

Polly McLean

I went to Sierra Leone with Search for Common Ground because I wanted to re-engage, first hand, with the challenges of life in a developing country. Things can get very comfortable in England, and I wanted to remind myself what fellow humans live through. I'd never been to such a poor country before, and I was struck by the fact that alongside our preconceived notions of Sierra Leone – corruption, dodgy diamond trading, fallout from the trauma of war – people are also more than capable of having a great time: how often do I dance like that?!

Unusual for me in my travel experiences was meeting, and having the opportunity for in-depth conversation with, a wide variety of highly educated people engaged in social change work. Because I had a lot in common with them, I appreciated the people we met as fellow human beings – colleagues – in a way that I haven't when meeting locals while backpacking for instance. I came back feeling fortunate to in relative peace and prosperity in this country, full of fire about the injustice of that discrepancy, and with huge respect for the work of SFCG. In my opinion no-one should be dissuaded from visiting Sierra Leone with SFCG from concerns about personal health and security – we were extremely well looked after, and though challenged, never too much so.