



Friends of Sierra Leone

A Meeting with Chief Prosecutor David Crane by Linda Slonksnes

On May 27, 2003, Friends of Sierra Leone hosted Chief Prosecutor David Crane of the Special Court set up in Sierra Leone to try those most responsible for atrocities during Sierra Leone's decade-long rebel war. FoSL president Mike Diliberti facilitated the meeting with guests and board members. Invited guests included prominent Sierra Leoneans in the media, the field of law, and others with special interests in the Court: Peter Andersen of Sierra Leone Web; James Butty of West Africa Magazine; Lango Deen of Mano Vision Magazine; Kwame Fitzjohn of Africa Media; Maurice Garber, Sierra Leonean legal expert; Josephine Kamara of Voice of America; John E. Leigh, former Sierra Leonean Ambassador to the United States; John Musa of the Sierra Leone Institute for Policy Studies; and Alfred Sam Foray of the Sierra Leone Action Movement. Several of these guests, as well as many board members, were able to participate via teleconference. The meeting opened with a short video presentation provided by Mr. Fitzjohn to set

the stage and history.

Mr. Crane brought "greetings from Freetown". His opening remarks were brief, though he talked about his travel throughout the country and the town hall meetings with his client, the people of Sierra Leone. He encouraged those in the states to continue to speak out and support Sierra Leoneans and noted the improvements he has seen in-country over the nine months since he arrived. Crane's compliments went to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and he said he has been encouraging people to go before them. The Special Court had announced eight indictments by the time of the meeting, and Mr. Crane stated that his investigation was continuing and that more indictments would surely follow. [Postscript: This meeting occurred one week prior to the announcement of Liberian President Charles Taylor's indictment.]

Mike Diliberti opened up the meeting for questions. A few focused on the indictment of Hinga Norman and the reported

hunger strike. Mr. Crane told the group that Norman is healthy and that there was no hunger strike. It also came out that defense attorneys will have full access to law resources and technology via the Special Court. When asked about further evidence to Al Qaeda presence in West Africa, Crane responded that "there are people operating with impunity" and he will turn over any information he finds to the appropriate authorities when it does not fall within the realm of the Special Court. Mr. Crane stated that each indictment was signed after careful

(Meeting - cont. on Page 6)

Inside this Issue:

Freetown 2004	2
Gbujama Interview	3
Projects	4
Opala Lecture	5
Portland Meeting	7

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Freetown Cotton Tree and Sierra Leone Museum
Photo by Mike O'Neill

Freetown 2004. The FOSL Board approved the proposal to hold the 2004 FOSL Annual Meeting in Freetown. The dates of the official events will be on Tuesday/Wednesday, June 22/23, 2004.

We have about 75 people who have submitted their names as interested in attending. They will receive separate information from us later this month or early in October. Since many of our members are in the teaching profession and would not be able to attend if we scheduled the event during the school year, we scheduled the event in early summer before the rains are too heavy.

We plan to have a full set of events on the two official days with additional events planned for that entire week. US Ambassador Peter Chaveas in Freetown was delighted to hear this news and assigned an Embassy staff to work with us. Sierra Leonean Ambassador Ibrahim Kamara was also delighted with the news and assigned an Embassy staff to work with us here in Washington.

We are still in discussions with travel agents and airlines and should be able to finalize arrangements later this month or early in October. We are looking into fares from New York (or elsewhere on the east coast); fares from your town to New York would be in addition to fares we negotiate from New York to Freetown. At this time, we think a high estimate for airfare would be about \$1,500 (and we expect the final price to be lower). We plan to negotiate the rate with the hotel in Freetown within the next few weeks and, again, a high estimate would be about \$85 per night. Prices for accommodations in Freetown vary up to \$110 per night for hotels and as low as \$60 per night for some guest houses.

In addition to airfare and accommodations, you will need to cover meals (ranging from high prices in the hotels and beach restaurants to still very reasonable prices in more traditional venues). Taxi fare is still reasonable in Freetown, but hiring a car with driver for the day, especially for travel upcountry could range up to \$80 per day.

Please use the information above and the length you are planning to stay in Sierra Leone to determine how much you expect to need for the trip. Please wait until you receive our next communication with more details before sending us your questions – we probably don't know the answers yet.

If you know of others who are interested in this event but who have not yet registered with us on our website, please encourage them to register so we can have stronger numbers for our negotiations. The registration is on our home page called: Survey: 2004 Freetown Annual Meeting. Also, we will then be able to include them in our mailings.

As you can imagine, this is a major undertaking – one that will bring us all a great time in a great country and give us a chance to reconnect with a most important part of our lives. See you all in Freetown, Mike Diliberti, President, FOSL

An Interview with the Honorable Shirley Gbujama

by Michael O'Neill

"Hello. Is Shirley Gbujama there?"

"Just a minute please. (aside) Grandma it's for you."

So began my interview with Hon. Shirley Gbujama, Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs since 1998, recently in the Washington, DC area visiting family and friends. Ms. Gbujama attended and later taught at Harford Secondary School for Girls in Moyamba. She attained her baccalaureate degree from the State University of New York (New Paltz) and a Master's of Arts degree in Mathematics Education from New York University. Among those selected to train the first Peace Corps Volunteers headed to Sierra Leone, Ms. Gbujama continued as a Peace Corps trainer from 1961-64. In 1996-97 she served Sierra Leone as the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In her current posting, Ms. Gbujama expressed gratitude for "the opportunity to make a difference in people's lives."

When asked to summarize the mandate of her ministry, Ms. Gbujama pointed out that there are three distinct areas to consider; all negatively impacted by the decade-long war. The realm of Social Welfare aims to provide services and advocacy for the elderly, infirm and disabled among the population. As traditional social systems have broken down, exacerbated by

the war, she explained, little support has been forthcoming for these disadvantaged people. Obviously, she noted, the numbers of disabled have been increased dramatically by the cruelties of the war. Similarly, she lamented the lot of children has become dreadful. The war has led to an increase in the number of children forced to live on the streets with all the attendant social ills that this situation will inevitably breed. The government with donor agencies must protect these children and provide opportunities for education and re-integration into the wider society. To this end, she added, her Ministry is working closely with the National Commission for War-Affected Children. Women, she noted, have demonstrated throughout the war that they are the backbone of the country. Her ministry is committed to creating a policy environment where women are "strong enough to walk side by side with men."

"But the challenges are daunting," Ms. Gbujama admitted with some frustration. Unlike other ministries of trade, mines or agriculture, her ministry "is not production-oriented and therefore receives little investment." "Ironically," she continued, "solving the problems today will make for more productive citizens in the future. But this is a long-term proposition and investors are

looking for a quicker turn around." Even where investments have been made e.g. micro-credits to women, she noted, there are limits to how far women and women's groups can expand their businesses without relying on their husbands. Ms. Gbujama was sensitive to the critique that to be effective her staff need to reach the grassroots. Once again, budgetary limitations have resulted in severe logistical constraints. The ministry, she said, has no dedicated vehicles to support field activities or monitor programs. In addition, her staff are in dire need of training in counseling skills and gender issues. In this regard there are some positive signs. The Ministry is trying to get the training center in Bo up and running and Fourah Bay College has initiated a graduate studies program focusing on gender issues whose students might one day intern with the Ministry.

When asked what she would like to see in place in the future, Ms. Gbujama responded, "I'd like to see established an Open Foundation for Children that would provide support for

(Interview - cont. on Page 6)

Projects

by Linda Slonksnes

Friends of Sierra Leone recently provided five small grants, totaling nearly \$18,000, to five organizations requesting our assistance in Sierra Leone. Over the course of about 7 months (from July 2002 to January 2003) we had received requests from 15 organizations, totaling over \$70,000. Many of the requests seemed viable and encouraging. There is truly some wonderful reconstruction happening in Sierra Leone. Our only regret is that we could not fund these projects to a greater degree.

The Small Grants Fund program was discontinued in February due to the difficulty in investigating organizations, the tremendous increase in funding levels needed, the resources required, and to allow for investigation into other types of projects. We still have three additional proposals in house that require review since these were received prior to the end date of the Small Grant Fund. Should any of these merit full or partial funding, we will include them in the next newsletter.

(Projects continued on page 5)



Pictured above are (from left to right) Aiah Fanday (FoSL Public Affairs), Yusif Fofana representing the Afro-Meric Institute of Cosmology, Peter Samura of SamKam, and Linda Slonksnes(FoSL Projects).

(*Projects* continued from page 4)

Afro-Meric Institute of Cosmetology in Freetown received funds for a generator to power the school and enable the students to provide care to customers in a more efficient and professional manner. The school is run by Mrs. Mary S. Fornah, who is founder and proprietress. The school teaches a new trade to many women students, including those who have been affected in some way by the war.

The **SamKam Institute of Technology** near the Ferry Junction trains in computer knowledge and use. Mr. Peter Samura and Mr. Martin Bash are both based in the US, but assist the Freetown school, often with their personal finances. They are also hoping to open an adjoining vocational school for students who are not yet at a level to benefit from the computer training. FoSL is helping with some of the computer building expansion by providing funds to purchase building supplies, workman fees, air conditioners, and sewing machines.

The **Kono Progressive Women's Association** (PROWA) grant will provide funding for some items to help the school operate effectively. The school teaches many women and girls in one of the areas of Sierra Leone most devastated by the war and provides training in tailoring, gara-making and batiking, soap making, agriculture and other services. The grant is expected to help purchase chairs and desks, blackboards, a soap mixer, and some tailoring/sewing machines. The founder of PROWA is Mrs. Sia Kamanda.

Radio Station KISS/104 in Bo had created the **Media Foundation for Peace and Development**. Their HIV/AIDS awareness project, organized by Mr. Andrew Kromah and Ms. Anita Woma Tam-Baroh, will be assisted with FoSL funds. The program is focused on youth and will host a radio talk show having discussions on the prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS in Mende, Temne, and Krio. They will also feature interviews with local youth.

The **Foundation for Rural Development**, of the Bo/Taiama Highway, is about to receive FoSL assistance to help reconstruct their piggery, which was seriously damaged during the war. Funds will be used repair the central pig house, replace some livestock which was looted during the war, and provide some start-up pig feed for the central pig house.

ADVOCACY

by Judy Figi

On April 25 the Clean Diamond Trade act was signed by President Bush and became Public Law No. 180-19. It would be a good idea to contact your congressmen and thank them for voting for it. We need to keep our congressmen aware that many of their constituents care about what is happening in Africa.

HR 250, the Peace Corps Charter for the 21st Century Act, is presently in the House. It was introduced by Rep. Sam Farr (Columbia) and is in need of cosponsors. Call your Representative and ask him/her to be a cosponsor. You can call the Capitol Switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask to be connected to your Representative's office. The bill has not yet reached the Senate but you might want to also contact your Senator and ask him/her to sponsor a similar bill in the Senate.

You can keep track of what is happening in Congress by checking their website at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>

Sierra Leone Embassy Hosted a Lecture by FOSL Member Joseph Opala (SL PCV 1974-77).

In April, the Honorable Ibrahim Kamara, Sierra Leone's newly appointed ambassador to the United States, hosted over 75 RPCVs and friends of Peace Corps at the National Red Cross Headquarters in Washington, DC. Ambassador Kamara, several of whose high school teachers were Peace Corps volunteers, spoke warmly of the Peace Corps, noting over the years he had been in contact with two of them. The featured speaker was Joseph Opala, an anthropologist who has performed important archaeological and oral history research linking Sierra Leone's Bunce Island historic slave trade with Gullah-speaking African-Americans. [Taken from an article in the Summer 2003 NPCA Newsletter]

FOSL in 2005 on Sapelo Island, by Peggy Murrah

FoSL will have its 2005 annual meeting on Sapelo Island, Georgia. Sapelo has a special connection to Sierra Leone through the inhabitants of Hog Hammock, a small community whose residents are descended from Sierra Leonean slaves brought to work in the Sapelo rice fields. Joe Opala documented the connection in *The Language You Cry In*. Cornelia Walker Bailey, an author from Sapelo Island, indirectly writes about the connection in "God, Dr. Buzzard, and the Bolito Man".

The meeting will take place June 24th - 26th with departure from the island on June 27th. Sapelo is not accessible by private vehicle. Visitors take the ferry from Meridian located about 60 miles south of Savannah. Cost per person per night at Reynolds' Plantation is \$135 and includes meals and transportation on the island.

(Meeting - cont. from Page 1)

investigation, that the evidence the evidence is trial-ready, that charges can be proved beyond reasonable doubt and that "impunity can not stand" in Sierra Leone.

For more information about the Special Court, visit their website at <http://www.sc-sl.org>.

For audio downloads of this meeting, as well as select transcripts of some of the answers provided, visit us at <http://www.fosalone.org/crane.htm>.

For more on the topic see http://www.americanradioworks.org/features/sierra_leone_trial/index.html

(Interview - cont. from Page 3)

their basic needs and scholarships" for secondary and post-secondary education. The Foundation established through grants and investments would be operated off the interests it earned. She also wished to see the establishment of an official bank for women - a legitimate institution designed for and responsive to the needs and conditions of Sierra Leonean women. She recalled that in the past that the Women's Finance Trust established through the contributions of prominent Sierra Leonean women served many of these needs. Looking outwardly, Ms. Gbujama

welcomed professional expertise that could help the Ministry frame national policies and legislation to address the needs of the aged and elderly, disabled and children.

"None of these advances can be accomplished without considerable investment," Ms. Gbujama admitted. Sierra Leone has suffered greatly and people now want to move forward. Acknowledging the reluctance of potential investors Ms. Gbujama concluded the interview with a plea, "Let people not hesitate to contribute because of fear of corruption. We have gotten to the stage where our eyes are open to this problem. We are committed to make a positive difference with these investments."

President's report on:

2002 FOSL Annual Meeting, Sunday, August 3, 2002 in Portland, Oregon

On Friday, August 1st, I flew out to Portland, Oregon to attend the 2002 FOSL Annual Meeting that was held in conjunction with the NPCA Annual National Conference. I would like to begin by saying how pleased I am that we had such a good turn out for our annual meeting. In addition to the several FOSL members who attended the NPCA Conference, we also had good participation from Portland area FOSL members as well as participation from a number of members who drove in from Seattle and other parts of Washington and Oregon. If you look at the picture below you should be able to recognize most of the following attendees (some came after we took the picture and are not included below): Phil Plummer (in Sierra Leone 1987-88), Jack Wilson (1966-68), Robert Rawson (1962-64), Tom Gihring (1962-64), Cindy Nofziger (1985-87), Callie (Black) Sundarum (1984-87), Julie and Bob Granger (1969-72), Jim and Carol Hitter (1982-84), Anne Branchfield (1989-91), Brenda K. Michel (1986-88), Betty and Fred Brace (1964-66), Sarah Moffett-Guice (1991-92), Cecilia Matthews (1978-80), Alma Cunningham (1985-87), Kinney Thiele (1985-87), James Harrison (1967-69), and me, Mike Diliberti (1974-78).

Also in the picture below is Mr. Konteh Kamara, who was our guest speaker, who also drove down from Seattle and we are all appreciative that he was able to join us. Mr. Kamara, a Sierra Leonean architect and businessman, recently spent a year in Sierra Leone doing feasibility studies for possible business ventures. He shared with us some of his experiences from his year in Sierra Leone and gave us his assessment of the country's major obstacles to development and what needs to be done. His presentation was followed by a good discussion of the issues.

On pages 8 and 9, you will find the two reports that were distributed and discussed at the meeting in Portland. The first report highlights the main activities of FOSL over the past year. Not included in the list are the monthly meetings of the FOSL Board of Officers and Committee Chairs where our business planning and discussions take place. The second report is FOSL's financial statement.

In closing, let me say that I was greatly encouraged by the genuine enthusiasm and lively interest in FOSL, the work we all do, and in the upcoming 2004 FOSL Annual Meeting in Freetown. I found it a very valuable experience to meet and discuss FOSL business with everyone there. A special thank you to Brenda Michel for being our Portland contact person and helping to have everything work smoothly. Thanks also to Sarah Moffett-Guice for the photo below. The cakes we had with our coffee frosted to look like Sierra Leonean flags with green, white and blue. It was a very enjoyable meeting.



Friends of Sierra Leone

Report to the 2003 FOSL Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon on August 3, 2003

Highlights of FOSL Activities since the 2003 FOSL Annual Meeting in Washington, DC in June 2002

EDUCATION

Sierra Leone Special Court. FOSL was approached to host a forum to allow the Chief Prosecutor of the Special Court in Sierra Leone, David M. Crane, to communicate with the Sierra Leonean community in the US. This forum took place at the International Student Center in Washington, DC with participation from Sierra Leonean legal experts and activists throughout the US and was covered by West Africa Magazine, (based in London), Mano Vision Magazine (based in London), Africa Media (based in Washington, DC), and others. The complete audio of this forum is available on the FOSL website.

Minister of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, Shirley Gbujama was interviewed by FOSL (see newsletter, page 3) to discuss the challenges facing Sierra Leone today and some of the programs in place to address them.

Presentation by Joseph Opala, Anthropologist, that was sponsored jointly by the Embassy of Sierra Leone, RPCV-Washington and FOSL. Joe presented his archaeological and oral history research linking Sierra Leone's Bunce Island and the Gullah-speaking African American community in coastal South Carolina and Georgia.

Other Education:

- Highlighted through newsletters and website numerous Sierra Leone-related videos, websites, books and other publications, exhibitions, conferences and humanitarian organizations that are active in Sierra Leone.

ADVOCACY

Blood Diamonds. Continued efforts and contacts, especially with Senator Russ Feingold (D-WI), Chairman of African Subcommittee of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, on US ratification of the Interlaken Agreement for identification of the sources of rough diamonds and enforcement of embargo against purchase of rough diamonds from Liberia. US became the 45th country to ratify the Agreement.

TPS. Continued efforts and contacts with key congressional representatives and the US Justice Department regarding the extension of Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Sierra Leoneans in the US. TPS was renewed for an additional year in November 2002.

Other Advocacy:

- Discussions with **US Ambassador to Sierra Leone,** Peter Cheveas, regarding US policies and programs.
- FOSL Board meeting with **Sierra Leone Ambassador to the US,** Ibrahim Koroma, regarding Embassy communication with Sierra Leoneans in the US and difficult process of remittances.
- Follow up with **Peace Corps** regarding Crisis Corps and return of Peace Corps volunteers in Sierra Leone.

PROJECTS (\$19,000)

Progressive Women's Association (PROWA) (training institute).

Grafton Camp for Amputees and War-Wounded (40 bags of rice; 12,200 people).

Afro-Meric Institute of Cosmetology (women's trade training institute).

SamKam Institute of Technology (computer and vocational training institute).

Media Foundation for Peace and Development (HIV/AIDS awareness).

Foundation for Rural Development (cooperative for food production).

Other project-related activity:

- **Gift of Limbs.** Follow up with families of amputee children brought to US through Gift of Limbs.
 - **United Nations Development Program (UNDP).** Met with directors of UNDP program to discuss possible FOSL cooperation and collaboration.
-

Friends of Sierra Leone

Balance Sheet

Presented at the 2003 FOSL Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon on August 3, 2003

July 1, 2002 thru June 30, 2003*

INCOME

FoSL and NPCA Membership	7,253	
2003 Calendar sales	2,155	
FOSL T-shirt sales	288	
Total Administrative Revenues		9,695
Contributions – Projects	4,017	
Interest Income	42	
Total Project Revenues		4,059
Total Income		13,754

EXPENSES

2002 Annual Meeting	1,364	
Board Meetings	2,575	
NPCA Annual Due	168	
NPCA Membership Fees	490	
Bank Charges	40	
Internet	99	
Calendars 2003	1,544	
Supplies	79	
Tax Fees	180	
P.O. Box Fee	100	
Postage	1,246	
Printing	2,637	
Total Administrative Expenses		10,522
Total Project Expenses		19,236
Total Expenses		29,758

Current Balance, Administrative Account: **\$ 4,698**

Current Balance, Projects Account: **\$ 23,248**

* Legally, FoSL operates on a calendar fiscal year. However, since our annual meeting happens in late summer, I prepare our annual meeting financial statement based on a July-June fiscal year so as to best reflect the most recent past 12 months.

Respectfully submitted--
Mark Hager, treasurer

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The 2004 International Calendar produced by the Returned Peace Corps Volunteers of Wisconsin is available through FoSL. In addition to volunteers' photographs from host countries around the world the calendar includes historic days, holidays and holy days from many cultures. A portion of the proceeds will go toward FoSL activities. Use the order form below.

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<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Price/Calendar</u>	<u>Shipping</u>
1-5	\$10.00	included
6-24	\$6.50	\$7
25-49	\$6.00	\$9
50-74	\$5.50	\$12
75-99	\$5.50	\$16

Check the date on the address label. Is it time to renew? If there's no date, it's time to join!

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Name (include maiden) _____

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Occupation _____

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

Sierra Leone Home _____ Years _____ to _____

Membership:	Individual Membership -- \$20	Contributions:	FoSL Circle -- \$1000 and up
	Household Membership -- \$36		Supporter -- \$500 to \$999
			Sponsor -- \$100 to \$499
			Friend -- \$50 to \$99

Membership	\$ _____
Contribution	\$ _____
Overseas Mail add \$10.00	\$ _____
Membership in <i>National Peace Corps Association</i> (Add \$35.00 individual, \$42.50 family)	\$ _____
Total Remitted	\$ _____

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
- Projects
- Events

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**

Please read: Request for Membership Renewals

If you review the FOSL Financial Statement on page 8, you will see that the balance in FOSL's administrative account is running low. Our major administrative expenses are printing newsletters, postage, and expenses associated with our annual meetings. The expenses included under the category of Board meetings this year included our semi-annual Board strategy session – when the Board comes together to plan our activities over the coming two-year period. Since we now have a nationwide Board that includes Board members from Alaska to New York and from Wisconsin to Georgia, this was a major administrative expense for FOSL this year (although through advance planning, we were able to find great deals on airline tickets and everyone from out of town stayed at the homes of Washington area Board members). This year, the Annual Meeting in Freetown will take a bite out of our administrative budget. As you know, we do not allow ourselves to use any money from our project account for administrative purposes. Therefore, we are making a special plea for everyone to renew your membership, just \$20 – and it's tax deductible! Please don't delay. Fill out the form above, write your check and mail it in today.

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