

One World Link

The friendship link between Bo District in Sierra Leone and Warwick District, UK

www.oneworldlink.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 700714

Chairman's Notebook



It's a difficult time. For once, Sierra Leone is front page news, but for all the wrong reasons.

The year has been increasingly dominated by the Ebola crisis. Whilst Bo, so far, has not been overwhelmed, it has its share of individual tragedy and wider social and economic impact.

As the world is eventually waking up to the need to respond, the local Bo Task Force is dealing with immediate needs. The scale of this problem has caused us to rethink our normal non-aid approach to partnership with Bo. This is a problem of such magnitude that we think it is right to contribute directly to help our friends and colleagues not only fight the disease but provide the support and reconstruction that will be needed in its aftermath.

We have therefore established our own Bo Ebola Emergency Fund which will be used to assist the Bo Task Force and help with post Ebola support.

We are very grateful for the Mayor of Leamington for designating OWL as one of his charities. The monies raised will be used to build up this Fund. Together with other donations this should mean that we will be able to make not only an immediate impact, but provide longer term help.

Whilst Ebola dominates, life continues. We are still developing ideas for solar power at the OWL Centre and the Waste Project continues to progress, with new skip lorries in place. The WHH project workers remain in Bo and are driving this project forward still - an impressive commitment.

Other projects have been put on hold. A further Local Government visit in December, looking at building up a new programme of partnership work with the Bo City and District Councils has been delayed to a later date. Teacher links have also been affected and though we had a very successful Day of the African Child this year, with visiting teachers from Bo, arrangements for further visits have been delayed.

Nevertheless, we remain closely linked with all our friends in Bo and look forward to a return to normal life and activity as soon as possible.

Ebola

Dr Paul Gully, Public Health Specialist and founder member of One World Link reports from Sierra Leone

A good piece of advice here, is to try and achieve something that will hopefully have some influence on stopping the epidemic. That might seem obvious, but inevitably we do spend a lot of time responding to "fires", planning for the short-term, coordinating, travelling between meetings and trying to get a sense of what is really going on.

My task is to coordinate the roll-out of Ebola Care Units (ECUs). The World Health Organisation (WHO) is responsible for the technical aspect and training, but we are in charge of setting up the first four as a proof of concept. Then NGOs, probably funded by the UK, will set up many more. These will be small, 8 bed facilities, in tents, built by local labour with a lot of local material. The objective is to provide isolation for cases close to their homes, when there are no treatment beds or beds in holding centres or where transportation is not available.

A miniscule number of health workers across the world have ever worn the personal protective gear required for Ebola. We have the task of training health care workers in rural SL to perform at the same level, for their protection and the protection of others, in the ECUs. This is a tall order.

I heard from a local MP about his task of dispelling myths about Ebola. This included fears that a person goes into a centre for treatment, has a needle in their arm (for a specimen) and are then sprayed with chlorine and then die. It is not hard to understand how some would think that the first was injecting the virus and the second caused death.

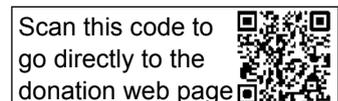


Paul Gully was a founder member of One World Link in the early 1980's. He was doing preventative health training in Leamington and went to Bo in 1982. He left the UK with his family for a very successful career in public health in Canada and later in Geneva working for the World Health Organization (WHO). Now, he has volunteered to go out as a WHO field coordinator and has been in touch with Jane Knight.

If you would like to donate...

One World Link will be sending money to help with the emergency and, in due course, to help with recovery from the effects of the disease on lives and livelihoods. The Chairman of Bo District Council wrote: ***"It's a pleasure and comfort to hear from friends like you. The Ebola situation in Bo and the country is not good... A lot of efforts and strategies have been put in place in the fight against Ebola. We in Bo are putting emphasis on proactive surveillance, social mobilization and case management. These three areas require a lot of financial and logistical input."***

Donate through our website: oneworldlink.org.uk



The Day of the African Child

St Patrick's Primary School in Leamington hosted the Day of the African Child on 16 June 2014. Nearly 500 children from thirteen schools in Warwick and Leamington with links to schools in the city of Bo, Sierra Leone, assembled in a large marquee to the sound of beating drums.

It was a day of huge fun and a lot of learning. The children split into groups and then rotated between activities so that everyone had a go at everything.

In two rooms the air was throbbing to the sound of djembe drums. In complete contrast there was quiet in other rooms where the children thought about more serious issues - the fact that so many children don't enjoy the basic 'right' of education - and wrote buddy messages to their MP telling him their thoughts.

Outside there were races emulating people going to market with baskets of food balanced on their head. In the marquee they were learning the anthem of the link.

*“You are my brother
You are my friend
You are my sister
Our love will never end”*

Elsewhere, the visiting Sierra Leonean teachers told traditional stories to hushed audiences, whilst in the hall, there was noise and excitement as the children learnt to dance to a drum.

On a serious note, the children were told of the origin of the International Day of the African Child in commemorating the shooting of school children in South Africa in 1976 and the need for schools for children everywhere, whatever their abilities or disabilities. Finally they held a grand parade with banners proclaiming their links with schools in Bo and sang and danced in a great display of exuberant enthusiasm.

We made lots of new friends and we learnt about different cultures. I especially enjoyed the singing. I really liked the story teller, Alfred, from Sierra Leone.

The day was expertly managed by Liz Garrett and Katy Traynar of St Patrick's School. We are very grateful for the use of St Patrick's and the generous donation from Leamington International Twinning

Society towards the cost of the event. Fortunately it occurred before the outbreak of Ebola became serious. We hope that all will be well in time for the Day of the African Child next year but in the meantime it may not be possible for the planned teacher exchanges to take place.



My uncle Dom and his wife Sarah are going to Sierra Leone By Anna Johnson, age 10

Recently at school people have been talking about Ebola and how dangerous it is as well as how quickly it could travel. I was starting to get quite worried because I wasn't sure how they were going to control it.

One day after school my mum told me that my uncle Dom and his wife Sarah who are both doctors were going to Africa to try to help stop the spread of Ebola. They knew they were capable of doing this as they had spent a year in a children's hospital in Sierra Leone in 2012. When I heard this devastating news it felt like my brain had just stopped there and then. I was proud, but very worried for them as they could catch Ebola quite easily.

Sometimes when my mum tells people what Dom and Sarah are doing they are shocked and think they must be stupid, while others try to think of things they can do to help. We don't all have the bravery and skills to go to Africa, but we all have the capability to help in a smaller way.

The doctors and nurses that are going to Africa are sacrificing their comfort, their safety and possibly their life, it makes me think about what I can sacrifice for others who need more help than I do.

Dominic and Sarah are going to Sierra Leone as NHS volunteers. In 2012 they spent a year as volunteers in Kenema Hospital, near Bo.

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