



ONE SKY NEWS

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Director's message

By Mike Simpson

The past year has been very full as we established new programming in Nigeria and played an active role in networking for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. While we have had much success the world has been plunged into an era of uncertainty and intense conflict.

One Sky exists to promote sustainable living globally and we have concentrated on this in some of the world's environmental and social hotspots including Sierra Leone, El Salvador and now Nigeria. We have worked on international issues with our partners in Canada and broader networks around the world.

One Sky is about linking practical solutions with policy developments. Our belief is that we need to be working on the ground before we talk in the halls of power. Our mission is to promote sustainable living globally by working both in Canada and abroad and by linking the global environmental and social challenges that we face with solutions we can all participate in. It is not an easy task.

One Sky has been working on what we consider the most pressing and daunting tasks, resource wars and environmental and social conflicts. Our goal is that by addressing these difficult issues and maintaining a positive sense of hope we can be a small but powerful inspiration and school of change. We would like to thank all of those people that have encouraged us and supported us and that continue to struggle toward a better, more just and environmentally sound planet. You inspire us to keep working in troubled times.

Blood Diamonds are for Never

by Kristin Patten

Diamonds – apparently a girl's best friend - have long been associated worldwide with love, romance, purity and wealth. In Africa, Sierra Leone's rich diamond reserves have brought not wealth and prosperity, but child soldiers, arms deals, mass amputations and the slaughter of innocent civilians in a decade long civil war fought over control of the country's diamonds.

Soon after Sierra Leone's civil war began in 1991, it became apparent that the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) had no interest in "winning" the war. "Winning" for the RUF meant keeping the population terrorized and subdued so that they could mine diamonds. The RUF elite quickly grew rich – and bought arms (anti-aircraft missiles, tanks, AK-47s) necessary to finance the war. Between 1991-99, the war took over 75,000 lives, created over half a million refugees and displaced half of Sierra Leone's 4.5 million people. Peace in Sierra Leone, achieved with the presence of the largest UN peacekeeping force in the world and peaceful elections in May 2002, remains fragile and the country lies at the bottom of the UN's Human Development Index. This story is not unique to Sierra Leone. Wars are being fought over diamonds in other parts of Africa, primarily Angola, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Angola's rebel army, UNITA, made almost \$4 billion in diamond sales between 1992 and 1997.

Although inspiring humanitarian impulses, the problems of a few African countries may seem remote. But our connection to Sierra Leone is more direct than at first glance. Conflict diamonds* are smuggled out of the country, mixed in with diamonds mined legitimately in other countries, and sold to unwitting consumers worldwide. The diamond industry, aware of the war-tainted source of some of its diamonds, remained "business as usual" until two key NGOs exposed the bloody trade. Global Witness and Partnership Africa Canada (PAC) through research, reports and media attention argued that consumers have the right to know where their diamonds are coming from. After years of turning a blind eye, the industry and particularly governments of legitimate diamond-producing countries like Botswana and South Africa, responded.

The Kimberly Process, initiated in May 2000, is bringing together governments, the diamond industry and civil society to stop the flow of conflict diamonds to the markets, while at the same time protecting the legitimate diamond industry. By setting up international standards for national certification schemes for rough diamonds, conflict diamonds will be effectively shut out of the market. Governments are also working to bring in legislation to implement the Kimberly Process. The key critique of the Kimberly Process by NGOs is a lack of effective monitoring. Without independent monitoring, any country can join the system simply by notifying the chair - and gain legitimacy for their diamonds without actually doing anything.

The diamond industry and governments have proven that they will respond to consumer pressure and media attention. This pressure needs to be continued to ensure that actions being taken by the international community are effective in cutting off rebel armies mining misery from Africa's rich resources. Consumers and civil society – you – are a key part of this continued pressure. For ideas on how to take action, see the following section. And keep an eye on One Sky in the next few months to join in actions to stop the trade in conflict diamonds.

*Conflict diamonds: rough diamonds used by rebel movements or their allies to finance conflict aimed at undermining legitimate governments. (UN definition)



Actions and resources: what you can do about conflict diamonds

If you're buying a diamond, ask your jeweler where it comes from. Even if they don't have an answer, raising the issue lets the industry know that consumers care about conflict diamonds.

Write a letter to your MP to support the addition of an independent monitoring system to the Kimberly Process
Learn more – and talk to others.

Check out these websites for campaigns and information:

www.partnershipafricanacanada.org

www.fataltransactions.org

www.globalwitness.org

www.phrusa.org/campaigns/sierra_leone/conflict_diamonds.html

www.amnesty.ca/SierraLeone/index.html

Other upcoming activities

Nigeria - One Sky is about to embark on a project in the Cross-River state of Nigeria. The project will be carried out by four Canadian NGOs and two private sector firms partnered with five Nigerian NGOs on issues around sustainable watershed management and forestry conservation.

Bus to Sierra Leone – A number of children and teachers walk up to 10 kms to the Sieng Penh School in Hamilton, Sierra Leone. School District 54 has sold One Sky a school bus that will be filled with donations of school supplies, tools and bicycles and shipped to Sierra Leone to serve the Hamilton district. The bus will leave Smithers in the Spring of 2003.

Organic Agriculture Conference – The CEN-IP is holding their capacity-building workshop for ENGOs and their international partners alongside the Guelph Organic Agriculture Conference in January 2003.

One Sky Welcomes Another FOESL Member

By Christopher Buzie

Last year One Sky, less than a year after its creation, was able to sponsor the visit to Canada of the executive director of Friends of the Earth Sierra Leone (FOESL), Mr. Olatunde Johnson. The purpose of the visit was to acquaint the Sierra Leonean director with skills of project administration and to establish a smooth corridor of interaction between Canada and Sierra Leone. It was a rewarding venture.

This summer, One Sky once again hosted someone from the small and little known West African country of Sierra Leone – this time, the Programme Coordinator. Writing in that capacity, the reasons for my visit were many – strengthening the link between our organizations, training in areas such as grant writing, conferencing, taking part in workshops, giving talks at schools in Saskatoon and Smithers as well as participating in the writing of eco-curriculum modules designed to be used by schools in Sierra Leone.

Although my visit was met with some misfortune as I had to return home earlier due to the sudden death of my mother, it was overall a satisfactory trip. During my stay, I helped in recruiting and orienting two interns for FOE Sierra Leone, helped the educational team finish the production of the modules, visited schools and agricultural projects in three provinces, and made a presentation at the Sierra Club of Canada conference in Kingston, Ontario.

Little efforts may appear negligible but experience has shown that the effects they produce are often great. The case of the One Sky/Friends of the Earth partnership is a glaring example. One Sky coming in at the initial stage apparently to resuscitate a crippling organization soon finds itself immersed in all activities of Friends of the Earth. How it all happened is not the focus of this section but the message is that today there are hundreds of people out there whose lives have taken a U-turn and are now living happily through the intervention of one of the smallest and youngest non-governmental organizations in Canada: One Sky. Families in the villages of Lakka and Hamilton are smiling, ex-combatants and the displaced are smiling as batch after batch graduate out of skills training programmes initiated and administered by FOESL and the same FOESL is today counted amongst the few organizations in the country boasting the operation of sustainable power – solar power. Oh yes, One Sky has made an impact out there. Who next? That is the challenge.

Get Involved in One Sky!

You can get involved in One Sky by becoming a member, signing up for a newsletter subscription, making a donation or participating in our activities.

Membership: To become a member of One Sky and receive our bi-annual newsletter, send \$10 to One Sky at the address below.

Donations: One Sky relies on the support of funders and individual donations. Our programmes are sustained from the support of many generous donations of money, resources and time. If you support our work and would like to make a donation, please send a cheque to the One Sky address below.

Volunteering: Locally, One Sky could use volunteers to help with fundraising events, collecting and donating resource materials, laying out our newsletter, assisting with the website, or sharing your skills in training sessions for our interns and/or Sierra Leonean delegates. Others can volunteer by coordinating a fundraising event in their area or pitch creative ideas on how to share your skills.

For more information, please contact us at:

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Overview of past activities

Human Security and the Environment –

This project, supported by the Canadian International Development Agency since the summer of 2000, is a partnership between *One Sky* and the *Northwest Institute for Bioregional Research* with the organization *Friends of the Earth Sierra Leone* which is located in Freetown, Sierra Leone. The activities are designed to make a link between human security and the environment.

Sierra Leone has endured a terrible civil war and is still reeling from over ten years of war. Both the people and the environment have suffered tragically. This project is working with marginalized target populations including internally displaced people and war-affected children to provide vocational training and educational opportunities in environmentally sustainable activities. These activities include developing an ecological centre near the village of Hamilton, doing sanitation campaigns, North and South –South exchanges, capacity building and organic and pedal powered workshops.

Education -

One Sky is involved in developing communication and education materials regarding living sustainably. We have a teacher-to-teacher program of eco-curriculum development organized between educators in Canada and West Africa who are jointly producing eight eco-curriculum modules for use in schools in Sierra Leone.

School tours –

Employees and volunteers for One Sky have given classroom presentations on the links between human security and the environment in Saskatoon and across northwestern British Columbia.

CEN Forum on the WSSD -

The Canadian Environmental Network created a Forum on the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD). One Sky coordinated this forum that produced an alternative report entitled *Summit or Plummet? A call to Canadian leadership 10 years after Rio*, advocated around WSSD issues, developed a website and coordinates a listserve. One Sky staff Nikki Skuce also participated in the preparatory meetings and the Summit in Johannesburg.

Interns -

Our internship programme works with Canadian youth under the age of 30 in local and overseas placements. One Sky currently has two interns in Sierra Leone and is planning on sending interns to Nigeria.

CEN-IP -

As the western regional node of the Canadian Environmental Network's International Programme we are involved in joint proposals and cooperative ventures with other organizations in western Canada. We have also coordinated national and international conferences for Canadian NGOs involved in international sustainable development work.

Landmines -

One Sky is partnered with the Sierra Club of British Columbia and the Salvadoran Centre For Appropriate Technology in working with landmines victims in El Salvador. Based on vocational training in appropriate technologies this program entitled "Healing Ourselves Healing the Land" trains survivors of landmines in organic agriculture, pedal powered technologies and micro-enterprises as well as promotes the goals of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines.

Summit or Plummet?

By Nikki Skuce

For an Earth Summit, the World Summit on Sustainable Development wasn't very earthy. Somewhere during the process the environmental component of sustainable development became lost to poverty and development. We were back to developing countries lobbying for more money and the industrialized countries refusing to take responsibility for the current state of affairs. And, of course, the notion of development to the dominant also means trade liberalization (except of course where agriculture in the U.S. and the EU is concerned), and business partnerships.

Between the preparatory meeting in Bali and the Summit in Johannesburg, Secretary General of the UN Kofi Annan launched the WEHAB campaign to try to invigorate greater commitment and attention with regards to water and sanitation, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity (WEHAB). In part he succeeded, at least in getting countries to concede on certain issues and in putting the environment somewhere on the radar screen; putting the earth back into the Summit.

With faint hope, the Canadian delegation headed off to Johannesburg at the end of August for the largest United Nations conference in history. The Summit kicked off on August 26th and immediately began the long days of negotiations and separation of contact groups to resolve contentious issues. As the days went on, disappointments grew amongst civil society (and some delegates) with more and more weak paragraphs with "encourage", "promote", "improve", "where appropriate" being agreed to.

Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth International dubbed Canada, Australia and the U.S. the 'environmental axis of evil'. Canada lived up to this reputation with few exceptions. Canada was especially obstructionist when it came to setting a target for new renewable energy and with regards to any regulations for GMO foods. However Canada also became the champion of human rights. Members of the delegation (both NGO and government) worked throughout the Summit trying to garner support for Canada's proposal for a paragraph related to access to health services "in conformity with all human rights and fundamental freedoms". Canada held out the approval of the entire Plan of Implementation for this inclusion. In the eleventh hour, the language was slightly modified and the U.S., Argentina and Holy See finally conceded.

Despite having 190 of the 195 eligible nations in attendance and a large number of world leaders speaking about the importance of sustainable development, the Summit ended in disappointment. A few strides were made, including committing to halve the number of people lacking basic sanitation by 2015

and the establishment of marine protected networks, including representative networks, by 2012, however the final document has fewer than 35 targets, and most recycled from previous agreements. The goal of the WSSD was to produce an action-plan. Without targets and timetables, nations can not be held accountable. When we look back on Johannesburg in ten years, will we be able to measure its success?

As I prepared to leave the Summit, held in the richest neighbourhood in all of Africa (also ironically set in a shopping mall), I pondered the usefulness of the Summit. Operating by consensus in a globalized world dominated by one superpower, the UN offers an international forum where small victories can sometimes have significant impacts. Even though a weak Plan of Implementation resulted, there's hope that the environment and development are back on government agendas and that most countries, including Canada, will go beyond the lowest common denominator agreed to. The overall answer to the success of the Summit can only be answered with time, but outside of the negotiating halls partnerships were created, networks enlarged, inspiring and innovative projects showcased, ideas exchanged, and evidence shown that people are implementing sustainable development and that it does make a difference. After all, change also comes from the bottom up.



