

## One World Link Annual Report December 2008

This has been another busy year for all of us. After celebrating 25 years of the link, we've been reminding ourselves of our primary aims, namely:

- Encouraging the awareness of global relationships;
- Education in each community;
- Building links between groups in each of our communities;
- Encouraging and supporting person to person interaction;
- Encouraging links between Local Authorities and other public bodies in each community;
- To continuously encourage exchange visits;
- To monitor our achievement of these aims.

Our specific objectives for this past year were to review our internal structure here, and to focus very much on developing the finished Community Centre as a local hub for the Bo community; as a teaching and capacity building centre, a communication centre, a resource centre and as a general focal point for the community there.

Whilst doing this there have been visits in both directions, though arranging visits from Bo in this direction hasn't been as successful as we'd have hoped largely because of difficulties in obtaining visas. We very much hope that in the coming spring we will have three visitors from Bo...Maada Fobay, Catharine Koroma and Alpha Bah. In the course of this year, we've had two visits from Bo; the first from Father Peter Conteh in August. Peter is a longstanding supporter of the link who works as development advisor for the Catholic church in the Bo area of Sierra Leone and the second was from Eric Moosa, environmental officer for Bo district here on a 3 month Commonwealth Professional Fellowship And from whom you will hear more a little later on.

From this side, a group of four have just returned from a fortnight in Sierra Leone, - Jane Knight, Andy Smith, Kip Warr and Glenn Fleet, and there will be more on their trip a little later on too.

The reviewing of our internal workings here, largely as a result of some very helpful workshop leading by Maria Franchi helped us to identify and recognise ways in which we could make ourselves be more focused and be more efficient. The subgroups were strengthened and encouraged to be more independent and self driven, reporting back at our regular committee meetings to share hopes and outcomes and sometimes frustrations. Spurred on by the success and vibrancy of a very active and large youth group in Bo, we've been aware for some time of the need to encourage more younger aged people to become involved with the link here, and to this aim we've been very fortunate to have been joined by two individuals on the right side of 30 who are showing great fortitude with this task; JoAnne Fisher and Ben Wesson have already

showed themselves as the Face of the **Warwick OWL Youth group** at recent events including their own Open Day in Spencer Yard last Sunday.

The **Schools group** have as ever shown remarkable tenacity and patience as they unerringly knock on our schools' doors, suffering what in most cases is the predictable rebuff with stoic dignity. The School's group have also been preparing teaching materials for use in schools in Bo and have recently sent out, for example, laminated A3 posters on world food production for display in schools, along with other materials which have been requested by teachers there for use with the Laptop computer, projector and Dvd player that have been sent out.

A lot of what Alan, John and Brian have put together, with enormous help from their behind-the-scenes team of Myf Hodkin, Janice Austin, Gayle Farr and Georgina Harkness can be found on our website.

And on that subject, the **Website** is now a joy to behold and something we're really proud of. There's a huge amount of info there, about what we're about, what we do and all sorts of links to other parties. And we always post newsletters and reports and other relevant documentation. I'd like to thank Kip, Brian and John for all the work that goes into the website.

**The Woman's group** Bo OWL have recently constructed a new hut which has a storage and office space for the youth group, but the main part of which is to be designed to be a new café and space for women's activities, and Jane has reported the impressive show the women put on providing catering at a very high standard for the Waste Management workshop; there was much praise at the level of facilities provided at the centre from all who attended, and notably the UN

**The Local Authority group.** As many of you probably already know, over the past couple of years, Jane Knight has managed to sow the seeds and uncover considerable funds for a Waste Management project for Bo City. The plan that has evolved with the considerable help of the various professionals on this side and in Sierra Leone has since been adopted as a template for the city of Mackeni as well as for Bo city, and as the upcoming report will show, is now being delivered to the two local authorities through training and funding from exterior agencies. One World Link has brought from nothing a project which with care and focus will bring enormous improvements in health, sanitation and environmental well-being to these two authorities in the short term, and in the long term provide the building blocks for well designed and run infrastructural systems for these two fast growing cities.

**The Communication** element of our aims is a central one to all of us here and in Bo. Person to Person links using the telephone are constantly encouraged; now that the newsletter is posted on our website and our committee minutes are e-mailed out to their committee, joint decision making becomes easier and easier. This last summer John Myers personally raised a large sum of money which after consultation with colleagues in Bo, he has specifically designated for the setting up of an internet link in the

Community centre. At present, Bo is waiting for the CDMA wireless network (as opposed to 3G) to come up from Freetown; in the meantime Bo OWL will be opening up an account at a local internet café to get the proceedings going, and we hope that they will soon be in a position to appoint a co-ordinator to be trained to run the internet link and to manage the Resource Centre too. Another element of the communications function in Bo is the soon to be appointed co-ordinator for Pen friend letters; as ever the problem of postage remains intractable but by using person post whenever we can and not being reluctant to try any other means, we do as best as we can.

So, of course the times are uncertain here and they are as ever uncertain in Bo. We mourn the loss of long time members Ken Hall and John Holliday, and we keep in our thoughts Johannes Malah, Moosa Conteh and Bishop Patrick **Koroma** all three suffering serious illness. But we celebrate the re-election of Wusu **Sannoh** a personal and loyal friend of the link, as mayor of Bo City. We look forward with excitement to the unfolding of the Waste management project and to the steady development of the community centre as it becomes a more and more significant part of life in Bo. And throughout all of that, our friendships and mutual respect continue to strengthen and to grow.

Just before finishing I'd like to express how much we value the continued support of Leamington Town Council, and to remind you all that Myf, our archivist is always happy to take care of documents or pictures relevant to our 27year old link, and Nan, our librarian and chief minute-taker, is always ready to hear enquiries and requests for reading matter.

Chris King  
Chair Warwick District One World Link  
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