



August 2011

Friends of Sierra Leone

Friends of Sierra Leone Annual Meeting in Freetown: President Koroma Praises Group's Contributions

By Tom Hull

"You are all ambassadors," declared President Ernest Bai Koroma to Friends of Sierra Leone and Peace Corps participants at the State House in Freetown. Noting that he had Peace Corps teachers in primary and secondary school, the President thanked Friends of Sierra Leone for its contributions to his country and to relations between our countries.

The President's remarks came during the successful July 17-20 Friends of Sierra Leone Annual Meeting that was deftly organized by Friends of Sierra Leone President Peggy Murrah, Public Affairs Officer Amadu Massally, and Board Member Etta Toure. Several other senior officials briefed the group in detail on economic development, education, health issues, and U.S.-Sierra Leone relations.

American Ambassador Michael Owen updated the group on embassy programs, including an expanded Fulbright Senior Scholar Program for U.S. professors to spend 6 to 8 weeks lecturing and advising in Sierra Leone; a world class medical laboratory being built by the Centers for Disease Control outside Freetown; a USAID 5-year, \$60M program for the sale of Food for Peace commodities; technical advice on oil production to the Government of Sierra

Leone; guidance for Sierra Leone on competing for Millennium Challenge Account funding; the recent establishment of a U.S.-Sierra Leone Chamber of Commerce; promotion of diaspora relations; and the State Department's new Global Partnership Initiative under which Friends of Sierra Leone and other U.S. NGOs might become partners with the embassy in development initiatives. Ambassador Owen also graciously hosted a reception for annual meeting participants at his residence.

Minister of Finance and Economic Development Dr. Samura Kamara thanked Friends of Sierra Leone for its advocacy as Sierra Leone seeks donor assistance and investment to double its GDP in the next two to three years. While recognizing that his country needs to "trade out of aid," Dr. Kamara emphasized the need for well-coordinated assistance to meet its citizens' expectations for free health care, children's needs, social security, elections, and improved roads and other infrastructure. Sierra Leone, he said, needs investment to process raw materials in-country and greater market access internationally.

World Bank Country Manager Vijay Pillai

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2011 Election Results

The ballots are in and counted. The following were re-elected:

Peggy Murrrah, President

Aiah Fanday, Vide President

Patty Bruzek, Secretary

Amadu Massally, Public Affairs

Jim Sheahan, Public Affairs

Ed Monaghan, Board-Member-at-Large

In addition we welcome two new Board-Members-at-Large:

Jeff Davis

Falla Lamin

The three Board-Members-at-Large listed above have four-year terms that expire in 2015.

These other four Board-Members-at-Large have four-year terms that expire in 2013:

Anthony McMillon

Gary Schulze

Judy Figi

Tom Hull

A statement from Jeff Davis, newly elected Board-Member-at-Large

I'm honored to serve on the Friends of Sierra Leone board as an at-large member. I was an Education PCV in the Moyamba District of Sierra Leone from 1984-1986. I was then a Peace Corps Recruiter and a Peace Corps Fellow at Columbia University. I've held international education positions in a few countries, including from 1993-1995 during the civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone when I served as the Guinea Country Director for the International Rescue Committee, which ran a system of 150 schools and three adult education centers for refugees. Presently, I'm the Co-Founder and Vice President of School-to-School International (www.sts-international.org), a non-profit organization based in the U.S. that has contracts and grants to support educational development in about a dozen countries around the world, mostly in Africa.

In terms of supporting Friends of Sierra Leone, I'm willing to do about anything that the organization might need, but am probably most useful in helping with development projects and liaising with Peace Corps (I'm based in the Washington, DC area). I'd also be glad to look into possibilities for linking up Friends of Sierra Leone with School-to-School or similar organizations. One of School-to-School's activities is to manage a pen pal program that includes approximately 800 school children from Africa who regularly correspond with children from the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. Unfortunately, we do not currently work in Sierra Leone, but the School-to-School board has appointed a committee to examine the possibility of establishing an office there. In any case, I am very much looking forward to getting more involved in Sierra Leone as a board member with Friends of Sierra Leone.

*On the occasion of
Sierra Leone's 50th Independence Anniversary &
The 50th Anniversary of the Peace Corps*

*The Embassy of Sierra Leone &
Friends of Sierra Leone Board of Directors
Request the pleasure of your company at a reception*

*On Friday, September 23rd, 2011
3:00 pm – 8:00 pm*

*Africare House
440 R Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001*

*Presentations & Updates by
Embassy of Sierra Leone
U. S. State Department
Peace Corps
Friends of Sierra Leone*

*R. S. V. P. by September 1st, 2011
50th@fosalone.org*

To help defray expenses a \$20 donation at the door is suggested.

Friends of Sierra Leone Presented with Humanitarian Award

Friends of Sierra Leone gratefully acknowledges the honor of being chosen by the Embassy of the Republic of Sierra Leone for its Humanitarian Award. It was presented recently by Ambassador Bockarie Stevens in recognition of the role Friends of Sierra Leone played in providing artificial limbs and other medical care for amputees who came to the U.S. at the height of the war, as well as its funding of agricultural and educational projects in Sierra Leone over many years.

Accepting the award on behalf of the organization's worldwide members, Aiah Fanday, Vice President, thanked the Ambassador for the honor. He said, "Friends of Sierra Leone has been proud

to play an advocacy role with regard to the U. S. Government on policy matters such as obtaining Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for over ten thousand Sierra Leone citizens who came here as refugees during the rebel war." In addition, Mr. Fanday related how Friends of Sierra Leone members, both returned Peace Corps Volunteers and Sierra Leoneans, have worked on getting the Peace Corps to again send volunteers to the country. Last June, the first contingent of teachers arrived in Bo and they are now located in secondary schools throughout the provinces. In June, 2011, an additional 49 teachers left the U. S. and will begin training in Makeni before being assigned to teaching jobs.



Ambassador Bockarie Stevens announces that Friends of Sierra Leone has been selected the winner of the Humanitarian Award and **Dr. Susan Shepler of American University awarded the Certificate of Recognition.** Shown in the photo are Friends of Sierra Leone President Peggy Murrah and Vice President Aiah Fanday with Ambassador Stevens and Dr. Susan Shepler.



President Ernest Bai Koroma addressed the Friends of Sierra Leone in the State House.

Friends of Sierra Leone would like to recognize Aerosafe Products, Inc. of Marietta, Georgia, for their donation of a filter to Panguma Hospital in Sierra Leone. The hospital uses diesel to power its generators, and the diesel becomes contaminated during the transfer from drums to vehicles and generators. Aerosafe makes products for aviation maintenance, including the funnel filter the hospital needs to decontaminate its diesel. Friends of Sierra Leone gives a big Thank You to Aerosafe for its generosity and support of a vital organization in Sierra Leone!

Everyone is invited! Are you going to be in Washington, DC, for the Peace Corps 50th birthday gala? Plan to attend the Friday, September 23, reception at Africare House (see the invitation on page 3). This reception is being sponsored jointly by Friends of Sierra Leone and the Embassy of Sierra Leone. To help defray expenses a \$20 donation at the door is suggested.

Solar Electric Initiative Update

By Leslie and Jack McKeon

A little over a year ago, Friends of Sierra Leone's Solar Electric Initiative, in partnership with Energy for Opportunity (EFO), a local Freetown organization, installed a solar array of a little over 1,500 Watts at the Kamakwie Secondary School, making it the largest school solar energy array in Sierra Leone. Happily, with very few glitches, the project has been a success.

The sun delivers a free and abundant source of energy. Now the school has light 24/7, making night classes and tutoring a reality and making the school compound a venue for evening socializing and activities. There are over 1,000 students attending in split sessions, a big departure from when I taught there over 40 years ago! The school has a functioning computer lab with several computers and teachers trained by volunteer Princeton engineering students.

Not without struggle and nagging, the school now has a designated solar account with over two million leones at present. The school is beginning to make regular deposits so it can maintain the system as needed and expand on the opportunities offered by the solar upgrade. Small solar gooseneck study lamps with mini solar panels were sold to several students. Though the batteries have run down after a year's use, the director of EFO has worked out a way to run them with a locally available Nokia battery. Solar energy in the developing world remains a work in progress, but if my Peace Corps experience taught me anything it's that nowhere can people do more with less than in Sierra Leone. It's human initiative at its best.

Though it's a little sad to see expanding development, population growth, and crowding in what was a rural and laid back town, solar development is offering Kamakwie the best of modern technology. Starting with the school, Kamakwie now also has solar energy at the hospital, the community center and an orphanage. Soon there should also be a solar array at Outamba Kilimi, a nature reserve less than 20 miles north of Kamakwie. (If only there were a paved road and a bridge!) There is also a solar array and computer lab being installed at Gbendembu Secondary School, about 30 miles south.

While we expect to continue helping expand solar and computer opportunities to schools in the Northern Province, it is ironic for me, a computer dinosaur, to appreciate the importance of internet access, and I would also like to help install a V-SAT in Kamakwie. Basically a private internet tower, this would offer a quantum improvement in internet access to all the above mentioned sites, transforming the quality of medical care and education now available. Though costly to contemplate in these difficult and mean spirited times, it is surprisingly affordable for the size of the benefit.

For anyone interested in solar opportunities, I cannot recommend EFO, with its team of Sierra Leonean engineering students, more highly. If you want to help expand solar opportunities in Sierra Leone or work to expand internet access via a V-SAT in the Northern Province, please contact me [mckeon110@mac.com or (201) 836-8209].

Freetown HIV Awareness Cup Update

By Justin Sampson, Project Manager

As many of you know, it's the height of the rainy season here in Sierra Leone, which means fewer beach trips, moldy clothes, and, of course, tons of rain...but it's not all bad! The air is cleaner, everything is greener, the English Premier League is starting up, and, most importantly, The Freetown HIV Awareness Cup is only a few months away! As this exciting event approaches, I'd like to thank you for the support and donations which have made this tournament possible and give you a brief update on the event.

First and foremost, without you and your support, the Freetown HIV Awareness Cup would not be possible. I and the rest of All to Play For thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your invaluable support over the past year. As the creator of the Freetown HIV Awareness Cup, I must extend an additional thank you to all for lending your support to an ambitious endeavor. It means a great deal to me, but it will mean even more to the tournament participants and the communities who benefit. We know there are many opportunities to contribute to worthy causes and we are eternally grateful that you have chosen to support HIV education in Sierra Leone through football. You have enabled us to contribute to the fight against HIV in a way that is both effective and enjoyable.

The planning for the Freetown HIV Awareness Cup is well underway here and we are happy to announce that we have partnered with African Elite Athletes (AEA), a firm specializing in holding youth football tournaments, to implement our project. AEA is currently putting on the Manchester United/Airtel Rising Stars Tournament (http://news.sl/drwebsite/publish/article_200518201.shtml) here in Sierra Leone as well.

We have planned the Freetown HIV Awareness Cup in a manner that will provide the greatest community impact through HIV education while at the same time presenting a highly professional and organized youth football tournament. The Cup will take place over several weeks leading up to World Aids Day on December 1st 2011 and include community outreach, classroom education, preliminary rounds, and a Finals Weekend Celebration.

Sixteen boys teams from the following communities have been invited to participate: Fourah Bay, Murray Town, Low Cost Housing, Lumley, Dwarzack, Goderich, Cline Town, Kroo Bay, Mount Aureol, Brookfields, Calaba Town, Aberdeen, Wellington, Wilberforce, Central, and Kingtom. Based on community interest, as many as eight girls teams from the above mentioned communities will also take part in the tournament. The participation of all these teams is contingent upon taking part in classroom HIV education prior to the beginning of the tournament, facilitated through the National HIV Secretariat and other HIV partners. Throughout the tournament, HIV education will remain a priority and a visible element of the event.

Once the teams have successfully completed their classroom education, the 1st round of the Cup will begin in early November. Each team will be paired off with another team against whom they will play in a two-match aggregate round: one home game and one away game. The winners of these first round matchups will advance to the Finals of the Freetown HIV Awareness Cup which will take place the weekend of November 26th and 27th at the Brima Attougga Fields in the Cline Town area of Freetown. Those teams advancing to the Finals will all receive uniforms courtesy of Playing it Forward (<http://playingit.org/>) and the Fairleigh Dickinson University soccer program (<http://fduknights.com/index.aspx?path=msoc&>) This Final weekend will also bring together all the competing communities to further increase HIV Awareness in Freetown, to celebrate their successful participation in the program, and to cheer on the teams competing for the Cup Title.

As the Freetown HIV Awareness Cup draws nearer, I will provide more regular updates at www.hivawarenesscup.org, including information on the participating communities, the HIV education being imparted to the participants, and tournament progress. Thanks again to Friends of Sierra Leone for all of your support. You may continue to make donations to the Freetown HIV Awareness Cup through the website mentioned above or by mailing a check into Friends of Sierra Leone with HIV Cup noted in the memo line.

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was optimistic about Sierra Leone's growth, but noted that its current \$350 per capita annual income would take 17 years to double at a 6% per annum rate of GDP growth. He observed that without human capacity development economic growth will be slowed. He further cited need for greater efficiency (e.g., 40% of electricity from Bumbuna Dam is lost in transmission), and for generating more revenue for government operations. He and others commented on the importance of reviving the Mano River Union economic agreement for the development of Sierra Leone, Liberia, Guinea, and Cote d'Ivoire.

Minister of Agriculture, Food Security, and Forestry Dr. Sam Sesay briefed the group on recent significant progress in agriculture, which accounts for over 45% of the GDP and employs over two-thirds of the population while generating a quarter of the export revenue. The Government with donor assistance has invested heavily. As a percentage of the Government's total budget, agriculture increased from 1.6% in 2007 to 10% in 2009.

The payoff is reflected in bumper rice production (the World Food Programme is buying 40,000 bags of locally milled rice). The Government has invested significantly in equipment, weed killers, seeds, drying facilities, and mills for farmers, and is promoting irrigation to facilitate a second crop cycle annually. The Government strategy includes improving conditions (e.g., clear water, toilets) in rural villages, and Sierra Leone was the first country cited by the WFP for incorporating a social safety net in its agricultural strategy. Export crops have also received attention with cocoa exports having quadrupled in value in

just three years. The Minister concluded with an appeal for the Peace Corps to re-establish its agricultural program in Sierra Leone.

The Minister of Health and Sanitation, Zainab Hawa Bangura, reported that as a result of the introduction of free health care in April 2010, the 300% increase in outpatients is straining the system due to the inadequate number of health professionals. With only 5 pediatricians and fewer than 100 qualified midwives, the problems of child and maternal mortality remain serious. The training of midwives and nurses is being fast-tracked, and 75 new midwives (including some former traditional birth attendants) will graduate from a new school in Makeni in December.

Minister of Education, Science and Technology, Dr. Minkailu Bah, recited a litany of educational shortfalls that returned Peace Corps Volunteers are familiar with: teachers without teaching qualifications, oversize classes everywhere, insufficient teaching materials, etc. The Ministry has created a Commission to recruit and license teachers, and a national teacher training curriculum is being developed. He also observed that the educational system is not producing the "middle level" personnel that the country needs, such as electricians and plumbers. A Government White Paper on education concluded that a total overhaul of the education system is required, but, the minister said, it cannot happen without donor aid.

Another session of Friends of Sierra Leone's annual meeting, moderated by board member Michael Diliberti, gave participants an opportunity to hear about

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a cross-section of NGO programs and projects from their managers. Instead of going into detail about each one, a web site for more information is provided.

Mr. Sheka Forna spoke about the Rogbonko Village Retreat (www.rogbonkovillage.com) -- "Three Hours from Freetown, Two Centuries from Today" -- that he is developing for eco and cultural tourism. Amadu Massally spoke of his for-profit initiative Fambul Tik Tours (www.fambultiktours.com) that generally engages in heritage, cultural, eco, adventure, and gambit tourism with an emphasis on heritage tourism. April Conway, a University of Georgia researcher, spoke about her year studying pygmy hippos at Tiwai Island (www.tiwaiisland.org/). Mr. Abraham Bah of iEarn (www.learn.org) spoke not only of his organization's micro-lending activities, but also of its Youth Exchange Scholarship program that sent six Sierra Leoneans last year for a year of secondary school study in the U.S. and will be sending another five students this year.

Mr. Peter Andersen of the Special Court (www.sc-sl.org) updated participants on the war crimes trials, which are winding down, with a decision in the Charles Taylor case expected soon and the five final defendants on trial now for alleged witness tampering. Dr. Alfred Jarrett, head of the Department of Social Work at Fourah Bay College and an Affiliate Professor at George Mason University, updated the group on the International Community College Town Center System (<http://icctc.net/>) project that is developing community colleges in Makeni in agriculture, Pujehun in forestry, and in Lunsar and Kono in mining.

Dr. Adonis Abboud discussed his NGO, Pikin Bizness (<http://pikinbizness.org>) which sends seriously ill children overseas for medical treatment that is unavailable in Sierra Leone. Mr. Justin Sampson of All to Play For spoke about the soccer tournament he is sponsoring in November for the HIV/AIDS Awareness Cup (www.hivawarenesscup.org/) that will lead to World AIDS Day in December. See page seven of this newsletter for Justin's update.

Another highlight of the annual meeting was a Friends of Sierra Leone group visit to the new Peace Corps headquarters on the former British-American Tobacco Company compound off Signal Hill Road near the Ambassador's Residence. Current Volunteers and Directors Joel Wallach and Gail Metcalf briefed the visitors on the current Peace Corps education program in Sierra Leonean schools, which is expanding with the arrival of a second group of 49 new PCVs recently. The Friends of Sierra Leone visitors were very impressed by the spacious Peace Corps facilities, especially the hostel on the compound for Volunteers when they come to Freetown.

Most of the Friends of Sierra Leone visitors joined in a memorable voyage to Bunce Island where Amadu Massally gave them a guided tour of the ruins of the former slave trading fortress.

Overall, the third Friends of Sierra Leone Annual Meeting to be held in Freetown was judged to be its most successful for which an enthusiastic vote of thanks goes to everyone who was involved in its organization, to the Government of Sierra Leone for its strong support, and to all of the speakers who gave their time to be with us.

2012

The **2012 International Calendar** produced by the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Wisconsin is available through Friends of Sierra Leone. This year the calendar celebrates its 25th anniversary. In addition to volunteers' photographs from host countries around the world, the calendar includes historic days, holidays, and holy days from many cultures, astronomical data, and references to recommended books, music, films and local fare from the featured countries. The profits will go toward Friends of Sierra Leone activities. Make your check to Friends of Sierra Leone.

Use this order form or go to the Friends of Sierra Leone website and order via PayPal.

| <u>Quantity</u> | <u>Price/Calendar</u> | <u>Shipping</u> |
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| 1-5 | \$ 12.00 | included |
| 6-24 | \$ 7.00 | \$ 11.00 per order |
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**2012 is coming soon! You probably
 already have appointments to record.**

**Time to renew your membership? Check the expiration date on the mailing label
 and use the membership form on page 11 or renew online.**

Check the date on the address label. Is it time to renew? If there's no date, or if the date is some time in the past, it's time to renew!

FRIENDS OF SIERRA LEONE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Name (include maiden) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP+4 code _____

Home Phone (____) _____ E-mail address _____

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Relationship to SL (e.g., Sierra Leonean, PC, etc.) _____

Sierra Leone Home _____ Years _____ to _____

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|------|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Membership: Individual | \$25 | Contributions: FoSL Circle | \$1000 and up |
| | | Supporter | \$500 to \$999 |
| | | Sponsor | \$100 to \$499 |
| | | Friend | \$50 to \$99 |

Membership (\$25 per member) \$ _____

Contribution \$ _____

Overseas Mail (add \$10) \$ _____

Membership in *National Peace Corps Association* (\$35) \$ _____

\$

Total Remitted

- Membership dues support operations for Friends of Sierra Leone, including meetings, newsletter, and the website. All other contributions support projects in Sierra Leone.
- Dues and other contributions to Friends of Sierra Leone are fully tax-deductible. The \$35 membership fees for National Peace Corps Association are **not** tax-deductible.

Thank you for your support! Please return this form with a check payable to Friends of Sierra Leone to the address at the right. →

FoSL needs your participation. Circle your areas of interest:

Advocacy

Education

Membership


Newsletter/Communications

Projects

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Would you be willing to be part of a network to receive information and contact your members of Congress at important times? (Please include e-mail address, if available.)

Yes



P. O. Box 15875
Washington, DC
20003-0875

You may also renew your membership online at www.fosalone.org

Are you going to be in Washington, DC, for the Peace Corps 50th birthday gala? Plan to attend the Friday, September 23, reception at Africare House (see the invitation on page 3). This reception is being sponsored jointly by Friends of Sierra Leone and the Embassy of Sierra Leone.

PEO Sisterhood, chapter AY, has donated \$187 to the Friends of Sierra Leone Teacher Training project.

Friends of Sierra Leone
P. O. Box 15875
Washington, DC 20003-0875

Web: www.fosalone.org

Address Service Requested



Friends of Sierra Leone

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