



SIERRA LEONEANS CELEBRATE LAUNCH OF NEW COMMUNITY ORGANISATION

Saturday, April 27, 2002 was one memorable day for Sierra Leoneans in London. On that day, INASLA, the International Association for Sierra Leoneans Abroad, was formally launched in South London. The occasion was attended by a large cross section of the Sierra Leonean community, representing different shades of opinion and a variety of interest groups. By design, the day also happened to be the 41st anniversary of Sierra Leone's Independence, thus adding an even more festive flavour to the occasion.

The day started with a march-past of good-willed Sierra Leoneans, holding high various banners proclaiming that 'we are all one' despite our varied social, political, religious and regional characteristics. It delighted scores of Sierra



Leoneans to see the march from the Peckham Library grounds to the Walworth Road Methodist Church Hall, where the formal ceremony to launch INASLA took place. To most people, it demonstrated that whatever differences we may think we have, there is strength in unity and that we



Rev Norman Giggs

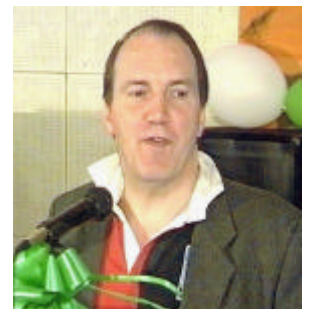
all belong to the same country.

The launching ceremony took place in the conference room of the church hall, which was bedecked with the national flag and festooned with the green, white and blue colours of Sierra Leone. The centrepiece was an impressively framed full-size INASLA emblem.

Speaker after speaker praised the efforts of the organisers and exhorted them to do all that was necessary to embrace the true Sierra Leonean spirit of love, unity, justice and forgiveness.

Among the distinguished guest speakers were the Liberal Democrat MP for London Southwark, Hon. Simon Hughes (pictured below) and the administrator of the Methodist Church at Walworth Road, Reverend Norman Giggs (left), who is well known to many Sierra Leoneans living in South London.

Mr Hughes noted the importance of an organisation like INASLA and spoke of the beauty and warmth of Sierra Leone and its people when he visited Bo and Freetown. He observed that the launching of an organisation, which embraces other Sierra Leonean organisations, on the anniversary of the country's independence, reinforced what he witnessed in Sierra Leone, namely, Sierra Leoneans wanting to succeed after a decade of conflict. Those living in the United Kingdom, said Mr Hughes, were



Simon Hughes MP

now putting this into practice. He said that the enthusiasm of ordinary Sierra Leoneans whom he saw and met during his visit to our country was proof enough that the country wanted and deserved peace. The Honourable Member for Southwark also commented that the dignified and loving spirit of the Sierra Leonean community now being demonstrated not only in London but also in other parts of the United Kingdom was clear proof that Sierra Leoneans living abroad, far from their home country, want to create their part of West Africa in the UK, spreading the message of goodwill to all. Mr Hughes ended by offering to become an honorary member of INASLA.

Veteran broadcaster John Sorbah Greene (right) was there to give his support and recalled that previous efforts to create a similar organisation had failed because of a number of reasons. He said he felt proud to be addressing fellow Sierra Leoneans on the anniversary of Independence Day, noting that he was a commentator at the Brookfields Stadium, during celebrations in April 1961 to mark Sierra Leone's Independence.

The interim Chairman of INASLA, Michael Fofanah, in his speech outlining the objectives of the organisation, insisted that it was not a political organisation but a community-driven body whose aim was to cater for the needs of all Sierra Leoneans. He said that membership was open to Sierra Leoneans in other organisations and that their contribution and help towards promoting or furthering the work of INASLA would be always most welcomed. He told the audience that a number of priority areas had already been identified. The most urgent were:

- The launching of a truly Sierra Leonean community newspaper; and,
- Setting up of a resource centre. The resource centre, apart from providing a venue for the meetings of various groups and individuals, would also serve as an information centre, offering ancillary services such as social welfare advice, preliminary immigration advice and counselling, etc., and any other advisory facilities to help Sierra Leoneans discharge their responsibilities as law abiding residents of the United Kingdom.



The problems facing INASLA should not be underestimated. The demise of a similar organisation, ASLA, the Association for Sierra Leoneans Abroad, had been attributed to its hijacking by political groups and the lack of accountability by key members. Interim Chairman Fofanah and former members of ASLA, who were present at the launch, made it clear that INASLA was not a continuation of the former body. "We are a truly independent, non-political and community-oriented organisation catering for the needs of all Sierra Leoneans irrespective of whatever affiliation", he emphasised. He also revealed that INASLA would not be confined solely to London or to the UK: "We are in contact with fellow Sierra Leoneans in other parts of the world to co-ordinate the setting up of branches of INASLA", he pointed out.

Among the projects to be co-ordinated by INASLA will be a purposeful move to recognise the efforts and achievements of Sierra Leoneans. "We need to identify and reward the efforts of Sierra Leoneans in all fields - from the Arts and Sciences through the professions. We have people who have quietly and effectively contributed to our country's development as well as globally, who have never been given the credit or recognition they deserve", Micky added.



The launching ceremony also witnessed the handing over of funds previously held by ASLA, by its former President Idrissa Bangura (above), who gave wholehearted support to the new organisation.

A Sierra Leonean local government member, Councillor Columba Blango (left), welcomed the new initiative and appealed to all Sierra Leoneans to support an organisation that could be the central point for activities relating to the Sierra Leonean community. "We need to understand and appreciate our problems, for us to successfully plan forward," he added.

Sceptics question if the new body will not go the same way as ASLA and would want to know about any hidden agenda.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF INASLA

FELLOW Sierra Leoneans, friends and well-wishers, I am delighted to see the publication of the first non political content newsletter for our community abroad.



Michael 'Micky' Fofanah
Interim Chair of INASLA

As you maybe aware, INASLA is a non-political association helping to ensure that regular constructive social information flows among Sierra Leoneans and well-wishers. The association has kick-started the establishment of a Sierra Leonean

umbrella association - a main NGO abroad. We are trying to provide a forum whereby we can identify and participate as Sierra Leoneans who are deliberately focusing on social community development issues. We want this forum to be inclusive of every individual and group but not to compromise the promotion of political interests.

To achieve this aim, it is essential that a communication channel be established for information/knowledge to reach as many people as possible. This newsletter has provided the opportunity for us to start constructive dialogue and make use of our resources in social development.

The INASLA vision is based on our common love for our country, Sierra Leone. It is in view of this that every effort is being made to encourage individuals and groups to join INASLA for community development. Through INASLA, we can establish the largest association for Sierra Leoneans abroad that will advocate as well as address our concerns in the UK. We shall continue to spread the word for an agenda that will focus on 'addressing our social exclusion.' Besides, we can collectively support our people back home.

Meanwhile, I earnestly encourage every Sierra Leonean and well-wisher to fill our free membership form and join INASLA. We particularly want you to be on the mailing list of this free monthly newsletter so that you can read about matters of social and cultural interest to our community abroad and beyond. It is hoped that the contents of our effort will be of interest to our children, young people, women, the elderly and well-wishers alike. No doubt, with your support and increased readership,



we will be able to launch a community newspaper in the very near future. May the word be with you.

INASLA Launching Celebrations

(Continued from page 2)

This is understandable given the experiences of the past. There are those on the fence waiting to see if the interim officials will deliver an organisation that is worthy of the embrace they have asked for and the expectations that have undoubtedly been raised.

That the launching ceremony took place in South London, preceded by a march that started from Peckham, was not surprising. Peckham after all has the largest concentration of Sierra Leonean expatriates in London. Critics have charged that it also houses elements, which supported perpetrators of the carnage in Sierra Leone. But INASLA officials are quick to point out that Peckham is host to a large community of Sierra Leoneans, including political activists; but not all Sierra Leoneans in that part of London were so inclined.

The organisers have given the assurance that all are welcome and that even those who might have supported the perpetrators of the horrible events in the country would be free to become members. By interacting with other sections of the Sierra Leonean community, such persons would come to realise that there is more to being a Sierra Leonean than engaging in the destruction of their own society and communities.

INASLA's Financial Secretary, Herbert Marlin, writes:

AS a fledgling organisation, INASLA needs your continued support both morally and financially.



Although membership is free and subscription is by donation, we would encourage all members and well-wishers to consider making a regular financial contribution to INASLA.

Like all other organisations, INASLA needs sufficient funds to implement its future plans. The rate at which the objectives can be met will depend on how quickly

we are able to raise funds. We are grateful to those members who have made a contribution in cash and kind over the last six months, towards the day to day running of this organisation.

In order to budget for future projects, we need to be able to estimate how much income we are likely to receive during the year from subscriptions and other sources. Therefore, by making a monthly contribution, you will be helping INASLA to plan future activities more effectively. If five members made a monthly contribution of £5, the amount raised could pay for the hire of a meeting room.

It is important that contributors know what their money is being spent on. We have a policy of transparency and accountability in INASLA, which is underpinned by a monthly financial report that is available to everyone. I intend to provide a summary of funds generated and used during the month beginning with this edition of our newsletter. I shall also be keeping you informed of what our plans are regarding fundraising activities in the future. As chairman of the fund raising committee, I would like to ask other members to come up with ideas for boosting our finances.

In November 2001, INASLA was awarded a grant of £500 by Scarman Trust, a donor agency in London, as part of the Community Champion initiative. This grant was awarded to help kick start the organisation and there is a further £500 to be paid to INASLA.

We were also fortunate to be awarded a grant of £1000 by The Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest Fund. This award was made to help meet the costs of launching INASLA on 27th April, which amounted to just under £1200.

We are truly grateful to these donors for their generosity. I also want to thank all those Sierra Leoneans who have been contributing regularly to our funds and have helped to keep INASLA afloat.

... And Development Secretary, Francis Lemeh, writes:

THE historic foundation of the International Association for Sierra Leoneans Abroad (INASLA) was officially laid on the 27th April, 2002. This significant event happened at a time when peace was returning to our beloved country and we were marking our 41st Independence anniversary. Prior to that event, a group of concerned individuals had been meeting regularly to take on the challenges of establishing INASLA. They contributed their money, time and effort to the vision.

From its inception, INASLA has always advocated solidarity. In spite of our huge population in the UK – over 100,000

according to some estimates – Sierra Leoneans are probably among the most

excluded and marginalized ethnic groups in the UK. This has been due largely to the lack of cohesion and cooperation in our community. It would therefore be a great achievement if we could put aside our differences and personal pride, and collectively do something to change our terrible conditions.

There is no doubt that an increasing number of Sierra Leoneans are by now quite familiar with the basic objectives of INASLA. Nevertheless, for the benefit of those who don't know, I shall restate them here:

- To establish the largest non-political voluntary association for Sierra Leoneans abroad.
- To create awareness and provide accurate information about opportunities for individual and community development.
- To establish a Resource and Recreational Centre for Sierra Leoneans in the UK.
- To establish INASLA as a significant medium for facilitating community development programmes in Sierra Leone, rendering support to groups that are working to reduce poverty in our country.
- To recognise and respect the contributions of Sierra Leoneans abroad in sectors such as



Francis Lemeh

education, journalism, business, drama, music, media and other related community activities.

- To promote the economic advancement of its members, affiliates and well-wishers in the Diasporas.
- To become the leading provider of accurate information about events in Sierra Leone, for the resident community abroad.
- To facilitate social integration and foster better understanding among Sierra Leoneans and their contemporaries in the United Kingdom and beyond.
- To motivate our young people to achieve the highest levels of excellence in learning, and complement this with the best standards of discipline and personal behaviour.

Finally, I do encourage you to support our vision for social development through your membership, financial donations, and by placing your individual know-how at the disposal of INASLA in the service of our community.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF INASLA

1. To establish the largest non-political/non governmental voluntary association for Sierra Leoneans abroad:

- Serving as the main NGO for Sierra Leoneans living or resident abroad;
- Identifying and contacting individuals, groups, and well-wishers and liaising with Sierra Leone's Embassies and High Commissions abroad;
- Organising rallies of solidarity for all Sierra Leoneans to mark key events in the history and life of the country;
- Advertising and disseminating the aims and programmes of INASLA (through leaflets, posters, and banners);
- Engaging the media (newspapers and radio) to put across the perspective of indigenous Sierra Leone on issues concerning their country;
- Keeping abreast of developments taking place in their communities and informing the communities.

2. To facilitate information/knowledge on Sierra Leone social development matters:

- Through periodic publications, conducting symposia, workshop and academic seminars on Sierra Leone.

3. To establish a Resource and Recreational Centre for Sierra Leoneans:

- To secure a suitable, fully equipped and functional building/premises for INASLA and other community activities and events;
- To have on site a cadre of committed staff and volunteers, who would provide the very highest standards of service to the community.

4. To support efforts to reduce poverty in Sierra Leone:

- To liaise with local NGOs in Sierra Leone and with international agencies operating in the country;
- To undertake and/or support charitable and other projects intended for the benefit of Sierra Leoneans.

5. To recognise, respect and celebrate the contributions and achievements of Sierra Leoneans in the Diaspora, in Music and Art, Education, Science and Medicine, Law, Business, Finance, Information Technology, etc.

- To organise exclusive events. e.g., award ceremonies.
- To provide support, give appraisals and promote individual, group or organisational contributions.

INASLA - The International Association for Sierra Leoneans Abroad

A truly non-political social development association that is already developing to become the largest ever to unite Sierra Leoneans abroad. This is the organisation that will enable Sierra Leoneans abroad and well-wishers, to do more and make positive changes through the NGO process

- for themselves
- for the community
- for Sierra Leone

Join INASLA to enable you to participate in restoring our country's pride.

Sa Lone na we all yone.

Ring 07950 924 864 or 0207 733 7872 for more information about becoming a member.

Spread the word to everyone.

Don't just hear it ...share it!

UNITY IS STRENGTH

Should a wise man utter vain knowledge and fill his belly with the eastern wind? Should he reason with unprofitable talk, or with speeches wherewith, he can do no good? You shed fear and restrain prayers before God. For your mouth utters one's iniquity, and you choose to speak vainly. Your mouth condemns you.

For now is born, an idea within all Sierra Leoneans abroad, not just a simple word "INASLA" but a hard fact, meaningful, constructive, for all beloved and patriotic Sierra Leoneans. What a great idea for unity: coming together, putting hands together, and working together for progress. No more individual, sectional, tribal or old schools' group's development programmes aimed to better bits and bobs of Sierra Leone.

This approach has proved futile as the war is evident of our separatist approach only keeps the flame of hatred burning. We forget the simple fact that we cannot have a sectionalised understanding and implementation to any one issue affecting us all as Sierra Leoneans.

How would you feel one morning, opening your doors and finding your homeland, with all its wealth, a peaceful atmosphere and total bliss? How much more do we have to suffer for us to realise our purpose in life, and move towards a common goal for peace and prosperity.

INASLA is a word binding all Sierra Leoneans abroad together, for the future development programmes of Sierra Leone. In the past, we have tended to lose sight of the fact that we owe Sierra Leone far more than we have offered.

An important move for the success of INASLA would be the motivation of mobilising all our abilities towards a speedy rebuilding process. To reach these goals, Sierra Leoneans must create and develop good values, understanding the adage "unity is strength". We must refine our moral ethos for sustainable development both within the general Sierra Leonean community and ourselves.

In an appeal to all Sierra Leoneans INASLA would create programmes to bring together socially, every Sierra Leonean, thus, creating the atmosphere for resolving our various differences and difficulties.

To reach these goals, every member needs to be fully committed, by offering their diverse talents and knowledge to develop a fruitful agenda. In this light, we all need to submit ideas for consideration. If we address our problems

collectively, we then will be able to solve most of them effectively. We must realise that sceptics help make our aims and objectives viable because we need such obstacles to boost our endeavours and resolve towards successfully achieving our goals.

This is the decade for putting into practice the old adage "don't ask what Sierra Leone can do for you, but what you can do for Sierra Leone." This concept embodies total awareness, service and dedication. In achieving progress, we must welcome healthy competition,

encouraging all to join up and help in various progressive ways to realise our common goal.

In conclusion, it has to be said that our collective discussions for a better Sierra Leone will, ultimately, lead to the realisation that 'Unity is strength'.

Long live Sierra Leone, Long live our people, God bless us all.

Francis Juana, Italy

The INASLA CHORUS

INASLA,
INASLA,
INASLA na we all yone.
Leh we cam togeda,
Leh we wok togeda,
For mek we go befoh.
Sa Lone na mi yone,
Sa Lone na you yone,
Sa Lone na we all yone.
If a lek you en if you lek mi,
We go mek a bette home.

ARCHBISHOP GANDA'S BRIEF STOPOVER IN LONDON



Archbishop Ganda of Sierra Leone made a brief visit to London on Monday 17th June, on his way back to Freetown from the United States. He

conducted a mass of thanksgiving in North London, during which he relayed news of the recent appointment of the second indigenous Sierra Leonean, Rev Fr Patrick Koroma, the former the Catholic Education Secretary, as the new Bishop of the Diocese of Kenema. Guests included several priests who worked in Sierra Leone for many years.

The Ganda family in London treated guests to a sumptuous lunch.

***As we go to press, we hear that Bishop Koroma was installed in St Paul's Cathedral, Kenema, on Saturday 29 June, amidst great jubilation, with Vice President Berewa deputising for President Kabbah.

Community Notice-Board



ADULT BIRTHDAYS

Nurane Salaam & Lucy Salaam key members of INASLA, celebrated their birthdays on 5th and 12th June. Here's wishing both of you long life and God's choicest blessings.

Victor Sylver – Popular Sierra Leone/BBC Journalist, celebrated his special birthday on 23rd June. Best wishes from your INASLA friends.

Jennifer Durosinmi – July 3rd is your special day. Your family and friends wish you a very happy birthday and God's love and blessing

Josephus Manfred Bowling – Best wishes on your 65th birthday, which falls on 7th July. With love from your wife, Marion, children, relations & friends.



KIDS' BIRTHDAYS

Franold Lemeh – 10 yrs

Congratulations to Franold who will be 10yrs on the 8th July. Your parents, who are active INASLA members, wish you their love and God's blessing as you grow up to be a good lad.

Zainab Tarawallie – 10 yrs

Girl! Oh Girl! You're really growing up and will be 10 yrs on the 15th July. Your Mum Kadi wishes you peace, love and happiness and God's protection.

Melissa Vandi – 4 yrs

Melissa Vandi will be 4yrs on the 23rd July. Your Mum, Striebina & INASLA are proud of you and thank God for your dedication to education. Keep up the good work at school!

Lucy Mwansa – 10yrs.

Happy birthday to you and best wishes from your parents, Adama & Emmanuel. Good luck as you celebrate your birthday on the 18th July.

Jamestina Scott - 11yrs

You'll be a big girl on 2nd July. Your parents, James & Florence wish you love and happiness.

Hector Pratt (Jnr) – 7 yrs

Your big day was 7th July. Happy birthday wishes from your parents Hector & Komeh.

Send your children's birthday wishes and photos to INASLA and we will publish them.

WEDDING BELLS

Patrick Gbanie Kandeh, General Secretary, INASLA, & his beautiful fiancée, **Martha Kanu** will tie the sacred knot on 27th July. INASLA joins their family and friends to wish them happiness and a blessed future.



OBITUARY

Mamme Conteh – Her death on Sunday 16th June is reported with profound sadness. INASLA expresses its condolence to relatives in the UK and Sierra Leone. May God grant her eternal rest.

IN MEMORY

John Barnard Fofanah - The Fofanah family in UK and Sierra Leone, wish to remember their late Dad who died in Sierra Leone on 22 April 2001. Age 71. Children are **Micky, Solo** and **John**.

John Albert Jusu – Sam & Jennifer in the UK join their Mum and other family members in the UK & Sierra Leone to mark the 4th memorial of Pa Jusu who was buried in Sierra Leone. Age 67.

Dr Stuart – The death is reported of Dr Stuart, renowned General Practitioner in Freetown. He died in Manchester. INASLA members express their heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

What's On?

KABASLOT-N-KOTOKU Production - Coming up live at the Lewisham Theatre on Saturday 21st and Sunday 22nd Sept 2002, will be Shafumi Garber's masterpiece – "So Na Mi Mama Are Marred?". Time 7.30pm for 8.00pm start. Do you remember "I Can't Get You Off My Mind? Well, this time they promise it will be a spectacular event.

OUTING TO EASTBOURNE -The Sierra Leone Fellowship, Bermondsey will have their annual outing to Eastbourne on **Saturday 27th July 2002**. Dept – 8.30am; Tickets: Children = £6 Adult = £12. Proceeds to support charity.

Enterprises

KADMOS Enterprise – 3 Station Way, Rye Lane, Peckham SE15 1QT Specialists in tropical food & money transfer. Tel: 0207 732 5939 / Fax 0207 732 5939

Sierra Spot – 6 Arnside Street, Walworth, London SE17 2AP. Various African food and hair styling. For more information, contact Steve Swarray on 0207 701 2414.

Globalcrest Services Limited - 207 Camberwell Road, London SE5 OHG. Provide a variety of services including air cargo, money transfer, CDs, newspapers & magazines. Tel 0207 252 4300 Fax 0207 252 4311. Email: globalcrest474@netscapeonline.co.uk

Paradise Restaurant - 278 Camberwell Road SE5 Tel: 0207 701 1965. Specialists in mouth-watering African & Caribbean dishes. Just checkout the grove. You'll be glad you did.

Leone Supermarket - High Street, Peckham. An indigenous and friendly store that caters for consumers needs. Ahmed, the proprietor, is ever helpful and ready to provide for your needs Checkout 0207 701 4743.

Jays Travel & We Yone Money Transfer - No 1 Peckham Park Road, SE15 6TR Tel: 0207 639 7724/ 0207 639 9470. Best for money transfers to Sierra Leone and The Gambia. Travel agents for SNA and Red Air Flights to Freetown and Banjul.

NEWS FROM SALONE....

Peaceful elections held

Sierra Leone's first post war elections, which were held in a relatively peaceful atmosphere on 15 May, have been universally acclaimed as "free and fair". Victory went President Tejan Kabbah and the ruling Sierra Leone Peoples Party (SLPP), which won 83 of the 112 ordinary seats in Parliament, giving it an absolute majority. The All People's Congress (APC), led by Ernest Bai Koroma, came second with 27 seats and, to everyone's surprise, AFRC coup leader Johnny Paul Koroma's Peace and Liberation Party (PLP) won two seats. The RUF and six other political parties failed to achieve the necessary 12.5% threshold and did not therefore win a seat in the new Parliament. There has been a new mood of optimism and great expectations for peace and progress throughout the country.



...And Kabbah is sworn in

On Sunday 19 May, with the Presidential vote moving overwhelmingly in his favour, President Kabbah was swiftly sworn in for a second five-year term, along with his new vice President, former Justice Minister and Attorney General, Solomon Berewa. The newly appointed Chief Justice Abdulai Timbo conducted the ceremony. Kabbah afterwards formally proclaimed the end of the country's 10-year civil war.



Send your adverts and messages to INASLA
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