

One World Link

Registered charity No 700714

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One World Link (OWL) promotes friendships between two communities across the world: those of Bo District in Sierra Leone and Warwick District in the UK.



25th Anniversary of OWL celebrations in the streets of Bo

The link that has been running between these two communities since 1981 is inspired by a desire for justice, equality, human understanding and mutual support. Over the years it has helped to strengthen both communities and their awareness of global and development issues.

It has also proved to be great vehicle for doing practical things, such as teacher exchanges and building a community centre, to further international understanding and co-operation at a local level. The link is about exchanging development ideas and improving the quality of lives.

Why is linking important?

Linking is important because, as OWL has found out, it encourages mutually beneficial friendship and understanding between two contrasting communities, challenges cultural misconceptions and removes prejudices. OWL has achieved these through visits and cultural exchanges, as well as through regular communication by phone, letter and e-mail. Members in both countries see the link as an important way of enriching lives, eliminating racism and religious

intolerance, and ultimately as an effective way of contributing to world peace. Exchanges of ideas on global issues that affect the lives of ordinary people have suggested new approaches to



A dance class at the Sierra Leone Workshop in Warwick District
Photo courtesy of North Leamington School

development and the alleviation of poverty such as ensuring joint ownership and consensus regarding any initiatives taken.

How OWL has worked

The link has been maintained over the last 25 years through a number of activities including exchange visits, cultural events, links made between schools and other organisations

in the two communities, parties and social gatherings, pen friendships and regular shipments of school supplies and other goods to Bo. A regular newsletter which reports on upcoming events and development progress has helped to keep a wider network of members and the public informed about life in Bo over the years. Alongside the above activities which form the bedrock of OWL relationships, a jointly agreed project to construct a multi-purpose community centre in Bo is a major practical undertaking which has brought the communities even closer together

About Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone in West Africa, has a population of 4.5 million and an area of 28,000 square miles. It is a beautiful country with abundant mineral and agricultural resources. Ironically, it is also one of the world's poorest countries. External and internal exploitation, under-development, the burden of debt, and internal strife have held it back and caused hardship to its people. The ten years of civil war which caused tragedy and trauma to the people of Sierra Leone in the 1990s and into the new millennium left an already poor country even more in need of rapid development and recovery.

Post war action

During the war, contact between Bo and Warwick Districts was reduced to infrequent telephone calls. Many of our friends in Bo were in hiding, making it difficult to keep the lines of communication open.

Once the war was over, the Mayor of Leamington Spa and one of the founding members of the link went to Bo to investigate possibilities for renewing the link to its former strength. Communication and exchange visits now flourish. School, women's, local authority and community links are growing again.

25th Anniversary

Bo had a week of celebrations to mark 25 years of linking in October 2006 with debates, a march through Bo by 500 people and a party with an electronic link up with Warwick.

OWL in Warwick also plans to celebrate the 25 years of friendship and co-operation with Bo with 12 months of activities which aim to attract more members and participants in the link..



A street scene in Bo

There will be:

- * a creative project encouraging people to link with Bo by exchanging individually created postcards
- * A debating programme for young people to discuss slavery and relationships with Africa
- * An archive roadshow in the summer to record the many experiences over 25 years of the link
- * a big African day culminating in a big party in November.

Do join us - more details at www.oneworldlink.org.uk.

The Community Centre

The One World Link Committee in Bo is playing its part in rehabilitation after the war by building and running the multipurpose Community Centre. It has already completed a meeting hall, bar and seminar room on the ground floor. It is hoped that the building will be finished as soon as possible, with an information technology room, a resource centre and an income-generating guest suite.

The future

Once the Centre is functioning, the various community groups will be able to use it to develop activities with their Warwick counterparts. Teachers and other community groups will be encouraged to come to the centre to learn more about global issues as well as to develop their skills and capacities.



The new Community Centre in Bo

Plans are also afoot for cooperation between the local councils in both Districts with the aim of improving infrastructure in Bo and building up officer and member capacity in Warwick.

If you would like to know more, or to join OWL, please contact:

info@oneworldlink.org.uk or Richard Edwards, OWL Membership Secretary, 17 Randolph Close, Leamington Spa CV31 1RH

For up-to-date information visit www.oneworldlink.org.uk

For information about the one world linking movement see www.ukowla.org.uk