



Strategic Publishing for Sierra Leone

By Jusu-Wai M. Sawi

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What do you publish for a war-ravaged nation?

Sierra Leone, a West African country of six million people, is the subject of unwelcome publicity these days. The Hollywood movie "Blood Diamond," starring Leonardo DiCaprio and released in early December 2006, highlights the country's recent civil war, an 11-year conflict that ended five years ago. The war resulted in approximately 50,000 deaths and the displacement of more than 2 million people (about one-third of the population). It is in this context that CLC Sierra Leone publishes resources to proclaim the Gospel.

"We are the only Christian publisher in Sierra Leone," says Jusu-Wai M. Sawi.

CLC Sierra Leone's publishing effort, begun 10 years ago with the launch of Catalyst magazine, started publishing books in 2002, the year the civil war ended. So far CLC has published 26 editions of the magazine and 8 books.

"We have four books on reconciliation and peace for kids to be launched by March 2007," says Sawi. "The need is there for the country." Nearly 50 percent of the country's people are children and youth under 14.

In a nation where only 30 percent of the population is literate, nearly 70 percent live in poverty, and Christians make up only 10 percent of the population (Muslims are 60 percent and indigenous beliefs 30 percent), CLC must be strategic in its use of limited resources.

"We are seven staff," says Sawi. "Four concentrate on the bookstores." CLC operates two bookstores in the country's capital, Freetown, and one in a second city. The organization distributes its literature through churches, supermarkets, and vendors in public places.

"Our vision is to develop local Christian writers," says Sawi. "Writers are all part time, engaged in other things." With Media Associates International, CLC offered writers' training in October 2005. Sawi contends that Sierra Leone's need for Christian material is so great that writers "could work on anything, but if we define our purpose, we will be most effective."

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