



October 13, 2007

Hello everyone!

We have tickets to Freetown! Chris and I will make a quick trip, focused tightly on preparing our Sierra Leone headquarters for the team's trip in the Spring.

We leave on October 17th and return on the 26th. Travel time each way is a little over 24 hours, so we'll have just about a week for working.

Our intent is to create a flexible, welcoming place for our Executive Assistant to work and live, and for our volunteers as they arrive and depart. We also hope to make plans for the storefront space facing the street. Options include a classroom, clinic, or additional meeting or office space. In addition, the storage room needs to be ready for supplies as we begin sending them.

So many of you have offered ideas for raising funds, working effectively, making contacts, and so on. Thank you so very much. While we are here, we IM Jitta stories about you to pass on to the people. She, and they, are amazed at how much you care about them, so far away and so terribly poor. Over and over, they press us to convey their deep gratitude. They are very human - no "noble savage" nonsense here! - with fears, dreams, frustration, pettiness, and joy. They definitely are thrilled with your thoughts, prayers, and wishes. I'm looking forward to being back in country and will again tell them again of your concern and support.

Your gifts and prayers are saving lives and giving hope. We see it. On the web site, I try to be discreet with peoples' stories; but look at the faces in those pictures. Those are people who have seen death and destruction too closely. And they are the people you are helping.

Please keep on sending your thoughts and prayers for us as we travel. We need stamina and wisdom in just about equal parts.

Trish Ross and Chris McManus

November 12, 2007

Hello all

This is a quick note letting you all know we are home.

Traveling with British Airways was a significant improvement over the other airlines we've tried. The trip took about 22 hours each way between SFO and Freetown, which is the quickest yet, by a dozen hours. The planes were nicer with more legroom. Previous trips required at least a day of recuperation on each end of the journey. The savings of 2+ days of recuperation and a day travel time are well worth the \$500 extra per round trip.

We made significant progress on the house in Freetown. Jitta and her sister, Tiangay, had worked diligently to clean the place and hang curtains. We bought kitchen appliances, so no more cooking over coal, and a generator. The kitchen is now set with a supply of pots, pans, and dishware. With screens for the windows and fans, the house will cool off a bit at night. The generator also will run the lights in the house. We took some solar lights as well as crank



flashlights, and purchased candles, so we have lighting options. We ordered beds and parlor and dining room furniture. We also picked up some plastic chairs and a small table to set on the north verandah. Comium provides internet access for about \$45 per month, so we invested in that to save Jitta and us countless trips to the internet cafes. We figure we can run the generator for a couple of hours most nights, to power the fans, refrigerator (to keep Chris's medication cold), computer, and lights.

Each purchase required significant shopping effort, complete with negotiating prices and delivery. Some of my less favorite moments were spent in small, airless shops, sweat streaming from my face, while Jitta and the proprietor loudly discussed the merits and worth of the items. To balance that was the sheer delight of watching the fresh creamy paint transform the interior into a light, welcoming space. And the evenings on the verandah, eating lovingly prepared meals, and watching the most amazing lightening storms. Our neighbors are very neighborly, and we enjoyed watching the children play and getting to know them a bit. The place is becoming a home.

I was able to find the house on Google maps, which I think is very cool! Follow this link. <http://maps.google.com/maps?f=s&ie=UTF8&t=h&om=1&ll=8.482156,-13.258696&spn=0.002425,0.004978&z=18> Find the oval roundabout in the upper middle part of the map. Find the house just south of the roundabout, with the reddish roof. Follow that road south, about 8 lots. Our place has a light, rectangular roof (it is tin), with the ridge of the roof running east and west. There are some smaller buildings sharing its compound to the east. We are beginning to make plans for our Spring trip in February and March. We will assess how much our learners have retained and conduct some remediation. And we will teach a new class using regularized and updated materials. We are making progress, and our progress is making a difference!

Thank you for all your support - your prayers, good wishes, gifts, conversations. Those of you who listen to me talk about Sierra Leone give me an important outlet. Others give of your brainpower, skills, and money. You are making a difference in the lives of the people of Sierra Leone. As I tell stories about you to the folks there, they marvel at your caring and generosity. They constantly press us to give you their thanks. They know you are choosing to care and share with us and with them.

Warm Regards,

Trish Ross

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