

## **Letter from David Ngombu to Brian Austin dated 7th March 2000.**

....As I mentioned in my letters to John, nine years of war in Sierra Leone is almost over. The Peace Accord that was signed between the Revolutionary United Front and the government of Sierra Leone in Lomé, Togo, is yet holding, though there are violations in some parts of the country. Now, the Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Re-integration (DDR) of former combatants of the RUF, the renegade soldiers and the Civil Defence Force (CDF) comprising the "Kamajors", "Donsos", "Kapas" and "Tamboros" is the major task for the United Nations Peacekeeping Force. The Civil Defence Force consists mainly of traditional hunters who rose up to protect their areas of survival - Northern Province (Kapas and Tamboros), Eastern Province (Donsos and Kamajors), the Southern Province (Kamajors) and the Western area (Hunting Society.) these people stood firm to defend their respective areas. They fought the rebels and fought them off their strongholds. We owe a lot to the CDF of Sierra Leone for their vigilance, else all of us civilians would have been refugees in the neighbouring countries like Guinea, Liberia, Ivory Coast, etc. At the moment, most of the displaced people have gone back to their respective towns and villages to rehabilitate their devastated environments. The major areas of rehabilitation for now are directed towards community structures - bridges, churches, markets, mosques, schools hospitals and health centres, police station, etc. However, the country is facing constraints in the production of building materials - cement, corrugated zinc, nails, bolts, iron rods, etc.. and also providing medicines and medical equipments for the hospitals and clinics, and teaching/ learning materials for the schools and colleges - blackboards, chalk, text books, exercise books, pens, pencils, vanguard sheets, etc. etc. We are starting all over again which is not easy.

In one of our executive meetings of the link, it was discussed that we contact friends outside the country to assist us in the rehabilitation drive by sending us the basic things necessary to build up a comfortable home. Most communities in the Southern Province (Bo District in particular) have decided to put up dwelling houses with the use of mud bricks and sticks. It is unfortunate, however, to learn that, because of poverty, most people use thatch or grass to roof the dwellings. Some of the visitors, like Michael Moss, Moussah Conteh and others could testify if asked. Most schools (Primary and Secondary) and colleges were vandalised, the furniture and reading materials were used to provide fuel for cooking food for the rebels. As such, most educational institutions are virtually empty of teaching/ learning materials.

Brian, before the war started in 1991, some schools and institutions were linked with other schools and institutions in Warwick District. As a way of re-linking, I am sending a list of some schools and institutions in Bo Town for your perusal. A comprehensive list of schools and other institutions will be sent later in the year. In particular, I am making a request for Milton Comprehensive Secondary School, PO Box 82, where I am presently employed. At present the school is a Junior Secondary School (JSS) but frantic efforts are being made to develop it to the status of Senior

Secondary School (SSS). However, some of the conditions for this are as follows :

- i. The school should have well-equipped laboratories for teaching Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Geography and Environmental Science.
- ii. The school should have a well-stocked library with textbooks and other equipments in English Language, Mathematics, Geography, Integrated Science (Chemistry, Physics and Biology), Agricultural Science, Home Economics, etc.
- iii. The school should have a fairly large assembly hall with enough benches/ chairs and tables for the staff and students. As a way of assisting the school to get the SSS status, I would like to request materials/ equipments in the above areas to be used in the school.... [Method and address for sending materials] And finally, I am a member of an indigenous NGO called the Peoples Educational Association of Sierra Leone (PEA-SL) with headquarters at 90 Sanders Street Freetown. There are 21 branches of this organisation and is aimed at promoting adult education in all its forms, providing opportunities for healthy growth of individuals and communities. In Bo District, the organisation is providing adult literacy and Non-Formal Primary Education programme to children aged 6 -14 years and from disadvantaged communities (street children, orphans, children from poor parents or single parent families). At the moment, there are eighteen adult literacy centres and about twenty-two Non-Formal Primary Education (NFPE) centres in the various communities in Bo Town and its immediate environs. At the moment about one hundred facilitators/ teachers have been trained in a workshop organised by PEA-SL (Bo Branch) in collaboration with UNICEF. The facilitators have to be given incentives in cash/ kind by the communities. Some of these have already started operating but are faced with problems of teaching/ learning materials (blackboards, slates, chalk, (assorted colours), pens, pencils and reading materials which have already been developed but there are no papers, typing and duplicating, to produce them. Please bring this up at your next Committee Meeting to see if there is any organisation, group or person that will be of help to us....