

## Health Visit to Bo October 2022

This was our first visit back to Bo since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. It was an incredibly positive trip with many productive meetings and new contacts made. Richard Hall and Helena White from the OWL UK health team were accompanied by a midwifery colleague, Zoe Milburn.

The health workers in Sierra Leone tend to be posted to units for approximately 3 years which can make long-term working relationships difficult. This was the case on this visit, but all new contacts and meetings were positive and enthusiastic.

We met with the new District Medical Officer (DMO) for Bo district, Dr Masuba, who, along with his team, oversee all the health units within Bo district and he has all the information regarding staff training and ongoing health programmes. We understand that 15 of the small Peripheral Health Units have been identified for upgrading to provide at least basic maternity care and we have offered support with this in terms of training and supporting the staff working in these remote units.

We were also lucky to meet with Rose Kamara from CARE International who are a large charity working in the Bo area. They strive to tackle the underlying causes of poverty and social injustices while supporting ways of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular the universal right to health care. We are hoping to work in partnership with them in the future within the framework of their health worker training programmes.

We delivered our basic training package to the staff of Yemoh Town Health Centre – this time focusing primarily on the use of the partograph, a specific form used during labour that will easily highlight the need for referral to a tertiary unit, and Neo natal resuscitation. We had meetings with the In Charge of the clinic – Lansana Deen, and handed over two emergency paramedic backpacks full of essential supplies. Unfortunately, Mr Deen has now left to work within the District



Health Management Team but we are in contact with Gabriel Moriba who has just taken over and has experience in working in a particularly remote health unit. We spent an afternoon at Yemoh Town clinic with Hawa, one of the night shift midwives, creating scenarios that demonstrate blood loss during a delivery. Estimating blood loss is universally difficult but the pictures currently available are of NHS beds or western sanitary products, both of which are not



available or useful when teaching in Bo. So we made our own! We made 'blood' with water, red food colouring and a local food product 'gari' similar to ready brek and poured differing amounts onto a 'lappa' – a piece of local material that the women are asked to bring in with them when they are in labour. We created different pictures and put them onto the WhatsApp group that we created for the team. We hope this will help them estimate in the future and refer women if it seems to be greater than 500mls –

considered a haemorrhage. We also spent time learning their routine in the ante natal clinic

We also delivered two teaching workshops at the OWL centre, using the large conference room downstairs. It worked very well with the technology readily available to show short demonstration films and plenty of space to break into sub groups for more focused teaching. We had good attendance to both sessions and hope to build on this in future visits.

Looking to the long-term future of the health link we want to explore the possibility of linking Bo Government Hospital (BGH) with South Warwickshire NHS Foundation Trust hospital. This would be an educational link, supporting local staff to improve their skills in a variety of disciplines. BGH offers medical, surgical, maternity, special care baby unit, paediatrics and physiotherapy so there are many potential areas for us to make productive working relationships and positive impacts for both local and NHS staff. As a start we met with the Medical Superintendent of BGH, Dr Kanu, who was



very enthusiastic and sent us a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for us to consider and discuss with him further. Initial talks have taken place with board members from SWFT, we will keep you posted.!

One World Link is based on long and firm friendships and this visit was particularly heart-warming as we all felt we had been through a bit of an ordeal with the pandemic and were so pleased to be back amongst such warm and welcoming friends. Our last evening was spent playing cards and receiving some wonderful gifts – mainly beautiful, specially made, African clothes.



In order to maintain the momentum to build the links we are hoping the next visit for the health team will be in January.

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*Helena White, One World Link UK Health Coordinator*