



January 2020

Dear Supporters and Friends of St Joseph's School

Sister Mary is enjoying her retirement and is delighted that her great friend Sister Amala is now in charge although she still visits the school regularly to keep an eye on things! Over Christmas both Sisters were involved in distributing rice and onions from the school to more than 400 adults and 300 children.



A group of local people in Sister Mary's home town of Dungleo, have formed a committee and nominated her for Donegal Person of the Year 2020. The result will be known in early 2020. Whether she's chosen or not, she has done amazing work for the education of Hearing Impaired and Special Needs children in Sierra Leone, both in St Joseph's School and setting up the Special Educational Needs Department in UNIMAK, the University established 10 years ago in Makeni. She and the Cluny Sisters have supported the most vulnerable people in Sierra Leone; the poor, the leprosy patients, the ebola families, the civil war victims and

amputees for the last 47 years. Wonderful tributes from all over the world have been written about Sister Mary to support her nomination. We are all very proud of everything she has achieved; she leaves a wonderful legacy behind her.

While Sister Mary begins her well-deserved retirement, Sister Amala is working hard to continue to build on the amazing achievements of the staff and students at the school. Unfortunately Sister Mary's two assistants, Carmel and Thabile have now come to the end of their contracts so Sister Amala is extremely busy wearing a number of hats at the moment! But she always finds time to acknowledge the support she receives from far and wide. In her Christmas greeting to us she said: *I take this opportunity to say a big thank you for all that you have done for our school and especially your great support and donations. If your help had not reached us at the correct time the school might not have reached the stage it's now at. For that I am very, very grateful to you and all the donors. May God bless you all richly.*

We will be talking to her at length over the next few weeks and months to see how the Friends of St Joseph's can best continue to support her as she takes the school into the next decade.

A recent visitor to the school, Helen, a Speech and Language Therapist, worked alongside the school's educational audiologist, Monica, for two weeks, assessing the children's speech skills and training the teachers. She told us her experience of the school was inspirational. She said "I found that the



children were happy, well cared for and ready to learn, despite the challenges that they faced. The teachers were dedicated to the children's learning and well-being and many of them had a breadth of knowledge that was clearly due to the intensive training and support offered by Monica and the lovely St Joseph's team".

Please help to support Sister Amala as she builds on the solid foundation Sister Mary worked so hard to create. We'd love to hear from anyone who might be keen to help through fundraising – however big or small. And if you would like to donate in any way please email us at forthehearingimpaired@gmail.com or go to www.virginmoneygiving.com/charities/FriendsofStJosephs

Please note that if you donate to the school through the Virgin Money Giving website we are no longer able to acknowledge your kind donation personally unless you tick the consent to marketing box. Unless you do that Virgin will protect your privacy and will not release any of your details so we won't know your name or your email address. Alternatively you can email us to tell us you've made a donation.

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Those of you who have been following regular news from the school on its Facebook page will have noticed that there has been a pause in the service due to the departure of Thabile. We hope normal service will be resumed in the not too distant future!

With all good wishes for 2020 from Linda Freestone and the Trustees.

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