



FOCUS



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ON

ARMS FOR DEVELOPMENT

NIMBA COUNTY GETS READY FOR DEVELOPMENT

The City of GANTA in Bain-Garr Chiefdom, Nimba County has demonstrated readiness to embrace the **UNDP Arms for Development Program**. On January 14, 2006, the UNDP Small Arms Control Programme won the heart of the people of Ganta when UNDP Country Director, Steven Ursino, and his team led a route march of school children and other community members through the streets of the city and ended up with a memorable first official launch of the Arms for Development Programme.

Earlier, the challenge had been taken up at four separate gatherings: a workshop for Community Radio staff, a meeting of Project Management Committees (PMC) in Nimba and Grand Gedeh Counties, an exciting soccer

chorus: “we shall do all we can to expose all the remaining weapons”. The District Commissioner even went further to community was also assured that nobody turning in their weapon would be arrested. Messages of support and commitment presented by the Paramount Chief, the Religious Leaders, the Youth Groups, the Women’s Group, and the District Commissioner, Emma Konnah, had one express the determination of the people of Bain-Garr to be the first to benefit from the UNDP development award.

In the course of the ceremony, it was announced that seven guns had been surrendered to the police. This piece of news received loud applause which later accompanied the officials and the community to a scene outside the Assembly Hall, Ganta United Methodist School, where a ceremonial handing-over of weapons to the police was conducted.



Some participants at the launch displaying weapons retrieved

competition and a debate among 5 High Schools in Ganta on the topic: ‘**How Can the Youth of Nimba County Help Reduce the Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons**’ ?

Placards held by the community on the route march carried messages such as: ‘WE WANT EDUCATION, NOT GUNS’; ‘WE PREFER DEVELOPMENT TO GUNS’; ‘LET’S MAKE NIMBA COUNTY GUN-FREE’; ‘NO MORE ARMED VIOLENCE’.

At the launch itself, the community leapt with joy when Steven Ursino and Programme Manager Napoleon Abdulai announced that Bain-Garr Chiefdom would be awarded \$40,000 for a development project of their choice if they surrendered all remaining weapons to the Police. The



A scene of the parade through the principal streets of Ganta

Soon after, Nick Sanders of Landmine Action and his team demonstrated the use of Arms Collection Boxes to the admiration of the community members.

The official launch of Arms for Development was declared by Hon Harrison Karnwea, Superintendent of Nimba County with a call on the people to move to all corners of the county to ‘bring out all the remaining weapons’ in return for a development project. The joy and enthusiasm on the faces of a people who had been dragged into a war for 14 years was overly evident.



The Netherlands

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