

# First Lady focuses on plight of Sierra Leone children

YEARS OF WAR HAVE LEFT RESIDENTS TRAUMATISED — KOROMA

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Staff Reporter

**Dubai** Sierra Leone's First Lady Sia Nyama Koroma is tackling the West African country's issues hands-on.

Koroma is currently visiting the UAE as part of the fifth Institute for International Research (IIR) Corporate Social Responsibility Conference held yesterday, talking about the opportunities in Sierra Leone's mining industry.

Koroma, who is a qualified psychiatric nurse, said: "I am here in the UAE to create an awareness of the plight of children in Sierra Leone, both orphans and other children. I use my nursing training every day. After the war we have been left with a population where a percentage is traumatised, especially women as there are a lot of rape victims.

"Orphaned children suf-



ARSHAD ALI/Gulf News

fer from loneliness and depression and we have a lot of cases where youth are taking street jobs. Many are living and suffering from alcohol and drug dependency, so I counsel them and talk to them: there's a lot of work to do, every day. I even use my basic nursing skills to help," she said.

The country is the poorest in the world, ranking 177 of 177 countries on the recent UN Development

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**Sia Nyama Koroma**  
First Lady of Sierra Leone

Programme Human Development Indices.

Koroma's visit coincides with the International Day of the African Child, which is today, that was established in 1976 after the Soweto protest shootings.

She works with All As One charity in Dubai, encouraging individuals and businesses to join its 4Dirhams A Day sponsorship programme.

The charity operates an

orphanage, school and medical clinic in Freetown, Sierra Leone, and encourages participants to donate Dh120 a month to sponsor a child.

Koroma will visit King's School and Horizon School in Dubai today.

"The aim of the day is to educate children about the plight of children back home, to talk about the culture because we're getting into a world where children need to mix at an early stage. I'm going to tell them about the true picture as it is, about the health centres, educational centres and how the children are," she said.

"I am definitely going to work on the infant mortality rate, simply because we have the worst figures in the world. So I've set up the WISH (Women in Safer Health) programme. We found that women are dying because they simply do not have access to healthcare."