

**REPORT ON THE MORAL FOUNDATIONS FOR DEMOCRACY TRAINING
HELD FROM 18th – 22nd DECEMBER 2007 AT THE ARMED FORCES
EDUCATIONAL CENTRE.**

SUMMARY

The fourteenth 5-day Moral Foundations for Democracy (MFD) Training Course was conducted in December 2007 at the Armed Forces Educational Centre (AFEC), Wilberforce, and the outreach programme was held in Tombo in the Western Rural District of Sierra Leone. The training was attended by a total number of 28 participants; 8 from the military, 10 from the police and 10 from civil society. This training is now gaining much more recognition from our partners, especially since the President's call for a 'change of attitude' by Sierra Leoneans. In this respect the MFD programme has been ahead in advocating a change of attitude.

Since the start of this Sierra Leonean-led programme in September 2006, a total of 402 participants from the military, police and civil society have benefited from the five days residential training. A total of 804 participants in the provinces have benefited from the one-day outreach programme organized immediately after the five-day training. This programme is indeed creating an impact in the country, especially amongst the security forces. The just concluded successful election can be attributed, in part, to the constant emphasis on moral values that has been given Hope-Sierra Leone/MFD and other initiatives throughout the country. It is a clear indication that change and reconciliation are gradually taking place amongst Sierra Leoneans.

The outreach was wonderful and timely for the people of Tombo in terms of uniting the elders, the naval wing of RSLAF and the youths. There were serious divisions between them, due to misunderstandings during the just concluded election and issues concerning the payment of taxes. The team successfully tried to reconcile the Navy, youths and some of the elders who were present during the training.

INTRODUCTION

At the Opening Ceremony of the residential training, the Guest of Honour was Mr. Brima Sowa, Chairman, Board of Directors of Hope- Sierra Leone, and the Chairman was Genneh Y. Moriba, Acting Country Director of Hope-Sierra Leone. An overview of the programme and introduction of local faculty members were given by Abubakarr Kamara, Acting Manager of MFD.

In his opening remarks, the Chairman welcomed all participants to the training and said that they could count themselves lucky in being selected. He encouraged them to treat the five days' training very seriously as they would be given the responsibility of passing on the values of MFD to their colleagues, neighbours and family members.

The Guest of Honour commended the virtue of tolerance as one of the ways to bring about the change that was needed. He said that Sierra Leoneans should learn to tolerate one another and serve each other, irrespective of status or age. He concluded by urging participants to be ambassadors of change.

TRAINING

Each day's training started with prayers and a story given by the facilitator. Participants were then asked a question connected with the story to consider during a time of quiet (R&D). They were then invited to share their thoughts and experiences. A story about a man who had been ship-wrecked motivated some participants to really share their experiences of how they once lost hope but had been revived again through the blessings of God.

All the other sessions were well facilitated by the faculty members and the sessions were interactive, enabling participants to engage in discussions very actively.

The session **My Journey of Life** created a silent atmosphere as participants reflected on their childhood up to the present. Most of the experiences shared were related to the rebel war, particularly the loss of parents who were the bread winners of the family, and the resulting struggle to survive and be of importance in society.

Standing against Corruption was an interesting session because of the number of accusing fingers pointing at the police. However, this was found not to be always justified. After an in-depth discussion, it was concluded that civilians often encouraged the police to engage in corrupt practices.

The other sessions were well facilitated and interactive.

EXPERIENCE SHARING

At the close of the training, participants were invited to share their experiences if they wished. Most felt relieved of their stress after they had spoken. Sometimes, listening to stories that were even more tragic than their own, gave some more courage and strength.

CIVIL SOCIETY

"I was impregnated by a man when I was in Form Two and was abandoned by both the man and my parents. I went through the worse experience in my life and finally gave birth to a baby girl. I started some petty trading to sustain myself and the baby. I came in contact with a friend who came back from the U.S. and explained my situation to her. She took responsibility and paid for me to go back to school. Since then, I have developed a hatred for the man who impregnated me. I even began to extend my hatred to my child when she started seeing her father behind my back. When she was growing up, I told her that her father was dead but, unknowingly to me, some friends of mine told her about him. *During the session on forgiveness and reconciliation, I felt a strong call inside me telling me to forgive this man. The thought was continuous and very loud.* When I went home, I discussed it with my daughter and she told me to forgive her father. In the morning before going for the training, I called the man to tell him that I had forgiven him for all he did to me. He was very surprised and could not believe what I had said. During the day, he called again to locate me and I directed him to AFEC. He then came to really confirm what I had said over the phone. *I told him I meant all what I said because of what I had learnt in this training. I was relieved and felt like a new creation and am grateful for partaking in this training.*"

RSLAF

“I decided to enroll into the military after finishing high school because my parents were not financially strong to pay my fees for University. I tried to convince my friend to buy the idea of enrolling into the cadet course. He was having a reservation about joining the army but I persuaded him and he finally agreed. I bought the form for both of us and went through the exams and medical tests successfully. When the final results were out, my name was not there, but my friend’s name was there and I was very disappointed. I was told that those who did not make it for the officer’s course could re-apply for the other ranks’ course. I became more frustrated, thinking of being a subordinate to a friend that I had convinced to join the army. He came to console me and advised me to enroll for the other ranks’ course as it had always been my dream. I thought of it carefully and made up my mind and went in for the other ranks’ course, and I succeeded. Each time I see my friend I become uncomfortable and jealous of him and this has led to strain in the relationship between us. Before coming for this training, I was told to attend a course where my friend will be one of the facilitators so I decided not to go anywhere until I was asked to join this course. *Going through this course has caused me to stop bothering myself with the issue of my friend’s position but rather to accept the situation as it is and allow God to put me where I am supposed to be. I have vowed to renew our friendship as it used to be and forge ahead with life.*”

SLP

“I joined the police at a time when the former Inspector-General of Police, Keith Biddle, was sacking policemen for accepting bribes. One day, I was in a conference in which they made provision for questions, and I used the opportunity to ask Mr. Biddle to investigate the reason why policemen got involved in bribery. I also asked him to look into the salary condition of the police force. I told him that some policemen receive just one hundred thousand Leones (Le. 100,000/USD 33) a month. Some of these policemen have children in the universities and schools, and how do you expect that man to take care of his responsibilities with just a hundred thousand Leones? I told him to check how much the lowest ranking policeman is paid in England and compare it with the salaries paid to the lowest ranking policeman in our country. After the session, my friends told me that I would be sacked for misconduct, and I told them that I didn’t really care what would be the outcome as long as I passed the message across. Two weeks later, I was called by Keith Biddle and he congratulated me for being brave and enlightening him on the issue. He told me that he had investigated the matter and the policemen involved in the bribery would not be fired. I felt proud for saving many families from suffering.”

OUTREACH

The outreach took place on 29th December in Tombo in the Western Rural District of Sierra Leone. Forty participants were in attendance with twenty from civil society, ten from the police and ten from the military. The reason for the small number of SLP and RSLAF was because of the number of personnel allocated to that particular location. However, the turnout did not stop the training from commencing. As earlier mentioned, the outreach was very timely for the community.

The outreach started with individual prayers and introduction of participants and faculty. **R&D** was observed with the story of the beautiful flower (see report for November 2007) and participants were divided into groups for discussions.

One of the elders in group two said: *“We want to thank you for the programme but the heart of our people in this community is like the stone in the flower vase.... The story explains how we are treating one another in this community and therefore this is the time for us to change our attitude before the New Year begins, please my brothers and sisters.”*

Some of the people were not on good terms with the navy personnel in the community over the payment of taxes for fishing boats. When the people refuse to pay their taxes, the soldiers come down heavily on them. This creates some misunderstanding amongst them. The people felt they were being marginalized in their community and so there was no cordial relationship between the navy and some youths who are involved in the fishing activity.

The training brought the leaders together and reconciled them during the session on **Conflict Transformation**. Political rivalry also created some conflict amongst some elders who supported different parties during political campaigns. Much was done to resolve the issue. The session on **Who Am I?** contributed greatly to resolving the conflict.

The participants were very active in reconciling with one another and the sessions were interactive.

EXPERIENCE SHARING

SLP

“I was married to one Mr. Kallokoh in Waterloo in 1995. In 1997 he had an opportunity to go to the United States and left me three months pregnant. For the first seven months he was in communication with me. I gave birth to a baby boy and he was very happy. After a year there was a break in communication between us from his side. I was told by one of his friends that he was married and I was very frustrated and devastated when heard that.

One day, a man by the name of Mr. Koroma came to my house and told me that Kallokoh wanted to talk to me. He called after fifteen minutes and started crying and apologizing. He did not give me chance to talk or even express my anger so I instantly accepted his apologies. He started caring for us again and my family.

After some time, he again broke off the communication and abandoned us for the second time. I decided not to accept him any longer. He came back to apologize when his business collapsed and asked me to forgive him again which I am very reluctant about. *From what I have acquired today in this outreach, especially on peace and reconciliation, I am going to call him after the programme to forgive him.”*

CIVIL SOCIETY

“I was very active during the just concluded election. I was a supporter of the outgoing government (SLPP). People were not happy with me for being very active. My friend was supporting the present government (APC) and when they won the elections, he was the

first to mobilize his colleagues to my house and beat me helplessly, and I had to be taken to the hospital. Where I recovered, he came to visit me in the hospital. I asked the nurses to take him out and they did. When I finally went home, he came with his wife to visit me to ask for forgiveness, but I was very bitter against him as I was not expecting him to do such a thing to me. *I asked them to go and since then there's been no amicable relationship between us. This training has touched me deeply and I have decided to see my friend and reconcile with him. I have felt relief by sharing this experience and I am highly grateful.*"

RSLAF

"I just want to apologize to our brothers and sisters from civil society to forgive us and maintain the cordial relationship in the community. We are all Sierra Leoneans and therefore must be united to develop our community and we must be grateful for such a wonderful programme."

COMMENTS

All the trainings were successful for this year and we are looking forward to another successful training in 2008 and an expansion of the programme into the school curriculum.

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