



## Easy Solar in Sierra Leone and Liberia

by Patty Bruzek

“We are bringing reliable, high quality energy to West Africa”

“Easy Solar enhances the lives of people across West Africa by providing access to solar energy solutions and other transformative durable goods. We make these affordable through a range of flexible financing options, empowered by pay-as-you-go technology, and accessible through an extensive network of agents and shops.” (This is from their website)

Easy Solar is working to bring affordable solar to all parts of Sierra Leone and Liberia. My experience with them has been very smooth and seamless. I saw something about them on Facebook and went to their website ([www.easysolar.org](http://www.easysolar.org)) to see what my options were (orders can be from one light to refrigerators and TV's). I was hoping to purchase solar for two friends, one in Bo Town and one in the village of Gbaima, just west of Bo. I was able to ask questions through the website and got responses quickly. I was concerned about getting the solar delivered to the small village 15 miles from Bo. Once I made the purchase, they got in contact with each of the recipients and made an appointment



to bring the materials and install the solar and lights.

The friends who had solar installed are very happy with it. They have lights, a phone charger and a radio. The friend in Bo had worked with Easy Solar previously and was happy to get solar in his home. The friend in the village had lived here in the States for 25 years and she is thrilled to have this.

The friend in Bo Town and has electricity very sporadically. This is what he said about Easy Solar: “When you have

continued page 5

# Projects Report December 2020

by **Jim Hanson, Committee Chair**

As with all other things this year, the pandemic has forced us to make some changes in our projects funding. Early this year, the FoSL Board of Directors responded to a request for funding from **Street Child of Sierra Leone**. A total of \$7000 was granted to that organization to fund two programs, providing corona virus awareness and prevention, hand-washing stations, and food assistance. Street Child was able to quickly implement these programs using their existing office and field staff, saving time and lives.

Later in the year, we moved back to our regular programming, funding three new projects that will begin their work during the upcoming dry season. A covered well was funded for the **Gary Schulze Orphanage** in the Kakama Community, east of Bo. The \$2896 grant will enable the orphanage to have year-round potable water. The orphanage serves some 25 children orphaned by Ebola.

The **Kagbanka Bana School** in Mapaki, Bomboli District, received \$2988 to build a three-room primary school, which serves several surrounding villages. Another school, this one a junior secondary school in Maharibo, near Kamakwie, Karene District, will use its \$2000 grant to add two classrooms. The Kasankarie Farmers Association started the drive for a local junior secondary school after seeing a large number of drop-outs in students sent to Kamakwie, where they struggled to find adequate food and housing.

With the school year restarting in Sierra Leone in early October, the **Paul School for the Blind** in Bo received \$250

from the Daphne Sawyer-Dunn Memorial Scholarship Fund. Needy students at the school are aided in expenses and transportation from this annual donation.

Our committee is currently evaluating 9 applications received by our October deadline. The Board of Directors will make those funding decisions at their December meeting.

Thank you to all of our 2020 donors. And, the good news is, there is still time to give. We will put your money to work in Sierra Leone ASAP. The need will be even greater after this challenging year. Aided by you, our loyal members, we will be there to help. Happy New Year!

Past projects are listed at:

<https://fosalone.org/projFunded.php>

## The CARES Act and Charitable Giving

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act—or CARES Act—signed into law in March 2020 includes a provision of particular interest to individuals who may be considering charitable donations in tax year 2020. Taxpayers who use the Standard Deduction can take a new "above the line" deduction from taxable income for monetary gifts to public charities of up to \$300 per taxpayer (\$600 for a married couple filing jointly). Discuss this with your tax advisor to determine its applicability to your individual tax situation. To make a charitable donation to Friends of Sierra Leone, click on <https://www.fosalone.org/donate.php>.

A big thank you to Michael Thomas, FoSL board member, for informing everyone about this tax credit.

## Announcements

For those who are looking for friends you've lost contact with or who have an announcement others may be interested in, this is your place to post it. Please send your request to Peggy at [info@fosalone.org](mailto:info@fosalone.org). Announcements regarding marriages, births, new jobs, deaths, or any other item of interest are welcome. Keep in mind newsletters usually come out twice a year.

### Looking for

Karen Miller is looking for **Diane Fuqua Richards** originally from California and Georgia. She was a secondary education volunteer from 1965 to 1967 at Methodist Boys' in Freetown. She is also looking for **Kay Hester** originally from Colorado. Kay was a primary education volunteer in Segbwema. If you have information for either of these, please let Peggy know at [info@fosalone.org](mailto:info@fosalone.org) and she will provide Karen's contact information. Thank you.

Carrol Long is looking for a friend named **Mark Jacobs** who was in the same Peace Corp group from 1969 to 1971. He was stationed in northern Sierra Leone. If you have contact information for Mark, send it to Peggy and she will pass it along.

### In remembrance

**Pauline Sakai**, secondary education from 1965 to 1967, has passed away. She was originally from Hawaii. She taught at a girls' school in a village just outside Segbwema. Information provided by Karen Miller.

Ambassador Tom Hull shared the following: I saw an obituary in a local paper for **Nathaniel Lindgren**, age 79, that states in part: "Upon graduation [from St. Olaf's College] he entered the Peace Corps and was among the first groups sent abroad, to Sierra Leone. Nate considered this experience a highlight of his life, where he developed

a deep respect for Africa and its people. From there he earned a PhD from the University of California at Berkeley, which he used to return to Africa to teach physics at the University of Malawi." He subsequently became a leading physicist at the MIT Lincoln Laboratory until he retired in 2014. He died last February, but oddly the obit only appeared today.

### On a much happier note

This is **Michael and Mariam Bertapelle**. We recently gave birth to a healthy baby girl. Michael was working with Peace Corps in Sierra Leone. We're currently living in Michigan and raising our baby with support from family and friends.

### Free to a good home

"Family Across the Sea" on VHS videocassette. If you would like to have it, email [ThomasMD64@gmail.com](mailto:ThomasMD64@gmail.com).

Thank you to all who shared information.

## NPCA 60th Update

As you can imagine, everything remains somewhat uncertain as to whether the NPCA will be able to come together in person. That being said, plans for the 60th anniversary conference call for it to be Thursday through Saturday, July 29 - 31 on the campus of Howard University in DC. If that holds and they are able to hold an in-person event, it's expected there will be some virtual components as well.

## New Email List Server

We expect that Yahoo will soon discontinue our current email list server. Please update your addressbook by replacing the old address with [fosl\\_mbr@googlegroups.com](mailto:fosl_mbr@googlegroups.com). Not on our email list? Subscribe at <https://fosalone.org/listserv.php>

## Walter Carrington: A Remembrance

By Tom Hull

Speaking of his life, **Ambassador Walter Charles Carrington**, who passed away on August 11, shortly after his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, said, “Many Black Americans go to Africa, to find their heritage. I went and found my destiny.” An important part of his journey and his legacy was Sierra Leone. As the first Peace Corps Country Director in Freetown in 1961, Walter laid the foundation of the program that for decades to come would impact the lives of Volunteers and Sierra Leoneans alike. That experience also deeply affected him, and made him a friend of Sierra Leone for life.

Other FoSL members who were part of the first Peace Corps contingent under Walter can speak of that time better than I, but having been a PCV in the late ‘60’s, when Walter was the Peace Corps Regional Director for Africa, I was certainly aware of his contributions. Walter and I began our friendship when he was President Clinton’s Ambassador to Nigeria and I was one of his senior deputies. We kept in contact when I was Ambassador to Sierra Leone. When I left Freetown, I succeeded Walter as the Warburg Professor of International Relations at Simmons University in Boston. A few years ago, Walter asked me to introduce him when he was given the annual human rights award of his hometown of Newton, Massachusetts. This required me to immerse myself in his fascinating life story to understand fully his path and its significance.

Walter Carrington’s early years suggested that he would spend his life as a civil rights lawyer. He grew up in the working class Boston suburb of Everett during the Great Depression and World War II. He was one of four African-Americans admitted in 1948 to Harvard College. He immediately confronted segregation when the Black students were housed together, and ultimately persuaded the college to adopt integration. After receiving his A.B. degree as Class Marshall in 1952, Walter went to Harvard Law



Walter Carrington 1930 - 2020  
Former Peace Corps Country Director and US  
Ambassador to Nigeria

School, graduating in 1955. With his law degree in hand, he entered the U.S. Army as a private serving in the Judge Advocate Corps.

While at Harvard, Walter founded a chapter of the NAACP, and in the early ‘50’s served as the student member on the national NAACP Board of Directors as it devised its Brown vs Board of Education strategy that led to the Supreme Court decision requiring school desegregation. As a student Walter was also the Boston chapter president of the fraternity Alpha Phi Alpha into which he recruited Boston University student Martin Luther King. They were friends, often discussing racial equality. Walter urged Martin to adopt the non-violent protest strategy of Mahatma Gandhi. While still in the army in 1955, Walter wrote to his friend, “It seems to me that the possibilities of a large-scale, well-disciplined, non-violent disobedience to segregation laws are enormous. It gives people a greater sense of participating in a cause than any other technique that I know of.” Walter regretted that he would “have to sit on the sidelines. Uncle Sam has his hands on me, and it’s next to fatal to practice a little disobedience on a sergeant.”

Out of the army and back in Boston in the late ‘50’s, Walter pursued his strategy of using the law to advance civil rights. He was a practicing attorney and the only African-American on the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination. From that pulpit, Walter played a key role in the desegregation of the Boston Red Sox in 1959, the last all-White

major league team due to its racist owner Tom Yawkey. When he died in 1976, the street in front of Fenway Park was renamed Yawkey Way, a clear affront to minorities. After four decades a movement finally arose to remove his name from all public signs in Boston, and an elderly Walter Carrington reemerged to take center stage again to denounce Yawkey's racism. Yawkey Way was renamed and the last sign came down in 2019. This was Walter's final way to make Black Lives Matter.

Walter's career might have continued on a civil rights path but for an opportunity he took to lead an Operation Crossroads Africa student work program in 1959 to pre-independence Nigeria. This was Walter's African epiphany that redirected his life. In 1961 after President Kennedy's inauguration, he became one of the seven original Peace Corps Country Directors, and eagerly accepted the opportunity at age 31 to go to newly independent Sierra Leone.

Walter Carrington always lit up when he spoke of his years and his Volunteers in Sierra Leone. That experience cemented his commitment to Africa. He then moved on to become the Peace Corps Country Director in Tunisia and Senegal and then Africa Regional Director in Washington. Following his decade with Peace Corps, Walter became Executive Vice President of the African-American Institute in New York, until President Carter appointed him in 1980 to be Ambassador to Senegal, a position he held briefly until President Reagan's inauguration. For the next thirteen years, he mostly held academic positions, mainly as Director of International Affairs at Howard University in Washington.

President Clinton appointed Walter Carrington as his Ambassador to Nigeria in 1993. This was a terrible period in Nigeria when General Sani Abacha seized power and human rights were ruthlessly abused. Walter deserves the accolades that he received posthumously from Nigerians for standing up to Abacha to fight for democracy in their country.

As Nobel Laureate in Literature Wole Soyinka said, "We owe him." While in Nigeria in 1995 Walter married a physician, Dr. Arese Carrington, now his loving widow, who wrote, "It was my pride to be side by side with him as he fought for democracy and human rights."

After leaving Nigeria in 1997, Walter received an honorary doctorate from Livingstone College in North Carolina, and returned to academe at Harvard and Simmons until he retired in 2007.

Walter Carrington had an exceptional life dedicated to civil rights, democracy, and human rights in America and in Africa. He was a wonderful friend and human being who benefited every person and every place that he touched, including Sierra Leone. As the current Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Tibor Nagy wrote on his passing, "I have never known anyone to represent America – most especially the America which should be – better than Walter."



Solar - continued from page 1

paid for the package, it is their responsibility to send the technician to come and set it up in the house free of cost. And for a year or two they will take care of any fault. You just call on them at 336, free of cost and they will come to help."

RPCV Eric Silverman works on Sales and Operation for Easy Solar. They have over 600 employees in both Sierra Leone and Liberia.

# In the Time of Covid

by Peggy Murrah  
FoSL President

I'm not even sure where to start when summing up the past year. It is the year that never happened and the year that everything happened all at once. We had to cancel our annual meeting and still haven't set one for next year because no one knows what will happen. The Peace Corps is turning 60 and we want to know plans for that celebration before we make our own. We all sit waiting for change from this quiet chaos.

Not so quiet was the ensuing turmoil around the election. And, while we don't get involved in politics, it is impossible not to have this one impact everyone. It just makes the whole country's atmosphere even more difficult. It will be over soon. And a vaccine for Covid is just around the corner. We can do this.

While we did put off funding projects last spring due to Covid, we are back in that business now. Reports we saw and heard all agreed that, at least so far, Sierra Leone has not had nearly the Covid cases that we figured they would. The projects' committee is hard at work vetting the current applications so that we can formalize our selections and get the funds to the selected projects.

We are also involved in a bigger project than our usual small grants. A very generous couple has given us a large grant to build a youth center that will provide young people a place to study and play. The donors want a sports component as well as the educational part. The idea came about when they were traveling in the Bo area to attend the primary school opening in Kenema Blango. They saw a large group of young men sprawled about the sidewalk in Bo utilizing the lights from a diamond merchant's shop. From that experience was born the idea of a youth center. While we had to delay starting the

work due to Covid, we are confident that it will soon begin to take form.

As always we are in need of donations to continue our work. As always we are one of the few organizations working in Sierra Leone that does not take a percentage of donations to pay salaries. The only salaries ever paid are when skilled workmen are required to complete a project and those are figured into the budget by the recipients.

You may donate via the link on our website, [www.fosalone.org](http://www.fosalone.org). You can also mail a donation to us. If you choose to mail a check, please know that it may not clear immediately. If you prefer, you can contact Peggy or Mark Hager, our treasurer, for a direct mailing to either one. Contact can be made via the website.

We are wishing all of our members and friends a restful, safe holiday season.



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