



## **FoSL Donations Aid Mudslide Victims**

**by Peggy Murrah**

During my last visit to Sierra Leone I looked up at the overbuilt and denuded hills and mountains surrounding Freetown and said to the person with me, "It isn't "if", but "when" there is a disaster." I just didn't think it would be so soon.

During the first few days following the mudslide, Friends of Sierra Leone raised over \$2000 for relief efforts. The board decided to give the money to an organization of the ground dealing with the immediate needs of the survivors including food, water and shelter. We settled on Street Child, a UK based nonprofit, because they were doing exactly what we wanted to support. Subsequently the US Embassy in Freetown sent out a list of useful contribution resources. Street Child was second on the list. I had already been told by the Embassy that they had seen Street Child working with the survivors immediately after the mudslide.

Since the initial donation we raised over \$5000 more dollars. We decided to send that to Street Child as well. In addition to the type of assistance they were giving, they were using 100% of donations toward helping survivors. We received this follow up from Street Child regarding their work:

Total supported 20,275 with food and water, including

- 9,850 children
- 969 pregnant women
- 1833 lactating women

We have also given out

- 2441 clothing packages
- 2094 towels
- 495 bars of soap

We are part of the WASH consortium of agencies in Freetown (WASH stands for water, sanitation and hygiene) and have been working with them to promote hygiene in the affected regions. This includes going door-to-door and advising people around how to dispose of their garbage (eg use trash receptacles instead of leaving it in the street to be washed into the drinking water), distributing chlorine powder for contaminated wells, and giving out water filters and soap.

Finally, we are also in the process of compiling a list of affected children who will need school fee and supplies support when the semester starts next month.”

Our members and friends have been very generous during this trying time. While the majority of donations came from members, I received donations from people I went to school with and haven't seen since 1969. I even received one from the only guy who ever stood me up in my dating years. It helps to restore faith in times that seem to divide us rather than bring us together.

While we recognize that there is much work to be done to prevent such a tragedy from happening again, we feel that the most pressing work right now is to provide support to the survivors. At the same time, we can continue to encourage our Sierra Leonean friends and relatives to hold their

government accountable in making sure that the underlying environmental issues are not just recognized, but fixed.

Thank you again to everyone who helped by opening their hearts and wallets to strangers simply because the need was there. The need continues.

## **Emmanuel Gborie Community Health Centre**



Thanks to a donor who prefers to remain anonymous, Friends of Sierra Leone is happy to announce that The Emmanuel Gborie Community Health Centre, Kenema Blango, Valunia Chiefdom, Bo District, Southern Region, Sierra Leone will be open for business in

the next few weeks. The official opening is on October, 3rd 2017. This is the same small village where FoSL sponsored a primary school. The school and the health clinic are the first that the village has had. Since Emmanuel Gborie has been our person on the ground for both the school and the health clinic, the donor requested that the clinic be named in his honor. This is the second recognition that Emmanuel has received this year as he was

presented a plaque expressing FoSL's appreciation for his continued support and assistance through the years. FoSL President, Peggy Murrah, will accompany the donor for the official opening.



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## Projects Report

by Jim Hanson

The FoSL Board of Directors selected another project for funding at its August meeting. This application was put on hold at the June meeting, in hopes that a group from the annual meeting in Freetown could make a site visit. That site visit did take place, at the Port Loko Wounded Camp, as the group was enroute to Bunce Island. They found the community well-prepared and recommended funding. So, The **Port Loko Wounded Camp School** was born with a grant of \$2414. This two-room primary school will serve about 80 young students. These youngsters were having to cross a dangerous highway to reach the closest primary school. The

community is excited and ready to go to work.

And, as the school year begins, we will again be awarding \$250 in scholarships to the **Paul School for the Blind** in Bo, in memory of former board member Daphne Sawyer-Dunn. This money typically helps 4 to 5 needy students with school expences and transportation.

After funding the **Port Loko School**, and the **Kabasa Primary School** latrines in June (\$1200), our balnce in the projects account is about \$4000, and the total in Daphne's scholarship fund is \$60. But, this is money well spent. Thank you for your continued support of our projects fund.



## Ambassador Brewer



Maria E. Brewer, Ambassador  
U.S. Embassy Freetown, Sierra Leone

**Maria E. Brewer** has been appointed to serve as the U.S. Ambassador to Sierra Leone.

She most recently served as Deputy Director of the Career Development and Assignments division of the Department of State's Bureau of Human Resources (2016-2017). Prior to that position, she was the Deputy Chief of Mission of the US. Embassy in Nigeria (2013-2016). Previously she served as: Deputy Executive Director of the Bureau of African Affairs; Management Officer in Islamabad, Pakistan; in Colombo, Sri Lanka;

and in Mumbai, India. She has also served as a Special Assistant for the Bureau of Administration and the Under Secretary for Management, and served in the Office of Allowances. She began her Foreign Service career in Lagos, Nigeria, and served her second tour in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

In 2010, Maria received a Master of Science degree in National Resource Strategy at the National Defense University's Industrial College of the Armed Forces. She holds a B.A. in Spanish and International Economics from Valparaiso University in Indiana. She is married to State Information Management Specialist Mark Brewer and they have an eight year old daughter, Arina Brewer.

### Amazon Smile

As a reminder to all Friends of Sierra Leone supporters, if you choose to shop with Amazon by using their "Amazon Smile" program, a small percentage (0.5%) of your purchase will be donated to FoSL. Yea!

Simply use this address to get to Amazon: <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/52-1732179>

Don't be surprised to see FoSL registered by its original name - Greater Washington FoSL

Donations directly to FoSL are also greatly appreciated:  
<http://fosalone.org/donate.php>

Thanks for supporting FoSL

# 2017 Annual Meeting by Amadu Massally



*FoSL would like to send a big thank you out to Amadu Massally who put so much time and effort into assuring the annual meeting was a success! Without his efforts, this meeting could not have taken place. Tenki, tenki, tenki Amadu!*

On Monday July 17, 2017 we kicked off the annual Friends of Sierra Leone meeting in Freetown, Sierra Leone as we were whisked off in 4 vehicles to visit with the Peace Corps office and met with the new Country Director, Penny Alexander, and most of her staff. After a brief introduction by all of us we were taken on a tour of the premises. Of course, for some of us that are back from 2011, this was our second visit. We spent about

two hours or so and by the time we were done we were ready for lunch.

We visited the legendary Balmaya for lunch. With the founding proprietor now transitioned, Balmaya still provides quality food and a friendly service. Some of us had olele as appetizer, and folks ordered individually rice with chicken, with cassava leaves, etc.

After lunch, adjusting our schedule to accommodate an impromptu visit with One Family People, we were about to get some of the best music from a disabled band than we could have ever imagined. Deaf, blind and

physically challenged others sang and danced for us and in the end we could not help, but join them on the dance floor. What a pleasant treat that was!

The first day did not end there. Subsequent to the visit with One Family we were scheduled to be at the Tacugama Chimp Sanctuary where some of the rarest chimps are found. Pinky, for example, is the only of her kind: an albino chimpanzee, cannot be found anywhere else in the world. Sierra Leone is home to the Western Chimpanzee subspecies and holds the third highest population after Guinea and Liberia. That was also a good visit. We returned to the hotel late in the day and had a group dinner before everyone retired for the day.

The next day, Tuesday July 18, was the pinnacle event and why we were in Sierra Leone in the first place: the FoSL Annual Meeting! This by the way was the second one we had held in Freetown in six years, as we were in Freetown again in 2011 when we celebrated 50 years Peace Corps in Sierra Leone and coinciding with the 50th year of the independence of Sierra Leone. The day started with Peggy giving a brief (see photo) as to why we are there and what was about to happen. After that it was report after report after report as key guests tell us what they have been doing in Sierra Leone over the past few years.

Starting off with the Deputy Chief of Mission (read Deputy Ambassador) to Sierra Leone, Laurie Meininger started off the day. She talked about what the US Government had been doing in Sierra Leone and the scores or hundreds of millions given in support in cash and kind to Ebola-ridden countries. She also touched on the political climate and spoke of the fact that more and more women are stepping into the political arena, which they see as a good thing. She also talked about the program to reuse plastic (bottles especially) into something productive like they were doing in Bo town.

Penny Alexander, the Peace Corps Country Director, was next. Of course we had visited with her the previous day, but she was still original an informative as if we did not even meet the previous day. She asked us a question with regard to the total number of volunteers who have gone through the Peace Corps program in Sierra Leone. Shockingly, or was it staged, the Minister of State II in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation knew the answer! Next the USAID Country Director, Khadijat Mojidiwho talked about some of their programs.

She was followed by the Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Isata Kabia, who urged the FoSL membership to continue being that which they have been for Sierra Leone -



Ambassadors and advocates for Sierra Leone. Next the Minister of Tourism and Cultural Affairs highlighted the image of the country from a touristic and cultural perspective. He was followed the Chairperson of the Monuments and Relics Commission who buttressed some of the Minister's points, but also gave an assessment of their status as a Commission with regard to what they have done since she took office and what they continue to do to protect and preserve national assets.

We also had the Country Director for One Village Partners, Jennifer Artibello, gave us an impressive presentation on their work in country over the past few years. After a hearty lunch, we wrapped up the day being entertained by One Family People.

Day 3 was more of relaxation and recreation, or was it? We visited an orphanage and boy were we touched. The Raining Season is home to just about a hundred boys and girls from as young as 3 months to their early teens. The kids were elated over the numerous gifts that were provided by members of our group and in a show of appreciation, they entertained us with songs and short stories. After spending a couple of hours there we left for lunch at Crown Bakery and our downtown Freetown market tour. We were not able to do what we had set out to do, but ended up spending time at the Freetown Big Market and the Sierra Leone

National Museum. As usual, the streets of Freetown were bustling!

Then it was time to go outside of just Freetown on our fourth day when we ventured to Port Loko and then Bunce Island on the same date. The school we visited was in a town of amputees along the Port Loko axis. They are interested in building a classroom on one side of the road so young kids do not have to cross over lanes of speeding vehicles. It's a highway... so imagine 3 to 6 year old kids trying to do that, every day, twice a day! Because of those dangers and how impressive the community was, the participants voted unanimously to recommend that the FoSL Board of Directors approve their application for funds to build a school for the youngest children on the same side of the road as the community. Traveling in a very



Boat used to transport people to Bunce Island. It was named for the Gullah woman in Georgia (mother of Wilson Moran) who was featured in the movie, "The Language You Cry In" because she was found to be singing a song in Mende. They made the journey to Sierra Leone and found the village from where that song originated.

different way and not the usual route to Bunce Island we had to drive to Pepel and get on a boat. Being that this was the first time on this route for even us we found it to be quite an experience.

By the time we returned it was dark and what an exhausting but fulfilling day that was. But it was not over. Having returned much later than we anticipated and having kept a faction of the National Dance Troop waiting for us we were thrilled in a late show. Dancers, contortionists, a fire dancer, and more added much to our experience on this wonderfully crafted trip.

Finally, it was time to get to the beach for relaxation and recreation at River No. 2! The group spent all afternoon at the beach, basking in the sun, had a lobster, fish and chicken lunch. No one swam, but a few people did go on a canoe ride that was eco-tourism-oriented.

After a long day at the beach, we were able to return in time for a short rest in preparation for our final dinner. We had a band at the hotel that night and so that was an added treat for us. We had a buffet styled dinner that was really good. And most importantly we honored Emmanuel Gborie for his service and acknowledged the entire Gborie family who were present. Emmanuel as taken care of FoSL business in the Bo area for many years now. He oversaw the school we built in Kenema Blango and that



Amadu Massally praying over the grave of his ancestors on Bunce Island.

took quite a few years since we started that project by sending Mr. Alieu Jalloh through teacher training college. Only then did the school get built and that was done in parts. Emmanuel willingly took on the challenges of building a health clinic there. While Kenema Blango is only 25 miles or so from Bo, at times there are parts of the road that are almost impassable. FoSL us indebted to Emmanuel for all his work. The night ended very well and we got some awesome feedback from some in our group, one who said she “got far more than she bargained for.” We were humbled.



# Annual Meeting Attendees Comments

## From Hazel:

The most interesting presentation for me was the one from One Village Partners. I was really impressed with their approach to helping the villages with basic infrastructures that were sustainable by the village and were what they actually wanted. They were not trying to do grandiose schemes that would not last.

I enjoyed hearing from Isatu Smith about the Relics Commission. After our visit to the museum and Bunce Island it made sense. She obviously cares about preserving the heritage of her country and is determined to make it happen.

## From Lydia:

I was amazed at how much effort and planning went into the FOSL trip by both you and Amadu. The trip was fun, informative and an honor to share Sierra Leone with such a wonderful group of people.

## From Jeannie:

As usual, it is amazing to see how people in Sierra Leone are ever so resilient.

The in country PC representative was one of the best and also the culture updates and as you all saw first hand, the SL Museum near the Cottonwood Tree was very much improved.

Since I had never been to Bunce Island, I particularly felt privileged to travel there. I have been to Gore, off the coast of Dakar, when I first came to West Africa in 1967 and have been to Cape Coast, Ghana, several times. Thank you Amadu for filling in the history of that place “where you can still hear the wailing”.

## From Phil:

The most informative speakers were from one village. They they worked without a lot of bureaucracy provided vital project support.

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Sierra Leone Home \_\_\_\_\_ Years \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_

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FoSL Circle	\$1000 and up
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Membership (\$25 per individual)    \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Contributions to Projects            \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Overseas Mail (add \$10)            \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Remitted**                      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Membership dues support operations for Friends of Sierra Leone including meetings, newsletters, and web site. All other donations support projects in Sierra Leone. FoSL has no paid staff.

Dues and other contributions to Friends of Sierra Leone are fully tax deductible.

**Thank you for your support! Please return this form with a check payable to Friends of Sierra Leone and mail them to:**

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