

In July 2002, H el ene Dion will return to Senegal for the next phase of work with DEVSOL. This time she'll focus on training in community organization. "It's threatening to become a second career!" she says.

Putting an end to conflict diamonds

In 1997, a group of Canadians and Sierra Leoneans living in Canada decided to do something about the illicit trade in rough diamonds that was fuelling a deadly war in Sierra Leone.

Within a year, the working group had found a home within Partnership



Photo: Associated Press AP

Diamond miners in central Sierra Leone. The diamond trade fuelled a horrific decade-long civil war in Sierra Leone in which tens of thousands of innocent civilians were killed or maimed. Diamonds have also driven civil conflicts in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia. The May 2002 free election in Sierra Leone is hopefully the first step toward a democratic future.

Africa Canada (PAC), a coalition of Canadian and African NGOs. In 2000, with financial support from DFAIT, CIDA and a host of NGOs, PAC produced a groundbreaking report called *The Heart of the Matter: Sierra Leone, Diamonds and Human Security* that probed the issue of conflict diamonds in Sierra Leone. The report, co-authored by two Canadians and a Sierra Leonean journalist studying in Canada, made international headlines.

"The impact of the report has been quite amazing," says Ian Smillie, one of the authors.

PAC's report gave added impetus to Canada's efforts at the United Nations (UN) to address the conflicts in Angola and Sierra Leone. As chair of the Angola Sanctions Committee, Robert Fowler—at that time Canada's Ambassador to the UN—set up an expert panel to look at conflict diamonds in Angola. Several other expert panels followed that examined the issue in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia.

"When Canada was on the Security Council in 1999–2000, it was instrumental in getting the issue of conflict diamonds raised at official levels," says Mr. Smillie, who sat on the Sierra Leone expert panel. "The NGOs had done it in the media, but the issue wouldn't have got the profile in the UN it did without Canada."

In May 2000, South Africa launched what would become known as the Kimberley Process—an attempt to develop an international certification scheme for rough diamonds. By the end of the year, Canada had co-sponsored a resolution at the UN General Assembly supporting the Process.

The Kimberley Process, which involved governments, NGOs and the diamond industry, culminated in a meeting held in Ottawa in March 2002.

"The agreement in itself was remarkable," says Mr. Smillie. "However, we didn't get independent monitoring of all national systems. Without that, the whole thing is in jeopardy of not working." In response,



Photo: Robert Fowler

Angolan soldier with AK-47