, reciprocity and anonymity as they relate to giving in Sierra Leone. In the fourth section, the report uses interviews, survey data and a case study of Susan's Bay to examine philanthropy in times of emergencies, investigating the factors that shape citizens' giving, including the role of trust between citizens and the state in philanthropic initiatives. The fifth section concludes the report.

The Context

The idea of philanthropy in Africa is underpinned by a mutual and reciprocal obligation and ethos that can trigger an endless cycle of giving and receiving of counter-gifts (Mati, 2020; Moyo and Ramsamy, 2014). The idea that giving should be reciprocated is rooted in the communal character of African societies which thrive on relations of mutual dependence (Ferguson, 2015; Moyo and Ramsamy, 2014). However, the incentives informing giving have often produced disagreements among scholars, giving rise to different theoretical explanations behind the phenomenon (Fowler, 2017; Mati, 2020). One view is that giving is influenced by reciprocity which is part of ubiquitous patterns of solidarity within social groupings (Barman, 2017; Mati, 2020). This functionalist perspective thus sees giving as having a role in the effective functioning of society, providing multidimensional mutual benefits for both givers and receivers of gifts. These benefits include positive correlations between giving of time, money and personal gains such as increased levels of self-satisfaction, happiness, physical and mental well-being (Son and Wilson, 2012; Smith and Davidson, 2017).

On the other hand, it has been suggested that gifting can serve utilitarian functions induced by rational choices and market-based relations between a giver – often a corporate entity – and the goal of influencing the behaviour or acceptance of the receiver, usually in a favourable way (Barman, 2017). This theorisation explains the rationale behind firms' corporate social responsibility, which is not only geared towards promoting development in communities hosting their operations (Mati, 2020; Barman, 2017), but also helping them obtain the social licence to operate (Conteh and Maconachie, 2019). Simply put, it is seen as an investment risk management strategy that provides reputational benefits, rather than a moral satisfaction or obligation (Mati, 2017, 2020). Finally, a third view expresses scepticism in relation to gifting, in that if one expects a favour in return for a gift, it then becomes a form of trade, increasingly leaning towards credit and debt (Derrida, 1992). This is because gift-making should be driven by altruism, rather than expectations of reward (Barman, 2017).

There is however a need to distinguish between this high-level discourse of philanthropy and the more specific forms of philanthropy, particularly "community philanthropy" which is prevalent in Africa, given that the terminology – philanthropy – is neither popular among Africans, nor useful in capturing the range of social exchanges found on the continent (Moyo, 2010). The European Foundation Centre has suggested that community philanthropy:

> …encompasses the act of individual citizens and local institutions contributing money or goods, along with their time and skills, to promote the well-being of others and the betterment of the community within which they live and work. Community philanthropy can be expressed in informal and spontaneous ways, whereby citizens give contributions to local organisations which, in turn, use the funds to support projects that improve the quality of life (cited in Knight, 2012: 3).

While this definition emphasises the importance of human solidarity and reciprocity (Kilmurray, 2016), it has been criticised because it does not distinguish between community philanthropy and normal NGO operations (Sibanda, 2016; Knight, 2012). Unsurprisingly, the difficulties inherent in defining community philanthropy have led some to move away from a one-size-fits-all definition, to the use of a set of criteria or characteristics (Knight, 2012; Sibanda, 2016). For Knight (2012), an activity qualifies as community philanthropy if it meets the following requirements: (1) organised and structured, (2) self-directed, (3) open architecture (as opposed to being closed or owned by a proprietor), (4) civil society, (5) using own money and resources and (6) building an inclusive and equitable society (Knight, 2012: 4). This classification is important in that it provides a useful framework for understanding the broad spectrum of community philanthropic endeavours around the world. Thus, while the first four characteristics can apply to NGOs, their activities can only qualify as community philanthropy if the fifth characteristic is included. Despite this, Doan (2019: 7) has built on the definition of Pond and Hodgson (2018: 5), in synthesising the different definitions of community philanthropy, noting that:

> Community philanthropy is both a form of, and a force for, locally driven development that strengthens community capacity and voice, builds trust, and most importantly, taps into and builds on local resources,

> which are pooled together to build and sustain a strong community (Doan, 2019: 7).

Thus, as with the characteristics developed by Knight (2012), this broad framing merges broader and more local views of community philanthropy, particularly those related to how the poor help themselves (Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler, 2009), whether as individuals or in association with others within a given community (Murisa, 2020a). Further, in order to better distinguish between philanthropic activities implemented by NGOs or organisations funded from the so-called Global North and more localised forms of philanthropy, some prefer to use the framework of vertical philanthropy and horizontal philanthropy (Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler, 2009; Mati, 2016a, 2016b, 2020; Murisa, 2020a), with the latter specifically concerned with community philanthropy. This study draws from, and builds on these arguments and contributes to the literature on community philanthropy, through an analysis of the community philanthropy landscape of Sierra Leone.

COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY IN THE COLONIAL ERA

Cooper (1994) has argued that colonising powers initially rationalised their intervention in Africa by assuming that they could "remake" African societies but quickly realised their endeavour would prove futile, prompting them "…to make-through policies of 'indirect rule' and 'association'", in order to make "their failures sound like a policy of conserving African society and culture" (Cooper, 1994: 1531). Cooper's point is insightful, and like others (Bangura, 2006, 2017; Harrell-Bond et al., 1978; Okonkwo, 1981), illustrates that Africans were never bystanders in colonial territories, as they actively sought to shape colonialism's trajectories and outcomes (Howard, 2005). As we will see in the case of Sierra Leone, philanthropy was not only an expression of kindness, but it also became an expression of anticolonial sentiments even if it was not always explicit. Some of the most compelling historical accounts of social change in Sierra Leone during the colonial period have been documented by Harrell-Bond, Banton and Kilson (Harrell-Bond et al., 1978; Banton, 1957; Kilson, 1966; Bangura, 2006, 2017). In them can be found expressions of both associational and individualised forms of philanthropy. For instance, between the 1930s and 1950s, several dance associations emerged, serving not only as sources of cultural and ethnic mobilisation, but also as platforms for recreation and relaxation (Banton, 1957; Bangura, 2017); and within them ethnic identities were reinforced, socio-economic networks of philanthropy and dependence built and expanded.

Community Philanthropy in the Colony

A contemporary historical account of the role of associational forms of community philanthropy in the colony has recently been provided by Bangura in his study of the agency of The Temne – one of the country's largest ethnic groups in the making of the Sierra Leone Colony (Bangura, 2006, 2017). Bangura does not only problematise the role of the Creoles in the history of Freetown, but he also puts forward a counter narrative of how other social and ethnic groupings whose roles in the shaping of the colony have either been overlooked or under-documented (Bangura, 2017). One influential cultural association that emerged in the colony during this period was the Temne-based *Alimania* – meaning "a group of humble people full of patience" (Bangura, 2017: 108). *Alimania* was set up as a dance and religious association for the promotion of Islam, educational, religious and social standards, as well as enabling the enhancement of the "…progress of the African so as to take [his or her] place honourably in the affairs of the democratic world in the near future." (Sierra Leone Women's Movement, 1949, quoted in Bangura, 2017: 108). The association also served to strengthen the sociocultural structure of the Temne ethnic group in the colony, including the promotion of "…the culture of marriage among its members, especially young members", as well as providing "…counselling services to couples, and regularly counselled them on the values of marital commitments and mores" (Bangura, 2017: 109). Further, given the socioemotional challenges faced by arriving rural Temne migrants in the colony, *Alimania* served as a useful platform for them to integrate "freely with their peers, expressed themselves on a wide range of issues", as well as learning the "…arts of leadership and management in the Temne community" (Bangura, 2017: 109). Interviews Bangura conducted with surviving members of *Alimania* revealed that:

> The association also funded wedding ceremonies for indigent members, and financially assisted bereaved subjects. Further, association meetings served as venues of interaction for potential couples; such meetings fostered and facilitated marriage relationships, organized orientation programs for new immigrants, taught young men and women the value of communalism and business management skills (Bangura, 2017: 109).

Associational philanthropy became so important in the colony that it transcended original purposes, veering into the provision of social and religious services in their immediate communities, including in education. For example, *Alimania* "…built a school for the Temne community in 1943", and "…other Temne cultural associations also helped raise funds for the building of the Temne Central Mosque and other community mosques for their worshippers" (Sierra Leone Women's Movement, 1949, quoted in Bangura, 2017). Other notable associational forms of philanthropy also emerged during this time, including one involving Temne market women who amidst rare or limited financial capital to start and sustain businesses, "…

organized small loan schemes meant to help each other during bad harvests or poor returns from sales, especially in fairly remote sections of the colony" (Bangura, 2017: 173).

In addition to associational forms of philanthropy, there were individuals whose philanthropic activities proved highly influential in the colony (Harrell-Bond et al., 1978; Banton, 1957; Fyle, 2006; Bangura, 2017; Okonkwo, 1981). The profiles and philanthropic activities of two such persons are worth reviewing. The first is Adelaide Casely-Hayford, a cultural nationalist and feminist who promoted African values in a rapidly urbanising colony at a time whereas the authorities were de-emphasising them (Fyle, 2006; Okonkwo, 1981). Privileged and married to Joseph Ephraim Casely-Hayford, a prominent Gold Coast lawyer and Pan-Africanist (Desai, 2004; Fyle, 2006), Adelaide is reported to have travelled to the United States in 1920 "…to familiarise herself with African American programs for industrial education and also raise funds…for the Girl's Vocational School" which she opened in October 1923 (Fyle, 2006: 33; Desai, 2004; Okonkwo, 1981). Through the School she developed "a curriculum involving African history, folklore, songs, and artwork. Traditional dances and African games were prominent features on Africa Day, celebrated once a year when the students wore African dress" (Fyle, 2006: 33). In some ways, Adelaide's philanthropy was a repudiation of colonial rule and when the colonial government repeatedly denied her school adequate funds, she accused them of racism (Okonkwo, 1981). Ironically, despite her blatantly anticolonial stance, the British government honoured her with the Member of the British Empire (Okonkwo, 1981; Fyle, 2006), an endorsement of her inescapable contribution to the colony.

Another individual philanthropist whose contributions to society helped to shape the lives of many during the colonial period was Pa Alimamy Yenkin Kamara, whose social background and career was markedly different from that of Adelaide. Kamara was a tailor and a local intellectual, who is reported to have founded *Endeavour* – another Temne cultural association, and "the Temne Progressive Union in 1938, and 1958, respectively" (Bangura, 2006, 2017: 115). His drive for the formation of the associations emanated from the need to evade the hold of the "chief" on the social and political lives of the Temne people. He is reported to have established a tailoring school as part of *Endeavour* and was able to secure financial support from the Temne Tribal Authority (TTA) to purchase sewing machines for his students (Bangura, 2006, 2017). The school became so successful that it continued to expand both in terms of its facilities and curriculum, incorporating carpentry and woodwork. Perhaps Kamara's greatest contribution to philanthropy was in recreation, with *Endeavour* helping to "organize the annual lantern parades held during Eid-ul-fitr celebrations, which marked the end of the Muslim month of fasting" (Bangura, 2006, 2017: 115). To this day, the annual lantern parade is the country's biggest and most anticipated cultural festival. Endeavour also organised inter-communal football competitions between 1949 and 1952, attracting participating teams from all ethnic groups, in an act of philanthropy that helped foster interethnic peaceful coexistence in Freetown. Everything considered, philanthropy in the colony was more than just providing for the material and emotional needs of those who benefited from it. It embodied and expressed the aspirations of Sierra Leoneans in ways that allowed them to adjust to the sociopolitical and cultural changes taking place around them.

Community Philanthropy in the "Protectorate"

Although there is limited documentary evidence of philanthropy in the interior of Sierra Leone during the colonial period, interviews conducted in Bo and Makeni suggested that for many in the protectorate, as it was then called, philanthropy was not significantly different from what obtained in the colony (Interview, Pa Sorie Sesay, 16 June 2021, Makeni; Interview, Moiwo Bockarie, 30 June 2021, Bo). Perhaps, one notable difference existed in the fact that, while philanthropy in the colony was shaped by the determinants of a multiethnic colony, with its pressures for ethnic and cultural solidarity, rural philanthropy was shaped by the excessive poverty that characterised rural life (Galli and Rönnbäck, 2019), imposing the need for them to cooperate in the enhancement of their socio-economic lives. In Safroko Limba Chiefdom in Bombali district, for example, whole villages were built and expanded through voluntary and rotational communal labour schemes, akin to the pooling of labour in Zimbabwe (Murisa, 2020a); with community members engaging in "self-help" to construct roads and taking turns to support and work for each other in the building of houses, as well as on farms during the clearing and planting season (Interview, Pa Sorie Sesay, 16 June 2021, Makeni).

One informant nostalgically reflected on the emergence of the concept of *company*, for which today's equivalent is the cooperative. The *company* was made up of a number of household heads who on account of their mutual need for agricultural labour would sign up (not literarily) to rotationally work for members. While no direct monetary transactions were involved, members whose farms were being ploughed would provide food and palm wine for the labourers (Interview, Pa Gbantha Bangura, 17 June 2021, Binkolo). In this way, hundreds of acres of land were ploughed each year, ensuring the sustenance of whole villages and towns. Rural residents who eventually migrated to Freetown in the late 1960s and early 1970s "brought with them the spirit of voluntary and rotational labour", and many of the city's informal settlements, including Susan's Bay evolved through such schemes (Interview, Chief, Susan's Bay, 10 June 2021, Freetown). In addition, rites of passage, including births, weddings, initiation of the young into secret societies and funerals, were all avenues for the expression of associational and individual philanthropy that transcended the villages or towns they took place (Interviews, Pa Sorie Sesay, 16 June 2021, Makeni; Pa Gbantha Bangura, 17 June 2021, Binkolo;

Moiwo Bockarie, 30 June 2021, Bo). Often residents of surrounding villages would bring with them chicken, palm oil and cattle to celebrate or sympathise with their neighbours, depending on the circumstance or occasion (Interviews, Pa Sorie Sesay, 16 June 2021, Makeni; Pa Gbantha Bangura, 17 June 2021, Binkolo; Moiwo Bockarie, 30 June 2021, Bo). Features of this form of philanthropy have survived to this day. Nevertheless, rapid social changes and high levels of rural poverty have led to a scaling down of what one academic described as "extravagant acts of generosity". As the academic commented on the complexities of rural philanthropy:

> It was as if rural people constituted an economic puzzle. On the back of a bumper harvest, that is when they will initiate their children into secret societies and marry the next wife. Such occasions will go on for days if not weeks. They will consume all their harvest in acts of kindness, and in some cases, they might not even have seeds for the next planting season (Interview, Lecturer, University of Makeni, 16 June 2021, Makeni).

This portrayal of rural-based philanthropy as contradictory was however contested by focus group participants across research sites, when asked whether they were extravagant in their display of philanthropy (Interviews, May–July 2021, Bo, Freetown and Makeni). One male focus group participant in Bo expressed a sentiment shared by many, when he noted that

> We depend on each other, and it is what keeps us together. Imagine if someone dies, or my neighbour's child is getting married and I decided not to sympathise or celebrate with the family. Do you know what that means? I will be regarded as an 'outcast', and when I will be in the same position, no one will sympathise or celebrate with me (Focus Group Discussion, male participant, 29 June 2021, Bo).

These reflective, if not contrasting, views perhaps remind us of the need to be cautious in our assessment of the social structures of the rural poor, as we seek to understand the economic pressures placed on them by the imperatives of giving. We should be careful not to impose our views on them or misconstrue their giving without a careful understanding of their incentives. For focus group participants, giving – whether financially, in-kind or in attendance of a funeral or wedding (giving of time), is not just an act to be reciprocated, it is a determinant for one's continued socioemotional and psychological *belonging* to the community. As we will see in the subsequent sections, the manner in which Sierra Leoneans continue to give draws heavily from the colonial period, except that given economic difficulties (Kiendrebeogo et al., 2021) and rapid social changes, people's ability to give may now be challenged.

CONTEMPORARY COMMUNITY PHILANTHROPY: THE NEXUS BETWEEN CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

In the previous section, examples of associational and individual forms of philanthropy in the colonial period and the factors that shaped them were examined, predominantly using secondary data. In this section of contemporary philanthropy, the report relies mainly on interviews, focus group and survey data for analysis. As with colonial era community philanthropy, contemporary giving assumes both *associational* and *individualised* forms. However, a number of changes are also observed, which, as already noted, have resulted from social changes taking place – including the war of the 1990s, complex emergencies and the increasing presence of NGOs (Conteh, 2014b). Interviews and FGDs revealed that the occasions and circumstances that trigger giving among Sierra

Box 2 Protecting and expanding access to Sawmill Spring Water

The Sawmill Spring Water has a long history and is reported to have been used by Europeans exploring the West African coast in the seventeenth century. Currently serving an estimated 5000 people in the informal settlements of Susan's Bay and Malaba, the water source has never been protected, and the settlements depending on it have suffered recurring outbreaks of cholera (focus group discussion, Susan's Bay youths, 10 June 2021, Freetown). In May 2021, a Sierra Leonean who grew up in the area in the 1950s and had gone on to work for the government and later the United Nations decided to help protect the water source, as well as expanding access to it. Working through an intermediary because he preferred anonymity, the philanthropist noted that he was incentivised by the desire to give back to the community, recounting that he faced a lot of challenges fetching water when growing up. Because of his short stature he would woften spend hours struggling to fetch water, if not assisted by adults. At the time of writing, the philanthropist had spent an estimated US$ 10,000 constructing a 20,000-l concrete water tank, with six water points, leaving room to directly connect nearby homes, "in order to limit the number of persons coming to the water points" (Interview, local philanthropist, 31 July 2021, Freetown).

Leoneans are limitless, including those associated with rites of passage – the birth of a child, baptism and confirmation, school or college graduation ceremonies, wedding, retirement and funerals (Interviews and FGDs, May–July 2021, Bo, Freetown, Makeni; see Moyo, 2010). Other circumstances include those that may result from economic difficulties, such as when the livelihoods of families, friends and neighbours are severely challenged due to poor harvests (FGD, village savings and loans association (VSLA) Members, Bombali Bana, 13 June, 2021; FGD, HAPPY Kids caregivers, Makeni, 12 June 2021) or austerity enforced public sector redundancies (Interview, consultant, 20 July 2021, Bo; Interview, Lecturer, University of Makeni, 16 June 2021, Makeni; Interview, NGO staff, 8 July 2021, Makeni); and the impact of natural disasters and health emergencies, such as Ebola and the COVID-19 pandemic (Osuteye et al., 2020).

Whereas some new forms of community philanthropy were observed, there have been striking continuations from the colonial period – including the use of inter-village football matches in the promotion of social cohesion – and raising of funds for community development projects complementing government and NGOs' interventions (Interview, Community Animator, 7 July 2021, Makeni; Interview, Lecturer, University of Makeni, 16 June 2021, Makeni). Also, ethnic and cultural associations, such as the *Ekutay* of the Limba and *Haldi Forthie* of the Fullah, have persisted (Interview, Lecturer, University of Sierra Leone, 2 July 2021, Freetown)[1] as well as the *company* concept which, as already noted, evolved during the colonial period out of members' need for agricultural labour. The use of VSLAs to enhance resilience among members – especially in rural areas (FGD, VSLA Members, Bombali Bana, 13 June, 2021; FGD, HAPPY Kids caregivers, Makeni, 12 June 2021) – is a relatively new idea (Reffell, 2019). VSLAs are gaining momentum and spreading fast. In fact, the use of the term "village" does not adequately capture their spatial distribution, as VSLAs are also widespread in urban centres. Focus group participants in rural and urban areas recounted stories of how their membership of VSLAs helped them to sail through difficult periods during the COVID-19 pandemic (FGD, VSLA Members, Bombali Bana, 13 June, 2021; FGD, HAPPY Kids caregivers, Makeni, 12 June 2021).

In addition, the company concept continues to shape the local philanthropic landscape, proving useful in ensuring continued availability of agricultural labour in rural areas. However, there are signs that its influence is waning as a result of rural–urban migration propelled by the movement of young people. With some families losing their young ones to urban centres, the future influence of the company on community philanthropy remains unclear. In some areas, the shortage of labour has led to the monetisation of companies, as members without farms are offered money or compensated in-kind, in return for their labour (Interview, Community Animator, 7 July 2021, Makeni; Interview, Pa Sorie Sesay, 16 June 2021, Makeni). While on the face of it the original non-monetised configuration of the company appears threatened in the short term, remittances from those who migrate to urban centres can prove useful in not only sustaining a "hybridised" form of the company[2], but rural economies in the long term. In fact, the monetisation of the company is reflective of the general spread of wage labour in previously wageless activities in rural areas, including in artisanal mining where wage labour has almost replaced the tributor system (Conteh and Maconachie, 2021). In addition to migration, the emergences of new modes of livelihoods such as the motorcycle taxi (Conteh and Maconachie, 2021), low productivity in agriculture and the demand for imported commodities are some of the factors said to be fuelling the monetisation of the company (Interview, Community Animator, 7 July 2021, Makeni; Interview, Lecturer, University of Makeni, 16 June 2021, Makeni).

Furthermore, while community philanthropy channelled through ethnic associations was meant to foster solidarity in a multi-ethnic colony, in the post-independence era they have become deeply political. The *Ekutay* in particular has been accused of being a vehicle through which Limba politicians consolidated power in the late 1980s under President Joseph Momoh, although it accommodated senior politicians from other ethnic groups – including the Mende and Temne (Zack-Williams, 2012; Conteh, 2014a). The implication is that the expression of philanthropy through ethnic and cultural associations is not always considered benevolent, especially in politically polarised and multi-ethnic societies. Associational philanthropy as an instrument of control is likely to cause resentment as experienced in the late 1980s. Also, that certain forms of associational philanthropy continue to revolve around ethnicity that illustrates the lasting impacts of colonialism, and citizens' inability to stop coalescing around ethnic identities, instead of promoting a national identity. In the following subsections, the report examines issues of faith, morality, reciprocity and anonymity as they relate to giving in Sierra Leone.

Community Philanthropy, Faith and Morality

Even though giving broadly conceived is ubiquitous in Sierra Leone, the distribution of philanthropy's beneficiaries remains uneven, as survey data indicated that 35.8 per cent of respondents gave to their family members, while 27.3 per cent reported giving to their neighbours and other community members. Cumulatively, this means that 63.1 per cent of respondents gave directly to people they know, with almost 9 per cent giving to community causes and projects, while 19.5

[1]Ekutay means "come and see" or "have you seen?" and Haldi Forthie means "let us agree".

[2]Unlike colonial era company, a "hybridised" company is one that relies on non-monetised and monetised labour pulling.

Table 1: Beneficiaries of individual community philanthropy

Beneficiary	Per cent
Family members	35.8
Neighbours and community members	27.3
Community causes and projects	8.8
Local NGOs	1.4
Philanthropic foundations	1.4
Alma mater	5.6
Church/mosque	19.5
Others	0.1

Source: Author's survey data.

per cent gave to religious houses – churches and mosques (Table 1). In some ways, the findings resonate with those of a 2015 study in South Africa which revealed that 34 per cent of respondents gave to both individuals and organisations, with 84 per cent giving to "'informal' organisations such as community self-help" initiatives (CAF Southern Africa, 2015: 6–7). However, the percentage of respondents' giving to religious houses in Sierra Leone disproportionately reflects their attendance in religious services, as 75.2 per cent said they regularly attended religious services (Survey data, collected in July 2021).

Survey data on the beneficiaries of philanthropy complements the findings from interviews and FGDs, and it is important to put them into context. First, the family in Sierra Leone is extremely important, serving not only as the basic unit of socialisation, a source of emotional support, but it is also considered a source of social security by parents, amidst appalling welfare benefits once they retire, become sick or unable to provide for themselves and dependants (Interviews and FGDs, May–July 2021, Bo, Freetown, Makeni). Several informants recounted having to support their families in a number of ways, including daily subsistence, healthcare and school fees for siblings. One respondent working on a donor-funded project, and on a monthly salary of about US$ 4000, reported giving an estimated US$ 800 every month, with half of it going towards her mother's medical bills, and the rest to other philanthropic commitments – including supporting a local orphanage in the outskirts of Freetown, unemployed family members and friends (Interview, donor project official, 24 May 2012, Freetown). Another, a development consultant, noted providing over US$ 2000 of capital for the resuscitation of his cousin's failing business, after the wife went away with most of his stock (Interview, consultant, 20 July 2021, Bo).

These examples are by all measure impressive philanthropic gestures that can rarely be found among citizens of similar socio-economic status in individualistic societies. In fact, it is not just the relatively well-off whose philanthropy is visible. Within the country's horizontal philanthropy landscape, gifting assumes both "top-bottom" and "bottom-up" forms (Interview, Lecturer, University of Makeni, 16 June 2021, Makeni), and citizens' ability to give is unrestrained by their social class or status, echoing similar findings in Zimbabwe (Murisa, 2020a) and what Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler (2009) have described as the "poor philanthropist". Thus, while urban-based relations with comparatively better jobs support those in rural areas with finance or seeds during the planting season, on the other hand,' rural-based relations would reciprocate with agricultural produce. Also, whereas the urban-based elite would take in family members in search of education and other opportunities in urban centres, beneficiaries would freely perform household chores, relatively expensive services. In doing so funds are not only saved, but also the "associated risks of employing complete strangers" are also mitigated (Interview, NGO staff, Makeni, 8 July 2021; Interviews and FGDs, May–July 2021, Bo, Freetown, Makeni).

Further, the factors influencing research participants' giving are as diverse as the beneficiaries themselves. Nevertheless, the requirements of their faith as well as the "desire to give back to family and community" are the most important considerations in giving, representing 36.3 and 39.1 per cent, respectively. Indeed, "giving back" as the biggest driver behind majority of respondents' philanthropy correlates with interview and focus group data, as illustrated in the case of the Sawmill Spring water and on Table 2.

The finding is similar to that of Mati whose study of philanthropy in Kenya identified the "desire to give back to the less fortunate" as one of the incentives for giving among Kenyans (Mati, 2020: 13). Nonetheless, while both Christianity and Islam – the country's two main religions – emphasise the importance of giving as well as its earthly and heavenly rewards, survey data revealed that Christians are relatively more inclined to giving to charities than Muslims, with 57.3 and 42.7 per cent, respectively (Table 3).

Table 2: Factors influencing giving among respondents

Factor	Per cent
Faith/religion	36.3
Desire to give back to family and community	39.1
Friends and peers	10.3
Need to complement community/collective action	9.6
Need to complement Government action in providing services	4.7

Source: Author's survey data.

Table 3: Giving to charities by religion

Religion	Per cent
Christianity	57.3
Islam	42.7

Source: Author's survey data.

Although it is unclear from the data why Christians are more likely to give to charities than Muslims, the difference may lie in the fact that Islamic charitable giving is less formally organised and visible, thus obscuring respondents' perceptions. Christianity in Sierra Leone, on the other hand, has strong links with formal charities, dating back to the founding of the Colony.

In addition, though giving is an essential part of Sierra Leonean life, the data revealed that people do not offer or accept gifts blindly. They do so on the basis of unwritten and unspoken set of moral rules and expectations that determine the circumstances in which gifts may, or may not, be accepted (Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler, 2009). Several interviewees reported rejecting gifts that did not conform to their moral ethos even when their material needs would have forced them to do otherwise. Whereas 48.8 per cent of respondents said, they had not rejected a gift, 51.2 per cent reported rejecting them. The reasons for rejecting gifts are many, including (1) the gift being a procedure of corruption; (2) gift given in bad faith and (3) gifts intended to corrupt office holders. Cases of gift rejection on the basis of them being transactional are common among certain professionals (including academics and public officials) who rationalise gifts from persons accessing their services to be "bribes for underserved favours" (Interviews, lecturers and civil servants, May–July 2021, Freetown and Makeni).

Although the rejection of gifts in Sierra Leone appears pronounced – based on survey data, it is not peculiar to the country, as similar findings have been reported in Kenya (Mati, 2020) (Table 4). Given that gifts are exchanged within a context of unwritten moral expectations, it is not unreasonable to expect that nonconforming actors can be corrected, and "in extreme cases…isolated, excluded or rejected" (Wilkinson-Maposa and Fowler, 2009: 23). Also, the offering gifts in some instances has ramifications for morality and public conduct, especially in African countries where the lines between everyday philanthropy and corruption are blurred by gift-making, and the difference between a display of appreciation and bribery can be unclear and conflated (Blundo, 2006). For example, a recent study in Tanzania found that people seeking health services would offer health workers valuable gifts in order to save time or make access simpler (Camargo et al., 2021). While the offering of gifts helps to foster and nourish relationships and lubricates social networks (Camargo et al., 2021), in this context, gifts are bribes that contribute to a distortion of the sequencing of service provision and perversely alter the behaviour of public servants, making access simpler for some and harder for those who cannot offer "gifts".

Table 4: Reasons for rejecting gifts

Reason	Per cent
It will force me to reciprocate a favour	16.6
It was meant to compromise my position	12.2
It was not given in good faith	9.3
It was the proceed of corruption/ill-gotten wealth	4.0
Religious convictions	8.9
Others	0.2

Source: Author's survey data.

Perhaps, the most striking example of people rejecting gifts was encountered in Bo, where an NGO staff narrated an instance in which internally displaced persons (IDPs) at the Gondama Camp, rejected a helicopter load of rice in 1996, provided by the National Unity Party (NUP). Although the IDPs were in need of the gift, their leader succeeded in persuading them to reject it, in that "he believed it was part of a vote-buying-strategy" ahead of that year's general elections (Interview, NGO staff, 30 June 2021, Bo). While we can only speculate what would have been the reactions of the IDPs if the gift was offered a year or two before the election, the example illustrates that acceptance and rejection of gifts are underpinned by moral considerations, and as in the case of the rice, they are also time-dependent. Although the narrative is about the rejection of a gift, it also highlights issues related to morality, the nature of politics and trust between citizens and those who govern or seek to govern them.

Giving, Reciprocity and Anonymity

The twin concept of reciprocity and anonymity in giving are critical for our understanding of community philanthropy in Sierra Leone. When survey respondents were asked if they expected beneficiaries of their gifts to reciprocate, 88 per cent said they would not expect reciprocation, while 12 per cent said they expected beneficiaries to reciprocate in one form or another (Table 5). This trend among respondents appears inconsistent with embedded expectations of giving in Africa, as mutual dependence, obligation and reciprocity are intrinsically entrenched in gift-making (Mati, 2017, 2020; Fowler and Mati, 2019). This could be a result of the Hawthorne effect, thus requiring caution in the interpretation of data (McCambridge et al., 2014). In fact, interview and focus group evidence revealed a nuanced view of reciprocity. It would appear for many, reciprocity amounts to a physical receipt of gifts, a view that is unaccommodating of intangible forms of reciprocity – such as the emotional and psychological benefits or satisfaction one gets from seeing a gift being well utilised. The example of one academic perhaps best illustrates this conundrum, when he stopped paying school fees for a beneficiary because he thought "the boy was not serious enough" (Interview, Lecturer, University of Makeni, 16 June 2021, Makeni). In other words, although he did

Table 5: Reciprocation of gifts

Expectation	Per cent
I do not expect beneficiary to reciprocate	88
I expect beneficiary to reciprocate	12

Source: Author's survey data.

Table 6: Views on anonymity

Preference	Per cent
I would like to remain completely anonymous	62.0
I would like only the recipient to know, but not others	26.1
I would like to be recognised as the giver	11.9

Source: Author's survey data.

not expect the boy to physically reciprocate in the short term, he expected him to ensure the gift was well utilised. Despite the embeddedness of reciprocity in Africa (Fowler and Mati, 2019), it would appear that respondents did not want their giving to be (mis)interpreted as a trade (Derrida, 1992), if they outrightly exhibited a need for reciprocity.

In addition to reciprocity, anonymity is key to understanding giving in Sierra Leone (Table 6). Whereas it has been suggested that community philanthropy can be dysfunctional under conditions of anonymity (Fowler and Wilkinson-Maposa, 2013; Soetevent, 2005), recent evidence from South Africa indicates that anonymous giving is prevalent among citizens (Gastrow, 2019; Murisa, 2020b). In Guinea, Sierra Leone's neighbour, one survey found that "…87.8 percent of those interviewed…regularly gave to mosques and churches and to private individuals anonymously" (Mati, 2016a: 47). The finding is slightly less than this report's for which a cumulative 88.1 per cent of respondents preferred one form of anonymity or the other. Precisely 62 and 26.1 per cent said they would either prefer complete anonymity or only recipients should know of their gifts, respectively. Thus, anonymous giving in Sierra Leone reflects trends elsewhere in Africa, even if it is particularly pronounced in the country. Nonetheless, anonymity cannot be completely explained by survey data. Interviews and FGDs revealed a more explicit picture of why almost 90 per cent of respondents preferred anonymity when giving. The need or otherwise for anonymity is shaped by socio-cultural, economic and political incentives, including the likelihood that a gift made in public would expose one to unmanageable demands for help, or would enhance one's standing among those receiving, or present when a gift is offered (Interview, NGO staff, 30 June 2021, Bo; Interview, Lecturer, University of Makeni, 16 June 2021, Makeni).

Several informants noted, ordinary Sierra Leoneans are generally attracted to giving anonymously because "they are protected", while limiting the possibility of their giving being interpreted as "showmanship". On the other hand, persons "vying for political office tend to be public about their giving" (Interview, Lecturer, University of Makeni, 16 June 2021, Makeni; Interview, NGO staff, Bo, 30 June 2021; Interview, NGO staff, 8 July 2021, Makeni). In other words, community philanthropy in Sierra Leone flourishes with anonymity, a finding that is inconsistent with those of some studies which have concluded that the removal of anonymity leads to more giving (Andreoni and Petrie, 2004; Rege and Telle, 2004; Soetevent, 2005).

PHILANTHROPY, EMERGENCIES, TRUST AND POLICY

So far, the report has examined community philanthropy in Sierra Leone both in the colonial and postcolonial periods, under what can be described as "normal" circumstances. In this section, it analyses community philanthropy in times of crises and emergencies, drawing on interviews, focus group and survey data from Bo, Freetown, Makeni and their environs. In particular, it uses one of Freetown's informal settlements – Susan's Bay, as the case for its examination of community philanthropy in emergencies. Although the country continues to experience recurring emergencies, including the Ebola epidemic of 2014–2015 and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic,

Box 3 Other community philanthropy initiatives during the COVID-19 pandemic

In the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, community philanthropy has been manifested in several ways. For example, community groups in Freetown's informal settlements, including Cockle-Bay, Thompson Bay and Oloshoro, have taken a lead in information management on the mode of spread and prevention of the disease, using social media messaging tools such as WhatsApp (Osuteye et al., 2020). They have also invited health experts to give talks in order to coordinate and harmonise communication and prevent misinformation (FEDURP Executive quoted in Osuteye et al., 2020).

In addition, communities have mobilised funds for the provision of potable water "particularly during the periods of official lockdown and restricted movement" in Palmoronkoh and Portee-Rokupa, where "pooled financial resources were used to purchase and fill water tanks (two 2000 litre and one 10,000 l, respectively) placed in accessible areas of the communities" (Osuteye et al., 2020: 58). Further, in collaboration with the Freetown City Council and NGOs, community groups have been able to establish "community kitchens in Portee-Rokupa, Crab Town, Kolleh Town and Grey Bush (CKG) and Cockle Bay", which have provided "food parcels to residents during the period of official total lockdown" (Osuteye, et al. 2020: 59; Hawkes, 2020). While community kitchens have been used elsewhere even before the COVID-19 pandemic (see, e.g., Khera, 2016), it has been suggested that their use in Freetown's informal settlements goes further than just providing food for residents. As in South Africa (Wigley, n.d.), community kitchens have also provided an opportunity for solidarity and mobilisation during the pandemic (Osuteye et al., 2020).

which have all triggered giving, the country does not have a philanthropy policy or strategy (Interview, senior official, Ministry of Social Welfare, Freetown, 23 July 2021). Key to the report's analysis here is the interplay between philanthropy, localised emergencies, trust or its lack thereof and public policy. Survey data revealed a varied picture of citizens' giving patterns during emergencies, with respondents more likely to give to localised forms of emergencies, such as community fire accidents, floods or winds destroying houses and economic assets, than to those that assume a national character. The data revealed that 20 per cent of respondents had given either directly or indirectly to the Ebola response, while 16.0 and 5.9 per cent had given the 2017 mudslide and COVID-19 pandemic, respectively. The majority – 41.8 per cent – gave to localised emergencies, while 16.0 per cent said they had never given to an emergency.

These findings perhaps raise an obvious question – why do respondents tend to give less to national emergencies, than to localised crises? This question was put to interviewees and focus group discussants, and two main reasons for this trend emerged. First, is the issue of *hierarchy of responsibility*, as many argued that responding to national emergencies is the responsibility of the state and its development partners, including NGOs. The second reason relates to trust and accountability deficits, which are long-standing challenges inhibiting development and cooperation between citizens and the state (Enria et al., 2016). This finding reinforces those from similar studies that have emphasised the need to enhance accountability and trust in philanthropy, in order to attract and sustain citizens' involvement (Zambian Governance Foundation, 2018; CAF Southern Africa, 2015). Indeed, the issue of accountability in influencing people's giving to emergencies is illuminated by survey data, with 85.4 per cent of respondents noting the (mis)management of their gift is "very important" consideration when deciding whether or not to give to emergencies. Perhaps, it is unsurprising that as indicated in Table 7, the percentage of persons who reported giving to national emergencies has progressively declined since the Ebola epidemic, whose response was accompanied by one of the highest levels of corruption in a government led programme in the post-war era (Dupuy, 2015; Shepler, 2017). As Dupuy has commented on an audit report on the management of domestic donations for the Ebola relief effort:

> Payments for supplies and sensitization efforts were duplicated and undocumented, money was paid out to private individuals rather than to organizations, taxes and healthcare worker salaries were not actually paid out as claimed, hazard pay was improperly provided to police and military personnel, and procurement procedures were widely disregarded (Dupuy, 2015: 2).

The implication is that, while national emergencies provide unique circumstances for philanthropic expressions, citizens' giving is however diminished by their lived experiences of how gifts given to address previous emergencies are (mis)managed. Trust is therefore central to citizen's philanthropic responses during emergencies, and it appears to be enhanced between parties when it is localised, as they get to experience the impacts within a framework of mutual accountability (Moyo, 2013; Moyo and Ramsamy, 2014; Conteh, 2016). This is unlike national emergencies when accountability is seen as distant, opaque, technocratic and designed to conform to certain legal and policy requirements, and not necessarily the interests of those whose lives are made worse by emergencies (Interview, Lecturer, University of Sierra Leone, 2 July 2021, Freetown).

Table 7: Giving in relation to emergencies or disasters

Emergency/Disaster	Per cent
Ebola	20.3
Mudslide	16.0
COVID-19	5.9
Others (include local floods and fire disasters)	41.8
Never donated to an emergency	16.0

Source: Author's survey data.

The Susan's Bay Fire Disaster 2021

It would be erroneous however to assume, without hedging, that the continued erosion of trust between citizens and the state leaves little room for interactions between them during emergencies, given that Sierra Leone's sociopolitical landscape has historically linked communities, local and national actors through familial, political and other informal ties (Conteh, 2017). The case of Susan's Bay illustrates that even localised emergencies can assume a national significance, with the display of philanthropy and its impacts shaped by factors completely outside communities' control. Home to almost 4500 people, Susan's Bay was on 24 March 2021 affected by a fire disaster which reportedly destroyed over 250 houses as well as leaving more than 1000 residents homeless (Macarthy and Kamara, 2021). As the disaster unfolded, the community quickly attracted support from nearby communities in extinguishing the fire without success; and residents whose houses were spared temporarily sheltered the homeless (Interview, Chief, Susan's Bay, 10 June 2021, Freetown; FGD, Susan's Bay youths, 10 June 2021, Freetown).

In addition, NGOs set up temporary offices, providing food aid and shelter to accommodate the homeless; and the services of community kitchens which had resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, extended (Interview, Chief, Susan's Bay, 10 June 2021, Freetown; Osuteye et al., 2020; Hawkes, 2020). Ordinary citizens from outside the community – either as individuals or groups, also provided food, household utensils, building materials and bales of used clothing. The community further attracted material support from notable local businesses and politicians – including President Julius Maada Bio and Samura Kamara,

former presidential candidate of the main opposition, All People's Congress, who are reported to have donated 1600 bags of rice and 50 bundles of roofing sheets and 200 bags of rice, respectively (Interview, Chief, Susan's Bay, 10 June 2021, Freetown). The two politicians who are expected to be the leading contenders in the 2023 presidential election have been accused of engaging in "politicised philanthropy" (Interview, Lecturer, University of Sierra Leone, 2 July 2021, Freetown), an idea that is nonetheless different from traditional conceptions of political philanthropy, related to giving as a basis of influencing public policies or programmes (Bertrand et al., 2020; Moyo, 2013).

At the time of writing, most of the burnt-out houses had not been rebuilt "despite large donations of building materials", which respondents feared had been rendered unusable (Interview, Chief, Susan's Bay, 10 June 2021, Freetown; FGD, youths, 10, June 2021, Freetown). Residents blamed the lack of progress in reconstruction on the government that had placed a moratorium on all (re)construction, insisting it was developing a "building back better" strategy for the area (Interview, senior official, National Disaster Management Agency, Freetown, 11 June 2021). However, with the impact of COVID-19 and the constrained fiscal space within which the government operated, it was unclear how the houses would be rebuilt from public resources. Remarkably, residents' understanding of government's plans remained limited, with insinuations of corruption and rumours spreading that the government was seeking to relocate them in order to allocate the area to the Nigerian Billionaire Aliko Dangote, who was reportedly looking to expand his operations in the country (FGD, Susan's Bay youths, 10 June 2021, Freetown). Although corruption is pervasive in the country, the example of Susan's Bay illustrates the dangers of society reducing the phenomenon to a sociology of rumour, relying on what is said of corruption, instead of the evidence (Blundo and Olivier de Sardan, 2006). Whereas in this case corruption rumours are unfounded, they nevertheless demonstrate the tendency of development and policy practitioners to persistently fail in the most basic of project implementation activities such as stakeholder engagement and information management (Conteh, 2014b). The result is an incomplete philanthropic process that is likely to further weaken trust between citizens and the state.

CONCLUSION

Community philanthropy in Sierra Leone has been at the centre of social change since the colonial period, and its adaptive features have enabled citizens adjust to diverse socio-economic and political shocks. It is embedded, enduring, transformative and cannot be confined to the past given that it is self-reproducing and sustaining, supporting citizens respond to diverse historical and contemporary contexts including emergences. For each milieu, the forces that have shaped community philanthropy are unique, with giving assuming particular forms to respond to those forces. In the colonial period, giving was not only an expression of kindness, it also emerged as an adaptation strategy to the imposition of foreign rule, a subtle basis of resistance, as well as an emotional and psychological "refuge" from the entrapments of colonialism. From Alimania (associational), to Adelaide Casely-Hayford (individual), philanthropy impacted individuals, communities and society as a whole, enhancing the self-esteem of Sierra Leoneans as well as equipping them with livelihood skills.

Today, there are noticeable continuities in the manifestation of philanthropy, especially those related to cultural associations, familial obligations, rites of passage and labour pooling, reflecting philanthropy's enduring qualities. However, within these continuities have emerged changes or hybrids, and in some cases new forms of philanthropy such as the VSLAs, exemplifying philanthropy's adaptability. For instance, although labour pooling is still part of rural philanthropy, part of it has been monetised, the result of accelerated rural–urban migration and emergence of new forms of livelihoods. Also, whereas cultural associations have persisted, they have not only supported their members adjust to social change, they have resulted in "animosities" between them and members of other ethnic groups. This problem is an unintended consequence of "a good idea", whose resolution is beyond the abilities of cultural or ethnic associations themselves, requiring a distinguished national leadership and strategy to address and leverage, as Rwanda has done through its "Home Grown Initiatives" (Hasselskog, 2017).

Furthermore, the picture that emerges from this study indicates that Sierra Leoneans generally give to, and within the familiar, with philanthropists directing their giving mostly to family members and persons with whom they share similar socio-economic characteristics. They are influenced by faith, need to give back to their communities from which they have benefitted, and the need to fill gaps in service provision, in a context of weak state capacity. This does not, however, imply that they cannot be mobilised to give beyond their communities. There have been limited attempts by the state to leverage philanthropy, except in emergencies when the share weight of crisis and the resulting existential threats, can trigger waves of giving to national efforts. Even at that, as we saw with giving during emergencies, the deficit in trust between the state and citizens continues to hinder state-society relations in philanthropic endeavours. If the government is to leverage community philanthropy as a strategy to reduce aid dependence and alleviation of poverty, there is need for the state to develop a comprehensive philanthropy strategy (see Moyo et al., n.d.), ensuring that the rebuilding of trust between citizens and the state becomes a central focus. This will require aligning such a strategy with broader social welfare and anticorruption strategies that will mitigate the public's concern related to giving to national humanitarian responses.

Sierra Leone's community philanthropy landscape already shares similarities with other African countries, either through

specific forms such as the pooling of labour and other economic assets in Zimbabwe; the rejection of gifts because they do not conform to expected moral standards, in Kenya; or the high level of anonymous giving among Guineans. There is perhaps limited scope for suggestions on what can be replicated elsewhere. If anything, one lesson other countries can learn from this study is how fragile, conflict affected and disaster-prone countries can build resilience overtime, which unfortunately has been a small part of this study. With all probability, the successful cases of community philanthropy, such as POPDA and the Sawmill Spring Water, may already exist elsewhere in Africa, with similar or slightly different configurations. They should therefore be identified and supported to scale up. Also, replicability should not only be international. It should also be within countries as in the case of POPDA in Makeni, whose model the government intends to replicate in other parts of the country. This study's modest contribution to understanding the country's community philanthropy landscape, it is hoped, would trigger further interests and research, including the investigation of the links between giving and resilience.

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