

Once an idyllic vacation spot, Sierra Leone is striving to rebuild after a savage civil war. Diamonds, recently seen as a curse for the people of this nation, are now being used as a tool for redevelopment.

SIERRA LEONE

Travelogue

BY AMBER MICHELLE

Photos by Wade Watson and Liz Donnelly.
Photo of First Lady Sia Koromo, top left, by Phyllis Galembo.



Situated along the scenic North Atlantic Ocean coast in West Africa, Sierra Leone is a country of beauty, tragedy and hope. Attracted by miles of beaches, European travelers once vacationed in this nation bordered by Guinea and Liberia. But years of internal strife and civil war have destroyed this once peaceful place, which, according to the United Nations Human Development Index 2007, is the world's least livable country. It is now struggling to rebuild as foreign investors slowly begin to trickle into the country.

Wade Watson, executive vice president of Target Resources, a junior mining company, and founder of Ruff&Cut, a collection of jewelry created from ethically sourced diamonds and gold, recently led an excursion including an editor and photographer from *Elle* magazine on a tour through Sierra Leone, where Target Resources has an alluvial mine. Dedicated to social responsibility, environmentalism and ethical use of natural resources,

Opposite, left to right. First Lady Sia Koromo has stated that her mission is to "bring it up" — meaning to raise the country's UNICEF rating as the least livable in the world to a higher place on the list. Beautiful beaches and scenic huts dot the landscape of Sierra Leone. At 7 percent, Sierra Leone has the lowest rate of AIDS in Africa due to heavy advertising for use of condoms. Open market in Sierra Leone.

SIERRA LEONE

At a Glance



- POPULATION:**
6,294,774 (July 2008)
- PRESIDENT:**
Ernest Bai Koroma (September 2007)
- SIZE:** 27,700 square miles, slightly smaller than the state of South Carolina
- CAPITAL:** Freetown
- CLIMATE:** Tropical; rainfall along the coast can reach 195 inches a year, making it one of the wettest places along coastal Western Africa.
- NATURAL RESOURCES:**
Diamonds, titanium, bauxite, iron, gold, chromite
- LIFE EXPECTANCY:** 40.93 years
- INFANT MORTALITY:**
156.48 deaths/1,000 live births, highest in the world
- HIV/AIDS ADULT PREVALENCE RATE:**
7 percent (2001 estimate), one of the lowest in Africa
- ETHNIC GROUPS:**
20 African Ethnic Groups comprise 90 percent of the population; 10 percent Creole.
- RELIGION:**
Muslim, 60 percent; Indigenous Beliefs, 30 percent; Christian, 10 percent
- LANGUAGES:** English, Mende, Temne and Krio
- LITERACY:**
35.1 percent age 15 and over can read and write English, Mende, Temne or Arabic
- GOVERNMENT TYPE:** Constitutional Democracy
- TELEPHONES-MAIN LINES IN USE:** 24,000 (2002)
- TELEPHONES-MOBILE CELLULAR:** 113,200 (2003)
- INTERNET USERS:** 10,000 (2005)

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, *The World Factbook*



SIERRA LEONE *Travelogue*

MUDDY LOTUS SCHOOL

the company is providing jobs and putting money back into the community by supporting an orphanage, building schools, markets, medical clinics and infrastructure, as well as paying fair wages to its employees.

Watson's week-long expedition with the team from *Elle*, which will be running a feature on the country in the magazine's December 2008 issue, started out in Freetown and then worked its way over to the diamond-rich area of Kono, 180 miles from Freetown and a five- to seven-hour drive. Kono is a region of the country that, due to its diamonds, bore much of the brunt of the civil war, as a rebel army enslaved residents and forced them to dig for diamonds to provide the forces with a currency they could exchange for arms.





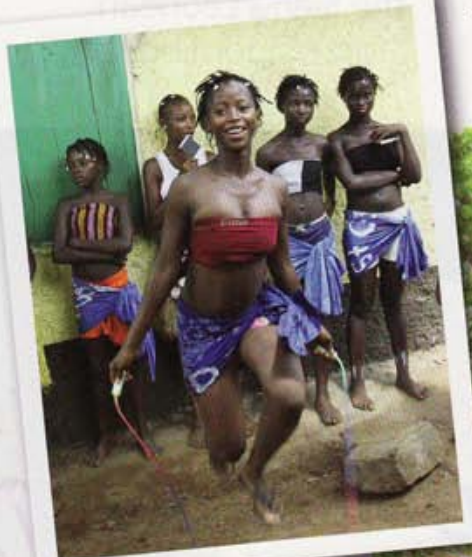
Ruff&Cut supports the Muddy Lotus School. The school goes from kindergarten through eighth grade and is based on the British educational system. The curriculum also includes French and the Sierra Leonean art of looming.



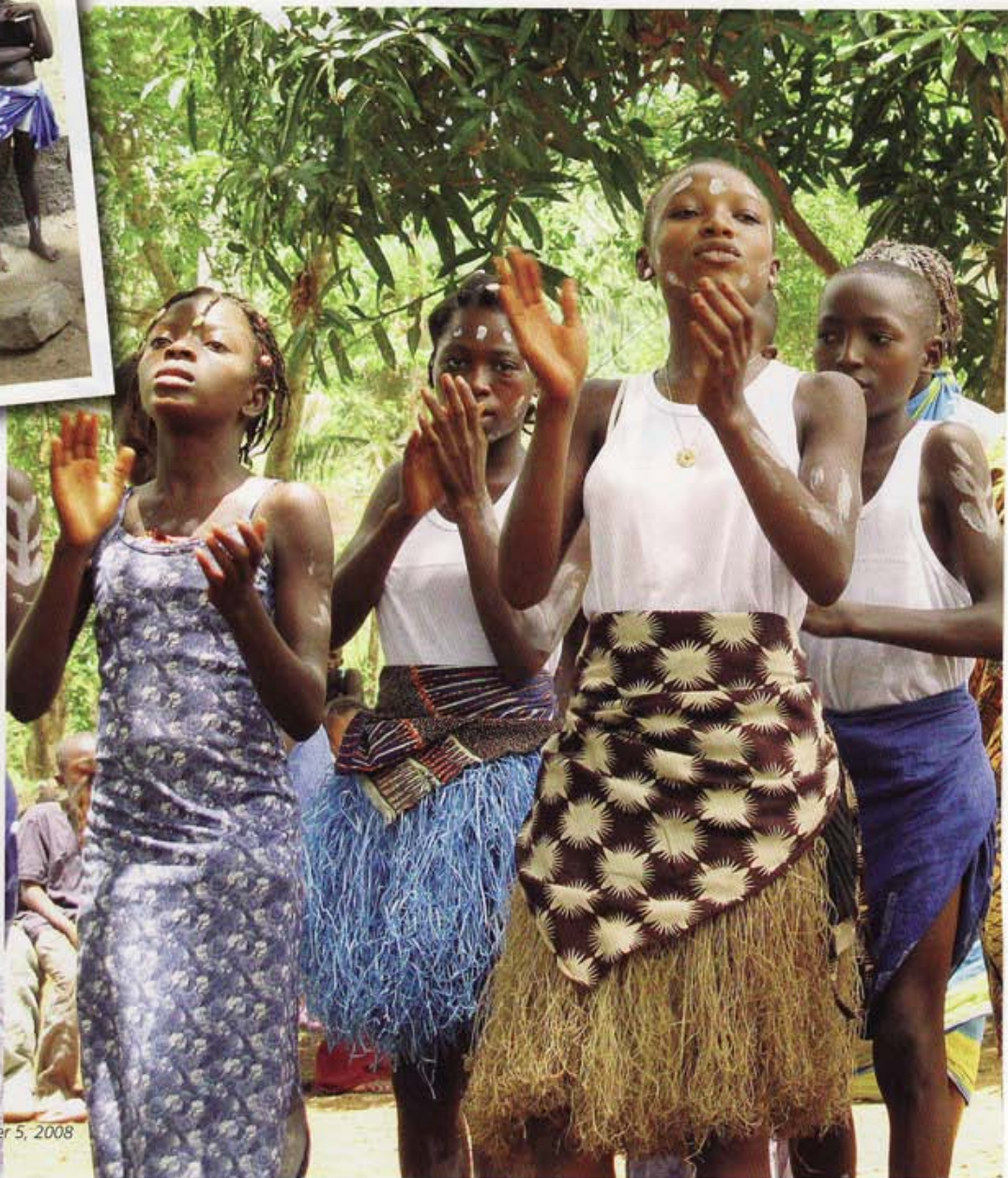
SIERRA LEONE *Travelogue*

ST. GEORGE ORPHANAGE

The *Elle* team stayed at the Kono Hotel, a bare-bones operation run by a generator due to its lack of electricity. The trip included visits to the St. George Orphanage, supported by Target Resources and various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Ruff&Cut also donates 5 percent of retail sales of its jewelry to one of its NGO partners. In addition, Target Resources and Ruff&Cut also support schools and have built bridges and covered markets — all endeavors

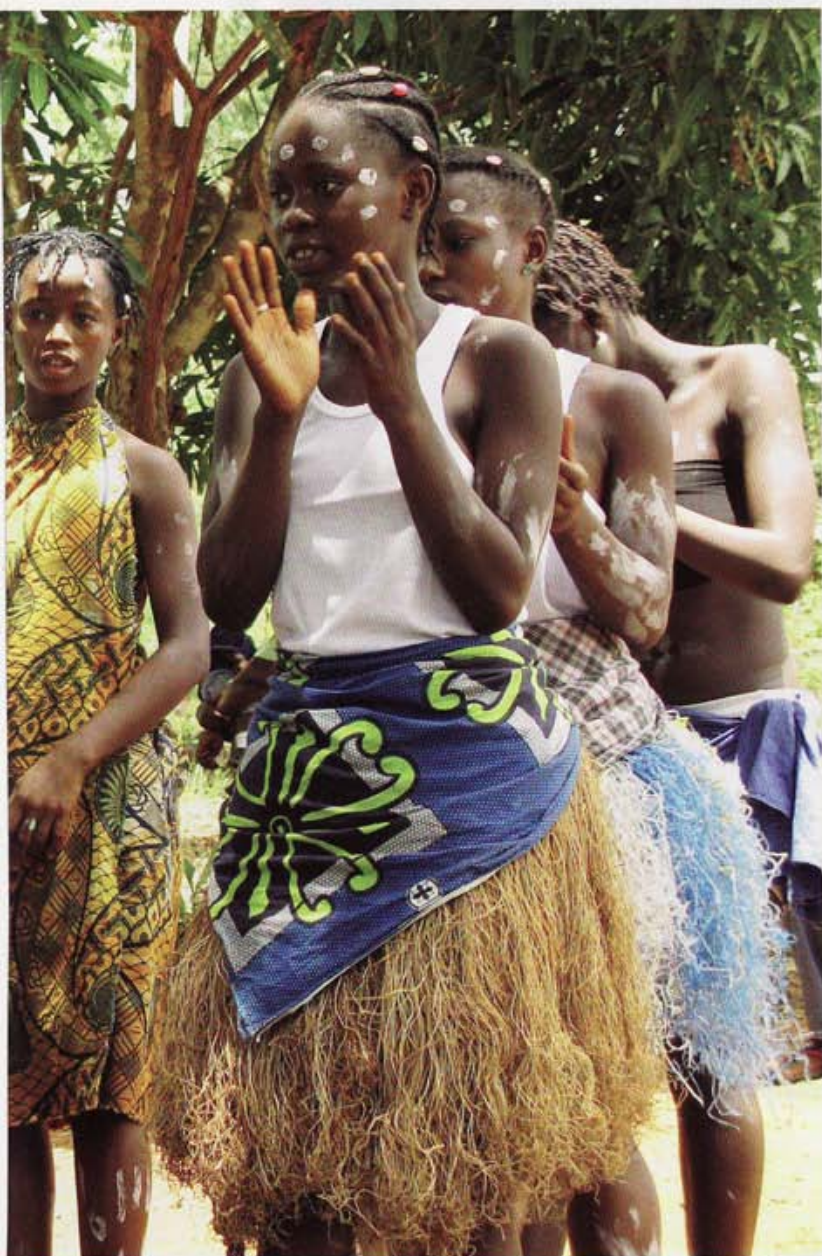


The St. George Orphanage is supported by Target Resources and Ruff&Cut. There are 65 residents of the orphanage and a staff of eight. A social worker drives around Freetown and brings abandoned children to the orphanage. As part of their therapy and recovery, the St. George Orphanage children dance and use poetry to express and cope with the horrors of what happened to them.





St. George Orphanage is supported by Target Resources. Ruff&Cut also donates 5 percent of retail sales of its jewelry to the orphanage.



HISTORY

Originally, Sierra Leone was settled by four tribal groups, the Bulom, Mende and Temne, followed later by the Fulani. In the 1500s, the Portuguese were the first Europeans to explore the area, naming it Sierra Leone, which means lion mountains. The capital city of Freetown, located on the coast of Sierra Leone, got its start as a home for runaway slaves and later freed slaves. In 1808, the coastal area became a British colony and in 1896, a British protectorate was established over the rest of the country.

On April 27, 1961, Sierra Leone became an independent nation and the next 40 years proved to be turbulent for the country. A series of violent coups resulted in unstable governments seesawing between civilian and military rule, eventually leading to the start of a vicious civil war in 1991 that lasted until 2002. The civil war marked a decade of terror, during which time the resource-rich nation sank to the least livable country in the world, according to the United Nations. It was this horrific war that was the catalyst for the Kimberley Process (KP). Implemented in August 2003, the KP is a United Nations-mandated monitoring system and chain of warranties that tracks diamonds at every point of the pipeline from mines to retail to ensure that the stones are not funding war or other human rights violations.

When its civil war ended, Sierra Leone began the process of picking up the pieces and starting over. Its diamond resources have attracted some foreign interests into the country to mine for the gems and help pave the road of hope to a more stable and financially secure future for its people.

SIERRA LEONE Travelogue

TARGET RESOURCES MINE

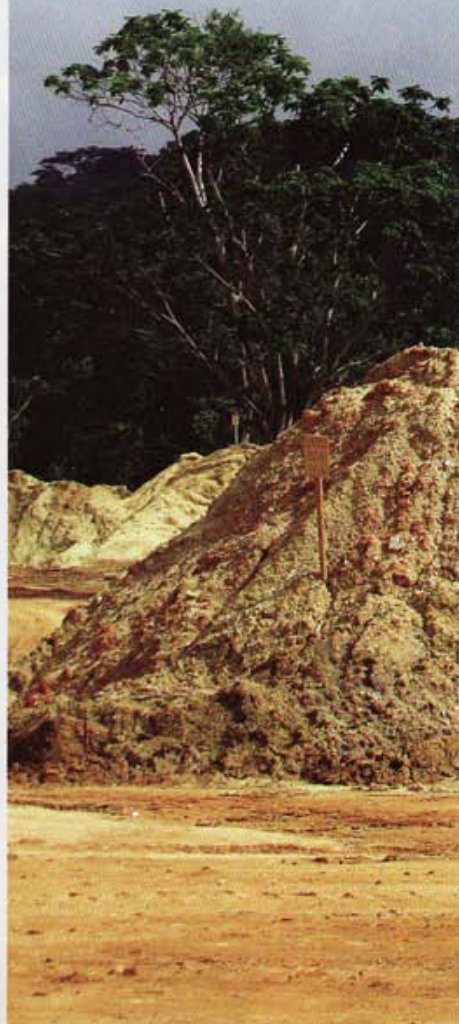
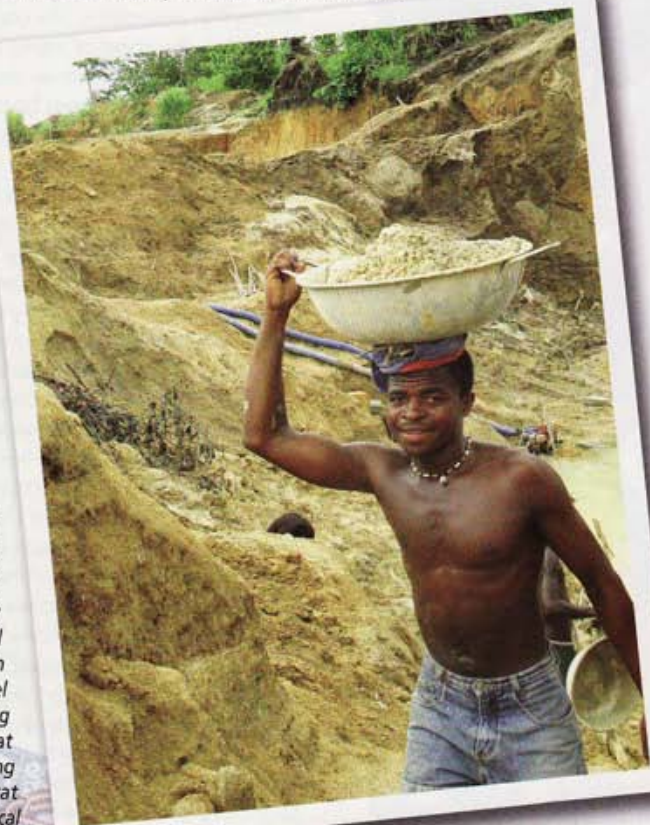
that are bringing renewed hope and resurrection to a country devastated by the ravages of war and poverty.

Target Resources' job site has housing that includes showers and air conditioning for its workers. The mine has 370 employees, all but 20 of whom are Sierra Leoneans. Workers are encouraged to join the Sierra Leone Mining Workers Union to ensure that they are paid fair wages, which, depending upon the job, run anywhere from almost \$3 to \$20 per day. It is a high wage in an area where police officers make \$1 a day and school teachers, 65 cents a day. ♦



The drill goes into the ground, digging out gravel that shows diamond indicator minerals and mapping the gravel depths. Mining in this way is both environmentally friendly and economically feasible as it maximizes efficiency by using less fuel and determining whether or not there are diamonds in a location. The drill is also used for bringing fresh water to the village.

Artisanal miners pan for diamonds and gold on Target Resources property. The company allows the diggers on its property at no charge to work the land in exchange for an exclusive contract to purchase. The 90,000 tons of diamond- and gold-bearing gravel sourced by Target Resources, far right, is part of the stockpile of the mining season. The company projects reaching full diamond processing soon at 100,000 tons of gravel per month. It is averaging gem-quality diamonds at 1 carat and achieving \$500 to \$600 per carat compared to the historical average of \$505.





Diamonds are kept in secured storage with an x-ray machine. In order to access diamonds, the landowner, a government representative and a representative from Target Resources must all be present with their separate keys to unlock each of three individual locks.

Once the excavation is done, Target Resources fills in the holes left by the machinery so that water-borne diseases are not fostered and the land can later be used for agricultural purposes. Only 1 percent of the land in Sierra Leone is used for commercial agricultural purposes.

