

ONE WORLD LINK

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

www.oneworldlink.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 700714

The Link reinvigorated

THE EBOLA OUTBREAK HAS FINALLY ENDED and we are able to resume visits to and from Bo. As you will read in this edition several visits have already been made. Personal and professional contacts have been revived. The waste disposal project is going strong and we are

looking forward to new possibilities for our local government links with Bo District. As we go to press two further visitors are in Bo to reinvigorate our education programme, now that schools have reopened, and look for new cultural opportunities.

Bo is getting back to normal

John Archer, Phil Clarke and Richard Hall had a ten day stay in Bo in late November/early December.

Nice to be back in Bo! It was a great opportunity to catch up with friends and colleagues, see how Bo was getting back to normal after Ebola and find out how and where we could continue to develop our link.

professional presentation on the Council's Development Plan and we will investigate where we may be able to work with them to improve skills. We hope to develop that during the course of 2016.

had died working at Kenema hospital during the crisis. There were over forty names inscribed. That was both shocking and moving.

We visited the Owl bungalow, outside the western outskirts of town. It was gratifying to see it occupied, by Mary James, the widow of the influential and well-loved member of OWL, Raymond James who died some years ago.

in Kenema we saw evidence of the impact of Ebola

And how is Bo? Well, what else but busy, thriving and energetic - as ever. We saw how the OWL Centre has been improved with solar lighting, how it is being used again for meetings and attracting visitors again, too. So, it's getting back to normal. That's great.



Visiting Bo District Council: Richard Hall, John Archer, Joseph Bindi (Chairman of BDC), Vivian Senesie, (Chief Administrator of BDC), Phil Clarke

Our friends in Bo OWL are looking to the future and thinking about how to invest for the long term future of the organisation. That is something that we will need to discuss between us. But it's very encouraging that there is now stability and a positive approach to the future

We visited many organisations. We met up with the Mayor of the City Council, Harold Tucker, and also contacted the District Council. Our meeting with the District Council revealed a very strong desire to work with us to help deliver services. We were given a very

We were able to visit some schools, notably UBC, to see their refurbished well, and the blind school, but as term was finishing during the week to enable a nationwide census to take place, we did not have as much contact as we may have done.

During a visit to see the Bishop of Kenema we saw evidence of the impact of Ebola. Outside the hospital was a memorial to all the hospital workers - doctors, nurses and technicians who

It was very pleasing to see the Waste Management Project was still going very strong, with a well organised collection service in place and the development of small recycling businesses also in action.

We experienced much more of the life of Bo - the tennis club, the markets, the restaurants, all functioning very much as before, which was very good to see. A highlight was the visit to Maada's Church on the Sunday to see him voted



Colourful items made from recycled plastic

as "Gentleman of the year" - a well-deserved accolade. It was a very good visit, recommencing direct relations after the enforced separation caused by Ebola and exploring opportunities for the future. I believe we succeeded in both and we look to the OWL link continuing successfully.

Chairman's Notebook



I was privileged to visit Bo in November for the first time since Ebola together with Philip Clarke and Richard Hall.

It was encouraging to see how the community was returning to normal after a period of such horror and dislocation. Perhaps the privations of normal life in Bo make a community more resilient to the difficulties presented to them. I am sure our society, faced with a similar real challenge would find it much harder to adapt and then resume something like normality. In any event, it was heartening to see progress.

Our colleagues and friends in Bo OWL are thriving still and are keen to look to how the link should move forward. This is a positive move and one that we will need to take part in through a review of how we develop as a partnership. This is something that, hopefully, we can progress during 2016.

The recommencement of visits is a very good step towards helping with our link and further visits will be taking place during the year. Let us hope that the community of Bo is able to take some real steps towards improving its economic and social support framework. The willingness is there - and as in some small way we are able to help, we will continue to keep the link working as well as possible.

New cultural links

Mair Evans and Paul Atkins are in Bo to restore school links and plan for new cultural activities

As 2016 begins, and now that Sierra Leone has been officially declared Ebola free, it is time reconnect with our friends in Bo and to reestablish some of One World Link's activities there.

It is therefore with a sense of optimism, tinged with reality, that Mair Evans and Paul Atkins are making a trip in January (as this newsletter goes to press they have just arrived safely).

Initially, they will make contact with as many link schools as possible as part of the 'connecting classrooms' programme as well to establish the current needs of teachers and to share this with our partner schools the district. They have taken teaching materials with them as well as ideas for shared projects between the institutions with a hope to help them start working together again.

In addition to this, they have a plan to make cultural connections with arts groups and

individuals with an aim to share ideas with similar creative people in the local district in the UK. It is very much an exploratory visit to explore the possibilities and much will depend on the response given the recent crisis and the predicted raw nature of current feelings following the disaster, but it is also a time for rebuilding and artistic expression can be an effective way of helping that process.

Although most of the 16 days will be spent in Bo, it is also hoped that a short time will be spent in Freetown, Makeni and Kenema talking with our friends there. Both Mair and Paul are excited by the visit but understand that the success of their aims will depend on how quickly the country has recovered and picked itself up after the recent Ebola epidemic and realise that although much can be planned, many ideas will only be sowing seeds for the future.

OWLTALKS

TTIP, Trade and the Developing World

Two speakers came to speak to One World Link and its friends in September. One was Yash Tandon, a distinguished academic, campaigner and international negotiator, and the other was Robert Elliot, a professor of economics at Birmingham University.

The idea of the evening was to give everyone an insight into TTIP – the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. This controversial agreement between the US and the EU is

seen by some as the key to unlocking wealth for participating countries, and by others as a license for multinational corporations to dominate governments and the public even more than they already do.

Robert Elliot sketched out all the arguments in favour of free trade – and by extension of TTIP, which aims to remove barriers to trade between the US and Europe. He took us through

mainstream economic arguments and evidence for the beneficial effects of free trade.

Yash's argument is that there is no such thing as economics or economists.

Economics as practiced by the likes of Rob, he inferred, was actually just a veil for power. Power is all that matters in these matters – exercise of power and resistance to power.

In answer to the question of what we can do in the face of TTIP and other seemingly inexorable forces, the answer seemed to be to encourage local and small-scale trading initiatives as a bulwark against the multinationals.

You can read a more detailed report on the meeting on our website: oneworldlink.org.uk

“The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is a series of trade negotiations being carried out mostly in secret between the EU and US.” The Independent

The Waste project in a time of Ebola

RAPH THURN, Coordinator of the Waste Disposal Project visited us in May to describe the spread of the Ebola virus and its effects on the project. He had remained in Bo throughout the outbreak and, although there were many constraints, the project never closed down. He was working closely with the Council on further development and the results are described by Glenn Fleet on the back page of this newsletter.

Dr WADDINGTON, also back from Sierra Leone, told us how the virus had killed all the laboratory technicians at one hospital due to their handling of samples, and how it was impossible to cure all infections on the wards so that hospital became known as the place people die. Ebola needs quite different measures from other diseases and disasters - lessons Sierra Leone was learning the hard way.

Day of the African Child

Anyone seeing five hundred children marching with banners round the grounds of Brookhurst School on 29th June might have wondered whether a revolution was under way. Far from it; they were celebrating the Day of the African Child.



The parade

ELEVEN LOCAL SCHOOLS joined in a day of workshops and gatherings to learn more about Africa and celebrate their links with schools in Bo, Sierra Leone. After the initial grand parade they gathered in a large marquee. They heard that the day was initiated to commemorate the Soweto demonstrations and shooting of schoolchildren in 1976. For One World Link it has grown into a celebration of more than thirty years of contact with schools in Bo and is a day of joyous activity.

The children joined in six different activities. In rotation one group sat quietly on the classroom floor listening to stories told by Sierra Leonians (although sadly the Ebola outbreak had prevented teachers from coming from Bo as originally

intended). Another were in the marquee singing at the tops of their voices while outside another group were enjoying sports on an African theme. In another classroom there was intense concentration as the children drew and cut out beautiful metallic designs in the shapes of leaves found in West Africa. In complete contrast the assembly hall was full of sound and action as they danced to beating drums. Not to be outdone, another group were learning drumming themselves, enjoying the chance to make a lot of noise, albeit a very organised noise!

The enthusiastic participation of so many children and their orderly progression was a tribute to the many teachers who took part, to Brookhurst for hosting the day and particularly to the organisers, Liz Garrett and Rachel Cliff.

At the end of the day everyone gathered again in the marquee where they heard more about the Link. As a grand finale they all joined in the songs and dances they had learnt during the day before wrapping up their banners and heading for home.

We are very grateful to Leamington International Twinning Society and Warwickshire County Council for grants towards this event.

Schools maintain contact despite Ebola

Throughout the Ebola crisis schools here were able to make contact with some of their link teachers by text, sending messages of support and sympathy. We have only heard of the death of one pupil and one teacher. The schools in Bo were closed for 9 months and some buildings have suffered damage due to lack of maintenance. We cannot imagine how difficult that long period of confinement with little social interaction was like. The whole education system was thrown into turmoil with pupils not able to sit their exams and proceed to the next grade.

When they re-opened in April 2015 we heard from one school that many pupils were slow to return due to fear of the virus, since the official 'all-clear' wasn't announced till October. Many Leamington and Warwick schools broke with our usual protocol and held fundraising events for post-Ebola support (always popular- cake sales, non-uniform days and even a

'Boogie for Bo' outdoor disco!) We are currently working on an exchange project where pupils are writing about 'Keeping ourselves safe'. Children here have made posters and written texts about aspects of safety such as food hygiene, road and water safety and E-safety. We are very much looking forward to receiving the work from Bo to see what aspects of safety their pupils have chosen to write about.

Mair and Paul will be meeting many of the link teachers and visiting some of our schools so we look forward to hearing up-dates on their return. We hope that we shall be able to send another group of teachers to Bo under the "Connecting Classrooms" scheme of the British Council and a return visit by teachers from Bo during 2017. Meanwhile, plans are already underway for our next Day of the African Child here in Leamington, June 2016

Photo gallery



Singing in the marquee



Dancing to the drums



Learning drumming



Listening to a Sierra Leonian story



African leaf designs produced in the art workshop

Waste disposal - a national flagship project

Glenn Fleet returns to Bo to find that the project has continued to develop despite the Ebola outbreak

Why would a friendship link like One World Link become involved in developing the waste disposal system for the City of Bo? The answer is that we have been able to bring together specialists from our own county with our friends in Bo City Council.

As you may have read in past articles, it all started with a study of the needs of the Council, then developed into a pilot project that has now become a full-blown internationally funded programme from our very own government.

The pilot showed that a skip type of collection service for this community was the right way to go. No real room to have large lorries moving between households, so now Bo's rubbish is collected in skips. Each skip is strategically placed around the city to accommodate as much of the population as possible, (more skips will always be welcomed). Each location has a minimum of two skips to enable both garden and food waste to be separated from the general waste after all the dry recycles are removed. This is the principle of the operation, but in reality it does not work fully, thus still more behaviour change is needed to get users to separate the material (it will come in time).

At the front end of the operation a youth organisation, Klin Bo Services, are contracted to gather waste door-to-door for a small fee or, if the residents do not want to pay, they may take their own waste to the skips. The process of sorting the recycles forms part of the youth organisation's contract and they can sell on the recycles.



Aluminium waste is turned into cooking pots

The council then take the skips to official disposal site. This site is presently being developed to accommodate not just the disposal of the general waste, but also to process the green waste into compost. Some £300,000 will be spent on this part of the project, which includes the development of the road, new building, a machine to shred the green waste and a weighbridge. On top of this, two second-hand skip lorries have been

purchased. These lorries are well built and should last for many years if looked after. Only a small proportion of the city is covered so far and there is much to do to expand the scheme and to make it sustainable in the long term but a major triumph is that it never stopped during the Ebola crisis and the Ebola outbreak is now over, fingers crossed.

Recycling and re-use are important aspects of the project. Fifteen small local enterprises are now involved in recycling waste and turning it into a profit. They came up with a variety of ideas and were finally chosen for project support in open competitions. Their ideas range from composting waste to making handbags, pots, slippers and bio-charcoal, and even making dolls' houses out of paper

waste. A potentially large industry could come from manufacturing pavestones out of waste plastic.

The four-year project is managed by Bo City Council with WHH of Germany, and is funded by £3.2 million of British aid, a long way to go. For more detail, including some excellent video, see the project Facebook page: EffectiveSolidWasteManagementForBoCity

A simple way to raise money for OWL - and it costs you Nothing!

You can raise money for OWL with a click of your mouse - and it will cost you absolutely NOTHING!

Register with easyfundraising.org.uk and choose OWL as your beneficiary. You can shop online with all your favourite retailers and they will donate a percentage of everything you spend to OWL.

Your membership of One World Link

Stay up-to-date and involved - renew your membership. What - not a member yet? - see our website for more details: oneworldlink.org.uk or email membership@oneworldlink.org.uk

First impressions

Phil Clarke has returned from his first visit to Bo

IN NOVEMBER 2015 I WAS IN BO WITH FRIENDS FROM OWL. As it was my first visit to Sierra Leone, wherever we went people enthusiastically asked me: "so, what do you think of our country?" It is an impossible question to answer in 30 seconds (or 200 words)!

First impressions are, inevitably, about how different Sierra Leone is to Britain; the temperature and humidity; the state of many of the roads; the frequent power cuts, the vibrant colours in the markets and in the women's clothes; the noise (at a "studio" next to the OWL Centre they like their music loud) and the motorbikes (which are everywhere and, ironically,

don't make quite enough noise until they nearly run you over). These impressions stay with you but are quickly joined by more lasting ones. Chief amongst these is the warmth of the welcome we received. OWL members and colleagues in schools and local councils met us as friends and honoured guests.

Local people, adults and children alike, were often genuinely friendly and keen to make some connection with us, however brief. I was struck and inspired by the resilience of so many we met; from teachers to council workers, from NGO workers to local entrepreneurs. It was often inspiring and frequently humbling.



Phil with Eleanor Smith-Sam, a teacher at UBC

