



Vol. 1, No.3, Dec. 2005

FOCUS

ON

ARMS FOR DEVELOPMENT



IBFRTA

Small Arms: The Media Can Play A Role

The UNDP Small Arms Control programme recognizes the enormous role that the media can play in accelerating development in post-conflict Liberia. The responsibility becomes even more prominent when one considers that any meaningful awareness raising exercise in a post conflict situation cannot be effective without the support of the mass media of communication.

Liberia's development has been thwarted by 14 years of war. Families have been dislocated; over 30% of the populations have been displaced internally and externally; infrastructure has been destroyed; the confidence of the people has been shaken. And in the place of all these tragedies, most people have been left ignorant, diseased, and completely distanced from information and the reality. Whether in the control of arms, or in campaigns to rid society of small arms, there needs to be a certain level of awareness in communities, in homes, and in public places. It is important to explain and emphasize the harsh consequences associated with proliferation of small arms and armed violence.



UNDP Country Director, Steven A. Ursino and Sierra Leonean Ambassador, Patrick Foya, posed with member of the press and the Small Arms team.

The role of the media is imperative. And that is why the UNDP Small Arms Control Programme has began a series of interactions with the media in Liberia with a view to partnering them to raise awareness about small arms and to direct people's attention towards human security, community and national development.

In the first of a series of engagements with the media, a Media Workshop was organized on 8-9 December, 2005 in Monrovia for 40 representatives from the print and the electronic media. International Media Consultant, Kojo Yankah, outlined the important role the media can play in awareness raising: He stressed:



From L-R: Sierra Leonean Ambassador, Patrick Foya; Int'l Media Consultant, Kojo Yankah; UNDP Country Director, Steven A. Ursino and Small Arms Programme Manager, Napoleon Abdulai

“The media is considered a major partner because it has the capacity to:

- Build awareness and influence public opinion about Small Arms and Light Weapons,
- Influence and put pressure on Government and the legislature to pass the necessary legislation to back the campaign against the spread and misuse of small arms,
- Publicize the work of the Liberia National Commission on Small Arms, as well as that of the UNDP Small Arms Control Programme,
- Help prevent and resolve conflicts, as well as build Peace, in Liberia and
- Help give confidence to civil society.”

Sierra Leone ambassador to Liberia Patrick Foya spoke on the Experience of Sierra Leone in voluntary collection for development. He called upon Liberians to unite and rid their country of weapons. UNDP Country Director Steven Ursino praised Liberians for the peaceful elections.

As part of the Media Sensitization exercise, a national conference for Editors of Newspapers and Programme managers of Radio Stations has been scheduled to be held in Gbanrga in March this year. Before that, a workshop will be organized for Programme Managers of Community Radio Stations on 11 January, 2006 in the city of Ganta, Nimba County.



The Netherlands



Liberia



United Kingdom

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