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**\*\*\* PRESS RELEASE \*\*\***

**MIRACLE CORNERS SECURES LAND FOR YOUTH CENTER IN KONO, SIERRA LEONE**  
*Field Visit with MCW Associate Executive Director Focuses Attention on Plans for a  
Second MCW Youth Center*

**FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE, June 29, 2009** – Alfred Hanssen, MCW Associate Executive Director, and a delegation of Miracle Corners Sierra Leone (MCSL) leaders traveled to Kono, a district in the eastern most part of Sierra Leone, in mid June to begin preparations for building a new youth center and to focus attention on the country’s continuing efforts to create opportunities for its youth following a decade-long civil war.

“There is a lot we can do to expand opportunities for social entrepreneurship across the country,” Hanssen said. “In particular, we hope to create alternatives to mining for the youth in the district, which abounds with diamond and gold mines. The impact of the war in Kono was extremely intense so there is a real demand for entrepreneurship training and skills development for youth. We believe MCW could have a major impact on how this region is perceived in the country and around the world.”

Ishmeal Kamara, a youth activist from Freetown explained: “We hope that the center will present youth living in the area with the understanding that there are more options to them than mining, which the International Labor Office (ILO) has labeled a modern day form of slavery.”

During the five-day visit, the team met with Paramount Chief Saquee V of Koidu Town to discuss the project, identify local partners, and to explore ways to ensure that the center successfully delivers services to youth. The Chief also presented MCW with ten acres of donated land on the border of Sukudu village. He explained that the site is strategically positioned between several villages in order to serve a large number of youth.

After the meeting, the MCW team toured the site with the Sukudu Chief. They also met with local youth activists and participated in a discussion with the young leaders on how this new MCW center can best serve the district.

Hanssen was joined by MCW field intern Julia Walcott, who volunteered at MCW’s center in Freetown for five months, and youth activists from the MCW youth center in Freetown, including Charlie Kamara, an African studies and law graduate, Philip Salis Bangura, a former Barcelona soccer player, and Ishmeal Kamara, who works at the Tourism Ministry.

“These three team members from Freetown will take the lead in incorporating the Freetown model into the vision of the new Kono center,” Hanssen said. “Discussions are underway about possibly bringing MCW Freetown members to Kono to co-lead the project’s development.”

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MCW was invited to build a center in Kono by Sierra Leone Vice President Samuel Sam Sumana in March 2009, when he delivered a keynote address on behalf of President Ernest Bai Koroma at MCW's annual gala dinner celebration in New York.

MCW's youth centers—in Freetown, Sierra Leone, Arusha and Songea, Tanzania, and Ntarama, Rwanda—offer learning opportunities for youth, particularly in the areas of information technology (IT), entrepreneurship, and foreign language development Programs at the Kono center will be tailored to the unique conditions and resources of the region. For example, the MCW team is considering developing a tourism attraction to help financially sustain the center.

### **About Miracle Corners of the World (MCW)**

Miracle Corners of the World (MCW) is a non-profit organization that empowers youth to be positive agents of change, to improve their lives and contribute to their communities. Based in New York, MCW serves youth worldwide through leadership training, community development, oral healthcare, and partner initiative programs. For more information on MCW, visit [www.miraclecorners.org](http://www.miraclecorners.org).



Left to right: Julia Walcott, Philip Salias Banguara, Doris of Sukudu Village, Chief Saquee V of Koidu Town, Alfie Hanssen, Charlie M. Kamara, and Ishmeal A. Kamara.

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