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28/2/2008 - USA - "From war to peace: education"



(ANS – Baltimore) - On 27th February, in the University of Maryland, Mr Joe Wiah delivered a lecture entitled "From War to Peace: Education, Training and Family Reunion for Liberia's War-Affected Children." Mr Wiah is the Deputy Director of Don Bosco Homes, Liberia. He is a Liberian social worker who specialises in child protection and youth development. Mr Wiah joined the staff of Don Bosco Homes in 2000 and has served as the Street Shelter

Supervisor, Assistant Head of Child Protection Unit, DDRR (Disarmament) Coordinator, and Coordinator of the Skills Training Program.

On 26th February Mr Wiah gave a similar lecture to staff and students on the Master of Arts Program in Conflict Resolution at Georgetown University, Baltimore, and on 7th March he will be speaking at the George Mason University near Washington DC. Mr Wiah is being assisted during his tour by John Monibah, the Media Officer of Don Bosco Homes, who is one of the 12 African Journalists sponsored for an 8 month Humphrey Fellowship programme at the University of Maryland.

The Salesians have been present in Liberia since before the war there. By the middle of August 1990, all the Salesians had left Monrovia and environs because of the intense fighting. At Christmas 1990 Sean Devereux, who was later killed in Mogodishu by warring factions, wrote to Fr Michael Winstanley, Salesian Provincial in the UK, "It may be wise to consider some new presence here. One possibility is working with the ever-increasing number of street kids. Now there are gangs of boys, homeless, that roam around Waterside, the Freeport etc. They are dangerously idle. We need to get an orphanage, boys' town, sleeping and eating hostel, off the ground. I think more than ever this is a call for Don Bosco's work."

In March 1991, Fr Harry O'Brien and Bro Donald MacDonald returned. They were met at the airfield by Sean who was in charge of the UN food distribution.

In April 1991, Bro Joe Glackin and Fr Michael O'Meara returned from the UK, and the seeds of the Don Bosco Homes, with its night shelters, courier service, etc, as well as the new Don Bosco Technical school, began to grow.

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