

Bomerh the Largest Illegal Dumpsite in Bo City Sierra Leone joins the ISWA “Close the 50 Largest Dumpsites Initiative”

A recent visit by Derek Greedy, ISWA Board Member representing National Members, to Sierra Leone revealed how the city of Bo and the neighbouring cities of Kenema and Makeni are embracing the ISWA initiative to close the 50 largest dumpsites. Although these cities themselves do not have one of the 50 largest dumpsites they recognise that one of the 50 is in their country in the capital city of Freetown.

Sierra Leone and Bo city have already featured in the roadmap for closing waste dump sites demonstrating how in the poorest of countries good governance can lead to improved waste management. UK Aid has also recognised the significant contribution being made by improved waste management in Bo city by contributing to a roll out programme for the cities of Kenema and Makeni adopting the good practice already established within Bo. Implemented by Welthungerhilfe, a German international non-governmental organisation, “The Improved Waste Management Project” started in Bo as a pilot and is currently being rolled out to Kenema and Makeni cities in Sierra Leone.

The extended project plan also allows for the rehabilitation and closure of the central dump locally known as Bomerh (local word for dumpsite). Bomerh is the last and largest of all the 134 illegal dumpsites that were identified in Bo city whose clearance has delayed due to logistics and related resources it required and relocation process to resettle illegal settlers who had encroached some of its sections for businesses. Stakeholder meetings have been held over several months including illegal settlers. Arrangements are in hand to relocate these and work commenced to reprofile the 3.2-acre site which culminated into the launch of site clearance works on 5th May 2017. The proposed rehabilitation will provide recreational open space which is currently lacking in the city. The ambitious scheme will include a multipurpose sports surface, walkways and picnic areas. A stream passing through the site will be re-profiled to make a water feature.

Furthermore, each of the cities administrations were made aware of ISWA’s commitment to close dumpsites worldwide no matter how big or how small. Links to the ISWA web pages were made available to each of them with a request to sign up to the declaration to close the world’s 50 largest dumpsites. Although there wasn’t the opportunity to meet up with government officials the Vice president of Sierra Leone had been involved with the stakeholder events which has led to the rehabilitation and closure plan for Bomerh. At the same time the District Medical Officer of Health has openly declared that in his opinion the reduction level from 60% of the population of Bo likely to contract malaria down to 40% in Bo city can be explained by the closure of the open dumps and the improvements to waste collection and management services by the project.