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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Background on Sierra Leone**

Almost diamond-shaped, Sierra Leone is embedded like a gem in the bulge of the West Coast of Africa. It covers an area of about 72,000sq. kilometers. It has two immediate neighbours, Guinea and Liberia. The climate is tropical with an average temperature of between 25°C and 28°C.

The country derived its name from the breath-taking mountains of the Freetown Peninsular. This range of mountains was given the name Sierra Lyoa (Lion Range) by the early Portuguese traders who were awed by the roaring tropical thunder among the steep mountain ranges. Though discovered by the Portuguese, it was colonized by the British for 150 years. Independence was achieved in April, 1961.

The population was estimated at 4.6million in 1996, growing at an annual rate of 2.6%. The population is predominantly young with close to 50% in the 0-4 years range. The female/male ratio of the population is 51%: 49% respectively.

Between 1991 and 2001, the country witnessed a debilitating civil strife. Human resource development has been adversely affected directly and indirectly through deaths, injury, displacement and migration of skilled manpower, disruption of educational training, and damage, destruction or looting of educational and health facilities. By 1997, over 10,000 people had been killed, 2.1 million were internally displaced and some 700,000 were refugees in neighbouring countries.

The educational system in particular has been in a state of crisis for many years even before the civil strife.

This once prestigious, though elitist sector, which up to the 1970s earned Sierra Leone the epithet 'The Athens of West Africa', was never reformed in line with the country's development needs. The educational system is now faced with the challenge of rising up to the expectations of a dynamic and developing country.

In terms of statistics, quite apart from an externally low current national overall literacy rate of only 32%, significant rural-urban and gender disparities also exist.

Adult literacy for females is only 23% as compared to 36% for males. Primary enrolment for girls is 43% as against 57% for boys, and while enrolment rate for Freetown (the capital) is estimated at 70%, that for some parts of the rural areas stands at only 20%. Dropout rates are also high especially for girls, estimated at 25% between grades 1 and 2.

The country's socio-economic history typifies the case of missed opportunities amidst considerable resources and potentials so common in Africa.

Although relatively small, the country is well endowed with natural resources, rich agricultural and marine resources, considerable deposits of high quality gem diamonds, rutile, gold, iron ore and bauxite as well as highly favourable conditions for tourism.

I consider this brief country profile as necessary for two reasons, firstly to clear the decks to reveal my country's identity, and more importantly the context within which

to discuss my country's attempt at providing education for a secure future as an element for attaining human security and dignity, the *raison d'être* for the establishment of the United Nations.

The rest of my presentation will attempt to discuss education as an instrument for a secure future for Sierra Leoneans. It assesses efforts underway for the attainment of this human development goal. The presentation will also highlight the major challenges to promoting education for a secure future.

The concept of human security and dignity has long been narrowly interpreted from the point of view of nation states to mean protection from external aggression and protection of national interests in foreign policy. However, average citizens, like most of my compatriots in Sierra Leone, a feeling of insecurity arises principally from possible threats to their daily lives, hunger, unemployment, poverty, disease, crime, political repression, environmental hazards, to name but a few. For Sierra Leoneans, an additional sense of insecurity arose from a prolonged civil conflict that eroded human security and dignity.

### **New outlook of global conflicts**

If, after fifty- eight years of the existence of the UN, we are here today at a conference entitled: ***'Human Security and Dignity'***, it illustrates that the aims of the UN are far from being fulfilled as of now as conceived by the signatories of the League of Nations which preceded the United Nations.

The aims continue to be:

- to maintain international peace;
- to establish effective machinery to ensure international security, thereby reducing the fear of war;
- to better the lot of humanity through improvement in economic and social conditions, raise standards of health and education, and promotion of respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms (1960, Worldmark

Encyclopedia

p.9).

Lofty though these ideals may seem, they were unfortunately not translated into teachable units in both formal and non-formal education programmes so that learners would imbibe them and this would enable them grow up into adults who would have, for example, respect for human rights and diversity among human beings, as well as the realities of race and race relations.

The existing types of education, especially formal education, promoted and perpetuated, created ample opportunities for widening disparities, between the rich and the poor, between races, religions and gender among others, within countries and in regions of the world.

As the 'global village' goes through the bitter experiences of violent conflicts, it has come to the stark realization that it is only through increased knowledge and information readily accessible to all, understanding and communication between ourselves as human beings, that we can ever hope to build a safer and more secure future.

The radical change in the nature of conflicts in post - 1945 calls for more commitment now to the attainment of the aims stated above than was the case in 1945, after the Second World War. A drastic consequence of this change is the enormous effect that war had on civilian populations. In World War I (1914-18), civilian casualties were estimated at about five percent of total casualties; in World War II (1939-45), the number rose to almost fifty percent of all casualties. (1991, CARITAS). The deliberate and systematic elimination of the Jewish population in Europe shocked the world. Hence the setting up of the United Nations immediately after World War II as an attempt to ensure that such large-scale genocide would never happen again. There is, however, still no guarantee that it will not recur. As a matter of fact, these horrendous acts are still being perpetuated in more recent times in Bosnia, Burundi, Rwanda, and Sierra Leone lately.

We are here to come up, in the next three days, with concrete and possibly attainable strategies to forestall a repeat of such tragedies.

Undoubtedly, the search for peace has dominated human existence for a long time and while conflicts between states and nations have been on the decline, for the past two decades or so, we have witnessed an exacerbation of intrastate conflicts of the worst kind: wanton destruction of lives and property, mutilations, sexual violence and cruelties of unimaginable proportions. The following World Bank statistics illustrates this:

- over 50 countries have been involved in major protracted intrastate conflicts since 1980;
- in 30 low-and middle-income countries, conflicts are in progress or have only recently ceased;
- about 35 million people are currently displaced as a result of conflict;
- in 30 countries, more than 10 percent of their population has been displaced, and in 10 countries, the percentage is as high as or higher than 40;
- more than 90 percent of the casualties have been civilians;
- more than 100 million land mines have been laid, causing casualties and preventing economic development long after the guns are silent.

Indeed whole generations have grown up in 'cultures' of armed conflict and violence, and conflict has impoverished many countries. In Africa for example, in these 'new wars', unlike old times, it is children, not men that assemble to go to war. The concept of 'enemy' and the process of enemy building have had a dramatic twist. Today, the enemies are women, children and the elderly, who ironically constitute the most vulnerable in society. It takes a couple of weeks of brain washing to turn a friend, a parent or a prominent community member into an enemy. The intimate relations between perpetrators and victims of violence make the psychological and spiritual wounds resulting from the 'new wars' deep and indelible; social institutions, values, beliefs and norms constructed over centuries are swept away by the swift tide of the 'new wars'.

This trend cannot be allowed to continue unabated. We the peoples of the world must allow peace to reign, as it is essential for progress, prosperity, freedom and the entrenchment and preservation of human dignity. Without peace, there could be no serious talk of stability, a necessary condition for growth and development.

### **The Sierra Leone situation.**

In Sierra Leone as a reference point, the ten-year civil conflict (1991-2001) was characterized by brutal abuses and violations of human rights unrivalled in the contemporary history of internal conflicts in Africa and probably in the world. Thousands of unarmed, defenseless civilians were killed, or maimed through crude amputation by the rebel forces, and various forms of torture of the most inhuman kind were inflicted on defenseless and unarmed people. Women and girls were not only abducted, raped and gang raped, but were also forced into 'marriage' and sexual servitude by combatants. As a youthful population, the youth including school children were abducted and forcefully recruited as combatants. All of these took place in the full view of the world as these horrific images were shown on television screens through out the world.

Also, the infrastructural destruction of both public and private property has been incalculable. About 3000 towns and villages were destroyed which accounted for the mass displacement of people, both internal and external. Not even schools, colleges, hospitals, churches and mosques were spared. Over 1,700 educational institutions were either completely destroyed or severely devastated. In other words, during the ten-year brutal armed conflict, Sierra Leoneans experienced very serious material and human consequences. In addition to loss of lives, destruction of physical infrastructure and, at one stage, virtual collapse of the state, citizens of the country have had to deal with gross human rights violations affecting every aspect of their lives very negatively.

The nation's value system has been seriously threatened, if not completely eroded. Efforts of Government with assistance from a friendly international community to

turn the country round to a brighter future are now noticeable and beginning to bear fruit.

But the magnitude of the challenges are enormous and despite these noble reconstruction and development initiatives, e.g., the TRC and the Special Court to address impunity, peace and security in the country are indeed still very fragile. Thus to consolidate and deepen them further will, among others things, require a bold and conscious effort aimed at inculcating a new value system based upon a culture of democracy, peace, human rights, equity, respect, accountability, and respect for the rule of law. And there is no better place to kick-start this initiative than in the country's education and human resource training system.

### **Educating for a Secure Future is Peace Education, or Education for Peace.**

If education means the gradual process by which a person's mind and character are developed as he/she gains knowledge and understanding through learning, then **educating for a secure future**, simply put, is – **'the sum total of all social processes, formal, non-formal and informal that is employed to ensure that future generations imbibe skills and concepts that would make them live peaceful and secure lives'**. Thus while individual states or the world as a whole could attest that for decades, many nations have institutionalized conflict through their existing social order and political values, nations should now turn the world around by institutionalizing in their education systems, structured education about human rights, tolerance and peace. For as Bombande (2001) states "We cannot achieve peace and stability if we continue to be our own terror, destroy our future, kill our intellectuals, extinguish the dreams and aspirations of young people and create a mountain of displaced persons". We must use education to foster inter-community dialogue and peace building. Education can be a powerful instrument for reducing poverty and inequality, improving health and social well-being, and laying the basis for sustained economic growth. Education is also essential for building democratic societies and dynamic, global competitive economies, thus ensuring a secure future. (Millennium Development Goals)

Education to foster a culture of peace and that, which upholds justice, human rights, tolerance for all nations and people, is essential for attaining sustainable peace and a secure future, and should begin at an early age. Such education should include elements in determining early signs of conflict, conflict resolution, mediation, reduction of prejudice and respect for diversity. It would demand some deep diagnosis of our human problems and the provision of effective remedies and solutions. There is need to review the value systems, attitudes, institutional practices and performances, so that those that complement conflict or human rights violations would be replaced by positive ones. This is necessary as in violent situations; people's identities are negated and subjected to humiliation.

In Africa, villages and sacred places are desecrated and myths, beliefs and worldviews are called to question as a result of the magnitude of violence and the disintegration of the established order. Thus to accomplish sustainable peace, that is, create a peaceful, patriotic, democratic and human rights culture firmly based on the principles of participatory governance, there is no alternative to sound, comprehensive citizenship peace and human rights education in which a deliberate and painstaking struggle to re-socialize our societies of the values of non-violence and respect for human rights would be embarked upon.

Studies about peace should employ methods of teaching, which are conducive to the development of peace. One must therefore employ teaching methods that affirm and enhance the dignity of learners, develop their ability to engage in productive dialogue, discussion and problem - solving. It is being proposed that the methodology must be participative and interactive. Activities can be organized where learners identify their own individual styles of interpreting and managing conflict, and have an opportunity to learn about and internalize attitudes consistent with necessary changes in behaviour patterns.

The curriculum also should not be predetermined by 'experts', especially for countries that have experienced conflict and for whom peace education is a reactive process. Citizens' views must be sought and their knowledge and experiences used in determining the content of the peace education curriculum. This would ensure that the peace education programme would fit in with the socio-cultural context and needs of the community. Other peace education materials could only be used as reference/resource materials as they would portray worldviews that may not be appropriate to others, although best practices could be studied.

Furthermore, peace education should be integrated into traditional subject areas so that it will be taught. This would allay teachers' fears of overloading the school timetable as well as lessening pressure on learners with several subjects, separate but interrelated.

A lot also is being done at the international level, for example, the 'Hague Appeal for Peace Global Campaign for Peace Education' has as its goals: 'to build public awareness and support for including peace education in all spheres of education throughout the world; to promote education of teachers and develop and disseminate resources to teach for peace.' The Campaign has an interesting and apt slogan to one of its flyers: **To Reach Peace, Teach Peace!**

### **Experiments with peace education in Sierra Leone**

For over a decade and half now, the Mano River Basin comprising the countries of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia has been engulfed by a conflict system that has swung from one country to another.

The violent conflicts in the Basin (Liberia 1987-1997), Sierra Leone (1991-2001), Liberia (2002), with Guinea serving as a 'buffer zone,' (although she has not gone unscathed with various raids into Guinean territory from either Liberia or Sierra Leone). These conflicts have left in their wake a deep spirit of hate among communities; the traumatic memories of the conflicts have left a never-fading desire for revenge in the minds of the victims. Unfortunately, this spirit of revenge is a

precondition for renewed hostility if not nipped in the bud. In fact, the seesaw nature of violence and instability in the region calls for immediate introduction of peace education into the curricula of our education systems, with corresponding programmes at the community level to target the non-school-going youths and adults who are in the majority. This would forestall a repeat of what the present generation has experienced and is still experiencing.

Sierra Leone after the civil strife, with its education and training system destroyed, is determined to turn the table round as she realizes that the main goal of education is to free the potential of children by imparting in them the skills, knowledge and values that will make them effective, productive and responsible citizens. Hence the country's New Education Policy cites the general aim of education as the integral development of the individual for the building of a:

- free, just and peace-loving society,
- democratic and harmonious society, and
- moral and disciplined society.

The Policy also recognizes that Sierra Leone has an obligation to provide every citizen with education, which, among other considerations, takes account of:

- the right of each individual/child to basic education,
- character development and the cultivation of desirable attitudes, and
- the need to correct gender imbalances.

In Sierra Leone, at governmental level and more especially at the NGO level, scores of peace and conflict resolution organizations have sprouted since the outbreak of the war. Training at workshops, seminars and conferences have become the most widely marketed commodity of the peace industry, as each agency believes rather erroneously that its approach offers the best way forward. It would help us to recognize that the complexity of conflicts requires equally complex interventions, as they could not lend themselves to simple one-dimensional intervention. Therefore, any meaningful intervention must be multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary, and

must take place at several different levels at the same time. No one actor can provide a total response, so that in any new approach to conflict resolution, there is need for co-operation and coordination between all the actors involved in trying to build peace. This coordination and cooperation is seriously lacking among the stakeholders involved in peace education in the country. This fact is reiterated in the "Draft Curriculum Framework for Sierra Leone: May – June 2003":

"Various organizations with a stake in Citizenship Education in Sierra Leone were consulted, and a miniature audit of their content undertaken. Recognizing the many players and lack of coordination in the Citizenship Education terrain, the Ministry of Education identified the need for coordination of their varied initiatives with a view of maximizing their benefits"(p.1).

The government recognized that serious human rights violations were committed in the country during the conflict. Summary executions, mutilations and torture, abductions, sexual abuse, forcible recruitment into fighting forces and massive displacement were commonplace occurrences. It is estimated that between 50,000 and 64,000 women were victims of sexual abuse. Thus the UN publication 'Sierra Leone Recovery Strategy for Newly Accessible Areas' (May 2002), in which priority was given to take action to address the issue, states as follows:

"To protect human rights and encourage reconciliation, the main national initiatives include the establishment of the Special Court, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the development of institutional capacities (judicial system, police and prisons) and the strengthening of national institutions (such as the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights and the office of the Ombudsman). National initiatives need to be complemented by...community-based initiatives contributing to stabilization and reconciliation" (p. 24).

These community-based initiatives include:

- the organization of traditional cultural programmes, sports activities, community meetings, community services and other related activities for the promotion of peace and confidence building;
- training selected members of chiefdom level committees on community human rights/civic education and the roles of peace-building committees;
- training community members on community mobilization, conflict resolution, and/poverty dispute resolution, trauma healing and overall community reconciliation.

These initiatives are now being implemented under the Rehabilitation of Basic Education Project (REBEP) (January, 2003) with funding from the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

In the school-based peace education and peace-building initiatives under the Project, government recognizes that Schools play an important role in returning normalcy to the post-conflict environment, as they provide not only an important service to the community, but also because they often become an important reference point for other community activities. In the interest of building a sense of community as well as a means of building trust, REBEP will support participatory school management by establishing a School Management Committee with membership determined by election, comprising representatives from parents, and the school community. Developing trust is a key element in the promotion of peace-building environments, and this can be achieved by giving communities the opportunity to participate in the school's decision-making process. This is definitely a move from the 'norm' that Sierra Leone inherited from the colonial system and which she perpetuated until now, that is, that the community and the school are separate entities and the community has nothing to do with the school apart from paying school fees and charges for pupils.

In addition, the project will promote school-based initiatives that emphasize the importance of supporting an enlarged learning community and promoting tolerance.

There will also be support for curricula and extracurricular activities oriented towards the production of human rights, civic education and tolerance.

It is worth noting that 'The Pre-school Project', (1991- 1997) developed by the Catholic Mission, Sierra Leone, with funding and expertise by CARITAS Germany, has laid the foundation of effective school-community link. The life-oriented learning approach used in the Project promotes the involvement of parents, other members of the family and of the community as active participants in the preschool activities: they discuss with educators what is important for children to learn; they inform educators about problems and needs of children, and they take part in different activities.

The government also has embarked upon positive discrimination in school enrollment of girls, particularly in the Northern and Eastern Regions of the country, where girl's education lags far behind their counterparts in the Western Area and Southern Region. This is primarily an attempt to address the regional and gender disparities currently found in the provision of education services in the country. All girls in these regions will receive free education as pronounced by government in a policy statement.

Another initiative by government is the hiring of the services of a consultant from the Commonwealth Secretariat to develop a single Curriculum Framework for Citizenship Education in Sierra Leone. After consultation with a number of stakeholder organizations, both formally and informally, a draft of this document has been produced and has been introduced to stakeholders for their reactions and input, and the final document is being prepared. In reiterating the importance of education, Mahkubu (2003) states:

"If, therefore, Citizenship Education is about character development, nation-building, gender sensitivity, cultivation of desirable attitudes, internalization of values, moral discipline, and respect for human rights and rule of law, and if realizing all of these noble goals means focusing a large proportion of a country's investment on young children, then education is better suited to be the single biggest mode of delivery"

(p. 17).

The report also states that citizens need to be sensitized that a peaceful society is a recipe for sustainable development and that this requires each citizen to be an envoy for peace and a mediator in conflicts. The following content themes have been suggested for the Peace Education and Human Rights in Education Curriculum respectively:

<b>Peace Education</b>	<b>Human Rights Education</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is Peace?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- definition of peace</li> <li>- types of peace</li> <li>- benefits of peace</li> <li>- how to build and keep peace</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Constitution and Human Rights:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- constitutional values and principles</li> <li>- what are human rights?</li> <li>- types of human rights</li> <li>- rights guaranteed in the Constitution.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Conflict management and Resolution:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- what is conflict</li> <li>- types of conflict</li> <li>- causes of conflict</li> <li>- how to avoid conflicts</li> <li>- ways of settling conflicts</li> <li>- how to become angels of peace.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Rights and Responsibilities:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- limitation of rights</li> <li>- individuals rights versus rights of others</li> <li>- duties of citizenry.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peace and the Constitution:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- nationalism and patriotism</li> <li>- human rights(especially of vulnerable groups)</li> <li>- the rule of law</li> <li>- values and principles.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peace, Conflicts and Human Rights:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Human Rights violations</li> <li>- Human Rights and peaceful co-existence.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convention of Human Rights, especially               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- rights of women</li> <li>- rights of children</li> <li>- rights of minority groups</li> <li>- rights of people with disability.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human Rights and Culture:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- what is culture?</li> <li>- manifestations of culture</li> <li>- forced, arranged and early</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

marriages - rape - wife battering.
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Acknowledging the complexity of conflicts, the Draft report further supports a multi-disciplinary approach in implementing the curriculum, that is, integrating the themes above into appropriate traditional subjects in the curriculum of schools. That is because by combining theories and practices from disciplines such as education, theology, sociology, political science, art and culture, learners will develop the skills and understanding necessary to prevent future outbreaks of violence. For example, the incorporation of the following themes into the study of History:

- abuse of human rights
- social justice
- deteriorating environment.

This approach could be justified from the point of view that History affords people an opportunity to study, record and diffuse knowledge of their failures and successes.

Art and Culture – These liberate the imagination. The power of the performing and visual arts is great. Arts and culture education have the potential to empower young boys and girls by giving them techniques through which they can express themselves creatively, and also give pupils a non-coercive and voluntary model for submitting oneself to the ensemble. The activities teach tolerance, teamwork, self-confidence, respect for others and self-respect among others.

Religious Education can also accommodate some themes listed above provided that such education does not promote any one creed or belief over any other. Religious education should provide pupils with knowledge about religion, morality and values, and the diversity of religions. It must therefore be the embodiment of values and principles of justice, democracy, freedom, reconciliation, tolerance, human rights, compassion and human dignity.

Games and Sports could also be the media for the development and cultivation of character and desirable attitudes among the young such as cooperation, tolerance, team spirit, discipline. This is because sports is governed by rules. Its teaching and learning make pupils to accept common rules of engagement, the adherence to which reinforces commitment to a common social code.

The Draft Curriculum Framework further advocates for a conscious bias towards girl-child education. At primary school level, the vast majority of personnel are women, yet they are under represented when it comes to positions of authority. We must begin to challenge the manner in which schools are presently organized as it reinforces gender discrimination and stereotyping. It is common experience for women to teach subjects in the Humanities while men teach the Natural Sciences.

The education system and schooling in particular have a social obligation to teach sex education so as to instill a culture of sexual responsibility among boys and girls, especially in the light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and its impact on society in general and education/schooling in particular.

All these brilliant suggestions would be meaningless if no learning takes place. Thus the Draft report advocates for educational strategies and methodologies that would help learners participate actively in the teaching/learning environment, using methodologies such as experiential learning through dialogue and debate, role play, brainstorming, whole class discussions, projects, picture talks, etc.

A lot of work has also been done and is still going on at the NGO and Community Based Organizations (CBO) levels in promoting peace and security. Most of these organizations target mainly the non-formal level and therefore employ interactive and participatory teaching methodologies recommended in the Draft Curriculum above. For example, the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), an international organization with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, has a local chapter

in Sierra Leone. FAWE's mandate is 'Supporting girls and women to acquire education for development.' In 1999, in anticipation of the UN declaration of the year 2000 as 'The International Year of a Culture of Peace', and the decade 2001-2010 as 'The International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World', the Sierra Leone Chapter of FAWE developed a 'A Training Module for Education for a culture of Peace' with funding from UNESCO and FAWE International. The Module has eight units covering conflict, gender, trauma, rights and mediation. This Module is used in all FAWE branches in eleven out of the thirteen districts of the country. Other organizations also use the Module in their community-based education programmes, for example, PLAN Sierra Leone.

On the sub-regional level, various organizations have sprung up to propagate the peace education mandate: the 'West Africa Network for Peace-building' (WANEP) with headquarters in Accra, Ghana, was set up in 1998 'to promote an indigenous culture of peace, strengthen the capacity of peace-building practitioners and institutions, develop conflict prevention networks and mechanisms and advocate for just socio-politico – economic structures'. WANEP has also developed the "Active Non-violence and Peace Education Program, comprising a curriculum, teacher's guide and source book.

W A N E P also facilitates seminars and training workshops in the sub-region. In Sierra Leone, teachers have been trained to use the materials and these teachers have established Peace Clubs for students in their schools. Some members of these clubs have been trained as peer mediators, who will mediate in school problems.

The 'Mano River Women's Peace Network' (MAWOPNET), comprising members from Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia, has been very active in advocating for peace in the Mano River Union States. The mission of the network is to promote sustainable and durable peace in the sub-region particularly in the Mano River Basin, so as to allow sustainable development and the integrating of the specifics of each gender which will foster the participation of the women in the process.

National institutions, notably the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights (NCDHR), have also added their voices to peace and security education in Sierra Leone. With the primary aim of cultivating a democratic tradition and advancing the democratic process through awareness-raising strategies, the Commission has contributed immensely to the increased civic awareness of the citizenry and the emergence of a strong and vibrant civil society.

### **The Millennium Development Goals**

The pledge to achieve universal primary education by 2000 made at the 1990 Conference on Education for All (EFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand has proved to be a dream. So in September 2002, 189 nations including the United States, affirmed a set of 8 international development goals in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, now known as the Millennium Development Goals. They reflect an understanding of the devastation caused by global hunger, poverty and diseases, and aim for a world that is free of such misery. They are achievable as most of them are very specific and time bound. The UN also has indications to help monitor the progress of implementation.

The Millennium Development Goals are in the main education goals. Although Goal 2 ('Achieve universal primary education') is specific, Goal 3 ('Promote gender equality and empower women',) also features education prominently as does also Goal 6 ('Combat HIV/AIDs, malaria and other diseases').

Indeed, a good education is the basis for helping to address many of the interrelated issues faced by developing countries like Sierra Leone. Hence government and its collaborating partners, both national and international, have put hands on deck to achieve the Millennium Development Goal on education through innovations in their activities.

In 1993, in her bid to make education more relevant, Sierra Leone introduced the 6-3-3-4 system of education to replace the academic-centred 7-5-4 system. The 6-3-3-

4 system was introduced together with the Basic Education Reform to ensure the provision of basic education for the majority of the population and to enhance the participation of women and girls in education. The new system comprises 6 years of primary schooling, 3 - year junior secondary school, 3-year senior secondary school and 4 years of tertiary education. The first two tier (9 years) of the system make-up the Basic Education Level. Also, non-purely academic subjects were introduced to cater for skills development areas and cultural awareness like Creative Practical Arts, Technology, Integrated Science and four predominant Sierra Leonean Languages.

With the objective of delivering primary education to out-of-school children who are in the majority and are also not quite easy to reach, UNICEF and national and international NGOs, for example, People's Educational Association, PLAN International, Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), etc, have carried out Non-Formal Primary Education Programmes (NEPE) since 1992. These are usually embodied in community-based schools that aim to increase the participation of boys and girls in basic education and involve parents and local communities in the management and monitoring of schools. The curriculum is similar to that used by formal schools, although significant emphasis is placed on numeracy and literacy, as well as civic education and simple vocational skills, with short period of schooling (3hours/day) and a longer academic year.

Similar initiatives have been taken to assist the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in reestablishing education services in war-affected areas, and for displaced students. For example, the Rapid Response Education Programme (RREP) which lasts for 5 months facilitates the re-entry into the formal school system of 10-13 years olds who have lost formal schooling as a result of the war, and also the Complementary Rapid Education for Primary School (CREPS) aimed at inducing the re-entry of over-aged children into primary school, using the 6 years primary school syllabus now condensed to 3 years so that children in the CREPS programme complete the syllabus in 3 years. These projects also include the construction and rehabilitation of schools.

In August 1999, PLAN Sierra Leone launched the Rapid Education Programme in displaced camps in the Western Area. Teaching/Learning Materials provided included Teachers Guide with a focus on basic literacy, numeracy, peace education and trauma counselling; the school-in-a-box kit containing materials for children and teachers for literacy and numeracy lessons, the recreate kit containing play/art materials such as balls, crayons, drawing books, nets, game boards.

## **HIV/AIDS**

The HIV/AIDS epidemic is a serious and growing threat to the education system in Sierra Leone. Taking a severe toll on the society, it also dampens the demand for education as affected households have fewer resources to spend on education either because of reduced income due to illness of income earners or diversion of scarce resources for health care services. Moreover, there are fears that the epidemic may likely have a significant effect on the supply of teachers to service the education system. Currently, there are a number of health programmes under implementation targeting both formal and non-formal systems, including the Sierra Leone HIV/AIDS Rapid Response Project (SHARP), aimed at preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS. SHARP does provide funding for school-based HIV/AIDS prevention programmes and also supports school initiatives on a demand-driven basis to prevent and mitigate the spread of the disease.

## **Gender equality and Women's Empowerment**

Efforts are now being made to raise citizen's awareness of the need for gender equality and women's empowerment as positive measures for development. Tertiary institutions now offer courses in Gender and Peace Education. The introduction of the universal free primary education in all state-owned and assisted schools in 2001 resulted in a quick increase in school enrollment. The National School Survey Report (NSSR) revealed that the Gross Enrollment Rate (G.E.R) in Grade 1 went up from 74% in 1999/2000 to 120% in 2000/2001, (World Bank, 2003). This represents a

surge in the demand for schooling substantially higher than any increase experienced before the war.

As stated earlier, government has embarked on a positive discrimination policy to enhance girls' enrollment in the northern and eastern regions, which lag behind those in the other regions of the country.

The 50/50 Organization is a women's advocacy group for the political and economic empowerment of women in Sierra Leone. This group strongly believes in the equitable distribution of resources for both male and female. Also, other NGOs are undertaking awareness campaigns on gender equality and women's empowerment. Thus a result of the 50/50 group sensitization for the 2002 parliamentary elections, the number of women in Parliament rose from 7 in 1996 to 18 in 2002. The group has already begun consultations to discuss the role of women in the upcoming Local Government Elections slated for mid 2004.

## **Challenges**

With all the efforts enumerated above, educating to ensure a secure future will still remain largely a dream if some challenges are not addressed.

In education, as in other sectors, reliable data and information system are very necessary as they serve as guides in effecting plans. This is particularly so in the Sierra Leone situation where different groups are responsible for education service delivery. For example 85% of all schools, though assisted by government, are managed by the missions and supported by NGOs. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology lacks the capacity to monitor the performance of the service providers and schools. Hence there is lack of reliable data.

Another challenge is the political will and mobilization of resources. Making primary education free is a laudable venture. But what happens to the provision of quality teachers to man the schools and even logistics for the teachers. While efforts are now being made to reduce the number of untrained and unqualified teachers with

the introduction of Distance Education courses for teachers, trained and qualified teachers are in very high demand if we should give the children quality universal primary education. Teachers must be paid living wages and their conditions of service made attractive.

We must not forget that many curriculum innovations live or die depending upon the type and quality of support given to the end users – the teachers.

Peace and Human Rights education is an educational innovation, which consists of learning new ways of thinking and doing things. It also implies acquiring new skills, knowledge and attitudes. Successful curriculum change draws on teachers' capacity to understand the changes confronting them. Teachers must be empowered to implement whatever curriculum they are provided with. This is indeed a big challenge for Sierra Leone where, in the rural areas, the bulk of teachers are not trained or qualified as the table below illustrates.

**Status of teachers in primary schools in newly accessible areas.**

<b>District</b>	<b>Number of Pupils</b>	<b>Qualified Teachers</b>	<b>Non-Qualified Teachers</b>	<b>Total Numbers of Teachers</b>
Kambia	37,584	216	553	769
Port Loko	73,714	858	935	1793
Bombali	56,757	855	722	1577
Tonkolili	63,914	554	1131	1685
Koinadugu	28,731	178	380	558
Kono	17,206	160	386	546
Kenema	64,924	1393	825	2218
Kailahun	18,437	331	549	880
<b>Total</b>	<b>363,267</b>	<b>4,545</b>	<b>5,481</b>	<b>10,026</b>

**Source:** Sierra Leone Recovery Strategy for newly accessible areas, National Recovery Committee, May 2002.

In the area of peace education in particular, our teachers need to be taught the skills necessary for effective child-centred teaching/learning, a radical move from the traditional teacher-centred learning.

To effect a conscious bias towards the girl child, the education and training system has a moral duty to advance women to positions of power and authority so that boys and girls can begin to experience women in roles of authority as well as roles of nurture. This is necessary because even though the majority of teachers in the primary schools are women, male teachers are in the majority in classes 5 and 6 – upper primary classes.

As stated earlier, the country has one of the lowest literacy rates in the world, averaging around 32%. Also, there is the inadequate budgetary support to education, which is only 1.7% of GDP. (UNPD Human Development Report 2000) has seriously hampered the provision of quality educational services. Thus ample provision of resources needed for this sector is urgent for any meaningful implementation of educational programmes, such as the adequate provision of new places to accommodate the children in primary schools.

## **Conclusion**

Education for a secure future is a sine qua non if nations and invariably the world should live in peace. Disparities in access, retention, gender must be reduced to the barest minimum if not eradicated completely. The individual's capacity must be tapped to the maximum; education must be made relevant to the people and the citizens must take part in determining the content of what is taught in educational institutions. Nations, especially the developed ones, must be sincere in their words and genuinely accommodate and support the developing nations in their efforts at living in peace and security.

Human security and dignity are universal concerns and therefore relevant to people everywhere in rich and poor nations. The threats to their security and dignity may differ – hunger, diseases, political unrest and the attendant problems of refugees in poor countries, and drugs and crime in both poor and rich nations – but these threats are real and growing. Some threats are common to all nations – job insecurity, crime and threats to the environment.

Sierra Leone is making modest attempts at eradicating these threats to human security and dignity through education for a secure future.

I thank you for your attention.

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