

# I saw God at work in Liberia

## Answering the call

In April 2007 I visited Liberia on behalf of the Association of Christian Teachers (ACT) and the Senior Volunteer Network (SVN). Each organisation had received a request for help from the Association of Christian Schools of Liberia (ACSOL).

Back in November 2006 Isaac Wheigar, founder and Executive Director of ACSOL, had attended ACT's annual (ACT Day) conference in London. There he met with the Directors of SVN to discuss a partnership that would help realise ACSOL's God-breathed vision for a strategic programme of Christian teacher training in Liberia. Five months later my flight touched down in Monrovia and I began an incredible 11 days of fact-finding and fellowship. Various school visits and face-to-face meetings allowed me to gather the detailed information I required to properly brief the full ACT-SVN team before planning our work in Liberia in October 2007.

To be honest, Liberia is not the easiest place to get to. In fact, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advises British citizens not to visit this small West African country at all. The task of booking flights, arranging travel insurance and getting a visa was far more difficult than for any other trip I have done – if I had not been sure of my calling I might well have given up. But when I arrived in Liberia my visit turned out to be more successful than I could have ever dreamed. Praise God!



Children show off their smart school uniforms



John Hallett, VSO Director

## Seeing the need

Two civil wars – fought in quick succession between 1989 and 2003 – destroyed most of the country's infrastructure. In 2007, 40% of Liberians do not have access to clean safe water; 75% do not have access to adequate sanitation; 40% of children under five suffer from stunting as a result of malnutrition; 15% of children die before reaching their first birthday.

On its website, Unicef states: 'Armed conflict, HIV/AIDS and other diseases have orphaned an estimated 230,000 children. Half a million children do not attend school. Two-thirds of students are being taught by unqualified teachers. Girls' enrolment rates lag far behind those for boys.'

There are no landline telephones and there is no public transport. The damage done during the fighting is still evident in the buildings; in the lack of continuous electricity supply; and, more subtly, in the eyes of the traumatised children. The presence of the UN military peacekeeping force is evident in the road blocks and military vehicles, but there was no time when I felt that there was any danger of fighting restarting.

## Working in partnership

Christian schools are operating, despite the difficulties, and crying out for help. Whilst I was there, I was able to lead seminars on Christian Leadership in schools. I also worked with the leaders of ACSOL to produce a three-year plan for in-service teacher training. ACSOL is looking to ACT and



Half a million Liberian children do not attend school

SVN to partner it in this work until enough home-grown Liberian trainers have been trained. Thereafter, ACSOL should be in position to provide in-service training without the need for non-Liberian personnel. The first stage involves ACT-SVN volunteers running three in-service training courses in October 2007. The first is for school principals; the second is for primary school teachers; and the third is designed to train up the future in-service trainers. We are currently looking for volunteers to form the team to provide this training.

Whilst in Liberia, I was able to do two radio broadcasts and have long meetings with Christian leaders, with the President of the Christian University and with the Minister of Education. God was clearly at work.

I said goodbye to Isaac and his colleagues and we thanked God for a worthwhile visit. Then I went to the airport to fly home. However, when my plane home didn't call at the airport because of bad weather – but flew on to London Gatwick without the 40 of us who had seats booked – I found myself waiting two whole days for the next plane to stop and pick me up!



Isaac Wheigar,  
ACSOL Executive Director

## An open invitation

There is a strong will amongst Christians to repair the shattered fabric of the nation and, by so doing, to rebuild a sense of hope in the hearts of its people. ACSOL and the Liberian Government share the view that the most strategic place to start is by training the teachers who work with the youngest children in primary schools. This is where ACT and SVN come in. As Christian educators in the UK, we have been invited to work in partnership with our Christian sisters and brothers in Liberia to help rebuild their country. Please believe me when I say that these kinds of opportunities do not come along very often. Receiving such an invitation is a real privilege; we must not ignore it.

■ John Hallett

## Information


Anyone interested in playing a part in this joint ACT-ACSOL-SVN enterprise, and particularly in joining the team going to Liberia in October 2007, should contact John Hallett at [calebsnet@aol.com](mailto:calebsnet@aol.com) or phone 01623 793863.

Anyone interested in contributing financially towards this project should send cheques (payable to 'ACT') to: ACT Overseas Fund, Association of Christian Teachers, 94a London Road, St Albans, Herts AL1 1NX

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