

The friendship link between Bo District in Sierra Leone and Warwick District, UK
Registered Charity No. 700714

Take Your Partners!

Dear Readers,

Local Government may not strike you as the most exciting of topics but it can be, especially when two councils over 3000 miles apart enter into a cooperative partnership which is beginning to be productive. The living proof of this is embodied in two Environmental Health Chief Officers by the name of Eric Moosa of Bo District and Richard Hall of Warwick District as you can see in the two photos below



In discussion in a Bo Market November 2007



September 2008 Welcome to Riverside House

Eric arrived here on 8th September. It is too soon to record his reactions to his visit. Below are extracts of Richard's account in the Journal of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (for full text see - <http://www.cieh.org/ehp/ehp3.aspx?id=12000>)

"We landed at Lungi at 11pm and chose the hovercraft as our best and safest option. Unfortunately, what should have been a 20-minute trip ended five hours later – still short of our destination. The hovercraft motors failed and a night-rescue attempt by a local tug only made things far, far worse for us: we began to sink and catch fire. As dawn broke across the estuary we were in the water being rescued by local fishing boats."

"Environmental health in Sierra Leone is part of central government's Health & Sanitation Department. The local environmental health officer, Eric Moosa, is responsible for Bo City, the neighbouring town of Kenema and surrounding rural areas. His team in the office at Bo's government hospital comprised eight support workers. Malaria accounts for the highest number of deaths, with intestinal infections second on the list, and average life expectancy in Sierra Leone is 38. A major part of their work consequently relates to infectious disease control.

It was soon apparent that healthy living conditions could only be achieved if government solved major infrastructure problems. Long-term solutions needed international development aid and short-term solutions required seeing how public health improvements could be achieved at the local level with limited funding.

Remembering my days as a student EHO, I occasionally "stood in" as market supervisor, collecting rents and adjudicating on the size of stall holders' pitches – most contentious! The experience helped me appreciate the importance Bo City Council attached to markets as a critical income source. "

Warwick District Councillors hear about the link.

Warwick District Council met on April 23rd and for the first time in its history had a presentation from one of its officers re. the exciting local council visit in November 2007, and February 2008 to Bo City Council in Sierra Leone.

Almost all 46 councillors were present together with the Chief Executive and other senior officers. Richard Hall, WDC Environmental Health Officer, led the presentation showing slides of the mounds of waste and the unsanitary drainage systems which threaten the health of Bo citizens. Nicola Cumberledge from WCC Finance dept. described the state of the Treasury dept. in Bo City Council. Cllr. Jane Knight talked about the exemplary governance practice in Bo.

Everyone described the positive experiences they had working in partnership with their Bo counterparts. They had gained a tremendous lot of personal learning and the Action Plan put together by Bo councillors and staff and themselves and the other Planning, Waste and finance officers who took part in the visit, was greeted by everyone as a major achievement. This needs now to be topped by accessing funding to implement it. The Chair of WDC thanked the OWL members present for their support of WDC involvement with Bo City Council.

WOMEN'S GROUP REPORT

We have had two meetings of a core group of Val, Jane, Myf, Judith and Maria(+ baby!) We have decided that we need to have something to offer the wider female membership before we have an open meeting. We had given Jane a number of questions to ask Kayoma concerning our involvement in their activities. She had met with some 20 of the Kayoma women and reported that they were less enthusiastic about setting up a tailoring business in spite of having our sewing machines. Hopefully they will keep a few of the best and give the others away. This is another reason to be really sure that what we send out they really would use!

They were talking about setting up a café to cater for those people using the community centre and might require funding for more pots and pans

We were pleased to learn that Catherine Kamara was coming to visit us in February/March as one of our aims was to welcome women as official visitors to OWL

So now our main focus is on developing an oral history of women's life in this country which could be used in Bo. We are setting up three tasters for Jane to take out to Bo when she goes in November. They are a business woman, a woman who remembers life in the 1930s/1940s and a woman who has had to overcome difficulties. If these work we shall apply for funding from the Awards for All Lottery and extend the project to the local women here who have expressed an interest in Bo. We would also hope to encourage Bo women to produce a similar thing to send to us

I am pleased to report that Soroptimist International, of which I am a member has asked Leamington Soroptimists to support and adopt a Club being set up in Bo by the Freetown Soroptimists – apparently they already have a group of interested women



Internet and Computers

John Myers sponsored cycle ride raised £1600 for OWL. The main purpose was to establish an internet connection with Bo OWL. £500 is on its way to Bo to establish a landline based connection if this does not work then a mobile connection will be looked at. The rest of the money will go into to Bo Development Fund which is now concentrating on provision for the Resource and IT Centre. The main purpose of the initial internet connection will be to enable better communication between Warwick and Bo OWL. In due course it is intended to develop a network on a broadband connection of sufficient bandwidth to enable access to the world wide web for educational purposes.

Danny Foulstone and Maada Fobay, the two leads on IT matters are in regular communication. Maada has written to say that "I have completed the setup of the 7 machines and they are running on a network at the proposed IT room downstairs this weekend. We can still get one machine connected using Tigo or Celtel while waiting for any proper setup. We hope to start IT training for Headteachers as first pilot project any time from now."

Kenilworth School Africa Week



In March OWL and SLAWAD (Sierra Leone Association for Welfare and Development – Coventry) cooperated in the delivery of classroom sessions on reconciliation. The School's Africa week combines special lessons with stage shows to raise funds. Their fundraising efforts were very successful this year. In June we were delighted to receive a donation of £2500 (picture on left) from USU as a result of the Africa week events. We recognise the hard work that goes into making this week a success and in particular the enthusiasm of Mr Nahal and the students who are closely involved. The donation has gone to the Bo Development Fund,

Personal News from Bo

From Jane Knight's visit in August "I caught up with recent visitors to Leamington, Mary Bakarr and Hassan Feika. Mary has not been well and will be spending another 6 months in America next year. Hassan introduced his Freetown Colleague to the centre and they will be having their Conciliation and Resources strategic workshop at the centre as she thought it was a wonderful venue." "It was sad that Johannes Mallah is now unable to take part in OWL activities as he is not at all well. Everyone is worried about him and efforts are being made to see if anything can be done to relieve the effects of his stroke. Moussa Conteh had an operation while I was there but seems to be recovering."

I wonder how it will all be in a year's time? - Schools and adults accessing information and maybe using the internet? The women running a café? The town rubbish separated, collected and disposed of, with fertiliser made from the organic waste materials? People viewing films on a regular basis and ? Only time will tell!



The Youth of Bo are raring to go

Ever since two representatives of youth from Bo District in Sierra Leone visited Warwick and Leamington two years ago, young people in Bo have been waiting with bated breath to hear how they may link up with like minded young people in Warwick District. Now that they have their own building in the One World Link Community Centre (see Picture below) and will soon have their own internet connection, their expectations are very high. The young people of Bo have much in common with young people here; they are passionate about music and sport, they care about having a voice and human rights. Some of their experiences are very different. As children they have survived a period of civil war, and they live in a developing country where they lack many of the facilities and luxuries that are taken for granted in England.



exchanging videos with Warwick youth. Before I left the youth group gave me some letters for prospective pen friends over here.

Our Vice Chair Jane Knight visited Bo in August and writes 15 young people came to meet me on August 6th. They sent thanks to Warwick for the contribution we had made to the building of their office and store which is also now awaiting furnishing. They went through their Action plan and in fact admitted there had been little progress on it as they had had no reasonable resources. The plan had included linking up with the senior and junior secondary school pupils. The latter they had managed to do. They could not do the radio discussion because of lack of funds, nor the football gala, nor a boxing match, or HIV sensitisation. The group had used some of their registration fees to acquire materials with which they had done some road maintenance and clearing. They are very anxious to get some board games together and ideally a table tennis table to draw people in. They liked the idea of

Ben Wesson and Joanne Fisher have taken up the challenge of turning the youth link into a reality to the benefit and enjoyment at both ends. They are organising an open day in November which will give a taste of Africa to whet appetites – see panel on back page. If you would like to know more ring Ben or Joanne or visit our website to learn more about the link.
www.oneworldlink.org.uk

Ben: 07771633393
Joanne: 07904 351247



Alpha Bah. Chair of Bo OWL youth section

The Day of the African Child 16th June



This day which is observed throughout Africa especially in schools was initiated by the African Union in commemoration of the Soweto Massacre and with the intention of advancing the human rights of children. Many Bo schools celebrate the day with a variety of events and often a half day holiday. This year it was also celebrated by some of our schools, Shrubland Street, Kingsway, Clapham Terrace, Brookhurst, and Telford Infants, and some of them were able to communicate with their link school on the day or during the week.

Next year, we hope that it can be more widely celebrated with an event that may bring schools and others in the community together. All suggestions and offers of help will be gratefully received as planning needs to start well in advance.

two Telford pupils in Heine Memorial Scholl uniform

The Primary Teachers' Group
is meeting next on:
Tuesday, 14th October at 4 p.m.
St Anthony's School,
Sydenham Drive Leamington Spa

SOCIAL OCCASION

on Sat 27th Sept. at 19 Beauchamp Hill Leamington 12
to 2.00pm. Bring and share food. Meet Eric Moosa
who is the Chief Environmental Health Officer for Bo
District and is here in Warwick District for 3 months on
a Commonwealth Fellowship course of study
please phone 421093 to say you will attend

Youth Open Day



We are looking to rebuild links between young people in our
two communities please contact us or look us up on Facebook
to find out about our 'Open Day' in November

- We will have a West African Dance and Drumming workshop, tastes of Africa food, people on hand to discuss any ideas you may have, Video link with Youth Group in Sierra Leone and more....
- We are looking for young people to be involved in this project which could involve music, sport, arts, rights, humour or other ideas that you may have!! Contact with Bo, could be through email, texting, video linking, exchange visits, pen friendship and more
- If you are interested, please phone or text 07771633393 or email youth@oneworldlink.org.uk join our Facebook group

One World Link Youth Group Bo District, Sierra Leone - Warwick District, UK

CAN YOU LEND A HAND?

We feel we are doing a good and worthwhile job. There is always more to be done, and what we do would be done better with more members to help. Some jobs are one offs, others are longer lasting, and are varied in nature. Whatever your talents or interests, there is likely to be something you can do.

Some of the larger roles that need to be taken on at present are: Newsletter Editor, Hosting organiser, Development Education coordinator, other jobs include help with organising social and fund raising events

All our sub-groups will welcome more participants

Contact John Myers on 01926 425403 or email: info@oneworldlink.org.uk

DO YOU HAVE DVDs you could donate e.g. good films, documentaries, learning programmes, or copy from the TV to help stock the Resource Centre in Bo?

Shipping and Recycling has been one of our traditional activities finding a useful home for redundant items here, but the committee has decided that the time money and other resources spent on collecting storing and sending container loads diverts our energies from our core priorities, and we now concentrate on sourcing as many of Bo OWLs needs as possible within Sierra Leone. However the Bo District Descendants Association based in London is aiming to send containers and would welcome a range of materials. However we cannot offer to store goods here but if anyone has a load of anything we will be willing to contact BODDA to see if they would like the goods in question and would be able to collect.

www.oneworldlink.org.uk is our website address. Please pay us a visit
TEACHERS please note there are extensive class resources on the site