



October 2020

Dear Friends,

As St Joseph's School for the Hearing Impaired tries to give its students the education they deserve, while adhering to the government guidelines to minimise any risk from the coronavirus, Sister Amala took time out of her busy schedule and sent us news and photos of the school.

New School Year

The school fully reopened on 5th October and there is plenty of demand for boarding and non-boarding places. Sister Amala is desperately trying to accommodate as many as possible with limited resources. She was confident the teaching staff would be paid by the government now the school is fully reopened, unfortunately this has not happened yet. It's a constant struggle to get all the teachers paid properly by the Ministry of Education.



There are many plans for the farm. Sister Amala has been in talks with both the charities Caritas Germany and Trocaire with a view to beginning the production of palm oil and garri (flour made from the tuberous roots of the cassava plant). The chickens and the pigs are doing well and will not only provide a source of food for the school but will also provide a source of income. Ground nut, peppers and corn have been planted.

The harsh climate of Sierra Leone has a brutal effect on the buildings and maintenance work is extensive and continuous. Repairs are currently needed on the floor tiles in the corridors and the wall pillars of the school.

New Project for the Friends of St Joseph's School:

There are many drains on the income of the school which makes it difficult for Sister Amala to fund some of the bigger projects. She has asked if the Friends would consider making a substantial contribution towards the cost of a new school vehicle. For the past few months she has had problems with the old one. It is continually in the garage for repairs. Sister Amala relies on this vehicle to take the eggs from the farm to the supermarket for sale, to go to the bank and to purchase food and equipment for the children. So she is finding life even more of a challenge at the moment. The ideal vehicle for the school is a Toyota Hi-Lux Double Cabin 4x4 Pickup but the one she would like is approximately €21,100. Joe Manning, the Honorary Consul for Sierra Leone in Ireland (see below) has contacted an Austrian NGO who has agreed to pay 50% of the cost. If you can help in any way to raise the remaining 50% please go to:

www.virginmoneygiving.com/charities/FriendsofStJosephs

Sister Amala sends this message to you: *"Once again I thank you for all your support all these years. I am very very grateful to you all. My prayerful wishes go to all of you. May God bless you richly. Praying for you all. Please keep us in your prayers"*.

Monica Tomlin, the school's educational audiologist, flies out to Sierra Leone from the UK next week. She will stay at the school for six weeks to continue her work assessing the children's hearing, fitting hearing aids, teaching the children and training the teachers. She will be taking much needed audio equipment made possible by your generous donations. We wish her well and we hope to bring you more news of her work in our next newsletter.



Joe Manning, the Honorary Consul for Sierra Leone in Ireland, has recently become involved with St Joseph's School and we asked him if he would introduce himself to you all:



"I worked in education and rural development in Sierra Leone in the mid seventies. I returned home after my time there. During the civil war a group of us, ex volunteers, came together to lobby the Irish government to get more involved in Sierra Leone. In 2004 Ireland announced its intention to adopt Sierra Leone as a Programme Country.

Ireland does not have a large aid budget, approx. €800m annually, so it concentrates on a small number of countries, known as Programme Countries. At present there are nine, including Sierra Leone. A commitment is given to the country to stay with it for at least 25 years, thus, in theory anyway, encouraging longer term planning.

As recognition of our efforts, the then government in Sierra Leone asked me to be their Hon. Consul. As Hon Consul I don't have any real powers. However while Ireland has an embassy in Freetown, Sierra Leone does not have one in Dublin. This does give me a little more clout; it helps with opening

doors and it establishes a degree of credibility. Also I have a very nice letterhead which impresses people hugely!

I was in Makeni, visiting Unimak, in January of this year and stayed in the guesthouse in St Joseph's School. While there Sister Amala asked if I could help. Sister Mary was retiring and Sister Amala felt that bigger donor agencies were becoming more demanding with regard to governance, sustainability and longer term planning. This is becoming a condition for all projects, not just St Joseph's.

I have agreed to help Sister Amala in these areas. So far I have spoken and written to five actual and potential donors who all appreciate what St Josephs has achieved and want it to continue and flourish. Our task now is to prepare proposals for them, addressing their concerns mentioned above".

We will be working with Joe to support Sister Amala and will bring you updates of any developments in future newsletters.

Sister Mary arrived safely back in Ireland and is now enjoying spending time with her family and walking in the beautiful Donegal countryside.



We wish her well in her retirement. If there are any ways in which you could support the school and continue Sister Mary's legacy, through fundraising activities, or raising awareness among friends and family, we would be really grateful for any ideas or help. You can set up a fundraising page or donate at: www.virginmoneygiving.com/charities/FriendsofStJosephs

Stay safe and well in these uncertain times.

With all good wishes from Linda Freestone (Chair) and the Trustees.

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Legislation was introduced in May 2018 strengthening the rights of individuals to protection of their personal data held by organisations. We have prepared a privacy statement, which has been published on our website (www.friendsofstjosephskids.org)