

April / May 2010 Newsletter

Two birds with one stone

It has long been a problem that each year we either turn away our up-country successes who pass their BECE [Basic Education Certificate Examination] at the end of their Junior Secondary Schooling, or bring them to Freetown for Senior Secondary. The first solution seems unthinkable and the second creates an ever-growing population of youngsters who have to be separated from their parents in order to stay with EducAid in Freetown.

At the same time, there has been mounting frustration amongst some friends of FAWE [Forum of African Women Educators], who provide sponsorship for the girls leaving their primary school in Port Loko for local on-going secondary. The girls are leaving the primary school with such low exam results that they rarely qualify to get into the local secondary schools. The solution: a partnership between them and us! Some members of this group have decided to put their money into supporting EducAid to provide secondary schooling by building a brand new senior secondary school. Girls leaving the FAWE primary school, and other vulnerable youngsters in the area, will have local junior and senior secondary provision. At the same time, those girls who miss the grade for immediate promotion from primary into secondary can be groomed in the Women's Project until they are competent and confident – a seamless service!

Construction began in Rolal, Port Loko, in January, and a very nice new facility will be ready for action before the summer school.

We are also looking to see how we can best support the FAWE primary school in raising the quality of the teaching and learning there.

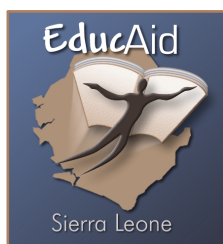
We appreciated the recent visit from Adrian Carr and Swithun Mason. They took communal eating, white ribbon campaign dramas, power point presentations on everything from restorative justice to Nigerian literature and much more, all in their stride. Their interest in the students and their futures was very motivating for all.

For those interested in more regular news about EducAid's activities, please refer to www.educaidsierraleone.blogspot.com

Rolal Senior Secondary School and staff quarters under construction.



Abibatu first came to EducAid at the time when she was finally reunited with her family after she ran away from an early, arranged marriage. She had been out of school for seven years and was a banana seller. She had forgotten everything she had ever learned. Now Abibatu runs the Women's Project in Rolal enthusiastically and is training on the distance Higher Teachers' Certificate programme at the same time. Her example is a powerful one for the girls she teaches.



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In Maronka, there has been building too



EducAid has long been showing pictures of Maronka's little primary school with its dwarf mud brick walls and tin roof and nothing else...dead cute!... But then you think about the consequences of such a set up and trying to teach there, particularly in rainy season, and it gets a little less cute!

Forut is a Norwegian-funded donor agency that operates in Sierra Leone (among other places). Last year they decided to help Maronka. In March this year, they handed over a beautiful building, which has significantly changed the possibilities for the youngsters on that site. It leaves us with a challenge of course – buildings, however beautifully they are painted, guarantee nothing in terms of quality of education. We have to ensure that however beautiful the school is, the education that takes place inside is more so!

Teachers in Training

Another accumulating problem has been the difficulty of finding sponsorship for some of our best youngsters, when they finish secondary school and want to go on to college. The costs are such that it is almost always completely out of the question for the sort of youngsters with whom we work. This year a fantastic opportunity has come up. A number of our youngsters, who have been teaching as junior staff and shown some promise, have received sponsorship to start a course being piloted this year.

Only 40% of teachers in Sierra Leone are trained and qualified, so a distance teacher-training programme is being launched. 21 of our teachers, including 18 ex-EducAidians, started the programme in January, alongside 80 others from all over the Port Loko district. We hope that they will, in time and with appropriate funding, form the basis for an outreach programme from a centre of excellence which will be built up on the Rolal site. We aim to send teachers to schools in the more remote villages, where standards can be unbelievably low and the potential of many bright youngsters is wasted.



Prayer corner: Please continue to pray for EducAid.

Please pray for:

- Sierra Leone to successfully take a stand against the corruption that deprives so many of basic services and rights.
- EducAid students to pursue the fullest education they can so as to position themselves to be part of the change.
- EducAid girls, in particular, to achieve their full potential.

Thank you to all of you who continue to donate to EducAid. None of our activities are possible without your generosity. If you would like to sign up as a regular donor [e.g. £10 per month pays for education and food for one student] or make a one off donation, please go to

[http://educaid.org.uk/EducAid Sierra Leone/Donate to EducAid.html](http://educaid.org.uk/EducAid_Sierra_Leone/Donate_to_EducAid.html)

Calling all golfers.... EducAid is running a fund-raising Golf Day on 14th May in Muswell Hill. Please encourage friends to form a team and come along. For more information, contact Frank@123computing.co.uk