



Centre for Democracy & Development

Centre pour la démocratie et le développement

Report of the West Africa Night

On 15 June 2007, CDD London held an event entitled 'West Africa Night' at the London Irish Centre, Camden Square from 6-10pm. The evening was a fundraiser for former child soldiers in Sierra Leone and Liberia, victims of the small arms that have been the subject of CDD publications in the recent past.

The event was attended by over 70 people, including a representative from the Guinean Embassy and the Deputy High Commissioner from Sierra Leone.

The event began with a moving statement by Sylvie Aboa-Bradwell, the CDD London Coordinator, about CDD, its mission and especially its West African ambitions. It was followed by performances from the Nigerian artist, actress and dancer Christine Oshunniyi and the Sierra Leonean dancer, percussionist and story teller Usifu Jalloh. There was also a screening of the Amnesty International film 'Time for Truth, Justice and Repatriation for Liberia's Victims'.

Sorious Samura, the well-known, award-winning Sierra Leonean journalist and filmmaker gave the keynote speech. He began by narrating how, during the bloody civil wars that devastated Sierra Leone (1991-2002) and Liberia (1989-2003), unscrupulous individuals, whose only preoccupations were money and power, brutalised and dehumanised thousands of Sierra Leonean and Liberian children, and transformed them into fearful killing machines. He then stressed that whatever these youths may have done, they were defenceless victims robbed of their innocence, their dreams and their future. He concluded by urging everybody, including Sierra Leonean and Liberian politicians, their compatriots, as well as the international community, to restore hope to these former child soldiers and, ultimately, to Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Guests were treated to a wide selection of West African dishes, including cassava fufu, oxtail and okro, tilapia, jolof rice, plantains, red beans, groundnuts, chicken, sweet potatoes etc.

The evening culminated in a thrilling auction of artefacts from various parts of West Africa.

The event raised nearly £1,000 which would convert into a large sum in local currency, and will go to CDD's implementing partners Geko - Sierra Leone and the Kofi Annan Institute for Conflict Transformation in Liberia.