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REMOTE COMMUNITIES REAPS BENEFITS UNDER ARMS FOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Freetown, Sierra Leone--- 05 September 2005, The Arms for Development Project which began in Sierra Leone with a pilot program in 2003 and full scale implementation in 2004 have begun to show dividends in isolated communities.

The Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General (DSRSG) for Sierra Leone and United Nations Development Programs UNDP Resident Representative, Mr. Victor Angelo, today visited Mokorbu and Makali communities in the Ribbi Chiefdom in Moyamba District, Southern Sierra Leone to officially commission two three-classroom blocks built by UNDP under the programme.. The two classroom blocks, built at the cost of fifteen millions (about \$5,300) each were conceived to serve the educational needs of the pupils in the two communities. Other projects to be commissioned are a Ministry Dome in Magburaka, a Market in Miniama Chiefdom, Kono and eight power tillers for two chiefdoms in Kambia .

During the ceremony, Mr. Victor Angelo, who applauded the wave of development in the two communities since the end of the war told the people that there can be no meaningful development where there is discrimination between women and men. He said: “in development all people, irrespective of their sexes are equal and their contributions are all needed to enhance development in the community.” He advised them against any acts of violence. In his words, “war is against development while peace is a pre condition for sustainable development.”

On development, the DSRSG told the people of Moyamba that the best way to attract development was to initiate viable projects and exhibit reasonable level of commitment. Then and only then will the donor community be attracted to come in and assist. He assured them that the *Arms for Development* project will be extended to other communities as more donations come in from the international donors.

Victor Angelo also encouraged the people to send their children to take advantage of the facilities provided. He advised them that investment in the education, especially the girl

child is investment in the future leaders of the country.

Speaking in Mokorbu, the Chairman for the occasion, Mr. Max Bendu, explained that Ribbi Chiefdom was declared arms-free in 2003 with a pledge of development, which has found fulfillment in the three classrooms blocked been commissioned. He regretted that the eleven year rebel war left a legacy of violence in their children and youth, and averred that only through education can their lives be remolded. He called on the people in the community to come together and address these consequences of the war.

Also speaking on behalf of the Paramount Chief of the community, Mr. Abdul Mahoi, explained that even though 375 pupils from the chiefdom passed this year's National Primary School Examination, there is no Junior Secondary School within the Chiefdom to accommodate them and may have to travel more than 80 kilometers by foot to attend one in Waterloo if they are to attend secondary school. He called on UNDP to help them further by establishing a Junior Secondary School in the District to address this problem.

Since the Arms for Development initiative began, 33 chiefdoms have participated and more than 2500 weapons have been surrendered, including shot guns and some abandoned military weapons.

The two projects commissioned were executed with funds from UNDP while the communities provided labour and local materials.