

ONE WORLD LINK

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

www.oneworldlink.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 700714

Branching into Health

As a natural progression of its friendship link with Bo, One World Link is now looking to establish a health link. Continuing in the spirit of support and friendship, Helena White was asked to investigate the possibility of this idea in her recent visit.

We visited Yemoh Town Peripheral Health Unit (PHU) just outside Bo town centre. This serves a community of approximately 17,000, conducts just under 1,000 deliveries and year and cares for around 2,500 children under 5. They run on skeleton staff (they have no trained midwives). One of the nurses is the daughter of Theresa Bangali, a long-standing member of the Bo OWL committee.



Helena with staff at the Yemoh PHU

The unit has a half-finished building - walls and a roof - that is being used for children's clinics. The existing building is mainly serviceable but an upgrade of basic equipment is desperately needed. A delivery bed - with only three legs and propped up at one end - had had three labouring women on the previous day.

Government supplies have been problematic, with a lack of some essential life saving obstetric drugs. We are now beginning to see malnourished children requiring administration of *Plumpy'nut* (a peanut-based paste for the treatment of severe acute malnutrition).

During our visit we discussed many aspects of the running of this small unit including the possibility of forming a link with OWL. We reiterated that the link is for sharing of skills and support, not for financial assistance or supply of large amounts of equipment. This was completely understood and we felt that just the suggestion of friendship and support was enough to lift their spirits and inspire them to improve things where they could e.g. asking a local

carpenter if he would make a delivery bed with four legs to replace the one with three!

We also went to Bo Children's Hospital, a not-for-profit unit on the edge of the town, for which the Leamington pantomime raised some £6,000. BCH was set up by Dr Lemoh, a Sierra Leonean, to offer further support for the children of Bo. It has two wards and an isolation unit which is unusual in Sierra Leone but absolutely crucial in view of the recent Ebola epidemic. It also

has a basic lab for diagnostics, an x-ray and an ultrasound machine.

We met with Mr Wusu Sannoh, hospital director (former Mayor of Bo and long-standing friend of OWL) and Dr Sombie, paediatrician in charge. Both gentlemen were delightful and obviously felt passionately about the future of the hospital. They were keen to computerise their records so we are discussing a collaboration with Warwick Hospital to produce a basic modular system.

Sierra Leone is one of the most hazardous places in the world to have a child. Women have a 1:21 chance of dying in childbirth and 25% of children don't make it to their 5th

birthday. By sharing our skills and offering friendship and support where we can, we can improve these statistics and improve the healthcare for the people of Bo.

Helena White is a community midwife based at Warwick hospital. Her own charity, The

African Maternity Link, established in 2012, sends midwives to Sierra Leone to teach and update the midwives in practical skills and evidence-based knowledge.

“the suggestion of friendship and support was enough to lift their spirits and inspire them to improve things”

A valuable and enjoyable visit to Warwick and Leamington

Our six visitors from Bo had a busy ten days of visits, meetings and social activities.

Following the gap in visits due to the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone, in late 2016 we were finally able to welcome a group representing schools, a local authority and the committee of One World Link in Bo.

The three teachers visited their linked schools in Leamington Spa, building on their relationships with children and teachers. Joseph Bindi, Chairman of Bo District Council, making his first visit to the UK, saw how the local authority link works and met with officials in the Warwick council. Maada Fobay has been a friend for many years; as Treasurer of Bo One World Link he plays a vital role in the continuing success of the 35-year-long link.

In addition to detailed discussions on the future of One World Link in both the UK and Sierra Leone, we were addressed by Peter Penfold CMG OBE who was British High Commissioner in Sierra Leone during the Civil War and has a long and close relationship with Sierra Leone and its people.

In a grand finale to the visit, we were treated to a civic reception by Jane Knight, Chair of Warwick District Council and founder of One World Link. We were honoured by the attendance of Julius Maada Bio, former President of Sierra Leone.

Chairman's Notebook



It's very rewarding to see our relationship with the community of Bo develop and strengthen.

We had a very fruitful visit from Bo late last year, involving teachers, local government representatives and Bo Committee members. It provided us with the opportunity to establish a helpful common understanding of how our two committees, in the UK and Bo can work together in pursuit of the same aims. It also enabled the development of further initiatives in planning for urban growth and enhancing our already very strong teacher links, both of which are now moving ahead well.

We have also more recently seen the development of health links, particularly with the African Maternity project, which is helping to develop wider relationships between health professionals locally in the UK with health development needs in Bo.

Whilst very encouraging and rewarding, all developments and progress are the result of committed work by many people in the OWL family. A great deal of thanks is due to all those who put much time and energy into their work for OWL.

John Archer

From public dump to public park

The waste management project extends from Bo to Makeni and Kenema

Glenn Fleet and Derek Greedy made another visit to Sierra Leone to advise on the extension of the waste management project and it looks like good news all round.

Bomerh no more

Bo council have decided that the Bomerh (the old, unregulated 'central dump' in town) is to be converted into a public park with sports pitches. It is the last and largest of the 134 illegal dumpsites in Bo city whose clearance has been delayed due to logistics and the resources



Clearing the Bomerh in Bo

required and the need to resettle illegal settlers who had encroached some of its sections for businesses. Work commenced in May to reprofile the 3.2-acre site. 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.

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



An artist's impression of the new park

The original Waste Management Pilot Project in Bo was facilitated by One World Link with Bo City Council. We continue to support the services of Glenn and Derek. The extension of the project to two more cities reflects the success of the pilot and the value of these services.

The full reports can be read in the archive of the website, oneworldlink.org.uk

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.

Extending the project

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.

Glenn and Derek visited the sites designated for waste landfill in these two

cities. They made recommendations for their layout and management, with detailed advice on best practice for managing landfill and compost sites to minimise litter, odours, bird nuisance, vermin and fire risk.

Other news in brief

Volunteers help pantomime raise money for Bo

Last winter's pantomime in Leamington was Cinderella. One World Link volunteers helped to collect money from the audience for Bo Children's Hospital, the charity chosen by the Chair of Warwick District Council, Jane Knight.

The event raised a magnificent £6450 and Jane has raised additional money from other sources in Warwick District.

Detailed discussions are now being held with the hospital and its trust to decide how best to use the money in a way that helps them to be sustainable financially.

Day of the African Child

This year's host is Lillington Primary School in Leamington. We look forward to our three visiting teachers leading our story-telling workshops and being our guests of honour.

We are excited to be trying a drama workshop this year for the first time, led by Paul Atkins. This will be in addition to workshops for singing, dancing, drumming, story-telling and sports.

The event marks the International Day of the African Child in June and once again we hope to be able to establish a video link to the assembled schools in Bo as they celebrate on the same day.

A simple way to raise money for One World Link - and it costs you 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.

“Would you fancy teaching for a week in Sierra Leone?”

Jamie McNeill finds that a visit to Bo changes his whole outlook on teaching

Changing jobs is always an anxious time; being keen to impress, worried about making fabulous first impressions with your new team members, and going to teach for a week in Africa! For it was only after two hours in to my first day of my new job at my new school, that my incredibly supportive head, Mrs Jane McSharry, was already posing the Africa question.

"So, Jamie, you seem like an adventurous type... Would you fancy teaching for a week in Sierra Leone next year?"

How could I turn down such a fabulous opportunity? I knew Sierra Leone was in Africa, but I didn't know exactly which of the African countries it was. And yes, I was aware that Sierra Leone had had its fair share of challenges over the past



30 years or so, but, despite warnings from friends, I am unable to decline the opportunity for adventure and confirmed enthusiastically!

I'd purposefully not done a whole lot of research on Sierra Leone before arriving, as I wanted to experience what it would offer for myself. From the moment of our arrival on the first evening, we were greeted with warmth and fervent hospitality from our OWL colleagues who are based in Sierra Leone.

Inspirational

There is a common misconception within European nations that children schooled in Africa are not educated to as high an academic standard as those within Europe. Enormous pleasure was given to me by being able to demonstrate to my UK colleagues and friends that simply isn't true, having captured photographs showing evidence of learning in a range of challenging subjects such as quantitative aptitude and the equations for calculating volume from the chalk boards around St. Francis School.



Furthermore, I felt enormously privileged to have had the opportunity to work with incredible practitioners out in Bo, who use ingenuity to maximise educational outcomes for their pupils given limited resources.

Watching these teachers was highly inspirational, particularly when, throughout my career to date, I have encountered colleagues who have said, "I can't teach without my projector!" or "How am I supposed to get this maths work done when the photocopier has packed in...AGAIN!"



So it was that I returned to England with this in mind: How can I continue to make my teaching effective, with fewer resources? Which resources have I turned to in the past, that aren't providing value for the pupils? Are they really superfluous?

Of course, in comparison to my colleagues teaching in Sierra Leone, I remain resource abundant, but I look upon opportunities to reduce the amount I use, focussing more on engaging with the pupils and improving my strategies for modelling.



Additionally, where I have felt that resources are genuinely useful to my practice, I have given considerable time and thought wondering how these resources can be made or recreated cheaply within Sierra Leone.

I returned a completely different person

In conclusion, my journey to Africa was a life changing one in so many ways, that it is fair to say that I returned a completely different person. My ambition now is to return to Sierra Leone someday, but for a far longer period, so that I can continue to be humbled by my Sierra Leone colleagues, and I hope, I can bring something for them too.

Jamie Ewen McNeill teaches Year 5 at St. Anthony's RC School

The three teachers' busy programme in Bo

Jamie McNeill, Sunita Evans and Liz Garrett (the OWL Education Coordinator) visited Bo in February 2017. They packed a great deal of activity into their ten days there. Liz visited all 15 linked schools and a secondary school, maintaining contact and exchanging messages. Jamie and Sunita spent several days at their linked schools, teaching and gaining insight into local education.

They ran workshops, seminars and training sessions for Bo teachers, explaining current ideas in subjects such as mathematics and phonics. They attended a football gala (the teams wearing football kit sent out from the UK) and even had interviews for local television.

Liz made a successful 20 minute Skype call connecting All Saints' Juniors in Warwick with BDEC New Gerihun Road Upper in Bo; the children sang to each other and made speeches.

They did manage to get a little relaxation with a day at Bureh Beach before leaving.

Re-establishing links after Ebola

Mair Evans and Paul Atkins report on a 16 day visit to Bo in January

After a lengthy period without formal contact between the linking primary schools in Bo and Leamington district, because of the Ebola epidemic, our primary aim was to reconnect the classrooms and reestablish the exciting and useful dialogue between teachers.



Consequently, we had fruitful meetings with most of the representatives from the schools as well as visiting numerous classrooms around the area.

The welcome we received was constantly overwhelming and the energy and warmth shown on each occasion very emotional. We were treated as celebrities with all the schools entertaining us with singing, dancing and sharing of

their work, visiting 7 of the 14 schools and experienced nearly 100 classrooms.

We were able to take out learning resources and not only maintain the existing links, but also develop new ones; for example that between BDEC

Messima and St. Margaret's in Whitnash, a relationship that has gone from strength to strength. All the schools are enthusiastic to continue with this important part of OWL's friendship link.

As we both have an interest in the Arts, we felt that whilst we were in Bo we would like to explore any

potential for developing a cross-cultural connection between our communities. Although the creative cultures are very different, it was this difference that seemed to make an exploration worthwhile. Sierra Leone has a rich heritage with regard to dance, storytelling and painting and drawing. We met a few practising artists, often having to develop commercial ventures such as screen printing tee shirts or illustrating health manuals in order to support their more creative work.

Since returning to the UK we have started to think about productive ways in which the artists can benefit from a future link.

We both felt that there were immediate benefits from our visit, but also that there are many exciting possibilities for the future.

"there are many exciting possibilities for the future"

Our website has been revamped.

Visit oneworldlink.org.uk



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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

Bo, Urbanisation and the Prince's Trust

One World Link has been involved in the past in promoting approaches to planning the future growth of Bo, working with Bo City and Bo District councils.

Both can see the need for some form of management of the growth of the City, but there is very limited awareness of how to start bringing it about.

Last year, we became aware of an initiative set up by the Prince's Foundation to help tackle the enormous challenges posed by rapid urbanisation in many of the Commonwealth's cities.

Representatives of the Foundation met with Bo City and District colleagues in Leamington when they came to the UK last October and that initial meeting has developed into a project whereby Bo is to be used as a pilot City for developing a new planning methodology that can be rolled out to other Commonwealth cities.

This is a major opportunity and the project is to move forward with workshop sessions in Bo during spring and Autumn of this year.

John Archer, Philip Clarke and Clive Harridge attended a two-day Conference in London convened by the Prince's Foundation for Building Community to discuss the initiative. The Conference brought together key partners from the Commonwealth and beyond, including the Commonwealth



HRH Prince Charles and Tom Perry (Prince's Foundation) with John Archer and Philip Clarke

Local Government Forum, Commonwealth Association of Planners, Commonwealth Association of Architects, UN-Habitat, and New York University as well as One World Link.

This provided an opportunity to help develop the new planning methodology to be used in Commonwealth countries where rapid urbanisation is experienced. The Conference concluded with a meeting with HRH The Prince of Wales at Clarence House, where we had the opportunity to explain One World Link's

involvement in the project directly to him. He was interested in our work and informed us of his own experiences of visiting Freetown and his awareness of the difficulties the country faced.

