



In pre independent Papua New Guinea in the early 1970's, we witnessed the introduction of a competition to establish the country's first national flag. Peter was working in a remote area of West New Britain, where a British volunteer was teaching, and so he was invited to take a break from building the new classroom, to take an art and craft lesson instead. Topically, Peter chose the designing of the national flag as his theme. Few of the children had ever ventured more than a few miles from their rainforest homes, so the geographical appreciation of something as big as even a province, let alone a nation covering a large land mass, multiple islands and over 800 tribes, was an impossible task. Five years later we experienced the lowering of the Australia's colours and the hoisting up of PNG's first national flag, in black, red, yellow and resplendent with a bird of paradise, the country's unique symbol.



On assuming power in Mozambique, following the long civil war, the victorious *Frelimo* liberation movement simply established their flag as the nation's own. That it displays an AK47, the weapon of choice for freedom fighters, has not been sufficient to prompt a revision to be made to the nation's flag during the last 20 years of the country's peace. Whilst,



this year, neighbouring Malawi, decided that after opting to display a rising sun on its flag in 1964, it was time to make the change to a fully risen sun.



In this year alone, 22 African nations will celebrate 50 years of independence. Last week, the continent's most populace country Nigeria, which has one of the continent's most un-distinctive flags, was acknowledging its freedom from colonialism amidst serious questions as to whether there was more to be reflected upon than celebrated.

As Sierra Leone begins to contemplate its own jubilee celebrations next April, a group of staff at



the theological college are working on a project to combine both the nation's milestone and the 35 years since the college's inauguration. There is much to be considered, including how to remember the many people from a variety of nations who have contributed to theological education and nation building during that time. Meanwhile the green, white and blue of the Sierra Leonean flag invites a deep reflection on how it has been utilised, functioned and interpreted, at different stages, during the country's fragile, democratic growth and for too long, a costly civil war.



The green band, at the top, stands for the nation's agriculture, mountains and natural resources. As we are coming to the end of the rainy season it is indeed a verdant landscape that we witness across the nation. Agricultural produce is far less than it ought to be but a recent story from the Kenema District is more than worthy of flagging up and not just for lovers of chocolate.

When the war ended, a cocoa group called "Kpeya" which means "give way" in Mende, made a useful alliance with Africa's most successful cocoa cooperative, [Kuapa Kokoo](#) (Good Cocoa Farmers' Company) in Ghana. The company is the main source of fair-trade cocoa, in the UK and owns nearly half of Britain's Divine chocolate company, which had a £12.5m turnover last year – a share of which goes straight back to the farmers, including those in Kenema.

The white band at the centre of the flag represents unity and justice. The trial of the former Fisheries Minister concluded this week, with a guilty verdict being handed to Haja Afsatu Kabba, for misappropriating and misusing public funds. She now faces more than US\$100,000 in fines or 15 years in prison. The verdict, which many had thought unlikely, given her prominent position among the nation's political elite, was rightly applauded, as being a positive demonstration of the government's attempt to eliminate wide-spread corruption wherever it is

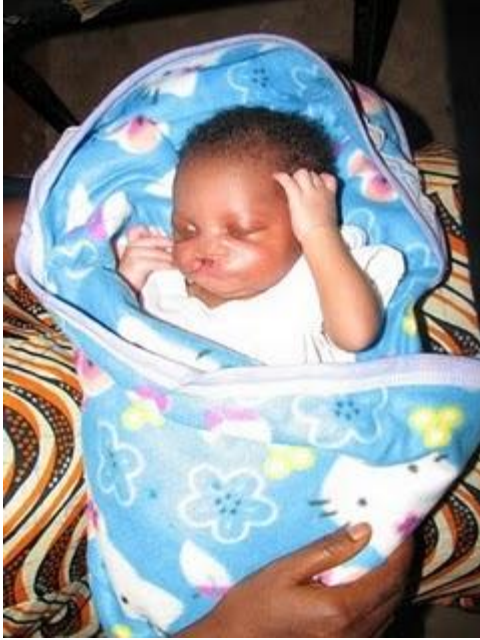


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The blue band, at the bottom, stands for the hope, that Freetown's natural harbour, the deepest protected port on the whole of the west of Africa, will make a contribution to peace in the world, in the same way that the harbour offered freedom to the tens of thousands people who arrived into it, as a result of the ending of trans Atlantic slavery. Today, as a busy trading port the harbour also features in the needs of vulnerable new mothers and their babies too, as is evident in the story of Agnes and her new born baby girl Sia.



Agnes arrived at the last monthly gathering of the HIV positive group in Wellington, proudly displaying her 4 day old daughter. Both were warmly greeted, as Agnes told the story of how she had already visited The Mercy Ships land based hospital because of Sia's hair lip. Because of Sia's inability to suck, Agnes needs to express her breast milk, making



feeding a precarious process. Resorting to formula milk alternatives only increases the possibility of life-threatening water born infections. Agnes had been told that an operation was not available at present, but would be so in four months time, when the Mercy Ship vessel will dock in port and begin its 10 months stay, with six surgical theatres on board, to address a whole variety of medical needs.

No doubt there are many more green, white and blue tinged stories in Salone but hopefully this biographical snapshot of the 50 year old flag will add colour to the viewing of your own much older national flag and perhaps the one of the country in which you read this too.

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Posted By Peter and Janice to [ClarkServInSalone](#) at 10/17/2010 04:06:00 PM