

**Letter from Jenny Gibson to "Friends", dated 25th November 1995
(sent from Kenya)**

[She is pleased that she can receive the BBC's "Focus On Africa" while in Kenya and sends the following report of conditions in Sierra Leone.]

The news at the beginning of September was of starvation - 600 dead in Bo and Kenema from starvation due to the attacks on the main road targeting vehicles bringing food up country. A particularly horrifying attack on the Freetown - Bo road at the beginning of August destroyed all but 5 of a convoy of about 70 vehicles, with many drivers killed. The displaced people who have fled to the overstretched towns for safety are unable to cultivate their farms for fear of rebel attacks. The attacks on the roads continue- 2 soldiers and 20 civilians killed near Tongo Field last weekend. Dingdoing guerilla warfare-two weeks ago government troops recaptured rebel strongholds at Sumbuya and Matru Jong in the Southern Province, but at the same time rebels recaptured Kailahun in the Eastern Province, together with the airstrip at Buedo. "Executive Outcomes ", the South African white mercenaries seem to be confining their attention to looking after the diamond mining area at Koidu. I suppose that at least deprives the rebels of a source of income for buying weapons - but when will the arms manufacturing nations stop selling them ?

In the midst of all this chaos, James Jonch and the electoral commission continue to try to organise a general election next February, in the hope that a civilian government could persuade the rebels and "Sobels" (soldiers playing at being rebels") to go back to barracks, and then police the country with Nigerian and Guinean soldiers from the West African Peacekeeping Force (ECOMOG) . And Segbwema hospital continues to function and was highly commended by a UN assessment team which travelled there with Michael Moss by helicopter in August. Michael is the only M.C.O.D. mission partner left in Sierra Leone now, and is sharing in the enormous job of getting relief supplies to the million or so Sierra Leoneans (one quarter or more of the population) within Sierra Leone or refugees from Guinea.

One ? good thing is a fragile peace in Liberia after Charles Taylor (the rebel leader who started the whole thing off in Liberia and Sierra Leone) was eventually persuaded to come to the negotiating table. He's now a Vice- President, along with all the other warlords, and is hoping to become President after elections next year. It seems that the people of Liberia are so completely fed up with the fighting that they are prepared to pay almost any price for peace. There are still hopes that Foday Sankoh may follow Taylor's example and come to the negotiating table to arrange a ceasefire in Sierra Leone.

[She goes on to describe conditions in Chogoria, Kenya, where she is working in a hospital]