

Health Link and Planning Visit January 2020

Introduction

The visit had been planned by Phil Clarke, Helena White and Richard Hall with two main purposes. Phil was pursuing a Development Planning project in partnership with the Princes Foundation. Helena and Richard's visit was to make contacts and discuss further development of a health link.

The Schedule

Date	Location	Activity
Fri 10 th Jan	Heathrow to Freetown via Casablanca	Landed at Lungi at 3am Arrived at Aberdeen Dock at 5.30am
	Ministry of Health & Sanitation, Freetown	8.30 am Meeting with Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Temp Head of Environmental Health Directorate, Dep Dir Environmental Health Directorate
Sat 11 th	Freetown	Meeting contacts in relation to Helena's midwifery work. Also met Planning contact in relation to Phil's project
Sun 12 th	Travel to Bo	Meeting with OWL Committee to plan for the visit.
Mon 13 th	Bo	Visit to Paul's School for the Blind Phil met with Planners at Bo City Council to plan for the week.
Tue 14 th	Bo	With Wusu Sannoh H& R visited Yemoh Town Clinic and Bo Children's Hospital Phil worked at BCC on planning project Helena and Richard met with Bo District Medical Officer in the afternoon.
Wed 15 th	Bo & Freetown	Visit to Bo Govt Hospital for H R sat in on the Bo Teacher group meeting at the OWL Centre . In the afternoon R visited Sewa Rd school. Phil went to Freetown in connection with Planning
Thurs 16 th	Bo & Freetown	Visit to rural areas for H & R P returning from Freetown
Fri 17 th	Bo	R met with teachers bringing information for the 'Zero Waste' project. R & P visited Maada's widow Elizabeth Meal Visited Yemoh Town Clinic to officially 'open' after improvement work. Joint OWL committee meeting at the OWL Centre
Sat 18 th	Bo	Taken by Alpha Bah to Ngeybayama. Welcomed formally by the community. In the afternoon there was a Health Link Committee meeting attended by H&R
Sun 19 th	Bo to Freetown by Govt Bus	Up at 4.30am Arrived in Freetown about midday! Met socially with Doris and Saidu

Mon 20 th	Freetown	Feedback meeting at the Ministry Of Health & Sanitation Meeting with the British High Commissioner and Health Policy Officer from DFID
	Freetown to Lungi by Sea Coach	Flight from Lungi at 4am
Tues 21 st	Freetown to Heathrow via Casablanca	Arrival back at Heathrow 5pm

Report

Day 1 - We arrived at Lungi at 3 am Fri 10th and took the 'Seacoach' to Aberdeen. We were very grateful to be picked up at 6am by friends of Helena and transported to their house to shower and change before our first meeting at 8.30am. This was at the Ministry of Health & Sanitation where we met the Deputy Chief Medical Officer for Sierra Leone and other health officials, as below.



Alhaji Dr Momodu Sesay, Team Lead Directorate of Environmental Health and Sanitation and Ms. Doris Bah, Deputy Director, Directorate of Environmental Health and Sanitation.

Day 2 - We were able to spend a day in Freetown catching up with contacts and exploring parts of Freetown. The following day we travelled to Bo in a vehicle driven by one of Helena's friends.

Day 3 - After arriving in Bo on Sunday afternoon we met with Bo OWL Committee to discuss plans for the coming week. Richard hadn't been to Sierra Leone for 4 years so it was good to meet friends again.

Day 4 – In the morning we re-acquainted ourselves with Bo town itself. In the afternoon Phil had meetings to attend at Bo City Council, so Helena and Richard visited Paul's School for the Blind. We met with Mohamed and looked at the improvement works carried out to the latrines.

Day 5 – With Wusu, Helena and Richard visited Bo Children's Hospital and Yemoh Town Community Health Centre (YTCHC) to discuss future plans and to look at projects completed. Phil led a Development Planning workshop at Bo City Council offices during the day.

In the afternoon Helena and Richard met the District Medical Officer for Bo Dr Carson-Marsh.



New washing facilities and beds at Yemoh Town CHC

New delivery bed in the maternity area at YTCHC



Day 6 – We again had a division of activities, with Phil being fully involved on Planning matters. He travelled to Freetown with the Mayor of Bo City Council and their Planning Officer. There they met with the Permanent Secretary to the Minister for Local Government to discuss the planning work that OWL and the Prince’s Foundation have been supporting in Bo.



Phil presenting a certificate at the Ministry. OWL with the Princes Foundation had been 'Highly Commended' by the Commonwealth Association of Planners in their awards for excellence, for the innovative work being carried out in the project.

Helena visited Bo Government Hospital in the morning to look at some of the facilities there whilst Richard sat in on the OWL Teachers Group meeting. They were making plans for the impending visit by 4 UK teachers.

During the afternoon Richard visited Sewa Road School with John Sandi in connection with a potential project to improve toilet facilities. A visit was also made to see Teneh at her home.

She had been ill for some time and there were packages, with good wishes, to deliver from the UK.

Teachers Group at the Bo OWL centre



Day 7 – Phil had a meeting with Makeni City Council, Bo City Council and the Prince's Foundation in Waterloo to discuss the forthcoming Prince's Foundation workshop in Bo. He then travelled back to Bo in the afternoon.

Helena and Richard visited some of the remote rural areas with staff from Bo District Council. The size of the district and difficulties for travel and accessing services became very apparent.

The Community Health Post at Ngolahun Jabarty. One of the remote areas of the District.



In the evening we were all able to enjoy relaxing at the OWL centre and chatting to friends there.



The 'bar' at the OWL Centre built with Ecobricks. With Theresa, John Sandi and Alpha Bah.

Day 8 – There was a gathering of Teachers first thing. They were providing written information to be returned to Leamington. Richard and Phil then travelled with John Sandi to meet Maada's wife, Elizabeth, at her home. We paid our respects following Maada's death and shared many happy memories of Maada's huge contribution to OWL and to life in Bo.



Maada's wife, Elizabeth

Helena had visited YTCHC again to meet Mr Lansana Deen. Phil and Richard joined Helena after their morning visit, to hold a low-key but formal 'opening' of the new facilities at YTCHC.

The local Chief, Imam and health workers gather to open the new facilities at Yemoh Town CHC



In the evening a full Bo OWL Committee meeting was held. On the agenda were ongoing OWL Centre Management issues and planning for the future.

Day 9 – Alpha Bah took all three of us to his own community on the outskirts of Bo, Ngeybayama. There we were met with a full reception from the whole community, with singing, dancing and speeches. The hope was expressed that OWL would be able to help provide a much-needed clinic on land donated by a local landowning family and to help the community in other ways. Sadly this was the last time we saw Alpha. He had been ill for some time and had made a supreme effort to arrange this event. (NB. Not long after returning to the UK we learned that Alpha had died).

In the afternoon there was a meeting of the Health Link committee which we all attended at the OWL Centre. This was a significant step in the developing new link.

In the evening we were treated to an excellent meal at a hotel and said our goodbyes to all our friends in OWL.

Day 10 – We set off for Freetown by Government Bus at 5am! The bus having broken down a couple of times we landed back in the centre of Freetown at 1pm. The journey had been a real insight into Sierra Leone life.

We were able to relax at Julie and Fadi's (Helena's friends on whom we had landed when we first arrived) during the day. We then met with Doris Bah and husband Saidu at a Lumley beach restaurant in the evening.

Welcome Star beers at Lumley beach on our final night.



Day 11 – Our first meeting was back at the Ministry of Health & Sanitation to give feedback on our visit and findings. We then had a very friendly meeting at the British High Commission, with the High Commissioner, Simon Mustard. He was very positive about the work of organisations like OWL and promised to visit us in the UK. Jaya Verma the Health Policy Advisor for DFID was also present.

It was then back to base to pack and prepare for our flight at 4am the next morning.

Conclusions

As always, visiting Sierra Leone is full of memorable experiences and the sharing friendships. This time it was also tinged with great sadness, with Maada's death looming large and the illness of Alpha Bah. Questions as to how Bo OWL was going to cope with the situation were in our thoughts as we left.

From the Health Link point of view, it was a very productive visit enabling a Helena and Richard to begin formulating a plan for the future.

The Planning work which Phil had been involved with in partnership with the Prince's Foundation had progressed well and was receiving good recognition.