

THE ROLE OF ARCHIVES IN ENHANCING ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY – THE CASE OF SIERRA LEONE

Proscovia Svärd
The Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden
E-mail: Proscovia.Svard@nai.uu.se

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of archives in the promotion of accountability and transparency in post-conflict societies by focussing on a case study of Sierra Leone. Sierra Leone was engulfed in a destructive civil war in the 1990's. Since the end of the war in 2002, the government of Sierra Leone and the international community have been involved in the process of peace building, national reconciliation and reconstruction. This paper argues that access to public records is a right for citizens in a democratic society in the spirit of Article 19 of the Universal Human Rights Declaration. The paper further demonstrates that the enlightenment of a society through access to information is a vital key to peace and development. The state of the Archives in Sierra Leone poses challenges for peace and reconciliation. In order to promote the democratisation of information, the national archives will need to be rehabilitated. This is important for peace building, democratic governance and the creation of an engaged civil society and a vibrant public sphere. The paper further addresses the importance of archives in safeguarding the rights of the people in order to create a firm foundation for a democratic society. Information is empowerment and that is why repressive governments misinform the electorate or withhold information from it. The paper also argues that the role played by archivists in government institutions in the West is relevant to the challenges facing the proper documentation and maintenance of government archives in Africa.

Keywords: Accountability, Archives, Civil War, Sierra Leone

Introduction

Since the end of the war in 2002, the government of Sierra Leone and the international community have been involved in the process of peace building, national reconciliation and the reconstruction of the country. Good governance is now the focus of the government, in order to promote sustainable development and the efficient management of the country's resources in a transparent manner (Sierra Leone Vision 2003:21). Non-accountability and lack of transparency were contributing factors to the outbreak of the destructive civil war. To address impunity, bad governance, corruption and the violation of the human rights and to foster reconciliation, the government will have to make use of the TRC archives and also improve on the management of government archives. Archives in this paper represent both the Sierra Leone TRC archives and the National Archives. A population emerging from war experiences has expectations like justice for victims, accelerated economic recovery and development that can generate employment and prosperity, social services like education, health, electricity, water and the rehabilitation of infrastructure. The management of these expectations requires a good communication and information dissemination strategy (Blake 2005: 109). To sustain the work that the government and the international community are engaged in will require investment in information management. It is argued in the TRC report, that lasting peace will only be achieved through knowledge, understanding of the causes of the war, and national healing of the wounds from a traumatic past.

Although civil society organisations engage in the dissemination of information, the government of Sierra Leone is the main controller of the information and dissemination infrastructure (Blake 2005:110). My earlier research findings on the TRC archives for example show that the government has been inept in supporting the dissemination of the TRC findings. The findings contain important information, which should be used for the reconciliation and healing of the people but also for the reconstruction of the society as a whole. Blake argues that Sierra Leone needs a National Information Policy that will enhance the consolidation of peace and national reconstruction initiatives (Blake 2005:111). Information is a prerequisite if citizens are to be able to exercise their rights. Cain *et. al.*, contend that in

many countries, information is not made available to the citizens, which hinders accountability and transparency on public resource allocation and utilisation. This in turn creates tension and public mistrust towards government institutions (Cain et al., 2001:413). In order to support the development of democracy, accountability and transparency are significant in post-conflict reconstruction (Bangura 2005). The decade without a functioning government in Sierra Leone created a ground for non-accountability and lack of transparency (Bangura 2005).

While issues concerning the long-term preservation of electronic records continue to engage informational professionals worldwide, some African countries are still grappling with issues of access to public information. In Sierra Leone, the Constitution grants the electorate freedom of expression and the press. It is clearly stated in the Constitution that:

Except with his own consent, no person shall be hindered in the enjoyment of his freedom of expression, and for the purpose of this section the same freedom includes the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference, freedom from interference with his correspondence, freedom to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions, and academic freedom in institutions of learning (The Constitution of Sierra Leone 1991).

This right is however contradicted by the Public Order Act of 1965. Kamara (2006) argues that The Public Order Act of 1965 contravenes the 1991 Constitution. The Criminal Libel Law violates the right for individuals and organisations to hold opinions, impart ideas and information as stipulated in the Constitution. According to interviews I carried out in September 2006 and March, 2007, the Sierra Leonean press is challenging some of the provisions in the 1965 Public Order Act because they are anti-democratic and anti-press since, a person who writes an article, which is viewed by the government as libellous, can be sent to jail. This also applies to the person who reads the article and the publisher of the article (Interviews 2006.09.11, 2007.03.23). This kind of environment does not enhance the tradition

to access government information for fear of reprisals from the government.

It is against this background that this paper examines the role of archives in promoting access to information as a tool for facilitating transparency and accountability. The role of archives in Western democratic societies provides some illustration of their relevance to the promotion of accountability and transparency. In this regard, this paper will later explore a perspective from Sweden.

The paper is divided into five sections: the introduction, conceptual issues and issues related to accountability and transparency, the analysis of my research findings and the conclusion.

Method

The study relies on a combination of *secondary* (published) and *primary* (field research) data sources. It adopts a qualitative research approach, characterized by interpretation and observation, and involves an understanding of the research subject through documentary analysis, participant observation and direct observation, unstructured interviewing, and case studies (Deacon 1999:4).

Theoretical issues: the records continuum model

The strand of the Archival and Information Science theory adopted in this paper is the records continuum model, which explores the continuum of responsibilities that relate to recordkeeping regimes. Proper recordkeeping requires the capturing, maintenance, preservation and the re-presentation of records as evidence of business, social and cultural purposes for as long as they are of value. This theory focuses on frameworks for accountable recordkeeping regimes (McKemmish 1998). In this context, records are central to the documentation process. Since the records continuum model combines recordkeeping and archives management, it means that information is effectively managed and can be made readily available to those who require it even during the period when it is still actively being used in the transaction of business. The records continuum model enhances the availability of up-to-date information to the general public. This would also allow the media to play their "watch-dog role" by monitoring and

scrutinising the government activities through access to government records. The records continuum model would enhance accountability and transparency.

Accountability and transparency

Accountability and transparency require access to information. To promote these two concepts, governments must document their activities (Longworth Bernes and Bertrand 2005:5). Philip defines the narrow construction of accountability as that which deals with systems of control for corruption, fraud, embezzlement, negligence and gross incompetence (Philip 2001:360). Proper record keeping is a prerequisite to effective accountability. Hurley also argues that government documentation should be used by journalists to hold officials accountable for the decisions they make on-behalf of the electorate (Hurley 2005:224). Proper records management should include laws and regulations to support improved decision-making, policy, monitoring, audit and enquiries into official actions. Records are evidence of decision-making processes (Cain et al., 2001:415). This enhances proper decision-making processes since decisions are based on comprehensive background material (Longworth, Bernes and Bertrand 2005:5). Longworth, Bernes and Bertrand (2005:5) argue that archival institutions should be given enough resources to support the freedom of information acts that have been introduced in a number of countries. Poor record keeping routines in many countries hinder access to government records. Since transparency and accountability are inextricably linked to information, public officials should account for their actions and the decisions they make should be open to public debate and scrutiny (Cain et al., 2001:410-412).

Cain et al., (2001:413) posit, "transparency or openness has two aspects, both: the ready, unobstructed access to, and availability of, data and information from public as well as private sources that is accurate, timely, relative and comprehensive and tolerance for public debate, public scrutiny and public questioning of political, economic and social policy choices". This in their view would enhance good governance. In order to promote accountability, records have to be complete, authentic, reliable, coherent, understandable and accessible, (Hurley 2005:224). Non-partisan institutions (Philip 2001:360) like

the audit offices, ombudsman and ethics committees use formal accountability to impartially assess public office holders.

The Sierra Leone Government Budgeting and Accountability Act of 2005 provides for "transparency and accountability in the appropriation, control and management of the finances and other financial resources of Sierra Leone and to provide for other related matters". (The Act, 2005:1). This would require the recording and reporting of actions taken to the parliament, public (The Act: 2005:2). Government archives provide documentary evidence of larger societal concerns. The value of archives therefore, is cultural and humanistic (Henry 1998:315). Archives are not only meant for academic research but they are a cultural heritage and they document the fundamental rights of the citizens. In a democratic society, records of organisations/institutions financed by public money must therefore be made available to the citizens, (McKemmish, 1998). The Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission's archives are a clear illustration of the need to plan for the proper use, preservation and dissemination of information contained in archives to enhance accountability and transparency. Sierra Leone lacks information technology that would enhance the dissemination of information and the situation is exacerbated by the poor maintenance of paper recordkeeping systems. Even in developed societies with modern record-keeping systems technological developments have contributed to the privatisation of public information. Computerised records management systems have become a challenge (Cain et al., 2001:415). What does this mean for a fragile democracy like Sierra Leone?

It is the obligation of a Public Records Office to make government information available to the citizens according to the specified regulations (Glazar 2004:3/4:159). Glazar (2004:3/4:159) examines the link between state archives and Habermas' concept of the public sphere which is "an arena, independent of government (even if in receipt of state funds) and also enjoying autonomy from partisan economic forces, which is dedicated to national debate (i.e. to debate and discussion which is not 'interested', 'disguised' or 'manipulated') and which is both accessible to entry and open to inspection by the citizenry" (Webster 2004:163). The formation of public opinion is based on the quality, availability and communication of information (Webster 2004:163). Glazar (2004:3/4:159) looks at state archives as

a “possibility of democracy at work in the public sphere”. Public archives as information collecting centres provide a balance between journalistic versions that are supposed to provide a critical debate and original versions.

Given the history of Sierra Leone, which is tainted with endemic corruption, nepotism, abuse of human rights and impunity, the issues raised by all the authors in this section illustrate the need to promote the role of archives in enhancing accountability and transparency.

A historical background of Sierra Leone

The causes of the war in Sierra Leone were both external and internal. Years of bad governance, endemic corruption, and lack of respect for human rights created a society that was a ticking bomb bound to explode (TRC Report 2005). Sesay (2003) further posit that the uneven distribution of resources, economic and political mismanagement, sub-regional dynamics are among the factors that caused the civil war in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone gained its independence in 1961. After independence it passed through a succession of leaders. One of the leaders Sir Milton Margai managed to bring about a steady development in the country until the long and autocratic rule of Siaka Stevens of All People's Congress (APC), (1965 - 1985). Siaka's rule led to authoritarianism, corruption and patrimonialism. This deprived a vast majority of Sierra Leoneans of basic social services, (Sesay 2003). The ineffectual leadership plunged the country into war. The insurgency of March 1991 by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Corporal Foday Sankoh, was a bi-product of the Liberian civil war (Ukeje 2003:113). The RUF were encouraged and funded largely by warlord Charles Taylor. In April 1992, dissatisfied military officers who had been fighting the RUF overthrew President Saidu Momoh's government. The junta led by Valentine Strasser under the National Provisional Ruling Council (NPRC) who also failed to end the war succeeded Momoh. In May 1997 Major Johnny Paul Koroma overthrew the government of Ahmed Tejan Kabbah. The junta was removed from power in February 1998 through an invasion ordered by the then ECOWAS chairman the deceased General Sani Abacha of Nigeria (Ukeje 2003:123-124). On 7 July 1999, the Lomé Peace Agreement

was signed which was to put an end to the war and opened the door to reconciliation (Lord: 2000:10). In May 2000 there was a resumption of atrocities (Obita 2000:9) and a total of 30,000 to 70,000 people are estimated to have died of war-related deaths. There are no reliable figures on the people who were wounded or traumatized by the war. Atrocities like the amputation of limbs, ears and lips with machetes, decapitation, gang rape of women and children were common (Lord 2000:13) during one of Africa's most brutal civil wars. It was against this background that the Sierra Leone TRC situated its work.

Bangura (2005) argues that most African conflicts are caused by long years of centralised power, bad governance, corruption and the marginalisation of the citizens. The conflict caused the dislocation of large numbers of people into urban towns.

Critical issues in accountability and transparency in Sierra Leone: the role of the archives

Access to public records and sensitisation

Sierra Leone has had a history of misrule, endemic corruption and the abuse of human rights. The state archives have not been used for the promotion of good governance. Governments have not been accountable to the people. The fact that only 35 per cent of the 4.5 million people are considered literate translates into lack of interest in information. This however should not hinder the dissemination of public information since official information can always be translated into local languages.

McKemmish (2005) argues that records are an integral part of the historical memory of the state. The creation, maintenance and retention of government records and its agencies are a direct responsibility of the ministers and chief executive officers. They are held accountable in the management of their portfolios, departments and agencies (McKemmish 1998). McKemmish however contends that the overall responsibility of records should be entrusted to a separate body with the general oversight of public records. This body should be equipped with adequate powers (McKemmish 1998). National, state and local government archives are archives of governance since they address the role of the government within a society.

Article 19 in the Declaration of Human Rights regulates access to information as a human right. "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers" (Gränström et. al., 2000). Access to information is vital in enabling the citizens to scrutinize government activities but also empowers them to discipline unscrupulous public officers through the ballot box (TRC Report n.d: 131). As argued by Kargbo (2002:3), the diffusion of information in Sierra Leone will require the engagement of information networks like libraries, archives, media and educational institutions. Information is an essential resource in promoting human rights, conflict resolution, peace and security. Its availability to the public measures the level of accountability and transparency of a democratic society (Kargbo 2002:3).

The public needs information in order to monitor how public money is being spent on specific services and amenities. Sierra Leone for example lacks basic needs like water and electricity that would stimulate cottage industries and partly solve the pressing issue of youth unemployment. In Uganda for example the publication of government allocations to schools reduced the amounts of money that were being spent on patronage politics other than education. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission therefore based on the Uganda experience recommended the government of Sierra Leone to publish allocations for the provision of services and amenities (TRC report n.d: 162 - 163).

The challenges facing the Sierra Leone Archives are many. There is lack of infrastructure, resources, manpower, and the political will to invest in record keeping systems that will enhance information dissemination and literacy and a culture to ask for information.

The state of the public records office in Sierra Leone

In 2003 a proposal was written by the Sierra Leonean Senior Archivist of the Public Archives Office with the objective to prevent further decay and destruction of records from fungus, termites and silverfish. Records needed to be identified, organized and catalogued

in order to ease accessibility. This was a significant step towards improved information management and to promote the integrity of the Public Archives and its relevance to the general public (Moore 2003:2). I interviewed a lecturer in Library and Information Science at Fourah Bay College during my research trip in September, 2006 who explained that government archives are now being recognised as a useful tool in the management of government affairs and that work has been embarked on to improve their status. My personal visit to the Public Records Office of Sierra Leone and a response from a respondent who was involved in the TRC process revealed that one of the key challenges is infrastructure. The public archives are housed in the University of Sierra Leone, Fourah Bay College. While interviewing one of the commissioners, he mentioned the impact this could have on the general public in seeking information. For an illiterate person, the chances are minimal to go the University, a centre of learning to look for information (Interviews 2006.03.18, 2006.09.09). Archiving facilities and funds are still lacking, a result of which the TRC archives are still packed in boxes, since the completion of the TRC mission and not indexed or coded. The respondent that I interviewed in March 2006 was of the view that there is lack of knowledge because people have never been properly trained and even if they are have been trained in theory, perhaps some of them even though foreign educated, have never had the opportunity to apply what they learnt in practice, in Sierra Leone. My respondent argued that:

Information that does not serve the purposes of government is routinely destroyed. There is no such a thing as freedom of information and so I don't think any one ever felt sufficiently empowered to ask for an archive. I know for example that law reports in Sierra Leone, which would be an integral part of any national archiving system, were stopped in the early 70s, so I don't think that there is a culture of recording things in writing or any archiving form (Interview 2006.03.18).

In 2005, the government contracted the International Records Management Trust consultants to establish a new information infrastructure that will help enhance economic management capacity and service delivery. Government ministries are still grappling with

problems of records management (Hoyle 2005:1). The consultants identified the following problems:

- Uncontrolled information flow;
- Untrained staff;
- Poorly organised registries;
- Insecure storage facilities that lead to the corruption of public records; and
- Lack of computerised records management systems.

The consultants noted that recordkeeping of government activities concerning financial transactions; resource allocation and policy development was poor (Hoyle 2005:1). The project has a component of capacity building through training of local staff and the building of secure storage. Initiatives to enact new public records and archives act and a scheme of service were embarked on in the hope to support legal, regulatory and organizational frameworks (Hoyle 2005:2). The staff were trained in appraisal, business process, functional analysis and file classification schemes, (Hoyle 2005:2). It is hoped that improved records management will help the government to exercise better control over for example personnel and payroll records because payroll manipulations had increased the personnel budget (Hoyle 2005:2).

The TRC of Sierra Leone Archives

The archives of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) raise issues of accountability. Lack of a proper dissemination strategy of the TRC findings shows the government's lack of interest in making the information available to the citizenry. The investment in the TRC by the international community and the people of Sierra Leone was directed at enhancing transitional justice. The entire TRC documentation is a social memory of Sierra Leone and a monument of the horrendous atrocities committed against innocent civilians. The objective of the Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission was to establish an impartial historical record, which would enable Sierra Leoneans to understand the causes of the conflict. It was argued in the TRC report that the "building of a lasting peace in Sierra Leone can only begin with a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the country's past" (TRC Report n.d.: 22). In order for this

objective to be achieved the findings of the TRC have to be disseminated to the citizenry. The media also has a role to play by digesting information in a way that will promote reconciliation.

The right to access public information is important for media freedom and it encourages media to play their role as watchdogs. Ogbondan (2002:89) argues that the democratisation of information and knowledge should be an aspect of ongoing political transition. He further states that access to government information in Africa is an area, which needs to be reformed (Ogbondan 2002:75). Freedom of information was listed by the commission as one of the factors that would promote good governance (TRC Report n.d.: 23). Sierra Leone still uses sedition and criminal libel laws, a legacy from its colonial past. The effective performance of media requires freedom of expression and independence.

Given the high level of illiteracy, Sierra Leone's biggest question is how to reach out to the groups of Sierra Leoneans who need the TRC findings most? These include the combatants, war amputees, women, children, young and old people and those that were generally traumatised by the war. During an interview that I carried out in March 2006, my respondent argued that:

Some of those problems have now become so endemic that you do not even have a natural curiosity among Sierra Leoneans to find out what is in the archives. Most of us who have been educated and have been governed freely and allowed to access information freely have what we think is an inherent curiosity but in Sierra Leone, I have had it proven to me that curiosity is not an inert quality, it is not something that comes by virtue of being a human being. It is something that comes as result of your nature, if you are given channels through which to access information, if you are given opportunities to build up a base of knowledge, if you are shown that knowledge can be empowering, that diverse and makes rich experiences, can in turn enrich and diversify your contribution, then you go around the world, you seek information. You and your human interactions seek to learn, seek to discover, Sierra Leoneans don't. They have experienced oppressive leadership, from the colonial times and then

carried through into post-independent governments, Sierra Leoneans have always been told that it is not their right to know or ask, you will keep your mouth shut and we will govern you in the way we see fit to govern and if we enrich ourselves, that is our right and that is a depressing state of affairs but cannot be allowed to continue (Interview 2006.03.18).

Lack of the tradition to access government records creates a non-democratic society and pacified citizens.

The Human Rights Commission

In March 2007, during my second research trip to Freetown, I had a meeting with the Chair and Executive Secretary of the newly inaugurated Human Rights Commission. The commission, which is a statutory body, was inaugurated on 11 December 2006 and is charged with the challenge of holding the government accountable for the implementation of the TRC recommendations. The Commission is also to follow-up the TRC process and engage in the dissemination of the TRC findings. This will necessitate a take over of custodianship of the TRC archives that are currently being stored in the dump rooms of Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone. In order for the commission to be able to effectively live up to its mandate, it will need to establish a good records system that will preserve and enable the dissemination of the TRC findings. The challenges before the commission are many. There is need for premises, salaries to the commissioners and archival and information management expertise and the effective dissemination of the TRC Archives.

A perspective from Sweden

The role played by archivists in government institutions in the West could be relevant to the challenges facing the proper documentation and maintenance of government archives in Africa. This is because established democracies such as Sweden have put into practice laws that enhance access to government archives. A democratic society fosters participatory governance. Democracy is internationally supported because it is a means by which development is achieved. Where there is development, there are hopes for stability, order and

peace. Rudebeck (2002:3-17) posits "democratisation in any given country implies in the first place, equalisation of power to control those developmental resources which can, at all, be controlled from within that country". Sierra Leone might have educated archivists/information managers but who have not been enabled to put their skills into practice because of the war, political, structural, technological and economic challenges. Cain et al. who studied Gambia and investigated corruption came to a conclusion that over-bureaucratisation, inefficiency and inadequately trained records management staff resulted into improper recordkeeping and hardships in information retrieval. They further observed that chaotic record keeping is sometimes deliberate, to prevent anyone from following a trail of fraud. The case of Gambia demonstrated that the assertion that records management "acts as a building block for other activities: in this instance financial management" is true (Cain et al., 2001:415-416).

Since 1766, Sweden's Public Records Act guarantees every Swedish citizen the right to access public records. It is through the public records that the general public can exercise control over government institutions. Government records are considered public the moment they are received at a government institution. This gives the general public and the media a chance to access information while it is still current. Access to information encourages investigative journalism. The media scrutinize government institutions, digest and relay information to the general public (Bohlin 2001:19). The Swedish Public Records Act also protects sources of printed information. Free debates on societal issues and democracy are enhanced. The availability and accessibility of the records to the general public establishes a controlling function regarding the routines, ambitions and the effectiveness of government authorities. The Swedish Public Records Act protects the legal rights of the citizens and promotes participatory government (Bohlin 2001:20).

Are there then no challenges to the Swedish system, which safeguards the citizenry right to information? With modern recordkeeping systems the privatisation of government records has increased but functions that allow the scrutiny of government office holders like the media, audit office and ombudsman are allowed access to government records. Investigative journalism often leads to the revelation of

facts and the resignation of government officials. At the beginning of this year for example, two ministers were forced to resign after the media had retrieved old records that revealed that they were not morally suitable to hold the portfolios they had been given (*The Local* 2006). Another incident that illustrates the importance of information and its management is the tsunami catastrophe in Thailand that claimed 543 Swedish lives. A commission was set up to establish how government officials had handled the news on the catastrophe. The discovery of recorded tapes that contained the email logs after the completion of the commission's first investigation necessitated a new investigation (*The Local* 2007:1). This, in a democracy, is the role that accountability plays by holding government officials responsible for their deeds. Records have had to be scrutinized in order to establish the truth, which enhanced transparency in the issue. The truth is important for the families that lost their loved ones and on a political level; it shows the effectiveness and commitment of the government office holders. Transparency and accountability are useful for good governance and democracy, ensuring that the government serves the people well and manages public resources in a manner that promotes the welfare of each member of the society. Where there is transparency and accountability, justice is done and equity is respected with no room for impunity.

For archivists who operate in an environment where access to information is respected, the awareness and the skills that we develop might help our African counterparts in the management of records. There is need to sensitise those in power and the general public about the importance of proper recordkeeping. It is all about human rights.

Conclusion and recommendations

Post-conflict societies need reliable information because of the expectations that a population weary of war has. People need to understand the causes of the conflict in order to reconcile and to be able to engage in the reconstruction of their society. Trust is important and puts the issue of accountability and transparency at the epi-centre of the reconstruction work. Accountability and transparency are two salient elements in the establishment of a firm foundation for stability and sustainable peace building. Government archives

document societal needs and the activities of the representatives that people vote into power. They contain information from which people should get enlightenment using media, on the management of the public goods for developmental purposes and the delivery of services. The national constitution of Sierra Leone and Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasize the right to access information. The Sierra Leone Criminal Libel Law of the 1965 Public Order Act however contravenes the freedom of information since it hinders the scrutiny of political authorities.

The lesson that can be drawn from the problems presented in this paper is that information management is an area that should be given priority during the reconstruction of post-conflict societies. Peace building, healing and reconciliation can only be achieved through an understanding of the causes of the conflict. In the case of Sierra Leone, the TRC archives should be effectively used to create knowledge and to enhance long-term stability. The recommendations contained in the TRC report would enhance accountability and transparency. Through access to government records the causes of the conflict like corruption that is swallowing the country's scarce resources could be effectively monitored. Nepotism is another evil that hinders the recruitment of competent people in government ministries and an obstacle towards work that would bring about change and development. Recruitment procedures should be an open exercise and resource allocation to government ministries should be publicised. Politicians should declare their assets before taking up their portfolios. International Aid Agencies should have a component of the effective management of government records in order to promote transparency and accountability. The British Development Agency (DFID) for example is involved in the betterment of records management in some of the government ministries to be able to monitor or ensure the proper use of its aid.

Information contained in government archives is important knowledge in the creation of a stable and peaceful society.

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