

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

*UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SIERRA LEONE
(UNAMSIL)*

PRESS RELEASE

5 September 2002

DEPUTY SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE VISITS BONTHE DISTRICT

Freetown – The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) for Governance and Stabilization, Mr. Alan Doss, visited Bonthe Island on 3 September to assess progress on economic recovery and reconstruction programmes in the area. A team comprising top officials from the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA), the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and the NGO World Vision accompanied Mr. Doss.

Briefing the Deputy Special Representative on the situation on the island, the Commanding Officer of the “A” Company of Nepalese Battalion 2, Maj. Pushparat Shrehtha, said the security situation was calm, but lamented the state of the infrastructure, which he described as “very poor.”

“There is no pipe-borne water and no electricity on the island and malaria, cholera and diarrhea are rampant,” he said. The economic situation, however, was “gradually but notably improving with the return of peace throughout the country and the people are grateful to UNAMSIL for this.”

The Deputy Special Representative, accompanied by representatives of the local community, including the Mayor, the principal of the secondary school and the director of Bonthe Technical College, toured a number of the island’s facilities, including the local police station, the Senior District Officer’s premises, the Government hospital, the secondary school, the Catholic Mission/World Vision clinic, the prison, the elections office, the post office, the powerhouse and water works.

In a brief meeting with the Deputy Minister of Trade and Industry, Ms. Theresa Koroma, a native of Bonthe, Mr. Doss discussed ways to revitalize the local economy, notably through support to the agriculture and fisheries sectors and access to markets. The Deputy Minister said there was an urgent need to help the community with improved seed rice. She said the people of the community were skilled in fabric dyeing, carpentry and fishing, and appealed for financial assistance for them.

Speaking to the community’s representatives, Mr. Doss, who is also the UN Humanitarian Coordinator, said an assessment had been done on Bonthe to highlight the priority needs for the island. These would be part of the National Recovery Strategy that the Government would implement with the assistance of UN agencies, donors and NGOs. Work to rehabilitate the island’s infrastructure had already started: the hospital had been rehabilitated by the National Commission for Social Action (NaCSA), and with World Bank funding, the market was being reconstructed. World Vision, the only NGO working on the island, supported three clinics.

The Deputy Special Representative, however, stressed that the people of the community must take the lead in efforts to rehabilitate Bonthe's infrastructure.