



Global Connect

Surrey Christian School - Global Partners in Education

January 2012



What Does Hope Look Like?

When John the Baptist was in prison he sent his disciples to Jesus to ask if he was the promised Messiah, the one who would usher in the Kingdom of God. You might wonder why Jesus didn't just tell them yes, he was the one. Instead he said to them "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor." As if to say "I am not *saying* that I am the One. Just watch me." I love that! I imagine that Jesus said this to give John confidence and hope.

I was in Sierra Leone in November to visit the school and participate with the leadership in goal setting and planning. I returned with hope and confidence. The kingdom of God is here. The students at CRC Primary and Junior Secondary School are learning to read and write from competent Christian school teachers and are doing so in creative new

ways not previously seen in Sierra Leone. They are receiving this education in beautiful, well lit and clean classrooms. They have teachers who really care about their whole life, not just education. These students hear the gospel every day as Biblical stories are told, as songs are sung and prayers are offered. The students in the Junior Secondary grades spoke to me with such hope about their own futures. They testified to the skill of their teachers and Principal and the richness of their learning experience compared to most of their less fortunate peers in other schools. I felt to some degree what John the Baptist might have felt. Yes indeed

the Kingdom of God is here: reading, writing, good news preached, new life and hope.

It is a privilege and honor to be witness to this, and humbling to think about the rich gift of this partnership. Pray for it. Treasure it.

- Dennis deGroot



New Junior Secondary Building

The campus at CRC Primary and Junior Secondary School in Kabala looks quite different with the lovely pink and maroon colored arches gracing this new building. So far there are two classes meeting in these new rooms; the JSS I's and II's. This raises the school population up to 240 children. We have been blessed to find four new teachers willing and able to serve in this new capacity. They in turn feel privileged to be working in one of the most lovely buildings in Kabala at this time.

Finding quality construction and workmanship is a challenge and we count ourselves very fortunate to have a company in Freetown who was able to

complete this project on budget. The building was wired for solar power, as was the Primary wing, and the process to install solar power on the campus has begun. This was made possible with generous donations from our partners in the US, *Schools for Sierra Leone*. This will in turn allow for some new possibilities, not the least of which would be the introduction of computers into the school's program.

The new building is showing up some of the weaknesses from the early phase of Primary School construction raising awareness that some work needs to be completed there. We would very much

like to have the buildings be uniform in appearance. This will require the completion of some painting, roofing and drainage projects. We will have to raise funds rapidly in order to make this happen.



Getting to Know Our Partners

Dr. Jo Kuyvenhoven

Dr. Jo Kuyvenhoven is an important partner in our work in Sierra Leone. Jo first worked in the Badala, a small village in the north of Sierra Leone, doing literacy and development work with a Christian Relief agency before the civil war. She went on to do her PhD at UBC and has since been teaching in the education department of Calvin College. Jo tries to spend a part of each year working with the teacher training institutions in Sierra Leone to improve teachers' literacy skills. She is an invaluable advisor to us and continues to provide leadership at our school in Kabala.



James Tamba Koroma

JT, as he is known to most, is a remarkable man and gifted leader. Seldom have I met someone with such devotion and dedication to a task. JT was hired to the position of Head Teacher about six months before the school opened. He was key in the building of the school, hiring of the first teachers, leading a new school board and shepherding this fledgling effort through its early establishment challenges. Mr. Koroma is married to Sunakrie and together they have five children.



Mrs. Fina Kamara

Mrs. Fina Kamara is Class II teacher at CRC Primary School and one of the founding teachers of the school. Her straightforward nature, her love for the school and her desire to be a better teacher strikes one very quickly upon meeting Fina. Like most of her colleagues, especially those who live in the north of the country, Fina has had to work hard to secure her placement as a teacher. Most women would find this too big of a stretch. Fina's determination and faith have gotten her where she is today. She is currently exploring ways to upgrade her teacher certificate.



Future Plans for the School Partnership

As you can see from the images below, the Junior Secondary Wing has been completed and we are thrilled with the finished building. The construction company out of Freetown has done a superior job to any building project we had seen thus far.

As I was leaving Kabala the installation of a solar power unit was about to begin. This project was funded by our US partner, *Schools for Sierra Leone*, and will provide light and power for computers in the future. It also has some income generating capability when people wish to have their cell phones charged.

The board of Global Partners in Christian Education has approved the next phase of building and development, the addition of a Senior Secondary Campus. Next year will see the current students come to the end of their Junior Secondary education and there is a strong sense that we should expand to include a senior secondary program. This will be a financial challenge for us since the building project would likely be in the neighborhood of \$200,000 to build.

Having this program in Kabala will allow students to stay close to home for their high school years and attend a quality Christian school as opposed to either attending a poor, local high school or moving to Freetown to continue their education in a somewhat better school.

Teacher training and upgrading remains a priority. We would love to see some of our Surrey Christian School teachers work alongside our colleagues in SL to experience the partnership personally, and share their expertise in the areas of Biblical worldview and diverse teaching practices.



Blessed to be a Blessing

One of the challenges of financially supporting a school in the developing world is creating inequities between the “haves” and the “have-nots.” Our school in Kabala has small class sizes and learning materials for all students while neighboring schools do not. This is a delicate balancing act. However, we have been deeply touched by the ways in which the school has been reaching out into the community to give back. Whenever gifts arrive, they are quick to share. Uniforms get borrowed by neighboring schools, the soccer field is regularly shared for games and teacher professional development is also combined. Here is what Dr. Jo Kuyvenhoven said after a recent professional development event hosted at the school in Kabala: “It was great to all be together - and hosted by our ‘own’ school with uncommon grace and generosity of spirit. It was a witness to the spirit that drives our work here: sharing and generosity of spirit; we who have received so much need to give easily.”

Alumni Take Up the Challenge in Kabala

Joel ('90) and Ella Ringma (VanderKamp)('92) and their three children, Maria, Jacob and Naomi, arrived in Kabala just after the New Year to begin a six month experience in the country. Joel is working alongside the mission team in the area of leadership training. Meanwhile, the children are attending the CRC Primary School in grades 2,4 and 6. No doubt this will be an education in and of itself. Ella is a middle school teacher and will be a valuable asset to the school there in the area of teacher professional development. Teachers there are eager to improve their skills

and would welcome the input that Ella can offer.

The children have been suited up in pink and blue, and the girls already have their hair plaited and will soon be picking up the Krio language used by most of the children. Education is delivered in English but their learning will go well beyond what happens in the classrooms.

Joel first visited Sierra Leone with the BC CRC Partnership Team that was exploring ways of partnering churches in BC with the Christian Reformed Church of Sierra Leone. Apart from the

learning that Joel will be undertaking and the relationship that is developing, Joel will be working alongside local church leaders in maturing indigenous leadership skills. Follow the family on their blog at <http://ringmas.blogspot.com/>



12 + 12 = 24 Grandchildren

We have some generous sponsors in our community who have taken grandparenting to a whole new level. They made a commitment many years ago to send their children to Christian schools. Those children, alumni of our schools, are grown up and married and sending their children to Christian schools. The grandparents have decided to 'adopt' a dozen children in Sierra Leone; one for each of their Canadian grandchildren, in order to give these children a Christian education in Africa. What a gift. Other families in our local school community have simply added another child to their tuition commitment and are sponsoring a child at the cost of approximately \$250 per year. Good value when you consider the long term impact of this gift.



John Loeks and SforSL

John Loeks of Grand Rapids Michigan has been a tireless fundraiser and supporter of the CRC Primary and Junior Secondary School in Kabala. He would just as soon talk about the school as he would about his own primary business venture, the ownership and management of several multiplex theatres in the Grand Rapids area called *Celebration Cinemas*.

John has been partnering with the project for several years. We have been able to do fundraising on both sides of the border because of the nonprofit society that he began, *Schools for Sierra Leone*. He most recently raised the funds for a solar system to be installed at the school. We are deeply grateful for his hard work and his love for the school.

There is Always Time to Sponsor Another Child

At the present time there are 240 children able to attend school in Kabala, Sierra Leone because there are people here, in North America, who believe in the importance of being generous with the gift of Christian Education. However each year since the school opened in 2006 we have added another grade, or another 30 students. The costs will continue to climb as we add the next Junior Secondary grade and then year by year each additional Senior Secondary grade. Your gifts toward these child

sponsorships are deeply appreciated and needed for the day to day operation of the school. The funds pay teacher salaries, buy school materials, pay for support staff and the maintenance of the facility. Cheques can be written to our charitable arm, Global Partners in Christian Education and you will receive a charitable tax receipt for this gift.

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