

## *LETTER FROM LUCY*

I am delighted to report that this year's working vacation in Sierra Leone was extremely productive! On May 6, 2010, I departed from New York, and, on May 7, finally arrived in Freetown, to be welcomed by my sister Annie Bangura, the Managing Director of The Magic Penny Sierra Leone, and my friend Mamie Caulker, the Treasurer. They met me at the airport, smiling broadly and welcoming me home. As we drove to the ferry on the first leg of my local visit, we stopped to stock up on wonderfully fresh mangoes and other fruits and vegetables, and tasty smoked fish that filled the stalls at the docks.

On May 13th, Annie and I headed to Shenge to pay our respects to our aunt, Paramount Chief Doris Lenga Gbarbior Caulker II, who was recently crowned the new chief of Kagboro Chiefdom (this is the equivalent to running a county). Shenge is the seat of government for Kagboro Chiefdom and Bompehtoke, our Magic Penny pilot village, is located here. We were also in time to celebrate the 85<sup>th</sup> birthday of Mrs. Naomi Barrow Sumner, our revered relative. As is our custom, all family members wore various styles of dresses made from the same fabric design. Such variety of dresses in the same fabric is called aseobi (ashwebi). Dressing in this manner is a mandatory custom for significant occasions in Sierra Leone.

On May 16, Annie and I continued on to Bompehtoke to check on The Magic Penny projects. I am happy to report that the construction of the school is progressing as planned and we expect construction to be completed by the early November. Roofing (red!) has been installed on the school building and I was assured that wiring for electrical power, installation of floors, and painting of walls will soon follow.

The Magic Penny Sierra Leone negotiated and secured the agreement of the Government of Sierra Leone (GOSL) to build a second classroom building as the government's contribution to The Magic Penny project. At the time of my visit, this building had been delayed due to inexplicable government red tape. But I am pleased to report that upon appeal and intervention by The Magic Penny Sierra Leone, this glitch has been resolved and work is back on track; the government has even hired The Magic Penny contractor to

complete the GOSL's part of the project!

While in Bompehtoke, we held our annual meeting with the elders who thanked us for our efforts on behalf of their children. As requested, I now convey their gratitude to The Magic Penny New York and to all of our donors, extending the elders' deepest appreciation for the enormous patience and support that has allowed these projects to be realized. An important new issue emerged during this meeting – the elders requested that one of the classrooms be used for a junior high class, as there is no school nearby for children who wish to continue their education beyond primary grades. Without opportunities for continuing their education, the potential for social problems escalates. Boys may get so disillusioned that they drop out of school altogether, while girls may get pregnant and hard won progress is then reversed. Clearly this is a critical matter, and, while complicated, it may point a direction for the future.

Annie and I returned to Freetown, and then made a second trip to Bompehtoke on June 15, accompanied by a certified engineer whom we secured to inspect and verify the integrity of the completed construction. We also obtained the commitment of The Magic Penny contractor to carry out any recommendations made by this engineer. We can all be reassured that all aspects of construction will now meet his rigorous standards.

On this last trip to the village I distributed drawing paper, colored pencils and crayons to all of the children. With a little encouragement and much creativity, they produced drawings which became our first batch of note cards – you may purchase these from The Magic Penny website [www.themagicpenny.org](http://www.themagicpenny.org) if you would like to support these efforts.

I returned from my visit to Sierra Leone invigorated and pleased. The dream of building a primary school was more complicated than we all had imagined and the journey has been hard and long. But I now know that the Bompehtoke primary school will open in

January 2011, ready to serve about 400 children! I am sure we can all agree that it has been worth it – what is more, none of it would have happened without you.

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR PAST, PRESENT AND CONTINUING  
SUPPORT!**

Lucy Sumner, President