

Bo City Waste Management Project - A DFID investment in the future of Sierra Leone

One World Link started in 1981 as an experiment in linking communities in Bo and Warwick District Councils for the benefit of both communities. Since then a wide range of groups from schools to churches to medics have formed very successful partnerships and life enhancing friendships. When the government of Sierra Leone reinstated democratically elected local councils in 2004, Warwick District and Warwickshire County Councils were funded by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum to the tune of £45,000 over 3 years. This was part of the Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice scheme funded by DFID. Further funding was won through the Commonwealth Professional Fellowships programme managed by the Commonwealth The exchange visits to

and from Sierra Leone of officers from Finance, Planning and Environmental Health and Waste departments led to a number of successful capacity building initiatives . These initiatives benefited all the council officers in both countries and contributed to the successful growth of Bo City Council.

The article below is a description of one of those programmes by one of the officers who went to Sierra Leone 7 years ago.

The relationships and trust built up from the contact over the years have paved the way for the exciting outcomes of the programme. The small investment by CLGF all those years ago has yielded plentiful.

Jane Knight, vice chair of One World Link.

DFID investment in the future of Sierra Leone by Glenn Fleet, Warwickshire County Council.

Why on earth do I keep going back to Bo city in Sierra Leone? Because so much has happened in the last six years in the development of managing their waste service, and I have been privileged to be their technical support with Derek Greedy covering the landfill management areas. And the icing on the cake has been in the last few months, when Bo City Council has even won the award for the cleanest city in Sierra Leone.

But what will happen and where are they going from here? They have carried out two waste analyses over the past 6 years and both have indicated that well over 90% of their waste is compostable material. The remainder is mainly plastic, a few broken bottles that can no longer be reused (everything that can be reused is reused). These results form the main driver for separating this material into two fractions, inert waste that can be landfilled safely and the 90% plus turned into compost.

As the early work was a pilot programme paid for by the United Nations and Commonwealth Local Government Good Practice Scheme from a limited budget, we only had one skip lorry, with a small number of skips, and taking into account the fact that all the politicians wanted a skip in their ward, we ended up with a result which was not the planned pilot intention. So plan A of two skips at each location and separating the two fractions, went out the window, but the pilot project did highlight that residents did want to use the skips and the City has become a lot cleaner for it.

During late 2012 the Department for International Development (DFID) started to show a keener interest in the work. By the beginning of 2013 they had approved funding to progress the project towards expanding the front end of the service. The UK Government chose an NGO called Welthungerhilfe (WHH) who are working in the country with ourselves One World Link supporting them to expand the project outcomes.

Part of the project was to support setting up small SMEs by unemployed Youth groups within the city. The groups charge the individual households for collecting the waste from the household, taking it to the skips, and separating out any materials that can be recycled and sold separately. The remainder is then moved to the landfill site. The only problem now is that the scheme has been so popular they cannot clear the skips as quickly as they are filling up.



Household collection by youth groups

A large amount of training was invested in the youth groups, ranging from Health and Safety to accountancy management, team building, opening bank accounts etc. to make sure they have all the skills to manage a sustainable business.

Another part of the project was to support small businesses to develop the use of recyclable materials to make new products. A number of businesses have applied for support. The support covered a small amount for tools, but mainly skills based learning in Marketing and Developing the business. The photograph shows you one of the winning businesses that make bags out of used water bags, that keep the inner bag dry.



Between both the youth groups and the other small recycling businesses some 60 jobs have been created in the past year.

So where do they go from here?

Believe it or not the project has been so successful through having a project manager on the ground full time from WHH, working closely with the Council, that further investment from DFID has been approved over the next four years to fully expand the service. This fund does not include the Council full budget and further investment by private companies.

The DFID investment is providing £3.2million to WHH over the next four years to take Bo's solid waste management forward and Warwickshire County Council officers through One World Link will remain a key knowledge (technical advice) partner in the project.

The British Government believe that solid waste management is a core basic service provided to citizens by city governments and is one of the defining elements of good municipal function, and often serves as a proxy indicator for the adequacy of other basic services and the competency of good governance.

Improvement of public service delivery in solid waste management will reduce environmental health risks. Solid waste accumulated in the streets and drains provides a home for vermin which exacerbate the spread of diseases such as Lassa fever, and leads to blocked drains which flood in the wet season, spreading water-borne disease. The accumulated waste is unhealthy and unsightly and can undo the benefits of improved water, sanitation and hygiene programmes.

Improvements in waste management will also deliver positive environmental impacts, including reductions in flooding, water, soil and groundwater pollution, reduction in open air-contaminating indiscriminate burning of solid waste in urban areas, and significant reduction in the quantities of decomposing waste around the city.



Making cooking pots out of aluminium cans melted down

The project will be geared by following a market-based approach to the waste management. Significant opportunities are to be generated which will create jobs, in particular for unemployed youth and women. Opportunities will also be provided for small businesses and for Public-Private Partnerships with medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to take charge of newly outsourced Solid Waste Management services. With the Bo pilot project already creating around 60 jobs, mostly for unemployed youth and some women, it has also contributed to the creation and strengthening of around eight SMEs. More than 200 new jobs are anticipated from the full project together with significant additional opportunities for enterprise creation.

DFID have said one of the most impressive features of the Bo project has been the commitment of the Mayor, Chief Administrator and City Council. The city has effectively pledged its entire waste budget to the project. This is a project that is truly driven by the demand and commitment of the City Council. It brings development funding from DFID with a contribution from WHH to reinforce the City Council's waste management budget. It shows the commitment of the City Council to transform the environmental surroundings and improve the environmental health risks to the City's population.

Given the current tight economic circumstances in the UK , you may say why are the UK government giving so much in international aid. In the big scheme of things it not huge, but will create a much safer, healthier environment for a population of over 240,000 and start to act as a catalyst to generate many new jobs across the whole waste spectrum. and the sometimes unhelpful attacks on the UK's international development activities, it would be really useful if OWL could highlight this project as an example of really good use of development funding. I would be more than happy if my comments above were to be used in the OWL Newsletter to raise the profile of DFID and the Bo project.

For future reference and for information, if there are any companies that would be interested in partnering Bo City Council in the PPP service provision, please contact me at Warwickshire CC.

And finally, on a different note, I feel I have been very lucky to be part of the Solid Waste project since 2007 and what has struck me is how the Country and Bo City is steadily improving. The first time I visited whilst crossing the estuary to get to Freetown, the hovercraft sank when entering Freetown and I was rowed ashore in a very sustainable wooden canoe, now it is the new fast taxi boats and do they certainly move. There was not really any tarmac road, but thanks to the EU you can now drive from Freetown to Bo in 4 hours, where it could take you all day and it was like having a four by four experience..

Glenn Fleet

Group Manager – Waste Management , Warwickshire County Council