



ONE SKY NEWS

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Editor's message

By Nikki Skuce

At One Sky's recent Annual General meeting, the staff and members of the board shared what their passions were for being involved in One Sky. Many people had a turning point in their life either from an event, book, or personal influence that put them on the path towards working for social and environmental justice. Others were influenced by family and their up-bringing over a longer period of time that formed the basis of their values and ethics. For some, they became involved in One Sky because they trusted Executive Director Michael Simpson and his vision when he was starting the organization. Others finally found an NGO that melded their concerns and beliefs around human security and the environment. At the end of the session, it was clear that our medley of motivations and passions will result in a dynamic organization that will hopefully meet the needs of those working and volunteering here as well as inspire others in our work towards a more sustainable and just world.

Environment Knows No Borders

By Jen Castleden

The Obudu Plateau in southeastern Nigeria provides a vantage point for visitors to view the expanse of mountains and forest that straddle the border of Cameroon and Nigeria. Within this region – known as the Cross River Bioregion – resides the Cross River gorilla with only about 250 individuals remaining in the wild. The Cross River Bioregion is the largest remaining contiguous Tropical Moist Forest in West Africa with the highest biological endemism in the region.

This high biodiversity of the forest and its inhabitants is also one of the reasons it is experiencing increasing pressure from people. Pastoralists convert forested land to grazing land to support their cattle, environmental refugees from neighbouring areas put increasing demands on culling bush meat for food, and the quality and quantity of hardwood trees lures illegal logging interests who export timber to foreign markets. While the degradation of this forest has implications for all of us, those who live in Cross River are most directly impacted.

NGOs based in Cross River State are the key instruments supporting communities and Community Based Organizations in the buffer zones surrounding two key protected areas – the Guinean Lowland Forest Ecosystem in Cross River National Park as well as the Montane Ecosystem of the Obudu Plateau – in the Cross River bioregion. To strengthen the work of five of these NGOs, One Sky has embarked on a two-year partnership to support NGO capacity by:

- Providing training in project and organizational management;
- Supporting activities in key land and water management demonstration projects in local communities;
- Working with the State Government to effect policy change and enforcement;
- Providing training in gender analysis, gender equality and HIV/AIDS integration approaches; and
- Increasing public awareness in Canada and Nigeria of environmental issues in CRS.

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(cont.) To design a long-term strategy for our work together, Nigerian and Canadian project partners met in February on the Obudu Plateau. Our slogan – the Environment Knows No Borders – recognized that forests are essential to our health and well-being, regardless of our nationality. Forests regulate our world by using carbon dioxide, producing oxygen, filtering the air and water, and recycling essential soil nutrients. Forests are used for the services they avail us – for food, timber for shelter, wood for fuel, plants for medicine, recreational pursuits. And forests enrich our lives through their beauty, biodiversity, and spiritual qualities. These essential life-giving traits provided the impetus for a unique partnership - a partnership without borders.

Nigerian Project Partners in One Sky's Environmental Capacity Building Project in CRS:

[Living Earth Nigeria](#) - is supporting communities to sustainably harvest timber and non-timber forest products from tropical rainforest on their communal lands. The programme in Cross River State is supporting community forestry through education/training materials, activities and radio programmes on community forestry and sustainable development as well as providing technical support to villages wishing to set up community forestry initiatives and a rural credit scheme for village forestry projects.

[NGOCE](#) - is a network whose mission is to develop and support projects that counteract the threat to the biological and cultural diversity and natural resources that sustain the environment while advocating for the sustainable use and equitable distribution of benefits to the people who depend on these resources.

[Development in Nigeria](#) - is an NGO located in Cross River that is working through community economic development, adult literacy, HIV/AIDS awareness and community forestry and agriculture to uplift the status of people- especially women - in the communities that it works in.

[Nigeria Conservation Foundation](#) - focuses attention on building a harmonious relationship between the natural resources it seeks to conserve and the people who depend directly on these resources for their food, shelter and clothing. NCF's field projects try to integrate conservation with rural development in order to achieve long-term sustainable development of our natural resources for the benefit of all.

[Cercopan](#) - is an environmental NGO based in Cross River State, with their head office in Calabar and a forest based Environmental Education and Research Centre in the Iko Esai community forest. Their long term goal is to create an internationally recognised center which serves as a focal point for those interested in tropical forest conservation, as well as a location for primary, secondary and university students from across Nigeria to meet and learn about conservation, primates and tropical forests.

Canadian Project Partners involved in One Sky's Environmental Capacity Building Project in CRS:

[Fallsbrook Centre](#) - is located in Knowlesville, New Brunswick where they have a working appropriate technology and research centre that includes an organic gardening operation with a certification program, a working woodlot and forest certification centre, alternative housing, solar power learning centre and a host of appropriate technologies and environmental education materials, displays and programs.

[Greenheart Conservation Company](#) - has been working on the establishment of true ecotourism "canopy walkway" and canopy research stations since 1989. Led by a team of three, the company has experience building ecotourism operations in Peru, Guyana, Guatemala, the Philippines, Malaysia, Canada, Costa Rica and Ghana. The canopy walkway they constructed in Karakorum National Park in Ghana now grosses over \$1 M/yr and has attracted the attention of many international ecotourism ventures. They will be exploring the potential of setting up a canopy walkway in Nigeria.

[Laing and McCulloch](#) Forest Management Services Ltd - is a consulting firm operating primarily in Canada for the last sixteen years. The company employs between five and sixteen staff and is managed by two Registered Professional Foresters both of whom worked in Mozambique for two years. The company is well respected for its work in certification, technical audits ecosystem based management planning, policy development, community-based forestry work and training and facilitation. They are working with us on a GIS mapping project in Cross River State.

[The Nappan Project](#) - in Nova Scotia is a community non-profit organization dedicated to the development and demonstration of environmentally friendly sustainable living skills and technology. It has a mission to contribute toward the development of a more sustainable global society.

[Silva Forest Foundation](#) - is a non-profit organization formed in 1992 and based in BC. SFF carries out research and promotes ecosystem-based forest practices with the aim of assisting all parts of society in understanding ecosystem-based management of forests in practical ways that can be readily applied in varying local situations. They are working on a community mapping workshop for the Nigeria project.

School Bus Set For Sierra Leone

By Chrisa Hoicka

One of the more prominent features of One Sky's backyard is a school bus laden with school and office supplies, waiting to be shipped to Sierra Leone.

One Sky has been working in partnership with Friends of the Earth Sierra Leone (FOESL) for over 2 years, and sending the school bus is a joint initiative.

In order to get to school everyday, many of the students and staff of Sengbeh Pieh school in Sierra Leone must walk for up to 2 hours, which can add to fatigue and ill-health, or ride on the back of sand trucks, which can be dangerous. This prompted the principal of Sengbeh Pieh to request a bus to transport staff and students in order to improve punctuality, alleviate body weakness and reduce rates of illiteracy by increasing the attendance standards of the school. FOESL has also built an Eco-Centre near the school and needs transportation for its staff and trainees in activities such as organic agriculture, gara dyeing and pedal-powered tile-making.

Former youth intern Jud Jones started working on the project a year ago, and was successful in purchasing a school bus from Bulkey Valley School District No. 54 for a relatively low price. Smithers and surrounding communities have since donated enough bikes, and school and office supplies to practically fill the bus, as anyone who has recently visited can see!

The bus will be at the Kispiox music festival where youth will paint one side of the bus with a message of solidarity promoting education, peace and environmental sustainability. When the bus arrives in Sierra Leone, the other half of the bus will be painted by students of Sengbeh Pieh completing a visual symbol of cooperation between these two far-apart communities.

In early August, the bus will depart from Smithers with Jud and new intern Jen Thompson at the helm, and make its way to Halifax, with a brief stop in Toronto to aid in the *Blood Diamonds* campaign action. From Halifax, we hope it will survive the lonely, month long voyage to Antwerp and then Sierra Leone, where it will be happily received by FOESL and Sengbeh Pieh students and staff.

One Sky is grateful to Atlantic Container Line for generously providing a 50% discount in shipping costs of the bus to Sierra Leone. The cost of shipping the bus is still in the order of \$9,000. While we have received many donations of supplies, we would gladly accept monetary donations to help with the bus shipment.

Get Involved in One Sky!

Get involved through one of the following:

Membership: To become a member of One Sky and receive our bi-annual newsletter, send \$10 to One Sky at the address below.

Donations: One Sky relies on the support of funders and individual donations. Our programmes are sustained from the support of many generous donations of money, resources and time. If you support our work and would like to make a donation, please send a cheque to the One Sky address below.

Volunteering: Locally, One Sky could use volunteers to help with fundraising events, working on our Conflict Diamonds campaign, helping with our new office space, assisting with the website, or sharing your skills in training sessions for our interns. Others can volunteer by coordinating a fundraising event in their area or pitch creative ideas on how to share your skills. For more information, please contact us at:

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Reflections from an Intern

By Jud Jones

Oil. Rice. Flies. Fish.
Music. Tiles. Smiles. Plastic dish.
Cold water rinse. Poda poda squish.
Two block bread. Fried egg mayonnaise.
Stepping from my front gate, I'm an actress
on stage,
"Hey white girl!" "Yo black boy!"
A 5 minute walk becomes an epic adventure
in time management.

Being a self-proclaimed luddite and small town nature lover, it seems rather absurd to travel umpteen kilometers all the way to the mysterious continent of Africa to learn that city living is actually kind of fun. Cell phones are pretty damn convenient. A laptop computer will fit easily into my backpack, replacing formerly essential items like underwear and a toothbrush. Living as an intern in Freetown, Sierra Leone provided these revelations to my disbelieving mind. Previously, I had also failed to fully appreciate the hysterical sensation of personally providing meals to a feasting creature. The thrill was soon fulfilled when a maggot was squeezed in slippery projectile fashion from my inner arm. Nor did I know that a people, caught in the booby-trapped existence of the constantly challenging conditions that is Salonian life, could somehow pull out mysterious reserves of perseverance that kicked my inspirational ass.

Don't go to Sierra Leone to sit around tanning on a white sandy beach while watching the playful fronds of a palm tree, although an unconscious fringe benefit. Go because the volatility of your emotions will experience a complete kaleidoscopic range, each and every day. Go because you want the learning curve to be huge. Go because tile making and appropriate technology are but a few of the hundred aspects that give the ultimate privilege of experiencing the raw truth

"A Day in the Life of a Child in Sierra Leone"

By Natalie Charlton and Janet Sondresen

Summer of 2003 has once again brought Janet and Natalie together in Smithers to initiate the process of compiling a teaching package for educators in Saskatchewan and British Columbia. Due to our collective experience teaching in the public education system we became aware of the lack of up-to-date resources available on West Africa, and in particular Sierra Leone, for the prescribed Social Studies curricula. Through the encouragement of One Sky we applied for and were granted a contract from the Global Classroom Initiative at CIDA to create a resource package for our colleagues in our respective provinces. We are excited by this opportunity to provide Grade 6 educators with a resource that will help create awareness and a global perspective on three topics (basic human needs, human rights, and the environment).

Our passion for this project stems from our desire to provide a quality teaching package for Canadian educators regarding the current issues facing a Sierra Leone child. We believe that our past experience working on "Sierra Leone and the Environment –A Handbook for Environmental Educators" has given us the foundation to launch a second successful project. In addition, Janet's participation in One Sky's educational delegation in 2001 to Freetown has allowed her to network with the teachers at Hamilton School. Once again we look forward to the rewards of this bilateral, global educators partnership.



Jud Jones commuting in the back of a sandtruck in Sierra Leone.

Blood Diamonds Campaign

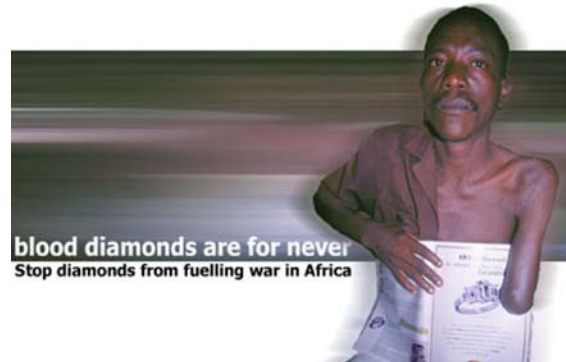
By Nikki Skuce

From working in Sierra Leone and making the links between human security and the environment, One Sky launched its *Blood Diamonds are for Never* campaign on Valentine's Day this year. Sierra Leone is just one of the countries ravaged for years by war fuelled by the lucrative value of diamonds. The international response to conflict diamonds is the Kimberley Process - a joint effort between the diamond industry, governments and civil society that aims to end the trade in 'dirty diamonds' through an international certification system. However, without regular, independent monitoring in the Kimberley Process, the diamond industry faces a credibility gap as it can not provide consumers with assurances that the diamonds they're buying have not been mined with blood and terror.

Part of our larger campaign is the *Canadian Jewellers for Conflict-free Diamonds* initiative that One Sky is working on in collaboration with Amnesty International Canada and Partnership Africa Canada. The initiative calls on retailers to take action to create a credible system that will allow them to assure consumers the diamonds they are buying are conflict-free. Canadian Jewellers who have committed to the campaign action are listed on our website (www.onesky.ca/diamonds/jewellers.html).

Campaign Coordinator Kristin Patten organized a panel in June at the "Sustainable Development in the Diamond Mining Sector" conference hosted by Environment Canada in Ottawa. Kristin coordinated and facilitated a well-attended discussion entitled "Conflict Diamonds and the Kimberley Process" with panelists David Viveash from the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Ian Smillie from Partnership Africa Canada, and Bruce Boyd from Natural Resources Canada. With the diamond industry growing exponentially in the Northwest Territories, Canada is projected to have as much as 15% of the trade by 2010. All Canadian-mined diamonds leave Canada even though some are then re-imported for cutting and polishing here. Without an effective monitoring system, conflict diamonds can enter the supply chain and be passed off as Canadian. Currently, there are no guarantees that a diamond is truly Canadian or conflict-free once it sits on the retail shelves. The panel aimed to raise awareness about the issue, and to encourage industry and government to support independent monitoring in the Kimberley Process.

Our next upcoming campaign event will be at the World Jewellery Expo being held in Toronto from August 10-12. This trade show will be attended by hundreds of jewellers and industry representatives. Amnesty and One Sky are collaborating to try to get more jewellers on board and to inform and engage consumers about the issue of conflict diamonds. If you would like to join in the public action, contact Jen Thompson (jt@onesky.ca) for more information.



For more information about our campaign, please visit our website at: www.onesky.ca/diamonds/index.html

Annual General Assembly

By Sandra Thomson

One Sky Announcements!

The One Sky AGA, or "Annual General Adventure" was a dynamic coming together of minds and experiences from all corners of the world. Looking around the room, it was clear that One Sky has grown - from the number of people involved to the number of creative ideas put forward. Ginny, Jud, Chris and Lori had just stepped off the plane only a few days before from working in Sierra Leone and Nigeria. Adding to the high energy atmosphere at the strawbale house were three new interns - Chrisa, JT and Mali. The first day of program presentations set the context for our strategic planning, identifying our current strengths, challenges, and opportunities. On the second day we focussed on strategic planning and lots of lively discussion ensued. A great deal of energy was spent on clearly defining our philosophical approach and how to create a ripple effect that will affect change within our organization and with our various partners in Canada and overseas. The themes and threads that run through all of our programs are human security and the environment, organizational effectiveness, strengthening the social justice and environmental movement through networking, building capacity, modeling sustainability at a local level, fostering global citizenship and encouraging diversity within the organization. The need to be working at a local level was considered a key priority and the purchase of the One Sky building provides a unique opportunity to demonstrate sustainable alternatives. Integrating our various international programs with our domestic and local public outreach programs was also identified as a priority. It was a highly productive meeting and everyone is looking forward to implementing our ideas over the coming year!



One Sky crew at the AGA in June, 2003.

One Sky will be building a pedal-powered smoothie maker for the store front of its new sustainable office in Smithers. One Sky volunteer Marcus Abram and Appropriate Technology Assistant Chrisa Hoicka will be working on it at the beginning of August.

One Sky Goods and Services Auction! The second annual goods and services auction will be held at One Sky's office on September 12th. For more information on attending or making donations, please contact Mali at mali@onesky.ca or the One Sky office at 250-877-6030.

Congratulations to Nigerian partners Sylvanus of DIN and Tony Okpokam of Cercopan who were selected to attend and present their papers at the World Forestry Congress in September in Quebec City, Canada. Former One Sky intern Chris Hunter was also selected by the Canadian Environmental Network to attend the Congress.

Overseas staff Ginny Stratton is working in Sierra Leone on developing a micro-credit program for 8 women's groups along with Friends of the Earth Sierra Leone. For more information or to make donations specifically to this program, please contact Ginny at ginny@onesky.ca.

Looking for a pen pal? One Sky has received requests from Sierra Leoneans working on our projects or in the communities we're in to match them with a pen pal. We have 8 letters at the office awaiting keen Canadians interested in some old-fashioned letter writing and intercultural sharing. Please contact Nikki for more information at nikki@onesky.ca or 250-877-6030.

One Sky is planning a Speaker's Tour across Canada in March 2004 to raise public awareness around the issue of conflict diamonds. We are currently looking for organizations interested in hosting the tour. Contact JT on how to get involved at jt@onesky.ca.

