

# ***Full house!***



We have made it our mission to introduce Bingo to Freetown society! No seriously, the numeracy course with the games and activities is still going down really well with the children in the prisons, and the work is spreading. In December, Catherine ran another numeracy

training for some volunteers from a Church in Lumley who run a club for street kids. On Wednesday afternoons these two guys, Suma and Foday, are now running numeracy and Bible study classes for about 15 to 20 street kids. The church has a separate collection every week, and uses the money to feed all the children attending the club. Unfortunately over Christmas it was broken into and nearly all their electrical equipment (including their sound system and their fans) were stolen, but it has a vision to reach these children, and they continue to make a difference to these children's lives. This church is an inspiration to us and a picture of hope in amongst frustration due a dependency culture here in Freetown. We are also hoping to introduce the course to a local NGO that trains teachers around the country. Who knows where this is going?!

Our team has changed personnel again. We said farewell to Georgie in January. She and her husband have planted a church in a rural area on the other side of Freetown, and they are using their energies to establish this small community of new believers, as well as setting up a nursery school in the community. We also welcomed Matthias to the team. Still, we can praise God for the unity and fun within our team and it continues to be our desire that '...with one heart and mouth [we] may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom 15:6).

The past 3 months have been busy for both of us. However, we have achieved a new, clearer, focus to our work. We plan to leave the Child Development Programme in the hands of national organisations in September of this year. Already we have 19 churches in Freetown and the surrounding area running, or ready to run, clubs for children, and at least two of those clubs are being run by organisations and churches that want to take them to the provinces. We gave out small gifts to the children at Christmas, and found that through the churches we are reaching and teaching nearly 400 children. When you add the children that our partner organisations are working with, that means that nearly 4000 children in Sierra Leone are part of this club programme! Wow!

## **THE HIGHS AND LOWS**

### **Highs...**

- 1 Joining the WEC Gambia team for their annual conference
- 2 A good time with Catherine's Mum and cousin in Freetown
- 3 Spending 3 days in a Fullah village in Gambia
- 4 Starting informal education at one of the clubs for Street kids
- 5 Having a clear vision of our work here till September

### **Lows...**

- 1 Tiredness
- 2 Uncertainty about the future, both of WEC in Sierra Leone, and of our own future

Along with our local partners, we continue to develop the 2-year club curriculum. We were encouraged to hear of one particular story from Kailahun. This is a Muslim area in the far east of Sierra Leone that has been badly affected by the 10-year war. Many of the Muslim parents did not want their children to attend the 'Christian' clubs. However, teachers in local schools were noticing that the children who attended the clubs were doing better in school. One Muslim school decided to take 2 hours a week out of their normal timetable to run the club, so that *all* the children can benefit. These teachers are also asking for help to teach in a more interactive way, using games and activities, as they can see the benefit to the children's learning.

## PLEASE PRAY...

1 For inspiration as we work

2 For safety in and around Freetown

3 For WEC to follow God's desire for the work in Sierra Leone

4 For continued good health

5 For the political situation in Sierra Leone as the country prepares for elections in 2007

At the beginning of February, we travelled to the Gambia to join the WEC team for a week, for their annual conference. We had a great time, and it was fun to meet the team, as well as hear of the work they are doing. After the conference, we travelled into Gambia where we stayed in a small village of Fullah people. It was wonderful to be in the countryside and Stephen came away with a 'Learn How to Read Fullah' booklet for one of the boys in the Approved School, and also a Fullah Bible for a friend. We then travelled by bush taxi to Dakar in Senegal, which is the other extreme from the Gambian village - big, bustling, noisy, Africa-meets-Paris! We thoroughly enjoyed our time and returned to Sierra Leone last week refreshed and ready for the next few months. On returning, we were overwhelmed by visits and calls from neighbours. We have often felt isolated, yet here was a demonstration that we do have many friends in this country.

The next few months look fun, although busy! Stephen has much to do with the finances of Rainbows of Hope, and just keeping that ticking over takes a lot of his time. Catherine has to help complete the second year of the club curriculum, as well as to write a literacy course to use in the prisons and with the street kids. In addition, we will find out in March whether WEC is going to expand the work here in Sierra Leone, or whether they will ask us to shut down the work we are doing here and leave. It's a time of change and uncertainty for us all, but we believe that the words God spoke to the prophet Jeremiah are still true today, "I know the plans I have for you... plans to prosper you and not harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future".

Thanks so much for the emails, Christmas cards, postcards and letters. It is always great to hear from you! Take care and God bless,

With love from,

Stephen & Catherine

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