



# ONE SKY NEWS

Volume 3, Issue 1

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## Editor's message

By Nikki Skuce

What does leaping, HIV/AIDS, renewable energy and micro-credit have in common? The connection might not seem obvious to those outside of the buzzing One Sky walls. It should, however, be clearer to those within them. A lot of time was spent during the past year working on a 3-year strategic plan for the organization which culminated at our annual general meeting in June. This longer term plan is a map, a guide with milestones and indicators to measure how we're doing along our journey in trying to promote sustainable living globally. After reading the newsletter, you'll get a taste of where we're headed or you may come to your own conclusion as to what solar dehydrators, Canadian curriculum and crossing rivers have in common.



One Sky News

## Leaping

By Adrian McKerracher

When you leap, there are two moments that remind you that you're leaping – the moment in which you push off from the ground, and the moment in which you land. What's between is not the leap at all – it's a kind of floating, a levitation that relies on time and circumstance to connect what came before with what comes after. In short, the middle needs the context of start and end.

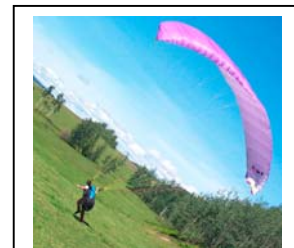
It's the same with travel. Just as a leap is composed of pushing off, a time in the middle disconnected from the earth that you knew, and a landing, so too is travel made up of leaving, being there, and coming back. Without landing, there is no leap. Without coming back, there is no travel.

In October, I will be going to Sierra Leone, West Africa. Among other things, I will be working with One Sky's overseas partner Friends of the Earth Sierra Leone (FOESL) to help build water cisterns and solar dehydrators, as well as develop a communications plan for educational radio programs about environmental stewardship. I will be riding in the back of sand trucks, cursing the traffic, waiting for electricity, counting grains of rice, and stuttering through the Krio dialect while trying to understand a country emerging from violent civil war. Indeed it will be a leap.

But the point is to land. No doubt the experience will affect me deeply, no doubt I will think differently about the world, no doubt I will have questions. But what do you do with that new information? You tell stories.

Being away has never made so much sense as it does when you're back. Of course I don't mean that things are clear – in fact, the urgency of the present is usually much more vivid than the collected bits of a remembered past. What I mean is that going away must be understood in the context of what you're going away *from*. And that understanding isn't usually reached until you realize what you've come back *to*.

For the next three months I'll be in Smithers, BC, helping to organize a fundraising auction, encouraging local businesses to lower their energy consumption, and planning a resource centre for the One Sky home office. That's the pushing-off phase. Five months in Sierra Leone will constitute the fascination of an airborne man who has left the ground he knew. And when I get back in March, full of stories, new realities, the odd parasite, and more questions, that's when I'll know that I have leapt, and I'll be able to look back to see how far I've come.



One Sky intern trying paragliding

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## HIV/AIDS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

*By Patricia Eyamba*

At the end of a focus group discussion in a community in Cross River State where one of the issues being addressed was the impact of HIV/AIDS on the environment, one of the consultants tapped on my shoulder and said, "But Tricia, HIV/AIDS has its advantages - the pressure on our environment is reduced as populations reduce due to the number of people dying as a result of HIV/AIDS infection. The advantage is that fewer people exploit our environment and sustainability is enhanced."

These were the words of a consultant in Cross River State during a field survey on Non Timber Forest Products. It first came as a shock to me, but could you blame him for saying this? Until recently, since a mainstreaming approach was introduced by organizations, donor agencies and others, it has been difficult for people to relate HIV/AIDS to other issues except health. There also has not been any concrete knowledge on how HIV/AIDS affects the environment or other sectors.

The Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) affects the human system. It has no cure and it is expensive and demanding to treat and care for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Poor health (which includes HIV/AIDS) increases the difficulty of ensuring the sustainable use of the environment. When a person is sick or dies by HIV/AIDS, energy is invested to relieve the effect of ill health, labour and skill is lost, productivity is reduced and poverty increases.

Poverty increases vulnerability, and people's negotiating power is drastically reduced because of the desperate situations they find themselves in. Products that would have been sold at a reasonable price often go for peanuts because the sellers desperately need money for their love ones.

Health, productivity and food security is threatened by HIV/AIDS. That is the linkage with the environment. If all these are threatened, how then can we sustain our environment? How can environmental laws be obeyed?

When One Sky's Cross River Environmental project insisted that HIV/AIDS and gender be cross-cutting, it was not well appreciated by some partners because it was considered a waste of time and resources. People rarely make the connection between the two, but today it is a different story. More than three quarters of One Sky's partners appreciate the need to mainstream HIV/AIDS. They now realize that HIV/AIDS threatens results achieved with respect to the knowledge acquired and institutions developed and ultimately undermines the long-term protection or sustainability of the environment. Also, when AIDS leads to an increase in the mortality rate among community people where these organizations have their projects, their capacity to coordinate and control diminishes and their financial situation is negatively affected.

The rate of HIV/AIDS infection in Cross River State, Nigeria is 12%. One Sky undertook a Gender and HIV/AIDS assessment of its partner organizations as part of the CRE project. The results of the assessment were used to develop Gender Equality and HIV/AIDS integration plans. One Sky hopes to continue drawing the links between HIV/AIDS and the environment.

Therefore long-term sustainable use of the environment can function best in relatively healthy and socially stable societies. What can we do to ensure this? All hands must be on deck to increase awareness of HIV/AIDS, organizations should ensure they have focal persons on HIV/AIDS, linkages should be established with organizations with similar visions, and their communities should be trained to develop HIV/AIDS action plans. Finally, parents, teachers and community leaders at all levels should address sex education and communication. We should all remember that HIV/AIDS has no cure. The only treatment is prevention. Health is wealth.

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## Bantering in Bonn

*By Michael Simpson*

The first United Nations conference on solar energy was held in 1954. Some ideas are not new! What is new is that in the year 2004 when the world met in Bonn, Germany to discuss renewable energy there was a much more determined group of people at the table. Oil had reached an astounding forty-two dollars per barrel during the conference proceedings and the meeting included numerous presentations on the looming oil crisis. Energy is a large subject and one that Canadians would do well to pay more attention to. One Sky was attending the conference in an official capacity as an NGO representative on the Canadian Delegation to Bonn. Canada had little to boast about in the company of nations like Germany and Denmark, which are currently leading the world in wind energy. Indeed, most of our efforts went into protecting the role of large-scale hydro electricity as a renewable energy source, much to the chagrin of the NGOs and European nations.

The bottom line in Bonn was simple. Our world currently depends on fossil fuels. Oil is running out and our energy needs are increasing. This is a simple supply and demand equation and it is startlingly soon that we will read the writing on the wall. We have been using fossil fuels for about 100 years. The total estimated amount of oil in the Earth that we have found AND expect to find is about 1800 Billion barrels. To date we have used up over 920 Billion barrels and our use is increasing exponentially. Some people predict our current use of 25 Billion barrels a year will jump as high as 45 Billion Barrels/year by 2020. So far, the price of oil has remained artificially constant as we continued to discover more oil than we consumed, which has meant an ever-increasing supply. In theory, oil should have become cheaper over the last decades as we discovered more and more but the OPEC nations have managed to control the rates of production (about 64% of the worlds oil supply is sitting under the Persian Gulf region). Recently however, we have been discovering oil at less than the rate that we are consuming it (for the last seven years) and this statistically implies that we are at the top of the Bell curve used by scientists that study the peak in oil and gas reserves. We were not predicted to get to that peak until 2010 yet it looks like we hit the peak in 1999. In short, once we hit the top of the Hubbert curve, as it is known, our oil reserves will decline at a certain rate (currently 2.6%). If we simply work this out it means in 40 years we will have no more oil and in 46 years no more natural gas. In the meantime we should expect some radical shifts in energy price, use and production.

This is bad news for the current economy and great news for the coming renewable energy economy. Bonn was an opportunity for the world to showcase the potential of renewable energy, which, in theory some people believe could replace our energy footprint by 2050 using currently available technology. We need to both reduce our current energy consumption through efficiency measures and invest in renewable energy. It was an eye opener for Canadians to see how far ahead the European nations and countries like China and Brazil are in promoting renewable energy. Denmark currently meets 20% of its energy needs through windpower, Brazil 40% of its transportation sector through biofuels (ethanol) and China is the world's leader in thermal hot water production. The Germans have invested heavily in wind energy and Japan has a project for solar panels on rooftops that is targeting 100,000 homes.

In the meantime, Canada lacks a national renewable energy strategy and is only just beginning to talk about wind energy. Here in British Columbia we have some of the best wind energy potential in Canada due to the shallow and windy nature of our offshore coastline. We have the potential for small-scale hydro and tidal and geothermal power that is better than anywhere else in Canada according to a recent study by Pollution Probe. European nations would be glad to have even a portion of our potential. It is time for our province to stop talking about offshore oil and gas and wake up to the coming era of renewable energy. In 1954 solar energy was an idea whose time had not come. We have since rejected nuclear energy and will soon run out of fossil fuels. Hopefully, the events of Bonn Renewables 2004 will mark a new era.



*Photo: Larrv McCulloch*

One Sky is doing working on renewable energy in three ways. Locally we intend to decrease our own energy footprint through a solar renovation. Nationally we hope to work with other groups to promote a national renewable energy strategy and fight against perverse subsidies of the oil industry, and internationally we will continue to work with the Citizens United for Renewable Energy and Sustainability (CURES) network as the North American representative and play a role in the international negotiations process regarding energy as well as draw attention to the issue of oil and international security.



### Energy Smart Smithers

One Sky has launched the "Energy Smart Smithers" initiative to help local businesses reduce their energy use and

costs. After an evaluation of their current energy footprint, businesses commit to 3 simple things that they can do to save money while reducing their environmental impact. Mark Hart, Energy Pledge Coordinator, is spending the summer with One Sky working on this initiative and helping set up a series of workshops.

Funded by Eco-Action of Environment Canada, this initiative is part of One Sky's larger ecological footprint program. We are planning on retrofitting our existing building, installing alternative energy systems and creating educational signage as well as a resource centre with materials relevant to Northern dwellers. The organization has a larger vision of being a renewable energy centre that includes a new building – a training project - where local developers learn green building techniques and strawbale construction and form a network for the Northwest. A centre in rural Smithers that models energy efficiency, conservation and alternatives, provides workshops and acts as a hub for research and advocacy to change policies toward renewable energy and the reduction of perverse subsidies. The overall goal of the Centre would be to create an enabling environment to increase the use of renewable energy and reduce the overall energy footprint in the Northwest. British Columbia.

### Energetic Solutions – An International Conference on Making Renewable Energy a Reality

*Energetic Solutions*, being held November 21<sup>st</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>, will provide a unique forum for discussing the important role of renewable energy for poverty alleviation and sustainable development in the developing world using Nigeria as a case study. The conference is strategically designed as a follow up to Renewables 2004 held in Bonn. Participants will be an international mix of renewable energy experts and NGO, private sector and government participants.

*Energetic Solutions* is a practical, hands-on experiential international conference designed to assess the viability of leapfrogging technologies using a real life scenario. By locating the conference in Nigeria, which has one of the world's most challenging development contexts as well as a nation that is both blessed and cursed with an abundance of fossil fuels, *Energetic Solutions* has chosen to place itself at what can be considered the heart of the renewable energy challenge.

One Sky is coordinating the conference as part of the Canadian Environmental Network's International program. We are hoping that the conference produces a joint declaration on renewable energy and poverty, a peer reviewed plan for the creation of a renewable energy demonstration project on the Obudu Plateau, and a legacy in Nigeria of an active renewable energy network among relevant stakeholders. To participate or for more info, please visit:

[http://www.onesky.ca/ES\\_Brochure.doc](http://www.onesky.ca/ES_Brochure.doc) or contact conference coordinator Nikki Skuce at [nikki@onesky.ca](mailto:nikki@onesky.ca) or 250-877-6030.



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## An Outsider's Look at One Sky

By Sandra Thomson

One Sky is not like any other three-year old non-profit organization. With projects in three countries, a financial track record of more than a million dollars in project funding, 15 staff for 2004...one is compelled to ask - *what exactly is working so well and how can it work even better?*

To begin answering that question, One Sky Executive Director Mike Simpson, invited Drishti: Centre for Integral Action to conduct a third party assessment of organizational effectiveness. Drishti is a new non-profit organization, dedicated to transforming self and society in balance with nature. Our work seeks to build the capacity of non-profit organizations to use progressive social change methodologies. In doing so, we first assess an organizations' internal processes as well as their external outcomes using action inquiry, reflective tools and an integral approach. We find that through this process, the people within the organization themselves reveal where their work is most effective and why.

"When we began this integral assessment, our expectations were high – we knew how progressive One Sky is in terms of its work with global issues. And yet this assessment brought to light its true cutting-edge nature. Some areas in need of improvement were raised by staff and board, but nothing more than expected from the growing pains of a young organization," reported Gail Hochachka, Director of Drishti.

Interviews were conducted with most staff and board members and several philosophical questions arose. These were tackled during the AGA in a workshop entitled "Managing our Growth" – *how do we balance process and product? how do we capture and incorporate lessons learned during our work? and how do we create a culture of self care that addresses burnout, urgency and busyness?* Lively discussions resulted in some practical actions that One Sky will incorporate into its work over the next year.

Following completion of our assessment, we will help One Sky more clearly articulate the approach that it takes in working with both northern and southern partners which includes a strong commitment to mentorship at both the individual and organizational level, an emphasis on fostering strong networks and creating opportunities for multiple leadership. The result of this approach is expressed by staff and board when describing the culture of One Sky – dynamic, challenging, innovative, open, bold, constantly learning, radical, and fun!

## Global Classroom Initiative

One Sky worked in collaboration with teachers Janet Sondresen and Natalie Charlton to produce educational kits on "A day in the life of a child in Sierra Leone" for schools in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. A big thanks to the Sierra Leone teachers committee for their feedback on the units - David Massaquoi, Maryama Kamara, S.I. Mansaray and Alpha Kamara; and to both Kristin Patten and JT who overcame many challenges getting artifacts together, conducting interviews, putting together current information and meeting deadlines. These educational kits will be distributed in the coming year with some assistance from returning One Sky interns.



Sierra Leone teachers committee and One Sky intern JT

## Congratulations Patricia!

One Sky staff Patricia Eyamba gave birth to a healthy boy on August 1<sup>st</sup>. Best wishes to all of them!

## Special Thanks

One Sky would like to thank two of its very dedicated volunteers – Erica Close for her research on rehabilitating mining lands in Sierra Leone, and Kim Patzwald for her research into participatory monitoring and evaluation as well as fundraising efforts.

In addition, One Sky would like to thank and say goodbye to its 2003/04 youth interns Mali Bain, Chrisa Hoicka and Jennifer Thompson. We'll miss you!

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## Mountain Magic

*By Rebecca Rolfe*

You wouldn't even believe it if I told you! Just try to picture the nervous excitement of seven sleep deprived yet smiling new One Sky interns heading out on their first official team building exercise. As part of an extensive and intense training and orientation program for new interns, we began the 12 kilometre hike heading into the unknown on June 14<sup>th</sup> after a 15 hour drive to Smithers from the Vancouver Airport.

We started off at the base of the trail heading for Silver King as we all reluctantly peered back, only to see the knowing (albeit secretly comical) faces of One Sky staff quietly documenting our every single and slightly unsure move. A staged bear scare and several hours later, we came to a beautiful unassuming log cabin. You couldn't imagine the view from the top. Surrounded by 360 degrees of mountains meant for the movies, the light rain brushed our faces and encouraged our fragile souls onward.

You wouldn't even believe it if I told you! On an otherwise normal camping trip among friends we maneuvered the removal of a can of 'poison' liquid from the middle of a 'toxic' pool, worked through the night on a One Sky Policy Framework for interns working overseas, and almost kissed our sanity goodbye when we agreed as a team to scale ourselves one by one across a raging river meters below...all with one rope and an old children's bicycle helmet. Despite clear safety concerns, the point of this exercise (which we came to understand) was to take a closer look into the trust we had built for each other and the lengths to which we were willing to push that trust given such a risk (staff stopped us from crossing just as we were on the brink).

We all silently confessed that these few days on the mountain were carefully conceived to evaluate our potential to think and act clearly under the most compromising of conditions. I was so overwhelmed with joy and emotion that I found it difficult to speak on my feelings about the experiences I had over these few first days. Much like living and working overseas under difficult circumstances, the One Sky intern-hazing program has equipped us with invaluable tools (as a team and as individuals) to creatively assess and strategize on problem solving. Neither of us will forget these days in beautiful Smithers, B.C and I would do it all again given the chance to spend time with new friends for life.

## One Sky Youth Internship Program

The overall goal of One Sky's youth internship program is to provide opportunities to radicalize, broaden, transform, and activate youth as social change agents. One Sky welcomes the addition of seven youth interns this year sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency. Each intern will spend over 3 months working with One Sky in Smithers and 5 months working either in Sierra Leone or in Nigeria. The interns off to Sierra Leone are:

- Adrian McKerracher, Appropriate Technology Programmer
- Kevan Berg, Environment Programmer
- Solarin Harding, Micro-credit Programmer

The interns heading to Nigeria are:

- Evelyne Ssendendo, HIV/AIDS Program Assistant
- Greg Brown, Renewable Energy Programmer
- Rebecca Rolfe, Appropriate Technology Programmer
- Susan Liu, Nigeria Project Assistant

Photo: Nikki Skuce



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## Reflections on time in Sierra Leone

*By Jennifer Thompson*

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I have come home to Montreal with memories. But memories are sometimes hard to share. We all know that stories retold skew what was really going on.

*Take the rest of the afternoon off because a meeting got cancelled or forgotten or ignored. Work until midnight because your neighborhood has power, and you don't know when it (the power) will return.*

Be flexible.

My best memory: A simple romantic day at the beach. In the midst of everything else going on – teaching someone how to swim, luke warm beer from a can, and white sand between my toes seemed pretty good.

What was it like to be an intern? *A fall down an grap* (A Krio expression - I fall down, and then I get up). Growth. Balance. How much should I talk? How much should I listen? Where do I draw my lines? Which lines should I draw?

My worst memory: Loneliness and anger – sitting in my room with my head in my hands.

Be strong.

You: "So *what* did you do this year?"

Me: "Well, Environmental Education in partnership with a Sierra Leonean organization."

You: "But what did you DO?"

I talked to people – I listened – I asked questions – I got confused - I looked for clues on how to help – I ran in circles with all the best of intentions not to.

"Think before you talk, don't let your mouth give you trouble." – Krio Proverb

I dug compost pits with hundreds of women and children. I laughed with taxi drivers. I got malaria and then recovered. I learned how to balance things on my head. I ate fish for the first time in 10 years. I made friends. And I lost friends.

I came home every so often at 5 in the morning, sweaty and tired from dancing all night. Bucket wash, swatting away dawn's mosquitoes. Fell asleep tucked safely under my bug net – with the first light's call to prayer echoing between my ears.

Run around Freetown in the bright hot burning sun. Laptop in backpack: The moving office. Try to find a shop that is open AND has power – to make a photocopy. Try to still look clean at the end of the day.

I walked the dusty red road of the Western Peninsula of Freetown. To the Eco-Center for a meeting that might happen. To the next village over to buy a piece of bread and boiled egg for lunch. To Sengbe Pieh (Do you know who he was? I didn't) School to run an environmental club.

I saw more sugar ants in our kitchen than one could find black flies in Northern Ontario – teaming up with lucky finds – a sugar granule, a bread crumb, a grapefruit pulp, spilled cocoa.

I sat in a dark tin shack up the road – lit by a lantern, and ate a nightly plate of rice – happy to hide in the shadows and fill my belly.

I made attempts to answer the same line of questioning about 10 times a day: How are you? What's your name? Where are you from? How do you like Sierra Leone? How long have you been here? Can I be your friend? Where do you live? Who taught you to speak Krio? Can I have your (shoes/bag/shirt/jeans)? What is your mission here? Are you married/Do you have a boyfriend? Will you marry me? Can you take me to Canada? What is your phone number? Can you help me? Are you a Christian or a Muslim? What did you send (bring) for me?

But I didn't always have an answer.

Be patient.

"The patient dog eats the fattest bone" – Krio Proverb

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## Micro-credit: Working Toward Secure and Sustainable Livelihoods

On a monitoring trip to Sierra Leone last year, I accompanied One Sky staff Ginny Stratton and FOESL staff Marion Coker to the rural community of Waterloo. We were warmly greeted by the same women's group who had met One Sky's educational delegation in 2001 dressed in fine Africana, singing joyfully and expressing their hopes to be able to make and trade soap, gara cloth and agricultural products. What they were missing were start-up funds to begin small enterprises.

In Sierra Leone, as the nation struggles to rebuild, the people have an extremely limited ability to mobilize the resources necessary to improve their livelihoods. Working toward economic security and the development of sustainable livelihoods at the grassroots level could prove instrumental to the economic growth and stability of the country. FOESL views the provision of micro-finance as a vehicle through which people are enabled to overcome some of the challenges that they face in the development of themselves, their families and communities in a post-conflict context.

The Waterloo women's group is the pilot project for FOESL's micro-finance initiative. They have developed a constitution that includes their goals and objectives, membership criteria, group structure, management of funds and consequences of not repaying loans. While individual loans are given to each member to start a micro-enterprise in their area of choice, everyone is also obliged to contribute weekly to a group savings fund that not only acts as collateral for when loans are not repaid, but can also be used for community projects such as building a health centre, improving a well, or sponsoring children to attend school.

So far the micro-credit program has been run from individual donations. The UN has announced that 2005 is the year of micro-credit. FOESL and One Sky are hoping to expand the program to reach a total of 8 communities to assist women and their families in achieving sustainable livelihoods in this country that continues to rank last on the UN Human Development Index.

For more information on the program or on how to support it, please contact Ginny Stratton ([gabby@onesky.ca](mailto:gabby@onesky.ca)) or Nikki Skuce ([nikki@onesky.ca](mailto:nikki@onesky.ca) or 250-877-6030).

## Supporting One Sky

Since its incorporation four years ago, One Sky has coordinated sustainable development activities locally and has also been working in some of the most difficult places on the planet with projects in Sierra Leone, Nigeria and El Salvador. By working in challenging areas and maintaining a positive sense of hope, One Sky aims to inspire and create change.

In order to carry out our initiatives, we rely on grants and individual donations. This year we are specifically looking for additional support for the micro-credit initiative in Sierra Leone, for building water cisterns for FOESL's agricultural project, for developing world participants to attend the Energetic Solutions conference, and for our local Sustainability Centre.

If you would like to show your support for One Sky by making a donation, please send a cheque to:

One Sky, Box 3352, Smithers, BC V0J 2N0 Canada.

One Sky is also holding its third annual Goods and Services auction in Smithers on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2004. For more information on making a donation or attending, please contact Adrian, Shola or Kim at 250-877-6030 or [info@onesky.ca](mailto:info@onesky.ca)

Photo: Janet Sondresen



Waterloo women's group involved in micro-credit