



DE BARRAY

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HIGHLIGHT OF CRITICAL NATIONAL CHALLENGES


Responding to allegation of subversive activities

The *Awareness Times* newspaper reported on January 12 that Omrie Golley, the former spokesman and legal representative of the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) movement, had been arrested by the police criminal investigations department for alleged "subversive activities".

Information about the arrest was made public over state television and radio by no less a person than the country's President, Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, reportedly saying that "Omrie Golley was plotting to destabilize the country".

When contacted by the *Awareness Times* newspaper, Omrie Golley was said to have proclaimed his innocence, saying his arrest was politically motivated as he was in the process of registering a new political party which he said was to be named the New Alliance Party.

Eyewitnesses allegedly confirmed to *Awareness Times* that Golley was spotted earlier at the Special Court on Thursday Jan 12th but the paper says it was not clear if he had gone there on a peaceful visit to detainees of his former faction.

The *Awareness Times* quoted the President of the Sierra Leone Association of Journalists (SLAJ), I.B. Kargbo, as claiming earlier that Sam Hinga Norman, former deputy defense minister now in custody of the Special Court as a war crime indictee, informed him (Kargbo) that his (Norman's) supporters would soon start kidnapping government ministers and other public functionaries and "put them on trial" if the Special Court continued to prolong his illegal detention. 


Ensuring shared benefits from the diamond sector

The *Concord Times* newspaper published a story on January 16, disclosing that Sierra Leone's diamond sector registered significant gains with export figures rising to **\$126.65 million in 2005** from **\$141.94 million in 2004**, but that indigenous Sierra Leonean diamond exporters, traders and miners are faring far worse now than before.

The paper says that 'H.M Diamonds' run by Lebanese Hisham Mackie accounted for over 40% of exports in 2005, followed by Kassim Basma, also Lebanese, claiming that all four companies which profited most from diamond exports in 2005 were owned by foreigners and had accounted for over 90% of diamond export profits accrued to the country's private sector.

The *Concord Times* contrasted the successes of Mackie and Basma with that of Andre Hope who it says is an indigenous Sierra Leonean diamond exporter whose business accounted for nearly 15% of the country's diamond exports in 2004 and who went out of business in 2005.

Concord Times also asserts that state revenue from diamonds which comes mainly from licenses and export tax is a tiny fraction of the actual value of Sierra Leone's high quality gems often smuggled out of the country. Such a minute revenue, the paper argues, has since 2004 been kept below \$9 million as indigenes working in the sector continue to be exploited and made impoverished.

The *Concord Times* recommended that government urgently address this situation to ensure equity in distributing benefits of the diamond sector as the country's poverty reduction strategy demands 

Protecting the Special Court of Sierra Leone

The newly constituted United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) which replaced the UN peace keeping mission (UNAMSIL) disclosed on January 19 that a military exercise – involving the UN peace keeping mission in Liberia - UNMIL - and the Government of Sierra Leone police and military forces - was underway in Freetown.


A statement from Andrei Bobylev of the UN security unit in Sierra Leone said the exercise was for training purposes only, in view of UNMIL's emerged role to protect the Sierra Leone Special Court after the departure of UNAMSIL, which is now a thing of the past.

Andrei Bobylev cautioned UN staff to maintain VHF/UHF handsets and be in contact with Security Control/UNIOSIL Security Duty Officer, especially at night time.

He said "You may observe some military movement, especially around the Special Court facilities".

The Monrovia based *Analyst* newspaper said on January 24 2006 that "the beefing up of the Special Court's security coincided with trial of former Kamajor commander and former Defense Minister, Sam Hinga Norman".

The paper also quoted the UNMIL Chief of Staff as clarifying that the operation is in no way connected to Mr. Norman's going to court.

"We are only doing our job", the UNMIL Chief reportedly noted, and "this does not mean the trial of Mr. Norman is posing threat to the Special Court in any way" 



'De Barray' is a typical gathering point in Sierra Leone where, mostly, critical issues are discussed to inform decisions.

To know more about the World Bank activity in Sierra Leone visit www.worldbank.org/sierraleone

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DE BARRAY

*The place to meet, inform,
amuse, discuss and decide*



FROM THE WORLD BANK GROUP'S PRESS ARCHIVE

Strongly supporting pro-poor oil revenue laws


The World Bank announced in a press release dated January 6 that it would withhold new loans and grants to the Government of Chad and suspend disbursement of IDA - International Development Association - funds allocated to the country, valued about 24 million United States dollars.

This action followed a legislative enactment of amendments to the country's Petroleum Revenue Management Law by the Chadian National Assembly which would substantially weaken programs to improve the lives of poor people, which the World Bank had been supporting.

In a letter to the Chad authorities, the Bank said it would not present any new grants or credits to its Board of Directors for approval, and would suspend disbursements on all eight active projects that were part of the World Bank portfolio in Chad.

"We have a responsibility to ensure that money generated from this oil project is used to help meet the needs of the poor in Chad," said World Bank President Wolfowitz.

The World Bank had offered to assist the Government of Chad to address its financial difficulties by analyzing and helping to address issues including how public finances had been managed. The Bank had also proposed a review of how the Petroleum Revenue Management Law had been implemented to identify which, if any, amendments to the law might be warranted.

The release said the Bank remains open to dialogue with the Chad Government on the best ways to address its current financial crisis while protecting poverty reduction programs 

Accelerating progress in achieving MDGs in Africa

The World Bank press release on January 19 announced the annual plenary meeting on January 17-18, 2006 of African governments, African regional institutions and the donor community, to discuss issues of accelerating Africa's progress toward achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which are also critical to reducing poverty in the continent.

The meeting underscored the partnership reflected the SPA – Strategic Partnership for Africa.

The World Bank Vice President for Africa, Gobind Nankani, noted that the SPA plays an advocacy role, builds common and better understanding of emerging and existing development issues and is an important tool for providing peer pressure on partners to improve ways of doing business.

The meeting resolved that shared growth is central to achieving the MDGs and that there is a need to ensure sector allocations of aid to reflect national priorities as there is yet little evidence that donors adjust their assistance to support the shared growth strategies of PRSPs, especially those in the second generation phase.

Concerns were also expressed about how countries manage the scaling up of financial support promised at the last G8 summit.

It was stressed that additional aid, though merited and welcome, must be aligned with national development priorities and delivered in a manner that minimizes procedural and implementation burden in African.

Donors were urged to ensure that their support is provided to encourage national capacity development and discourage technical assistance in a manner that weakens government institutions 

Projecting a new, bolder vision of micro finance


The *Today* page of the World Bank internal website ran a story on the day after the launching of a book by Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) in association with the Bank Group. The book outlines a new, bolder vision of microfinance.

Access for All: Building Inclusive Financial Systems lays out in plain language what CGAP and others in the development field have learned over the past 10 years about the true potential of microfinance and of integrating the world's poor into the financial mainstream.

As recently as a decade ago, micro credit seemed little more than a "charming idea" to many experts. Over the past 10 years, however, CGAP has been at the vanguard of what some say is a microfinance revolution, one that sees poor people not simply as struggling entrepreneurs worthy of tiny loans, but as full and valued participants in the global financial system.

Indeed, the financial services most of us take for granted—credit, savings, insurance, money transfers—are the same ones that can help the poor launch a small business, save for a child's education or hedge against the calamities of illness and natural disaster and war.

That the poor can have access to this wide range of services remains a pie-in-the-sky idea to some, but skeptics are hard to come by these days.

Today, few experts question whether poor people need a wide range of financial services. Instead, the question is how to extend these services to the world's 3 billion poor people who could use them 





Showing Results of Decentralization Reforms: Tonkolili District Council

INTRODUCTION

The Tonkolili District Council has amply demonstrated what the World Bank supported decentralization reforms mean to the people of Sierra Leone. Comprising 22 Wards and 11 Chiefdoms, the Council has been able to speak with one voice with chiefdom authorities and is receiving encouraging support from the three ministries that have devolved functions to it.

The Ministry of Health and Sanitation; Agriculture, Forestry and Food Security; and Education Science and Technology have commenced the devolution process by going through induction workshops in readiness to work in a new setting and environment.

A SHINING EXAMPLE

There are three key areas in which Tonkolili stands tall – (i), a strong desire to show tangible results which is backed by strong commitment and an unflinching political will (ii), a strategic communications approach bordering on the centrality of citizen's engagement in the developmental process (iii) an effective monitoring and evaluation system.

These facts were revealed in the closing weeks of 2005 during the World Bank implementation support mission in December last year one of whose teams visited to local councils in the Northern Region. The visiting team made a reality check to learn how the councils were progressing now that the devolution process has commenced. Another team of IRCBP staff and representatives of donor Institutions led by the Director of the Decentralization Secretariat, Emmanuel Gaima, visited local councils in the southern and eastern regions over the same period (1st to 4th December, 2005)

Despite the fact that the visits revealed the numerous challenges to the new people's empowerment drive, Tonkolili seems to have taken the lead in effecting a successful transition to the new local government system by taking very appropriate measures to deal with the challenges they face.

DEALING WITH THE CHALLENGES

1. Keeping the citizenry informed

The council's unique way of dealing with human resource, structural and governance challenges is what has made all the difference. The methodology of the council ensures that the people are not only informed, but are excited about council activities. On assuming office, council 'went round the District' sensitizing the people about the new system of government, thereby impressing on their minds the fact that decentralization would result in an improvement in their wellbeing.

The Tonkolili Council has been strictly following the provisions of the Local Government Act by ensuring that documents pertaining to its operations are posted on the notice board for the attention of the general public. By this move, patriotic citizens make the notice board their source of information and are able to keep themselves informed about its activities. Armed with such knowledge they serve as checks against any possible display of high handedness.

2. Best Practice in monitoring and tracking results

One of the initial moves of the council was to convene meetings with Paramount Chiefs in the District and chart a common path with them. The obvious outcome is that a very harmonious relationship now exists between the Paramount Chiefs and the Local Councils.

Each party is fully aware of their areas of authority in terms of revenue mobilization, an issue which often breeds conflict between the councilors and chiefs. Very importantly, Tonkolili District Council has a very strong monitoring mechanism as explained by the Chief Administrator, Abdul Dumbuya and the acting Chairman, John Amadu Serry. Development projects being undertaken in the District are thoroughly monitored, and a proof of this is that council took upon itself to purchase a motor bike which is being used by the Coach and the PADCO Volunteer, Mohamed Sesay and Arthur Allieu respectively, to inspect projects all over the District.

3. Involving the citizens

Employees of Companies or Firms contracted to undertake projects in the locality are formally introduced to the people in special meetings convened for that purpose. According to the Chairman and the C.A, this strategy has paid the desired dividends. In many instances there is citizens' participation in project implementation. By and large, the projects actually belong to the respective communities and this gives a justification for the citizens to be involved in the implementation even if not directly.

PROJECTS UNDERTAKEN BY COUNCIL

Indeed projects are strewn all over the District, from Magburaka Township to Yele, from Masingbi to Mile Ninety One. They range from a modern lorry park in Magburaka to construction of 'Loma' (periodic markets) in Yele and Masingbi, and a recreational centre in Mile 91. There is also a cassava cultivation project for all the 22 wards in the district.

The lorry park in Magburaka is a modern lorry park with toilet facilities, Supervising Drivers' office, a water well, a waiting space for passengers (with sitting capacity) and a shop for the sale of drinks and provision. The market at Yele is large enough to accommodate all the petty traders in the town who peddle edible items, and this move helps to keep traders off the streets.

The construction of Loma markets in Yele and Masingbi is a welcome development in the District as hitherto; conditions were terrible in these markets. Never before have 'loma' (trade fair) markets in Sierra Leone provided the people the kind of service the newly constructed markets now offer.

CONCLUSION

Someone once said 'good laws are good but good men are better by far'. An analogy can be drawn between this saying and what actually obtains in Tonkolili. Though not everyone in Tonkolili is 'good', one may still assert that the goodwill of the Tonkolili people has contributed to the success of their Council. Their steadfastness, devotedness and resilience are among the qualities that have come into play as they support their Council to achieve the degree of success it has achieved so far

Compressed from a feature story by Dandeson Smith, Decentralization Secretariat, Freetown, Sierra Leone.



SUMMARY OF KEY COUNTRY EVENTS OF THE MONTH

The unsatisfactory TRC Score Card

Sierra Leone recorded unsatisfactory progress in implementing important recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) said the Civil Coalition for Truth and Reconciliation in a press statement on January 8.

The release maintained that the slow progress is likely to weaken effective implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

The release noted that the results of a Score Card of progress in the implementation of the 47 imperative actions which the TRC recommended had been unsatisfactory since December 2005.

"Scores were particularly poor with respect to recommendations on the protection of women and those related to mineral resources," the statement affirms, further claiming that "some measured progress was realized in the rule of law and the protection of human rights, but much more needs to be done".


The statement expressed frustration over what it said was the "negligible commitment toward the TRC recommendations during the London Consultative Group in November last year" 

High speed wireless internet for S.Leone

The World Bank website published a story on January 11 stating that "what might sound rather too good to be true is, in fact, a reality made possible in part by the efforts of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA)". MIGA is one of the five bodies that constitute the World Bank Group.

The story said Israeli Telecommunications Company Sierra-Com was bringing high-speed broadband wireless Internet and voice over IP communications to Sierra Leone. Sierra-Com's subsidiary in Sierra Leone, IPTEL, had already started commercial operation and was signing up new customers every day.

Prior to IPTEL's entry into the marketplace, the report continued, the only Internet access was a slow dial-up service provided by a state-owned utility, which had been plagued by poor management and broken infrastructure; and by a narrowband private Internet service provider whose service had been prone to stoppages due to electricity shortages.

Sierra-Com's \$3 million investment, the report said, would now establish a network using advanced equipment from Israel 

Corruption sends magistrate to jail

According to *Reuters* (Jan. 20 2006), a Sierra Leonean court sentenced a magistrate, Mohamed Steven Bangura, to three years in jail for "abusing his office by accepting bribes (to the tune of 125,000 Leones equivalent to \$50.91) from a complainant".

Bangura was the first magistrate to be jailed under the renewed anti-corruption prosecutions by expatriate judge, Robert Schuster.

In the past, a high court judge, former government ministers and senior civil servants had also been handed prison terms, usually for crimes involving far higher sums.

Reuters said Massive corruption among government officials involved in the country's diamond sector was a key cause of a 1990s civil war in which rebels cut off hands, feet and ears of civilians, seized diamond fields and sold gems to buy guns.

The report concluded that Sierra Leone, one of the world's poorest countries, launched an anti-corruption campaign 3 years ago as part of an effort to recover from a decade of civil war caused in part by rampant graft in its lucrative diamond industry 


Former rebel trainer arrested in Liberia

The Monrovia based *News* newspaper disclosed on January 25 2006 that long time business partner of former Liberian President, Charles Taylor, Simon Rosenblum, who was also said to have been involved in the training of Taylor's Anti Terrorist Unit (ATU) and the erstwhile rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) of Sierra Leone was arrested in Monrovia on January 24.

Rosenblum is said to be a Brazilian/Israeli national who had been placed on the UN sanction and travel ban list and was a member of the Israeli military.

The paper cited intelligence sources as revealing that at the time of Mr. Rosenblum's arrest he was in possession of a Liberian diplomatic passport. It claimed that the former President, Charles Taylor, appointed Rosenblum as Counsel General and issued the diplomatic passport to him.

The *News* further disclosed that Liberia's current Deputy Defense Minister, Joe Wylie, confirmed the arrest but declined to give details as investigations were going on.

Simon, the *News* continued, had been detained earlier in Sierra Leone, but was freed due to inadequate evidence to prosecute him 

This newsletter provides information to the Sierra Leone public, internal Bank staff and internet users interested in Sierra Leone on activities of the World Bank Group, and on developments about Sierra Leone that are of interest and of concern to the Bank Group; seeking also to solicit feedback from Sierra Leone on the Bank Group's global strategies, policies, programs and projects.

