



Sierra Leone On The Map

Written by Ibrahim Dabo Monday, 06 July 2009 10:34



Rev. Kabs-Kanu,

I read with great interest your report: "DATELINE NEW YORK: THE DIARY OF A SIERRA LEONEAN DIPLOMAT". I applaud your efforts in putting our beloved country back on the map as best as you can. Reading your report made me reflect on an exclusive article I wrote and posted on my Webpage in 2005 titled "Sierra Leone: A Nation Injured By War But Still Blessed." I believe you might be interested in reading it, so I am pleased to share it with you. Please see link to my report: <http://www.idabo.20m.com/photo2.html>
I wish you all the best in your role as Minister Plenipotentiary for the Sierra Leone mission to the UN. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kind regards,
Ibrahim

Sierra Leone: A Nation Injured By War But Still Blessed *Exclusive*

The name **Sweet Salone**, which means **Sweet Sierra Leone**, is a cliché fondly used by many Sierra Leoneans. Sierra Leoneans are proud of their country so much that even many little kids are familiar with the name **Sweet Salone**. Many local music artists also play their part as they fondly use the name when composing some of their songs. From a different perspective, we come across the name **Sierra Lya**, meaning **Lion Mountains**. The visibly high mountains across the Freetown peninsula are a reason why the country was named **Sierra Lya** by a Portuguese explorer, Pedro da Cintra, when he sailed down the west coast of Africa back in 1462.

Prior to the start of the civil war in 1991, Sierra Leone was one of the most peaceful countries in West Africa. The country, which gained independence from Great Britain in 1961, has a unique history and is rich in mineral and natural resources. In fact, the green strip of the country's Green, White and Blue flag, stands for the country's natural resources. The capital city is Freetown, which was used as a settlement for freed slaves in 1787 and is with the third largest natural harbor in the world. The white sandy beaches, which stretch across certain parts of western Freetown, may also be a hot spot for tourists.

From the hills of Mount Aureol over looking Freetown is Fourah Bay College (FBC), which over the years has produced many intellectuals across the sub region. Founded in 1827, FBC is the oldest in tropical Africa and achieved a university status after it became affiliated with Durham University in England in 1876. The level of education in the college years back paved way for many foreigners across Africa, especially from British West African countries like Nigeria and Ghana, to enroll into the college. There are success stories on some of the impacts the college has created over the years, especially in the sub region. "Over the years, in terms of success, it [the college] trained manpower for administration, for education and the ministry all over English speaking West Africa," says Prof. Arthur Abraham, a former history lecturer at F.B.C who is now professor and chair of History at Virginia State University, U.S.A. "It was the powerhouse that was producing the teachers, the missionaries, the administrators of British West Africa."

With a population of more than five million people, Sierra Leone recently witnessed a decade of civil war. Tens of thousands of people were killed and thousands had their limbs amputated, which may be seen as the worse incident to occur in the country's history. With the help of West African peace keeping forces (ECOMOG), the British, and United Nations peacekeeping forces, the war was officially announced over in 2001. Post-war Sierra Leone has seen the rehabilitation and reconciliation process move on while the United Nations approved the Special Court for Sierra Leone in January 2002. Many responsible for war crimes are now being tried in the Special Court.

Many are now answering to war crimes charges. But at the same time, the impact of the war is so great on the lives of Sierra Leoneans that they may find it very uneasy to forget the atrocities and brutal acts they suffered at the hands of the rebels. "The violence, brutality and atrocities the rebel war unleashed on Sierra Leone and its people, leave no margin to forget," stressed Alhaji Aliou K. Turay Snr., a retired civil servant of the Sierra Leone government who also suffered as a result of the war and lost many relatives. "Offences committed deliberately, spitefully and with impunity that leave a permanent horrific scar, become a legacy for generations. The question of forgetting the entire episode is absolutely impossible. Victims will continue to live with the memory always."

As things are slowly returning to normal in the country, many Sierra Leoneans are looking forward to a brighter future. It's hard to forget about the past when it comes to war and the issue of forgiving those responsible for the misdeeds is one significant aspect en route to lasting peace. Those responsible for the atrocities, which occurred during the war, also have a major role to play in the peace process. "To sustain the value and importance of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a margin for forgiveness may be allowed if offenders

President Koroma



Ernest Bai Koroma - An Outstanding Head Of State. Working very hard to deliver an agenda for change. Support our President for a better Sierra Leone by getting involved in the development process.

come forward voluntarily and of their own free will to purge their actions," says Alhaji Turay Snr.

The country's mineral and natural resources also play an important role to the economy. The country is rich in minerals such as Diamonds, Gold, Bauxite, Iron Ore, Rutile and Zircon. The agriculture and fisheries industry is also expected to boost the economy. The sad thing however is that despite being blessed with all this natural wealth, the country ranks among the world's poorest nations.

Everything may not be moving well in the country at the moment. Corruption and economic hardship is presently a cause for concern. Poverty dwells among the population and other economic factors such as inadequate electricity supply leaves many to question whether the authorities are doing their jobs. There may be more questions than answers, at least for now. Understandably, the war may also be a contributing factor to the slow economic growth. However, it is now time for all Sierra Leoneans to come together and play a leading role in bringing the nation back into the limelight. Ambitious youths already have this in mind because they believe they could make a difference in creating a huge impact in the affairs of the country in the long run.

Many studying at home and abroad believe that they have a future role to play in making their country's economy one of the best not only in Africa but the world as a whole. "One of my future plan is to change the negative image of Sierra Leone in the international community and encourage investors to come in and invest," says Abdul Deensie who is currently pursuing International Studies at Montgomery College, USA, and hopes to finish up with a Masters degree in Political Science. "We need to let people know that the civil war [in Sierra Leone] was an unfortunate incident which will never happen again. Sierra Leoneans are peaceful people and the country can grow to become economically strong with time, as we have the mineral resources and also rich in agriculture."

On the sports front, many Sierra Leoneans are very passionate about soccer. The national team *Leone Stars* has qualified for the African Nations cup before in 1994 and 1996 but failed to cross the first rounds on both occasions. The team has also failed to impress many during recent times. Nevertheless, soccer faithfuls seem hopeful that the team would regain its form and qualify for big competitions like the Nations Cup. "My wish and willingness is to take Sierra Leone to one of the highest levels in football," says Sierra Leone international striker Mohamed Kallon who presently plays club football for AS Monaco in France.

However, the country does not have many players currently playing top professional football, something that might affect the country's preparations for upcoming competitions like qualification for the Nations Cup. This leaves words of hope on the part of Kallon. "Football is an unpredictable sport and I will never take the Nations Cup or the World Cup off my mind," he says. "But if I can't do it [to qualify for these competitions] within my own time, when I am actually playing football, I would still be around to support and do everything I can to enable my country to participate in one of the biggest competitions in the world."

In 2003, football in the country was at a standstill for several months as a result of an impasse among stakeholders in the game. This culminated into a change of leadership in the Sierra Leone Football Association (SLFA). Will changes in the football association make a difference after the body had come under heavy criticism for contributing to the downfall of soccer in the country? "I was 100% involved in the campaign and I was on the opposition side for us to change the former SLFA executive because I am seeking my country's interest," explained the 25-year-old Kallon, who is also captain of the national team.

"When the international competition begins with the African Championship, then after they start the league... I believe from now to next year when we begin to play the competition; the qualifying rounds again, we would be able to judge them and see whether or not they [the FA] are doing a good job. For now, they are doing very well." In 2004, Nahim Khadi won the FA presidential elections and there were also other changes within the FA executive.

Sierra Leoneans now need to join hands and help get the nation back on its feet. Patriotism is a key, which should unite us all, to wholeheartedly contribute in re-building this blessed land. With concerted efforts and having gone through the pains of a brutal civil war, Sierra Leone is capable of setting a brighter example in Africa, one that would be emulated. As this author always points out, "it would be better for Africa to use its wealth to build rather than to destroy." Backed by our own resources that should be well managed, very soon, the name *Sweet Salone* would be echoed throughout the African continent and beyond. At least, that is my dream - and my prayer.

Ibrahim Dabo

 [Email this](#)  [Bookmark](#)  [Set as favorite](#)

Trackback(0)

 [TrackBack URI for this entry](#)

Comments (3)

 [Subscribe to this comment's feed](#)

...
written by [Mimi Dabo](#), July 06, 2009

Excellent article!!!

   

...
written by [Foday Bangura](#), July 06, 2009

This was a well written article. With all the natural resources and brain power mama salone has been blessed with, there is absolutely no reason why we should be at the bottom of the human developmental index. We can only hope and pray that one day our beloved nation will be the envy of other nations around the world.

   

...
written by [Mohammed Kanu](#), July 07, 2009

This is a good one. Very true, Sierra Leoneans need to come together to rebuild our country. With all our wealth, we should be one of the powerhouses in Africa.

   

Write comment

Name

Email

Website

Title

Comment



[smaller](#) | [bigger](#)

- Subscribe via email (registered users only)
- I have read and agree to the [Terms of Usage](#).

Please enable JavaScript to post a new comment

[< Prev](#) [Next >](#)

[Contact Us](#)