

# HOPE-SIERRA LEONE

## Report on H-SL Moral Foundations for Democracy (MFD)

### Heart2Heart Dialogue at Kholifa Rowala Chiefdom,

### Tonkolili District

30<sup>th</sup> March - 1<sup>st</sup> April 2011



**PARTICIPANTS MARCHING TO THE DIALOGUE CENTRE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

It was a great sunny day when everyone happily marched from the Magburaka police station to the district council hall. The Kholifa Rowala dialogue witnessed a large turnout of dignitaries from Freetown and Kailahun district, with a few stakeholders from Tonkolili district. However, the organisation of the dialogue had been plagued with difficulties. The authorities of the chiefdom and the district had not only demanded several changes to the dates for the dialogue but they refused vehemently to attend, fearful that they might be exposed as being behind the troubles in the district. Furthermore, immediately after a consultation in the chiefdom organised by H-SL, a court case erupted in which an injunction was filed

against the host PC Masakama III. His staff was subsequently withdrawn from him and the matter has been referred to the appeal court.

In spite of all of the squabbles and the intention by the authorities to derail the programme, a few successes were achieved, which to many was a remarkable beginning. The attendance of the District Council Chairman, Paramount Chief and other aggrieved parties was greeted with many accolades. It was evidently clear that the Tonkolili conflict had a lot to do with political infighting within the ruling APC. This was really a replica of the conflict witnessed in most chiefdoms visited so far.

The kind of intra-political conflict is embedded mainly in authorities close to the president, some individuals taking advantage of others by saying or doing things in the name of the president. This sad state of affairs has been a very serious challenge especially in the Northern part of Sierra Leone from where the president hails. The dialogue through it media programme has given a loud cry to the president to look critically into some of these matters and act upon them quickly and vigorously.

The dialogue in Tonkolili targeted all parts of the district, including Paramount Chiefs. Dignitaries such as the Human Rights Commissioner were very much impressed with the turnout.

## **BRIEF BACKGROUND TO TONKOLILI DISTRICT (KHOLIFA ROWALA)**

Geographically, Tonkolili District is located in the centre of Sierra Leone, bordering with seven districts in northern, eastern and southern provinces. The headquarter town is Magburaka which used to host the provincial headquarters of the north and also the chiefdom headquarters of Kholifa Rowala chiefdom.

Economically, the district has a large deposit of gold and one of the largest iron ore reserves in the world. The inhabitants of the district are mostly engaged in mining, petty trading and agriculture.

Politically, it is the district in which the president attended high school and lived there for some time. The district seems to have benefited from whatever government was in office. In the days of the SLPP, a lot of ministers and deputies came from the district. This has also been repeated in the current APC regime with very senior cabinet posts enjoyed by the **TONKOLILIANS** as they are famously known.

Educationally, it has two government schools, the Government Boys' Secondary School and Mathora Government Secondary School for Girls. These schools are the most popular government schools in the north and most other parts of the country. They have produced the highest number of the educated elite in the north and the second highest in the provinces after Bo District. This is why any government that came into office recognized them to their political advantage.

Culturally, it is the district that has the most powerful and cultured chieftaincy ceremonial authority in the whole of Sierra Leone. The district is so rich in culture that many other districts and chiefdoms try to replicate this culture. The district has the Temnes as the largest tribe, followed by the Limbas and Kurankos in the north-east. These tribes encourage inter-marriages and up to the present time there has never been an iota of tribal conflict among them.

Socially, the district is plagued with political conflict ranging from chieftaincy to national politics. Such conflict is largely responsible for the backward nature of the district which used to host the provincial

headquarters town of the north. Most authorities are only concerned about self development and so forget the district. The district has no goods roads, medical facilities, water and electricity supply and even basic social amenities.

It was against this backdrop that H-SL endeavoured to help the district find ways to accelerate the reconciliation process, thus opening the way for rapid development.

## **OPENING CEREMONY**



**(LEFT): THE AUDIENCE LISTENING ATTENTIVELY DURING THE OPENING CEREMONY**

The Host Paramount Chief Alhaji Masakama Kanamanka welcomed his colleague paramount chiefs who had come all the way from Kailahun District in Eastern Province, those within and everyone present.

### **(RIGHT): P C MASAKAMA OF KHOLIFA ROWALA GIVING HIS WELCOME ADDRESS**

He shared the experience he had gained during the dialogue in Kailahun. There he said that his people would participate fully in the three-day Tonkolili dialogue. He believed that there were factors responsible for the under-development of the chiefdom. He called on everybody to think of these and contribute in whatever little way they could.





**(LEFT): CHAIRMAN, ELVIS G HALLOWELL, GIVING HIS OPENING REMARKS**

In his opening remarks, the Chairman, Elvis Gbanabom Hallowell, Director-General of the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Commission [SLBC] commended Hope-Sierra Leone for its work. He made it clear that peace without justice would pave the way for more conflict in society. So many people had

suffered injustices; it was therefore essential that peace should go along side justice. He believed that the three-day dialogue would contribute towards transformation of the lives of people in the chiefdom.

He believed that H-SL's programme so far had succeeded in bringing together the Banya and the Ngobeh families in Kailahun District and the Bundu family in Gbinti. These families had caused very big problems in these areas that could have resulted in civil unrest. He appealed to everyone that before the end of the programme they should see themselves as brothers and sisters. In concluding, he asked those present to sing the National Anthem.

### **KEY STATEMENTS**

Statements were made by various personalities present. The District Coordinator of the Office of National Security gave a brief resume of his organization and the need for partnering with H-SL as they were all working to bring sustainable peace and tranquillity in the country. He assured all present to give unflinching support to the organization whenever required.

Dr. Bobson Sesay, a renowned politician and former Minister of Lands and Country Planning, noted that the essence of political tolerance was to make a positive impact towards sustainable peace and development and to prepare the ground for the 2012 election.



**DR. BOBSON SESAY MAKING HIS STATEMENT**



The APC Women's Leader and Chairlady Tonkolili District, Kadiatu Lakoh, declared that the problem in Kholifa Rowala was not between the ruling and the opposition parties but conflict within the ruling party. She encouraged all to embrace the dialogue in good faith for the development of the chiefdom.

**(LEFT): KADIATU LAKOH, APC WOMEN'S LEADER AND CHAIRLADY TONKOLILI DISTRICT**

Tom Nyuma, the Kailahun District Council Chairman and leader of the Kailahun delegation, admonished all that peace should be the greatest concern of every Sierra Leonean.

He reminded everyone to reflect on the eleven years of civil unrest and the suffering of the people. He encouraged all to refrain from violence-related causes and think about their children's future. He ended by calling all Sierra Leoneans to put politics aside and work for the sake of the country.

**(LEFT): KAILAHUN DISTRICT COUNCIL CHAIRMAN TOM NYUMA**



Lamin Vonjo Ngobeh, one of the Peace Ambassadors from Kailahun, also gave a word of caution to the youth to refrain from violence, and he called on all stakeholders to

work together. Members of the main political parties also made statements.

**(RIGHT): LAMIN VONJO NGOBEH CALLING FOR PEACE AND UNITY IN TONKOLILI**





**(ABOVE LEFT): THE TWO LEADERS OF THE APC AND THE SLPP PARTIES EMBRACE EACH OTHER**

**(ABOVE RIGHT): P C KAILONDO BANYA OF LUAWA CHIEFDOM, KAILAHUN DISTRICT, HANDING OVER THE STAFF OF PEACE TO P C MASAKAMA OF KHOLIFA ROWALA CHIEFDOM, TONKOLILI DISTRICT**

### **KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY EDWARD SAM, COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

Mr Edward Sam declared that the Human Rights Act had greatly increased awareness of human rights. He maintained that violation of human rights would lead to war. Widespread violations had led to eleven years of civil unrest. He admonished all to work very hard to promote and protect Human Rights. Some human rights were violated through political interference. He also made it clear that human rights were enshrined in law. People violating these laws were violating the Government and international treaties. Everyone should also enjoy fundamental political rights.

He reiterated that the Agenda for change should be embraced by every Sierra Leonean. There should also be diversity in culture as this would help national development.

### **DIALOGUE AND MEDIATION**

From H-SL's point of view, the mediation process in Kholifa Rowala Chiefdom was extremely difficult, the reason being that most of the key stakeholders ignored the invitation to participate in the programme. In spite of the lack of cooperation and willingness on the part of some of the chiefdom authorities to join in the dialogue process, progress was made in a few areas.

One such area was the conflict between two members of the ruling APC party, the Hon Member of Parliament, Mohamed A. Tarawallie, and the Women's Leader and APC Chairlady for Tonkolili District, Kadiatu Lakoh. They each narrated their grievances and it became apparent that there was a conflict of



**(LEFT): MAJ TM BRIMA FACILITATING THE MODULE 'CONFLICT AND ITS TRANSFORMATION' DURING THE DIALOGUE SESSION**



**(LEFT): KADIATU LAKOH, APC CHAIRLADY, TONKOLILI DISTRICT, MARCHING TO THE PODIUM**

interest between the two of them and their cronies, concerning party programmes and positions. The lead mediator tried to strike a compromise between the two. This resulted in the two protagonists giving each other a hug, shaking hands and promising to work together. This change became apparent during the course of the dialogue.

**(RIGHT): THE HOST M P MOHAMED A TARAWALLIE, NARRATING HIS OWN PART OF THE STORY DURING THE MEDIATION SESSION**



The other key area addressed was a dispute between the District Council Chairman Mr Augustine Koroma, and certain community stakeholders. Apparently, decisions concerning the development of the District had been taken without consulting the paramount chiefs and other development partners.



**(LEFT): THE CHAIRMAN TONKOLILI DISTRICT COUNCIL MR AUGUSTINE KOROMA, SHAKING HANDS WITH HON. M A TARAWALLIE**

This has made the District Council

Chairman very unpopular in the district, with youth demonstrating to have him removed from office. The Chairman was able to accept his fault and apologized to the Paramount Chief and other stakeholders for his previous actions. He pledged to consult all in the developmental initiatives taken so far. Personal issues were also resolved between Kadiatu Lakoh and a relative in the same party, Councillor Abdul Pedro Lakoh.



**(ABOVE LEFT): KADIATU LAKOH AND APC COUNCILLOR ABDUL PEDRO LAKOH RECONCILING**



**(ABOVE RIGHT): COUNCILLOR LAKOH AND THE DISTRICT COUNCIL CHAIRMAN, MR AUGUSTINE KOROMA, DECIDED TO RESOLVE THEIR DIFFERENCES DURING THE DIALOGUE**



**(ABOVE LEFT): THE DISTRICT COUNCIL CHAIRMAN AND P C MASAKAMA RECONCILING**

**(ABOVE RIGHT): KADIATU LAKOH AND HON. M A TARAWALLIE PROMISED TO WORK TOGETHER**

### **AN UNRESOLVED ISSUE**

One conflict that was not subject to mediation was a current court injunction against Paramount Chief Masakama to cease functioning as Paramount Chief. There is tremendous pressure by supporters of the paramount chief to take to the streets to fight this injunction which, of course, would pose a very serious security threat.

The issue has been exacerbated by allegations that a Senior Minister and certain stakeholders in the community were busy backing a candidate who was defeated by the current paramount chief.

This crisis is slowly undermining the peace and stability of the Tonkolili community. Mediation could not be attempted because a central player in the conflict was not present at the dialogue.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNT**

Despite the challenges outlined in the Introduction (page 1), the mediation process during the dialogue was able to make progress in settling certain conflicts that had the potential to cause civil unrest in the community. The dialogue produced a dramatic shift in the way areas of conflict were addressed. This is significant as Tonkolili is a key, politically sensitive area, which hosts large numbers of government functionaries from the ruling party.

It is clearly evident that government interference in local conflicts has been exploited for political gains. This ugly scenario has thwarted the long-term peacebuilding process that is greatly needed throughout the length and breadth of the country as it approaches the 2012 presidential and parliamentary elections.

However, certain trouble makers within the community, who were invited as participants, confessed their actions and asked for forgiveness. The dialogue brought together the Paramount Chief and the District Council Chairman so that they were able to settle their grievances and work together for the development of the community. Though a big challenge, it was, however, achieved.

Participants drawn from the paired District of Kailahun, were able to build trust with members of the Magburaka community and make a lot of friends.

Moreover, there was total involvement and participation by the two opposing political parties throughout the dialogue, which in itself is a positive sign for national development.

As a result of the enthusiasm and cooperation shown by participants during the dialogue, strategies were put in place to deal with early warning signs and avert future conflicts.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- **The Kholifa Rowala dialogue should be revisited to allow other stakeholders in the district to participate in the reconciliation process.**
  
- **A large forum should be organized to meet with all stakeholders and supporters of various factions for lasting peace and unity.**
  
- **H-SL should continue to build synergies between and among conflicting parties for a more sustained engagement in peace and reconciliation.**