

## Face to face with poverty in Kono

# US Rap Star cries

# Awoka

By Ophaniel Gooding

Notwithstanding his enthusiasm on stage, and the gutsy spirit of the hip-hop culture, Wu Tang Clan's Raekwon (born Corey Woods), American hip-hop superstar shed tears seeing the diamond mines in Kono, eastern Sierra Leone.

Relaying his impression about Kono, during a breakfast conference with journalists at the Bintumani hotel in Freetown, Raekwon said: "I cried."

He continued: "I sat at the back of the car crying; they got the camera all on my face it didn't matter to me; I cried my heart out; I had to let go because I couldn't believe what I was seeing...I always thought that I had a bad struggle, but my struggle doesn't compare to a lot of peoples' struggles, especially out here [in Sierra Leone]; people that basically control the mines think everything is a joke; I was mad, angry..."

The compassionate

American superstar disclosed that, "I'm a person, I have feelings, you know what I mean, and I definitely know what's right from what's wrong [that's why]... I just flipped out, but I did it in a way, you know I don't want to insult VH1 with their project, but at the token I let them know, listen, this is more than a project about diamonds this is about my mother\*\*\*king people-excuse my language."

Chronicling their visit [Raekwon, Paul Wall and Puerto Rican entertainer-Tego Calderon], Article 19 Films producers in association with the VH1 and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), plan to show how hip-hop culture has penetrated every crevice of the globe, binding youths despite language, religion or

race.

The project will also explore how clean diamonds may be used to fuel the fight against poverty in mining communities in Sierra Leone and beyond. The film is expected to premiere on VH1 in early 2007. That is why UNDP's Diamonds for Development Programme focuses on the human dimension of the diamond industry, which complements the Kimberly Process Certification Scheme, launched in 2003 to ensure that diamonds are conflict-free. The stars left the shores of Freetown on Friday after a four-day visit for the filming of "BLING: A Planet Rock", a hard-hitting scrutiny of Sierra Leone's diamond trade and how the flashy world of commercial hip-hop played a role in the country's.

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L-R Raekwon & Paul Wall