

The Volta Dam in Ghana

Ghana was the first country in Africa to gain independence from Britain in 1957. The new government decided to invest in hydro electric power to meet the country's power needs. To do this, Ghana built the Volta Dam at Akosombo on the Volta River - the fifth largest river in Africa. 80,000 people were moved from their homes to make way for the dam which is now the world's fourth largest artificial lake with a length of around 250 miles.

The Volta Dam project aimed, among other things, to open up Ghana to rapid development. A few years after the construction of the Volta Dam, rapid industrialisation took place, particularly in major cities such as the Accra, Kumasi, Sekondi-Tekoradi and Akosombo. But this development in turn brought about demand for more electric power.

By 1981, the increased demand for power meant that another dam was needed and a small dam at Kapong downstream from Akosombo was built.

The combined power of the two dams has meant that Ghana has been able to meet its domestic and industrial power needs. The dams have also provided irrigation for agriculture, a new supply of fish, an increased use of water transport in the lakes and the growth of tourism.



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These developments have not come without cost however. The Volta dam has led to a reduction in the shrimp population – an important source of protein for people living in the area. This reduction is because less food is being brought down the river for the shrimps. A fall in protein affects the health and nutrition standards of a population.

There has also been a decline in crop yields due to less silt being deposited downstream. The Volta dam has prevented natural flooding so the silt – which is rich in nutrients for plants – is no longer deposited. This has resulted in a fall in food production and also a drop in income for local farmers. The

result is greater poverty within the community which has led to problems such as crime, prostitution, an increase in sexually transmitted diseases, migration away from the area into towns and the cutting down of mangrove trees – to sell as fuel wood. This is causing serious deforestation in the area.

The dam has also caused a reduction in the flow of water in the main river which has resulted in a large increase of aquatic weeds. These have in turn led to an increase in the number of snails, particularly those that carry the bilharzia disease. Diseases like sleeping sickness and malaria have also increased in the areas near the lake.

The water levels of the lakes have also declined due to a fall in the rainfall. Global warming is blamed for this. With less rain to fill the lakes, there is of course less electricity generated...

Web links for further information:

BBC Country Profiles: Ghana

A brief history and key statistics: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1023355.stm

Oxfam Country Profiles: Ghana

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/coolplanet/kidsweb/world/ghana/index.htm>

BBC report: an 'eyewitness' report on water which focuses on the Volta Dam and its impacts in Ghana: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/2947420.stm>

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<http://allafrica.com/ghana/>

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Cholera in Benue State

Benue is one of the states in the African country of Nigeria. It has a population of about three million people. It is an area full of rivers and is an important area for agriculture – often called the breadbasket of Nigeria – growing crops such as potatoes, cassava, soya bean and corn.

At first when people were ill, it was thought that they had gastro-enteritis, a very serious and unpleasant illness which gives you a very upset stomach and diarrhoea. However, it turned out to be even worse: people were ill with cholera. Most of those affected were adults who died at home without going into the hospital.



What is cholera?

Cholera is an infectious disease caused by bacteria that gets into water. Symptoms include diarrhoea, stomach craps and vomiting. The illness also makes its victims become very dehydrated and it is this dehydration that kills many people. Most people who have treatment for the disease recover.

Causes of the epidemic

1. The cause of this epidemic was traced to a shortage of water, which led the people in these areas to fetch their drinking water from the River Benue. This river is polluted with all sorts of rubbish. Also, most of the houses in these areas do not have toilet facilities though some of them have latrines. This means that sewage gets into the water and makes it dirty and unsafe to drink.

2. Sadly, a normal practice for some households was to dump their rubbish into the streets. All of this ended up in the river making the water very polluted.

3. Women are not trained in personal hygiene practices. They need education about keeping cooking pots and utensils free from germs, particularly from flies.

The Benue State Government set up a committee which visited the areas and those who were in the hospitals. The committee directed the Water Board to supply water in water tankers to the areas affected by the disease. The Nigerian government agreed to pay the hospital bills where this was necessary. The committee also strongly advised people to keep their environment clean.

Prevention measures

There were no proper measures put in place to avoid this epidemic occurring again or preventing it from getting worse. Although the Government did provide clean water in tankers to those areas affected, and offered to pay medical bills of those who were ill, these were not long term solutions to the problems of poor hygiene.

What needs to be done

A committee, made up of local government officials and water and health experts, recommended the following measures to prevent further outbreaks of cholera:

- To train people, especially women, on safe hygiene practices such as:
 - How to treat water before drinking and to know the difference between safe and unsafe water.
 - Effective hand washing – when it is important and how often to do it
- To train people about safe sewage and waste disposal.
- To train people, especially women, on how to handle food to avoid it being contaminated before serving to people
- To provide a steady supply of clean water to avoid the use of polluted water.
- To build latrines a safe distance away from water sources to keep water clean and safe.

The illegal exploitation of natural resources and war in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is located in the heart of equatorial central Africa and has an area of over two million square kilometres. The current population is estimated at 50 million. The country has a unique biodiversity, large mineral and forest resources and rich soils good for agriculture.

The DRC is also the most mineral rich country in Africa holding the world's biggest copper, cobalt and cadmium deposits; it also holds large quantities of gold and diamonds.

In 1994 disruption occurred in the east of DRC with a refugee crisis which was a result of the war in neighbouring Rwanda.

In August 1998, fighting erupted between the DRC army and Rwandan and Ugandan troops: Uganda and Rwanda neighbour DRC to the East. Other neighbouring countries or countries near by also became involved: Angola, Zimbabwe and Namibia sent their armies to support the Congo government. Burundi also became involved and joined forces against DRC.

The conflict has become mainly about the access to, control of and trade in five key mineral resources: gold, timber, diamonds, cobalt and copper. DRC also has quantities of another rare metallic ore: coltan. This is important for the manufacture of mobile phones.

A recent United Nations (UN) report on DRC said that rebels and foreign governments plundered the country's resources during the occupation of the country. The report says that the war in DRC has been fuelled by different groups competing for access to gold, diamonds and other mineral resources.

The looting for these resources has helped fuel a four-year war in which 2.5 million people have died and 2.3 million have had to leave their homes.

As well as having to flee the fighting, local people also suffer because they receive no benefit from the theft of precious minerals from their home areas.



Poached ivory

The UN report says that national wildlife parks, particularly those in the east of the country, are being damaged by illegal mining, poaching and hunting for game meat and ivory. These practices destroy important ecological sites and will eventually deprive local people of income they could earn from tourism when peace eventually returns to the region.

According to the UN's report, the scramble for DRC's resources has become the main reason for fighting between different groups.



Tens of thousands of people have fled their homes because of conflict in DRC

Web links for further information:

BBC Country Profiles: DRC

A brief history and key statistics: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1076399.stm

BBC reports on how resources, and gold in particular, is fueling conflict in the Congo:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4604627.stm>

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/4601213.stm>

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http://allafrica.com/congo_brazzaville/

http://allafrica.com/congo_kinshasa/

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Eco-tourism

The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as: "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people."

In recent years, Africa's ecotourism industry has become increasingly important to the economy. Tourism enterprises based on the natural attractions of the region – particularly small accommodation establishments widely known as "safari lodges" – are considered key to creating jobs and wealth.

The growth of ecotourism

According to 1998 figures from the World Tourism Organisation, Africa was the fastest-growing region for international tourism, with 25 million tourists visiting African countries and this figure growing by 7.5% a year. South Africa, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Madagascar were the leading countries, particularly for ecotourism.



Typical African safari lodge



The World Tourism Organisation estimates that 'nature tourism' generates 7% of all international travel expenditure

Tourism figures from the Worldwide Tourism Organisation

- There were more than 663 million international travelers in 1999
- Spending by these tourists was estimated at more than US\$453 billion.
- The number of tourists is expected to grow by an average 4.1% a year over the next two decades
- The number of international travellers is expected to total one billion by 2010

Creating work and income opportunities

Ecotourism establishments are often in poorer rural parts of Africa and may be the main economic activity. Tourist expenditure on lodging, transport, food, guides, and souvenirs can be an important source of income and employment for local communities, particularly for rural farmers, women and young people.

Protecting the environment

Many conservation organisations also support ecotourism because it contributes to the management and protection of national parks, 'wilderness areas' and wildlife. For example, tourism is largely responsible for saving gorillas in Africa from extinction. In sub-Saharan Africa there are about 440 protected areas covering about 2.6 million square hectares.

Example: The Bwindi Impenetrable Forest in Uganda

Hundreds of people work as rangers and camping staff or provide food, crafts and entertainment for foreign tourists who come to trek in the forest and view gorillas. In the Buhoma valley just outside the park, many local businesses have started up, offering goods and services to visitors. This 'multiplier effect' brought about by tourism can have considerable benefits to the local economy. It is estimated that for every hotel room established for tourists, up to two jobs are created.



The Bwindi Forest in Uganda provides jobs for the local community

Example: The Kakum National Park in Ghana

Ghana is developing its ecotourism industry and has seen a growth of 12% per year in tourist revenues. By 2010 tourism is likely to become the biggest earning industry in the country. 80-90% of Ghana's original forests have been destroyed or seriously damaged by settlement, agriculture or timber extraction and Ghana's ecotourism programme could help to preserve what remains of its forests.

Ecotourism is focusing on the Kakum National Park with its canopy walkway, which is perched 30 metres above the ground, giving a unique bird's eye view of the rainforest.

The number of visitors increased from 20,000 in 1995 to 59,000 in 1998, while revenue from the walkway rose from \$10,000 to \$108,000. Much of this money goes to the Ghana Heritage Conservation Trust, a local non-governmental organisation that uses the funds to maintain the walkway and fund conservation and sustainable development projects with local communities.



The canopy walkway in Kakum National Park, Ghana

Mr. Gideon Sedziafa, a Ghanaian who lives in the UK but knows the area well says: *“The benefits of this ecotourism attraction are numerous. The road to the park is a first class road, which has improved infrastructure in the area. It has generated income and sustainable livelihoods for the people around Kakum and surrounding towns because of the hotels located near the park. This region is the highest tourism earner in the country, mainly because of Kakum. It also offers opportunities for the conservation of other parks in the country”.*



Example: Madagascar

Madagascar is an island in the Indian Ocean, off the east coast of Africa. Tourism is the country's second largest earner. By 1998 the government had established 40 new protected areas, covering roughly 2 per cent of the country's land area. But these areas are highly populated and intensively farmed because of their favourable climate. To prevent conflict between farmers and the tourist industry, 'participatory ecotourism' has been introduced. This means that money from ecotourism is shared with local communities to compensate them for any restrictions on using the land in parks and protected areas. This means that local communities benefit from tourism. The revenues raised are invested in agriculture production, forestry, drinking water, schools, health services and the development of credit schemes, enabling local people to borrow money at reasonable rates of interest.

Potential problems with ecotourism

There are a number of arguments used against ecotourism:

- Getting to the destinations usually involves flying, something environmentalists say is the most damaging form of transport when it comes to climate change and global warming
- Large numbers of tourists visiting 'wilderness areas' or national parks can damage the very areas ecotourism seeks to protect.
- Although ecotourism provides employment, the jobs offered to local people are often low quality/low paid jobs and are seasonal – only available at certain times of the year.
- Most of the money made from ecotourism still goes out of the region to foreign airlines, tourism operators, developers and builders.
- Any form of tourism can impact on the culture and traditions of local people, either because they lose their meaning and simply become 'entertainment' for tourists (e.g. traditional dances) or because the customs tourists bring to an area threaten local culture and traditions.

Further information:

The International Ecotourism Society: www.ecotourism.org **Tourism Concern:** www.tourismconcern.org.uk

Global Eye: Focus on tourism: http://www.globaleye.org.uk/secondary_spring2002/focuson/index.html

Emma's Story

Story based on the original, as told by Emma Abiodun Macaulay

My name is Emma. This is my story. It begins when I was 5 years old and had just started school. I used to live with my Mum in a part of Freetown, the capital city of Sierra Leone. When war broke out in Freetown in May 1997 I had to go to Kabala, a town in the north of the country, to live with my grandma and grandpa.

My grandma was a well known midwife, a kind of nurse, who gave health care services to the people in Kabala. In fact her house was the clinic. Soon the rebels were to attack Kabala too. The day before the rebel soldiers attacked the town they visited the clinic and asked for treatment. Grandma asked them some questions to find out what was wrong with them but they refused to say anything. They looked around the place and then left.



Rebel soldier in Sierra Leone

Their unusual behaviour made grandma and grandpa suspicious and very worried for our safety. They decided to leave the house the following morning and take cover at a doctor's house. Later that day the rebels returned to my grandparent's house to ask for grandma. When they did not find her there they took all the valuables and set the house on fire. It was so dreadful for us all, especially grandma.

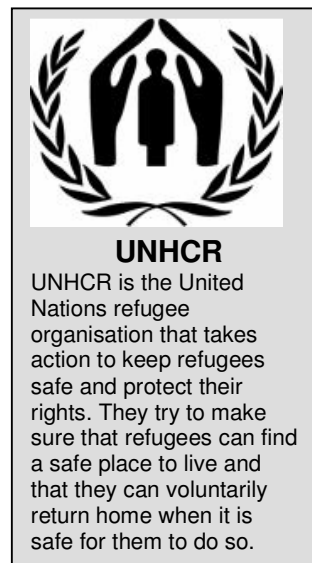
Worse was to follow. The rebel soldiers found out that we had gone to hide in the doctor's house and sent other soldiers after us. Grandpa wasted no time in deciding to break the fence wall at the back of the house and escaped with grandma and me. We ran and hid in a hole, as the rebels were after us. Grandma sprained both legs in the process and now she is in pain a lot of the time and cannot easily walk.

We had to travel partly by foot and partly by local transport to different areas of the country. We moved around for more than a year! Eventually we came to Coloma. Someone from a church was very kind and gave us a place to stay. We began to feel more secure but our peace was cruelly shattered when we heard that our house in Freetown had also been burnt. We had hoped to return one day.

Grandma could see that the people in Coloma needed a clinic to come to when they had health problems. The church opened a clinic that was run by grandma. With the money she earned from the clinic grandma was able to rent a house for us.

I went to a primary school in Coloma, and I learnt four languages: French, Foulah, Mandingo and Susu. I had to! Otherwise I wouldn't have been able to talk to people.

At last, in 2000, we returned home to Freetown through the **UNHCR programme** (see box). We were homeless but so glad to be back. A kind neighbour offered us somewhere to stay for a short time. Then we moved yet again to another new environment on another side of Freetown!



I continued my primary education and did well in my exams: 300 marks out of 400. I still enjoy French and use the other languages now and then. It is odd isn't it; if it were not for the war I would not have learned those languages. Most of my classmates cannot speak any of them. The only thing that's not so good is I have to go a long way to school every day and spend more money on transport than we can afford as my father is unemployed.



Not all girls are so lucky! Many miss out on an education altogether.

It might sound odd but having had some awful experiences fleeing from the rebels, living and feeling like a refugee, having to be brave and make so many new starts has made me a stronger person. I feel secure at the moment because the security police patrol our area at night. I am not sure how I'll feel when they leave.

Many children were displaced and lost when fighting broke out in Freetown because their schools were located far away from their homes. Their parents could not get to them quickly enough. Governments need to think about these things when they work out which schools to send children to.

With all the upset of the war and needing to run for safety, we lost touch with my mother. I don't know where she is. I hope she is safe and that we will meet soon.

I would like to say thank you to all those who are helping to promote peace in my country and in the world.

Web links for further information:

BBC Country Profiles: Sierra Leone

A brief history and key statistics: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1061561.stm

Sierra Leone timeline, with links to other reports and features:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1065898.stm

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Sierra Leone pages: <http://allafrica.com/sierraleone/>

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Flower growing in Kenya

Kenya's flower industry is the oldest and largest in Africa. The industry has grown to become the biggest exporter of roses and carnation flowers in the world. In 2003 sales of flowers was worth £77million, which was 8% of Kenya's export earnings.



Kenya is the world's leading exporter of roses

Kenya has some of the largest flower farms in the world, employing up to 10,000 workers. They usually live on the farm where they work. Approximately 65% of Kenyan flower workers are employed as casual workers. This means that they are not entitled to benefits and can be fired at any time. Women workers are likely to lose their jobs if they become pregnant. Many workers are paid wages of just £1 a day. The flowers are grown mostly around the Rift Valley lakes, which supply water for the farms.



Millions of flowers are flown from Nairobi to Europe every year. The peak period for export is in early February around Valentine's Day.

Irene Mwai's works in a flower farm in Kericho in the Highlands of Kenya. Because of the favourable climate, an increasing number of flowers are cultivated here – especially roses.

By 9am, on a February morning, Irene has already been in the farm for two hours and has cut 2,000 roses. She wears leather gloves reaching up to her elbows; "protection against thorns" she says. When she does the harvesting, she cuts the stems and shoves them skilfully under her left hand.

"It is always like this just before Valentine Day", says the 32 year-old, even though the popular "Lovers Day" is not celebrated in rural Kenya in the way it is in the USA and Europe. The farm Irene works on earns 20% of its year's income in the ten days running up to Valentines Day.



Most flowers in Kenya are grown in large greenhouses

Even though Kenya has a good climate for flower growing, most flowers are grown in greenhouses to protect them from rain, wind or hail storms that reach the highlands in the rainy season from April to July. "Wet roses rot easily" says Irene.

After harvesting, the freshly cut roses are placed in buckets of water and chemicals to protect the roses against germs and diseases and to prevent them from drooping after harvest.

Men workers wearing red protective clothing and gas masks spray the flowerbeds regularly with chemicals to prevent germs and diseases.

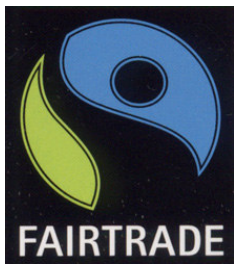
Large foreign companies and white Kenyan farmers own almost 90% of all the flower farms. Asian Kenyans own the rest. Although Kenya sells a lot of flowers, most of the money goes to the foreign companies that own the farms.

Out of the 150 flower farms in Kenya, there are seventeen that have improved the working conditions for their workers. These seventeen are members of the **Kenya Flower Council (KFC)**, which is trying to make a **Fairtrade code of practice** become law in Kenya's flower industry. These farms produce 60% of the flowers in Kenya. This code of practice would mean better working conditions for the workers and better protection of the environment.

The KFC Fairtrade code includes:

- Farms using chemicals that are environmentally friendly
- Computerised drip-irrigation system to reduce water wastage
- The wearing of protective clothing by farmers
- Fair wages, with workers paid above the government minimum wage of 2000 Kenyan Shillings (£28 a month)
- Six day working week of 46 hours
- Overtime pay
- Twenty one days paid holidays a year
- Two months paid maternity leave
- One month paid sick leave
- Reasonable housing

The code has been supported by many people, but there are problems with making sure that it happens. For example, the people carrying out the inspections on the farms to make sure the code is being followed are paid for by the foreign flower companies themselves. KFC say that these inspectors should be independent so that they are better able to criticise the companies if necessary. The first fairtrade roses from Kenya went on sale in the UK in February 2004 in Tesco. They were in two different size bouquets, retailing at £4.99 and £7.99. The sale of Fairtrade roses at such prices will go towards meeting the KFC Fairtrade code.



The Fairtrade mark

A third of all flowers from Kenya are exported to the UK. Large stores such as Marks and Spencer, Asda, Safeway-Morrison and Tesco all sell Kenyan cut flowers.

However, all is not well in Kenya's flower gardens. The flower industry is being blamed by many for falling water levels in the Rift Valley Lakes. It has been suggested that if things don't change, these lakes could disappear altogether.

This is why the KFC code calls for the use of computerised irrigation by all flower farmers to save water. There is also a worry about the fertilisers and pesticides (chemicals) being used by the flower growers. It is feared that some of these chemicals are leaking into the water table to pollute underground water, lakes and springs.

Web links for further information:**BBC Country Profiles: Kenya**

A brief history and key statistics: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1024563.stm

BBC report: Kenya's Flower power

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/crossing_continents/africa/1260248.stm

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Kenya country guide: <http://africa.oneworld.net/article/archive/4890/>

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Frank Kapopo's Story

An example of small scale investment: **The Tuchatane Club and Naluyanda Project, Zambia** funded by Harvest Help: www.harvesthelp.org

"My name is Frank Kapopo. I am 35 years old and married with five children. I live in Kapopo Village, in Zambia.

Before the project started, life was very difficult because we did not have enough ways of earning money to be able to work the farm properly. There was not enough food for the family and sometimes we only had one meal a day.



Maize growing

We were only able to grow one type of crop, maize, on the same piece of land every year. This is called 'mono-cropping'. This is not good for the soil because growing the same crop year after year on the same piece of land causes the soil to lose all its nutrients and goodness. Then the crop does not grow well. If there was a drought and no rain fell, it was terrible because the crop failed to grow at all. The only way we could earn any money was through cutting down trees and making charcoal from them to sell.

Then in 2002, I joined the Tuchatane Club, which is one of 166 Clubs set up through the Naluyanda Project. This has changed the way we live and I now believe my family can not only survive, but make plans for the future.

Through the Club I have learnt how to farm in a different way. Now I practise

crop rotation, which means I grow a variety of crops including maize, soya beans, and groundnuts. Every year we move the crops around and plant them in a different field. This means the soil does not get exhausted and there are fewer pests so the crops grow better. I have also learnt that the crop will be improved if I fertilise the soil with compost and liquid manure.

This way of farming has helped me to understand about 'sustainable agriculture'. I also have a garden which I look after carefully to use for my own family but also to sell vegetables at the local market.

I have also started to farm chickens. I started with 50 chickens but now have 300! To help me with this I have had some business training from the Club and made a business plan.

All our lives have improved. I can re-invest the money I earn in farming and use it to pay for my children to go to school. We can buy clothes and we regularly eat two meals a day now. I am also a member of the local savings and credit group (or village bank). I have managed to pay back all the money I have borrowed from this because of the earnings I have made through new ways of farming.

I feel it is very important to pass on these new skills to other people in my own village and other areas. I have had many visitors to my fields, asking if they too can join the club. I have now done some training which means I can train other farmers in the methods of sustainable agriculture. I also teach about agro-forestry and tree planting and, most recently, I have taken a course to improve my skills in running a business. This will mean I can make even more progress for myself and my family".



Small scale investment can help children go to school

Web links for further information:

BBC Country Profiles: Zambia

A brief history and key statistics: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1069294.stm

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Jariatu's Story

"My name is Jariatu Sesay and I come from Sierra Leone, West Africa. I was brought up in the countryside where there were few clinics and doctors and I saw people in my community die from illnesses which could be treated.

When I was very young I decided that I wanted to become a nurse. After doing well at secondary school, I applied to nursing school in the capital, Freetown. In Sierra Leone we have to pay for nursing training and my elder sister, who worked at a college training teachers, offered to pay for my training.

I began my nursing training at a time when Sierra Leone was involved in a terrible war. The nursing school closed down many times and nurses were often called upon to treat people hurt in the fighting.



I became a nurse at a hospital in Freetown as soon as I passed the exams. There were almost no medicines or equipment at the hospital where I worked. Patients were given a prescription and then their families had to go down to the local chemist to buy the medicines they needed for treatment. Patients also brought their own bedding and their families brought food in every day. If people did not have the money to

buy medicines then they could not be treated.

Doctors and nurses at the hospital received their salaries very late from the government, usually 3-6 months behind in payment. This made it very difficult for staff to get to the hospital to work as they had no money for bus fares and often had to walk long distances from their homes outside Freetown. Often there were not enough nurses on the ward as they had not managed to get to work. But I enjoyed my job and tried to be reliable as I knew that my patients depended on me.

Then something happened that made me think very hard about my life. A big mobile hospital ship docked in Freetown to carry out emergency surgery for people in Sierra Leone. I volunteered to work on the ship for a couple of months. My volunteer expenses for this work were more than my previous salary had been.

After I had finished this work, I went back to the hospital, but things had got even worse. It was so bad that I had to wait a whole year before I was paid! Can you imagine how hard life was for me and my family during this time? I had to support myself, as well as my mother and my nieces and nephews. Many of my friends at the hospital stopped coming to work completely, as they had to look for other paid work to feed their families.

Then I heard from colleagues that there was a shortage of qualified nurses in the UK and that I could earn a good salary there. I looked on the internet for more information and decided to apply to come to work in the UK. I was successful! I left Sierra Leone at the end of 2003 and started work in a London hospital as a nurse. It is so good to be in a hospital where there are medicines and the things you need to treat sick people.

However, life in London is not easy for me. I miss my home and family and I am lonely. I earn a lot more than I did whilst nursing in Sierra Leone and get paid on time. But I would not have considered leaving my home at all if I had been paid regularly, even though the amount of money was much smaller.



Sierra Leone is the poorest country in the world (UNDP 2004). The health service in the country is very weak; even non-existent in some areas. Many children die before reaching their fifth birthday and 2% of women die from problems related to childbirth.



Web links for further information:

BBC Country Profiles: Sierra Leone

A brief history and key statistics: http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1061561.stm

BBC report: 'NHS 'taking away Africa's medics''

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4349545.stm>

BBC report: 'Floating hospitals mercy missions'

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/4400381.stm>

BBC News World Edition

Top news stories from across Africa <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/default.stm>

All Africa

A site offering news from over one hundred newspapers and news agencies across Africa.

Sierra Leone pages: <http://allafrica.com/sierraleone>

One World Africa

The African arm of the One World independent media network; a network of people and groups working for human rights and sustainable development. <http://africa.oneworld.net/article/frontpage/151/509>

UNDP Human Development Reports

Human development indicators, searchable by country or indicators. <http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/>

Lona's Story

Forced migration

My name is Lona. I am an orphan of Sudanese nationality. Both of my parents were killed in the 21-year civil war which came to a halt in January 2005. I have not heard of any relations of mine but I believe there must be someone somewhere. The only ones I knew of vanished with history. My family was not ranked with high class members but we owned some land, a few cows and never missed something to put on the table. Gone are those days.

Civil War in Sudan

I longed to be myself again. I had given up in life. I stopped dreaming of whom I wanted to be when I grew up. The future was as black as coal. Nothing mattered and I thought if there was a time I wanted to die, it was that day I sat with an empty stomach under the tree. I longed and prayed to die though I doubted whether there was a God; I mean, an all loving God. As I was lost in thoughts, suddenly I heard a big sound. There was no mistaking the sound; they were bombing our small village!



Sudanese militia

My parents were shot dead; my uncle was tortured to death. Since I was the first child of my parents, I did not have sisters and brothers. I ran from the camp; we were only a few meters from the shooting point. I felt petrified. I hid in the bush nearby. Apparently every one seemed to be running helter-skelter. Tears rolled down my cheeks. I wanted to run as fast as an ostrich but my legs got stuck and rooted to the ground.

I will never forget the scene I saw an hour later. From East to West the ground was littered with dead bodies. I managed to skip and jump to a world of the unknown. If it had been the Old Testament, I would have competed with Abraham who decided to leave all in search of the unknown place. I cannot remember how many miles I trekked but I reached camp at which I was registered. Life was so difficult in the camps, as I moved from one to the other.

Security in a Refugee camp in Kenya

After what seemed an eternity, I was in the Kenyan camp for refugees called Kakuma. I went through the usual procedures of registration. With no one to relate to, I felt so lonely. But many were suffering too. The only thing which grieved me was that I could not be a sister to someone.

Soon, I got a chance to attend classes in Nairobi, the capital city in Kenya. Having no basic foundation in learning, I had difficulty in catching up with the teachings. However, our teacher gave me extra coaching and with time I was progressing rapidly.



Refugee camp



East Africa

Training opportunities in the camp

One day, good news came. There was an NGO who was offering some technical on-job training. I enrolled for tailoring courses. I was good at hand work and I was soon employed by the NGO in an income generating activity.



Tailoring stall

After a few years of operation, the NGO closed down due to insufficient donor funding. However, I managed to open a stall where I sew clothes for both men and women. I am basically known for embroidered African attires. I sell lots of clothes and make enough to save a good percentage.

With the recent peace agreement signed early this year, I long and yearn to go home to Sudan. I want to design clothes for my fellow Sudanese. I wonder what ruins remained of the village I shared with my *Mama and Baba*. Whatever happened to those dead bodies that lied motionless forever haunts. I wonder how many lived to tell their past stories. As much as the memories hurt, I want to go back home. I have heard rumours for a long time and stories through the media. We Sudanese have lost a lot and we need to go back and re-start afresh.

Support and Funding for Re-building Independence in Sudan

'*One tree is not a forest*' they say. With one hand, the Sudanese cannot do these things themselves. We need the help of almost everyone to lend a hand. The international community can help by funding programs. The neighboring countries can offer expertise at a cheaper price. Others might consider praying for things to move the best ways. In my culture we say, '*one fingernail cannot kill a louse*'. One needs two hands to kill it however tiny it is. We need to kill many tiny and huge things ranging from tribal conflicts, hunger, illiteracy, and blood-shedding, just to mention but a few.

Wanting to go back Home

Although I live a good life in Kenya, renting a good house and surrounded by caring friends, I feel deep down in my heart that I would feel much better in Sudan. I am still holding on and hoping that one day I will be on my way back home; never to feel home-sick again.

Life-line:

- ❖ Forced migration because of the civil war
- ❖ Security and education in the refugee camp in Kenya
- ❖ Training with NGO in tailoring in the camp
- ❖ Market stall, embroidering clothes
- ❖ Plea for further help from International Organisations to nurture independence and self sufficiency for Sudan, to fund programmes
- ❖ Wanting to go back home

Web links for further information:

BBC Country Profiles: Sudan

A brief history and key statistics:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/country_profiles/820864.stm

BBC In depth feature on Sudan: a Nation divided

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/africa/2004/sudan/default.stm

BBC News World Edition

Top news stories from across Africa <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/default.stm>

BBC Case Study of Emmanuel Jal, Sudanese former child soldier turned chart-topping rap star in Kenya and a passionate advocate of peace

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/entertainment/music/4277923.stm>

All Africa

A site offering news from over one hundred newspapers and news agencies across Africa.

Sudan pages:

<http://allafrica.com/sudan/>

One World Africa

The African arm of the One World independent media network; a network of people and groups working for human rights and sustainable development.

<http://africa.oneworld.net/article/frontpage/151/509>

Refugee Council

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk>

Human Rights Watch

www.hrw.org/refugees

Sudan profile: <http://hrw.org/doc/?t=africa&c=sudan>

UNDP Human Development Reports

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