

Letters from David Ngombu to Myf Hodkin: January, April, July, August, October and December 1996

Letter from David Ngombu to Myf Hodkin dated 12 January 1996

[Explains the delays in receiving post, as letters come by air and only on Tuesdays. The road has been blocked again because of rebel attacks on the Bo - Freetown Highway.]

The Christmas and New year were comparatively much better as there were no attacks on Bo Town as it happened last year. Because of fear, the Christmas and New Year were quietly spent except that some children were dancing on the streets. This means there was some sort of calm in rebel activities around Bo.

Hope it continues !

I have started writing a comprehensive report on the rebel war in the South - Eastern part of the country. This will be sent to you when I finish. I started last year but my illness disrupted the whole thing. However, I have started after feeling much better.

With regards the rebel war, it is still continuing in the southern part - Njala University College and its environs was attacked recently Most of the villages and part of the college were burnt down. A lot of people have left the area and are now in Bo. The problems for the newly - displaced people are that of accommodation and feeding. A lot of people are presently suffering as NGO's find it difficult to cope the large number. The town is overpopulated for now and more camps for the displaced people are erected. ...

Letter from David Ngombu to Myf Hodkin dated 8th April 1996

[He begins by thanking One World Link in Leamington for sending help towards payment of his medical bills.]

Myf, the political situation in Sierra Leone has taken a dramatic change. The country went through a democratic Parliamentary and Presidential Elections on the 26th and 27th February 1996. There were thirteen (13) political parties that contested the elections. At the end of it all, Dr.Ahmad Tejan Kabba of the Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP) received a landslide victory to become the President of the Second Republic of Sierra Leone. According to political analyst, Sierra Leone has not gone through a free and fair election for the past three decades. With the inception of the civilian government, the rebels have ceased fire for two (2) months, while peace talks continue in the Ivory Coast, West Africa....

Letter from David Ngombu to Myf Hodkin dated 23 July 1996

....On the receipt of the OWL Newsletter, I discussed the contents with some members who were around and they too were happy. On Thursday 18 July 1996 an Emergency Executive Meeting was convened to discuss the position of the Bo Committee that has been seriously affected by the rebel atrocities. Now that situations are a bit calm we have decided to start operating in the towns and villages that were affected by the rebel war. During that meeting a Special Committee was formed to look into areas like Rehabilitation, Education, Membership Drive and General Matters....I will keep you informed about progress.

A new educational programme called Non-Formal Primary Education has been introduced in Bo District. It is meant for children, mainly girls, 6 - 14 years old from disadvantaged communities in Bo District. This is a blessing for us as most of the schools, primary and secondary in the villages around Bo were burnt down. Such a programme is expected to start operating in August or September this year.

The peace talks between the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Sierra Leone government are again in progress. The outcome of the talks is expected to be out one of these days and we are anxiously awaiting the delegation that went for talks in Yamoussoukro in Ivory Coast (West Africa). A lot of displaced people have gone back to their villages to resettle. Most of them find it difficult staying in Bo as cost of living (accommodation, transportation and feeding) is skyhigh these days because of the influx of people. Although there are some reports of attacks people are still going back. Some of the NGO's concerned with the displacement are organising some rehabilitation programmes for these returnees. Hope the war will come to a speedy conclusion....

Extend my sincere wishes to all OWL members at Leamington Spa. I always have you people in mind during my prayers. Hope to see most of you someday.

Letter from David Ngombu to Myf Hodkin dated 15 August 1996

As was mentioned in my last letter, the peace negotiations are still in progress in Yamassoukro, Ivory Coast, West Africa. Up to the time of writing, we have not heard any good result from that end. However, one very interesting thing has started to happen. As I had written in one of my letters to you, some civilians were abducted by the rebels about a year ago. All along they had been in captivity until very recently, when the rebels have started releasing these civilians. About three days ago, a total of one thousand seven hundred of these civilians were released. The only bad side of it is that most of the released people are malnourished and need some immediate medical attention. The NGO's around Bo town like the Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Medecins Sans Frontierre (MSF), Action Contra la Faim (ACF) and CARE together with local NGO's have been trying to resettle those who have been released. Most of these people are

women and children. According to reports given by those released the rebels are now tired of fighting and want to come back home. Most of the rebels are now starving as there is no help from outside. Traditional hunters (Kamajors) have also been trained to fight alongside the soldiers against the rebels. This has been very effective and the rebels are now in small groups with just few guns. It is also believed that all the rebels have been summoned to meet in Koya Chiefdom, Kenema District with the hope of finally giving up. We are fervently praying for this to happen as we are now tired of this senseless war. I will keep you very informed.

[News of his family]

Letter from David Ngombu to Myf Hodkin dated 23 October 1996

[This letter was written from Freetown, where he was attending the AGM of Amnesty International, Sierra Leone Section, of which he is the National Chairman. The meeting had been scheduled to take place in Bo but was moved to Freetown because of the lack of security on the Bo to Freetown Highway. He mentions the idea of sending 2 people from Leamington to Bo to assess the situation there. He is personally in favour of the idea and will discuss it with the executive on his return to Bo. (Unfortunately, the letter is torn here and difficult to read.)]

The rebel war has shifted from the south -east to the northern part of the country. Traditional hunters (Kamajors) who had undergone traditional training are now fighting alongside with the military to keep out the rebels. They have really done very well. Bo, Bonthe, Moyamba and Pujehun Districts are now fairly calm. Most of the displaced persons have gone back to their villages to start a new life from the ruins. Its pathetic to see them roaming around the ruined village with almost no semblance of life - no chickens, dogs, goats.etc. Better send somebody to come and see.

Letter from David Ngombu to Myf Hodkin dated 23/ 12/ 96

This letter is purposely written to acquaint you with developments at this end of the world. As you may have been informed, the peace treaty between the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and the Sierra Leone Government has finally been signed at Yamosoukoo, Ivory Coast. And it may interest you to note that the rebel war has halted for the moment. The attacks on villages and highways have stopped for now. The traditional hunters, Kamajors, have been very effective in destroying rebel bases all over the country. They need to be commended for their effort in destabilising the rebels. But for the Kamajors, the war would have gone on unabated.

Now that the war has ended, a lot of displaced people are returning to their shattered homes to start their new lives. Some NGOs, Medicins sans Frontieres (MSF), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Action Contre la Faim (ACF) and others are following the people back to their villages to give them the services needed. In fact the relief food supply now takes place in

some Chieftdom headquarter towns like Bumpa, Sumbuya, Tikonko, Buowaa, Koribondo in the Bo District, Pujehun, Fairo, Poturu etc. in the Pujehun District.

[He lists the new executive for Bo OWI for 1997/8, along with a list of possible projects for the committee to consider. The committee agreed that the visit by two people from Leamington Spa should take place between February and March.]