

One World Link

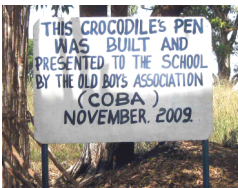
The friendship link between Bo District in Sierra Leone and Warwick District, UK

www.oneworldlink.org.uk

Registered Charity No. 700714

One Man went to Bo...

John Archer, former Head of Planning at Warwick District Council, recently visited Bo as part of a long term work project with the City Council. Here, he shares some of his thoughts from the visit.



"Like to see the school pet?"
My tour with William Alpha, Bo City's Chief Administrator was at a large secondary school.

We go round a corner to a fenced enclosure. I peer inside. Some pet. There sits a large, adult crocodile, basking

in the dry season sun. Just the latest of many surprises in Sierra Leone's remarkable second city.

I was visiting Bo with Jane Knight of the One World Link group. The link has been sharing experience and understanding between Bo and Leamington for over 28 years. It even continued through the Country's recent devastating civil war and today is as active as ever.

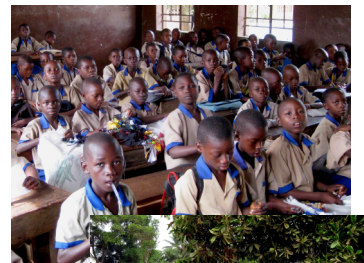
The collaboration between Bo and Warwick Councils has already helped with waste management, environmental health and finance support, involving visits by experts from the County and District Councils. My job was to help Bo Council develop ideas on planning for the City. But first, I needed to understand more about daily life.

The statistics tell one story, and a pretty stark one at that: highest under-5 mortality rate in the world, 60% illiteracy rate, average life expectancy in the mid 40's and a stagnant economy, with 60% of government expenditure coming from foreign aid.

Sounds bad, but there is another side. Whilst poor by any western standards, there is little evidence of despair or hopelessness. The streets throng with people; trading,

travelling and working. Everywhere I went I saw endless activity and was always met with courtesy and good humour.

Nevertheless, much is needed. I visited overcrowded schools, some with over 100 pupils in a classroom. At one, lack of space meant pupils were taught outside. Very picturesque, but hopelessly impractical. "How do you manage in the rainy season?" I asked the dignified Headmistress. She looked at me. "With difficulty", was the understated reply.



But the City Council is looking forward. The elected Mayor, Dr Wusu Sannoh wants to plan for the future. The Council itself has been in existence only since only 2004, shortly after the end of the civil war. With no control over development the City is sprawling in an unplanned way. Commercial areas are growing haphazardly and there is no mechanism for linking infrastructure needs with growth. Planning has its critics in the UK, but the adverse consequences of no planning at all are plain to see here.



The Mayor is keen to have a "blueprint" for the City to guide it over the next ten years. Following my discussions with City Council staff in Bo, the Mayor visited Warwick District to take the project further. We hope to be able to continue to work together to set up a system that can help plan its growth.

Celebrating the Day of the African Child - 16 June



Statue in memory of the Children of Soweto

As we go to press, last minute preparations are being made to celebrate the International Day of the African Child - a day when we remember the Soweto Uprising of 16 June 1976 during the Apartheid Era in South Africa. Over 500 African children and young people were killed after 30,000 African school children led a protest against being denied the right to study their own language and culture in school.

Our linked primary schools will again celebrate the Day by holding an interschool concert in the afternoon. At the same time their counterpart schools in Bo will come together for a storytelling session. Also, to support the World Cup "One Goal" campaign for universal free primary education in Africa, football matches between pairs of link schools here and in Bo will take place.

For security reasons, the public cannot attend the schools event, so OWL are putting on an evening concert on the following day, featuring African rhythm, music and story-telling, and with unique contributions from our linked schools.

Chairman's Notebook



OWL, if nothing else, is always alive with ideas about how we can put our aims into practice in our local communities.

Some years ago we had an active Health link with the hospital in Bo, and we're now investigating the possibility of re-invigorating this. I've had a meeting with a nurse practitioner at Warwick hospital and I've chatted with a WHO health advisor based in Leicester, who's been out to Africa and has experience of assessing the needs and capabilities of Health Centres and hospitals there. In Bo, when we ask women in the Women's Group what sort of support they'd like from us here, health issues are always up on the agenda. Sierra Leone remains one of the countries of the world with the highest infant mortality and deaths during pregnancy and childbirth. We could very usefully inform ourselves better here of these issues and the various ways that we can give support.

We've also been thinking about Adult Education and bringing people together in our community to learn more about issues of International Development, Development Education and all the various subjects touching on these. In the past we organised a series of talks given at the Warwickshire College, but because there are other groups organising talks in this area (the United Nations' Association to name but one), we're beginning to think that we might aim for one talk in the year, where we try to invite a well known figure and give the occasion of the talk a name (eg 'The Bo Warwick Lecture?'), so that, as time goes by, we might well achieve something of a reputation with these talks. The lecture might be planned as part of a weekend of other OWL events, perhaps with a music/ live event on the next day, or as part of the Day of the African Child celebrations. If any of you happen to come up with ideas for something like this, then do let me know!

And yet another idea we're toying with is hosting a Linking Get-together. To invite *all* linking organisations in the country might be too ambitious, so it might just be for those links involved with Africa. We might try to host such an event in conjunction with another link group. But the idea would be to share the successes, problems and good practice we all experience with linking, so that government and national linking organisations can better see the effects we're having on our communities here and in Africa.

Chris King

Fundraising? - It's Easy!

If you could raise money for OWL without hardly raising a finger, would you do it? Well, you can! By registering with

easyfundraising.org.uk,

and choosing OWL as your beneficiary, you can shop online with all your favorite retailers, like Amazon, Argos, Sainsbury's, Tesco, John Lewis and many, many more, and they will donate a percentage of everything you spend to OWL. And the beauty of it all is that it costs you absolutely NOTHING! So why not check it out and register today!

Every little counts!

HAVE WE GOT NEWS FOR YOU!

OWL runs a **monthly news service** delivering to your desktop all the key news stories from Sierra Leone. It keeps you up to date with articles and features covering a broad cross-section of news, views and information. OWL Member **John Yates** runs the service and if you would like to receive the service, please email him on johnyates23@gmail.com



MAYOR OF BO VISITS LEAMINGTON

Dr. Wusu Sannoh, Mayor of Bo, made a flying visit to Leamington in March. It was a great pleasure to welcome him back to Leamington. His last visit was in 2005 when he had only just begun his first term in office



John Archer (see front page article) had met Wusu and his councillors when he visited Bo in February and it was felt that continued discussions were needed to clarify roles at the Warwick District and Bo City ends of the link to achieve a local plan of Bo in ten years time. OWL's local government group also wanted to spend time reviewing their various roles in cooperating with Bo so that future programmes and fundraising plans could be worked out.

So there were earnest sessions about mapping and decentralisation and



Making plans.....

how to implement change in a city where land tenure is extremely complicated. The other matters of water and sanitation and finance were discussed with local Rotary of-ficers and Warwick District's environmental health and finance departments.

Dr. Sannoh also met with County Council officers to discuss their imminent visit to Bo to continue work on implementing the Solid Waste Management programme (see report on page three opposite) which has occupied all the councils since 2008. It was great news that at last the vehicles required for the programme had arrived in Bo just in time for the Mayor's return.

The Mayor was received with warm welcomes by the Town, District and County Council representatives and he also managed to fit in much appreciated school visits. We all look forward to his return whether as Mayor or just as a local Bo citizen....



Time to Get Involved! Ben Wesson reports on the state of (OWL) youth today....



Ben with members of the Bo OWL Youth Wing

As the examination period draws upon us, children and young people both here and in Sierra Leone are busy studying for their examinations - whether that be for GCSEs, A-Levels here in the UK, or the BECE or WASSCE in Sierra Leone. So, needless to say, recent contact within the youth wing has been somewhat fluid in the last couple of months.

However, young people on both sides of the link have been in regular contact since the return of our first youth visit to Sierra Leone last October. The youth wing in Sierra Leone continues to thrive, with so many young people involved. I have recently heard from Alpha Bah, the Bo youth chairman, that even more young people have got involved with the wing - he estimates that the wing provides activities for well over 1000 young Sierra Leoneans now!

The future for our youth wing here also looks good. We have a steady number of members, who remain enthusiastic about the work the link does, and together after the exam season has passed, we will be going on a membership drive. So, if you're young, enthusiastic, and passionate about youth-related issues, then why not get involved? Or, if you know someone who is, why not get them involved?

We're currently looking at creating a video about day-to-day life in the UK for young people to share with our friends in Sierra Leone, forming a partnership with the GAP's Brazil exchange project, and currently sourcing funding for our youth exchange for next year - so there couldn't be a more exciting time to get involved with the link!

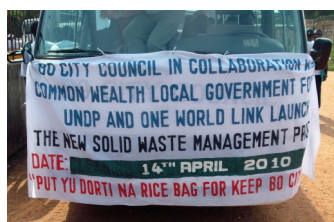
SKIPS AHOY!

The long awaited skips needed for the Waste Management Project have finally arrived in Bo. This meant that the roll-out of the pilot project could resume, and Glenn Fleet and Derek Greedy from the County's Environmental Health Dept were soon on their way to Bo. Arriving in April, landfill training was soon underway for operatives from both Bo and neighbouring Makeni. "At long last we managed to get the first landfill cell completed," said Glenn, "as our efforts last August, during the rainy season, were thwarted by the adverse weather. We even managed to landfill some of the residual waste that had been collected from the city streets."



Cavalcade

Glenn and Derek were also fortunate enough to be there for the project launch - a very public event met with great enthusiasm from the residents, with much waving, cheering and shaking of hands. A cavalcade was led by the JCB followed by the skip lorry and tanker. Councillors and staff followed in the two recently acquired air-conditioned buses. The official opening took place at the football stadium with numerous speeches from UNDP, the Paramount Chief, our own Glenn Fleet, the Ministry for the Environment and the Mayor of Bo.



Air-con bus - suitably adorned

Radio Bo

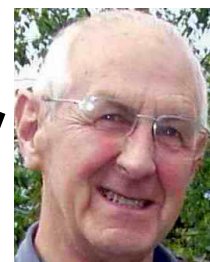
Both Glenn and Derek participated in the weekly live radio slot that Bo City Council have. "We managed to get in a few words in about the pilot project and what it was hoping to deliver," said Derek, "and were gratified when one caller phoned in to thank us for our efforts."

Extended Stay

Their stay was extended by the Icelandic volcano dust cloud closing UK airspace - frustrating for families and work colleagues back home, but it gave an opportunity to visit Holy Cross school and see the children during their lessons. "One class felt that they wanted to sing to us which was so rewarding as the song was sung with such gusto and passion," said Derek. "It was also so encouraging to see

School Report

from Brian Austin
Schools Group Leader



PROSPECTIVE EXCHANGE TEACHER VISITS

The Primary Teachers are exploring the possibility of reciprocal visits next year. Recently they have had visits from Matt Stephenson and Kate Hindson from the Hull Link to hear about their participation in GLOBAL SCHOOLS PARTNERSHIPS, which has enabled several exchange visits to take place with their schools in Freetown. We hope to learn from their experience and a meeting of Headteachers with Warwickshire's International Development Officer, Judith Walter, is planned for early July.

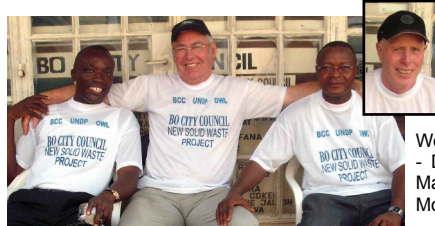
PRIMARY TEACHERS' GROUP

Every term a group of Primary Teachers gets together, as many as can make it from our ten linked schools, to share their classroom experiences and learn from each other. They also tell each other about resources they have used, discuss any problems with communication, etc. and generally explore ways of sustaining and improving their links with their partner school in Bo.

their break - disappointing perhaps to see that there was litter but reassuring to see that it was being collected! We just hope that attitude eventually rubs off leading to reduced littering in the streets."

Back for More

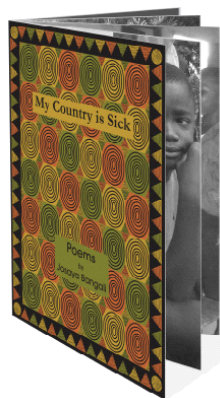
Derek and Glenn are expecting to make a further visit early in 2011 when they will be able to assess the success of the project and hopefully enable its roll-out country wide.



Wearing their T-shirts with pride - Derek and Glenn (inset) with Maada Foday (left) and Eric Moossa (right)



Bo Poet Published



Josaya wrote poetry during the Civil War in Sierra Leone from 1991 to 2000. His book 'My Country is Sick' is a collection of his poems which reflect Josaya's sensitivity and sensibility to the violence and also represent the sentiments of people wherever there is or there has been war.

Order from
Jm yers4544@aol.com
0192 642 5403
Price £10.00

ISBN 9780646513539

On his first visit to Bo in 2002 OWL member John Myers met Josaya in Cisco's bar. They discovered a common interest in poetry. John arranged for his poetry to be published on the internet. Now thanks to Jane Shakespeare, who met Josaya in Bo in 2006, the poems have been properly published. Each poem is complemented by a photo taken by Jane. This very attractive book will grace any coffee table and act as a talking point. Equally the poems may be read or recited to illustrate talks or lessons about civil war or West African culture. They are also worth many private readings to appreciate their beauty and meaning.

The following poem by Josaya was written more recently, and reminds us of the causes of war.

*While the python of sickness
Is swallowing the children,
The buffalo of poverty
Is knocking down the people,
And ignorance stands there
Like an elephant,
The political leaders
are tightly locked in feuds
Eating each others liver*

See also www.sierra-leone.org/Poetry/poetry-josayabangali.html

Bo Scrapbook

Photos from
recent visits



Marketing the Community Centre



The wit and wisdom of the road.....



Off the Shelf.....

Did you know that OWL has a library of books on a range of relevant subjects which members can borrow? **Nan Ells** is our librarian, and she is in charge of the collection which, at present, contains just over 20 books. The OWL collection is located in the Leamington Library in the World History section. They can be borrowed from the Library in the usual way.

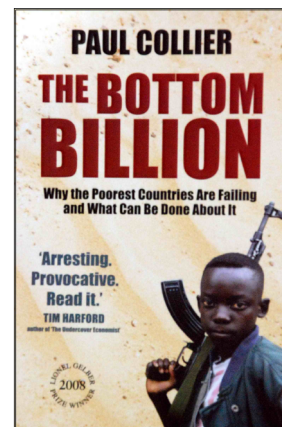
In each issue of the Newsletter, we plan to carry a short book review. If you have a book which you think OWL members would find useful or enjoyable, let us know. For this issue, our Chair, **Chris King** recommends.....

The Bottom Billion

By Paul Collier

OUP 2008

Paul Collier, Professor of Economics and Director of The Centre for the Study of African Economies at Oxford University, is a well known authority on World Poverty and related issues. This is not a long book, less than 200 pages, and is refreshingly easy to read. The book sets out to explain why the 'bottom billion' of the world's poorest people sit seemingly rooted in poverty while other countries, until recently in the same category, are lifting themselves up to a better standard of living. Over recent years he has examined how complex factors such as geography, natural resources, political and military influences and the relationship with the developed world affect the direction development can take. Collier is not reluctant to point out where he thinks the donor countries and agencies have gone wrong, but he also gives us hope with a list of ideas which he feels, if implemented, would have a significant impact and begin the process of getting these countries off the bottom.



For those wishing to read further, I can also recommend Dam-bisa Moyo's recent book *Dead Aid, - why aid is not working and how there is another way for Africa*. (Penguin Books 2010)

If you have a book you would like to recommend or wish to write a review, please email Nan Ells at annaeells@googlemail.com

if you want to know more about any of the projects or topics covered in this issue, you can always visit:

www.oneworldlink.org.uk