

Year in Review 1999–2000

A Message from the President of Partnership Africa Canada



Diamonds and Human Security

A year ago, in the Year in Review 1998–1999, I spoke of the future publication by Partnership Africa Canada of a study into the Sierra Leone diamond trade and its impact on the rebel war in that country. I wrote these words: *It is a crucial piece of work, whose findings and recommendations will have ramifications that will go beyond the borders of Sierra Leone and which will be relevant to others parts of Africa and the world.* History shows that I was not mistaken.

PAC's study, *The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds and Human Security*, was intended above all to influence the war in Sierra Leone, where rebel forces smuggled large quantities of diamonds into Liberia in exchange for arms. That is why the study's recommendations focused on two major problems — the pernicious, if not criminal, influence of Liberia and the role of the diamond importing countries, such as Belgium, where lax controls only encouraged smuggling.

A little after the study's publication, a UN report revealed a similar situation in Angola, where UNITA forces, in contravention of UN sanctions, continued to smuggle diamonds and buy arms with the complicity of certain African and European countries. The UN report was made by a committee chaired by Canada's Ambassador Fowler and it did not shrink from naming and shaming those individuals and countries involved. We congratulate the authors of this UN report which, contrary to diplomatic tradition, adopted a public and frank approach.

These two studies had a remarkable impact. In the space of a few months, the diamond industry, supported by some producer and importing countries, decided to radically reform the international diamond trade in order to try and eliminate 'conflict' diamonds, which several African rebel armies sell on the international market. This was something unheard of in such a short span of time. But the stakes were very high — a world market of more than \$50 billion, which would be very vulnerable to popular campaigns.

The corner stone of these reforms was the creation of an international system of certification for diamonds from the exporting country to the retailer. At the same time, the diamond industry agreed to help producer countries in Africa to establish ways of verifying the origin of diamonds. The aim of these measures is to reduce the opportunities for smuggling and at the same time protect the legitimate industry, which in the case of Botswana, for example, constitutes the major part of its exports.

The Economic Agendas of Conflicts in Africa

One would hope that these measures would have a direct impact on the finances of rebel forces and on their ability to acquire arms. Unfortunately, things are not so simple. The PAC study raised the case of Liberia, a country on the verge of collapse, where the capital's hospital has been closed through a lack of funds but where there are flourishing diamonds and arms smuggling operations. Sierra Leone's rebel forces do a good business in Liberia and the diamonds they steal in Sierra Leone become 'legitimate' by adopting a Liberian label. The authorities of this country, with complete impunity, are destabilizing a whole region, causing the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, especially women and children. Will Liberian diamond certificates be accepted by the world diamond industry? The PAC study called rather for an embargo on Liberian diamonds, knowing that a good proportion of them come illegally from Sierra Leone.

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On the other side of the continent, in Central Africa, the armies of at least six countries are involved in the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has become a major human catastrophe with more than two million deaths and which is increasingly resembling economic exploitation and pillage. Trafficking in diamonds, coltan, gold, wood, coffee — the armies of several of Congo's neighbours are developing extraordinary economic appetites. In such a situation, where Congolese diamonds become war booty, what is the value of a diamond certificate from Uganda, Rwanda or Zimbabwe, to name only these three protagonists? Meanwhile, Congolese civil society finds it more and more difficult to develop democratic options under a regime at war with little interest in opening up.

Blame has to be placed of course, as the UN reports do, on those African governments that seem to prefer military-economic adventures to building true democracies at home. But let us not be deceived, conflicts in Africa are a shared responsibility. Many in the North — private companies and governments — have left the door open to African conflict diamonds. Other networks in the North are involved in shipping arms with impunity to African rebel forces. Many companies from the North are involved in business in conflict zones without the slightest concern about the political and social impact of their investments. And there are few governments in the North that have the vision and political courage to act. It's time for public opinion to be fully informed about what is happening. It's especially time for the human security imperative to take precedence over economic and political interests. ■

Civil Society

Sudan

The war in Sudan continues its tragic course and, after seventeen years of conflict between the Sudanese army and rebel forces, the end of the war seems as far away as ever. The army is intensifying its attacks in the centre-south and doesn't hesitate to bomb civilian targets, claiming to target rebels. The Sudanese Government appears confident, with petrodollars swelling its coffers, and the link between oil exploitation and the ability of the Government to finance its war seems very clear. The report of a Canadian mission established this clear link (1), but the Canadian Government chose not to intervene.

In the south of Sudan, an important peacebuilding initiative has begun to bear fruit. The *People to People Peace Process* supported by the New Sudan Council of Churches is gradually helping reconciliation take root between various peoples in the south. Large gatherings have occurred at Akobo (1994), Wunlit (1999) and Liliir (2000), where representatives — men, women, youth — from different peoples have met to find solutions to their inter-ethnic disputes. Many observers consider this grass-roots peace process to be an oasis of hope in the diplomatic desert that surrounds the Sudan war.

In June 2000, Partnership Africa Canada helped organize a series of meetings in Calgary and Ottawa on the Sudan peace process and civil society's role in it. Organized under the aegis of the Canadian NGO grouping SIARC, the meetings brought together representatives from Sudanese civil society to discuss with Canadian NGOs, the Canadian government, the media and most importantly the Canadian-Sudanese community. There were many areas of agreement among the participants and two points should be stressed above all: the important role of civil society in the peace process and the harm that oil exploitation is doing to the peace process. The report on these meetings is available at PAC.

(1) John Harker, Human Security in Sudan, the Report of a Canadian Assessment Mission, January 2000

— its key role in Africa

Somalia

In May 1999, PAC undertook a joint study with the Somali-Canadian Institute for Research and Development (Som-Can) of conditions in northern Somalia — *Peace and Development in northern Somalia*. Somalia was ravaged by civil war and the international community more or less abandoned it in 1995. Since then, there has been silence, particularly in north America. And yet, in spite of extremely difficult conditions, remarkable things have been happening in Somalia.

Peace has been established in the two northern regions — Somaliland and Puntland. Peace has enabled both regions to develop their own governments, even with very limited resources. The private sector is particularly dynamic, which is surprising given the absence of a formal banking system. Numerous Somali NGOs have been created and they play a very positive role, despite the meagre funding given to them. But the most crucial role seems to be played by the Somali diaspora, whose remittances back to their families far outstrip international aid.

The study by PAC and Som-Can underlines the importance of supporting the efforts of communities in these regions to rebuild their society — schools, clinics, hospitals, public administration and the economy. In addition, claims the study, the strengthening of these peaceful regions will have a very positive impact on the other regions in Somalia.

Sierra Leone

The rebel war in Sierra Leone continues, despite the Lomé Peace Agreement of July 1999. The RUF rebels refuse to hand over their arms, as well as the diamond areas they control. What is even more serious are the incidents on the Guinean side of the border, when hundreds of thousands of refugees are at risk. Liberia's influence on these matters leaves no one in doubt.

The mobilizing of Sierra Leone civil society in the peace process has been a determining factor before and after the Peace Agreement. Representatives from Churches, NGOs and Unions all encouraged the Government to negotiate the agreement with the RUF. But less than a year later, following the humiliating kidnaping of hundreds of UN soldiers by rebels, popular demonstrations against the RUF dishonesty led to the arrest of the rebel leader, Foday Sankoh.

In January 2000, during the launch of the PAC study on the diamond trade, a group of Sierra Leonean organizations and individuals formed to study the mining sector. They developed a programme of work called “Campaign for Just Mining”, which seeks to influence the mining sector through research and public information. The programme is being coordinated by the *Network Movement for Justice and Development*.

In June 2000, several representatives from Sierra Leonean NGOs and Unions participated in a conference in Ottawa organized by PAC. A year after the Peace Agreement, the conference provided an opportunity for these representatives to dialogue with a large audience about the harsh realities of Sierra Leone. The conference report is available at PAC.

Strengthening NGOs

The PAC Africa office has begun a programme of initiatives to strengthen the African member organizations of PAC and other African NGOs. A first initiative, carried out in collaboration with RADEV, was the provision to a hundred NGOs of the *Human Development Library* CD-ROM, which comprises some 1,230 recent publications on sustainable development. ■

New Publications in 1999–2000

The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds and Human Security

by Ian Smillie, Lansana Gberie and Ralph Hazleton

This study is about how diamonds — small pieces of carbon with no intrinsic value — have been the cause of widespread death, destruction and misery for almost a decade in the small West African country of Sierra Leone. The study traces diamonds from Sierra Leone that are smuggled by the RUF rebels, through Liberia, to the European centres. It gives an analysis of the diamond industry - the diamond sector in Sierra Leone and the world of the junior mining companies (many of which are listed on Canadian stock exchanges), the Antwerp diamond market in Belgium and the giant De Beers, which controls a good proportion of the world market in rough diamonds. There are a series of recommendations with respect to the international diamond trade, aimed at both producer and importing countries

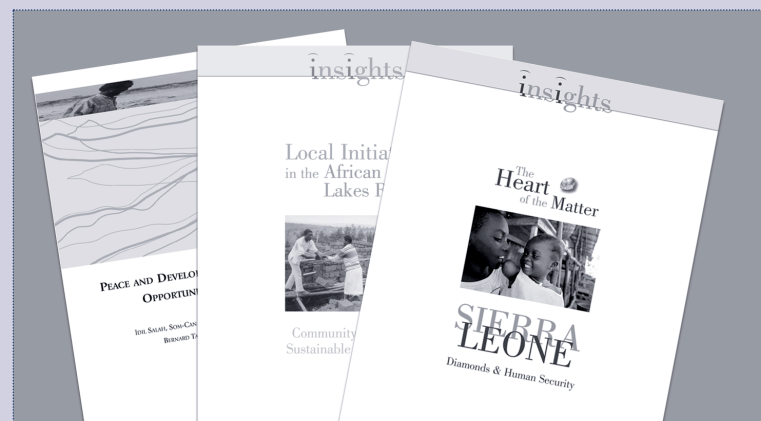
Complete version in English, 90 pages

Summary in English and French, 16 pages

Peace and Development in Northern Somalia — Opportunities and Challenges

by Idil Salah and Bernard Taylor

The study examines conditions in the two northern regions of Somalia — Somaliland and Puntland — where peace has been established and maintained by traditional chiefs and civil society leaders. The study was jointly carried out in May 1999 by the Som-Can Institute for Research and Development and Partnership Africa Canada. Somalia has been ravaged by civil war and inter- clan conflict persists in the centre-south of the country. The international community fled from Somalia in 1995 and the country remains in some ways cut off from the world. There is little development aid for Somalia, which is at the bottom of the world poverty ladder. And yet, Somalis are making huge efforts to improve their country, where the private sector is particularly dynamic.



The study calls for the lifting of the quarantine that's afflicting Somalia, so that current peacebuilding and development programmes can be supported.

Complete version in English, 47 pages

Summary in English, Somali and French, 16 pages

Local Initiatives in the Great Lakes — community voices and sustainable development

by Eugénie Rockhaya Aw

The study looks at the initiatives of some civil society organizations in Rwanda, Burundi and Congo. It began with a visit to the region in November 1997. The study tries to show the involvement of local communities in reconstruction and conflict resolution. The author, Eugénie Aw, visited some fifty organizations in the three countries, of which many were women's groups, given the important role they now play in the region. The study gives them a voice and the reader is able to gain a good understanding of the new realities in this troubled region. Proposals are made regarding support for women and their organizations.

Complete version en French, 35 pages

Summary in English 6 pages

Statement of Revenue and Expenditure for 1999-2000

at March 31, 2000

Revenue

Canadian International Development Agency (Partnership Branch)	\$ 283,275
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (Canada)	31,740
Non-governmental Organizations	44,867
Other	5,447
Total	\$ 365,329

Expenditure

General Programme	\$ 142,015
Projects	185,938
Special Initiatives	37,376
	\$ 365,329

A complete version of the Audited Statements by *McIntyre & McLarty* is available from
Partnership Africa Canada.

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- International Peace Information Service (Antwerp)
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