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Challenges of Public Private Partnership in Supporting Governance and Development in Sierra Leone: Wellington-Masiaka Toll Road Project

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List of Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
CRSG	China Railway Seventh Group
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GoSL	Government of Sierra Leone
MDAs	Ministries, Departments and Agencies
PPPs	Public-Private Partnerships
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WMTR	Wellington-Masiaka Toll Road

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Abstract

Sierra Leone faces serious infrastructure deficits, which have dampened economic growth in recent years and seems undoubtedly to slow it down in years to come. Responding to these, the government has sought to find alternative ways to finance infrastructure with PPPs becoming an interesting mechanism to address these challenges. This study analyses the challenges of PPPs in supporting Sierra Leone's governance and development so far. Results show that the PPPs' challenges in the country in this respect include China's involvement in the country's PPPs, access to finances, market forces, and legal-institutional architecture, corruption, and private sector insecurities. In addition, the research findings reveal legislative authority, and accountability and transparency as the major obstacles faced by PPPs when dealing with the Sierra Leone government and Chinese firm CRSG. Consequently, the study findings highlight that through upgrading policies to boost local private sector PPP actors and strengthen institution to combat corruption are key measures to counter the exploitive nature of Chinese state-owned construction companies. Further, employing and enhancing effective engagements to foster transparency in PPP's overall process are vital measures to increase and uphold public trust and interests in delivering public services. Finally, mobilizing private sector finances and private sector involvement in championing for overall PPP project processes are crucial PPP interventions to complement the government's better solutions to public service delivery. The research concludes that putting all these facts into con-sideration, PPPs will have great potentials as a tool for long-term development of Sierra Leone's infrastructure.

Relevance to Development Studies

This research will add more knowledge about the challenges that public private partnerships face in Sierra Leone, hence enable the country to strategize better in such partnerships to enhance development. From the Wellington-Masiaka Toll Road project case study, countries can venture into projects that can benefit them but poor strategies in managing the challenges can lead to increased costs therefore adding to the budget. In addition to international public private partnership, states should focus on empowering its citizens, as empowered people build a country's economy. By involving local businesses in government activities and paying them effectively, these businesses grow and create employment to the citizens. Public private partnership plays a significant role in enabling business between the government and these local businesses. However, the challenges can deter this partnership as explained in this paper. The capacity of the state to handle these challenges defines success for both parties in this partnership, which translates to general economic growth.

Keywords

Public private partnerships; Challenges; Concession agreements; Infrastructure development

Chapter 1 Introduction

The global pressure for countries to remain competitive has necessitated various approaches for economic growth across the world. In Sierra Leone, Public Private Partnership (PPP) is one of the approaches that have been the driving force of huge projects such as the wellington-Masiaka toll road project. Further, PPP has been the basis for economic growth among SMES and other local companies, in the sense that, a partnership with the government creates business to the local companies which enables their growth. Therefore, PPP is a consensus connecting a government or statutory owned body and a private entity, either internal or foreign, to provide public assets and services (Hodge & Greve, 2017). However, these partnerships face challenges which will be explored and examined in this research paper.

1.1. Contextual background of the topic

PPPs are collaborations between a government and private investors geared at improving public service delivery. Sierra Leone is a relatively small country with a population of about 8 million and a GDP of US$4 billion. To enable stability of the country, the government has focused on provision of essential services such as improved health, modern education, food security and security of the country. However, infrastructural development is far from meeting international standards. In fact, the country was ranked sixth from bottom in Africa's infrastructure development index by the African development Bank (Lufumpa, Letsara, & Saidi, 2017). This condition has affected its economic growth for a long time. For instance, the country is rich in minerals such as iron ore and gold which ought to be transported from the mine sites to the ports via road. Since the roads are substandard, there is always delay. This has made investors opt to work with other countries such as Tanzania which has the same minerals but better infrastructure. This pressure has necessitated alternative funding, which include PPP on funding projects such as roads for better operation.

The Wellington-Masiaka Toll Road is one among the PPP projects executed in Sierra Leone from an arrangement between the government and China Railway Seventh Group (CRSG). According to the East African (2017), the project was for widening and upgrading a 62km road stretch to a four-lane dual carriageway, running from Wellington in the east end of Freetown to the northern business town of Masiaka costing US $153 Million. Notably, the government and indigenous private sector could not afford to fund such a large and complex project. The Sierra Express Media (2017) reported huge applause to the government for initiating the project, which could play a pivotal role in economic growth and the public livelihood. However, critics argue that there lacked transparency, stability, and clarity of the arrangement once the Chinese company announced commencing to charge users earlier than anticipated (The East Africa, 2017). This confusion attracts a critical appraisal of the government and investors' roles in PPP arrangements.

The government and the private sector play pivotal roles in the execution of PPP projects. The Sierra Leone government's principle role is to provide legislation, which creates a favorable environment for investors to engage their funds in projects for the greater good of the citizens. Other roles of the government include offering the investors with necessary information regarding the project. For instance, in WMTR, it should give details on where the road should pass in places like parks, schools, and hospitals, to mention but a few. Finally, the government should explain the PPP policy on what machinery to be used, the measures towards safeguarding the environment, sharing risks and rewards when economic or political statuses deteriorate, and how to relate with communities involved. On the other hand, the investors' role is to ensure that the public get value for their money, observe agreement regulations, and guarantee completion of projects geared at ensuring they demand for returns. Investors are obliged to offer an assurance to fund the project to completion. This entails providing necessary requirements for the project, such as how much to spend and the returns they expect, coupled with how to source the profits to the public. This aspect enhances transparency and accountability, providing a reliable and valid framework to adhere to the project contract terms. With both parties in agreement, there exists equity in the bargaining power.

Failure from each party to perform its duties diligently and effectively exposes PPPs at risks of various challenges. Overseas investment in developing country infrastructure is problematic regarding the division of risks and rewards of a project. Mostly, the agreements reached by the PPP parties do not usually outline the frameworks of sharing risks in many developing countries (Wang et al. 2019). The procuring authority greatly focuses on project completion undermining any underlying risks. Notably, the government is often eager to see a project completed and servicing the public thus failing to outline the details as witnessed in WMTR whereby the public is paying high fees to compensate the investor's money. In addition, paper contracts often seem over-generous to the investors, but when economic and political conditions deteriorate, investors are often left facing losses in most developing countries (Mazher et al. 2018). This aspect is huge challenge to PPP actors since assurances are limited in case the unknown happens. Africa is known for political instability, which can disrupt the favorable environment required for PPP project executions. PPP agreements in Africa need to be elaborate to address the issue of the unknown challenges to encourage and motivate all actors involved. Kavishe, Jefferson, and Chileshe (2018) states that several challenges have been associated with PPPs, which include faulty arrangements, immature regulatory and institutional frameworks, and lack of disclosure of significance information to the public. These barriers influence the interests of each party in how the project performs.

This study is aimed at investigating the challenges that are encountered by PPPs when the partnering Chinese companies and the local government enter unequal contract where eventually one partner is bound to lose. Wellington-Masiaka Toll Road project in Sierra Leone will be the case study. In Sierra Leone, foreign investment in infrastructures private sector development has been one of the government's focuses in the past decade intended to help improve the country's economy after the civil war (Commonwealth Governance Sierra Leone, 2020). One of the major investors is the Chinese contractors whose companies are partially owned by the Chinese government whose objectives go beyond client - contractor relationship (Huang & Chen, 2016).

This understanding has given rise to numerous challenges to PPPs in Sierra Leone. They include project turning inappropriate or opposition to pay for the project, resilience from the public, limited access to finances and corruption, and weak legal policy frameworks. First, PPPs face challenges during the execution phases. This emanates from projects turning inappropriate thus subsequent difficulties or opposition to paying for the project. According to Xiong et al. (2017), PPP contract management might turn out to be beyond the procuring authority capacities that is managing the daily aspects of the contract, thus becoming challenging to pay for it. In these circumstances, authority-pay PPPs lack flexibility to accommodate changes over the life cycle of the contract, mainly on costs associated with requested changes to service requirements (Mashwama, Aigbavboa, & Thwala, 2018). In this regard, the PPPs execution become difficult when service requirements are unpredictable, unstable, and limited to technological requirements while the project is undertaken for a long-term. Consequently, the PPP procuring authorities leave projects to contractors once the agreement is signed. This leads to underestimating required level of resources thus failing in playing effective roles of managing contracts by procuring authority during operations phases (Gurara et al. 2017). Therefore, the PPPs might turn out poorly delivered which attracts resistance from the public. These scenarios add to the pile of challenges facing PPPs.

In addition, the country's economic status hinders local private investors from accessing finances. Similarly, the high rates of corruption in the country further limit the available opportunities for funds. Dykes and Jones (2016) argues that corruption challenges the contribution of capital allocation and management, which diverges the operational motives of both private and public sectors. In addition, Olele (2016) states that corruption and limited access to finances hinder the acquisition of the right institutional framework to support public sector capacities and processes for preparing and delivering PPP projects. The access of funds in Sierra Leone is limited and available opportunities to PPP actors are hindered by corruption. The banks are unwilling to offer long-term loans due to the political fragility witnessed in the country to private sector actors. Consequently, the ones willing to offer the loans demand high interest rates from the borrowers. The government too is not able to support private sector actors due to the economic constraints attributed to civil unrests and the Ebola epidemic.

Finally, weak legal policy frameworks guide PPPs procurement and awarding, which attracts vast challenges to investors. Notably, PPPs require new approaches and policies to the support capabilities in preparation, design, and delivery of projects and public services. Failures in legal frameworks provide unclear definition of powers and processes in the public sector for the effective management of various phases of PPP project development. On most occasions, policies, legal, and institutional frameworks reflect genuine constraints in implementing PPP processes, which this country is experiencing because the tender awarding officials put their interests first. Sierra Leone has weak legislation pertaining issues like transparency in bidding and dispute resolution, which makes it difficult to follow through the regulatory provisions thus a major challenge for PPPs.

1.2. The research problem framing

Developing countries, mainly in the African continent, lack the machinery and mechanisms to execute infrastructural projects to better the lives of their citizens, hence PPPs offer the preferred alternative to actualize the execution of these projects. According to Osei-Kyei and Chan (2017), PPPs allow a greater private participation in public service delivery that develops an environment, through their skills, funds, and experience, which improves the quality of life for the public in general. PPPs have been employed in construction of roads, bridges, ports, and other related facilities that directly influence the general welfare of citizens. However, PPPs can provide difficult and complex contractual issues for both the public and the private sector, which possess the highest rate of challenges faced by actors.

The United Nation Development Programme (UNDP) for a very long time now has been profoundly involved in offering private sector development assistance to the government of Sierra Leone, to help the country meet its development and economic objectives (Commonwealth Governance Sierra Leone, 2020). The body has also encouraged growth of small business and local companies by embracing partnership between the government and the local businesses. Because of this UNDP support, the Government of Sierra Leone (GoSL) decided in 2013 to create the PPP Unit under the Office of the president to offer support for prospective public–private partnership enterprises. In furthering the aim of the PPP in Sierra Leone, the Unit's Act No. 11 of 2014 provide coordination and transactional support to GoSL through its Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) across a range of potential PPPs.

The mandate of the PPP Unit is to foster, enable and rationalize the foundation, negotiations, and operation of all public private partnership agreements between public authorities and, in this case, Chinese based investors (Public Private Partnership Unit Sierra Leone, N.d). According to *Kargbo* (2017) a PPP agreement between the GoSL and the China Railway Seventh Group (CRSG), a project costing US $153 Million was signed in April 2016 for the rehabilitation and expansion of a 62-kilometer road highway from Wellington – Masiaka. Kargbo (2017) contends that the cost of the overpriced highway was incurred by CRSG; GoSL only monitored and supervised the work. This highway is the only link between the country's capital city of Freetown to the thirteen districts of Sierra Leone, and it is supposed to help foster business opportunities in the country.

The main problem is why do Chinese investors appear to exploit developing nations' resources in unfair and unreasonable contracts when they sign contracts with state owned Chinese companies whose intentions are to benefit their economy through faulty arrangements with partner countries? It is unfortunate for it is only later after contract signing is done that governments realize they have been led to a trap by the inexperience of their own officials whose ignorant nature have caused their nation to remain behind economy wise. The ruling SLPP did not favor the deal the PPP had with CRSG but they could not easily reverse it now. This study investigates the challenges PPP is facing as a governmental Unit in the presidency that no doubt will be controlled by the government. The Wellington-Masiaka Toll Road project is used to bring out the best practices in accountability and transparency within the context PPP implementation practice elsewhere.

In accordance with the repayment agreement between GoSL/PPP and CRSG, GoSL will repay the cost incurred by the CRSG through a toll road system. The CRSG coordinator Todd Hung said the toll service would cover a period of 25 years (later, modified to 27 years), after which the road would be handed over again to GoSL to generate needed funds to support the country's economy and development. According to Kargbo (2017), many Sierra Leoneans have viewed this concession agreement as exploitative and not a win-win agreement. This shows that the public is concerned with the states of public private partnerships in the country. Most agreements especially contracts involving Chinese companies lack adequate information across the residents, which has forced prominent persons to speak out asking for transparency and accountability. Such utterances can pressure responsible parties to disclose vital information to the public thus enhancing awareness of any deals entered into and the arrangements for the agreement.

1.3. Research questions and objectives

The objective of this study is to investigate the challenges faced by the local government in making Public-private partnership a success for both local and international companies, Wellington-Masiaka Toll Road project as the case study.

Main Question
Using Sierra Leone Wellington-Masiaka toll road project as a case study, what are the challenges of Public Private Partnership in supporting governance and development in Sierra Leone?
Sub-Questions

- What are the challenges PPP has faced and is facing in dealing with the government and CRSG (Sierra Leone)?
- What measures can PPPs use to increase public trust in government and uphold such public interest through effective delivery of public services?
- How can PPP interventions complement the Government to deliver better solutions and services for effective and efficient public services for citizens in the country?
- What ways can Sierra Leone counter the exploitive nature of Chinese state-owned construction companies?

1.4. Justification and limitations of the research

There have been various efforts employed by international bodies and the local authorities to lift countries such as Sierra Leone from poverty over the years since independence. However, Huang and Chen (2016) argue that PPP units have blindly allowed in foreign powers that are a threat to both economic and political stabilities that have hold communities together. Their article advises on collaboration with state owned companies from China seeking to inject their communism ideology where the government's policies and local ideologies are manipulated through high-ranking secrets. This context attracts robust rethink on engagements between governments and Chinese State-owned firms despite the expectations of increasing public services and improving the infrastructures to meet the outstanding obligations for citizens. Proper management of the country's resources has been a serious challenge hence it is imperative that the government needs a strong partner to drive these development initiatives to a logical conclusion. While PPP sounds very attractive and appealing because of the benefits it promises to its public partners, companies from china present distinct challenges because of their lack of transparency and accountability.

Another important aspect of this study is CRSG, the construction company of the Wellington-Masiaka Toll Road. CRSG has several operations in Africa. The company has been very active in constructing roads and bridges in Guinea, Mali, Senegal, and Sierra Leone, and operates in the rest of the continent in Tanzania, Mozambique, and Zambia. Sierra Leone, CRSG built the Regent to Grafton and Kossor Town road, the 35 km Makeni-Matotoka highway, the 65 km Bo-Kenema Highway, 62 km Port Loko-Lungi axis, and major urban roads like the Wilkinson and Spur Roads (Investing in Sierra Leone Infrastructure, N.d). These projects are because of PPP agreements that are relevant and deserving of scrutiny.

The first limitation of the study is it puts emphasis on the challenges presented by foreign companies after signing a partnership agreement. This means no attention will be paid on the problems that are encountered when dealing with companies that are considered local within Sierra Leone. Specifically, much of the attention will be paid on the Chinese firm that is implementing projects in Sierra Leone. Companies from other countries are out of scope.

Secondly, writing a postgraduate project on subject relating to an outside country during this global challenging time was a daunting task. There was very little published information on the topic relating to Sierra Leone. Apart from the Literature Review, most empirical information was received through phone and electronics. As the researcher cannot physically be in Sierra Leone for a field research at this time, representatives in the country encounter challenges with some interviewees who were reluctant and hesitant to respond accordingly. Some had to be cajoled to participate.

Chapter 2. Literature review

This chapter presents a critical review of contemporary pieces of literature related to the research subject under different angles to lay the framework for the study. The section relies on literature that is of recent years between 2016 and 2020 and from well-known authors from diversified specialties.

2.1 Brief explanation of the definition of private-public partnership

Private-public partnerships (PPPs) involve the private sector in planning, financing, and managing the operations of a project once completed geared at balancing the strengths and weaknesses of the public and private sectors for their benefits. However, this partnership ought to be regulated by PPP units to ensure transparency and compliance to the contract signed. Notably, the private and state enterprises have opposing interest, which means several circumstances attract the correlation of these entities (Navid, 2016). For instance, the private entities focus on maximizing shareholders' wealth while the state is tasked to ensure its citizens' overall welfare. In this regard, the progression of societies attracts increased government obligations to meet its citizens' expectations.

PPPs are a rescue approach that oversees the alliances between the public sector and private enterprises to deliver quality services and infrastructure to citizens at affordable prices. According to Al Khrusi (2018), most African countries have financial budget that they cannot fund. The author argues that these governments go ahead to borrow funds to fill up the gap, which sometimes becomes so much that it, creates doubt on whether they can be able to pay them by the time indicated in the contracts. Precisely, it is more worrisome, especially when a significant amount of borrowing comes from foreign debtors. Al Khrusi states that this adversely influences future borrowings, thus further exacerbating the problem by burdening future generations, hence culminating in being perceivably unsustainable. Therefore, PPPs are arrangements that governments embrace to manage borrowing from escalating levels that might turn harmful to the economy and unsustainable to warrant citizen outcry.

Developed countries enter such arrangements of PPPs to help developing countries advance their infrastructure. Los Ríos-Carmenado, Ortuño, and Rivera (2016) argues that in developing countries, especially in African countries, China has played a significant role in investing and financing PPPs. Global support for PPPs seems more strengthened than ever before, especially on infrastructure with the increased attention on large-scale investments in developing countries, mainly the low-income countries. This has seen many advanced economies, such as China; turn their focus on African countries for business ventures and investments. Notably, most established economies view Africa, as a continent, to being an avenue for investing based on its being poor. Cléry-Melin (2019) provide that foreign countries venture into investments disguised as transformational projects involving private sector participation that, in the beginning, are championed as potentially positive ventures influencing the entire country and region. Cléry-Melin's findings reveal that many nations are caught up in the waves of enthusiasm, followed by some consolidation and disenchantment at different times.

Jotterand, Shour, and Anguzu (2020) demonstrate the understanding that the government of Sierra Leone, due to prolonged conflicts, has focused on poverty reduction and food security, health improvement, and generation of jobs for the youth. These scholars provide that these expenses have left minimal finances for infrastructure development forcing the government to rely on PPPs to boost economic growth. This narrative forms the dissertation of this literature review study with a critical focus on Chinese Companies and the Sierra Leone Government in the Wellington-Masiaka toll road project. It was an excellent investment from the beginning, only to turn out to be an agreement unworthy going into based on facts being studied.

2.2. China-Africa involvement in PPPs

Africa's involvement in PPPs has been limited relative to other continents in the past decades. However, African governments and public entities are strapped for resources attracting a greater need for infrastructure development to support the growing population and demand for its commodities from emerging countries (Sanni, 2018). This narrative supports the reasoning that PPPs will continue to grow in significance across the continent of Africa. Therefore, developed economies are exploring Africa with PPP-oriented approach with China leading the race (Dykes & Jones, 2016). China, more than most established economies, is hugely involved in most PPP projects across the African continent.

According to Xiong et al. (2020), overinvestment in unproductive infrastructure and public services as witnessed in developing countries undergoing rapid urbanization results in the build-up of debts, instability in financial markets, monetary expansion, and economic fragility. This article reiterates that this is the scenario in Africa and China, the largest laboratory for PPP development, has taken full advantage to maximize on the flaws for economic prowess. The authors argue that China has taken PPPs to function as a sustainable finance approach but in real essence culminating into a trade between safeguarding public values and improving efficiency to its benefit. This literature shows that the initial China-African country PPP agreement is faulted along the way to benefit China and its companies. Their PPP policy designs shifts in the process from finance-oriented to sustainability-oriented scheme.

On the other hand, Osei-Kyei et al. (2019) argue that PPP adoption is one way of promoting sustainability of economic growth through embracing social responsibility initiatives. In their article, the author conducted a comparison between China and Ghana concerning significant features of PPPs adoption. Their findings revealed that Chinese PPPs are concerned with economic efficiency while Africa's PPPs, represented by Ghana, focused on job creation, service delivery, and protecting the environment. This literature registers that both parties record contradicting motives regarding PPPs field. According to Sanni (2018), the initial agreement might be based on mutual benefits, but the Chinese partner is economic development focused. Therefore, as both parties engage in win-win partnerships, considerable care and attention is required so that one party does not benefit at the expense of the other. China-Africa PPPs have continuously gained immense criticism on the basis that they benefit the Chinese more than they do to Africa.

2.3. Challenges of public private partnerships in Africa

Many African countries lack resources to maximize the essentials for economic development. These countries turn to PPPs to generate finance, construct, and manage infrastructure and other related requirements such as pandemics to gain much-needed private sector investment to supplement development amenities (Dykes & Jones, 2016). The article reiterates that the African continent being strapped for resources has a greater need for infrastructure, structures, and systems development to support its growing population and demand for its commodities from emerging countries. However, the continent's promising hope lies with the foreign continents such as Asia and Europe for PPPs due to lack of resources with China maximizing on the opportunity. Local private sector actors attract minimal bargaining power in bidding for PPPs projects.

Olele (2016) argues that the private sectors participants experience risks associated with assets investment in public projects, which forces them to ask for soaring guarantees, special considerations, and other enticements to guard their investments. The article outlines the following as the challenges faced by PPPs in developing countries, which makes projects unsuccessful.

Poor risk management policies

Poor drafting of legal and regulatory frameworks

Competition and lack of transparency

The government's inadequate commitment

Unavailability of finances and loans coupled with weak banking policies

Olele's article reiterates that these challenges directly reflect on the private sector confidence. Poor frameworks minimize the chances of proper assessment of PPP proposals and the government's ability to facilitate the projects. In this regard, the assurance that enough players are invited for project bidding process declines thus discouraging private sector investments, especially the smaller actors. Therefore, most PPP project tendering process in Africa and developing countries are subjected to minimal competitiveness due to lack of fairness and probity.

Similarly, Hodge et al. (2020) reiterate that PPPs phenomenon in developing countries is the beginning of feeble and corrupt systems. These authors argue that the leading officials in project contracting promote partnership ventures with a motive to plunder. This fragile position leaves private investors with huge uncertainties, which massively discourages their motivation to bid for PPP projects. According to the article, efficiency and service quality have been tackled and well-rehearsed overtime but accountability and transparency require hastened address. Their article highlights that China has embraced institutional cooperation and long-term infrastructure practices concepts that with minimal transparency secure massive corruption incidences. According to Dykes and Jones (2016), PPPs in developing countries, especially the African continent where legal and regulatory frameworks are poorly drafted, are exposed to high risks of corruption rates, which create fear to private sector actors to commit their investments. Therefore, corruption is a massive challenge to PPPs in Africa.

2.4. The role of government and investors in Sierra Leone's PPPs

The government of Sierra Leone and investors play crucial roles in PPPs agreements. The government's role is to introduce legislation enabling PPPs, monitor the project process whereby they use the PPP Unit, and empower the private sector through funding such as subsidies through public money at low-interest rates and links with international funders. On the other hand, the investors' role is to ensure the public get value for their money, observe agreement regulations, and guarantee completion of projects geared at ensuring they demand for returns. Governments are required to enact PPP laws to give priority to procurement and reviewing of projects coupled with establishing a clear institutional framework for the same (World Bank Group, 2020). In this regard, the government of Sierra Leone established the PPP Act 2014 to cover facilitation, implementation, and conclusion of PPPs whereby the regulatory framework enacted is the Public Procurement Act 2016 to make provisions for the continuance in existence of the national public procurement authority (World Bank Group, 2018). The act further was obliged to regulate and harmonize the procurement processes in the public service by decentralizing it to procuring entities.

In this regard, the government created favorable and enabling environment for PPPs by building the capacity that ensured value for money (Sierra Leone Web, 2016). In addition, the act facilitated participation in PPPs for qualified contractors, consultants while ensuring providers for works, and services were professionals. Finally, the government established within the office of the president the PPP Unit responsible for managing entire processes of PPP agreements for projects while providing legal and technical support in pursuance of agreements by contracting authorities (Osei, 2020). The unit also facilitates access to finances and links private sector actors with foreign funders given most of them, especially from the West, give finances directly to private actors in PPPs. These pieces of evidence show that the government of Sierra Leone executes its principle role of legislation adequately.

On the other hand, investors' roles in PPPs in the country are to aid in supplementing the constrained borrowing and expenditure of the government in a bid to promote service delivery to the public. Tarkhanova, Shikhov, and Lazutina (2019) states that investors enter into PPP agreements to develop and manage new infrastructures or contribute to improving existing infrastructures to allow the government concentrate on other pressing issues. Base on this understanding, Sierra Leone investors are obliged to render a helping hand to the government's infrastructure improvements based on transparency and accountability, which enhances the chances of rules and regulation adherence to guarantee value for money.

In addition, investors desire to get returns because of a completed PPP project. However, Were (2018) argues that some investors, mainly from China, end up asking for unreasonable returns that makes African countries become unable to pay, which Kroeber (2020) term as a strategy to rip off the continent of its natural resource endowments and facilities. Therefore, it is the responsibility of investors to demand for reasonable profits, which fosters development rather than amassing vast returns for their personal benefits at the expense of the public.

2.5. Benefits of African Countries from Chinese in Africa

As a continent, Africa benefits through direct investments to projects, trade, and volunteer services offered by the Chinese partnership. Alden and Jiang (2019) argue that Africa, as a continent, relies on Chinese investment for overall economic growth. Their article acknowledged that studies have highlighted the cancellation of debts worth billions by China from African countries, which is a massive benefit. Notwithstanding, China exceedingly continues to send doctors to treat Africans while hosting thousands of African workers and students in their training centers and universities. This concept guarantees exchanges of professionalism from both ends, given that China is advanced in innovative and creative technology.

In addition, Abdulai (2016) highlights that Chinese built bridges, schools, roads, hospitals, and dams are significant contributors to African infrastructure. This article noted that these ventures help African governments to manage borrowing and focus on other pressing issues, given that preferential loans attract minimal interests. Precisely, Africans view Chinese investments distinct from western ones due to the no strings attached clause, thus seen as support initiative to address development issues. For instance, Abdulai argues that China, through its companies has offered to mine oil in Angola and Sudan, generate electricity and service mobile phones in Kenya and Nigeria, and build roads in Ethiopia, and infrastructure development and tourism expansion in Sierra Leone. Additionally, China has aided in treating infectious diseases such as AIDS and malaria in Africa. These aids are vital in Africa since the host countries lack the machinery to execute the tasks.

2.8. Existing Gaps

While there have been various previous literatures on Chinese in Africa, there has not been a clear research on the challenges of public-private partnerships in supporting governance and development in Sierra Leone. There has not been a research that has focused clearly on these challenges especially on Chinese Companies and the Sierra Leone Government in the Wellington-Masiaka toll road project. Much research has been conducted on different fields and utilizing varied approaches, but none has been narrowed to this project.

2.9. Conceptual Framework

Many researchers have focused on the commercial and economic motivation behind the various Chinese funded infrastructure projects in Africa. However, there has been little research on the broader geopolitical ambitions and influence. This research employed the state capacity and privatization analytical frameworks as the tools for analyzing and easing the answering of the research questions. The choice of state capacity is stemmed from the conceptualization of research questions. Given the study is about the challenges of PPPs; it became worthy to elaborate the concept to understand how varied scholars advise on its application. The second framework is privatization. This concept determines the grounds at which governments can opt to lease out projects executed through PPPs. Certain individuals might take advantage of leasing PPP projects to disadvantage others in contract bidding and awarding, while others feel this approach favors a few.

2.9.1. State-capacity

Countries presently are governed by policies within which their effectiveness determines the outcomes of any public service or facility provision. The concept of state capacity has allowed researchers to depict how PPP actors, institutions, and processes are mobilized and combined in public action. In this regard, the concept continues to flourish over the years in state building and economic development. This study utilizes its application in public policies and governance since there exists no agreement around a single definition.

There is a great significance for a country building capacity of PPPs that increase legitimacy and balance of interests. Under the state capacity theory, a country is required to strengthen its internal abilities to manage their affairs successfully rendering unnecessary any outside assistance. Leigland (2018) argues that state-capacity is the only approach that ensures effective operation of PPPs through diminishing the interests of the private sector and the market under the banner of sharing power with the poor and the state. It enables increased government intervention in markets and communities through the emphasis of local economic development. Most countries' PPPs aim at overcoming the constraints of lacking public capital and public sector capacity, thus undermining institutional capacity constraints. According to Bayliss and Van Waeyenberge (2018), robust state capacity drives substantial investment on state-building agenda, thus directing an overarching framework for international engagement.

PPPs entail several actors such as the public, private, and PPP units, which require focus to demonstrate their roles in the entire PPP process and what the government has done to enhance their functionality. The motive of the GoSL in initiating and promoting the roles of each party in PPPs work constitute the state capacity. This country has witnessed both the lows and highs that makes the country applicable to be appraised using the theory to understand how various PPP actors have been strengthened to achieve state-building agenda. The framework is worth embracing to highlight how GoSL has built capabilities to enhance the relationship between these three broad groups of stakeholders to address the salient weaknesses existing in the PPPs field. This analytical framework offers an opportunity to seek these answers to give meaning to the research thesis.

However, the theory is criticized as functioning explicitly on dictatorship regimes, whereby politicization and degree of corruption elevates at the expense of the citizens due to the focus on cooperation and few elites networks reducing competition (Verger & Moschetti, 2017). In addition, opponents argue that under this theory, the state remains the ultimate provider of certain goods and services, for which it has the obligation to fulfill certain rights, constraining balanced risk and responsibility sharing through the crux of culture bureaucracies (Klijin & Koppenjan, 2016). Notwithstanding, critics submit that having the state as the last resort provider enables private partners engage in schemes of cost shifting to minimize risks and maximize profits while leaving the burden of unprofitable activities to the state. This means that state-capacity is a vital approach to PPPs since it advocates for strengthening of institutions.

2.9.2. Privatization concept

The constraints that pressure states to retreat from providing services and facilities often pushes citizens to look for alternative channels of obtaining them. The task is easy if there exists a robust private market that offers the services and facilities at affordable prices, thus resulting to privatization. Unfortunately, such markets are challenging to evolve under monopolistic status quos and lack of an enabling environment, especially for PPPs. Notably, PPPs continue to be promoted by international financial and political institutions as a key instrument for a broader trend towards increased privatization of public services. This continues to present renewed appetite for privatized provision of a wide range of public services globally. Scholars have classified privatization to government and corporate formats, although both apply to transfer of public owned business or services to privately-owned entity. This study employs government privatization, which generally refers to government transferring ownership of specific facilities and processes to a private entity, for profit making.

Further, privatization has mobilized social movements, which criticize and resist its programs. Privatization programs are perceived to have exacerbated economic inequalities that foster corruption. According to Hargrave (2019), these inequalities include such as the right to decent work, justifiable and favorable working conditions, and elevated spectrum of human right abuses such as land-grabbing and forced evictions. Consequently, privatization naysayers believe not all necessities should be vulnerable to market forces or driven by profits. In PPPs field, privatization has frequently been controversial. Such approaches are associated with impacting the right to bargaining power and governments unjustifiably retrogressing from their obligations to fulfill human right duties (Leviäkangas, 2019).

Nevertheless, privatization bridges the gap of public finance shortfall in providing necessary infrastructural developments. For instance, most African countries including Sierra Leone lack the finances to support infrastructural development given the wide range of basics they are obliged to provide for the entire public. In addition, proponents register that private sector owned companies execute public services more economically and efficiently because they are profit incentivized thus eliminating wasteful spending (Hargrave, 2019). Thus, private entities do not contend with bureaucratic barriers that have plagued the government entities. Therefore, many scholars interested in PPPs field have come to realize that privatization requires attention to underlying factors, such as inequalities and lessened bargaining power, to maximize on its full potential. The concept of privatization becomes useful in this respect as it helps understand how addressing inequalities a significant step is to realize the full benefits of PPPs in Sierra Leone through reduced challenges.

Analyzing the challenges of PPPs in Sierra Leone attracts the use of these discussed analytical frameworks. The concept of state capacity helps in understanding how actors, institution, and processes intersect to promote or hinder PPPs. On the other hand, privatization concept presents the inequalities surrounding PPPs with the aim of addressing them to foster favorable environments. However, these concepts reflect dual perspectives, thus cautious use is applied to navigate through the limits.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This section presents the procedure of data collection and analysis. It indeed did put together all previous African studies' reviews sparked by a broad spectrum of regional and topical issues falling under the giant umbrella of China-Africa PPPs, with Sierra Leone's Wellington-Masiaka Toll Road Project that has caused heated debates and public outcry as the focus. The study methodology entailed qualitative approach geared at unearthing the unknowns and adds value to the known through a systematic approach.

3.1. Research methods

The research methods in this study were descriptive, qualitative, and exploratory form approaches, whereby data and information that described specific China-Africa relation events supporting the research were gathered. The descriptive approach included fact-finding queries of different kinds from numerous peer-reviewed literatures from the year 2016 to 2020 that came from well-recognized writers, political analysts, and public watchdogs to collect data. The qualitative technique examined and reflected on project value, residents' perceptions, and key players' attitudes. These participants included the main players of related government ministries, workers in the project, and Chinese representatives. The rationale for choosing these methods was that many researchers have taken up these inquiries before, thus requiring broader scrutiny because several important issues warranted reflection.

However, these techniques encompassed several limitations. First, it became challenging to control the variables of materials scrutinized. Secondly, the already existing information was challenging to constitute a formidable data worth critical evaluation since such a project was minimally reported and documented. Finally, the findings were difficult to interpret and prone to challenging with ease. Nevertheless, the combination of these techniques guaranteed valid and reliable findings.

3.2. Research design

This study was about unearthing the facts surrounding the Wellington-Masiaka toll road project in Sierra Leone to add value to existing data and clear uncertainties highlighted by the residents of this country. The research design focused on phenomenon derived upon the issue of how much is happening in this project. It was set to discover facts to explore the growing concern to investigate the entire scenario surrounding China and Sierra Leone partnerships. This study was carried out in Sierra Leone to add existing data through interviews and questionnaires addressed to key participants in the project and the public. The nature of the research was broad, thus attracting adequate time to achieve the main objective of creating an evidence-based report surrounding China-Sierra Leone partnership relating the Wellington-Masiaka toll road project.

3.3. Data collection tools

This study employed both primary and secondary data, through which the appropriate tools of collection included interviews, and documents and archives.

3.3.1. Interviewing

This included oral in-depth interviews and questionnaires to collect primary data. Interviews played a crucial role in obtaining the facts concerning this project, given that existing information was perceived to be inaccurate and biased. The research sampled 15 participants due to constraints of Covid-19 requirements and participants' tight schedules. They included 2 workers of WMTR Project, 2 Chinese representatives, 3 local investors, 1 PPP Unit legal advisor and 1 PPP Unit official, 2 government employees, 2 officials from Ministry of Trade and Industry, and 2 officials from the Ministry of Works Housing and Infrastructure. In addition, since this field has experienced extensive research, thereby making it challenging to control the variables obtained from the data collection techniques. Interviews were conducted with leading players via emails, and telephone calls to obtain first-hand information. There were also follow-up strategies to ascertain the viability and validity of data acquired and to gain additional information deemed necessary.

3.3.2. Archives and documents

This research conducted qualitative documentary analysis. Various research sites and digital secondary data sources such as a broad range of internet websites, blogs, and videos were vital components in obtaining data for this research. This enhanced the acquisition of information relating to the current happenings to minimize past data complications, future intentions, and interviewees' attitudes of responses. It was based on observing the current trends surrounding the partnership deal from both ends that ease comparison with others from different African countries that were completed and approximately measured around the same magnitude. The concept is determining databases and journal selection that carry along adequate weight for the selected research study. Notably, this strategy secured limited information but guaranteed concrete evidence worth utilizing.

Government documents and respected magazines and newspapers' publications were considerably reliable archives for this research since bilateral data, and China-Africa official documents lacked transparency coupled with the challenge in accessing them. In this regard, the shreds of evidence contained in this case study relied heavily on locally but respected publications. This struggle was in pursuit to combine numerous methodological approaches geared at deepening the research findings. The national communication report that is released annually by the government touching on major government projects and strides of progress in the country was a useful data source. In addition, the annual trade policy review document was an additional value to archives of information acquisition critical to this research.

Further, the World's Bank group report on identification for development initiative in African countries archives formed a reliable source worth appraising. Similarly, respected local newspapers and magazines such as Concord Times, Sierra Express Media, Sierra Leone Telegraph, Awareness Times Newspaper, Sierra Leone Truth and Reconciliation Commission archives, and All Africa documentary provided current valid and reliable data. Finally, Sierra Leone state house online and IPU PARLINE parliament database constituted formidable archive sources for data.

3.4. Research methodology rationale

The methodology of research was based on several approaches capable of obtaining large pieces of evidence geared at securing a better understanding through qualitative analysis. The primary data sources were perceived to be more challenging; thus, the rationale of this research was dependent on incorporating primary and secondary data sources.

This field entailed vast related research that required massive attention. Acquiring relevant information was a key objective of the research. The research methodology and design, coupled with the data collection technique, needed to be viable. This aspect aimed at acquiring the primary objective of creating heightened understanding and awareness on the circumstances surrounding the Wellington-Masiaka toll road project between the GoSL and the Chinese firm funded by its government. The analyzed data was well designed for presentation by utilizing the specified procedure.

Chapter 4: Findings and analysis

This chapter presents the findings of the data collected and analyzed as guided by the research questions. They are analyzed and discussed under four broader themes derived from the research questions for simplicity and ease of understanding.

4.1. Challenges of PPPs in supporting Sierra Leone's governance and development

Public-private partnerships involve multiple stakeholders who have diversified interests in how the project performs. Developing countries like Sierra Leone, unlike industrialized nations, fail to anticipate project benefits, costs, and personal benefits coupled with maximum empowerment of state mechanisms, which influence the value for money analysis of PPP projects (Ameyaw, Chan, & Owusu-Manu, 2017). This aspect is widely witnessed in the Wellington-Masiaka Toll Road project. This draws attention to state capacity concept whereby government abilities and potentials are obliged to combine actors, institutions, and processes of PPPs to realize value for money (Mitchell, 2018). It shows that the government has failed at promoting state mechanisms as it continues to be clangorous on PPPs' perceived benefits yet has been silent on most contingencies and complexities of the overall concession agreements. Similarly, PPPs in the country attract privatization concept appraisal because it fosters promotion of private sector actors' participation in PPPs to bridge the gap of governmental public finances. In this regard, PPPs need not to experience challenges in a country whereby their utilization is worthwhile. However, this research classifies the findings on PPPs' challenges into China's involvement in the country's PPPs, access to finances, market forces, and legal-institutional architecture, corruption, and private sector insecurities.

4.1.1. China's involvement in the country's PPPs

China's involvement in Sierra Leone's PPPs emerged as a serious challenge to local actors in the field. Various researchers have argued that, despite China's need for natural resources to fuel its expanded industries, its involvement in PPPs is a direct way of indicating it growing influence as a world power too, thus capable of competing with likes of EU countries or even USA (Gurara et al. 2017; Mlambo, Mlambo, & Mubecua, 2018). Logically, only advanced economies or fully resource-backed companies can offer a PPP investment and at the same time spread the returns across many years, such as the 27 years for WMTR. Some Scholars also acknowledge that, this to government officials and privileged elites, as long as no conditions of transparency, good governance, and accountability are attached to the loans being dished out, remains business as usual (Bah, 2020; Chen, Dollar, & Tang, 2018). However, for the masses and local PPP actors, it is not quite the same opinion, thus becoming a challenge to compete for PPPs. Mansaray (2018) provides that local PPP actors and the masses are increasingly becoming suspicious of the dubious relationship between their government and china, which in real essence is pushing them out of business. This literature was supported by an interviewee who demanded anonymity by stating:

> "Deals between Chinese companies and our government officials are shrouded in so much secrecy and non-accountability that possible investigations from even the most vibrant Anti-Corruption Commission are practically impossible. This gives China a free ride in our country through corrupt officials due to this secrecy. The local investors cannot win PPP bids without bribing government officials, which escalates the challenges because they do not have much money. High-level government officials have seen this as an opportunity to becoming rich from Chinese companies. The local investors are unable to fund projects that will bring profit after years. How will they pay their loans and workers? They just opt to stay away of PPPs leaving Chinese companies to take advantage."

Further, the issue of waiting to make profits after a long period of time, extending to years, is a bigger challenge for local investors. This extended period obtains conflicting interests, which might not favor the local actors such as servicing loans they borrowed to fund a PPP project or paying workers. Bah (2020) reiterates that the spread of returns from PPP projects for many years has become an opportunity for high level government officials to enrich themselves at the expense of the people. In this regard, despite local actors being unable to fund such projects to completion, government officials are a barrier to acquisition of the projects because their dealings with China make their objectives easily attainable.

Essentially, the country has weak institutions that cannot facilitate monitoring and empowerment capacities. Corruption is the norm of the day, which challenges the local investors in acquiring PPP bids, while the Chinese benefit. The government needs to put in place mechanisms and institutions that support the locals first. There should be emphasis to decline the over-dependency on foreign engagements, which will allow local investors to compete for PPP project thus contributing to strengthening state capacities. The country can do much better in PPPs; if corruption is tamed and the real intentions of Chinese companies are ascertained and brought before the public for scrutiny. On the privatization concept, the government should exert more attention to local investors concerning PPP projects.

4.1.2. Access to finances

Access to Finance is one of the major challenges hindering Public Private Partnership. In Sierra Leone, this challenge can be observed in three major areas. These include the government undervaluing projects, contracting authority not keeping their promises on payment dates, and high interest rates for loans by Private entities to finance contracted projects.

Undervaluing of projects by the government is a fundamental factor that can delay or completely, lead to several incomplete projects (Elwakil & Hegab, 2020). To avoid overvaluing or undervaluing projects, the government ought to employ experts such as financial strategists, engineers, and professional lawyers to do due diligence and ensure they have accommodated all the expenses of a project. For instance, in the construction of major roads such as the WMTR have other expenses, which add to the final projects. Olele (2016) argues that these expenses include temporal diversion of roads during execution, adding the diversion to Google maps, building of bridges on the diversion constructed, creating awareness through advertisement to inform the public about the changes among others, which enable ease of construction of the main road. All these expenses add to the total budget. However, due to inadequate research and determination by the government, such additional spending may not be included in the agreement until shortly before execution of the project. In fact, in the case of WMTR, the actual cost was $150 Million. However, an additional amount of $11 Million was included as a compensation for people's properties demolished to make way for the expansion of the project (East Africa News, 2017). An interview by one of the government employees in the public works who did not want to disclose his name or position revealed that:

> "…clearly, the government was found unaware by some of the added costs of the projects, and it's very unfortunate that this information came very late when the project was almost starting. For instance, the costs of people's damaged properties, diversion, and feeder roads, building of bridges and advertisement expenses for diversion was not determined. On that part, I blame the government for not involving competent professional who could determine such costs and add it to the total cost. We had to advise on addition, which meant that the budget committee would go back to the drawing board to review the budget, which took time……..but other details such as relocating the fiber optic cables, and bridge at River Estuary was left for the company to sort. This is the reason CRSG opted to start charging motorists earlier than stipulated. Undervaluing PPP projects are a huge challenge associated with access to finances in the country."

A government is required to have the capacity of state advisors who defines the success of its projects in the country. The state advisors are a commission that takes part in having competent people in handling multi-million projects such as the WMTR. Having competent experts will go a long way in encouraging private entities to do business with the government.

In addition, an interview with a legal advisor of the PPP unit in Sierra Leone revealed:

> "The government announced compensating owners of private properties destroyed during the construction period of WMTR. However, the funds were delayed, and the residents became impatient and aggressive, resulting to invigorated resistance of destroying the company's tools and machinery, which was unperceived consequences. Delaying payments for PPP contractors is a big challenge that can induce immeasurable negative outcomes. In addition, despite the government reducing official interest rates to stimulate the economy, most banks insist that private firms pay much higher interests due to perceived risks and general economic uncertainty. Also, multiple banks are unwilling to offer long-term loans to private sector actors. An agreement between a borrower and the bank needs to be honored, while the government might be reluctant in releasing funds to contractors or payment dates contradict the loan terms for contractors. It is a huge challenge for PPP actors, especially small and medium-scale private entities."

This interview highlights that the government failing to keep its promise of payment dates disrupts the operations not only the project but also all other stakeholders involved, while banks offer loans with interest rates that limit the amount of the loan taken. Lantz (2018) states that private entities, such as local companies depend on payment from clients (the government), to finance the remaining faces of the projects, and even to pay the employees. Given the additional expenditures encountered along the project execution, contractors can run short of budgeted funds. Delmon (2017) highlights that the lack of mechanisms to address these emerging challenges in PPP projects leads to disputes that discourage and demoralize private investors. A great example is the resistance experienced by CRSG due to lack of compensation for properties destroyed, causing the project to stop for a while (Margai, 2020). Consequently, there are high interest rates on bank loans meant to finance some of these government projects. Banks demand huge interests and at the same time, they are very few in Sierra Leone. According to Mahdi (2018), Sierra Leone has financial policies that restrict credit and foreign exchanges, and broadened taxes that put candid private sector players under extensive stress of acquiring projects. Similarly, the World Bank Group report, as portrayed by Bertelli, Mele, and Whitford (2020) state that banks and lending firms have realized that many PPP contractors experience delays in acquiring payments hence making it challenging for banks to offer loans to the private sector. These literatures signify that PPP actors are exposed to schemes that can obtain losses because of high interest rates within a project entailing long periods of repayment. For instance, an agreement between the government and a private entity for a project running for over 10 years can result to payments being released in phases of about 5-year intervals. The banks on the other hand charge their interest rates annually, meaning a contractor who had borrowed cash to finance a PPP project has to service the loan at the end of each year. This makes it challenging to contractors to honor the bank's requirements. Further, delayed payment leads to accumulated interests, which imply that even after payment, contractors might end up paying all the funds without making profits. In this regard, most PPP contractors have damaged the image of even the honorable executors and bidders through late honoring of loan terms, thus making it difficult for banks to differentiate between genuine and false private actors in access to finance spectrum.

Supporting privatization in a country means that the government must provide an enabling environment, both resources and conformity to their agreement (Mitchell, 2018). The government should develop policies and ensure their implementation. For instance, the policy on interest on loans should be followed up and all financial institutions should be accountable for their actions. To support private entities means creation of employment in the country (Olalere, 2014). Road infrastructural development requires the deployment of diversified experts who eventually unearths all underlying details. The government should involve officers such as financial strategists and officers who ensure prompt payment as agreed.

4.1.3. Market forces and resistance

Sierra Leone as a country puts PPP bidding, awarding, and execution to an authoritative body, which is lacks inclusiveness. Arguably, the country needs large infrastructural developments that attract vast funding, and in turn demand huge returns as profits. An interview with a critical player in the Sierra Leone PPP Unit revealed:

> "Channeling public money through private funds leads to loss of transparency and accountability since most PPPs focus on profitable projects at the expense of the poor. With this, our country has inadequate negotiating capacity for PPP contracts; thus, the expected impacts remain unclear and monitoring extremely weak. These factors favor the elites to manipulate the market forces to win contracts that are profitable regardless of their urgency."

This interview highlights that resistance has a base at the expense of PPPs' execution. Logically, the authority is prone to manipulating the market forces to their benefits and at the expense of other PPP actors. The institutions and processes of PPPs are greatly influenced by the authority. Biygautane, Clegg, and Al-Yahya (2020) register that market forces make PPPs prohibitively expensive because governments support and adopt them due to constrained borrowing and spending. This makes the market environment competitive since authorities are pressured to conceal their long-term public liabilities by rendering substantial state aid to PPPs to build infrastructure. Similarly, Wilkinson and Fairhead (2017) state that government guarantees and available finance for PPPs are influenced and shaped by the market forces. Precisely, winning contract bids is determined by how much the private entity is favored by the market forces, which leave others at a disadvantage. The acquisition of PPP contracts in this country seemingly benefitting the ruling elites that command the market forces. Notably, major PPPs in this country have attracted massive criticism. The media and other related institutions argue that many PPPs with essential reference to WMTR, add to the country's long-term debt, thus undermining the public sector provision of services (Sierra Express Media, 2017). This literature affects the nature of contract bidding and execution since these forms of resistance can broaden the cost scope.

The state seems lacking the capabilities of creating an enabling environment for PPPs through inadequate combination of actors, institutions, and processes. The revelation that certain individuals can control PPPs to their liking registers a clear implication that the state is far behind in enhancing its capacities. This understanding puts privatization, despite its promising benefits, at a disadvantage. Authorities will foster privatized project execution to their own benefits. In this regard, the privatization concept in this arena seems more disastrous to PPPs by broadening the challenges associated with market forces. Authorities can pressure the market forces to privatize profitable partnerships despite lacking urgency in a bid to score individual benefits at the expense of a field grappling with trust issues from the public.

4.1.4. Legal-institutional architecture and benchmarks

Sierra Leone lacks sophisticated legal-institutional architecture and benchmarks that initiate an enabling environment for the successful operations of PPPs. The findings registered that the country has various formal and irrelevant procedures that delays PPP processes of getting into contracts, signing, and execution, limited legal institutional benchmarks, and unclear laws for protecting private sector businesses.

The formal and irrelevant procedures constitute a major challenge for PPPs. According to Lamba and Reimers (2020), PPPs' entails expansive procedures such as sourcing permits, getting credit, protecting interests, paying taxes, and labor market requirements that attract the need for a concrete legal architecture, whereby contracting authority has an option to include more requirements that delays further PPPs processes.. Notably, it is not easy for a local private investor to bid, deliver projects in the country without complying with laid down and relevant regulations, which seem to change with time. Leigland (2018) states that the financial, legal, and technical costs of PPP project preparations are high, thus requiring the need to arrange for expanded returns due to lack of robust benchmarks. These procedures take time and are expensive, which might hinder small private sector entities from participating, thus a need for the country's laws to be structured in a way that makes operation of business easier for the general growth of people and the country's economy.

A crucial interview highlighted:

> "PPPs in this country appear promising for workers on paper but not in reality. Foreign contractors continue to violate human rights provisions. Abuses like land grabbing and forced evictions continue to occur with limited compensation frameworks, attracting the need to review the country's legal-institutional benchmarks. The government should not only focus on value for money but rather incorporate strong work ethic requirements. Also, policies need to address the issue of accountability so that investors know what action to take in case something challenging happens. As it is now, private sector interests are at risk of manipulation."

This interview registers that the country has weak benchmarking frameworks and weak laws for protecting private sector businesses and interests. Benchmarks refer to channels of reference against which things can acquire comparison whereby weak approaches exposes PPPs to market forces, which can make them prohibitively expensive (World Bank, International Finance Corporation, & Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, 2020). For instance, the Public Private Partnership Act of 2014 advises that the contracting authority should ensure contractors are able to meet overall financing of a project including any additional expenses before winning a contract (Mansaray, 2018). This provision automatically disadvantages small business entities and local enterprise while making it easier for multibillion companies such as Chinese firms to be able to meet them and acquire contracts. In this regard, some of the laws are retrogressive, as they remain unchanged to measure modern provisions of inclusivity in PPPs. Thus, benchmarking is considerably lacking, whereby context-specific problems such as work ethics are not considered when executing PPPs. This leads to private actors avoiding most projects because there are no laws that clearly protect private interests in case of the unknown. For instance, there is no provision in case the government does not live up to their promise, such as in terms of payment, defining what penalty or compensation should be applied. According to World Bank (2018), weak legal-institutional benchmarks hinder a country's readiness to drive PPPs to success since frameworks for both preparing and approving them are not established to track the records of transactions. Therefore, Sierra Leone lacks in the ease of doing business scores and rankings that provide a favorable and enabling environment for PPPs' operation.

The findings revealed that the country needs huge projects but if hurriedly done can undermine the need for observing work ethics. The regulations and guidelines can be faulted with ease in a bid to acquire significant return given the vast investments involved in the country's PPP projects. Similarly, the state capacities have not been harnessed. PPP execution in the country remains a challenge due to lack of harmonized institutional regulations. The revelation that regulations are vulnerable to change attracts the questioning of state capacity preparedness given that neocolonialism protects international companies from local rules, but instead requires they stick to the contract, thus gaining protection from international bodies. The state should fabricate mechanisms that foster local empowerment to minimize this international engagement, which have certain immunities. The capacities of the country need to focus on protecting local business entities through providing frameworks that favor their growth and existence. Therefore, the effectiveness of the country's policies that govern PPPs requires reviewing.

4.1.5. Corruption

This study found out that PPPs face corruption challenge in various sectors of operation. These forms include tenders being won through corrupt means or bribery, contractors' assurance for kickbacks to contracting officials, and corrupt government officials that create a corrupt environment. An interview with local investor reiterated:

> "Incoherent policy implementations driven by deeply rooted corruption underlay the inequality encountered when bidding for PPPs by private sector actors and officials when negotiating charges to gain profitable returns. This makes small-scale actors evade participating in PPPs because they unable to bribe their way to win projects. Bribery by public officials, price fixing, fraudulent accounting, and kickbacks that are observed in a wide range of contracts involving various services and projects are dominant in Sierra Leone. This creates a situation whereby only few entities keep winning bids, which demoralizes other actors. If an individu-

al or company cannot bribe top officials in the contract awarding authority, they cannot acquire projects."

This interview shows that the private sector entity, once in the partnership, possesses a higher chance of risks being transferred to them due to corruption through many manipulated channels. Ghossein and Ruiz Nunez (2018) argue that government officials are tempted to enquire for kickbacks or bribes to award long-term concession tenders because they presume the long period amounts to vast returns whereby tenders end up being given in corrupt ways, which attracts the possibilities of the companies winning the contracts being incompetent to deliver the project. In this regard, the contractors end up with incomplete projects, or delivering poor quality work, which is a big drawback to genuine and competent PPP contractors. On the same note, bribes, and political elites influence form the basis within which contracts are awarded (Bangura, 2018). Similarly, Mansaray (2018) reports that the state had become a pay-to-play paradise in which friends and relatives of ruling elites win government contracts whereby most PPP stakeholders are sidelined. The deficiency of control and supervision of consigned public services in this country, aggravated by an absence of transparency and accountability of project bidding and acquisition have led to corrupt abuses that expand the challenges of public-private partnerships.

Further, kickbacks that attract cutting out some of the money meant for the projects is a key corrupt act associated with PPPs. This results in reduced budget for the project, which means conducting PPPs with the tight budget, thus eventually signifying that the company is not making profit. Gurara et al. (2017) argues that to maintain their profits and still achieve the objective of completing project, contractors find cheaper ways of completing the task, which essentially leads to compromised quality. Similarly, PPP contractors can be forced to spread the execution of tasks over many years to have project monopoly and source for remedies like commencing charging earlier as witnessed in WMTR. These traits come in handy when bidding and charging the users of the project for returns. Finally, corrupt government officials complicate PPPs by creating a corrupt environment. It becomes even worse since these officials, who have corrupt tendency, demand for bribes to release payments once a task is completed. Consequently, a corrupt environment means that only those with money/multibillion companies can win PPP contracts because they have surplus income (Hodge & Greve, 2017). Small companies that could wish to do things according to law may not get an opportunity to work within such environment. These trends are demoralizing to actors and a challenge that can hinder PPPs.

The capability of a country is measured by its ability to control and maintain transparency across all its operations. In this regard, a country should have a robust judicial system that ensures equality against biasness; thus, institutions should foster equity. The capacities of the government to monitor and supervise the PPP procedures require significant concern on promoting PPP legitimacy and balancing interests of actors. Government institutions in Sierra Leone need to be defined by their fidelity to the law and institutions objective whereby, in such an environment, hard work is rewarded, thus encouraging development. In addition, this fosters robust private market establishment that can champion offering services at affordable prices, thus under privatization concept, broadening the locals' bargaining power.

4.1.6. Protection of Private entities

Private entity's insecurity is a bigger challenge for PPPs in Sierra Leone. This lack of protection can be categorized into two sectors: weak laws protecting private entities' interests, and manipulation of legal institutions. In Sierra Leone, there are weak laws safeguarding the private sector interests in PPPs (Ganson & M'cleod, 2019). For instance, there is no robust provision on what action to take when the government fails to honor payment dates or when they undervalue a PPP project within which the private actor had signed an agreement. Precisely, the executive controls all other government organs, which contributes to the states' inefficiency and unsuccessfulness in providing public services through PPPs. A great example is that, when a contractor has signed an agreement to execute a PPP project, but despite the payment dates arrival, the executive must authorize the release of funds. The process becomes long and expansive, which might induce delays at the detriment of private actor interests. This argument makes private sector actor fear going into partnerships with the government. A key interviewee reiterated:

> "Private sector in Sierra Leone experiences an environment that lacks enabling pedigrees. The executive must authorize releasing of funds, which takes long time. Most private firms go into debts as they wait for payments. This makes them feel that their interests are endangered. There is no way one will enter a profit-making initiative and end up draining their pockets. The contracting body needs to advice the executive on ways to streamline the payment channels. Private sector actors are suffering."

Further, the executive controlling all other organs pose the risk of manipulating the legal frameworks. Bearing in mind that the country suffers high level of corruption across government institutions, genuine and law-abiding private sector are vulnerable to mistreatment. Ganson and M'cleod (2019) highlight that with the manipulation of legal structures and security systems to succor the few ruling elites' economic concerns, most of the genuine and strict law observer private sector actors are forced out of business. This understanding signifies that the executive dominance over all related organs has resulted to weak combination of PPP actors, institutions, and processes. For instance, a revelation that a company associated with a top elected official was exempted from paying all taxes through a court ruling is detrimental to law abiding PPP actors (Ghossein & Ruiz Nunez, 2018). The Public Private Partnership Act 2014 provides that PPP contractors be required to pay taxes as stipulated by law and the concession agreement (Lamba & Reimers, 2020). Manipulating legal structures to favor a few attract questions on how those lost funds will be recovered. The lack of clear frameworks on such occasions puts private sector actors, who are unable to manipulate the structures, at a risk of falling victims in the recovery of these funds since government activities are fueled by taxes.

A state capacity concept analysis signifies that Sierra Leone's institutions lack the capacity in fostering law adherence. Equity in judgments secures an approach whereby mechanisms are established to maximize PPPs full potential in public service delivery. Equipping selected few with the mandate to conduct the entire PPPs' processes puts into question the legitimacy and balance of interests of contract bidding and awarding as stipulated by the institutional laws. On the other hand, privatization concept requires on such instances to test the legal and security structures to hear the voices of all sides of the divide. It becomes a sad situation if only a few can negotiate their way through with such arrangements of manipulating systems to continue winning bids and evade adhering to the laws at will. Addressing these inequalities can promote capacity building in the country, which directly leads to declined insecurities.

4.2. PPP challenges faced dealing with Sierra Leone government and CRSG

Sierra Leone has suffered many difficulties in the last couple of years, which had devastating effects on the economy. In this regard, public-private partnerships encountered several challenges in dealing with the government and China Railway Seventh Group. This research categorized these challenges as the legislative authority, accountability and transparency, and China backing to its state-owned firm CRSG.

4.2.1. Legislative authority

The legislative authority is a major challenge for PPPs. In Sierra Leone, this challenge can be categorized into two, which include the legislative authority being guided by personal interests, and lack of inclusivity in decision-making. Sierra Leone's legislative authority lies with the parliament, which according to the Sierra Leone Investment Guide (2019) has been given powers by the constitution to act as the law-making body that passes most decisions.

The legislative authority in Sierra Leone, which is mandated to facilitate PPPs, has officials out to score personal interests. The East African News (2017) reports that the legislative authority has the power to decide to whom and when to award the project, as witnessed with WMTR. In this case, the political elites are favored in PPP's project awarding at the expense of other actors, especially the small and medium-scale private sector entities (Kargbo, 2017). This reasoning has raised numerous questions such as how bids are won, the evaluation process, and who to turn to for questioning since contracting authority give limited information once a tender is won, demoralizing PPP actors as a result. PPPs are resisted not because they lack due diligence, but because of these behaviors exercised by the authority. When an issue is brought to the floor of the parliament, it might lack professionalism in decision-making due to politicians who have vested interest. Similarly, when an issue is politicized, its acceptance or rejection may not lie on the efficiency of the real issue, but rather the political alignment of the politicians. For instance, opposition politicians may reject a project not because it is bad for the people, but because they want to dispute the adverse behavior of legislative authority or be seen opposing the government. An interviewee reiterated:

> "In the case of WMTR project, the concession agreement was drafted by the Chinese company and brought to the contracting authority for negotiation, which despite its nature was negotiated for two days. This minimized the opportunities for broadened engagements by involving many stakeholders such as the PPP Unit. The PPP Unit according to the PPP Act of 2014 should take lead in all negotiations of projects of such stature. However, they were only invited to partake in the negotiation process of the concession agreement, which contravenes the Act attracting massive concern on the role of the legislative authority in PPPs."

In collaboration with the Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce, Industry, and Agriculture, the Leading Edge Investment Guides (2017) highlights that the Chinese were leading the way of their investment confidence concerning the economic foundations laid down by president Koroma's prioritized infrastructural development projects. The decision to award a PPP contract is passed by a few and imposed all Sierra Leoneans. Logically, when the contracting authority presents the benefits and advantages of why a certain firm was awarded a PPP contract, there is limited opportunity to contradict it in the courts or PPP

Unit, since they already have the backing of the legal and security structures, and the executive. This means that the contracting authority decision-making bodies are required to act swiftly in keeping the foundation laid with limited opportunities to counter the resolves. Kargbo (2017) argues that the Sierra Leone Roads Authority, an institution charged with the responsibility of constructing and rehabilitating roads, gave the WMTR project to CRSG with the full backing of the legislative authority diminishing dispute chances by other PPP contractors. As a result, when the highest office passes its take on the path to follow, the entire PPP institutions and processes are obliged to offer their support.

The legislative arm of government is a challenge because the government lacks robust capabilities to enable the local market forces to stability through emphasizing on local economic development and aligning all the arms of governments towards that objective. Matters related to PPPs, in a country craving for economic growth, require institutions and processes that favor equity. The legislative authority might lack due diligence concerning an entire PPP, which then is provided by the private market forces. The country, in this respect, highlights limited strengthening of internal abilities of empowering local development-oriented entities to manage their affairs effectively. PPP awarding and execution need to focus on locally available resources to build and foster internal abilities, which reduces international engagements. The government focused on public capital constraints at the expense of institutional capacities. Therefore, the creation of a robust local private market that can supplement the government constraints in delivering services at affordable prices require the backing of the government, legislative authority, and the contracting authority.

4.2.2. Accountability and transparency

The government of Sierra Leone and private sector firms has great transparency issues concerning PPPs, which hinders accountability levels across the entire operation. The government should be transparent and accountable by providing information to the public that includes such as the details of the PPP projects, payments, and bidding processes. On the other hand, the private entity should portray all indication of fostering transparency and accountability through providing the quality of product or service they purport to give and curbing any aspects that could present stealing opportunities.

The government releases limited details concerning PPP projects, payments, and bidding process. The public expectations are always that the government has given adequate information, thus concentrating on how their livelihoods will be uplifted. For instance, the information in the public domain was that the initial PPP arrangement linking the government of Sierra Leone and CRSG concerning WMTR was that risks would be shared between the two parties, however, as the project surfaced, most of the project perils were assumed by the government and its citizens as seen when charging was brought to the public knowledge after the company sought to start charging early (Sierra Express Media, 2017). In addition, the public lacked information whether every passenger travelling in every vehicle plying the new motorway will have to pay the charge fee (Thomas, 2017). Similarly, Margai (2020) reported Jiang, the CRSG's project manager in charge of WMTR, complaining that the construction exercise had been delayed because of the payment of compensation to property owners. Notably, the government did not relay the information on how much and when these individuals will be compensated. This caused increased anxiety among the resident to an extent of planning resistance demonstrations to disrupt the exercise in entirety. The government was obliged to relate the bidding process to the public so that local private entities could have a say, mainly on repayment models prior to commencement of the project execution, which could have saved the image of the government tainted by numerous resistance demonstrations. These narratives record vast levels of lacking transparency when PPPs deal with the government, which attracts questions on the level of accountability involved and who to turn to for clarifications through high degrees of lacking clarity and openness in arrangements between the government and private entities, which amounts to a huge challenge for PPPs' acquisition and execution.

On the other hand, the private entity is obliged to be transparent to the public geared at increased accountability. CRSG was required to relay to the public relevant information on contracts it had executed to provide the quality of service it purported to offer. Arguably, such vast projects attract traits of stealing, which can be weighed through comparison of projects of such magnitude the company has executed. This increase and upholds public trust within which other private entities can emulate. According to Sun (2017), the Government and private entity involved in a PPP arrangement ought to be transparent to one another to ensure that the public has necessary and adequate information. This guarantees quality of service equaling the value for money within which the public is prepared and satisfied. A key interviewee reiterated:

> "According to the WMTR contract agreement, when there is devaluation of the currency, there should be renegotiation and the Chinese company has asked for that, but the new government has refused. This had forced the company to resolve to start charging users of the facility earlier than stipulated. The public was even unaware of how much to be charge and for how many times a day. On the other hand, the public lacked information concerning the projects CRSG has executed causing fear to residents that company was out to embezzle the public money. Such scenarios affected the PPP field since the public can lose trust. CRSG ought to have secured mechanisms within which to instill confidence to the residents. Even to date, the public feels the company stole their money because there lacked transparency. Also, the residents are not aware on who to turn to if the charges are too expensive for them. Both parties could have provided accountability frameworks."

The issues of accountability and transparency are of great concern in building strong state capacities. Accordingly, the government has an obligation to declare to the public the necessary information concerning PPP project, which demonstrates the government's capability to build a robust framework to foster economic growth instigated by the local market. This fosters ultimate adherence to set rules and regulations by both contracting authority and contractors, which eases the avenues to access the government authorities by other actors. In this regard, keeping concession agreements top secret secures avenues for abuses in reference to the privatization concept provisions. The possibilities of land grabbing and forced evictions remain high in such settings, since information regarding approaches such as compensation remains unrevealed. Therefore, such arrangements attract criticism as profit driven at the expense of the citizens, making authorities inaccessible. Both the government and private entity involved in PPPs need to maximize all spheres of accountability and transparency because it fosters trust in the field.

4.3. Exploitive nature of Chinese state-owned construction companies countering ways

Chinese state-owned construction companies entail an exploitative nature that has made many African countries encounter massive stress and criticism. The Chinese presence in Sierra Leone is multifaceted, amounting to becoming the sole exploiter of mineral resources. In this regard, there is more need for hastened formulation of ways of countering this exploitive nature of Chinese state-owned construction companies. This study found that measures to hinder the perception include developing valid, robust, and reliable policies that foster accountability and transparency, promote, and boost local private sector actors, strengthen institutions, and reduce corruption.

4.3.1. Policy upgrading

Favorable policies are vital in attracting private investment in the PPP field. Osei-Kyei and Chan (2017) argue that the lack of policies that enhance positive attitudes towards private sector investments lead to PPP field failure since the investors are exposed to political support issues that hinder PPP acceptability. Similarly, despite the Public-Private Partnership Act of 2014 and subsequent Procurement Act of 2016 laying the foundation of government project bidding and execution, a minimal framework is in place to monitor and supervise PPPs (Jabbie & Jackson, 2020). In this regard, the political elites continue to venture into agreements that benefit their interests at the expense of the population (Investing in Sierra Leone Infrastructure, N.D). The GoSL is required to formulate policies that guarantee Chinese investment benefits the country as well as fostering inclusivity to lay a playing ground enabling all interested parties. In addition, the systems must put into account accountability and transparency measures for Chinese state-owned construction companies. This way, the exploitive nature of the companies will be contained.

4.3.2. Boosting local private sector actors

There are more exerted efforts by African countries to free themselves from foreign engaged programs, especially on neoliberal reforms exercised through lending mechanisms. van Klyton, Rutabayiro, and Liyanage (2019) report that Sierra Leone's overdependence on foreign investments has affected it overall field-level changes yielding social and economic consequences at the end. Sierra Leone local private sector actors have the potential to deliver on these projects if they are adequately empowered by the government. In addition, Bangura (2018) reiterates that it is through empowering the local private sector actors that Sierra Leone can decline overdependence on foreign assistance. In this regard, the government should shift it attention to helping these local entities to rise and compete with Chinese companies. The competition aspect will pressure the Chinese companies to uphold the work ethics to secure and sustain relevancy. Therefore, the government supporting the local private sector actors is another way of countering Chinese company's exploitive nature.

4.3.3. Strengthening institutions to decline corruption rates

The PPP field continues to amass numerous stakeholders within which each has different interests from the others on the overall field of PPPs. The government should put measures of combating corruption at all levels through strengthening its institutions. The Sierra Leone institutions and legal instruments are weak to regulate the growing number of investors' behaviors effectively (Kanneh & Haddud, 2016). The numerous PPP stakeholders make the blend between the public and private parties inevitably to produce judicial contamination of dynamics, rules of action, values, parameters, and principles of responsibility, which is challenging for weak institutions to oversee and control (Valaguzza & Parisi, 2020). Learning from other countries, which have successfully held Chinese related PPPs, will help Sierra Leone maximize the benefits of its direct investment and tighten standards for present and future collaborations. The country is mandated to strengthening its institution to facilitate the governing of common interests. Strengthening institutions is a vital step to combat corruption that facilitates the exploitive nature of Chinese companies.

4.4. PPPs measures to increase and uphold public trust and interests in delivering public services

Effective engagement and transparency in operations are vital measures for PPPs to improve and maintain public trust and interests in providing services. Initially, residents of any country worldwide demanded for deliverables, but of late, the interest has shifted to incorporate the need to know the processes that develop and deliver public service outcomes. Nduhura, Lukamba, and Nuwagaba (2020) argue that country's residents are the customers, which need to be engaged through co-delivery of services they consume, thus the reason for continued outcry for their voices and interests to be heard and incorporated to PPP's procurement and processes. In addition, Onyango (2019) reports that public trust and interests decline in the PPPs field due to government's obsession with control and autonomy, which hinders effective engagement, inclusivity, and transparency. A critical interview with an actor in PPP field highlighted that:

> "PPP project contractors have a mandate to ensure that all services for the public good are delivered to completion in regard to agreed terms. This calls for massive transparency and effective stakeholder engagement. The concept is to guarantee the PPP projects maximize value for money. Having these aspects in PPPs is a valid and reliable surety to win public interests and trust for improved service delivery."

Sierra Leone is a country that requires embracing results-oriented frameworks for program planning and delivery concerning PPPs. This is a crucial aspect in facilitating better service delivery and value for money. PPPs need to be based on validating the linkages between costs and outcomes to guarantee project agreements compliance. Notably, public-private partnerships encompass a range of activities that require robust coordination. Incorporating traits of lacking transparency might lead to public suffering, as witnessed with the uncertainties surrounding the WMTR concession agreement. PPPs should build on that and improve transparency mechanisms since they directly reflect on effective operations.

Finally, effective engagement is a vital concept in PPPs agreements. As earlier noted, PPPs entail numerous activities that require diversified specialties to execute. Engaging all these stakeholders guarantees the smooth running of operations. Precisely, operations' smooth running is the cornerstone for prowess in PPPs execution under laid down terms and conditions. The concept is to maximize each department's strongholds that minimize project completion failure, thus enhancing trust from the public. The residents are assured of the value for their money because they are fully engaged and informed. Therefore, effective engagement of PPP project stakeholders guarantees broadened trust from the public.

4.5. PPPs interventions in complementing government's better solutions and services delivery

Public-private partnerships are experiencing a rise worldwide in the last two decades and are more used in contributing to the infrastructure of countries. World Bank, Independent Evaluation Group (2015) argues that PPPs in developing countries have introduced a significant potential and a need for expansion to help get the better of scanty infrastructure, which impedes economic growth. Sierra Leone faces the challenges of lacking public funds, substandard planning, and feeble appraisal underpinning most project preparations. This study found that PPPs could assist to overwhelm these restrictions by marshaling private sector financing and fostering project preparations, executions, and handling improvements. The Independent Office of Evaluation (2020) highlights that PPP interventions in upgrading rural areas across Sierra Leone are a guaranteed approach to complement the government's better solutions and service delivery since most projects target the urban centers. Therefore, PPPs interventions targeting on improving rural areas through investing on the people is vital to complement government's better solutions and service delivery.

4.5.1. Mobilizing private sector finances

Public-private partnerships are an alternative to the government's constrained borrowing and spending. Bayliss and Van Waeyenberge (2018) state that the private sector participation in infrastructure continues to gain support through public private partnerships in complementing the government's efforts in public service. In this regard, mobilizing private sectors' funds towards executing challenging services to the government has become a vital step. Government legislative frameworks is required to reflect and address the spatial imbalances encountered by private sector actors in a bid to create an enabling environment that motivates private sector investments on PPPs (Ndebele, Aigbavboa, & Ogra, 2017). Based on these literatures, there is need for efforts to be directed on mobilizing private sector finance to fund crucial projects. According to a critical interviewee:

> "The role of PPPs is to provide technical backstop for MDAs and local councils in delivering on projects of large and complex nature. It is important to note that the main aim of PPP is to take off the financial risks of delivering on certain projects from the accounts of government thereby releasing stress on government's funds to deliver on other priority social projects."

This interview is a clear indication that PPPs concentrate on the most beneficial and profitable projects at the expense of aiding the government in delivering services. Therefore, they should focus on incorporating the need to help the government by funding some projects that will focus on delivering vital services to the population.

4.5.2. Fostering projects' overall processes

The private sector enjoys huge capital and skills capable of building, upgrading, or operating public infrastructure, which has attracted governments to harness. Ameyaw, Chan, and Owusu-Manu (2017) argue that accessing private finance and professionalism speeds up the provision of public services in countries faced with budgetary constraints, but their engagement in PPPs demand clear frameworks of inclusivity. Similarly, Fleta-Asín, Muñoz, and Rosell-Martínez (2020) states that PPPs in developing countries have seen increased investments and favorable contexts of implementation when the private sector has greater degree of controlling the overall PPP processes. In this regard, the Sierra Leone local private sector requires encouragement to become more involved in the PPPs' field. This can be achieved through amplified participation in PPP project preparations, executions, and management improvements as a crucial channel to complement the government on service delivery. The government is focused on economic growth that entails many aspects of development. In this regard, project bidding and contracting, which require examining key details, attract aid from the private sector. The government might be lacking in information acquisition, thus grant projects to contractors that have minimal capacities. Arguably, the private sector has a more significant proportion in the market forces' control. Therefore, the private sector should render helping hand to the government to ensure that competent bidders can adhere to agreement terms to win project bids.

4.6. Conclusion

There are various challenges for PPPs in supporting Sierra Leone's governance and development. They include the Chinese involvement in the country's PPP field, market forces and resistance, access to finance and corruption, legal-institutional architecture and benchmarks, and weak protection of private entities' interests. These challenges hinder the effectiveness and efficiency of PPP processes. Nonetheless, other challenges seemed to be championed by the government and CRSG. This included the legislative authority that appeared to be guided by personal interests thus lacking inclusivity in decision-making platforms and mechanisms. In addition, accountability and transparency emerged as lacking due to limited access to PPPs details to the masses and local investors, which challenged the working environment.

Upgrading policies to enhance monitoring and supervision of PPPs was the key to boosting local private sector actors to promote them to effectively compete with large companies such as CRSG as a way of countering the exploitive nature of Chinese state-owned construction companies. This could also be achieved through strengthening the institutions to regulate the growing number of investors' behaviour, which ultimately could combat corruption. These would be vital to complementing effective engagement and fostering transparency in PPPs operations as the framework to increase and uphold public trust and interests in delivering public services.

Finally, PPPs have a significant role to play in complementing government's better solutions and service delivery. Mobilizing private sector finances to concentrate on all vital PPPs rather than most profitable and beneficial ones emerged as a key PPP intervention. In addition, fostering PPP projects; overall processes could complement the government by ensuring even the finest details of a project were captured and examined since the government bears the bulk of all services to be delivered to the public, thus it can overlook or undermine critical PPP details.

Chapter 5. Conclusions

Public-private partnerships are essential approach to the economic growth of any country. However, project preparation and execution require robust planning. In Sierra Leone, PPPs face many challenges. This research has revealed that China's involvement to this country's PPPs, access to finance by local private entities, market forces and resistance that favor political elites, legal-institutional architecture and benchmarks, corruption, and insecurities through protecting private entities interests are the challenges PPP has faced and is facing in dealing with the government and CRSG (Sierra Leone).

Further, the PPP field is continuously losing discipline and efficiency that is negatively reflecting on public trust. Promoting effective engagements and transparency emerged as vital measures that PPPs can use to increase public trust in government and uphold such public interest through effective delivery of public services. Adhering to agreement terms is always a challenge in executing PPPs in this country. This study has shown that efficient engagement and decreasing corruption, among other incidences, are vital approaches in restoring public trust in PPPs.

This study revealed that enabling environment that influences mobilization of private sector finances and fostering PPP projects' overall processes are crucial PPP interventions that can complement the Government to deliver better solutions and services for effective and efficient public services for citizens of the country. Mobilizing private sector finances to fund PPP projects in the country will go a long way in supporting the government in delivering public services. Notably, private sector investment in these public services will oblige them to monitor the overall processes of PPP projects, which at the end will ensure faulty and suspicious deals, are not conducted at the expense of the masses.

Finally, upgrading policies to create an enabling environment for all, promoting the local private sector actors for competition to thrive, and strengthening institutions to hinder corruption emerged as vital ways the country counter the exploitive nature of Chinese state-owned construction companies. The sense of inclusivity in the country will help address the exploitive nature of Chinese State-owned construction companies that dwell on corruption and secrecy, thus derailing public oversight roles. The government and the private sector in collaboration will enhance the possibilities of upgrading policies to favorable terms, resulting to promoting local PPP actors and strengthening of institutions, which in turn will tame corruption to minimal levels.

In this regard, Chinese involvement in Sierra Leone's PPPs and Africa at large, and state capacity significance emerged as relevant points regarding governance to achieve full-fledged development.

Chinese involvement in Sierra Leone's PPP field has raised the bar of competitiveness to another level which the local private sector cannot match resulting to them being pushed out of business. These engagements with African government officials have brought the incidences of putting forward personal interests at the detriment of the masses by the political elites. This study has revealed that GoSL is unable to reject the pleasing offers being dispatched by Chinese state-owned companies, thus neglecting the local actors who struggle to source finances. This has affected the proper running of PPP projects in the country who exploit people for selfish interests, thus, rendering respect of rules obsolete has resulted to heightened resistance to PPPs and realization of infrastructural development. In this regard, the country continues to rely on foreign assistance for projects that can be tackled by residents. Therefore, Chinese involvement, which conducts business under high secrecy hampering transparency, has led to distorting the correct functioning of institutions and adversely affecting government programs for development.

The presence of weak state capacities is a challenge to local investors who lack adequate resources to compete, win, and complete PPP projects. The government has emerged as an obstacle to timely payments of projects, which in turn exposes investors to huge risks of losses, since mechanisms to monitor and supervise PPPs are weak. This raises the question of the mode of governance exercised in promoting local private sector investments in a country in dire need of infrastructural developments. The government is required to have all the necessary mechanisms such as favorable policies and competent officials who are keen in promoting the government's agenda of infrastructural developments. The state capacities will decline the challenges faced by PPPs such as corruption and access to finance, which can be regulated through robust policies. Lacking these mechanisms will see the country continue to realize slow developments, despite the need for hastened public service delivery.

Notwithstanding, PPPs are offering a reliable alternative in substituting government infrastructure delivery in Sierra Leone. Public-private partnerships are crucial components in the overall economic growth processes of Sierra Leone. In this regard, embracing the recommendations provided by this study is a significant step in making sure PPPs perform to expectations. With special reference to WMTR, the following are recommended:

All PPP projects need to be well-researched and structured, backed by credible experienced players to attract the needed funds. Notably, PPPs entail multiple players that all have their own interests. In this regard, effective engagements and inclusivity will go a long way in reducing the challenges of market forces and resistance in the country.

The challenge of Chinese involvement in the country attracts the need for the government to demonstrate political goodwill, thus co-partnering with committed funders and employing experienced concession and project managers. This will aid in formulating policies that favor all, promote local investors to combat over-reliance on foreign engagements, thus strengthening state capacities.

Accountability is a huge challenge in PPPs in Sierra Leone. The government needs to exert more efforts in strengthening institutions to address the requirement of fairness in service delivery thus improving accountability in procurements. Public interests need to be put into contexts and addressed through enhanced accountability achievable by promoting PPPs transparency measures.

PPPs have emerged as an appropriate tool for addressing infrastructural needs of Sierra Leone. However, they have high transaction costs, which can dissuade local private companies to engage in them. In this regard, the government is obliged to enhance public and private sector capacities by providing frameworks for ease of accessing funds. The government needs to employ competent professionals that oversee PPP processes such as timely release of payments so that they do not push local investors out of business or accrue huge debts in the long run.

Finally, information is vital for effective PPP processes both to the government and the public. Functioning under high secrecy can attract suspicion and dubious dealings. In this regard, the government should set up a platform for its members to exchange information and experiences surrounding PPPs. This concept will help promote the alignment of PPPs with policies and regulations to create a favorable environment for the emergence of local investors' partnerships.

Africa has experienced increased debates on corruption cases that include African countries and Chinese government officials and representatives in awarding tenders to projects. In this regard, future research is required to exert massive efforts on these rumors, mainly on an individual basis concerning both parties' representatives. This field is crucial since these manipulative strategies and contradicting rumors can cause animosity between government and residents, and between officials and governments. The topic is critical, given that Chinese contracts lack transparency while Africans continue to service loans, or their facilities and resources are being taken over as collaterals. It is worrisome that Africans struggle to refund Chinese loans while it benefitted few individuals. These pieces of literature constitute a viable topic worth appraising in the future.

Appendices

<u>Questions for Respondents</u>

1. What are the fundamental functions of the PPP Unit in Sierra Leone?
2. Do you think our PPP Unit is doing its functions well as required? Are there enough resources for the working of this body?
3. In regard to the Masiaka Toll road project, what was the nature of the agreement? Was it good for Sierra Leone or the Chinese Company?
4. As negotiators in this contract, what was your experience? Did you also have previous experience in PPP contracts and international negotiations?
5. In the negotiation process, I believe resourceful people like International lawyers, and other expatriates are important, were they hired?

6. What are the challenges PPP has faced and is facing in dealing with the government and CRSG?(Sierra Leone)
7. Are there ways to counter the exploitative nature of the state-owned construction companies from china?
8. Was there in the PPP arrangement, an overall ability and capacity of the APC and SLPP governments to design, and effectively monitor compliance by CRSG to accomplish the terms of the contract in the construction of the Wellington- Masiaka Toll Road?
9. What measures can PPPs use to increase public trust in government and uphold such public interest through effective delivery of public services
10. How can PPP interventions complement the Government to deliver better solutions and services for effective and efficient public services for citizens in the country?
11. What are the recommendations PPP can make to introduce the discipline and efficiencies associated with the private sector management and methods into government “ways of doing business”?

Appendices 2

Profile of participants interviewed

Bogus Name	Sex	Occupation	Place
John	M	Project Staff	Masiaka
Sorie	M	Project staff	Freetown
Peter	M	Chinese Rep	Freetown
wung	M	Chinese Rep	Masiaka
Fatmata	F	Local Investor	Freetown
Ibrahim	M	Local Investor	Freetown
Idrissa	M	Local Investor	Freetown
Joseph	M	PPP Unit	Freetown
Florence	F	PPP Unit	Freetown
Rahman	M	Ministry of Finance	Freetown
Kemokai	M	Ministry of Finance	Freetown
Dabo	M	Ministry of Trade	Freetown
Mahmoud	M	Ministry of Trade	Freetown
Ivory	M	Ministry of Works	Freetown
Sahr	M	Ministry of Works	Freetown

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