

# **REBUILDING SIERRA LEONE: A PRAGMATIC DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH**



*"Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor; that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine; that the child of farm workers can become the President of a great nation."*

**NELSON MANDELA**

**JOSEPH KAIFALA  
SKIDMORE COLLEGE  
815 NORTH BROADWAY  
SARATOGA SPRINGS  
NY 12866  
EMAIL: [kalfala@yahoo.fr](mailto:kalfala@yahoo.fr)**

**offered**  
**Pragmatic Developmental Approach**

Joseph Kaifala



To quote the philosopher Confucius: “If your plan is for a year, plant rice. If your plan is for a decade, plant trees. If your plan is for a lifetime, educate children.”

I come to you today as a son, a brother, and most important of all as a compatriot. Only a little more than five years ago we were divided against each other. We were all blinded by greed, corruption, nepotism, favoritism, tribalism and power consciousness. We ignored the rich values of our ancestors that formed the basis of our national pride before the war. The more we deviated from the moral values of our nation the more we hunted each other's blood in a calamitous civil war that now defines us in the international community. I still find it difficult explaining to my friends what happened in this country between 1991 and 2002.

As far as I can remember, we failed each other as a country. Parents failed in their duty as the primary providers of nurture to the children, teachers failed in their role as developers of our minds, preachers failed in their role as constructors of the moral fiber of our society, politicians failed as custodians of our social contract, the young in consequence failed as bearers of our common destiny. Thousands of our compatriots perished in those years of madness, others lost parts of their bodies, and many of us will live in trauma for more years ahead with our country severely devastated.

The reality is that the horrors of our past have now become the mirror through which we perceive our future. I hope we all now believe in better ways of settling our disputes and sorting out our differences. Too long have we suffered in vain! Now we know that war breeds nothing but destruction and poverty. Long before we started the brutal killings, there were passive wars among neighbors, various tribes and elites of our society. Maybe the wars in our hearts would have lasted longer than the physical attacks on each other. But no matter what the case might have been, we are proud once again to be each other's keeper.



A few years ago I sat in prison as a child watching my two countries of Liberia and Sierra Leone crumble before me. But even as a child and a prisoner I was thinking of when will it all end, and what will be my role in bringing it about? Even though my father tried very hard to conceal the reality from my infant eyes, the sight of guns, blood and corpses littering the prison yard was enough to reveal to me that we were in the midst of terror. It was during my time in prison that I started having dreams of a man, a prisoner like me, who I had heard of only



on BBC Focus on Africa. That man is no other but Nelson Mandela, former president of South Africa, who is now the icon of African leadership. I dreamed that like Mandela I was detained for the freedom of my people.

My primary service to this country was when as a child prisoner I smuggled out a letter written by my father and other inmates to former President Joseph Momoh, in care of another Mr. Momoh, former uncle-in-law of Charles Taylor, warning him of RUF preparations to invade Sierra Leone. Since then, in my child's mind I continued to see myself as the Mandela of Sierra Leone. But rather unfortunately, I understood very quickly that if I survived the National Patriotic Front of Liberia's prison, I would again witness the collapse of my own country as I had already seen in Liberia. And indeed, I saw it all over again: the killing, rape and torture of my people.

Unfortunately, my father did not live to see the end. He was a teacher who did not fail his students. He left us no inheritance or fame; but even amidst the sounds of rocket launchers and machine guns he never failed to repeat the words that have now formed the basis of my personal development. "Son," he said to me, "wherever you find peace educate yourself; because education is the only legacy that cannot be taken from you." I took these words to heart. When rockets were flying and I was starving during the war, I still kept my eyes on the pages of old novels and sometimes encyclopedias my father left in Freetown during his own school days. I remember on January 6<sup>th</sup> 1999, when this country laid in blood and fire, my uncle and his wife were struggling to fit under the bed to

avoid stray bullets, and I just sat there looking through newspapers. "*eh borbor you nor dae fraid?*" (ah son, aren't you afraid?), my uncle asked very puzzled. "*Well, uncle die yone wae cam e nor matter if you dae under bed or sidon na chair.*" (Well, uncle when death comes it doesn't matter whether you are under the bed or sitting in a chair,) I smiled calmly as if death was not hanging over me.

It was amidst this terror that I gained my West African Senior School Certificate and obtained a scholarship to study at one of the United World Colleges in Norway. In 2002 I left for Norway at a time when the United Nations Development Index determined Norway as the best country to live in and Sierra Leone as the worst. I normally summarize that experience as rising from hell to heaven without going through purgatory. Sometimes God also grants V.I. P status to his humble servants. My experience at the United World College in Norway made me most of what I am today; a firm believer in democracy and peace.



It was at the UWC that I came across other young people from all over the world who were not child soldiers or hooligans, but proud responsible citizens of their individual countries with interests in international understanding and global peace. It was an incredible

opportunity for me to reflect on my new life as a survivor. Norway proved to be a country in which I could develop renewed hope for my own self-development and for the future of my country Sierra Leone. One way or another we were all responsible for the ruin of this country, so together we must reconstruct and redevelop our homeland.

After a decade of civil war in Sierra Leone the worst affected were innocent children, some of who like me never had the time to be children. But the most affected of all are the children who are growing up without their limbs, and will always be reminded of the heinous crimes committed in this country. It was in their interest that a few years ago I developed a project called Save the Future Generation. We provided clothes, stationery and medical assistance to children whose limbs were chopped off and children whose parents' limbs were also chopped off during the war. A couple of years later I left Norway to attend Skidmore College in the US, from where I continued similar services with another project called Beatitude International. One droplet at a time my friends in the West and I have changed lives in this country and brought hope where there was tremendous hopelessness.



A year ago I added a scholarship program for girls to the services I provide. The aim of the program is to encourage motivated girls to remain in school and pursue their education with continuous determination. We hope to diversify the intellect of our country by encouraging girls' education. It is rather appalling to think that a country with more women than men is still run by a circle of old-boy's associations. The only way we can break this blatant disparity is to elevate the intellectual status of women to that of their male counterparts. If our mothers can take care of our homes well enough, I believe they can also transform our socio-political development for the better.



I am what I am today not because of magic or the wealth of my parents, but by education and the discipline imbued in me by my parents. I believe like the great Madiba Mandela that "*education is*



*the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor; that the son of a mineworker can become the head of the mine; that the child of farm workers can become the President of a great nation."* I have traveled all over the world and met with leaders such as Lech Walesa and Madeline Albright carrying nothing but my education. Today my passport says Republic of Sierra Leone, but I feel just at home in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, USA and Guinea. No doubt why custom officers always look into my passport and take a second glance at me with a huge question mark in their faces. It is interesting to see that even with the increasing xenophobia in the West, an educated person sometimes become invisible. Education, I believe is an equalizer that can transcend all boundaries of race, ethnicity, color and creed. In other words, educated people tend to be the same everywhere.

In light of everything I have said to you about the power of education, I unveil to you today the St. Joseph 's Junior Secondary School Library of Peace. The idea of an educational infrastructure was conceived many years ago when I was a student in this country. Textbooks were very scarce and expensive and our only national library was ill equipped. Over the three years I spent at the Sierra Leone Grammar School, I had read almost all the books in our mini library. I always tell my friends in the US that my idea of a fake ID card has nothing to do with *bending the elbow* (drinking). It was an invention of a poor young boy to infiltrate the US embassy and British Council libraries. I was breaking the law *legally*.



I have built you a library so that you won't have to repeat in my footsteps. The library contains everything that a modern library should have. It is a gift to every Sierra Leonean who wishes to use it for their intellectual development, and I urge you all to use it wisely in the development of your minds and hearts. I bring you not the wealth of New York, because that could be spent down the road in an instant. I give you education instead, a gift that will be with you in war or peace, in poverty or in copious wealth. In fact I have every reason to believe that it can be a deterrent to war and it guarantees development.

I hope that some day great papers and great decisions will be made in this library for the development of our community. I have no doubt that it will also produce great men and women who will transform this country at large. Ours is a country that is rising from the wreckage of a brutal civil war; we need educated people who can engineer our development. Many years ago this country was known among Westerners as the 'Athens of West Africa' because of the high caliber of our educated people. It was right here at the Sierra Leone Grammar School and the Fourah Bay College that most African leaders and clergymen such as Sir Samuel Lewis, Samuel Ajayi Crowther and J. E

Casely-Hayford were trained. It is high time we placed our country at that level of international prestige and integrity.

Now you have a library to strengthen your efforts and empower you to rise up to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Over the past month your teachers have undergone standard computer and other technological trainings. The library has been furnished with audiovisual materials and modern books in order to bring you closer to the rest of the world. An electrical generator has also been added to the library in order to facilitate the operation of your recently acquired technological materials. Now students and teachers will be able to watch movies, listen to music and computerize their data in this library. I don't believe there is any other library outside Freetown that offers such facilities to our rural communities. I believe we can engage our entire country in the pursuit of development. But prior to that we must all be empowered to work together, and collectively. We cannot progress in the manner of our former colonial masters who developed cities for their own interests while the rest of our countries remained in obscurity.



Alongside the library, I have also offered twenty-five scholarships to school

children at the St. Joseph Junior Secondary School and the Lokomasama Secondary School. There is another pending twenty-five scholarships for school girls in Freetown. I will continue to do my ultimate best abroad in order to make education affordable for my brothers and sisters here in Sierra Leone.

Boys have repeatedly asked about my current interests in encouraging girls' education, which excludes them from the scholarship scheme at the moment. I urge you to please continue with diligence, and one day I won't have to prioritize anyone in this country. Trust me; all I want is a Sierra Leone in which we can all afford the basic necessities of our survival and live in the dignity we deserve.

The only request I have for parents present today is for you to take the education of your children very seriously. Since independence the entire African continent has been at war with itself. We have several scapegoats and people to blame, but the greater responsibility is ours to bear. Our fate has always been in the hands of the white man, our former colonial masters. Most of what they offer us has been in their own interests. Our people massacre themselves in the diamond mines and oilfields while the developed countries enrich themselves on our wealth. Our leaders continue to be unresponsive vis-à-vis our sufferings, and our societies have become places for survival of the fittest even in the midst of plenty. It is high time we Africans undertook the responsibilities of our own destiny. The West can give us all we require for growth, but if we ourselves do not embark on maintaining the foundations



they provide we will be doomed to eternal destitution.



I will now extend my deepest thanks and gratitude to all those who have in some way or another contributed to the success of this vision. Primarily to Shelby and Kathryn Wasserman Davis, whose generosity has made it possible to for young people to take pragmatic actions towards the achievement of international understanding and world peace. To the students of the Skidmore International Affairs Club, a very special thank you. I appreciate the efforts of Fr. Peter Mansaray, my uncle Sahr Joseph Tolno, staff and students of the St. Joseph 's Junior Secondary School for their indefatigable contributions to the success of this project. My thanks and appreciation also goes to the Church of St. Peter in Saratoga Springs for making me feel at home in their congregation, and their enormous financial and moral contributions to education and reconstruction in Sierra Leone.

I also extend immense gratitude to Catherine W. Minnery and Carol Spring for serving as parental figures in my life abroad, and their persistent contributions to education in Sierra Leone. I thank Professor Michael Steven Marx and family for guiding me in my academic

development and also working with me over the years to ameliorate the lives of children in Sierra Leone. Nothing I say here can speak to the generosity of Barbara Opitz and Darren Drabek. I often refer to their phone numbers as my personal 911. A very special thank you to Professors Roy Ginsberg, Lenora de la Luna and Mary-Beth O'Brien; Patricia Rubio, Robert D. Shorb, James Chansky, Sandi Jeska, Wendy LeBlanc and the entire staff of Skidmore Summer Programs.

I appreciate the support of Lorraine P. Bittel, Br. Robert L. Coleman and the entire team of Skidmore Dining Services; Skidmore International Affairs Program, Office of Residential Life, Health Services, Michael Popowsky and the staff of Media Services; SkidTv, Office of admissions, Staff of Scribner Library (Nancy, I promise to leave on time this year), the United World Colleges, Humanity in Action, Seventh Generation and all my friends in Europe and America, including those whose name I have not been able to mention in this speech.

Personally, I will now extend my love and gratitude to my host families in Norway and Sweden. To Desiree, Inge, Alias, Anna Kamilla, Johannes and Jacob. To my brother Erik; Ulla, Magnus and the entire Bolmstrand family. To my own family: my beloved brother Francis; Hawa, Amie, and Watta Sandouno. I thank Elizabeth Shafiroff, Nomvula Ndwandwe, Brian McGowan, aunty Kadie Aberdeen, Jowo, Miniatu and Josephine; Sahr Kendemah, Zainab Kamara, Fatmata Kamara and the Baina family. And to my most beloved mothers Magdaline Tewa Tolno and Angeline

Tolno. To Valery and Aunty Winifred Tolno.

I also extend my sincere gratitude to my compatriots abroad who often advise me on matters relating to our country's reconstruction: Leonard Gordon, David Sengeh, Sia Bundu and Yusuf Kanneh. Most especially to Sadiatu Kamara, a.k.a African Queen. And now on behalf of all Sierra Leoneans, I extend my most sincere gratitude to Peter Brock and Danielle McCourt-two of the most beautiful Americans I have met, and who were here with me to complete this project. They have demonstrated that in order to help the poor it is absolutely necessary to know the poor. African alignment with the West will become a practical reality when Americans like these ascend to leadership positions. I wish them well from the bottom of my heart!

Finally, my most gracious thanks and appreciation go to Janet Mui, Sarah Loomis and Liat Krawczyk. You may deem your services too little, but it means a fortune to those in need. Your tiny contributions make their lives a little better everyday.

Now I must leave you with the last verse of our national anthem; one that we all should pursue together as one country and one people.



Knowledge and Truth our forefathers  
spread  
Mighty the nations whom they led  
Mighty they made thee, so too may we  
Show forth the good that is ever in thee.  
We pledge our devotion, our strength  
and our might  
Thy cause to defend and to stand for they  
right  
All that we have be ever thine own  
Land that we love, our Sierra Leone.



## **100 PROJECTS FOR PEACE: CONSTRUCTING A LIBRARY IN SIERRA LEONE**



There are loads of brainstorming and assessments involved in constructing a library as a project for peace in the second poorest country in our world today. One should expect obstacles of corruption, dishonesty and cronyism as people struggle daily to make ends meet. It is therefore important to maintain flexibility and the will to change plans and ideas wherever possible. For the people of Sierra Leone, however, any addition to community development is fundamental to the course of life and the standard of living in general.

The process of constructing a library at the St. Joseph Junior Secondary School took three months. The library was constructed at a school in order to bring it closer to students and to minimize the cost of maintenance and security. Even though it is intended to serve students and the general public, it was necessary to grant proprietorship to SJJSS. The library will not only form a fundamental addition to school facilities; it will also be secured from misuse or physical damage.

Another positive aspect of placing the library at SJJSS is the fact that we were able to minimize corruption and misappropriation

of funds. We worked with the principal, Fr. Peter Mansaray, who is also a vibrant and meticulous priest with the goodness of his community at heart. While we could not succeed in making the entire project totally free of corruption and dishonesty, we were able to reduce the amount of money that could have been stolen or misused by local workers and merchants of construction materials. It is rather difficult to eliminate corruption in a country with no fixed prices or a tradition of processing receipts for monetary transactions.

Another technical problem we encountered during the project was the fact that most masons in Sierra Leone have no formal education in construction or architectural science. Most house plans and constructions are done manually; which leads to the possibility of many unforeseen problems. One such problem was that the foundation of the building turned out to be larger than initially anticipated, hence an increase in the initial financial estimate. I had to change several preliminary plans in order to accomplish the most basic and necessary library requirements.

Fortunately for the project we were able to secure additional financial supports from Seventh Generation, The Church of St. Peter in Saratoga Springs, Elizabeth Shafiroff and other private contributors. Even though most of these funds were initially intended for the girl's scholarship program I am also sponsoring, I used some of it to supplement the library project. We were able to pay more contractors and also cover the extra cost of the construction project.

Sierra Leone is also a country in which prices can fluctuate overnight depending on the nature of factors such as the political situation in neighboring countries, road condition for transporting goods, availability of the commodity and internal politics. Between January 2007 when our project proposal was written and June 2007 when the implementation started, the prices of construction materials had already gone far beyond the initial cost. The primary reason for price fluctuation is that our project coincided with the 2007 presidential elections in Sierra Leone, which took place on August 11. Another reason could be the dishonesty of contractors and local vendors of construction materials. In Sierra Leone, sometimes prices are charged in accordance with the client's position in society, and coming from the US with two white Americans only raised the vendors' perception of my status. But with the aid of Fr. Peter, who was put in charge of purchasing construction materials, some of these obstacles were removed.

The months of June, July and August are also a rainy season in Sierra Leone. Most of our work was delayed by heavy rains and limited sunshine. As a result of poor housing in the Lungi area where the library is located, Peter, Danielle and I also had to commute daily between Freetown and Lungi to teach and supervise the project. As for the funky ferry linking Freetown and Lungi, it serves one better praying for manna from heaven than to expect the ferry to show up. Sometimes our only options were the local pampers or wooden canoes. The canoes are a significant danger as they are not insured

and there is no emergency rescue brigade when they capsize at sea.

Alongside the library project was a general training in computer science and basic data processing for the staff of SJJSS. It could have been totally impractical to furnish the library with computers when no one knows how to use them. I was extremely happy to have the company of Peter Brock and Danielle McCourt as assistant teachers. It is rather difficult teaching adults how to use a machine that most of them had never seen before. But the eagerness of the teachers to learn inspired us to continue at their own pace. They were trained in basic computer operations and the use of programs such as MS Word and Excel. Another positive aspect of teaching computer to my compatriots is that they were constantly motivated by my presence as a Sierra Leonean who can actually manipulate computers. For most Sierra Leoneans, the idea is that computer science is exclusively a white person's mastermind. So part of the eagerness to learn was derived from their admiration of my abilities, which they wish to emulate.

Danielle also offered a day of training in basic photography, at the end of which she distributed a few disposable cameras for the teachers to practice their newly acquired skills. Our aim was not to develop the second poorest country in the world overnight, but to encourage, motivate and empower them to at least start thinking of chasing the rest of the world. There are many areas in Sierra Leone that need absolute reform before they can even embark on the challenging process of organizing what already exists in the country. But we can begin by bringing some light to the extreme hopelessness that already places limitation on the country's potential.

In the end most of our intended goals were accomplished. The library has been completed with most of the elements and facilities of a modern library. There are currently all required textbooks of the government of Sierra Leone, calculators,



TV, Stereo, an automatic stapler, sharpener, DVD, and an electrical generator to facilitate the operation of electronic gadgets. Students and teachers can now watch movies, listen to music and computerize their data in the library. The onus of putting the library to a valuable use will remain with the beneficiaries. My intention is to render future assistance to the school, but I also made it clear to them that such assistance would depend upon their ability to maintain the current facility. We intend to link the library to schools and individuals in the US so that we can continue to equip it with books and other facilities.

The school at which the library is located is in desperate need of a senior secondary school to accommodate the increase in demand for one. But the implication of the library itself as a project for peace is that it will serve as an educational facility and a social amenity. The aim is to help promote the significant need for education to play an important role in the lives of Sierra Leoneans, guide them away from violence and conflict through the availability of facilities that can contribute to their

intellectual development and peaceful coexistence, which in turn could lead to tolerance, reconciliation and accountability in their communities.

Implementing the project has enabled me to understand the problems and failures of my country Sierra Leone. I have also realized that it is not out of the lack of resources or indolence that my people continue to struggle for survival; it is rather out of the lack of conscientious leadership and organization. No one in Sierra Leone leaves college thinking how am I going to help my country. Everyone comes out thinking how am I going to enrich myself to recover from the past years of struggle. Hence corruption has become very rampant and development is crawling at a very slow pace. As I said during an interview on the United Nations radio in Freetown, African development will only become a reality if Africans themselves learned to tackle their own problems with the available resources. This is basically the kind of thinking that I hope to encourage in the youths of Sierra Leone. The burden of our development is primarily our responsibility.



# **THE FUNKY FERRY:**

## **REFLECTIONS ON PROSPECTS FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SIERRA LEONE**

**Peter Brock**



In order to travel between Sierra Leone's capital city of Freetown and the country's only international airport, one must cross the waters of the Fourah Bay, and just like daily life in Sierra Leone, this process can be remarkably luxurious or an exhausting struggle depending upon how much money you have. If you are lucky enough to be one of the country's elite or a UN/NGO worker, the journey can be done in thirty minutes aboard an air-conditioned hovercraft or in just ten minutes aboard a helicopter. However, if you are simply another member of the impoverished rest of the country your journey will be quite a bit more complicated.

The average Sierra Leonean has a few unsafe and extremely unreliable options to choose from once he or she has come up with the 2000 Leones (0.75 USD) to pay for the journey. The most popular choice is to

board one of the state-run ferries, which were donated by Libya, and hope that the falling tide does not trap the boat in the undredged harbor. These ferries (it is rare that both boats are actually working) depart when their operators feel that the boat is packed enough with cars and people for them to make a decent profit out of the voyage. The 'funky ferry', as some call it, tends to get the bulk of the potential customers because its only competition is a fleet of rickety canoes powered by outboard motors. The operators of the ferry take full advantage of their monopoly to maximize their own earnings with an impressive disregard for their poor customers. The effects of this utter lack of accountability or competition is epitomized by the waiting room in Freetown that has not seen a coat of paint since independence (1961) despite the

fact that the Ferry brings in a lot of revenue. The predicament that anyone wishing to cross the bay finds himself or herself in is relatively indicative of life in Sierra Leone: there are very few options and none of them are ideal.

When a country with a natural harbor that is rich in diamonds, minerals, forests and fertile soil is ranked as the second poorest in the world by the UN, something must be going horribly wrong. Unfortunately, in Sierra Leone there are many things going wrong. While it would be difficult to list the myriad of interrelated problems that are keeping Sierra Leoneans poor, it will suffice to say that the country's resources are being used inefficiently (if at all) and are only benefiting a very small minority of the population. Furthermore, the majority of the country lacks even the most basic economic infrastructure such as paved roads, electricity and running water. Although it would seem that Sierra Leone's vast resources combined with well intentioned development experts from the west could provide a express path towards prosperity, the reality on the ground is much more complicated.

Even the smallest and best intentioned of projects intended to move SL out of abject poverty are not immune to the culture of corruption and nepotism that pervades every level of society. During the construction of the library at Saint Joseph's Secondary School that Joseph Kaifala and I coordinated, it became clear that the foreman was demanding much more money for the building materials than any of our estimates would suggest was appropriate. Unfortunately Joseph, despite his western-education and local credibility, had very few options to try and prevent the workers from overcharging him and pocketing the difference. As it turns out, there are no price tags in Sierra Leone (prices are arrived at through bargaining), and receipts are all hand written on pads than can themselves be bought on the street. Even if Joseph had demanded itemized receipts for the materials, there was no way to verify if the

prices were correct or if the receipt itself was authentic. In essence, corruption is inescapable and we can only work to eliminate the desperation, illiteracy and lack of accountability that fuel the problem. Although it is inevitable that some of the money destined for the library will go towards feeding the foreman and his extended family, we must choose the best option available and hope that the children who benefit from this library will become inspired by Joseph's dedication to the development of his country.

Joseph and his friends tell me that every aspiring presidential candidate in the last few elections has promised to build a bridge connecting Freetown to its airport, but none has yet delivered on this promise. As I sit listening to the current batch of presidential candidates spew vague promises about development, peace, prosperity and the long sought after bridge, it seems unlikely that much will change this time around. This does not mean, however, that Sierra Leone is condemned to an eternity of poverty. There could very well be a time in the near future when Sierra Leoneans will see substantial improvements in their standard of living, but the responsibility of realizing this potential lies in the hands of Sierra Leoneans themselves.

Although we in the west can play a role in facilitating the development of Sierra Leone, prosperity will not come from the donated money or the efforts of the UN or the countless NGO's operating in Sierra Leone. Although it would be inappropriate for me, as an outsider, to prescribe the path to prosperity for a country that I know so little about, the actions of individuals such as Joseph Kaifala represent one of the most promising means to that end. With his principled resistance to the temptation of corruption and his firm dedication to the education and empowerment of his people, Joseph is teaching through his selfless example that Sierra Leoneans have the power to better their own situation through conscious and cooperative action. I personally hope that those Sierra Leonean



youth who have been witness to Joseph's efforts will follow in his footsteps and begin to reverse the cycle of corruption and

poverty and sow the seeds for a more prosperous future.



## **JOSEPH KAIFALA & THE SKIDMORE INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS CLUB**

### **Aims & Objectives**

1. Help to self-help in the process of African development
2. Empowering African youths for self-development
3. Engaging African youths in African development
4. To use education as the fundamental tool for African development
5. Pragmatic Development Approach (PDA) towards the process of African development
6. Creating a respectable liaison between Africans and Westerners in the process of African development
7. Encouraging girls' education in Africa in order to diversify the intellect of Africa

### **Plan of Action**

1. Improve education in Sierra Leone through the provision of educational facilities and scholarships
2. Encouraging girls' education and engagement in the socio-political development of Sierra Leone
3. Involve African youths in African development by encouraging the idea of African role models in the scene of African development

4. Introduce a pragmatic developmental approach wherein we can create personal connections between donors and their beneficiaries in Africa




### Achievements

- 2002-2004
  1. Provided clothing, stationery and medical assistance to amputees and displaced children and families in Freetown, Sierra Leone
  2. Contributed to the construction of a cesspit latrine at the Grassfield Primary School, Lumley Freetown
  3. Provided clothing and medical services to Liberian refugees living in Bo district, Sierra Leone
- 2005-2006
  1. Granted scholarships and school materials to school girls in Freetown and Lungi, Sierra Leone
  2. Provided educational counseling to students in Sierra Leone
- 2007
  1. Constructed a library at the St. Joseph's Junior Secondary School, Masoila-Sierra Leone
  2. Distributed clothing to needy children in Lungi and Freetown
  3. Taught computer science and photography to faculty and staff of St. Joseph's Junior Secondary School, Masoila-Lungi



## SELECTED THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION FROM SOME SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Student's Information

First Name VALERIE

Last Name COLE


Nationality SIERRA LEONEAN

Form SSS II

Age 16

Valerie Cole-VMSS

There is a popular saying in Sierra Leone that “when you educate a girl you educate a nation.” The education of Sierra Leonean girls is certainly relevant to achieving development. Both boys and girls have potentials, and must be given the opportunity to attain education so that they can make positive contributions to society. An educated mother guarantees such privileges for her own children, which will reduce the level of illiteracy in our society



Student's Information

First Name YATTA

Last Name MANSARAY


Nationality SIERRA LEONEAN

Form SSS II

Age 19

Yatta Mansaray-VMSS

Gender disparity is one of the fundamental factors responsible for the underdevelopment in Sierra Leone. Women are often deprived of their fundamental human rights and the opportunity to thrive in society. Educating girls will assist in reducing teenage pregnancy, female circumcision, etc.



Student's Information

First Name JOSEPHINE

Last Name TARAWALIE


Nationality SIERRA LEONEAN

Form II

Age 16 years

Josephine Tarawalie

Whatever men can do women can also do. Boys and girls must be educated in order for them to make substantial contributions to the development of our country. Educating girls will grant them the opportunity to participate in the government, politics and civil service of their country. It also reduces the workload of men who must no longer be the sole financial contributors to the home.



Student's Information

First Name Hassanatu B.

Last Name Barrie

Nationality Sierra Leonean

Form SSS II

Age 18

Hassanatu B. Barrie

Primarily, girl's education helps in the reduction of early marriages. Forced marriage is still a trend in our society, and girls will remain gullible as long as they are not educated. Education allows a girl to understand her roles and responsibilities in society. For example, our present electoral commissioner is a woman, and she has led our country through a free and fair election.



Student's Information

First Name Fatmata

Last Name Bangura

Nationality Sierra Leonean

Form SSS II

Age 17

PHOTO

S.S.S.

DATE

BRIDGE

Fatmata Bangura-FSSG

Any country that is undergoing development should not underestimate the need for the education of its women. Educating women leads to a certain level of economic independence and cultural freedom. Educated women can engage in the transformation of their society and effecting changes in areas that are no longer beneficial such as FGM, early marriages, inherited wives, confiscation of a widow's property, polygamy, etc.

Student's Information

First Name FATMATA

Last Name UNISA BANGURA

Nationality SIERRA LEONE

Form SSS II

Age 18

PHOTO

S.S.S.

DATE

BRIDGE

Fatmata Unisa Bangura-FSSG

Girl's education is vital to the enhancement of many facets of our socio-economic development. By educating a girl child, we will also substantially reduce poverty, domestic violence, abortion and disease.

Student's Information

First Name BOCKARIE

Last Name SATTU

Nationality SIERRA LEONEAN

Form SSS II

Age 18 YEARS

PHOTO

S.S.S.

DATE

BRIDGE

With a proper education, girls can become partners in development. We used to think that only men could become efficient leaders of society, but the caliber of women such as Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia and Christiana Thorpe of Sierra Leone have taught us that women should no longer remain in the sideline of development---Sattu Bockarie-SJSS

Student's Information

First Name ISHA M.

Last Name CONTEH

Nationality SIERRA LEONEAN

Form SSS II

Age 17

PHOTO

S.S.S.

DATE

BRIDGE

Isha M. Conteh-SJSS

The African perception of women in the past was that they are mere underdogs who cannot contribute much to their society. This idea of women has led to the suppression of otherwise meaningful contributions to society.

Student's Information

First Name ISHA M.

Last Name CONTEH

Nationality SIERRA LEONEAN

Form SSS II

Age 17

PHOTO

S.S.S.

DATE

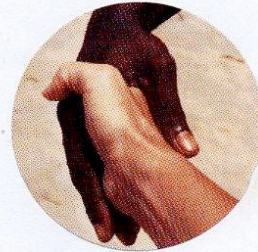
BRIDGE

Admire Finda Fanday-SJSS

In most of our rural areas in Sierra Leone, girls are not allowed to go to school. They are kept at home to do chores and they are given in marriage as soon as they reach puberty. This must stop!

# Grassfield Preparatory School

**Babadori-Lumley**  
**Freetown, Sierra Leone**  
**West Africa**



**The Red Cross Nordic United Colleges**  
**N-6898 FLEKE**  
**Norway**

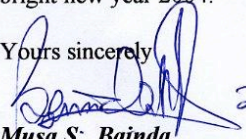
Dear Sir,

## **A BIG THANK YOU**

**Mr. Joseph Kaifala** was present at our 1<sup>st</sup> Term's Closing Ceremony on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2003 and he donated **One Hundred Thousand Leone (Le 100,000)** towards the construction of our cesspit latrine.

The management and Staff of the above institution is thanking **Mr. Kaifala** his friends and colleagues for the unexpected purse, and also wish them a merry Christmas and bright new year 2004.

Yours sincerely

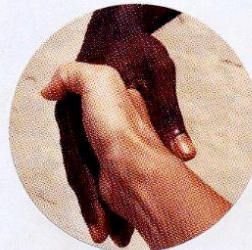
  
**Musa S. Baidia**  
**Coordinator**

23/12/03



**GILA CHILDREDN AND COMMUNITY HEALTH CLINIC**  
**19<sup>A</sup> Dambara Road**  
**Bo – Sierra Leone**  
**West Africa**

**The Red Cross Nordic United Colleges**  
**N-6898 FLEKE**  
**Norway**



Dear Sir,

**LETTER OF APPREICATION**

I write on behalf of the above establishment to express our sincere appreciation for an unexpected purse donated through **Mr. Joseph Kaifala**. We hope to utilise this fund as requested to provide medical service for 10 (*ten*) Liberian Displaced/Refugee Children.

We thank all those who have given up their valuable time and resources to contribute towards this honourable venture.

Kindly take note of our banker's information for future remittance

**Accounts Name:** Gila Children and Community Health Clinic

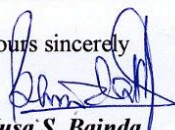
**Bankers:** Sierra Leone Commercial Bank (*SL*) Ltd  
Bo Branch

**Address:** C/O Sierra Leone Commercial Bank (*SL*) Ltd.  
Siaka Stevens Street Head Office  
Freetown, Sierra Leone, West Africa

**Account No:** 1001057

I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year 2004.

Yours sincerely

  
**Musa S. Baidia**  
**Cordinator**

23/12/2003



# True Wealth

By: Danielle McCourt



I walk up and down the aisles of a Target super store in a town 15 minutes from my home in Berwyn, Pennsylvania. In four days I will be headed back to school in Saratoga Springs, New York and I am loading up my shopping cart with

mundane items that I used to see as basic necessities; things that one cannot live without. But now I am conscious of the fact that I can live without, as so many people do all around the world. I am well aware that I am fortunate enough to live with the comforts provided by my environment or the sheer ability to have access to, and afford basic things like clothing and soap. Everyone hears the stories of people living in developing nations around the world, plagued by poverty. However, nobody's stories or accounts, no matter how vividly they share their experiences can truly explain how people learn to live with so few material assets.

I have been home from Sierra Leone for a week now and images from my experiences are still seared into my brain. I flash back to them as I complete the simple tasks of my day such as driving down the street or taking a shower. The street is smooth, free of potholes. I feel the steady stream of warm water and I think, only a week ago I turned the knob just hoping that I got some drips of cold water. The comparison between worlds plays over in my head. Despite my

gratitude for the comforts my lifestyle affords me, the comparison I see is much more than a material one focused on possessions and physical comforts.



The people of Sierra Leone may be living in difficult conditions but they are not miserable. In fact, the overall feeling amongst the majority of Sierra Leoneans is friendly, light and upbeat. People greet strangers warmly and the

hospitality I experienced was overwhelmingly kind. In my community, it is considered extremely friendly if someone urges you to go ahead of them at a stop sign or allows a pedestrian to cross before speeding through an intersection. Children in Sierra Leone may be running around in dirty clothes, sometimes barefoot but they are happy and smiling. The material aspect that may be lacking goes unnoticed because they have not failed to appreciate the value of life. They appreciate the most basic joy of life, enjoying each other and the simple but meaningful aspects of their lives.

As I pass through the shampoo isle I begin to hear the sobs of a little boy no older than five. All of the sudden I am thrown from my thoughts of a marketplace in Freetown and jolted back to the present. Now, back in Target, I am listening to a boy who, like I have done so many times, is failing to appreciate how fortunate he truly is. He is throwing a temper tantrum because his mom will only let him get one candy bar when he wants two.



My mind flashes back to two little boys I saw rummaging through garbage at the King Jimmy Marketplace in Freetown. They were upbeat as they spoke to one another in Creole, joking as they walked through trash. I mentally compared the two situations and found myself pondering the value of less. I am not saying that if you asked those two boys back in Freetown if they would like a candy bar they wouldn't have jumped at the opportunity. However, what good is material comfort if one cannot appreciate the fact that they are even alive to appreciate what they have?

My trip to Sierra Leone taught me countless things about values within different societies and strategies for survival. Sierra Leoneans set an amazing example by demonstrating that one does not need material goods to cultivate a meaningful and enjoyable life. When one appreciates life and the things they have no matter how few, a meaningful life is inevitable. Their appreciation for life and each other makes Sierra Leoneans wealthy in ways that are unfathomable to many.







## **SCHOLARSHIP**

**JENEBA Project: Scholarship for the Education of African Girls**

---

### **Contact:**

Joseph Kaifala  
Skidmore College  
815 North Broadway  
Saratoga Springs  
NY 12866  
Tel: 518-580-6654  
[Kaifala@yahoo.fr](mailto:Kaifala@yahoo.fr)  
[j\\_kaifal@skidmore.edu](mailto:j_kaifal@skidmore.edu)

Peter Brock  
Skidmore College  
815 North Broadway  
Saratoga Springs  
NY 12866  
[pbrock@skidmore.edu](mailto:pbrock@skidmore.edu)

Danielle McCourt  
Skidmore College  
815 North Broadway  
Saratoga Springs  
NY 12866

Special thanks to Skidmore International Affairs Club, Newman Club, Seventh Generation, Kathryn Wasserman Davis, The Church of St. Peter in Saratoga Springs and all individuals who have contributed to the projects I have accomplished in Sierra Leone.

-Joseph Kaifala-