



PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES

Annual Report 2021



*Distributing school materials - 2020-21 Academic Year
Umaru & Abubakaar (sponsored by Isobelle)*

WHERE IS SIERRA LEONE?

Did you know?

Population (2021): 8.1 million

[Australia (2021): 25.7 million]

Human Development Ranking (2020): 182/189

[Australia (2020): 8/189]

Life Expectancy (2021): 55.18

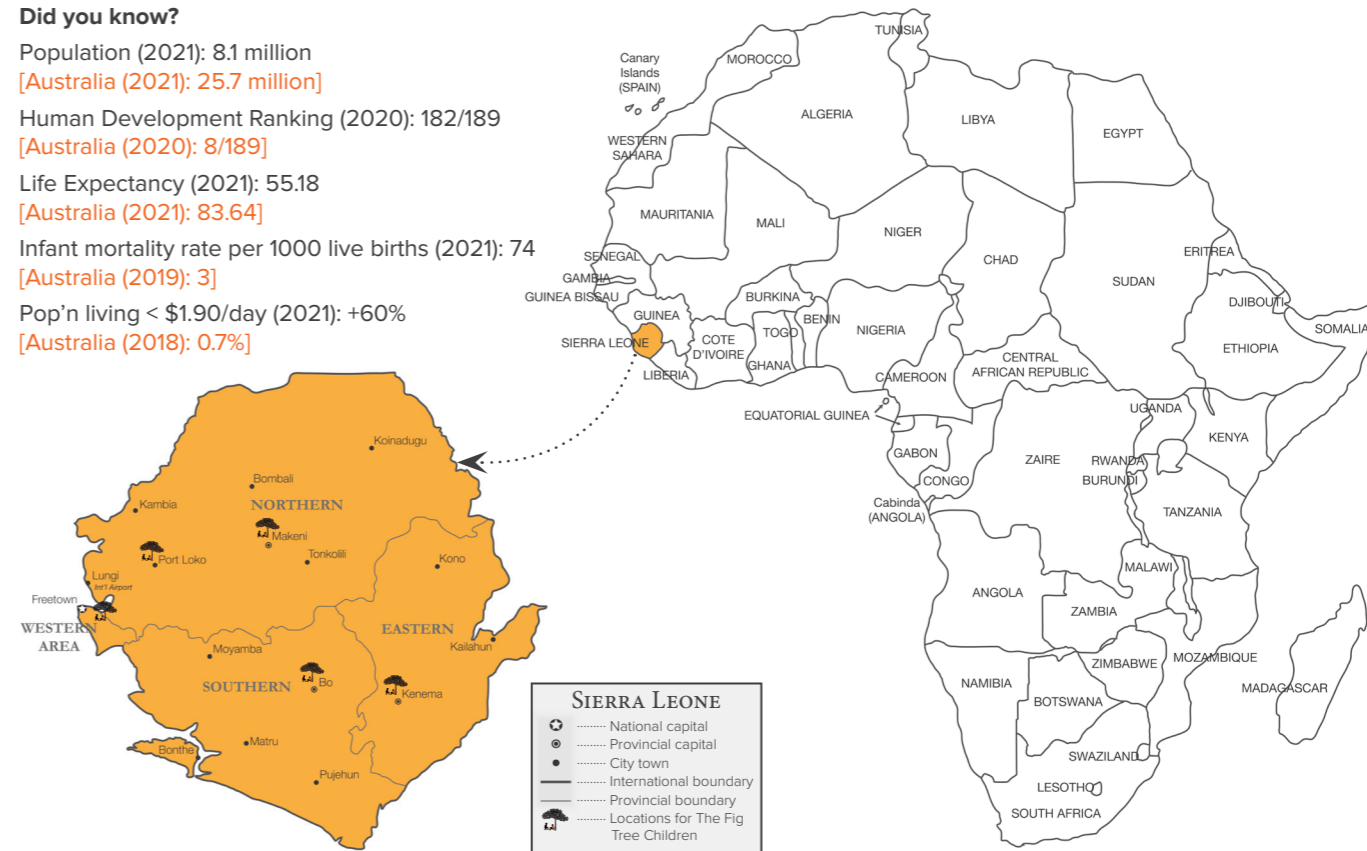
[Australia (2021): 83.64]

Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births (2021): 74

[Australia (2019): 3]

Pop'n living < \$1.90/day (2021): +60%

[Australia (2018): 0.7%]





Salay (Front, sponsored by Theresa & Rhys), Michael (rear left, sponsored by Jodie) on day of the African Child, 16 June 2021. We provided lunch.

Our Mission:

To give opportunities to orphaned and vulnerable children and youths in Sierra Leone.

Contents

2-3:	Message from Jeremy Davies, President
4:	Focus Areas of Intervention
5:	Executive Summary from Reverend Fr. Peter Konteh
6-8:	About us
9:	Child Wellbeing Reports
10:	Educating Children
11:	Emergencies
12-13:	Campaigns
14:	Events & Covid's Impact
15:	The Fig Tree Gift Shop
16:	Maintaning Increased Support
17-18:	Developing our Strategy
19:	Financial Statement
20:	The Beauty of Sierra Leone - Entrepreneurial Women



First of all, thank you for your continued support over the last year. The impact of Covid-19, in particular personal movement and travel restrictions, have affected all of us to different degrees and the carers and children are keen for us to pass on their thanks and good wishes for the help you have provided. So, what has been the effect of Covid-19 on the Fig Tree Children over the last year and how have people managed?

Covid-19 impact in Sierra Leone:

The Government of Sierra Leone is experienced in dealing with highly contagious and fatal diseases given the Ebola outbreak of 2014-2016. As the global pandemic unfolded, the government put in place various containment measures, including closing schools and international borders, suspending weekly regional wholesale markets, and introducing an overnight curfew and tight restrictions on inter-district travel - even before the first case in Sierra Leone was detected on 31 March 2020.

The direct health impact of the pandemic in Sierra Leone has been limited, according to official data, with only about 5,575 cases and 102 fatalities reported up to July 2021 (World Bank Ref. 1)

Fig Tree Children's Response:

You provided support with "Food Parcels", "Veronica Buckets & Soap for Clean Water" and "Radios for On-Air Learning" campaigns in early 2020 – the latter giving homes and community groups access to Sierra Leone's Home-Schooling Radio Service.

By July 2020 students with imminent examinations were allowed back to school and in October 2020 school resumed for all students. The disruption inevitably had consequences: twenty-eight percent of returning students are repeating a class, compared to only 8 percent for the 2017-2018 school year as measured by the 2018 SLIHS (Sierra Leone Integrated Household Survey). For the Fig Tree Children, we had four students repeating a year, compared to one repeat in previous years. Widespread fears about increased pregnancy in young girls, experienced during previous school closures, do not seem to have been realized (World Bank Ref 1)

The Fig Tree Children In-country Manager, Aminata, continued to visit carers and children, liaised with schools and continued monitoring well-being, to be able to provide any extra assistance when needed. Travel around the country proved more difficult – to Bo, Makeni and Kenema – and extra care had to be taken to keep everyone involved safe.

Outlook for Sierra Leone (World Bank Ref 1.):

Looking at Sierra Leone’s overall situation, the World Bank assessment is that with a push from domestic demand, Sierra Leone’s economy is projected to recover from the COVID-19 contraction but grow more slowly than before COVID-19. Real GDP is expected to rebound by 3.0 percent in 2021/22 - an upward revision of 0.8 percentage point (pp) relative of the earlier, 2020 Spring, forecast.

Core inflation, which excludes highly volatile food and energy prices, declined from 24.3 in December 2019 to 9.6 percent in December 2020, suggesting that the underlying inflationary trend is falling.

We are continuing to make good progress on the Strategy we presented in last Year’s Annual Report (see ‘Developing our Strategy’ Section p.17-18) and have also strengthened our Australian and Sierra Leone Management Teams.

As a result of your contributions seventy-five children and young people have been able to attend schools and colleges and you have provided over 27,000 days of support during 2020/21 (around 150,000 days of support since the Fig Tree Children started in 2014).

Without your help and that of our partners, none of this would be possible. We are grateful to have your generous support and the carers and children want us to pass on their huge, “Thankyou”.

Jeremy

Ref 1. <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/977131623908125668/pdf/Sierra-Leone-2021-Economic-Update-Welfare-and-Poverty-Effects-of-the-COVID-19-Pandemic.pdf>



Jane Shakespeare (Founder and CEO) with husband, Jeremy Davies (President) celebrating Jeremy’s birthday, Feb 23 2021

THEMATIC FOCUS AREAS OF INTERVENTION

The Fig Tree Children is a Charity - a not-for-profit organisation - with its focus areas of intervention designed to have a life changing impact on the lives of vulnerable children. The target beneficiaries include Children/Youths (boys and girls) of School going and tertiary education age.

The thematic areas of intervention are:

No	Activity portfolio	Target Beneficiaries
1	Educational support, Payment of tuition upfront to different Private Schools for 75 children, distribution of learning and school materials, also payment of tertiary education - currently for six children/youths.	Seventy-five (75) in Bo, Kenema, Allen Town, Newton, Waterloo, Goderich, Makeni and Lakka respectively.
2	Primary health care, provision of clothing, provision of rain wear, bedding, mattresses, daily need items and payment of house rent for a few people.	75 children.
3	Payment of Monthly Allowances of 150,000 Leones for every child on the programme.	75 children and their carers.
4	Recreational activities for the children (e.g. Christmas and Easter Parties).	75 children.



Above: Hawa (sponsored by Cecilia and Bruce) receiving school materials for the 2020-21 Academic Year.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY *(by Reverend Fr. Peter Alpha Konteh):*

Every passing year, lives are not only being touched but, both the physical and emotional transformation is seen in the lives of these poor vulnerable and some orphaned children that the Fig Tree Charity has been supporting.

The year under review 2021 has been a year of mixed feelings, some celebration of progress and growth in the life of the children whose hope was at the brink of collapsing but now regained hope and celebrating the essence of life and happiness through the donations of our wonderful benefactors who have made it possible for these children to regain hope in the midst of their challenges.

As we are now in 2022, we are hopeful that the gains made academically, socially and psychosocially will be built on and we will be able to touch more lives collectively. Our goal is to leave no vulnerable child behind and we do so 'one child at a time'.

Thanks to all of our donors, friends and well wishers, your invaluable contribution has made this possible for all these amazing things to happen, we know together we can restore more hopes and build a better university.



Reverend Fr. Peter Konteh

ABOUT US:

The Fig Tree Children is a Brisbane based charity established by Jane Shakespeare in support of the work of Reverend Father Peter Konteh (Father of Priests and Director of Caritas, Freetown) in Sierra Leone. The aim is to provide opportunities to orphaned and vulnerable children and youths. Jane met Fr. Peter in February 2006 when she visited St. Mary's Children's Home, established in 1999 in response to the number of orphans created by the country's devastating 10-year civil war.

Many children suffered unspeakable horrors at the hands of rebels and were left to die in the streets. There was a desperate need for safe havens for children to rebuild their lives physically, emotionally and spiritually and Fr. Peter's home, St. Mary's in Bo, offered this outreach of love and support. In 2014, the Ebola virus has been responsible for creating even more orphans on

the streets of Sierra Leone and as a result providing homes for thousands of additional children is once again critical.

Fr. Peter was transferred to Freetown from St. Mary's in Bo and has continued his work with orphaned and vulnerable children there. He has built another children's home in Freetown caring for 26 orphaned children. The Fig Tree Children is working in partnership with Caritas Freetown to provide support for children identified as being in most need.

Our Sponsor Programme supports the carers of these children with a monthly allowance, paid to them directly, and by paying the child's school fees directly to the school and providing each of the children with school materials. At the end of June 2021, your sponsorships are directly supporting 75 children.

Right: Esther (sponsored by Kirstin) after receiving her school materials for the 2020/21 School Year.



TEAM SIERRA LEONE 2021



REV. FR. PETER KONTEH
Technical Advisor

Director of Caritas Sierra Leone and also the President of Priests in Sierra Leone. Fr. Peter helped Jane develop the team in Sierra Leone and is influential in how the charity is run there. Nothing happens without his say so.



AMINATA KPGAOI
In-Country Programme Manager

The Fig Tree Children's Programme Manager. Aminata brings valuable experience to our team on the ground; a professional, energetic, and enthusiastic team leader. Our children adore her.



THERESA KAMARA
Treasurer/Bookkeeper

Accountant for Caritas Freetown, Theresa oversees a number of Caritas partner's projects, one of them being The Fig Tree Children. She's professional and extremely diligent. Theresa sends us reports monthly on all Fig Tree activities.



ISHMEAL CHARLES
Board Member

A Programme Manager working for Healey IRF and Caritas-Freetown. Charles is a great mentor and motivator. His experience and professionalism working with large groups of volunteers is extremely valuable.



SAMUEL KONTEH
Board Member

Samuel is a Barrister-at-Law and Solicitor of the Superior Courts of Judicature of the Republic of Sierra Leone, currently practising as Managing Partner (MP)/Head of Chambers (HOC) of Sisay and Associates Law Firm, Eyatunde Chambers.



GRACE JONES
Board Member / HR

Grace is a highly experienced administrator, manager and workshop facilitator. Grace brings skills in business development, change management and microfinance to TFTC's Sierra Leone Management Team.



DR. ROBERT MOIKOWA
Board Member

Dr Robert Moikowa heads the Service Delivery and Performance Management Directorate for all Government Departments, Agencies and State-owned Enterprises in Sierra Leone. His experience makes him a valuable advisor to TFTC.

TEAM AUSTRALIA 2021



JANE SHAKESPEARE
Founder, Secretary & Marketing

A Graphic Designer. An overwhelming desire to want to do something more to help orphaned children in Sierra Leone (after visiting in 2006) led Jane to start The Fig Tree Children. Works full time pro bono for TFTC.



JAMIE SIMMONITE
Board Member

Being a member of The Fig Tree Children Board gives Jamie the opportunity to channel his strengths of Business, Relationships and ICT toward a greater cause.



JEREMY DAVIES
President

Jeremy has wide business experience gained from his years in senior corporate roles. Jane vouches that without Jeremy's cheerleading, expertise, compassion and sound advice, the charity would not exist.



NIALL URQUART
Board Member

Niall wants to use his experience running his own successful business as well as moderating community oriented social media pages to help TFTC make a difference with some of the world's most disadvantaged children.



ISOBELLE TORRALBA
Board Member

Involved in the Financial Services sector for over 30 years. Isobelle's commitment with sponsoring some of the children and above all her drive and experience supporting a range of charitable work makes her a critical member of our team.



DR GREGOR H. MEWS
Advisor

Greg developed a genuine curiosity to figure out what makes people feel cosy and comfortable in different environments around the globe. He is helping us to develop a 'Pathway to Employment' program.



WAYNE MACDONALD
Treasurer

Wayne is a practising Chartered Accountant with 20 years corporate experience. His passion for the children of Africa is fuelled by 35 years' experience growing up in Africa before migrating to Australia in 2008.

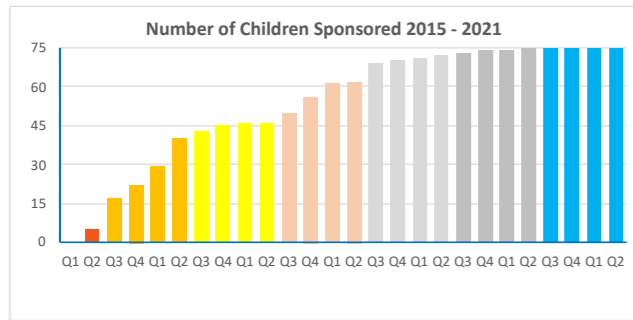


JAILENE SANTANA
Sustainable Development

Jailene's studies and work in International Environmental Studies, inspired by her desire to see a world in which poverty and unmet needs no longer exist is extremely valuable to TFTC Team.

CHILD WELLBEING REPORTS: A HOLISTIC APPROACH

As last year, increasing the number of children being supported has also been very carefully controlled this year. For us to reach out to more children is a big step. Because of Covid and not being able to travel this last year, we have decided not to take on more children and focus on giving holistic support to the children already in our program. Aminata undertakes individual wellbeing assessments for each child every month, as well as making regular visits to their schools (20 in total). We have continued to develop our holistic approach to support, seeking to consider the circumstances of each child and their carer – delivered directly to the points of need.



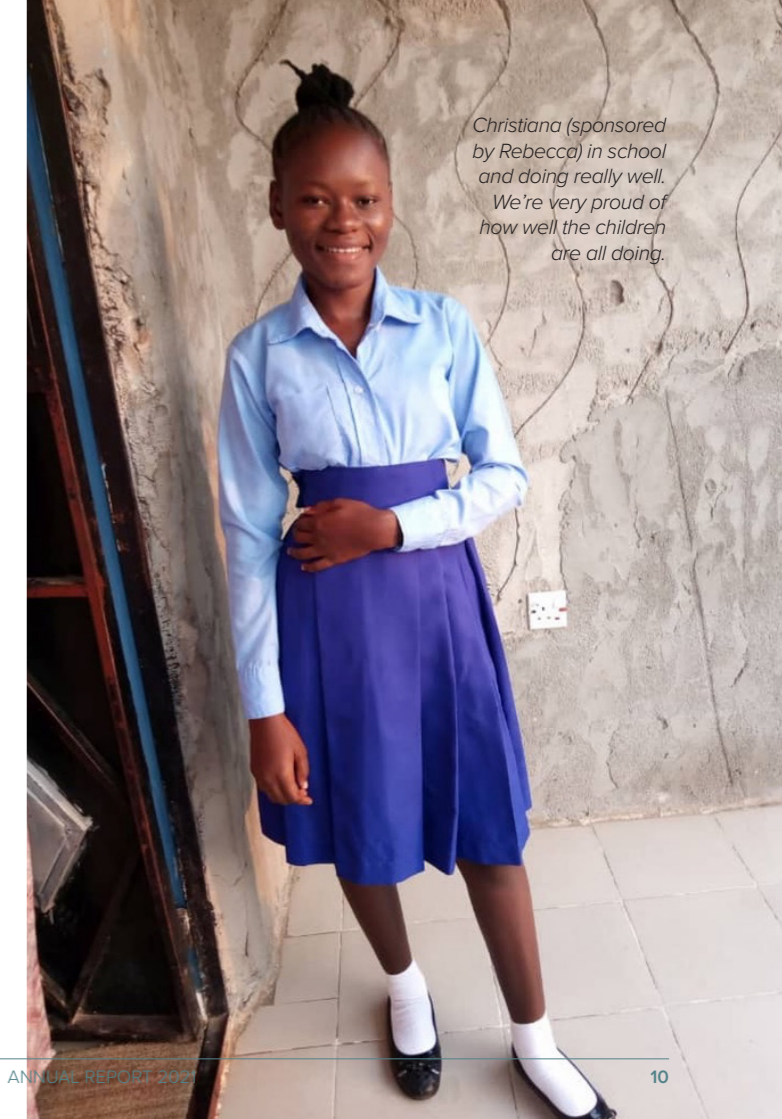
Hawa (sponsored by Trish) with Aminata (TFTC Programme Manager)

EDUCATING CHILDREN:

At the end of June 2021, there were 68 children in school, one not yet started school and six in Tertiary education. All of the children, except three, passed their exams and will move up into their next academic school year, the three that failed will repeat the year. We paid school fees and provided school materials for all of the children in August and September 2020.



Senesie (sponsored by Heather).



Christiana (sponsored by Rebecca) in school and doing really well. We're very proud of how well the children are all doing.



Simeon (sponsored by Vicki) in hospital (above), Oct 2020 and with his sister, Rosaline (also sponsored by Vicki) receiving food and clothing from us for Christmas 2020

EMERGENCIES:

Simeon became sick in October 2020. He was diagnosed with appendicitis. We arranged to cover the costs for Simeon to have his appendix removed. His sponsor very generously offered to meet this expense. Simeon had complications post-surgery and we arranged to have him admitted to hospital where he was diagnosed with malaria, typhoid, an infection and an ulcer. He was admitted for 5 days. Thankfully, Simeon recovered and is now doing well.

Malaria and typhoid are common illnesses in Sierra Leone and are big killers of children.



CAMPAIGNS:

FOOD & CLOTHING PARCELS FOR CHRISTMAS 2020:

For Christmas 2020, we ran a campaign to provide the children in our program with a food and clothing parcel. All of the children received clothes and their families were able to benefit from the food parcels we provided. Thank you to all of you who helped make this happen.



Above from left: Mariatu & Ishiatu (sponsored by Jane), Mariama (Sponsored by Lesley & Paul), Macy (Sponsored by Harry & Charlie).



Augusta (sponsored by Petrina)



Adama (sponsored by Isobelle) receiving a year's supply of sanitary pads.

SANITARY PADS FOR TWO ADAMAS:

The sanitary pad campaign is an ongoing campaign. Whenever someone donates to purchase sanitary pads through our website, we provide a girl in Sierra Leone with a year's supply. Many girls in Sierra Leone miss days from school each month because of their periods. By providing girls with sanitary wear we are helping to keep these girls in school during their menstrual cycles. While providing disposable pads is better than not providing pads, our aim is, where appropriate, to provide the girls with reusable sanitary wear (from EcoJC Pads) in future - better for the environment provided they have access to clean water and soap.



Adama (sponsored by Suzanne) receiving a year's supply of sanitary pads

EVENTS & COVID-19:

Covid-19 also affected our activities in Australia, where we raise most of the Fig Tree Children funds. Monthly sponsorship and donations are automatically collected and once a month are transferred into the Fig Tree Children Sierra Leone Bank Account - after small deductions for bank transfer and exchange rate charges. Support funds are then paid by Aminata to carers/children and, when required, to schools.

All other costs to operate The Fig Tree Children - including salaries, subsistence, travel, car hire, office and other operational expenses in Sierra Leone - are funded by the few profits made from the events we run in Australia: Fashion Shows; Movie Nights; Invited Lunches; etc.

This year we were only able to run one event due to Covid-19 restrictions and as a result our anticipated income was reduced by about \$8K. To compensate we cut and deferred costs wherever we could, we did not increase the number of children we support and, reluctantly, cancelled some events we generally fund each year in Sierra Leone: the Christmas party, A Day out at the Playground and A Day out at the Beach (both of which cost money and families in Sierra Leone cannot afford).

During this financial year, because of COVID-19 we held one event: in November 2020, Niall and Jane organised a fabulous breakfast at Method to the Madness in Kenmore.

Thank you to everyone who helped us make this event a success. Those who attended had a wonderful time and we raised over \$1,000 AUD.



method to the madness Breakfast MENU

Glass of Bucks Fizz on arrival
Juice, Tea & Coffee

Choice of:

A SERPENT'S EGG YOUR WAY

Two eggs (poached, fried or scrambled) with hash brown fries & mild chilli jam on sourdough. *gfo*

EGG & BACON ROLL

with chilli mustard jam, tasty cheese, tandoori mayonnaise & a hash brown. *gfo*

A BOWL FOR THE SULTANS

Tandoori Cauliflower, quinoa & sweet potato biryani, almonds, beetroot falafels, smashed avocado, pickles & cashew korma cream. *vg.gf.*

BUTTER CHICKEN BENEDICT

with kheema croquettes, greens, beetroot labneh, poached eggs & butter chicken hollandaise. *gf.*

SHAKSHUKA PUFF

Two eggs baked in a spicy tomato & wild mushroom sauce with grated paneer. *vg.*



Jane's first market at Peregian Beach with her little helper, Willow

THE FIG TREE GIFT SHOP:

In response to not being able to hold fundraising events, in February 2021, Jane started a social enterprise. The Fig Tree Gift Shop sells fair-trade hand-made products that are supporting talented artisans around the world. These can be purchased at markets and online and 50% of the profits are donated to The Fig Tree Children. This is also a great way to raise awareness.

Jane has also partnered with Threads of Hope and sells their beautiful handwoven friendship bracelets supporting girls in the Philippines. She is also supporting families in Mexico by selling delightful Guatemalan Worry Dolls and Mayan Legacy Mexican Hammocks. Details about these amazing products and the artisans who are behind making them can be seen at www.thefigtreegiftshop.com.au. The site also has its own blog and social media links: @thefigtreegiftshop



MAINTAINING INCREASED SUPPORT:

This year we've managed to contain operating costs (see Financial Summary Section p.19) and, after a survey asking Carers what the most important improvement would be, we increased the daily support payments by 50c/child. Living costs are less than \$2/day so, small as it was, the increase was appreciated.

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis we have managed to continue paying the increased support and to fund some "emergency interventions".



Right: Christiana (sponsored by Rebecca) and above: Aminata with Esther (sponsored by Kirstin).



DEVELOPING OUR STRATEGY:

1) Enhance and develop TFTC's Social Media Presence:

Actions taken:

We have improved our presence on Instagram and Facebook which are social media channels best aligned with TFTC's current and aspirational demographics. More needs to be done to expand TFTC network to potential new donors and sponsors. An enhanced social media platform was identified in last year's UQ MBA Report as a key strategic capability on which to build TFTC's future.

2) Identify and apply for Grants:

Actions Taken:

We applied for a Grant to help support us developing a 'Pathway to Employment/Self-Sufficiency' Program. Unfortunately, we weren't successful on this occasion but did receive some valuable feedback. We plan to pursue grant opportunities again next financial year.

3) Identify and develop relationships with Corporate Partners:

Actions Taken:

Developing a Corporate Partnership is still something we want to pursue but have not actively progressed during the year. The development of a successful corporate partnership was considered to be a long term goal, with a time Horizon of 3-5yrs.

4) Create an on-line shop and develop Social Enterprise opportunities:

Actions Taken:

Jane started The Fig Tree Gift Shop in February 2021 (see p. 17 above). This has been successful so far and has the potential to raise worthwhile funds for TFTC. Jane would like to learn more how to sell online and has the opportunity to do this with Unstoppable E-Commerce's Ignitor Program that they have very generously donated to TFTC.

5) Other:

What happens to children after school?

More of the children in our program are reaching school leaving age. A few are already progressing to further education and skills development programs, a fantastic achievement. For others, the way forward is less clear and employment opportunities are scarce. To better understand how we can help with this complex problem we have been seeking advice and learning from groups on the ground in Sierra Leone who are already tackling these issues.

We have opened discussions with Dreamtown, a Danish organisation who in the last three years have worked with communities in Sierra Leone to create Youth Dream Centres designed to enhance wellbeing and provide opportunities and safe spaces for local communities to develop skills and perhaps small businesses. Luckily, one of the key advisors to the Dreamtown Program is Dr Greg Mews from QUT's Urban Design Group who is now advising us how we can compliment and perhaps further develop the foundations established by the Youth Dream Centres.

The Freetown City Council (FCC) are also extremely active in this area and whatever future initiatives we develop must, of course compliment FCC's activities.

The Lord Mayor of Freetown, Yvonne Aki-Sawyer OBE is the dynamic champion of the FCC initiatives. You can read about the #TransformFreetown program at: <https://fcc.gov.sl/transform-freetown/>

We were fortunate enough to have a productive hour long Zoom meeting with the Lord Mayor and her team. Mayor Yvonne directed us to specific FCC Team Leaders to help us link existing FCC programs to our initiatives. We want to build on the work already done by the YDCs - their 'on-the-ground' community level activities whilst ensuring that these recognise and connect to the city level initiatives being delivered by the 'Transform Freetown' program.

Ensuring these connections are made and create real value, and employment for Fig Tree Children, is a big task that requires face to face discussions with all parties, in particular, with communities to ensure buy-in and sustainable success.

We are continuing discussions through Dreamtown who are extending their work in Freetown but we have not been able to make our annual visits to Sierra Leone in the last two years due to Covid, so progress has been limited.

We're developing lots of ideas that we will share with communities when we can next visit Sierra Leone.

TFTC Program Manager, Aminata Kpagoi seen here with Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyer (June 2021)



FINANCIAL STATEMENT:

For the YE June 2021, 88% of the funds spent from funds raised through events, donations, sponsorship and campaigns goes directly to supporting our program, children and their carers in Sierra Leone. At the moment our management team in Brisbane and our Fig Tree Board in Sierra Leone work pro bono. Our only full-time employee is in-Country Programme Manager Aminata Kpagoi. We also pay a monthly stipend to our Financial Administrator, Theresa Kamara (thanks to Caritas for making Theresa's time available), and costs as incurred for a driver and, when required, Alfred Sankoh who we hire to take videos and photographs for us.

In addition, we have an office in Sierra Leone which has been made available to us by Caritas. There are costs incurred for telecommunications, transport (fuel), occasional accomodation and meals when visiting the families living further afield (Bo, Kenema, Makeni, etc).

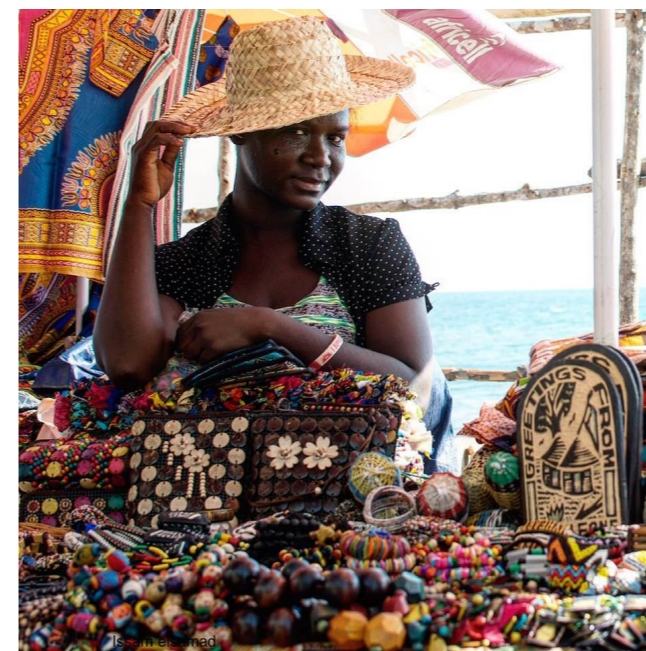
All of our reports can be accessed via our website: <https://www.thefigtreechildren.org/reports/> and through the ACNC.



Profit and Loss		
The Fig Tree Children YE 30 June 2021		
Account	2021	2020
Trading Income		
Donations	4,781.60	4,349.30
Other Revenue (incl. shop)	628.50	700.00
Sponsorship Revenue	38,999.82	45,171.49
Total Trading Income	44,409.92	50,220.79
Total Cost of Sales		
	570.24	0.00
Gross Profit	43,839.68	50,220.79
Other Income		
Ambassador Programme	780.00	0.00
Campaign Income	7,724.60	3,369.39
Fundraising Events Income	2,865.00	3,644.54
Total Other Income	11,369.60	7,013.93
Operating Expenses		
Advertising	323.76	149.16
Bank Fees (incl. Stripe fees)	321.48	86.96
Consulting & Accounting	972.50	935.00
Donation Expense (Sierra Leone)	55,558.83	50,985.10
Fundraising Costs	2,005.60	590.73
General Expenses	136.00	0.00
Insurance	816.62	816.62
PayPal Fees	277.77	344.08
Printing & Stationery	311.40	0.00
Subscriptions	2,135.95	844.66
Travel - International	0.00	0.00
Total Operating Expenses	62,859.91	54,752.31
Net Profit	(7,650.63)	2,482.41

THE BEAUTIFUL AND ENTREPRENEURIAL WOMEN OF SIERRA LEONE:

Of the two million working population in Sierra Leone, women make up half the work force. This is Amina. You can find her on Lumley Beach Road where she sells cultural bracelets, necklaces and more.



Mabinti at Wilberforce village insisted that Issam took her picture because she saw him taking one of a woman selling mango. "Leh all man see this fine Salone woman" is what she said to Issam - check out her pose, she definitely is a natural with no makeup! Just a simple soul selling mango to survive

Photographs © Issam ElSammad



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The Fig Tree Children is an unincorporated entity and holds Deductible Gift Recipient [DGR] status, meaning it is entitled to receive income tax deductible gifts and tax-deductible contributions

ABN: 31 162 586 717

Charity No. CH2631
Registered with the Australian Charities
and Not-for-profits Commission

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<https://twitter.com/TheFigTreeChild>



<https://www.facebook.com/thefigtreechildren>



<https://www.instagram.com/thefigtreechildren>

Photographs © The Fig Tree Children

Left: Hamid (sponsored by Zekia) in school.