



# FOCUS



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ON

## ARMS FOR DEVELOPMENT

### Foya Launch: Cooperation Beyond Expectations

The launch of the Arms for Development project in the Kissi Chiefdom of Foya, Lofa County, culminated in a spectacular show of confidence and support by the community. Within two days, Foya citizens exposed and turned in more RPGs, grenades, guns, and ammunition than anyone expected to see. Among them were six RPG M-57s, a Bangalore torpedo, five AK-MS, one Chinese 81-1, three magazines, 42 rounds of 7.62mm ammunition, and assorted spares. Lofa County shares a border with both Guinea and Sierra Leone.

After 14 years of civil war, with some of the most recent battles fought in their own city and surrounding towns, the people of Foya were eager to cooperate with the UNDP Small Arms Control Programme as they participated fully in two days of events.



The launching activities in Foya began on January 24, 2006 with an Orientation for the 15 community leaders who make up the Project Management Committee (PMC). The main objectives of the Orientation were to clarify their roles in the Arms for Development program, and come up with a plan of action for the duration of the project.

Fayiah Nyenyenko, one of the PMCs most prominent members and a former LURD General, pledged his support to UNDP and vowed to do his part to make Lofa gun-free. Mohamed Sheriff, the city's Imam, expressed his satisfaction about the other members serving on the PMC with him. "These are all good people and I trust we can get the job done," he said.

Also on January 24<sup>th</sup>, all four schools in Foya's Kissi Chiefdom participated in a debate about the best ways for the youth to help rid their communities of small arms. The hall was packed to overflowing as the young speakers shared their ideas and inspired each other. The next day, during the official launching program, two elementary schoolchildren took UNDP Small Arms staff and UNMIL security forces to an area in the woods where they had hidden grenades.



The day of the official launch began with a parade through Foya's main street, and ended with a formal program attended by city officials, PMC members, Paramount and Town Chiefs, and representatives of youth and women's groups. *Positive Youth for Peace* performed an educational drama about the procedures for turning in weapons or pointing out explosives, to the delight of the captive audience. The Acting District Commissioner of Foya declared Arms for Development launched, and in enthusiastic support statements, the city's leaders welcomed the UNDP Small Arms Control Programme and promised their full support and cooperation.

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of January, another Arms for Development program was launched in the Quandi-Gboni Chiefdom of Voinjama, Lofa County, by District Commissioner Gimela Kamara and citizens from Voinjama City and surrounding towns.



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