



May 5, 2007: The Next Trip Is on the Horizon

We bought our plane tickets!!

Sudy and Chris will leave June 7 to return July 28, I will leave June 14 to return June 29. Chris and Sudy will meet with officials, look for office space, and complete the paperwork for registering with the Sierra Leonean government as an NGO. Then, when I arrive, we'll head upcountry.

The Paramount Chief of the Jawi Chiefdom, Musa Ngomboklah Kallon, has issued a letter of invitation that we will send in with our visa applications. We got pictures made and our passports updated, so with the tickets in hand, we are ready for this step.

Our friends in Sierra Leone are almost as excited as we are. They have heard so many promises, they hesitated to hope we would really return – and now they can believe it! This was one reason we sent Jitta Rogers, our Executive Assistant, from Freetown to Pelli, to talk with them monthly – to hear more about what they want and need, to tell them what we need and want, and to reassure them that we are indeed coming back.

We wanted to allow Jitta free choice to work with Midwives on Missions of Service (MOMS), without pressure. So, although we knew she was a great find, we gave her room to ponder the issues and reach her own decision. At its last meeting, MOMS Board of Directors voted to hire Jitta as the Executive Assistant for Sierra Leone. Jitta is tri-lingual (Mende, Krio, English), a product of a culinary arts school, intelligent, efficient, and people-savvy.

More women of Jawi Chiefdom have heard about us and our program, and 10-15 more want to join the class. We have to consider very carefully the practicalities of working with up to 70 women. In addition to conducting hands-on training with so many people in a very simple environment, we have to consider whether we can raise enough money to buy supplies, teaching materials, and the starter kits for the birth attendants. Yet, they are so desperate and eager to learn, we must consider carefully before turning anyone away.

This is such a contrast to our experience in the United States. Few are so eager to learn that they would walk miles daily, giving up income, and sacrificing their family time to learn. I don't see people eager to try new ways, but they hesitate, wondering about the cost to their ego or status if they admit they do not know something. Working with the Sierra Leonean women has challenges, certainly, but watching the glow on their faces provides enormous satisfaction – and a good lesson in humility.

We have conducted a task analysis and created a curriculum map for two levels of training: Advanced Traditional Birth Attendant (ATBA) and Direct-Entry Midwife (DEM). We will take all current TBAs through the ATBA program first, then take a group of ATBA graduates into the DEM program. We will then train some of the DEMs to be trainers, and train likely candidates to be program managers.

We anticipate the ATBA training will last 4-6 months, plus an internship and the DEM training will take 6-8 more months, plus internship. Because we have little experience in teaching illiterate women, we are not clear how much repetition and reiteration they will need. We are



also experimenting with job aids that do not require reading. We'll create books where they can draw what they are learning or color sketches we provide.

We want to take some DVDs to use as visual aids, of anatomy, neonatal resuscitation techniques, suturing skills, and other things. We found a source for rebuilt computers (thank you, Diane Dailey – see below!) and are getting Jitta a laptop, which will save her hours in the internet cafe, and can use it to show the programs.

After we pilot some of the materials this trip, we will know much more about what works and what doesn't work. Then we can recruit a rotating schedule of midwife trainers and program managers, plan the program, and launch. Wow.

We are in the process of updating our web site. We have actually purchased a spot with a different host and are working on making a smooth transition to the new site, with much better facilities for the Marketplace, much more information, and much easier navigation.

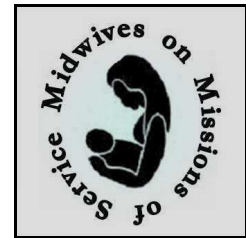
Until we upload the new site, you can see some pictures here: http://www.mcm-plr.com/files/SL_Seeing_is_Believing.pdf. Note well the picture of the highway between Kenema and Kailahun - we'll be driving part of it again in less than two months!

Since my last note, MOMS Board welcomed a new member, which is especially exciting for me. When I took the contract with WellsFargo last fall, I met a new colleague. Diane Dailey is a highly skilled instructional designer and technical writer. In addition to competence (one of my key criteria), she has good people-sense and a great sense of humor. She was captivated by the possibilities of MOMS and the ability to do tangible, specific good work. Before coming on the Board, she crocheted dozens of caps for newborns and did some really good research on water purification systems. Since coming on the Board, she has agreed to be the Secretary, and is working her way through MOMS' history and organization to understand the issues better. Her son is a computer hardware specialist and rebuilds laptops!! We gave him the specs for what Jitta needs.

We have found both a water purification "tool" and a source of solar generation that we want to take with us on this trip. The SteriPen Traveler with solar charger sterilizes water using UV. It is quick and effective, and the solar charger keeps its batteries full. It weighs about 4 ounces, plus the combination carry/case charger. It costs about \$175 each, and will eliminate the need for the village to ship in bottled water for us, saving hundreds of dollars and days of time. We want a couple of these, for when we travel separately.

In addition, we like the Brunton SolarRoll 14w charger, which can travel in a flip chart pad tube, as a 3" diameter roll. Unrolled, it is about 12" by 57" and weighs a pound! It will run a laptop, cell phones and cameras. I found some on ebay for under \$400. With a few crank and solar lanterns and flashlights, we will not need to run the generator at all.

It is important to us to not be burdensome on the village or the country. We do want them to support the work, therefore we ask them to provide housing and food for us. Beyond that, however, we don't want to drain them of their few precious resources or leave behind toxic crud. I was reminded not long ago that their per capita income is \$209 per year, compared to



\$41,000 in the United States. The last thing they need is a pile of used batteries and a stinky generator running all evening, especially with fuel costing about \$5 per liter – not gallon.

To help us manage gifts, we set up two Amazon wish lists - one for MOMS clinic in Ashland, and the other for the Sierra Leone project. Here is the link, I hope. If it doesn't work, search the Wish List area for MOMS, you'll find both lists.

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/2FZ3ZSW20SD5B/103-0933411-4422230>

Many of you have heard that Chris's father died recently. Please pray for the repose of the soul of Donnell Robert Kuntz.

As always, we love hearing from you with suggestions and other support. Feel free to email or call....

Trish

May 30, 2007 Getting Ready for Salone

Hello all...

We are working through our lists in preparation for traveling. Chris and Sudy leave June 7, while I leave June 14. The time is barreling toward us. With your donations, we have supplies like the water sanitizing "pens" and the solar panel, some books and supplies for the women who are our students, baby clothes and toiletries for Mama/Baby packets, etc. We also have wonderful start on our master library with copies of Anne Frye's Holistic Midwifery.

Another wonderful gift is a laptop, named Lilly (with 3 Ls), which we will give Jitta, our in-country exec assistant. Now, she must go to an internet cafe and rent the use of a computer 2 or 3 times per week to do her work and to communicate with us. With the laptop, she can do her routine work from home, and just take the laptop with her to the cafe for our weekly Instant Message chats.

In addition, we are preparing on the personal front. I've ordered some rain boots and shoes good for walking through the rainforest on muddy trails in the heat. Jitta let me know very clearly that my Birkenstocks were not going to work this trip. When I walked out from Pellie in my Birks, I gouged out a divot in one of my toes, which caused Jitta much concern. Actually it did take over a month to heal – and it hurt, so I don't want a repeat of that! We've started taking the doxycycline for malaria prevention.

We learned that DHL will ship a 55-pound box for \$310, with about 5-6 days shipping time. As shipping a letter or a package up to 4 pounds costs \$90, this seems like a great deal to us. We're going to quickly pack a couple of boxes and send them, so they arrive while we are still in Freetown. This will let us bring a little more of our own stuff – last time I had only three changes of clothes and one extra pair of shoes. Given we'll be there in rainy season this time,



we are likely to need a little more. Plus we want to bring some stuff to leave there – like scrubs, sheets, pillows, lanterns, etc., that we'll need for the longer term.

We're doing a lot of research to find ways to live lightly while there – we are committed to avoiding use of that generator. We've found some solar lanterns to use in the evenings while socializing, preparing for the next day, and working a Sudoku puzzle or two while winding down.

Jitta tells us that the people in Pellie are beside themselves with excitement. They built 3 huts for us to teach in, so we can have breakout groups, etc. (class size is 52!), and a "barrie" which will hold the whole group. We're buying tarps to cover the roofs, which are made of thatch, and hang down the sides a bit to keep out the rain. We've been told that the eastern province gets about 100 inches of rain a year.

We have a waiting list of 15 women for the next cohort – before we have even piloted this one! The Jawie Chiefdom has about 40,000 people, and no doctor. A few health outposts are staffed by workers like our beloved Sulaimon Koruma, who is a Dispenser (he was trained during the war as a medic and worked with some of the UN forces), or other workers who are the equivalent of medics or LVNs, perhaps. We hope to train an Advanced Traditional Birth Attendant in every village, and one or two Direct-Entry Midwives for each health outpost. So while we are almost overwhelmed by the response of the women, their services are badly needed – fast. We will work carefully to train them well; then on to the next Chiefdom.

The Paramount Chief wrote in his letter of invitation:

"...I reassure you, your Government and your relatives as a whole a peaceful and safety stay in my Chiefdom and Sierra Leone.... I am looking forward to seeing you back home (Kokoru/Peli) with open hands, we are all ready to receive you and to learn from you (those wonderful skill of yours). Once more, may I thank you very much for all you have done, and to say that your performances to my people as an indelible mark on my heart...." It is signed, "Your dear Comrade, Musa Ngombuklah Kallon II (Paramount Chief)."

Several of you have seen "Blood Diamond", read Ishmael Beah's book called "A Long Way Gone", or seen some of the documentaries about the civil war and the diamond fields of Sierra Leone. While we are in the Eastern Province, between the diamond fields and the Liberian border, we believe that we are reasonably safe. Nothing is ever certain, and West Africa is volatile. However, the Paramount Chief has made very clear that he holds the people of Pellie accountable for our safety.

We try to keep these things in perspective – I have had a knife drawn on me while I stood outside the AAA building in San Francisco, and the last time I got hit was in the ER of St. Luke's hospital by a terrified patient. The Sierra Leoneans appreciate what we are doing and are motivated to support our efforts; they see our work as making the difference between life and death for their women and children. And we will make that difference, with your help.

We are planning the curriculae, and thinking about how to administer them. This trip will give us more insight into the needs of program management as well as providing information about the learners' responses to the classes we present. In implementing the program, we'll consider



selection criteria for the learners, management of the supply lines between the villages and Freetown, communication among team members, housing, length of stay of volunteers, visits by other stakeholders, and so on. Managing the volunteer staff (midwife/trainers and program managers) will require extensive orientation and training. In addition, we still have much to learn about our learner population, how to conduct evaluations of the effectiveness of learning (Levels 2-3 for you learning geeks), what kinds of job aids are most effective, and so on.

So much to do.

Trish

June 12, 2007: First Report from Chris!

Dear MOMS' Family:

Here is a message from Chris to MOMS' Board. I deleted some personal stuff, but you can tell how happy, excited, and relieved she is to be in Freetown at last. The flight from London was uneventful. I did get an urgent message earlier, asking me to bring a new battery for Sudy's laptop. So that will replace two mama/baby packs and a pair of shoes in my suitcase.

This was Sudy's first time to see London, so that part of it was a gift for her and for Chris. We had talked before about traveling so we had a day or two in London. Yes, to sight-see, but also to manage the time change a bit, before facing the culture change. The flight to Freetown is about 6 hours from London.

Jitta's idea of getting a house is a good one. We need some kind of office space to register as an NGO. And a house will solve several other problems as well. We are concerned that Jitta's housing is inadequate, and she can't have her daughter with her there. And we need storage space as we begin to ship more supplies. Hotelling for volunteers transitioning in and out of country will become increasingly important and expensive.

We continue to marvel at Jitta's resourcefulness. She is the consummate exec assistant: she anticipates problems, finds creative solutions, and works her network of contacts amazingly well. She also has a great sense of humor – I can almost hear her squeal with laughter.

I continue to marvel at how few of the things I want to take will actually fit into the weight limit. I packed a box and my jumbo suitcase (and will add the battery) over the weekend, and my backpack is almost ready. I have also packed a couple of bins full of items to send later.

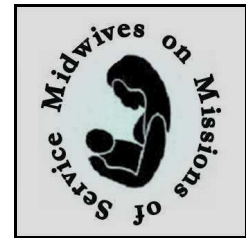
And my step-son just emailed me to say our basement is flooded. Please pray for our house, and a good, cheap plumber. And peace of mind.

Trish

----- Forwarded Message -----

From: Mary Christie McManus <mcm4@pacbell.net>

Midwives on Missions of Service
Journal: Trip 2 to Sierra Leone, June 2007



Sent: Tuesday, June 12, 2007 4:04:17 AM
Subject: We arrived!

Dear MOMS family,

Well, Sudy and I finally arrived last night in Freetown. We missed our connecting flight from London to Freetown on Friday because the airline lost Sudy's tubs full of medical supplies, books, teaching materials, and her clothes. We finally retrieved them Sunday, then set off to London for a day of sightseeing.

The high point of that trip was Evensong at Westminster Abbey on Sunday afternoon. The choir was angelic (nothing like little soprano boys!), and the preacher was a woman priest and head of social ministries from Durham. Part of the collection went for refugees in Uganda and somewhere else in Africa.

When we finally arrived, there was a man with a sign with our names, and we were whisked through immigration, no problem. There also was a representative of MOHS at the airport. We got a good van for the ferry – just us. Mr. Smith met us at the ferry as well. He is helping us get our NGO registration here.

The Minister of Health has been replaced! [We later learned this wasn't true.] The whole senior staff of MOHS are up country on some malaria project crisis, so we will not be able to meet with them till next week. However, we are in the process of looking at renting a house here in Freetown to be our office and guest house when our people are here. Jitta would live there and could have her daughter there as well. The rent for a year is about the same as hotel for 3 people for two-three weeks. So, it is a very good deal and gives us a permanent presence in the city.

We talked to the Chief last night on the phone. Dr. Karimu is also out of town, but will arrange our transport next week out to the village. Keep us in your thoughts and prayers. All is well.

C

June 16, 2007 I'm Safe!

Hi there

I arrived safely and on time, meeting all planes and stuff without having to run much, just walk briskly! The United flight into London was actually early, so I was able to make the transfer from Heathrow to Gatwick.

Then when I arrived in Freetown, another one of Jitta's many friends, who happens to work in the Customs department, met me with a sign and whisked me through Immigration and Customs with a wave of his hand. Lovely.

Jitta and Chris were at the barricades waiting impatiently, and yet another friend of Jitta had a car waiting to take us to the Ferry. We got caught in traffic and were sure to miss the ferry, so



Jitta got out of the car and disappeared up the line. Soon she returned saying, I think we should transfer cars. She had discovered a cousin, a SL soldier, driving a Humvee toward the ferry. He agreeably took us in and off we went, jumping to the front of the line. We got to the hotel by about 10.00 pm. As I had slept little during my travel, I was delighted to see the shower and the bed and tried out both promptly.

This hotel costs less than the guest house where we stayed last time, and has large, reasonably clean rooms, a decent private bath, a swimming pool, a restaurant on site, and this business center – in which I am sitting, writing this email. We took a swim earlier, which helped mightily with the jet lag recovery process.

Today, we picked up our boxes from DHL, and checked out a couple of houses which we might rent as our home base here. It would serve as a guest house and store room as well as home for Jitta and her daughter Alice. The best choice has a small storefront facing the street, which we might be able to use to dispense condoms, or as a clinic or childbirth education site, or something. We are just exploring possibilities. The house proper needs some work and is very dirty. But, in addition to the storefront (about 12 x 16, perhaps - it had no light), it has 4 bedrooms, indoor and outdoor kitchens, 2 baths, a dining room, a parlor, a storeroom, two verandas and a garage, so it is quite roomy. It is located in the "Congo Cross" area of Freetown, which is respectable and convenient. The asking pricing is \$5,000 US per year, but Jitta says that is too much, and is in negotiations with the poor owner. He's never met the likes of her, and he will not emerge unchanged. As she told him, "I may be small, but I mean business!" We also looked at a beautiful, large flat in another area, but the logistics of the place were problematic.

We'll be heading upcountry on Monday, we think. Jitta has two guys lined up, Plan A and Plan B, with 4-wheel drive vehicles. I hope we don't stop for porcupine.

That's about it for now. I just wanted y'all to know I was safe.

Trish

June 29 I'm Back in Freetown!

I arrived in Freetown yesterday, accompanied by Chris and Jitta. My plane for London leaves tonight, I have a tight timeline for transfer from Gatwick to Heathrow, then should arrive San Francisco at 10:50 Saturday morning. Good Lord willing and the crick don't rise.

Our time in Pellie was wonderful. The folks were thrilled that we returned, and offered many celebrations. We began teaching on Monday, with a class of 62 people. We had planned on having 55, so we were short on some items, but we're finding creative ways of making do. We will have to send another box with 7 sets of instruments, birth bags, and scrub tops.

We discovered that three children had been given our names: Patricia Jebbeh, Christie Sallay, and Sudy Sattah. So we had naming celebrations and will give small gifts to our god-



daughters. We have to be careful or every female child born in Jawie Chiefdom over the next 5 years will have our names! The appropriate gift is 20,000 leones – the exchange is 3000 leones per dollar, so about 7 \$ US. (This is a country where the per capita income is about 225 \$ US per year, remember.)

Sallay and Sattah went with the Paramount Chief and Chief Dispenser Sulaiman Koroma to the District Medical Officer in Kailahun. We have the freedom to work with Kailahun District, and the DMO will handle Freetown. The Ministry of Health and Sanitation pretty much told us that they would like our money but not our help. Obviously, this wouldn't do, thus the focus on working on the district level – which is actually more in accord with our original plans. The Paramount Chief is whole-hearted in his support, as are the village chiefs, the Dispenser (Sulaiman), the Maternal/Child Health Aid (Veronica Foday) and the people of the chiefdom. Well, that is about all for now. I just wanted you to know that all is very good, indeed, and I will be in the US soon.

As soon as I get over the jet lag, I will post some pictures and give you more information. Feel free to ask questions, and I will answer them as soon and as well as I can.

Take care

Mamie Jebbeh

Trish

July 1, 2007 I'm home safely from Sierra Leone

Hello all

I arrived in San Francisco this morning about 10:30 – almost 24 hours late. But I am safe, and bless the hearts of United Airlines staff people who were very kind. I spent last night in Chicago in a suite at the Sheraton Hotel – a long, hot shower and a few hours in a soft bed with lots of pillows were delightful.

The Freetown Airport runs on batteries, which were having problems. So we stood in the dark (Chris and Jitta stayed with me until the last ferry back to town) for hours; my plane finally taking off about 3 hours late. Jitta's friend, Mr. Sahr, who had eased my way into the country, also walked me through the security and departure process, so that was very painless. The delay in Freetown created the inevitable domino effect, resulting in my trying to get a flight out of London on standby. I got on a flight to Chicago on the fourth try; which was also late, so I missed the connection to San Francisco. Thanks to the mercy of a United Airlines agent, I spent six hours in a suite at the Sheraton, one of those precious hours in the shower

Leaving Sierra Leone and Chris was not at all painless. When I left Pellie on Wednesday night, I was surprised at the amount of tears from these fairly stoic women. I was very touched at



seeing tears in the eyes of Sulaiman Koroma, the Chief Dispenser. Sulaiman is becoming a very good friend to us all, professionally and personally. Then at the airport, saying goodbye to Jitta was very difficult; I can still hear her saying, "Oh, Mama Jebbeh, please come back to us." And Chris and I have never been separated this long in the 12 years we've been together. So, I feel very sad.

Clearly, though, MOMS is having an effect in the Jawie Chiefdom. The 62 women who are attending our classes attend a total of several hundred babies each year. We don't have good numbers of the mortality rate – but the women themselves have shared their own experiences of giving birth, and the pattern is grim. Of the women I interviewed, every one had lost at least one child at birth, and most had lost 2 or 3 by the time the child was a year old. Can you imagine the grief?

In the three days of training I participated in, we taught basic reproductive anatomy and physiology, calculating gestational age, basic fetal development, identifying higher-risk pregnancies, and fundamental information about their role as part of a maternal care team. We had feedback from the women, our translators, the husbands, and the chiefs, that the women learned more in those first few days than they ever had before.

One of our translators is Veronica Foday, the Maternal/Child Health Aide assigned to the area, and she was clear that she was learning a lot from us as she was translating.

The women were mesmerized by the charts we brought with us, and the model of a pelvis, and some texts. We took several copies of *A Book for Midwives*, which has many diagrams. These women (though only 6 of the 62 can read or write any language) pored over the books and charts on their lunches and breaks, and stayed after class to ask questions.

As the Ministry of Health requires us to use a "medical" person to translate, Jitta is now free to sit in the class as a student, which thrills her. One of the reasons she was interested in working with us is an old desire to learn midwifery. This, as for many women, arose in part from her own experience in giving birth. We are using Veronica and Sulaiman to translate and while this may be a little slower in some ways than using Jitta, it is helping us work closer, which is a good thing. We are developing a real mutual admiration society.

We've begun thinking about our next trip, as well. We'll likely bring more midwives, to help with teaching and supervision. We will keep you updated on our plans as we develop them.

When I got home, I found that two of our dogs had fought. The loser needed a trip to the vet to repair two fairly deep wounds. They had become infected and part of the skin has become necrotic, so the repairs were difficult. I just talked with the vet, and may be able to pick him up tonight; we'll see. in any case, please pray for Kevin's healing.

I will update you with more information. I go back to work in the morning, but will try to go through the pictures on the memory card in the evenings. I'll post them and send you a link in a couple of days.

Many of you have sent notes – thank you so much. I'll respond after I take a nap and do my laundry. I've missed a lot of sleep since I left Pellie and need to catch up. And I have no clue

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what time it is – and am dealing with a 30-degree change in the weather! It was over 90 degrees, and rained buckets on most days. It rains about 120 inches per year in Sierra Leone. Take care – and thank you.
Trish

July 29 Chris is home and safe. Kaiiguoma!

Hello all MOMS Supporters!

Kaii-guo-ma is the best I can figure out how to spell the word that means "thanks be to God" in Mende.

Chris arrived last night about 8.45. She wanted snacks, sleep, and a shower. Now she has had all of those, she is feeling pretty good. The flight arrangements worked smoothly. She lost track of Sudy while going through customs in Philadelphia (they were in different lines and were taking different flights home), but assumes Sudy made her flight....

The trip was wonderful; the training overall went well, and she has some great stories we'll be sharing soon. Sulaimon Koroma and Veronica Foday have become great partners; and Mamie Lamin has continued exercising her great leadership.

The hard part was leaving Jitta and the people of Pellie.

Much work remains to improve and regularize the curriculum, so it works when being taught by different people in different sections of the district. We also need to fix the house in Congo Cross in Freetown.

But more about all that, later.

We're going out for brunch at the Clement Street Bar and Grill, one of our favorites.

Talk to you soon.

Trish

Hello all.

As you might recall, I arrived home from Sierra Leone safely at the end of June (after a hellacious trip). Chris and Sudy arrived home safely a month later. We found ourselves tired, exuberant, and thoughtful.

Thoughtful?



The Board of Directors has been mulling over a number of things that are of critical importance to MOMS –

- raising funds more effectively so that we can plan better;
- writing grants to have a bolus of money to help us with some higher-cost items;
- recruiting board members who are diligently committed to our mission;
- completing, revising and expanding the lesson plans we used in Sierra Leone;
- leveraging existing instructional assets; and
- about a zillion other things!!

One of those things has been the web site, at www.globalmidwives.org. This was sadly out of date and extremely hard to maintain. So we changed hosts and development tools, and recreated the site from scratch. We did a "soft launch" on September first, and have busily been incorporating feedback.

We wanted the site to provide tons of information in a way that was easy to understand, entertaining, and attractive. We've included lots of pictures of our projects and our people, to put real faces to our stories. You'll find information about our mission, programs, and people, and links to articles and other groups with similar goals. You can also read more about midwifery care, and why we confidently offer poor women midwifery care rather than medical care. You can read about the "Women of the World Online Art Show" (be sure to tell your artist friends about this chance for great exposure of their work). And we include lots of information about ways to support us.

So, please, please, go look at the site - www.globalmidwives.org – and send me feedback.

Exuberant?

The courses went very well.

Of 62 women who started the course, all finished the program – several with perfect attendance. Some husbands were disgruntled at the extended absences of their wives, but the women were clear that this was a commitment to themselves and to their communities. The elders of the villages were also supportive. All you trainers out there – can you imagine 100% completion rate for a 4-week program?

The pre-test we gave had discouraging results. Few did well, and most failed. Then the post-test results were a welcome contrast – most passed this more difficult test, with several getting over 90%! We were excited and relieved. We'd worked so hard to find effective ways to communicate complex information to women who were unschooled. We still have a lot to do – training like this is very slow, and we're looking for more effective methods.

Their lack of experience in learning was obvious. I taught a class in taking a client's history. I explained the important issues, listed key questions, and questioned them on their understanding. Using Chris, I demonstrated how to take a history (and Chris played the client who totally flummoxed the care-giver - thanks, Chris!). Naturally enough, I wanted to group to divide into pairs, and practice asking each other the interview questions.



Thunderation! Not one of the learners – including Veronica Foday, the Maternal/Child Health Aide who was translating for me – had ever heard of such a thing. In school, the teacher lectures – none of this breaking-up-into-dyads-to-practice stuff! After about 45 minutes, I finally got the group divided into pairs. And silence reigned. I learned later, that acting in skits is great because they are "acting", but practicing in pairs like this was too real, too risky, too intimate.

After another 45 minutes or so of working with this activity, I gathered the group. I explained that they were not just passive listeners in these classes – they were active learners, which meant practicing skills. I told them that we were going to do this again and again, and they would learn to learn and learn to practice skills. They were less than thrilled, and I went on to the next topic, about an hour behind schedule.

After Chris returned home, she told me how she conducted a similar activity a few days later (after I left). The women formed dyads quietly and practiced the skills. They became so excited about their learning that they asked to present what they learned. Sudy and Chris agreed, and spent more than a day watching the women demonstrate their new skills!

We're also excited about renting a house in Freetown.

This gives us a credible address, necessary for achieving NGO status and earning some respect as a stable organization. Many NGOs parachute in for one or two trips, but leasing space in a decent neighborhood shows our commitment. We know of one NGO who used a shabby address as a mail drop, and the Ministry of Health and Sanitation was clearly unhappy, so we wanted to avoid that. The house is in a safe neighborhood, and nearby are other NGOs.

The house will provide a home for Jitta and her little girl, Alice. It has four bedrooms, which we'll set up as dorms for volunteers transitioning in and out of the country (hotel rooms run about \$150 or so per night, plus meals). It includes a nice storage room for supplies. In addition, it has a storefront facing the street, which we can use as a classroom or clinic space, so we can serve the women of Freetown, as well. So, we have a year's worth of office space, housing for Jitta, housing for volunteers, storage space, and potential for other activities – all for less than two weeks at the hotel!

The house needs quite a bit of work, and we will go help Jitta (she can handle the work and the decorating just fine – it is the money part of it). We're figuring out the best time to "sneak" into the country without letting the village know we're there. If they know we didn't come out to see them, they'll be offended, but going out to Pellie adds at least a week to the trip – 4 days of travel plus 3 days of visiting.

As for Jitta, the Ministry of Health and Sanitation was concerned that Jitta lacked medical background, and deemed her unsuitable for translating for us in the classroom. Shortly after hearing this, she said she wanted to talk with us. She asked to be included in the course as a student – part of her interest in working with MOMS was a desire to learn midwifery. We cheerfully accepted her into the program, and she passed at over 90%, despite missing several days of class because her duties as our guide and coordinator. If you look on the web site, you can see pictures where her classmates have hoisted her onto their shoulders and were singing to

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her! When I left Sierra Leone the first time, I gave her a copy of "A Book for Midwives", which she had read from cover to cover, so was well-prepared for the course.

Congratulations, Jitta!

Looking forward...

We are looking at running another course in spring of next year. By then, we want to formalize the lesson plans to create an instructor guide, and create "advanced" classes for continuing education. With our goal of replacing ourselves, we need to make sure all our instructor guides are effective for various others to use. This will ensure consistent quality across sites and teachers, critical for real success. We also need to recruit and prepare volunteers. We have learned a lot from our other experiences in West Africa, and want to make sure we apply those learnings.

As always, please continue to send thoughts, prayers, and other good wishes our way. If you have time, ideas, or money lying around, please share!!

And don't forget to check out the web site: www.globalmidwives.org. We update it weekly....

Trish