

# Special Commentary

# Giving SOCFIN

## A Bad Image

(By Sorie Fofana)

The trial of six people, alleged to have destroyed property belonging to Socfin Agricultural Company (SL) Limited in the Malen Chiefdom, Pujehun district has opened a can of worms.

The spokesman for MALOA (Malen Land Owners Association), Hon. Shaka Sama (one of the people currently standing trial in Bo) has now been accused of paying some indigenous people of Malen, to pollute the Malaini River, in order to blame it on the operations of Socfin.

Socfin had been blamed in the past for polluting the Malaini River as a result of their operations in the area. Socfin has consistently denied the accusation.

Without any scientific proof, the country's EPA (Environment Protection Agency) had blamed Socfin for the pollution that took place in the Malaini River. Although independent investigators proved that Socfin was not liable for the pollution of the Malaini River, EPA insisted that it was Socfin's operations that led to the pollution. It was this erroneous, unsubstantiated, totally biased and misleading report that NGOs such as Green Scenery were bandying around the world as gospel truth. It clearly shows the brazen incompetence of the leadership of EPA and Green Scenery in Sierra Leone.

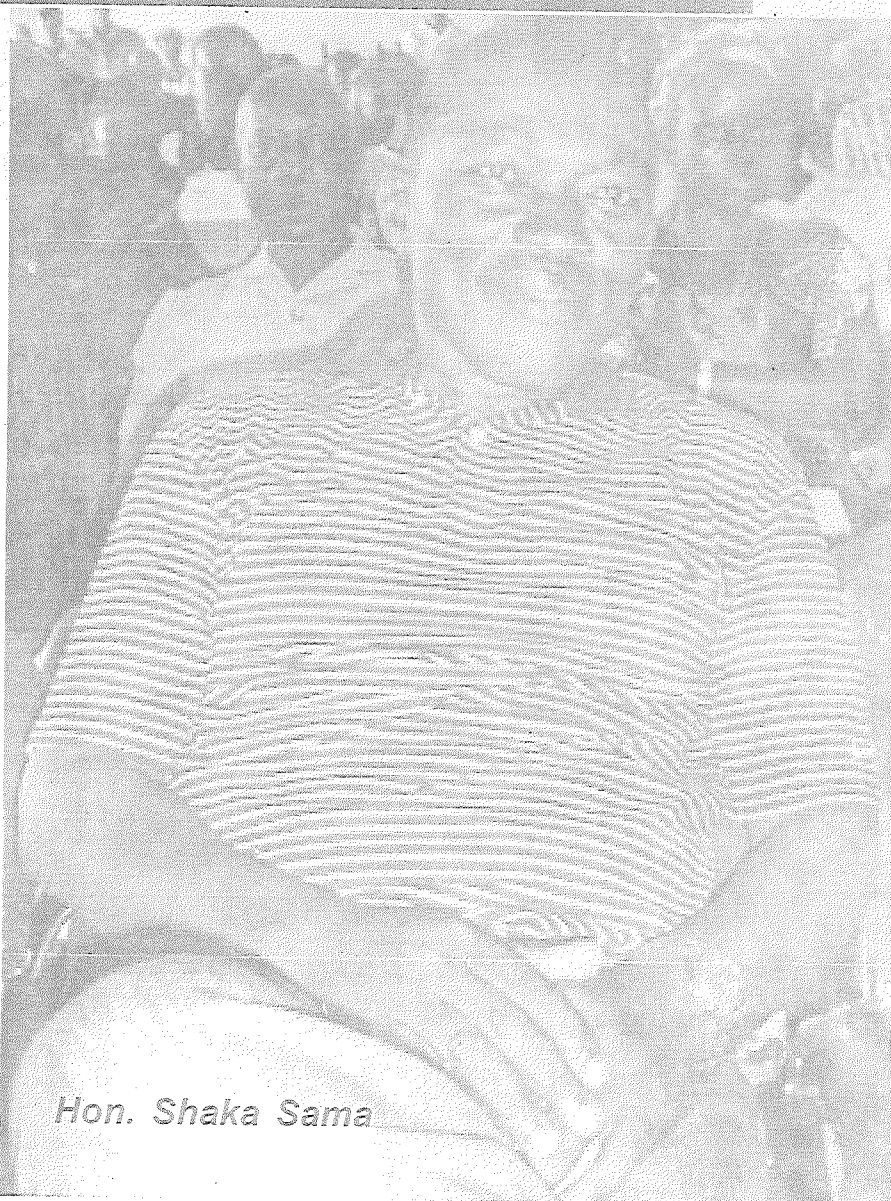
The onus is now on Hon. Shaka Sama to prove his innocence in the light of fresh allegations that he was the man behind the pollution of the Malaini River in order to portray Socfin in a negative light.

The leadership of EPA should now reflect on their earlier action based on uncorroborated report, castigating the management of Socfin by apologising to the company for soiling their reputation, both locally and internationally.

It will be unfair to comment on the matter before Magistrate Alphonso Fidawi of the Bo Magistrate Court. But suffice it to say that people like Hon. Shaka Sama allowed greed to overshadow his sense of reasoning.

EPA's over-reliance on discredited sources of information to punish foreign companies investing in our country is, to say the least, gobsmacking.

We call on both local and international NGOs to always do independent investigations before putting out their



Hon. Shaka Sama

so-called findings. It is only by so doing that they can continue to earn the admiration and respect of their sponsors.

Relying on false, fabricated and concocted information to condemn an international company like Socfin does not augur well for international best practice.

In future, EPA, Green Scenery and others must endeavour to get the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth before they embark on their campaign of calumny against foreign investors. That is not too much to ask for.

The fresh revelations coming out of Malen Chiefdom have vindicated Socfin Agricultural Company (SL) Limited. Our warning today is: stop giving Socfin a bad name.

Thank you!