



ONE SKY NEWS

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Editor's Message

By Nikki Skuce

Environmental organizations who work overseas tend to work in solidarity and under the notion that we all live under "one sky". The earth is reeling under pressures that require solutions at all levels. When One Sky was founded six years ago, it started off as an organization that worked predominantly overseas. Slowly over the past four years, we've been increasing our local programming. We feel we should live and exemplify what we promote in other places. If we are to talk about sustainable shelter in other countries we should decrease our environmental footprint in Canada. If we are to advocate for action on climate change, we should reduce our energy needs at home. One Sky also believes that we need to practically implement solutions if we are to walk in the halls of policy making. In turn, we can use policy to implement changes at the grassroots.

It's been an exciting journey over the last few years to be involved in this wide spectrum. Whether we're installing a PV system on our roof or participating as a delegate at an International Renewable Energy conference; working with farmer's groups in Sierra Leone or working with farmers in Smithers; or learning from our Southern partners or engaged in capacity building, we are constantly reminded by our very name that the environment knows no borders.

As we look ahead and work at setting our new vision for the next five years, we can't help but question whether we're doing enough or working most effectively. Are we working on the right issues? Given the urgency and magnitude needed to address certain global environmental problems, are we creating the change needed? What other strategies should we be using? Who else should we be engaging? What are some new ways of approaching the problem? In order to continue to inspire and promote solutions, we'll need to look intently at these questions. What remains constant is that we all live under one sky and need to work together.

International Cooperation - Moving toward a sustainable energy future

By Nikki Skuce

One Sky is working to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency at all levels. Following is an excerpt from a policy brief developed for the Canadian Renewable Energy Alliance's model national strategy.

For environmental and equity reasons, renewable energy has become a global imperative - a means of transforming economies from fossil fuels to sustainable energy, and a means to providing modern energy services to those currently without.

More than 1.6 billion people live without access to electricity and 2.4 billion lack modern energy services for cooking and heating. Millions more are connected to the grid but experience poor power quality and frequent power outages. Women, the elderly and children will benefit the most from access to renewable energy technologies as they are most often burdened with the collection of traditional fuels, the pumping of water and exposure from harmful emissions from traditional cooking methods, which is the leading cause of respiratory illness. Dependent on dwindling biomass supplies, many rural women in sub-Saharan Africa carry 20 kgs of fuel wood an average of five kilometres a day. In 2005 the richest 20 percent of the world's population consumed 58% of the world's energy while the poorest 20 percent consumed less than 4% - the majority of whom live in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.

Access to basic, clean energy services is essential for sustainable development and poverty eradication, and provides major benefits in the areas of health, literacy and equity. Simply put, the developing world needs more access to energy while at the same time the world as a whole needs to rely on less polluting forms of energy. Energy services have a critical role in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The UN Commission on Sustainable Development has called access to renewable energy a "prerequisite" for halving poverty by 2015. International cooperation in the area of renewable energy is needed to help fill the gap and improve energy equity.

Added to the need for addressing energy for development are climate change and the fact that we have reached peak oil or will within the next 30 years. It is widely recognized that developing countries and the poorest within countries will be more adversely impacted by climate change. In addition, there is a growing concern over rapidly rising oil bills. The decreasing supplies of conventional oil and current conflicts have caused the price of a barrel of oil to increase by more than 350 percent since 2001. The impact on sub-Saharan Africa is more than a doubling in cost of oil imports

(cont. from page 1) (which the International Energy Agency estimated in 2005 to be \$20 billion/year at only \$55/barrel). The rising costs of oil are outweighing any benefits in World Bank, IMF and African Development Fund debt cancellations to low-income countries relying on imports.

Energy is becoming the focus of several international negotiations although ironically has no permanent home within the United Nations and is predominantly dealt with by major international institutions that represent sectoral interests of the traditional carbon-based energy system (such as OPEC, G8 and the International Energy Agency). Fossil fuels, large hydro dams and nuclear energy have all been sources of conflict and are predicted to be at the core of future wars. International cooperation to expand renewable energy, a relatively conflict-free and secure energy source, is increasing but needs greater political will and leadership in order to transition effectively from a fossil-fuel based economy.

Internationally, Canada has not been a leader in promoting supportive policies and committing to international cooperation that actively promotes renewable energy (RE). Canada's reluctance has mostly centered around removing subsidies to conventional energy sources, the inclusion of large hydro as a renewable source, and the setting of binding international targets for renewable energy. Likely due to its own energy make-up and endowments of large hydro, nuclear and fossil fuels, Canada consistently argues for a "balanced approach" to all energy mixes. This ignores both the preferential treatment of conventional energy sources through subsidies and infrastructure, and the realities of climate change and the global peak oil scenario. While the setting of an international target is argued by Canada to be colonialist and imposing, an international agreement to have all parties set national targets and timelines for renewable energy can support international cooperation toward achieving country goals while reducing poverty and mitigating climate change. Canada lacks a well-developed renewable energy sector and a national renewable energy strategy to be able to take a leadership role at the international level, but international cooperation efforts can in turn influence Canada's domestic policies. There is need for Canada to follow-through on some of their international commitments to improve our renewable energy and energy efficiency portfolio.



Solarhot water heaters installed on building in Beijing, China.

One Sky is working with the Canadian Renewable Energy Alliance (CanREA) to advocate for a national renewable strategy that is comprehensive and based on a strong foundation of energy efficiency. The Canadian Renewable Energy Alliance (CanREA) has developed a model national strategy for renewable energy and energy efficiency based on input from across Canada and reviews of best practices used in other countries. A framework document and 8 policy briefs with federal and provincial recommendations are available to download at www.canrea.ca. CanREA's model strategy contains recommendations for the three main services met by energy - power, heat and transport - supplemented with national strategies for energy efficiency, a sustainable energy financing plan, and international cooperation.



Fuel-efficient wood stove produced by Environmental Foundation for Africa (EFA) in Sierra Leone.

Home And Away

By Adrian McKerracher

A country is coming back to me.

When I got back to Canada, I shut out my memories. I didn't do it on purpose, it just happened. Call it a survival mechanism. Some mornings when I was slow to get up I would remember the sound of a palm-leaf broom sweeping away the sand that had gathered over night. I would push the sound away. It didn't make sense to think about it. It was particularly bad at night. I was not allowed to think of Sierra Leone at night.

It was like that for eight months. I was always moving, so I didn't let things catch up to me. Now I'm in Montreal, and I'm staying. And bits of Sierra Leone are finding me. When I remember the light at five o'clock coming home to the village where I lived, I don't push it away. I let myself remember little things like the light. For a few minutes they cover me that way that light does and I can't see anything else.

It hurts to come back. It hurts to come back from remembering. The stories in my head are crazy. There is red dust and machetes made from car parts and witchdoctors and a fat moon. But there is nothing that I didn't do. I was there for all of it. I am not inventing anything, and maybe that is why it hurts. Because I can't find dust or machetes or witchdoctors or the moon in Montreal.

But I let them come because it's important. Staying still is good for me now. A country is coming back. It knows where to find me. And when it comes it is not easy because it hollows me like a spoon that hollows a pumpkin of its seeds. I remember sounds, and maybe the smell of rice in an iron cauldron over a fire. I remember me being me, and it is good. Later I don't know where I am and I do things to locate myself. But I let them come because it's important. And because I miss it so much that when the country comes back to me, I want to go back to the country.

One Sky Staff Updates and Thanks

One Sky HIV/AIDS Advisor

Evelyne Ssengendo (now Tawo) started off working with One Sky as an intern in Nigeria. She's been working with our Nigeria project as the HIV/AIDS Advisor under a Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) sponsored position for the past year. Evelyne and her Nigerian husband are returning to Canada to start a family. One Sky would like to thank Evelyne for all of her energy, dedication and work during her time with us and wish her the best of luck with her future endeavours.

Nigeria Field Office Coordinator Visits Canada

After over three years of working with us, Patricia Eyamba, One Sky Field Office Coordinator in Nigeria, finally received the opportunity to spend time in Canada. Among other things, she gave presentations to various groups in Victoria, attended the World Urban Forum, and participated in our AGM.



Kristin Patten and Patricia Eyamba on internship orientation hike.

One Sky Welcomes New Youth Interns

Allison Bryan, Ryan Cheng, Matthew Kitchen and Kathryn Nelder join One Sky as our 2006-2007 CIDA-sponsored youth interns. We are expanding our internship program this year into Mali with the Mali Folkecenter and Cameroon with Global Forest Watch, and continuing to send two interns to Sierra Leone with the Conservation Society.

Thanks to our 2006 Summer Student

Therese Vliegthart, sponsored by Service Canada, coordinated our community bike program this summer. Thanks to Therese, One Sky launched a 'blue' bike program in Smithers.



One Sky bike rack filled with donated bikes for distribution.

Reflections on an Internship - by Fiona Wright

My life moved itself to Freetown, Sierra Leone last year. For seven months I lived in a house with a Krio family, and spent my free hours hanging out in the ghetto market built from sticks and rusty corrugated iron known as Victoria Park, where mini cups of espresso, large glasses of ataya (green tea), smoke and palm wine cooperate to welcome the escape of a lost generation. I worked days as part of the Education Department at the Conservation Society of Sierra Leone (CSSL), and represented One Sky in the recently formed network known as the Environmental Forum for Action (ENFORAC). The work part of my internship began slowly as I acclimatized to a new country and culture. Looking back, that was a good thing. It gave me a chance to passively observe the small day-to-day interactions, rhythms and ways of doing things that are not immediately noticeable and that no one will tell you about because they come as naturally to Sierra Leoneans as eating toast in the morning does to me. And yet, it's these small considerations, niceties, the ways of comporting myself that made the biggest difference in my ability to relate to people, and therefore effectiveness in my work.

As the outreach and education intern, I began by trying to revive CSSL's Nature Club program in schools. I spent time chatting with people, I stressed about how to fulfill the fundraising component of my job description, and found reasons to avoid stepping outside my comfort zone and accepting weekly invitations to speak on the radio. I buried my head in my computer and wrote weekly newspaper articles on environmental issues and Sierra Leonean wildlife, I produced a new and comprehensive booklet on CSSL's activities, and a pamphlet introducing ENFORAC to the world.

But walking around the garbage-choked streets of Freetown every day, worrying about where I could find my next toilet, watching kids hauling more water than I could carry, and seeing the thin layer of topsoil washing down from the hills as the population pushed up the slopes, I felt like the opportunities for education weren't reaching the masses who could make a big difference. And so began the Murals Project, painting murals on concrete walls at busy intersections depicting simple environmental messages, aimed at reaching the largely illiterate general population of Freetown. The project has garnered so much support since it began that CSSL is continuing the project. All 15 member environmental organizations of ENFORAC are currently designing their own murals and other sites are being secured in two towns upland.

So, mission accomplished right? I fulfilled all the internship's objectives of learning about myself and challenging my cultural assumptions and personal values, I made lots of new friends, gained work experience and actually even contributed something to my host organization! So why do I still feel a bit lost in it all? I spent months thinking about a Franz Fanon quote I got on an old piece of paper inviting me to a Sierra Leonean youth rally: "The future will have no pity for those who, possessing the exceptional privilege to speak words of truth to the oppressors, engage in acts of passivity, mute indifference or even cold complicity." I have accepted that I am the person with that privilege - the fact of the matter is I am not forced to spend my time eking out a plate of rice. I am what I am. I am not what I am not. I am a drop in the bucket but I know now my whispers can speak out louder than I thought. I can tread lightly wherever I go and set an example that leaves ripples in consciousness and hope they turn into waves of social change down the road. I am a person with a heartbeat. Like you. Like all of us.



Fiona and Tuzie, Sierra Leone artist, in front of educational mural

Suffering and Smiling

By Kristin Patten

Last February in Smithers a small group of people got together to organize events for Black History Month - most likely a first for our small not-so-racially-diverse town. The events were fantastic, a mix of movies, poetry and song. During one of the events a clip from the movie *Amistad* was shown, a gut-wrenching scene from a slave boat traveling from Africa to the New World. Chains slithered like metallic snakes across the ship deck as 'excess cargo' - African slaves - were thrown overboard as the ship's supplies ran low. One eleven year old boy in the audience gave in to huge, heart-breaking sobs that spoke of his own growing awareness of Africa's pain and his own people's history as a young black boy.

Africa's pain. It is a pain that is shown to us in a tumbling of images and words so that Africa is wrung-dry, a caricature of itself that comes to exist in our imaginations as a dusty continent crowded with drought-inflicted, fly on the corner of the eyelid, emaciated children and mothers too exhausted to move, guns, child soldiers and amputees. (The African equivalent of Canada as dogsleds and igloos; or the continent of the Americas as the United States with its statue of liberty, Mickey Mouse and obesity).

All these things are true, and yet they're not. How do we balance the painful parts - which are real - with all the other images and stories that paint alternative pictures of the 58 countries that make-up Africa? How do we inspire people? Do we magnify the poverty, the hurt and the need to convince donors / the public / government to support our well-intentioned and beneficial programs? Or do we inspire by hopeful stories of everyday, strong, capable people overcoming challenges and living 'good lives'? With this more hopeful approach, are we sugarcoating the pain, denying the realities? Where is the balance? How do we portray, as in the title of a Fela Kuti song, both "Suffering and Smiling" without reducing this to simplistic stereotypes?

I suppose these questions are not the kind that demand answers. There is no definitive answer. The continent of Africa is much too large, too diverse, too complex, too real to fit within simplistic categories of 'pain / suffering' or 'smiling / hopeful'. Our images of the many Africas that exist will continue to be reshaped and reformed as Africa's stories unfurl.



From left to right - Matthew Kitchen, John Kelson, Nikki Suce, Patricia Eyamba, Allison Bryan, Kirsteen Laing, Greg Brown, Sandra Thomson, Sandra Smith, Kristin Patten and Kathryn Nelder at One Sky's 2006 Annual General Assembly.



Free bike repairs on Clean Air Day (June 7) were offered by volunteers to participants in Smithers' first Commuter Challenge. Over 30 people came out to a solar-powered pancake breakfast in celebration.

Addressing Food Security

By Matthew Kitchen

Each day, more people are becoming aware of the importance of food security initiatives in their community. Particularly in northern areas such as the Bulkley Valley, increasing attention is being paid to where our food comes from and the impact this has on the environment. In Canada, food is now traveling an average of 2,400kms before reaching our kitchen tables, an increase of 22% since the 1980s. These long distances release excessive amounts of greenhouse gas emissions, contributing to global climate change. In response to this, projects promoting the consumption of local foods, such as the 100 Mile Diet, are becoming more and more popular. These initiatives all have the common goal of encouraging food security by lowering the impact that our daily meals have on the environment.

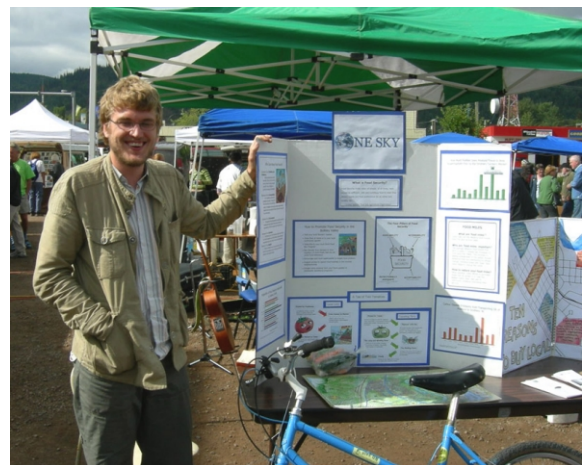
As part of a research paper looking into local food security for this area, I calculated "food miles" for ten items found at the Farmer's Market with the same found at the three area supermarkets. The ten items found locally were responsible for a total of 29.9g of CO2 emissions versus 2,304.97 grams of CO2 from the area supermarkets. If we were to purchase our food basket every week during the operation of the Smithers Farmers' Market (approximately 13 weeks), we would save approximately 30kg CO2 from transportation alone during that time (this does not include the embodied energy required to produce these foods, nor does it include the emissions created from preparing these foods for travel).

In the Bulkley Valley, there's a need for more local producers, outlets for selling and changes in policies to further promote local agriculture. Our northern climate also makes it difficult to consume local foods year round. One Sky is working to encourage people to buy local when it is possible. The popularity of the Smithers Farmers' Market provides opportunities for residents of the Bulkley Valley to interact directly with farmers while purchasing foods grown (and transported) locally. One Sky held an information booth during two weekend markets over the summer to educate the public on the importance of choosing local foods while also informing people where these foods are available in the Bulkley Valley.

In addition to promoting the consumption of local foods, One Sky is engaged in other food security initiatives. In September, One Sky is organizing a Food Collection Program. This program encourages gardeners to bring in extra produce from their gardens, which is then distributed to food assistance programs in the community.

Building upon these local food security initiatives, I will be taking what I learn while in Smithers and applying this knowledge on a global scale. For my internship I will be traveling to Sierra Leone to work with a local NGO along side farmers' groups to promote sustainable agricultural practices. These practices, aimed at maximizing what farmers receive from the earth (e.g. vegetables) while minimizing what they take from it (e.g. minimizing nutrient leaching, soil erosion, etc.), encourage long-term food security by employing sustainable techniques.

Realizing the interconnectedness of the local and global environment, One Sky is becoming actively involved promoting food security at both levels. For more information regarding these initiatives, contact Matthew at matthew@onesky.ca.



Matthew Kitchen with Food Security display at Smithers Farmer's Market.

Soil Rehabilitation in Sierra Leone

By Chris Woolgar

The mass destruction that so heavily defines the Western media image of this embroiled nation can haunt the most experienced of traveler. Years of civil war have left Sierra Leone with a degraded social system, depleted infrastructure, and civil uncertainty. Through this, plant life continues to reclaim what was once theirs by encroaching upon abandoned areas and neglected neighbourhoods. Recognizing this natural balance between humans and plants is clear, as their co-dependence on the environment determines their survival rates.

Tropical soils are often considered the most productive soils in the world. As local plant species gain in strength it becomes ever more difficult to work the land for agricultural expansion. Slash and burn tactics are adopted as the simplest method to develop a plot of land. However, in this system, thought is rarely given to the long-term viability of the depleting soils, thus creating an unsustainable management pattern. Once land is cleared for agricultural purposes, the use of the soils is frequently maximized after a few growing seasons. The ability to find ways of managing soils and servicing them can, at times, be the most important aspect of agricultural development.

On one of those humid Sierra Leonean afternoons, where the only refuge you have from a day's work is a small shifting portion of shade offered by the ever-generating banana tree and its palm companion, the Woama Farmers Association learned the value of composting. As we sat around discussing the days work and what lay ahead, we examined the cucumber yield. Sure it was small, but one section of cucumber was noticeably larger and more abundant than the rest. It didn't take long for the group to recognize that this was one of our experimental plots where compost was utilized as a fertilizer prior to planting the cucumber seeds.

Through the simple process of developing experimental plots a valuable lesson was learned. The use of teaching through action was much preferred to classroom lectures. The group soon realized the benefits of composting and began to work on transplanting other vegetables into freshly made compost as well as preparing more compost pits.

In Sierra Leone's attempt to re-establish food security networks, the basic fuel for agriculture cannot be ignored. Methods such as composting promotes sustainable soil management and creates an enabling mechanism to further develop other systems of soil preservation. Building the capacity of farmers groups and working with local agriculturalists are small steps toward building local food security. One Sky continues to engage at this level and promote organic agriculture as a sustainable livelihood in cooperation with local organizations.



Woama group farmers with cucumbers grown in compost.

One Sky in Sierra Leone

The goal of our project Growing at the Grassroots is to support organic agriculture as a viable livelihood in the diamond-rich Kono region of Sierra Leone through an integrated, cooperative approach. One Sky is working with the Conservation Society as well as four farmer's groups providing training, inputs, appropriate technology and facilitating networking. For more information or to support through donations, please contact Nikki at nikki@onesky.ca or 250-877-6030.

One Sky Running Off Solar

One Sky's Nigeria office has PV panels installed and our Smithers office recently installed a net-metered solar system on their office building in Smithers thanks to a grant from the VanCity/Realestate Foundation. Net-metering refers to feeding excess power generated from a renewable energy system back to the hydro company, through the grid, and receiving credit.

For consumers tied into the grid (i.e. those paying BC Hydro), they have the option of either installing a stand-alone or independent renewable electricity system (which uses a battery bank), or they have the additional option to net-meter (avoid batteries and connect to the hydro lines). This policy, adopted by BC Hydro in May 2004, allows customers who produce more electricity than they are using at a given moment to feed the surplus directly into the grid and essentially run their single electricity meter 'backward'. The customer is billed only for the net electricity consumed. In the case of BC, the customer is trading surplus electricity to the utility at the same rate the customer buys electricity from the utility. This is in contrast to initiatives in Europe and recently Ontario who are using advanced renewable tariffs (ARTs). ARTs permit the interconnection of renewable sources of electricity to the grid and set a specified price for the electricity generated over a fixed period of time. At a larger payback than current electricity prices, this offers a greater incentive for people to install renewable energy technology to generate power. One Sky is also working in collaboration with other organizations in BC and through CanREA to promote advanced renewable tariffs and other supportive policies.



Workshop participants during net-meter installation



One Sky's Smithers office demonstrating net-metered PV system and solar hot water heater.



ONE SKY MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name (please print clearly):

Address:

Phone number (optional):

Email:

YES, I want to join One Sky and help to "promote sustainable living globally". I have enclosed my annual dues of \$10 for this calendar year. Please mail or drop by your membership form with dues to One Sky at:

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Visit www.onesky.ca or phone us at 250-877-6030 for more information.