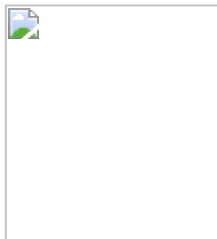


# OWL NEWSLETTER - May 2004

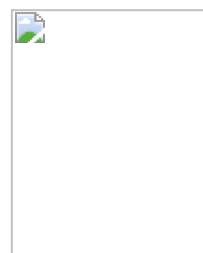
## Our visitors from Bo

16 June - 16 July



**Teresa Bangali**, who many of you will know from her visit here in 2001 (yes, it was 3 years ago!), and who will be representing the Kayoma Women's Development Association in Bo (see below) that she set up as a direct result of her visit here. She will work with our Kayomea Women's Support Group to further links between women's groups in the two districts, to further our understanding of the position of women in Sierra Leone, gain support for the micro-credit scheme initiated by her women's association and also, as a qualified practising teacher, assist on the schools programme.

**David Ngombu** is the Secretary of the Bo One World Link Committee, previously a Secondary Teacher and Human Rights worker for Amnesty International, he was very instrumental in keeping OWL informed during the war years of the 1990's. He will be actively engaged in the development of links between community groups, assist in the implementation of a link between local authorities in both districts, participate in public awareness raising events, participate in the planning of future developments in the link and assist in the programmes of his two colleagues.



**Joseph Bockarie** will work with our Primary Schools who have links with corresponding schools in Bo, give talks and generally assist with development education in other schools, help prepare materials for use in schools and work on the development of mutual educational aims between schools in the two districts.

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### **About the Kayoma Women's Development Association in Bo, Sierra Leone**

The Kayoma Women's Development Group was started after Teresa Bangali visiting Leamington in 2001. She returned home inspired by the work she'd seen women doing here to support other women - particularly Maria Franchi at Bath Place Community Venture. Then Maria went to Bo last autumn and helped Teresa to train the women in making business plans and much more.

There are 8 women's groups and they are primarily involved in skills training and income generating activities. Their membership is a mixture of professional educated women (predominantly teachers but also business women and farmers) and traumatised women with young children, widows and other less privileged women.

They meet fortnightly. When they meet they either have working meetings where they make soap, do gara dyeing or tending vegetables, or discussions and organisational meetings or training sessions. The groups share skills and work together to raise funds to provide for the members, the group and to provide each of them with skills to make a living.

### **The Micro Credit Scheme for the Kayoma Women's Groups**

NaCSA - the Sierra Leone government department responsible for social action runs a micro finance department. Maria Franchi, when visiting Bo last autumn, met the Director and she was extremely impressed by their methodology and results. NaCSA were already running a scheme in Bo and the Director suggested Maria approach them to provide administration for Kayoma's funds, and training and consultancy.

Teresa and Maria both felt that the scheme would enable and support the groups in such a way as to provide for their sustainability and growth although it is a small start. £900 was sent from the Kayoma Support Group fund to start the MicroCredit scheme off - Myf Hodkin raised most of this on her 80th birthday sponsored swim - but it is clear that more funds will be required.

### **What we need to do as the Kayoma Women's Support Group - and why we need YOU!**

As Maria has written in her report (see Newsletter, January 2004), there is a very strong sense of responsibility among the women in Bo. Those who are fortunate strongly believe that they must help their sisters - this is something we hope to learn more about when Teresa visits here in June.

We need to provide moral support for our sisters in Bo; we need to build a picture of what they are undertaking and find out what we can do to support them both emotionally, and financially. To do this we must build a fund,

contributed to regularly by members of Kayoma Women's Support Group; the fund will provide:

- money to fund future visits by Kayoma women to Leamington
- funds for items needed by the Kayoma Women's Groups in Bo
- further capital as required for the Micro Credit scheme

Teresa Bangali is arriving as part of a delegation from Bo OWL in June:

- We need hosts for Teresa's visit - please offer to have Teresa to stay and to take her around Warwick District
- We need introductions to women's groups in Warwick District so that Teresa can speak to them and tell them how much their sisters in Bo need their friendship and support.

**PLEASE GET INVOLVED  
HELP US SUPPORT OUR SISTERS IN BO!  
Contact Janet Alty - 01926 427773 (janet@alty.net)**

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### **OWL LIBRARY SHELF**

Please remember that we have a One World Link shelf at the Leamington Library - please use it!

Ask at the desk to be shown where it is.

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### **Jane Knight goes to Bo**

Jane went out to Bo from 12th to 27th March. Originally she was going to a Commonwealth Local Government Forum meeting in Freetown to discuss the kind of support required to supplement the SL government and other donor efforts to implement strong local democracy after the local elections. She had also planned to visit Bo while over there. But the CLGF event was postponed at the last minute, so she took the opportunity to go anyway and spend the whole time in Bo. We asked her to review progress of the community centre building, and to discuss various joint issues regarding school and women's links and the forthcoming visit of Bo friends to Leamington. She writes in her report:

*"I flew on March 12th 2004 and returned on the 27th after a most inspiring 2 weeks during which I watched the first floor of the One World Link community centre being "floated", I attended local election sensitisation meetings and I travelled from Freetown to Bo, to Tikonko, Blama, Kenema and back. I met MPs, Paramount and other chiefs and One World Link friends - Patrick Koroma, now Bishop of Kenema and Momodu Koroma, Minister of Foreign Affairs as well as many other old and new friends and the British Council Director Rajiv Bendre and the DFID first secretary, Ian Stewart.*

*"My last visit to Bo was in March 2001 with the Mayor of Leamington, Bill Evans. Before the civil war, I had visited Bo 3 times in the early 1980s. What I saw was evidence of real progress being made by the people and the government of Sierra Leone but I also felt angry and in despair at times at the constant frustration caused by lack of infrastructure - like a regular supply of electricity, piped water; decent roads and minimal resources in schools and medical centres. I felt there could be no excuse for Sierra Leoneans to be forced to live on the remains of 1940's infrastructures when most of the rest of the world has moved into the 21st century. However I must have seen at least 20 new schools in the rural areas and some noticeable road improvements had been done since 2001....*

*"I hope we can use the information I gathered to strengthen our link, to focus on priorities such as the centre, income generation and youth training and to bring in new people and energy to make it all sustainable...I hope the community centre will become the Hub of international partnership activities. I hope the results of the local elections will give us new partners and support for improving the lives and resources of our friends in Bo and for building a deeper understanding among the people of Warwick district of the world we are living in"*

*Thanks everyone for giving me this opportunity. Thanks to all the OWL committee friends in Bo, to Rajiv Bendre, to Mussa Conteh and his household for giving me such handsome hospitality and to CLGF for enabling the process."*



## COMMUNITY CENTRE UPDATE

The above is the view of the community centre on the day the 'floating' of the roof was to begin. Going out of Bo town centre, it stands on the left hand side of Mattru Road by the old railway line and opposite the back of Bo school. The timber poles from floor to ceiling were supporting the planks on which the concrete was to be floated and above these were iron rods around which the concrete would set. Jane Knight was there to see it all happen: In her journal she wrote as follows:-

*"Tomorrow LGIB is visiting Leamington to find out how our link functions .... Meanwhile, I am in Bo with longstanding friends and have just had one of my most memorable experiences. The first floor of the community centre was floated. 200 young men and some women gathered and were crawling like ants all over the building. Cement was mixed, buckets were filled and passed hand to hand up the ladders and the concrete was spread, non-stop relentlessly in the hot sun. I have never seen anything like it. From time to time a wave of sound emerged as the young people cheered at some achievement or greeted someone like Theresa when she climbed onto the roof..."*

*Meanwhile in the background there were problems of bounced cheques, no water at first as both water bowsers (water tanks) were out of action and missing cement bags. Fortunately, Joe had appointed Johannes Mallah to stand in for him, and Johannes has much construction experience... With his commanding presence and my £430 cash and Mussa's money changing friend all was nearly resolved. Floating is supposed to be done in one day but unfortunately the water problem (despite a very heavy rain storm in the middle of all this) meant completion took place the next morning.*

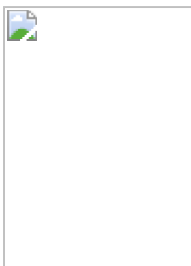
*Meanwhile after working non-stop from 10 until 3.30, the young people were finally served food and water which had been put together by Theresa and Mary Rogers (treasurer) starting that morning at 5.30am. The youngsters who did the work were an amazing mixture of ex-combatants, ex rebels and ex Kamajors. They were paid about £3 for the day's work."*

Jane concludes: "This was clearly a joint effort by us and all the friends who have put their hard earned money into the building and the friends in Bo were doing the work (and have also contributed their personal money). To me this is not AID - it is JOINT ACTION for a common purpose of sharing our concerns about global issues by building a community centre we can all benefit from."

**Do get a copy of Jane's full report (5 pages) available from her at:  
2 Gaveston Road, Leamington Spa, CV32 6EU;  
jknightuk@ntlworld.com; Tel 01926 311807**

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**Councillor Mota Singh** will be the Mayor of Royal Leamington Spa for the next year. At his inauguration on May 15th in the Town Hall he stressed the importance of world peace and co-operation between peoples. He praised the work of One World Link and expressed the hope that he will be able to visit Bo during his year of office.

Mota Singh is also a long serving County Councillor, a well know member of the Sikh community and tireless in his work for good community relations. He will be holding an official reception for our visitors in early July.

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## ***BITS AND PIECES***

**Newsletter** Unfortunately, Marie Thornby, who had volunteered to take on the publication of the Newsletter, had to leave Leamington in order to look after her mother. Is there anyone else out there who would like to do it? Please contact Brian Austin: Tel 428635

### **Visit of Catholic Priest**

At the time of going to press, we have Fr. Prince Charles Brainard here for a few days. He had assisted Maria Franchi while she was in Bo and he asked to come here while over on a 'business' trip. He is being accommodated at St. Peter's Church in Leamington and has taken Services there and met some of the parishioners. He is also visiting Brookhurst, St. Peter's and St. Anthony's Schools.

### **International Day at Aylesford**

We cooperated with Aylesford School when they staged an 'International Day' on 1st April for their Year 9 students by facilitating African drumming by Sierra Leonean Jahman Aggrey and Kenyan storytelling and myths by Kipnyango Seroney studying at Warwick University. We also participated in Year 10 Assemblies to support the work they were expecting to do in promoting global aspects of citizenship.

### **Local Government International Bureau Visit**

The LGIB paid a visit to Warwick District and had meetings with Janie Barrett, the Chief Executive of Warwick District Council, as well as other officers, councillors and members of the OWL committee, in order to introduce everyone to their new Officer, Samantha Page, whose job is to promote greater UK local government involvement in international development activities. We felt that they were favourably impressed with what we are trying to achieve here and hope that there will be long-term benefits from the visit.

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## ***OWL POSTBOX***

### ***Regular monthly mailings***

As well as correspondence and packages being taken out recently by Maria Franchi and Jane Knight, we have resumed our monthly mailings via the British Council in Freetown.

**This is the ONLY reliable way of getting items through to Bo!**

If you have anything to send to Bo, please send it to:

**OWL POSTBOX  
31 THE GRESWOLDES  
RADFORD SEMELE  
LEAMINGTON SPA  
CV31 1TP**

and **please make sure it arrives by the last day of the month.**

Newsletter produced for OWL by Brian Austin,  
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