



# KOIDU NEW SEMBEHUN CITY COUNCIL



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*Office of His Worship, the Mayor*

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Fellow citizens,

I wish to address you all on this day that marks the end of 2014 and the beginning of another year. It is rather unfortunate that due to the unprecedented outbreak of the dangerous Ebola viral disease in the country, all peace-loving citizens cannot share joy or happiness with one another this time round as it used to be in yester years.

Yet, significant efforts characterized by invaluable contributions by Government, Local and International partners or stakeholders in the fight to eradicate the menace unavoidably, inevitably eminently take prominence amidst contemporary development. And if they are to deserve appreciation, then I would like to express thanks and appreciation to His Excellency the President and the Hon. Vice President of Sierra Leone, representatives of the International Community-The British operating the Ebola command center in Kono, International Rescue Committee (IRC), World Vision, Action Aid Int., Ibis, Unicef, UNDP, International Federation of the Red Cross, KDDA in the UK, Kono Foundation in the USA, Kono Union(KU) in the USA, Kono Progressive Union(KPU) in the USA, Kono District Global Organization(KDGO) (to name but a few). I also strongly acknowledge the relentless support by our Kono Honorable Members of Parliament, Ministers of Government from Kono, Paramount Chiefs, Councilors, Civic Society, women and youth-

groups, intersects, opinion leaders and state's security forces, Local NGOs and CBOs, Kono citizens resident in the diaspora, the First Lady, Wife of the Vice President, Boi Finda Koroma and Ambassadors Extraordinary from Kono. Most importantly, my acknowledgement would be hardly considered sincere if I fail to extol our doctors, the burial team, contact tracers and nurses, some of whom have died of the dangerous pandemic and- of course- a marauding plague.

### **OUR SUCCESS**

Now that we have come to the year 2015, I consider it imperative to give a catholic perspective or overview of the Koidu New Sembehun City Council's engagement and or preoccupation in the context of development in the municipality; and in fulfillment of our obligations enshrined in the local statutory instruments. In this regard, I am delighted to outline Council's success in the procurement of solar lights and accessories for the PHUs within the city; restoration of 2 megawatts for Koidu City electrification after almost three decades in abysmal darkness, starting the final stage of the tarmac road in Koidu City by GuicoPres Construction Company, rehabilitation of 3 hospital quarters in the city; provision of 1 new brand ambulance with support from IRC; procurement of motorbikes for hospital staff; completion of the pediatric ward; completion of the toilet at the holding centre at the city hospital and the provision of computer with accessories for the hospital staff. Council has done well in the rehabilitation of 3 hectares IVS rice at Dorma and the construction of pen and stocking with small ruminants at Simbakoro. We have also provided support to vulnerable and abandoned children with food, finance, clothing through their foster parents; and with the view to strengthen the waste management system, Council also ensure the provision of 2 tricycles to compliment the waste management vehicles, provision of funds for 12 months for the

cleaning exercise and clearing of garbage waste at the Konomanyi lorry park and Gbense market.

### **OUR CHALLENGE**

However, it is rather unfortunate that KNSCC with only 45.1% Own Source Revenue generation could not meet its budget line because the OCTÉA Mining Company reluctantly refuses to pay their taxes, and which, to all intents and purpose, is a challenge that walks against the success of the Council and the progress of the city as a whole. This negative attitude of the OCTÉA Mining Company is a gross contravention of the agreement signed with the Government of Sierra Leone in 2010. It also contravenes **Sections 45, 56, 69, 70, 71 of the Local Government Act of 2004**, which make provisions for property-tax payment. The Agreement clearly states that:

- 1) 2% of profit gained should be allocated to the Koidu New Sembehun City Council;
- 2) The Council should take the lead in community development projects;
- 3) \$100,000 USD shall be a contribution to capacity-building, and 60% of which should be put aside for the expatriates and 40% for the indigenes with employable skills;
- 4) The Council shall have a representative in the Village Resettlement Committee VRC; which still faces bottlenecks;
- 5) The Resettlement Action Plan (RAP) shall have a time-line for the completion of the houses which is yet to be produced by OCTEA;
- 6) The Company shall take the responsibility in taking the lead in forming the Independent Monitoring Committee comprising the civic society groups, the media and local community representatives;
- 7) An annual social contribution to the tune of 0.25% of the aggregate ex-mine price of the diamond sold in the previous year shall be managed and disbursed by the committee formed by both parties (lessee and lessor) for the benefit of the Kono community.

- 8) There has to be adopted (in principle and practice) the underground mining policy according to the South African Standard by 2015;
- 9) There has to come into being an operation of an entity called "The Koidu Development Trust" including the KDC, KNSCC and Tankoro Chiefdom charged with the responsibility to oversee and monitor focus area 1&2
- 10) In a project to be known as Koidu Kimberlite project, the Community Development Fund should be utilized in accordance with clause 15:15.13.
- 11) Question still looms over the \$360,000 USD proclaimed to be spent on Kono District Football Team- the Diamond Stars on an annual basis. Reference, page 27 of the Community Development Action Plan (CDAP) of OCTEA 2012.

### **THE ATTITUDE OF OCTÉA AGAINST PROGRESS**

Our Council which has been taking a holistic view of income-generating activities in Koidu with mathematical precision unquestionably considers OCTÉA's attitude towards the municipality completely against progress. The OCTÉA Mining Company, which contract expires in 2030, has in use 3 different camp communities with about 150 multiplexes, canteens, European and African illicit supermarkets, workshops, 50 drilling machines, the second biggest washing plant in Africa which worths 180 tons per hour, 10 wheel loader, 7 graders, 7 truck trailers, 22 bulldozers, 45 ADT dumpers, 17 excavators, at least 120 light vehicles, 8 power house generators, 60 water pumps, etc. It is rather unfortunate, pathetic and very inhuman that a company with all these facilities in permanent engagement cannot pay their taxes to improve the lives of the Koidu people over 85% of whom are living in abject poverty. On a rather sad note, the people of Koidu and perhaps the rest of Sierra Leoneans had better know that the activities of the OCTÉA Mining Company have a very devastating impact on the lives of the people

and the city as a whole. There is an impending or imminent disaster looming over the city and which could be likely caused by flooding at the Gbense market. The Company will be responsible for any such upheaval because they have deliberately blocked the water way between two major streams- Meiya and Woryie- and which are the main outlets of the Gbense market during the rains. Taking the analysis into grave consideration, nonetheless, the people of Koidu must now ask themselves as to how can such a rich company which worth at least \$300,000,000( Three Hundred Million USD) be amassing or accumulating wealth from the land of the Kono people on the one hand, depriving them (land owners) of their right to progress or development on the other hand. What a sheer deprivation. Comparatively, other bigger mining companies in other parts of the country (North) are doing remarkably well in improving the lives of the children of the soil by the strict adherence to their cooperate social responsibility; and never are they reported to have reneged in their duty of paying taxes.

### **OUR STANCE AND RESOLVE AGAINST OCTÉA**

At this juncture, our position is resolute. For the fact that the OCTÉA Mining Company deliberately refuses to demonstrate its co-operate social responsibility in the city despite persistent demand through several correspondences, Council is now left with no other alternative than to take legal action against the Company. Enough is enough.

### **OUR PROSPECTS**

In order that it might accomplish its task in fulfillment of obligations enshrined in its strategic working document, Council (in 2015) is determined to successfully and assiduously walk towards the following:

- Improvement on the measures for the eradication of Ebola in the Koidu City and perhaps the rest of the District; and per extension the sub region.

- Procurement of ambulance with support from GIZ in the fight against Ebola;
- Strengthening support to social mobilization groups against Ebola;
- Training of Community Health Workers on integral disease surveillance and response;
- Ensuring cohesion of post-Ebola communities peopled with survivors, orphans, widows and families;
- Provision of furniture for hospital and diet for 150 patients on daily basis;
- Contracting the service of cleaners for the regular maintenance of proper sanitation in the hospital;
- Construction of primary healthcare complex, fixing up an Xray machine, the provision of medical consumables and equipment for the KGH and the completion of the mortuary;
- Construction of Municipal Junior Secondary school at Ward 62, the provision of learning and teaching materials and the provision of grant for tertiary students;
- Maintenance of 10 streets in the city, face-lifting of the Gbense market and the construction of drainages around the square;
- Procurement of waste management vehicle, fencing of the KNSCC complex and the Samandu cemetery;
- Commencement of project on the construction of a mini-stadium in Ward 62 Korquima;
- Provision of public transport;
- Reclamation, maintenance and utilization of mined out lands;
- Rehabilitation of agricultural warehouses in Koidu City;
- Rehabilitation of Koidu school for the blind, 2 other primary schools and the rehabilitation of the KNSCC education office;
- Outsourcing of the market due collection and consequently restructure the Treasury department of the Council;

- Construction of a clock tower with support from Lebanese Chief, Mr. Kassim M. Basma;
- Completion of the Konomanyi lorry park resource centre with support from UNDP, the establishment of a youth farm etc.

## **CONCLUSION**

On the conclusion, I would like to thank the Traditional Authorities, Inter-Religious Council, Civil Society, the Press, Teachers' Union, KONSU, Traders' Union, Bike Riders Union, Drivers Union, Artists Union, the physically challenged, the aged, women, youth organizations, the Kono Diaspora and all tax-payers for their continued support to our Council. More importantly, I would also like to appeal to those in the Diaspora to come home and participate in the April 6-19<sup>th</sup>.2015 population census which is the strongest indicator for development in cities and districts. Current GPS survey reports have it that Kono has 14 Chieftdoms, 72 Sections, 8 political constituencies, 27 political wards with 41 councilors including the Mayor and the District Council Chairman, 1,321 villages, 81,477 family households with a 65% youthful population.

With love and sincerity I would like to express deep condolence to all families whose loved ones had died of Ebola during this critical period in our country; and I wish all and sundry a happy and prosperous new year.

Submitted by:

**Saa Emerson Lamina**

**HW The Mayor**