

# *SSAAP Quarterly Newsletter*

## *Holiday Edition XXVII: Sierra Leone 2019*



*To my Mother, the great scholar and advocate of literacy ~ cultivator of SSAAP and all things philanthropic, reminding me to always keep my work clean, organized, and of pure intention. Merry Christmas, Mama.*



## Homecoming

*SSAAP's Focus: Spreading resources, around Africa, in the most potent and influential ways possible*



Sierra Leone, nestled in the deep heart of West Africa, formerly the seat of education in West Africa and hosting its first university around 1805, *Fourah Bay College*, is a land of great promise and fertility. Sierra Leone was once called ‘The Athens of West Africa’ as the nation, made of educated scholars and wisdom-keepers, valued knowledge the way the ancient Greeks did when they congregated in Athens. The Sierra Leoneans are strong and powerful people, and if SSAAP does nothing else than justice to how mighty a group of people they are, then our purpose here has been manifested.

We arrived in the middle of the night and our colleagues from SSAAP’s partner organization *Grace Children’s Foundation* met us at the airport, hollering with joy and made a scene in fact!, and we avoided the city driving directly to the small town of Port Loko: one of the two districts SSAAP works in in Sierra Leone. We drove through the dead of night and the dense, heavy darkness of the palm trees was surreal. Radiance, my daughter, nudged me and said: “Look, Mommy; the trees are smiling at us.”

We both felt elated to come back here – had not been back since April 2017 – and for the first time, I think for both Radiance and I, we realized it was Home. For days on end we skipped around on a cloud, still in disbelief by the joy we felt at coming Home.

This is not to say that Zambia or U.S.A. are not also Home to us; through our study of culture as well Radiance’s homeschool we have investigated what ‘Home’ means to us. It isn’t a physical place; it’s a place inside the heart. A place of true safety where the spirit is allowed to roam and fly free, where expression of mind, body and Soul are possible; a place where the food tastes good and the people’s

eyes are full of Love and kindness to receive us. This is America, this is Zambia; and we realize now, this is Sierra Leone.

SSAAP hadn't even been in Sierra Leone (the locals affectionately shorten to term it: 'Salone') for twenty-four hours when our colleagues from SSAAP's most successful local partnership, *Grace Children's Foundation*, took me to the water. There is water, literally, everywhere in this country. SSAAP's work here is to source it – to get the water clean enough for human consumption; unlike in Simwatachela, Zambia, we don't have to hunt it here. The water wells are relatively easy for us in Sierra Leone compared to Zambia. So, SSAAP's colleagues took me to the water and were laughing at me while I took the soil into my hand – here, the earth is red – and held it to my heart. I told them, quite honestly speaking: “You people think I have come here for you! And while I don't mind if you think this, I have come here for something much deeper even than the human element. I came here for earth as much as I came for you and for me. I need this Nature, this raw untamed earth and I sincerely feel it needs me. There is a deep need for Love of Mother Earth now, more than ever. I have noticed my level of happiness is exponentially higher when I live in places where Nature is right outside my door, when I don't have to search for it or plan for it or seek it out but rather, when it is right there, waiting for me, winking at me. I came back to Sierra Leone to be with the water and the trees and the soil and the sun – you people are just one piece of this whole equation.” ☺



The rainy season still lingers around until the end of October, then sometime after Halloween fades away again until after Sierra Leonean Independence: April 27<sup>th</sup>. In Sierra Leone, we have two seasons: excessive humidity with rain (late April to late October) and excessive humidity without rain (late October to late April).

Above, this is the view outside the front door of Joseph's house, where we are staying, just beside the Grace Children's Foundation Office in Port Loko. SSAAP will share its time here between the districts of Port Loko, Moyamba, Tonkolili and Kambia.





Some photos from around Joseph and Jemimah's house where we are staying in Port Loko: above left, Radiance and Favour play school together. Favour and Radiance have known one another since Radiance was four and Favour was three and so every time they meet again they play for hours and neither of them gets their school work or their chores done. Jemimah, Favour's mother, and I have had to set boundaries of play time for the children because of this. Above right, Radiance sitting at the desk in our bedroom.



Above left, dining room. Above right, sitting room.



Above left, our bedroom. For whatever reason, sleep is the most intoxicating thing here; perhaps due to the humidity, or the severe heat, but we sleep so deeply. If ever awakened in the night, the sleep is so heavy on the eyelids I have sometimes had trouble remembering where I was or who I was. Above right, our favorite food in Sierra Leone prepared by Jemimah: fried fish, fried rice balls, fried eggs and fried plantains. The dish is served with a soup (right) made of fish, palm oil, chili spices, onions, and pepper.



We have a toilet and bathing area inside of our bedroom! We couldn't be happier with this lovely lodging. No running water, but we truly speaking couldn't care less. This is such a step-up, comfort-speaking, from our home in Zambia. In Sierra Leone, we don't have our own home. In the old days I used to live with Radiance's father's family; since I started SSAAP here in 2010, we have always lived with partners for our project: the well contractors, Grace Children's Foundation, or the Chief has provided accommodation.

In Zambia, our house, toilet, cooking shelter, bathing shelter and guest house (SSAAP-Headquarters) maintenance is the community contribution for the communities SSAAP services. Communities receiving any kind of help from SSAAP (Microloans, wells, school sponsorship, animal projects) are required to participate in the maintenance and upkeep of our home in the village in order that we can safely and happily reside in the remote and in many ways inhospitable area of Simwatachela. In Sierra Leone, the remote communities SSAAP services are located in villages where we visit and sleep 2-4 nights, located some 50+ kilometers outside the towns we reside in (Port Loko and Moyamba). The community contribution for these villages receiving assistance from SSAAP is Food and Fuel, or what we call: 'F&F'. They provide the fuel to their site (return visit) as well food while we are in their communities. In exchange for F&F, SSAAP provides a water well, animal project, school sponsorship, or farming opportunity. In Sierra Leone, our hands-on agricultural work has been through cashew farming.

In both countries, our lodging expenses are \$0 USD. Every three to four years, when SSAAP-Zambia needs to repair part of its floor or roof, we spend approximately 54 Kwacha (~\$4.50) on a bag of cement and a few USD for grass for the roof. We are relieved to keep living expenses low for this project so that we may use **as much funding as possible** on the local people, the local projects, and repair of their local problems.



Radiance with Jemimah, Joseph's wife and one of my African heroines. Jemimah has only one child, Favour, and has made a library for her at home, as well a workspace, so that she may learn from home in the event that she cannot absorb all the material being taught at school. She is a strong woman and a compassionate mother, never laying a hand on her child, and always making sure Favour has enough to eat. Jemimah used to own a shop in the center of the city, but because of her aging mother's health, sold the shop and now takes care of her mother, her daughter, her household. Joseph, her husband, wants to get their deep freezer working again so that Jemimah can cook and sell the food: ginger beer (nonalcoholic), groundnut cakes, fried plantains as a source of income. Joseph and Jemimah are currently farming sweet potatoes on the land surrounding their home, sharing sweet potatoes with the neighbors free-of-cost in the African tradition of encouraging farming, sharing, a bartering system, and communal friendship.



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## Grace Children's Foundation



Far and away the most successful local partnership SSAAP has in all three of its nations, *Grace Children's Foundation* presently operates in both Port Loko and Moyamba Districts, Sierra Leone. Above, our first meeting: SSAAP and Grace Children's Foundation (GCF). Taylor, GCF's National Coordinator, and I patiently sit and comb through the last two years' worth of work at all of our sites in the remote areas: which projects are thriving, which projects are dying; which communities need our support and have filled out a CAT (*Community Assessment Tool*) asking for our services, as well which areas we still need to cover, do assessment site visits for, etc. We made a diagram of all the communities, ideally, we can help and which projects we can assist with.

Port Loko : 2017/2020			
Village Name	Location	Previous Projects / 2017	New Project Possibilities / 2019 - onward
Makoba	Makutah Chiefdom	Sponsored Students: 15 Poultry Project Garden Project: 8 schools & 20000 Shells	NEEDS FULCRUM maybe increase some funds due to larger village need
Mataska	Bukelele Chiefdom	Garden Project: 5 schools & 20000 Shells	no more assistance; no garden, ride: 2019
Bantharon	Bureh Chiefdom	Duck Project: 2018	Mikemba L.O. Kamara - need funding of local community - He just fund NEEDS FULCRUM?
Maisambo	Bureh Chiefdom	Good Project: 2017 Angie 3 goats 25, 10	7 goats 2019, 10 goats to Kichen sponsorship
Makoro "Joseph Village"	Maisamara Chiefdom	Site visit: 2019 Cathew and farm	water well sponsorship funds 3000 2019
"Waterfall Village"	Makutah Chiefdom	Site visit: 2017	NEEDS FULCRUM Makoba giving funds

It is important to keep all the villages, Chiefdoms, projects, etc. separate and organized as SSAAP works with another 10+ communities in Moyamba District! GCF has encouraged SSAAP to expand to two new districts as well: Tonkolili and Kambia, and I have agreed provided we can keep it organized and smooth: a well-oiled machine.

Village Name	Location	Previous Projects 2014-2018	New Activities 2019 - onward
Mogepah	Marampa Chiefdom	Stc visit 2014 Cashew nuts	♀ sewing, ♀ rice mill fuel project sponsorship Fishing Project
Franco "Kobba" / "de Batta"	Lower Maforki Chiefdom	Stc visit 2017	
Antiana (Blackwing)	Kassak Chiefdom	♀ Cashew farm	Water well give 3 goats from Maimamba sponsorship fruit
Manding	Maforki Chiefdom	♂	Fruit sponsorship
Ropaton	Bakelaka Chiefdom	♂	Water well sponsorship ♀ farming
Mogumbo / Mogingbok	Maforki Chiefdom	♂	Water well sponsorship
Thaaga	Bakelaka Chiefdom	♂	Sponsorship ♀ project ?

Village Name	Location	Previous Projects 2014-2017	New Activities 2019 - onward
Mogbele - Lal (Mama)	Maforki Chiefdom	♂	MSDS FOLLOWUP Aguaing toilet, sponsorship, well
Koghila	Maforki Chiefdom	♂	Water well, toilet, sponsorship
Methakaa	Maforki Chiefdom		Water well
Mara Village	Maforki Chiefdom		Water well
Mara Village	Maforki Chiefdom		Water well
Mogumbo Village	Maforki Chiefdom		Water well
Mogumbo Village	Maforki Chiefdom		Water well

**Top four reasons SSAAP works in such success and harmony with GCF:**



- GCF has its own philosophy, which runs alongside SSAAP’s but also is its own original unique mission.** GCF was founded years before they came into contact with SSAAP-Sierra Leone, and are therefore not dependent upon SSAAP for executing their work. GCF believes in serving the poor *through using their own resources* as they believe that in helping the most destitute members of the society, the entirety of the country will be served. They are not waiting for government intervention in local problems, but rather gracefully and successfully acting to help the rural poor with farming, gender and child-related issues, and education. Therefore the GCF/SSAAP partnership in Sierra Leone has yielded a higher success rate than either SSAAP-Zambia or SSAAP-South Sudan (via Ethiopia) simply because the people in Sierra Leone have a personal investment in the project the other two countries have not yet understood is mandatory in long-term sustainable success of the project. GCF implements projects in a hand-on way, their motto being: *‘If you are not committed, nothing will happen.’*



- **GCF helps SSAAP to conserve and preserve its funding and resources, not abuse it.** In other words, where other local partners in SSAAP's past have attempted to squander project funding, GCF has a general respect not only for how hard I work to acquire resources for the project, but also respect for those abroad (primarily American donors, although we have a few donors in Ireland, Greece, India and Sudan) who have helped them and *do not wish to abuse the hands of those assisting them*. I truly don't know how I was lucky enough to find them; I literally thank the Universe every opportunity I have to work with GCF. These people can do so much with so little. They always tell me, for any project – whether the goat-rearing, school sponsorship, women's sewing initiatives: "We will work with whatever you have." Sometimes, it is a \$20-project. They are grateful. Sometimes \$40 or \$50 ~ again, excessive gratefulness. This attitude is so much more appealing to me than the reactions I have, at times, received in Zambia or South Sudan (via Ethiopia). When I tell them I have \$200 (in their local currency) for a specific project, or \$400 – which to me is a good amount of money! – I watch their faces change and they say: "Is that all?" This attitude, sadly, is common in parts of Africa where large aid organizations have dropped huge sums of money: hundreds of thousands of dollars or even millions, but have not bothered to do the research or follow-up on the causes they are 'serving' – inevitably leaving the situation and the community in a state of deeper destitution than before they dropped their bundle of money, as I call it ☺ Because Sierra Leone has not been heavily aided with international government funding or large aid organizations, the people are very, *very* appreciative of SSAAP's presence and services in the remote village areas. So, in short, in Sierra Leone, whatever SSAAP has GCF will make work – versus – waiting for a fixed amount of money in order to begin a project.
- **GCF works in SSAAP's absence.** As we spend the majority of our time in Africa in Zambia, SSAAP has been absent from Sierra Leone for almost two years and in our absence GCF has been working heartily to monitor and evaluate projects, investigate new sites, acquire contacts and partnerships with members of communities, and to advocate to others about SSAAP-GCF programs. GCF workers are industrious and ambitious, and if anything, they overwork me! I hadn't even been in the country for 20 minutes before they were talking about the project with me, didn't even get a day's rest before they wanted to sit and make a program for the next six months I would be with them. These people are a pleasure to work with and for SSAAP, this is the model area and the ideal people to work with on any grassroots endeavor.
- **GCF are close friends with SSAAP.** In Africa, very little – if anything – is done without personal relationship. Banking, trading, postal servicing, projects, contracts – all of this work involves personal relationship; this is Africa's notion of 'professionalism'. Whereby in the West we function at a level of impersonal, terse, even at times cold communication – considering it unprofessional and even unlawful to know the personal lives of those we are working together with – in Africa the only way we work is to know one another intimately: our children play together, we eat together, drink together, suffer together, rejoice together. It's simply a different system than in the West, and while one is not 'right' or 'wrong', it is important to recognize the different systems present in the world for getting work done without judging one system over another. Both have their advantages and disadvantages.



Above, this is SSAAP's Team in Sierra Leone: *Grace Children's Foundation* members Sheka (center, wearing an American flag) who runs the GCF office as Office Manager and will be the Head Librarian for our Nonviolence Library; Taylor (seated, left) who is the National Coordinator and Co-Founder for GCF; Joseph (seated, right) who is the Founder of GCF and has personally funded most of its operations, in SSAAP's absence.

Sierra Leone is light-years ahead of Zambia and South Sudan (via Ethiopia) where philanthropy is concerned; despite the poor economy, because many Sierra Leoneans have adopted the philosophy of helping one another who are worse-off, this local element of Sierra Leonean helping his fellow Sierra Leonean is the most sustainable piece of the project and for this reason SSAAP-Sierra Leone is more successful than SSAAP-Zambia or SSAAP-South Sudan. Sierra Leone, historically, has been to hell and back so-to-speak, thus a deeper spiritual component has been unearthed in many of the people, I am noticing, now due to this. Their suffering has been intense and so has their reform. This quality, however, is not found in all the Sierra Leoneans, as many are selfish and motivated only to serve themselves and could care less about the sufferings of other Sierra Leoneans not as well-off as themselves, but there is a glimmer of hope with many of the Sierra Leoneans who truly do serve those less-fortunate than themselves. For this reason I believe the Nonviolence Library will truly take off here, as well as future programs and opportunities where Nonviolence is concerned.







## Thirst



There is a water well just outside our door at Joseph and Jemimah's house in Port Loko town (shown in the photos above), but in the remote areas where SSAAP serves such a luxury cannot exist. SSAAP is honored to announce that this year (2019-2020) we have **19 wells** for Sierra Leone! I decided to share them evenly between Port Loko and Moyamba Districts (8 each), 2 wells for the newly-established Tonkolili District, and 1 well for Kambia District – also a new district for SSAAP's endeavors.

For those of you who – whether personally, your school, your family, or your organization – generously and Lovingly donated a well to SSAAP-Sierra Leone for 2019/2020, I will be personally contacting you regarding if you have a preference of which district your well will be located, as well what name you will like to have engraved on the plaque for the cement on the well. Please think about it and let me know ~ this is your memorial in Africa!

And if you are interested in donating a well in the future for SSAAP, please let Gail (SSAAP-U.S.A.) know. The cost of a well in Sierra Leone is \$1000 USD and this includes the metal door/latch at the surface of the well, pulley, chain, bucket, cement, plaque as well the labor of the contractor and his employees. Kindly note we will be hiring four contractors this year to share the employment opportunities (Sierra Leone has the highest unemployment rate in West Africa averaging greater than > 85% unemployed!) as well to hire local people within the communities receiving the wells to aid the contractor in digging it. Each district SSAAP works in (Port Loko, Moyamba, Tonkolili and Kambia) we will be using a separate contractor located within that district.

There is water *everywhere* in Sierra Leone; it is the wettest country in West Africa. The issue in Sierra Leone is not acquiring water; the problem for the local people is acquiring **clean drinking water** suitable for the human body that is not contaminated run-off water from fields and village compounds, as Sierra Leoneans keep animals at their homes (primarily chickens, sheep, goats, ducks, dogs, cats) and the fecal matter from these animals is part of the run-off from the rains that people are imbibing as their drinking water and eating in their food through using it to cook. The SSAAP wells, each 12-15 meters deep and hand-dug, provide a source of pure, clean, clear, uncontaminated drinking water for the people and guarantee their health. I have lugged in my overweight baggage

here (!!!) water sampling quality test kits courtesy of Engineers Without Borders-Mississippi State University to test the water for its quality.

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## **Nonviolence Library: Port Loko, Sierra Leone**

*“Mommy, I keep meaning to tell you that I think going to India and taking that course changed Taylor’s life. He’s not even the same person anymore. He looks different. He looks younger, happier, and stronger.” ~ Radiance Gaia Amara Cumming*



I knew exactly what she meant. He had a new vision – something I had never seen in him before – I noticed even when Taylor came to the airport to pick us up when we arrived. He was more confident, as though he had found himself. Or given birth to his True, raw self – one or the other.

SSAAP assisted Taylor, through contacts and paperwork more than anything else, to attend the same course in 2018/2019 that I had taken in 2017/2018 at *Gujarat Vidyapith* in Ahmedabad, India about Nonviolence and Gandhian philosophy. SSAAP gave him a few hundred dollars in pocket money and the rest (air ticket, visa) he did all on his own from Sierra Leone.

I found that despite the 7 times I had traveled to India, Taylor had gone once for the six-month course and knew more about India than I did. He could speak some Hindi, with a better accent than me, almost the same accent the Indians have when they speak. He knew all about the caste system and was teaching me about it, and told me more about Gandhi’s life and autobiography than even I had learned during the course. I was stunned, speechless, and overwhelmed by how proud of him I was. I also realized how serious he was about traveling back to India, as he has already picked out another university where he can study to pursue his Master’s degree in India, and how much he could even do here, within Sierra Leone, with all the knowledge he had attained on the course in India.

I had given Taylor all SSAAP's contacts at *Navajivan Printing Press*, situated behind Gandhi's university for alternative education, called *Gujarat Vidyapith*, in hopes that they would fulfill the promise they had made to me in 2018 regarding donating books that they could not sell (books with a few pages missing, with typos, etc.) to SSAAP so that we may begin libraries in Africa to teach about Nonviolence. The printing press, specializing in books about Nonviolence: written by Gandhi or by other authors with similar scopes on Nonviolence, sent Taylor back to Sierra Leone with 65 books to start up our new library in Port Loko as well to distribute a few books to communities in the remote areas that could either read or had an interest to pursue studies of Nonviolence further. The University, *Gujarat Vidyapith*, donated the shipping costs for the books ~ so our library is a conglomeration of sponsorship from both *Navajivan Printing Press* and *Gujarat Vidyapith*.

The Nonviolence Library will be situated in two rooms of the GCF Office building, and for the first few months patrons will need to read while in the building. Materials will not be available for check-out until a personal relationship is established between the library and the patron, as we do not want all the books to disappear within the first year and then the library is left with nothing. We want to grow the library so that in the future, perhaps SSAAP can appeal once again to *Navajivan Printing Press* for more books. I plan to go to India in the next year or so for personal educational purposes as well as Radiance's home-school, and Taylor plans to go back as well, so we decided whoever goes back first will get the materials and bring them back to our library: the first Nonviolence Library in the whole of Sierra Leone, perhaps even in the whole of West Africa!

We plan to launch the Nonviolence Library with an Open House as well an Opening with food and discussions on Nonviolence, Gandhian thought, and the effectiveness of Nonviolence worldwide using specific examples Taylor and I, both alumni of the course, have been taught.

The essence of the Nonviolence Library runs parallel to Gandhi's foundation through his experiments with Truth: *Non-violence is a lifestyle that is a daily task of dealing with problems through an internal process which becomes transformational versus violence which is dealing with problems externally by punishing others (verbally, physically, psychologically) for the pain one has within him.* The fundamental difference between violence and nonviolence is external energy and internal energy, which I even tend to term '*internal alchemy*'.



Non-violence Library located in Port Loko town. The building is large and three rooms will be the Library.



## *Agriculture in Sierra Leone*

Because currently this is such a desperately poor country, I am taking advantage of the situation by using it to do even more with SSAAP's U.S. Dollars through simply creating as many projects as SSAAP can afford to do in an effort to help as many people as absolutely possible. SSAAP is buying *Agricultural Sets* (shovels x 5, pick axes x 5, cutlasses x 5), *Agricultural Suits* (rain jacket x 3, rain boots x 3, gloves x 3) for six villages, and bags of seeds for farming (cashew and rice seeds) for all six communities as well. The Ag Suits and Ag Sets are property of SSAAP and every two years we will rotate the Sets and Suits to new villages. We are working in 14 villages in Port Loko District and 10 villages in Moyamba District: two districts on opposite sides of the country, and so it is important to be organized and straightforward in the planning for all these projects. Since the economy is in the process of crashing, SSAAP can literally do a chicken-rearing project for \$20 since a chicken is \$1, and a goat project for \$100 since each goat is approx. \$30-\$35 for one. The money goes far here, the people are sincere and hard-working, and by and large, the project is a much greater success here than in Zambia or South Sudan (via Ethiopia) as you have local people helping each other: not present in Zambia or South Sudan. *Grace Children's Foundation* (GCF), our partner organization on the ground here in Sierra Leone, has also suggested that SSAAP/GCF rear goats in Mokoro Village (Port Loko District) that we can use for distribution to other communities so that we don't have to continuously buy goats for more communities; rather we can reproduce them ourselves and distribute them this way. They have suggested we do the same with fowls at our Makoba Village location - so that GCF has a base to rear chickens and goats and that way, GCF is also benefitting from this project and SSAAP won't have to continuously keep purchasing new animals. As well, this is a local, sustainable solution to the lack of food and income in the remote areas; animal-projects help generate income as well they are a food source and protein for local people.



## SSAAP Institute



I do personally believe the people of Africa have had their resources stolen from them, over time – and I use the word ‘stolen’ very specifically – and that nearly every nation in the world is responsible for this .... even to present-day, not just historically; one of the cornerstones of SSAAP works within this philosophy: redistribution of resources in an organized and positive way, trying to make the most of whatever we have, whenever we have it. Perhaps the most valuable resource taken from these people is their sense of self, their feeling of self-worth. And maybe that is the greater potential of the work SSAAP aims to do, long-term, here in Africa.

On the airplane ride to Freetown, Sierra Leone, Radiance and I shared a seat with an old Krio man (the *Krios* are one tribe in Sierra Leone; Radiance is a *Krio*) who was in very good health; he was tall and sharp, witty, with large beautiful hands and an extensive knowledge of the world. He had gone to the U.K. in his youth to study, married a [white] British lady, has children the same color as Radiance, and is now a grandfather: his oldest granddaughter is age 20. He told me it took him into his old age to understand the depth, as he called it, of the indoctrination of the colonial imperialists. He said this indoctrination is so subtle, and exists today, embedded in each and every African: *They see the white man, he said, and automatically assume a position of inferiority to him; they automatically, unconsciously, assume and allow him to be above them. They do this both out of fear as well out of habit.*





*Isn't it just so old and stale, I said to him, this age-old 'black-versus-white' discussion? It is so fossilized, outdated; humanity should have progressed far, far past this now; should have viewed the human race in oneness rather than in elite separatism; should have understood the Universal plan for all of us to be equal in unique ways, and that the world needs us all in order to function at its highest potential. The world needs all of us ~ exactly as we are.*

He told me it made him downtrodden that it took him into his old age, after decades of marriage to his [Caucasian] wife, living in a Western nation, to understand the depth of human consciousness this was embedded in by the colonialists, and the centuries of damage the colonial empires had done to Africa, perhaps even irreparable damage – so deep it exists today, even blatantly ~ isn't even ashamed enough to hide itself, he said.

*And you of all people, he said to me, firmly and strongly, directly: just like a proper Krio, have nothing to say about it! You are a white woman and perhaps not even in a position to discuss racism, for you don't know how it feels and you don't even really understand it. You might even find it trendy to be politically-correct and claim to honor all races the same in your country, but deep in the heart after all those layers of social politeness and correctness have been peeled, you will find that even at the core still, the imbalance is there. You have to change it at its root. There is no social justice system, no protests, no judicial system that can correct it, for it lies within the heart of each and every man to correct his own imbalance.*









I appreciated his words and they humbled me; there was a knot in my throat when he spoke them; thus, I didn't defend myself nor my race. I was silent. He was right. In the end, he gave me food for thought, and a worthy idea for me to chew on: *can a Caucasian even talk about racism and discrimination?* Am I not part of the only race of the world that has never been violated for the color of his skin, enslaved for it even? He was insinuating so. What I *do* know, however, is that if or when someone discriminates against Radiance [which has almost-never happened; if anything, her mixed-race has served to her advantage, not to her disadvantage] and she is hurt by those discriminating against her or her father's race, I tell her: "There is no racism against you that is not doubly against me, baby. I'm the one that chose your father – and people may judge me harder for that than even you."

As well to paraphrase the words of my best friend in Zambia, Fred Chiluba II: "*Africa itself isn't the problem; it has barely even caused its own problems. It's what the rest of the world has done to Africa; this is the problem. Africa, isolated, is innocent, exists in its own paradise.*"

So, what is the way out of this? Or is there any way out? Something more, something deeper is needed even than education still. The gift of life experience is a natural unraveling of the braid of racism, of misconception, of false privilege. And what if SSAAP could give this gift – just as I have had – to the world?





The idea was not mine, but rather Taylor and Joseph's of Grace Children's Foundation (GCF). Taylor told me they had been talking about it for a long time, the two of them: *SSAAP should have an institution in Sierra Leone, they said, and bring people here from all over the world to learn about each other, as well to learn about slavery and West Africa and all the possibilities we have here. The same way that both you and Taylor went to Gandhi's University in West India to learn about Nonviolence and Gandhian philosophy, SSAAP should open an institution or a university here so that students from abroad could come and learn from Sierra Leonean philosophers and scholars and perhaps even scholars from all around Africa.*

It would be indeed very powerful for the Africans to teach international students, learn from these experiences, and empower themselves simultaneously.

As I have been the recipient of worldwide education, and privileged to study in the U.S.A., the U.K., and India – as well plan to take a course on Egyptology in Egypt in the next few years – I could relate to what these men were saying. What if, in the future, SSAAP had its own institute here in Sierra Leone, to honor this nation as the historical origin of education in West Africa, yet amend and go a step further even in this by having an international institution honoring nonviolence, knowledge, and life experience as education – taught by scholars from the nations where SSAAP works: Zambia, Sierra Leone, and South Sudan? It could be a meeting place for people all over the world, who crave the experience of learning through living and unique experiences. And the course should be free – just as the Gandhian Nonviolence course in India was free to Taylor and I: free room and board, free food 3x/day, free course, free books. This was Gandhi's method (*'free education for all'*) and is still being practiced by *Gujarat Vidyapith* in Ahmedabad, India, where his university for alternative education is located – as well this would also be SSAAP's, methodology, were we to make an institution here: free learning for international students, free learning for national students, and somehow we would find a way to fund the building, the salaries for the professors, and the cost to feed the students, lodge them, and provide their books for them. Perhaps we could even set a minimal cost to attend the school: \$200/student/year, which could assist in providing for salaries for the lecturers.

Maybe if SSAAP could work with any universities in the U.S.A. on this endeavor, and allow the institute to count for legitimate credit equivalent to coursework in the States, then the interest of



Americans to come to Africa to study could also increase. It is a worthwhile idea, and even if it is something to pursue when I am 70 or 80 years old, I am up for the challenge! As Taylor says, it will serve as a legacy – a legend – for our collective efforts together here, long after our deaths. *The Nonviolence Library*, he says, *will be the centerpiece and spinning point for the SSAAP Institute.*



\*

## *Experience Freetown*



Freetown is one of my favorite cities in the world. It's one of the only cities in the world that I can get around, as I used to live in the center of the city when I was married to Radiance's father (2008-2012). Most things are accessible by foot, and the city is a carnival: street vendors everywhere, selling

everything you could imagine on the streets: candy, burgers, fried chicken, fried plantains, fish, electronics, shoes, clothing, personalized stamps, toothpaste, soap, toys, passport photos, money exchange, coffee, tea, cold water.



Radiance and I had a good chuckle on this one: the local transport (1,500 Leones/person ~ 15 cents) from the outskirts of town / 'suburbs' if you will (*Waterloo; Porty Junction; Obgone; Bai Bureh Road; Kissy Road*) are these huge buses: either *Greyhound* buses imported from the States, or the equivocal-sized tour buses from Europe (Germany, England, France), or U.S. school buses! Radi and I always end up on the school bus, and she had no idea it was an American school bus until I told her this was the type of bus I always rode in grade school in Ohio. We chuckled as her first experience on a U.S. school bus was in Freetown, Sierra Leone!



Typical street vending in Freetown. Left above, *Regent Road*. Right above, a typical street in Freetown.



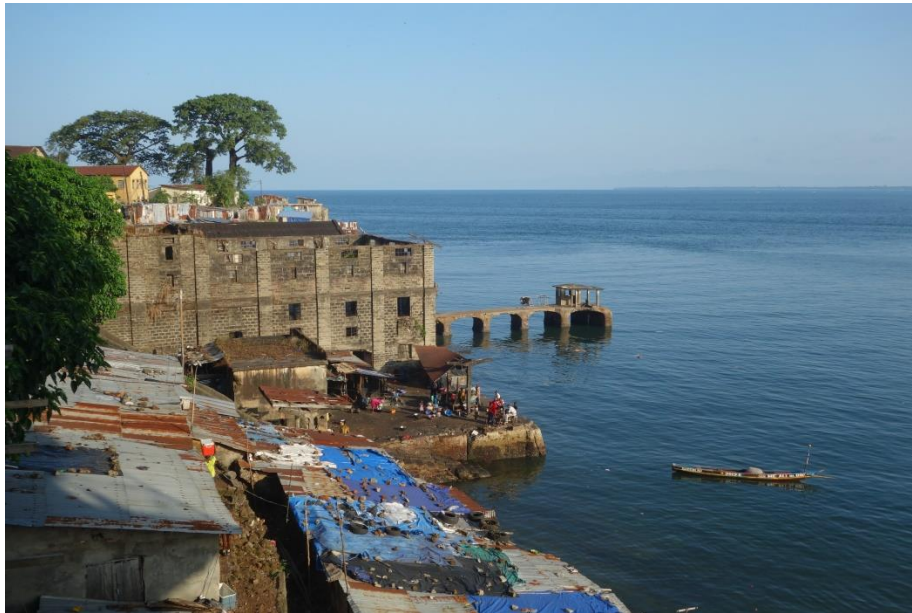
Since we left last, April 2017, the city is more destitute, trashed, and downtrodden than ever in the past. Every time I leave Sierra Leone and return, I find that another crisis has hit: civil war 1990-2001 (my initiation into the country was in 2008, only 7 short years following the war), Ebola Outbreak 2014-2016 (we were in the country at the onset of the Outbreak in February 2014, then left at the time the Peace Corps were evacuated July 2014, post-Ebola (we visited November 2016-April 2017) which was a plague of hunger, suffering, loss from the death of approximately 18,000 people (statistic I am told by the locals), and now - on this trip - there is an economic crisis: worst the country has ever had.



The streets are flooded with vendors, many of whom are my friends. They make less than \$1/day selling whatever they are selling, on average. The poverty in the city, I tell them, was never this bad in the past. There is a new President, who seems to be very good thus far, enforcing free education for all grade levels (primary and secondary school, whereas in the past secondary school had heavy school



fees ~ thus SSAAP sponsorships in Sierra Leone will be for uniforms/shoes/tote bags for students only) and is trying to eradicate the deep, deep corruption we have in the nation. The whole city has become, more or less, a slum ~ there is wealth only in small pockets around the beaches of the city or in the hills where the politicians, Ministers, Cabinet, and President stay. The rest of the city is more or less in shambles.



I have a friend who works in the Ministry of Tourism and asked him why none of the historical sites are marked. I have spent hours, sweating in the burning equatorial sun, asking everyone where to find the old Portuguese shipping port/slave export area during the British reign (for home-school purposes, education, as well as Radiance's personal history as she is part of the Krio tribe, who were the people sent abroad in slavery times, so she is a descendant of slaves and it is very, very important to me not only to teach her this history but that she see the sites and feel proud of her heritage). *These sites are not marked, he told me, due to lack of interest. Only 30% of Sierra Leone is literate, and the people cannot move ahead because they have never dealt with the pain and traumas of their history. That is why you see so much violence here, and why we are decades behind the rest of the world – if not centuries – in terms of development, he said to me.*





Our largest bill here is the 10,000 Leone note. At the time I first began coming to Sierra Leone, in 2008, the exchange rate was 4,500 Leones ~ \$1 USD. Today, the exchange rate is 10,150 Leones ~ \$1 USD. I exchanged \$2,000 USD and found myself counting over 2,000 notes (10,000 Le bills) as the largest note in Sierra Leone doesn't even come to one U.S. dollar now. Two thousand + bills makes for stacks of money that are more or less bricks, and very difficult to move around the streets with as theft is an occupation for many in this nation. For this reason, I will trade primarily with USD while I am here. SSAAP will pay for the 19 wells with USD, the school sponsorships, toilets, animal projects, art, etc. Everyone is *elated* to have U.S. dollars in their hands as the Leone is worth almost nothing now, and the \$2,000 I exchanged I will use only in scenarios whereby paying with USD is inappropriate, such as purchasing street food or paying for transportation, or buying goods for our Nonviolence Library, etc. There is very little money in this country ~ and not because it doesn't have natural wealth, but rather because of deep-rooted corruption. The money circulating in the country is foreign money (USD, Euro, GBP) and my thought is that the economy is headed for a full-out crash.



I have always wondered as well whether or not parts of the world that are more comfortable with bartering systems of trade, rather than cash/capital trade, sink underneath a Capitalism system imposed upon them. Perhaps part of the poverty in Africa comes simply from the fact that Africans naturally trade goods and no cash is actually used in the process: exchange four cups of rice for a day's worth of work on the farm; trade half a dozen eggs for a head of cabbage; swap three chickens for a baby goat. In the past, cowrie shells or hollowed-out rocks were a form of currency here, prior to the introduction of coins and notes by the West African Currency Board of British West Africa.





I tend to use photography for educational more than artistic purposes – but should it serve both, that is the best thing! – and in the photos I wish to convey the experience of Freetown. There is one road leading into and out of the city. It takes approximately 2.5 < x < 3.5 hours from the outskirts of the city to reach the innards of the city: City Center, which surrounds our historical Cotton Tree. I am told that this was the center of the city because, historically, it was the place where the people lined up during the slave trade to be traded, sold, and bartered for. This tree is a few hundred years old.







Typical home in Freetown. Unemployment rate is 85% < x < 90% in the country at this time, and people on the streets selling goods earn approximately 75 cents < x < \$2 USD per day, on average. A compound such as the one pictured above has typically 4-5 rooms inside, and families of 5-7 people live in each room. Those who are very badly off survive on rice and palm oil, without affording any vegetables, for 2,000 Leones a day: approximately 20 cents. Literacy rate, as mentioned previously, is 30% only in Sierra Leone. I have come to the conclusion that very little of this has to do with whether or not the child attends school; the root cause of every problem this country has is *violence*. Children cannot learn in violent environments: whether the violence exists at school or at home, it is not conducive to learning. In Sierra Leone, most homes are raging with violence; schools are less-better, flogging (hitting with a stick) a student who gets an answer wrong, or who won't sit at his desk; the environment in Sierra Leone is violent. Frankly speaking, Sierra Leone is the most violent country I have ever visited. And while the people themselves are very intelligent, very tuned-in to their environment and aware of the world, the violence is so deep here, so thick and so historically-entrenched that I think in the end I may have been attracted to this country for the sole reason of teaching people the essence of Nonviolence.

The essence of Nonviolence is dealing with problems internally, patiently processing pain, thus a transformational experience occurs within the heart. Nonviolence is a heart-centered approach to living, to working, to politics, to problems. Violence, its antithesis, deals with problems externally by punishing others for one's pain, be it verbally, physically, or psychologically.

For comparison's sake, I have seen one act of violence that I confronted the person committing the act of violence in the last 16 years I have lived in Zambia. Zambians are generally innocent, soft-spoken,

peace-loving people. In the first week of being back in Sierra Leone, I reported an innocent whereby someone was verbally and psychologically abusing my child, telling her they would flog her (hit her with a stick) twenty-four times. His supervisor was informed about this, and the following day we had a meeting with that man, another man who was also insulting my child and myself, a security guard, the Human Resources person, and their supervisor: a Sierra Leonean living in England. He, like myself, has absolutely no tolerance for violence or abuse of any kind – specifically where young children are concerned. The two men were reprimanded for speaking to Radiance in this manner. Two days later, I interrupted a woman beating her four-year old child by literally screaming in her face to *stop! Stop! Stop it right now!* A child, at age four, is innocent; in fact, all children are innocent. I informed the mother that at age four a child is innocent and means no harm, and that the fault and responsibility was entirely upon her; as well, that as far as the law of Sierra Leone is concerned she has no right to abuse her child, that the child has as many rights as she does, and that if she didn't stop I would be glad to report the entire incident to the police as I have all the time and energy in the world to report such cases of abuse, humiliation, and violation of human rights whenever I encounter such.

The dis-ease of Sierra Leone is violence. Violence is not the natural state of man, nor is it his healthy state. To paraphrase Gandhi: *Man in his lowest state is violent; man in his highest state is spirit.* The lowest common denominator in all affairs in Sierra Leone: at the government level down to the grassroots level, violence is the fundamental root cause for the lack of development in Sierra Leone. Violence is the reason the nation cannot advance, the cause for Freetown as essentially a slum and in all the nation's surrounding provinces the people have not enough food and no potable water despite Sierra Leone's status the wettest country in West Africa hosting incredibly fertile land. One of the many problems with violence is that it is always ineffective. It is a fear-based tactic rather than a Love-based tactic, thus violence is never sustainable. Violence causes its perpetrator not to Love her/himself, and when one doesn't Love his/herself he/she cannot develop his/herself, or his/her country, thus the nation in its entirety suffers on every level: politically, economically, medically, educationally, psychologically, even spiritually.



I was invited to speak at a school in Freetown on *Peninsula Road* regarding Nonviolence and the strain violence places upon education therefore personal freedom. It was an impromptu program, but I



spoke to the children from my heart and explained to them that in my experience those who are the perpetrators of violence are usually people who are hurting the most, and are desperate, and who have a block in their hearts to that Love cannot freely flow through them or to them. Sierra Leoneans are receptive and very, very clever people who learn quickly and generally have very open minds. They like information and they deeply value learning, and really seemed to enjoy the session. The children asked me a lot of questions about how I discipline my daughter if I refuse to flog her (hit her) and I explained to them that I just give her a lot of personal responsibility. She has to take responsibility if she exhibits inappropriate behavior, and is old enough to make her own decisions and face her own consequences. They were very interested in this approach, which I told them is a Love-based model: let the child take responsibility, suffer his/her own consequence, and take a step back every time I am angry with my daughter so that I don't do something I regret later. The children were very receptive to the discussion.



*You de come Salone only for Love, the Sierra Leoneans say to me. Tourists, they say in Krio, they no wan come. Da NGO's, they no wan come hea. You, you de come for Love; dis why you no lef us. And so they know my secret: I do Love Sierra Leone with my deepest heart ~ otherwise I would not be able to work here, for it is too difficult: the violence too deep, the mass suffering, poverty, unemployment and disappointment too vast. But I am dedicated to a lifetime of service to this country, and when things get especially tough I tap into my compassion-heart, and realize I have to Love the people here by cutting them some slack, for they have suffered a lot and for this need even more Love.*





And so the work that has been given to me – not through my choice, but what has manifested over time and is now surfacing – is *Nonviolence*. Through education, through practice, through the Nonviolence Library, through example. It is the greatest gift I can give these people, as they no know other way than to fight with their bodies and their voices rather than with their hearts. They are open, receptive, and want to change; they seek a new way forward, and new ideas.



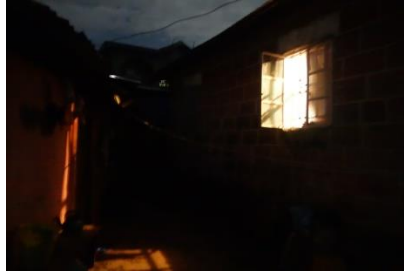


*“If you nor lek Africa pas nor ore you go; but if you lek Africa you nor go live without hem.”*

*~ in Krio; English translation:*

*‘If you don’t Love Africa, you cannot stay here; and if you Love Africa, then you cannot live without it.’*





I tend to compartmentalize, which my mother has warned me against – thus I apologize if this is overly-simplified – the issues of Sierra Leone into five major categories:

There is the slavery from the 1600, 1700, 1800's. Sierra Leone was one of the leading slave-trading countries during the Slave Trade Era.

There is the Sierra Leonean civil war: 1990-2001. This was also called a Diamond War, Rebel War, and Tribal War. Indeed it was all of these things.

There is the Ebola Outbreak of 2014-2015/2016 and its aftermath.

There is the Mud Slide of Sugarloaf Mountain, Freetown, which killed  $500 < x < 1000$  people in 2017.

In 2019 we currently have an economic crisis; most likely I expect the economy to crash in its entirety while SSAAP is here.

And so my brain compartmentalizes the events of Ebola Outbreak and Mudslide into one category: although caused by Nature, the responsibility of both was due to humans and humans (Sierra Leoneans) failed miserably in both events. They were warned by the British in the 1800's never to build on Sugarloaf Mountain in Freetown due to the quality of the sand on the mountain as anything built there would eventually collapse; the Sierra Leoneans built on Sugarloaf anyhow and in 2017 the rains caused a mudslide because chopping down all the trees created deep erosion upon the mountain. So Sierra Leoneans are to take responsibility for this, as I see it; and also the Ebola Outbreak which shed light on the international community as to the lack of medical care in Sierra Leone. I mean no personal offense to anyone in Sierra Leone when I say that most doctors and nurses in this country have obtained their qualification either through paying someone or sleeping with someone. Thus the Ebola Outbreak showed the rest of the world the secrets going on here with sub-par medical care in this nation. I fault the Sierra Leoneans for this; I also hold responsible the Sierra Leoneans for the corrupt government they have allowed to hold power here for the economic crisis of 2019 whereby Ministers, Cabinet Members, Members of Parliament and of course the Presidents and Vice-Presidents are pocketing whatever funding, capital, income generation through exports into their personal bank accounts, leaving about 6.9 million of the total population of 7 million people in obscene poverty.

I regard both the slave trade and the Diamond War as international issues; however, I don't criticize the Sierra Leoneans for these events as I reprehend the international investors for these atrocities. Without the European colonialists, the Arab World, and early United States, there would have been no



slave trade. And without wealthy nations and affluent people in the world buying diamonds, there would be no demand for diamonds, and therefore no diamond trade causing the Diamond War. Sierra Leone is the second-highest nation in Africa with diamond content in its soil, second only to Angola which is larger in square-area thus has more diamonds. Angola is where Princess Diana worked with the land mines, and serving humanity there and now, Prince Harry and his wife continue in her noble work.



***In Project: Nothing is small; nothing is wasted***

## *Slave Dungeon, Port Loko*

The only way to make permanent change in anything is by going straight to its energy source and changing the energetic properties of it that way.

This should be a scientific process, as we once learned in Chemistry class: changing the chemical [energetic] properties of an element changes the element itself. By reorganizing the energetic structure of something: its nucleus, protons, electrons, we have changed its dynamic, energetic properties. And then, like all things scientific, something shifts and that scientific process becomes spirit process: a subtle bending of energy.



This is a Slave Dungeon in Port Loko town, located just along the banks of the *Kamaranka River* (translation into Temne, our local language here in Port Loko: “*I swear*”) which eventually meets ocean, just a few meters after passing the old slave dungeon.



Apparently, this water is half freshwater (from Kamaranka River) and half salt water (from the Atlantic Ocean), thus the break in trees pictured here is an entry point from the Atlantic back to the



Slave Dungeon. The people used to wait in this little dungeon: 50 < x < 125 people I am told, crammed into this small space. Many people died here; many people starved here; many people lost their children here; many people suffered here.



The British built this Dungeon in the 1700's and the roof leaks, but otherwise, they did a good construction job as 300 years later it is still standing.



I have an appointment to meet with the Paramount Chief next week to discuss all of this with him as well to obtain his permission, but what I am thinking we can do with the Dungeon is bring it back to life, so to speak, by repairing the ceiling with cement (which wouldn't cost much) then planting flowers and tropical plants inside. With another two/three bags of cement, we can make permanent



benches inside the Dungeon. It would be a meditation place; a place of peace for contemplation. I want to hire SSAAP's Sierra Leonean premier artist from Freetown: Med Krack (Radiance's uncle and my best friend in Sierra Leone), to come to Port Loko to paint this Slave Dungeon with flowers, colors, trees, water, sun, moon, stars. He could even paint portraits of Sierra Leone's three greatest slavery heroes: SengbePieh (1613-1679; who forced a ship carrying many slaves, he among them, back to Freetown's *Water Key*: our main port in the city); BaiBureh (1840-1908; who boycotted British taxation of his village and refused to allow his people to enter slavery); and William Wilberforce (1759 – 1833), a leader in the movement to abolish the slave trade, who was also a British politician and philanthropist who worked his entire life for this cause.



I want to bring this sad stream back to life, and the mournful trees surrounding this dark dungeon. The suffering that occurred here was no doubt intense, as even today, 300-400 years later – nearly half of a Millennium--it carries the same damp despairing death energy.



I want to try to make all of this better. And while I cannot erase history, I recognize that even I am an integral part of it – so long as I take responsibility for it –therefore, there is something I can do about it, and that feels very empowering to me. Even now, long after this history is old, stale, decaying, and

long after it has passed, the sad energy remains here. Slavery should be one of the deepest stains in human history. While as an humanity, we cannot take away what has happened, we *can* change the energetic properties of the present day in order to reactivate a different future for humanity. This is the very basis of what education ought to be in our lives: learn the history, see the influence it makes in the present day, contribute your participation into a future and what that looks like in your dreams--even if you're not part of it--and it's just for your great-grandchildren or their great-grandchildren.

I don't think this will cost much: a few bags of cement for the ceiling and the benches, a small amount of money for flowers, and a fee to pay the painter (Med Krack) for his labor. Anyone who is interested in this endeavor, please let Gail or myself know. It is my aim to make every penny count, and while things are cheap here, I imagine the whole project I could do for  $\$150 < x < \$175$ .

I believe this project would be very healing: not only for the Sierra Leoneans, but also for the Americans. Speaking only of myself, since my childhood and the Slavery Unit taught to me by Ms. Sticht and Mrs. Mitch in 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Watts Middle School in Ohio, this burden has weighed heavily in my heart. I couldn't even watch the film Roots that was part of the Unit and asked my mother to write me a note excusing me from the film. Deep in the layers of my unconscious mind I carry this horrific part of human history, and the thought of doing something here in Sierra Leone – one of the main slavery capitals in the whole of West Africa – is very reassuring. I want this to be a project that ignites education, history, and healing, encompassing many of the core values of SSAAP.



## **SSAAP Schedule: 2019-2020**

- November 3-10, 2019: Freetown: hire artisan(s) to paint for Project Hartwork partnership in Denver, Colorado; visit old friends and family; eat bean salad (the *Fula* tribe's specialty); Sierra Leonean National Museum; swim in Atlantic Ocean

- November 11-November 25, 2019: Port Loko: Travel to villages for site assessments for water wells; meet with well contractor for Port Loko for 5 wells in 2020; meet with communities who have asked SSAAP for assistance; meet with Port Loko District Council and Paramount Chiefs for villages SSAAP/GCF is working in; distribute 6 Agricultural Sets (5 cutlasses, 5 pick axes, 5 shovels) to 6 communities (borrowed tools to be returned to SSAAP and re-distributed for 2021), 3 Agricultural Suits (gloves, rain jackets, and rain boots) to 3 communities on a borrowing basis. 21 Primary Students sponsored; 26 Secondary School Teenaged Mothers returning to school after giving birth sponsored. Three toilets for Port Loko District in 2020.
- November 26-December 15, 2019: Moyamba: meet with contractor Mr. Sam & Co. for the digging of 5 water wells for 2020, prepare contract, give him contract; meet with schools for school sponsorships: 21 Primary Students sponsored; 26 Secondary School Teenaged Mothers returning to school after giving birth sponsored. Work with FGM (*Female Genital Mutilation*) project; prepare for the digging of 3 latrines in Moyamba District; visit our post box; visit friends and family in Moyamba; meet with Paramount Chief in Moyamba.
- December 16-23, 2019: Port Loko: Travel to Travel to villages for site assessments for water wells; meet with well contractor for Port Loko and give him final contract; meet with communities who have asked SSAAP for assistance. Visits with Taylor of GCF to Tonkolili and Kambia Districts to see if projects and water wells will be possible for 2020 or if we should wait until 2021/2022 for this endeavor
  - December 24-27, 2019: Holiday break
    - December 28-31, 2019: Begin water wells, Port Loko
    - January 1, 2020: Launching of Nonviolence Library in Port Loko
- January 3-February 20, 2020: Moyamba wells, sponsorships, field work, animal projects, crafting, women's sewing initiatives
- February 21 – March 31, 2019: Port Loko wells, sponsorships, field work, animal projects, crafting, women's sewing initiatives; visit Kambia and Tonkolili Districts: work on projects there and possible wells x 3; work on FGM projects in communities
  - April 1-May 16, 2020: SSAAP-South Sudan Program (via Ethiopia)
    - May 17, 2020: Fly back to Zambia
- May 18, 2020: Final Zambian work permit expires; renew for Residency (Residency in Zambia is the same as Citizenship, only that Residents are denied a vote whereby Citizens may vote)
- May 21, 2020 – January 5, 2021: Zambia: deal with hunger situation; Microloans paid back and redistributed; animal projects; follow-up on 2019 well-drilling for four wells; possible visits from SSAAP partners; confirmed visit from SSAAP Board member from Austin, Texas for June/July 2020
- January 7, 2021-January 2022: Return to Sierra Leone; 5 wells for Port Loko District; 5 wells for Moyamba District; 1 well for Tokalili District; 1 well for Bombali District; 6 toilets (3 for Moyamba, 3 for Port Loko Districts); 42 primary school students sponsored; 52 secondary school pupils (teenaged mothers) sponsored; further work with artisans/art project/crafting; further work with monitoring wells; further work with FGM endeavors



Total Wells for 2020/2022: 21 wells

Total Primary School Sponsorships for 2020/2021: 84 pupils

Total Secondary School Sponsorships (Teenaged Mothers only) for 2020/2021: 104 pupils

Total Toilets for 2020/2021: 12 toilets

***\*The numbers quoted above include both Port Loko and Moyamba Districts, as well Tokalili and Bombali Districts with the wells.\****





*In promoting the village, SSAAP is also promoting Nature ~ and through promotion of the village, with promise and prosper available there, more Africans will be rushing to return from the cities and towns – all overpopulated in Sierra Leone – and back to the village areas where they can grow food, raise animals, and have more security in their lives. Sierra Leone has more water and a higher rainfall (some years, 9 months of the year there is rainfall) than any other West African nation, fertile and abundant land, and some of the physically-strongest human beings on the planet; thus the shortage of agriculture in this nation is due largely to an attitude that farming, agriculture, and living in the village is a ‘lesser’ life than the urban life in cities and towns, and is not highly respected in the society.*

SSAAP seeks to work, through education with an emphasis on respect to Nature, to shift this attitude of disrespect for the village into a deeper understanding for the potential of the village, as well the peace of mind which is an abundant side effect of living in harmony and deeply within it.



Because the agriculture sect of the nation is lagging, through the advice and wisdom of Grace Children’s Foundation, SSAAP has decided to buy rice seeds (temporal crop) as well cashew nuts (sustainable crop) for 6 villages in Port Loko District (Makoba, Makoro, Mayepoh, Rochain, Makin,



Ropolon, Thawiya Villages), as well provide them with Agricultural Sets (5 cutlasses, 5 pick axes, 5 shovels) and Agricultural Suits (3 gloves, 3 rain boots, 3 rain jackets) on a loan basis whereby the village uses both the Suits and the Sets for a year or two years (amount of time to be decided upon), then returns them to SSAAP and we loan them to 6 new villages. SSAAP's name is written on all the Agricultural Sets and Suits to ensure their return, and if damaged or stolen the communities are required to replace them.

This idea of borrowing a resource rather than giving a community a hand-out ensures a greater chance of survival for the farming projects, as SSAAP is empowering communities through responsibility rather than giving them hand-outs through pity. We are not helping helpless people here 😊



Above, Mokoro Village is accessible only through crossing a river, then one stream on foot (pictured here) and another small river (via boat pictured on previous page 39). Mokoro Village will work with SSAAP on a 2020 water well, toilet, 10 primary school sponsorships, Agriculture Set and Agriculture Suits, three goats, rice and cashew nut seeds, and arts and crafting for the We'Moon/SSAAP 2021 partnership.





## *Happy Holidays from SSAAP...*



*I have discovered that it is no longer Africa we are serving but rather that Africa is serving us; I have recently realized Africa – in all Her brutal Truth – we cannot live without; I think the feeling is mutual between Radiance and I. Although constantly bruised by Her excessive force, our life here has taught me that I have the strength within me to confront anything – absolutely anything – that comes my way. With pleasure, no matter the level of discomfort. I did not come to this world to be comfortable; I came here for Truth ~ be it humanity's, be it my own, be it the Universe's. I didn't come here to be comfortable; I came here to live, and to let life dish me out whatever it may.*





*The holidays – no matter where we may find ourselves – carry a constant theme for me. I collect all the beauties of my life: Radiance, this project, two parents who spent their lifetime in service to raising their children up, my blood family and friend family in the States, all of our families in Africa, the people I Love all over the world, Africa and India, the Mediterranean Sea and all waters of the earth; thus with overwhelming appreciation I send all this Love back out to the Universe, hoping that the holidays touch you as deeply as you allow yourself to open to them. There is only Love in the Universe. So certain of this I am that I have entrusted a lifetime to this benediction.*



*I suppose what keeps me going is this relentless nagging sensation that I haven't done enough; that I could do more. I even ask the Africans: "Do you think that what SSAAP is doing is helping? Has SSAAP helped you? Do you think this work – all this energy and all this effort – is amounting to anything?" Sometimes I just feel so small in the great span of Africa.*



*The people laugh, sometimes pat me on the back or hug me.*

*“You are doing all in your power to help us ~ and as we are Africans, that is always enough. SSAAP has brought food, farming, animals, water, toilets, school sponsorships, and opportunities through crafting. We never want you to leave us here. In fact we are hoping you will stay with us forever.”*



*Humility is one of the most important qualities I look for in a human being. Most Africans have it which is why I think I am so drawn to being here. Africans have taught me humility, which has brought me closer to myself. Most definitely humility also brings us closer to the Divine, and to our deepest selves: the most Divine thing in the Universe. Living in Africa has humbled me; I am not too good for anyone or anything. I have eaten things here I would not touch in the West, slept in places I dared not believe could provide me slumber, kept things that in the U.S. I would have thrown away: a simple rubber band, a paper clip, reusing a Ziploc bag until it rips at the seams. And for what? Africa has given me respect for the simple things: a bath, a plate of food in front of me, a good night's rest.*

*So, thank you to Africa and thank you to all who have given this gift to us of Africa. May you have a beautiful holiday and best wishes for all the Love and support you have given us.*

*Happy Holidays,*

*Love,*

*Heather and Radi*





*“I know the path. It is straight and narrow. It is like the edge of a sword. I rejoice to walk on it. I weep when I slip.”*

*~ Mohandas K. Gandhi, from *Young India**



***SSAAP's Philosophy:*** SSAAP targets the remote areas – rather strictly, in fact. The deeper into the bush, the more faraway, the more potent the Nature and the less urbanized the better. SSAAP aims its efforts toward the remote areas as all the local people in the remote areas have as a resource is Nature: no light, no technology, no electricity, no communication with the outside world. And while towns and cities in Africa are usually also lacking in infrastructure and carry their own heavy poverty, they at least have access to internet, to email, to more resources to connect to the outside world than those living in the most remote areas of Africa. As well, most aid organizations do not reach the hard-to-reach areas in Africa; SSAAP will happily do the dirty work and get its hands dirty in the village. We take it as our honor!



***SSAAP's Aspiration:*** Redistribution of resources through influential and empowering methods strengthening the local people through SSAAP's investment of time, respect, intensive study of culture and uncompromising, unconditional and unwavering Love.

