

# Aegis Foundation for Development

## Message from the Director

### Inside This Issue

- 1 Message from Director
- 2 S.O.S. Canada House Update
- 3 New Foundation Trustees
- 4 KIDS Volunteer Article
- 5 A Trustee's Experience in Sierra Leone
- 6 Upcoming Events

---

*The S.O.S. Canada house project which many of you have donated to remains our top priority: all money donated to this project will of course go directly towards caring for the centre's children.*

---



### *Name Change and Future Planning*

As the title of this newsletter suggests, Braveheart Youth Foundation has changed its name to Aegis Foundation for Development. The purpose of this name change is to reflect both our initial success in Sierra Leone and the future direction of the Foundation. Our original name "Braveheart" came from a local partner we were working with in Sierra Leone. Aegis, on the other hand, is a word that refers to general sponsorship and guidance that a group or structure gives another. In this way the purpose of our name change is to reflect both what the Foundation learned from our initial experience in Sierra Leone, and where the future of our organization lies. The S.O.S. centre was and continues to be successful because we play the role of sponsor and worked indirectly through the community. This is a unique approach not often taken by larger charities, and so the Trustees and our friends in Sierra Leone think there may be potential in the future to support other communities and organizations in this way. It is important to note, however, that for now the S.O.S. Canada house project which many of you have donated to remains our top priority: all money donated to this project will of course continue to go directly towards caring for the centre's children. The name change does not reflect any major shift in our current activities; it has been initiated by Foundation trustees in order to reflect activities that may be undertaken in the future.

And what lies ahead? Having studied extensively the history of development and international aid for my MSc at the London School of Economics, I can tell you that the direct and bottom up nature of our S.O.S. Canada House project in Sierra Leone is the exception to the rule. More often than not, aid and development projects are top down, involving large organizational, implementation and advertisement costs. Often these projects lack the involvement of local communities in planning their own development, something which renders them unsustainable and ineffective. S.O.S. Canada house is different; the community is directly involved in its development and management, and this has caused the sustainable, effective delivery of services to be incredibly cost efficient. The **yearly** operating costs for the S.O.S. centre are **less** than the **weekly** in country costs of the charity I first worked for in Sierra Leone. Foundation trustees believe that the generosity and intent of donors here in Canada should not be misused and instead go as far as possible to help those in need. Just imagine if we could have 48 S.O.S. Canada Houses, instead of 1 top-down project like the one I was initially working on in Sierra Leone: one which, when I returned a year later, was non-existent to the point as if it had never been. This vision has led us to change the Foundation's name and officially upgrade our mandate with the charities directorate in order to take on similar projects to the S.O.S. Canada House in the future.

Our current focus remains steadily on the S.O.S. Canada house, I want to assure all of our donors of this. We have merely opened the door for other (with separate fundraising) projects. For instance, the groundwork has been laid for a group of Winnipeg students to fundraise for a youth/student group in Bungalow, Sierra Leone. Once again, I want to thank all our generous donors here, without whom our vision of making a *real, effective* and *suitable* difference for the world's poor would not be possible.

## S.O.S. Canada House Update

The Foundation is pleased to relay a quarterly report from our in-field monitoring partners about the progress of the children living at S.O.S. Canada House. All 30 children continue to do very well with 22 of them excelling in primary school, 6 in Secondary, and 2 in the KREBS fastrack program (designed for children who are at secondary school age but did not complete primary school). One of the children, Jimmy Brima, underwent minor surgery for a small deformation that had

resulted from an infection that had gone years untreated. He is currently doing well and is as healthy as ever. The children are continuing to adjust well to their home environment. In addition to the children living full time at the centre, monitors report that through the centre's drop-in program 12 older street youths have been referred to the KREBS fast track program and 24 to vocational training including carpentry, tiling, and electricians school. There is avid interest among the unemployed youth in Koidu in the centre's referral program but the centre's focus remains primarily on those who are homeless: these youth continue to receive medical attention when needed as well as food and counselling. In-Field monitors make it clear that the centre is continuing to effectively provide its urgently needed services with the full support of the community.

In other news, the S.O.S. Centre's participation in the acclaimed KEEPS exhibit has been published on the internet, with the description and links to the image gallery hosted at [www.keeps-exhibition.org/sierra.html](http://www.keeps-exhibition.org/sierra.html). Foundation director Jason Dudek has recently been speaking at schools and churches in Winnipeg, raising awareness about the S.O.S. Centre and Social Justice issues in general.



## New Foundation Trustees



Ola Theopolis Smart



William Gould



David Pankratz

In laying the groundwork for the integration of the S.O.S. Canada House with an agribusiness, and for future projects, the Foundation has had the pleasure of welcoming three new trustees. They include Mr. Ola Theopolis Smart, a Sierra Leonean who escaped to Guinea during the 10 year civil war, who has an impressive background in project management and agriculture. He holds both a BSc and MSc in Agricultural Education from Njala University, as well as a Higher Teachers Certificate (HTC) in Science and Agriculture from Bo Teacher's College. He has held project management positions with numerous local and international organizations in Guinea and Sierra Leone, and is currently the director of Kids Action Sierra Leone. He joins Aegis to help monitor and advise its projects in Sierra Leone. With a background in accounting, new Foundation Trustee David Pankratz is the current director of the Institute for Community Peacebuilding at the University of Winnipeg's Menno Simons College. He has done field audits and financially-related work with different organizations in around 30 countries, mostly in Africa but also in Central America and the Middle East. Notably, he and his wife lived in Zambia for three years in the late 1990's and he delivered humanitarian aid for six months in Iraq in 2003.. New Trustee William Gould is currently studying international development and politics at the University of Winnipeg. He is an alumnus of St. Paul's High School and former student council president. William actively volunteers for various sports and youth related causes and is committed to sustainable ground up global development. William joins the Foundation to coordinate activities relating to the future project of Kids Involved in Dynamic Sport, in Bungalow, Sierra Leone, described below by one of the Foundation's volunteers, Scott Acheson.

## Kids Involved in Dynamic Sport

*Scott Acheson*

Kids Involved in Dynamic Sport (K.I.D.S.) was first presented to myself and a group of friends a couple weeks ago by William Gould, a trustee of the Foundation. The project is designed to provide youth in Bungalow, Sierra Leone with a sustainable community centre equipped with sporting equipment. The community centre will act as a place for educating Bungalow's youth on important issues of gender inclusion, respect, healthy living, and teamwork through



sport. As well, the centre will help refer community youth to vocational training and higher education, and act as an advocacy group for youth and child rights. I've been fortunate in my 19 years to have had many opportunities. Whether it was playing sports or attending St. Paul's High School, there existed many opportunities for myself; however, my best childhood memories came from playing sports. Sport was an opportunity to have fun and meet new people; more importantly, it taught me important life lessons. K.I.D.S. is a project that lets each of us, who have had the opportunity to play sports, to share those opportunities and the gift of sport with others. In a country that has been burdened with war where children were forced to kill and where many are diagnosed with AIDS, K.I.D.S. will allow youth in the community to be, simply, kids again.

## A Trustee's Experience in Sierra Leone

*Alexander Winfield*

What are we to make of the Africans? I am in London, describing my journeys in Sierra Leone to a young counter woman. She is pretty, dark haired and educated. I mention the War (forgetting to specify – in Sierra Leone there is only one War spoken of). “What do you think is different about them?” the pretty girl asks me, wringing her hands. There is an indescribable look in her eyes. “They can do such horrors.” What are we to make of the Africans? I recognized the look in her eyes - stretched wide by canvasses of black and scarlet painted by the daily news. Machetes, children with bloated bellies, dictators with laughs darker than their skin. What are we to make of them? My friend TD tugs at his shirt, a faint grimace of annoyance as mosquitoes dance from his face. “It is hot tonight,” he muses. It is four in the morning, and he is preparing to save children from the street. TD is quiet, with deep lines above his eyes.

Years ago, a madman's dream forced him to flee his fracturing country. He has returned home now, to this place which once birthed such evil before him. Quietly he has begun to try and fix things. He is an African, and he has seen the horrors his people may do. My great uncle Anthony, a 78 year old Cockney, tells me of the scars a madman left on his beloved London. Machine guns, starving orphans, dictators with smiles paler than their skin. He shows me pictures of buildings gutted and hollow, of streets pockmarked and impassable. Eyes heavy with the memory of dread. He is a European, and well he knows the horrors his people may do. He talks about this epoch of savagery as if it were a memory. I correct him: “I too have seen these things.” The bomb craters, the foul water. The war is still being raged,



T.D. Lansana

good people still fight back against horror and though the battlefield has shifted, I believe my aging Anthony might recognize the persevering spirit of TD. Fragile, thin, balding both – and indomitable. What are we to make of Africans? I do not ask this question of myself anymore. It makes no sense to me, for the savagery that is theirs is ours also. Rwanda. Darfur. Auschwitz. The Trail of Tears. In a vast and implacable night, TD is teaching a boy to read. In a night punctuated by tamed electricity, my Anthony is kissing his granddaughter goodnight. The horror is theirs and ours, but then so is that maddening, rare, insensible quality of mankind that I may dare to call grace. It survives. It endures in us all. What are we to make of the Africans? Who am I to say? I wonder, often, what they make of us.



## Upcoming Events

### *The Following Events are Scheduled for 2007-2008*

<b>S.O.S. Centre Fundraising Drive</b>	November - December 2007
<b>Development of K.I.D.S. Project</b>	December – January 2008
<b>Social Justice Awareness Campaign</b>	January – March 2008
<b>Trustee Monitoring of S.O.S. Canada House</b>	March – April 2008
<b>S.O.S. Documentary Release</b>	April 2008