The Fig Tree Children

# PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES

Two Year Report
2023-2025

*Distributing school materials - Sep 2024-2025 Academic Year*

# Where is Sierra Leone?

**Did you know?**

Population (2025): 8.8 million
[Australia (2025): 27.6 million]

Human Development Ranking (2023): 185/193
[Australia (2025): 7/193]

Life Expectancy (2025): 62
[Australia (2025): 84.2]

Infant mortality rate per 1000 live births (2025): 67
[Australia (2025): 3]

Pop'n living < $4.48/day (2025): 60%
[Australia (2025): 0%]

*September 2024 school materials distribution: Alhaji* Sponsored by Heather since Nov 2019. Previously sponsored by Loan from Oct 2016 - Oct 2019.*

## Our Mission:

To provide opportunities to orphaned and vulnerable children and young people in Sierra Leone.

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# A Message from Jeremy Davies

## President
## The Fig Tree Children

As President of The Fig Tree Children charity, I am pleased to introduce this two-year Annual Report, which reflects both the progress we have made and the context in which that progress has been achieved. Above all, it is an opportunity to thank our supporters and donors for their continued commitment over the past ten years. Your steady support has enabled TFTC to grow from modest beginnings into an organisation that now accompanies and supports more than 80 children and young people in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone continues to face profound and interconnected challenges. Unemployment remains extremely high, food insecurity affects many households, and inflation and currency pressures place daily strain on families and institutions alike. These conditions shape the lives of the children and young people we support and reinforce the importance of reliable, long-term assistance rather than short bursts of intervention.

Recent changes in the international aid environment have made this landscape even more difficult. The withdrawal of USAID and reductions in funding from other countries, including the UK's reduction in aid spending, have significantly disrupted large-scale development programmes. Many of these initiatives now operate on a stop-start basis, leading to staff layoffs, inefficiencies, and - too often - the complete collapse of ambitious "mega-projects" before they can deliver lasting benefit.

Local aid professionals in Sierra Leone have long warned that such uncertain funding models, however well intentioned, can be damaging. Projects designed without sufficient understanding of local culture, priorities, and constraints risk creating dependency, disillusionment, and wasted effort when funding is withdrawn or delayed. Sustainable progress requires consistency, humility, and deep local knowledge.

TFTC's approach has always been shaped by these realities. We work closely with partners in Sierra Leone who understand their communities and the country's real needs. Our work is guided by the TFTC Sierra Leone Board, including our Technical Director, Fr Peter Konteh, and delivered by staff employed locally. This structure ensures that decisions are informed by experience on the ground and that our support remains relevant, respectful, and practical.

For ten years, through your generosity, TFTC has been able to provide continuous and stable support in a challenging and unpredictable environment. This report sets out what that continuity has made possible over the past two years and reaffirms our commitment to the children and young people who rely on us.

Thank you for standing with them - and with us - for the long term.

Warm regards,
Jeremy

*Right: Jane Shakespeare (Founder and CEO) with husband, Jeremy Davies (President), March 2024*

# LETTER FROM OUR IN-COUNTRY PROGRAMME MANAGER
*Aminata Kpagoi:*

Dear friends and supporters,

Warm greetings from Sierra Leone! It is a joy to share the incredible progress of The Fig Tree Children in our 2023–2025 Two-Year Report.

As the programme manager, I see every day how your kindness and commitment transform the lives of our children and their families. In communities where poverty continues to affect even the most basic opportunities, your support opens the door to education, healthcare, safety and belonging. More than meeting daily needs, The Fig Tree Children strengthens families, empowers caregivers, and brings renewed hope into homes that have long struggled.

Our work is rooted in accountability, community partnership and the belief that every child deserves the chance to reach their full potential.

*Aminata (centre) with Massah (left), Evie* (sponsored by Jim & Barbara), and her mum.*

## Programme Highlights

Over the past two years, 86 children have been supported through the programme. Sadly, we experienced the loss of one young man, whose sudden passing deeply affected us all, and one young girl left the programme. Today, 84 children and young people continue to be supported.

## Education Achievements

Education remains at the heart of our work:

- 56 children are attending primary or secondary school
- 13 young people are studying at university
- 12 school leavers are preparing for their next steps
- 3 students graduated from university, including one who is now volunteering as a nurse in a community health facility

Out of 55 school-age children, only one needed to repeat a school year - a wonderful achievement!

This progress reflects the commitment of the children themselves, as well as the support you help us provide.

## Tools for Learning

This period also brought several important boosts:

- Solar lights, enabling children to study safely after dark
- Soap distributions, supporting hygiene and wellbeing
- Increased monthly allowances, which have meant children can eat lunch every day and afford transport to and from school
- Upfront payment of school fees, ensuring no child risks being sent home
- Uniforms, books and school materials, giving every child the tools they need to succeed with confidence

None of this would be possible without your generosity and belief in our work.

Together, we are lifting barriers, building brighter futures, and showing each child that they matter.

With sincere gratitude,

Aminata Dumbuya
Programme Manager, The Fig Tree Children – Sierra Leone

# Thematic Focus Areas of Intervention

The Fig Tree Children is a DGR Registered 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 and youth. The beneficiaries include Children/Youths (boys and girls) of school going and tertiary education age. The thematic areas of intervention are:

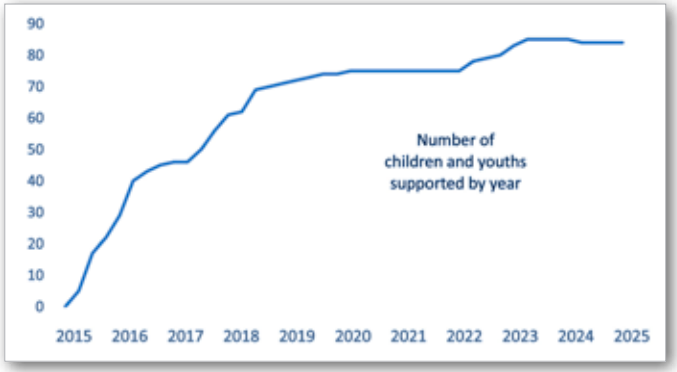
| No | Activity portfolio | Beneficiaries |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Educational support, Payment of tuition upfront to different educational institutions for 86 children, distribution of learning and school materials, including payment of tertiary education - currently for 14 youth. | Eighty-six (86) children and youth in Bo, Kenema, Allen Town, Newton, Waterloo, Goderich, Makeni and Lakka respectively. |
| 2 | Health care, provision of clothing, bedding, mattresses, daily need items and payment of house rent for a few beneficiaries, where needed. | 86 children and youth. |
| 3 | Payment of Monthly Allowances of 340 New Leones for every child on the programme. | 86 children and youth and their carers. |
| 4 | Recreational activities for the children (e.g. Christmas and Easter Parties). | 86 children and youth. |

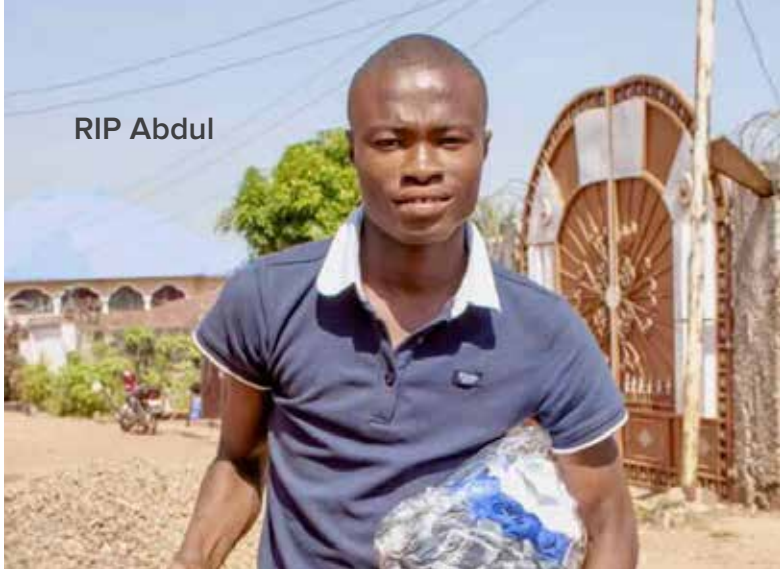
*Above: Receiving school materials - Sep 2023 (Margret* sponsored by Kirstin since June 2016)*

# CHILD WELLBEING REPORTS:
## A Holistic Approach

Over the past two years, we have continued to remain careful and considered in how we support children, focusing on providing strong, consistent, and holistic care rather than increasing numbers. Thanks to our generous donors, we continue to support each child with attention to their education, health, and home environment.

Aminata and Massah carry out regular wellbeing assessments and maintain contact with schools across more than twenty locations. This ensures we understand each child's individual needs and can respond where support is most required.




In July 2024, we were deeply saddened by the sudden passing of 18-year-old **Abdul Wahab Bangura** *(above, sponsored by Tony and Jane)* who collapsed and died instantly; we do not know why. His loss was a shock to us all and remains a reminder of the responsibility and care we hold for every child in our programme. Abdul had been in the Fig Tree programme since October 2015. **RIP Abdul, you will never be forgotten.**

At the end of June 2025, 85 children and young people were supported through The Fig Tree Children. This period has been one of consolidation rather than growth, strengthening our foundations and ensuring the programme remains stable, sustainable, and able to provide meaningful support into the future.

# About us:

The Fig Tree Children is a Brisbane based charity established 2014 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 young people. Jane first met Fr. Peter in February 2006 when she visited St. Mary's Children's Home, a home he established in 1999 in response to the number of orphans created by the country's devastating ten-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 was responsible for creating even more orphans on the streets of Sierra Leone and as a result providing homes for thousands of additional children once again became critical.

Fr. Peter was transferred to Freetown from St. Mary's in Bo and has continued his work with orphaned children and young people there. He has built another children's home at River No.2 caring for twenty-six 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 helps support the carers of these children with a monthly allowance, paid to them directly, by paying the child's school fees directly to the school and by providing each of the children with school materials. At the end of June 2025, thanks to our Fig Tree sponsors and donors, we are directly supporting eighty-five children and young people.

*Programme Management Team: Massa*
*Jane Shakespeare (centre) and Aminat*
*Jane's visit in October 2024.*

*h Nabieu (left),*
*a Kpagoi during*

# TEAM SIERRA LEONE 2023-2025

## 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 Kpagoi

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.*

## Massah Nabieu

Assistant Programme Manager

*Skilled in programme coordination and management. Massah brings valuable experience in human rights, business, youth advocacy, and health safety to our team. Our children addore Massah too.*

## Theresa Kamara

Accountant/Treasurer

*Accountant for Caritas Freetown, Theresa oversees a number of Caritas partner's projects, one of them being The Fig Tree Children. She's professional, diligent, keeps records and sends reports twice yearly.*

## Alfred Sankoh

Photographer/Videographer

*Alfred's keen eye for photography and proficiency in videography add significant value to the Fig Tree team, enriching our visual storytelling capabilities.*

## Ishmeal Charles

Board Member

*Programme Manager 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.*

## 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.*

## Samuel Konteh

Board Member

*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.*

*Our programme management team visit Barbara) at the school he attends.*

The Fig Tree Children's programme wouldn't exist if it wasn't for our volunteer Sierra Leone Board Members, Staff (Aminata and Massah) and Part Time Staff (Theresa and Alfred). Their support, sound advice, committment and dedication is invaluable.

# TEAM AUSTRALIA 2023-2025

## Jane Shakespeare

### Founder & Fundraising

*An overwhelming desire to want to do something more to help orphaned & vulnerable children in Sierra Leone (after visiting in 2006) led Jane to start The Fig Tree Children. Divides her time between TFTC and TFTGS.*

## 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.*

## Isobelle Torralba

### Board Member & Events

*Involved in the Financial Services sector for over 30 years. Isobelle's drive and experience supporting a range of charitable work makes her a critical member of our team.*

## Nirvani Naidu

### Treasurer/Bookkeeper

*Nirvani brings extensive experience in public practice accounting, with more than 10 years of accountancy and bookkeeping experience, as well as a Bachelor of Business (Accountancy).*

## Jamie Simmonite

### Board Member

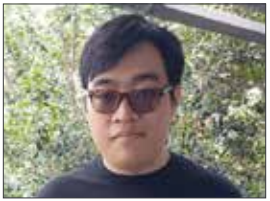
*Being a member of The Fig Tree Children Board gives Jamie the opportunity to channel his strengths of Business, Relationships and ICT toward a greater cause.*

*ing Abdulai* (sponsored by Jim and*

## 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. Greg has worked in Sierra Leone and is a good mentor and Supporter.*



## Tommy Hua-Tran

### Developer

*Tommy, a QUT graduate with a Bachelor of IT, was a volunteer web developer for The Fig Tree Children from Nov 2024 to June 2025, applying his skills to support the charity's mission of empowering children in need.*

*Our programme management team visiting some of the Fig Tree beneficiaries in Newton (one of the communities we serve).*

Our Australian team are all volunteers - Without their expertise, enthusiasm, cheerleading and sound advice we wouldn't be able to raise the awareness and funds needed to fund our programme.

## Maintaining increased support:

Throughout 2023-2025, we continued to prioritise cost containment efforts, as highlighted in the Financial Summary Section on page 21. The global rise in living expenses has particularly impacted disadvantaged regions. Acknowledging this, and because our donors increasing monthly contributions, we augmented our monthly support to caregivers by 1.26 times starting from July 2023. This increase was warmly received. Your increased contributions also enabled us to provide vital emergency interventions, including medical services, medication, and accommodation, when urgently required.

**Above:** *Massah and Aminata with Brother, Ibrahim* (sponsored by Scott and Erinna) and sister, Johanatu* (sponsored by Nathalia and Iris*
**Left:** *Massah (left) and Aminata with Tony* (sponsored by Penny) during a monitoring visit at Tony's school in Oct 2024.*

## Educating Children:

By the end of June 2025, our programme was supporting young people at many different stages of their educational journey. Fifty-six children were attending school (including one who started school for the first time), thirteen were in tertiary education, three had graduated and were seeking employment, and thirteen school leavers were preparing for their next steps, whether that be university or work.

We are especially proud that all of our school-aged children, except one, passed their exams and progressed to the next academic year. One child will repeat her year with our full support, ensuring she has every opportunity to succeed.

We covered school and tertiary fees and provided essential school materials for all children in August and September in both 2023 and 2024, and again in January/February for university students. This ensures no child is held back because of financial hardship.

It is important to note that tertiary education places a much greater financial demand on the programme than primary or secondary schooling. University fees are significantly higher and are often accompanied by additional costs such as accommodation, transport, and living expenses. As more of our young people progress to this level, it reflects the success of the programme, while also increasing the need for sustainable funding.

The transition from education to employment is equally challenging. In Sierra Leone, an estimated 60–70% of young people are unemployed or underemployed, making it difficult even for graduates to find stable work (African Development Bank). This highlights why our long-term support, planning, and donor partnership are so vital — not only to educate children, but to help them build real pathways to independence and opportunity.

**Above:** *Jane (Oct 2024) visiting Abdulai* (sponsored by Jim and Barbara) with his mum at his school; Jane also met with the school's principal.*

*Augusta* (sponsored by Rebecca S.) receiving a clothing and hygiene parcel, Christmas 2023*

# CAMPAIGNS:

## Christmas 2023: Clothing and Hygiene Parcels

During Christmas 2023, with the support from donors, we were able to provide a clothing and hygiene parcel for all of the children and young people in our programme. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed to making this possible. It wouldn't have happened without you.

*Macey* (sponsored by Andrew) receiving a clothing and hygiene parcel, Christmas 2023*

*Children & carers sponsored by (from left): Heather, Niall & Jamie (front), Megan, Rebecca, Megan, Isobelle, Jane, Trish and Tracey*

# CAMPAIGNS:

## Independence day out at River No. 2 Beach April 2024:

In celebration of Independence Day 2024, because of the generous donations to our campaign, we were able to organise a special outing, inviting all the children in the Fig Tree programme as well as those from St. Mary's Children's Home to spend a day at the beach. Each child enjoyed breakfast and lunch during the excursion. We extend our gratitude to all who contributed to making this memorable day possible. Your generosity means the world to these children.

*From left; Jessie* (sponsored by Mel, Adam & Jess), Evie* (sponsored by Jim & Barbara) and Sheku* (sponsored by Alan & Helen) at the beach on Independence Day 2024.*

*Lizzie* (sponsored by Petrina)*

## Shipment to Sierra Leone - Dec 2024

In late 2024, we successfully coordinated a major shipment to Sierra Leone thanks to the generosity and collaboration of our partners: SolarBuddy, Soap Aid, Save Our Supplies, Teacher in a Box, Zonta, Sierra Learners, MakeWays Foundation, along with many local donors. Managing the logistics and costs of a shipment of this scale was no small task, and we extend our deep gratitude to everyone who made it possible.

*Tamba* (sponsored by Sally & Stewart)*

*Missy* (sponsored by Flora)*

Our dedicated in-country team ensured that every item reached the children and communities who needed them most. Every child in our programme received a SolarBuddy light and soap from Soap Aid, and many more children and families in the surrounding communities also benefited. This shipment brought practical support, dignity, and joy, and strengthened the ripple of impact far beyond our 84 Fig Tree children.

# EVENTS: CHRISTMAS IN JULY 2023

Our annual Christmas in July event continues to be a much loved highlight in our fundraising calendar and an important contributor to the ongoing sustainability of The Fig Tree Children programme. Alongside monthly sponsorships and generous donations, events like this help us cover essential operational costs, ensuring that more funding can be directed straight to the children and families we support in Sierra Leone.

In July 2023, our Christmas in July celebration at **Method to the Madness** in Kenmore was a wonderful evening of connection, music, and generosity. We were thrilled to raise an incredible **$3,748**, made possible by the kindness of everyone who attended and the outstanding performances by **Nathanael Hubbard and Matthew Green from Alta Falls**.

It was a joyful reminder of how powerful community can be when people come together with heart, purpose, and a shared commitment to making a difference.

# EVENTS: CHRISTMAS IN JULY 2024

Our wonderful annual July 2024 'Christmas in July' was once again held at **Method to the Madness** and this event raised **$3,088**, thanks to the generosity of attendees. Check out the amazing menu right. With an incredible menu and tickets priced at just **$85** per person, it truly was exceptional value, and we are so grateful to everyone who supported the night.

THE FIG TREE CHILDREN'S

2024 Christmas in July Menu

♥ Mulled Wine on Arrival

CHRISTMAS DINNER

♥ Cranberry Glazed Turkey gf
with pumpkin pecan stuffing & Gravy

♥ Roast Pork gf
with chat potatoes, Cinnamon Apple & Gravy

♥ Nut Roast v, vg, gf
with carrots, thyme and sage

SIDES

♥ Yorkshire Pudding v

♥ Roast Potatoes v, vg, gf

♥ Caramelised Apples v, vg, gf

♥ Mixed Greens v, vg, gf

DESSERTS

♥ Christmas Pudding v
with brandy custard

♥ Apple Pie v
with vanilla bean ice-cream

♥ Vegan & Gluten Free Options vg, gf
chose from MTTM's Vegan/Gluten Free Cakes

v - vegetarian, vg - vegan
gf - gluten free

# EVENTS: SIP N PAINT

In November 2024, **Karen Bessell (Bess) from UCreate Art** very generously offered to run a Sip 'n' Paint for us, Bess donated her time, materials, and studio space to create a truly fun, creative, and welcoming evening. We are incredibly grateful for her generosity and support.

The night was filled with laughter, colour, and creativity, and everyone went home with a piece of art to be proud of. Thanks to the enthusiasm and kindness of all who attended, the event raised an amazing **$1,120**. It was a joyful reminder of how much can be achieved when community and creativity come together.

# EVENTS: 'BRIDGET JONES' MOVIE NIGHT

In February 2025, we hosted a wonderfully fun movie night at **Five Star Cinemas** on Elizabeth Street, Brisbane, to see the much-loved Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy. It was a fantastic evening of laughter, community, and connection, and we are so grateful to everyone who came along to support us. We hope you enjoyed the film as much as we did!

A special thank you goes to the team at Five Star Cinemas, who always go above and beyond to make us feel welcome and to help our events run so smoothly. The movie night raised an incredible **$1,300**, proving once again how powerful a simple night out can be when it's shared for a great cause.

# EVENTS: SOUND BOWL HEALING

In March 2025, we were treated to a truly special and calming experience with a Nepalese Sound Bowl Immersion, generously facilitated by **Shayne Warburton**, who donated her time and expertise to support our cause. For many of us, this was a completely new experience, and everyone left feeling relaxed, grounded, and restored.

We are also deeply grateful to **Tanya Koningsberger** for kindly donating her beautiful studio space in Fig Tree Pocket, which provided the perfect setting for such a peaceful event. Together, this gentle and nurturing evening raised **$650** for The Fig Tree Children and reminded us that fundraising can take many forms, including moments of stillness, connection, and care for ourselves.

# THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

- For YE June 30 2024 and 2025, donations towards our campaigns totalled **$10,092** and **$4,587** respectively. *The days out to the beach, provision of food, clothing, hygiene parcels, sanitary pads and other essential items are made achievable through the generous contributions to our campaigns. These donations enable us to offer comprehensive support, greatly impacting the lives of those in our programme.*
- Our Ambassador programme is a regular monthly donation to help us with our ongoing programme costs. For YE June 30 2024 and 2025, donations towards our Ambassador programme totalled **$1,977** and **$2,916** respectively. *These donations help cover our admin expenses and we consider our ambassadors as important as our sponsors.*
- Our Sponsorship Programme is also a regular monthly (or in some cases, fortnightly, quarterly or annually) donation which supports a sponsored child. For YE June 30 2024 and 2025, donations towards our Sponsorship programme totalled **$45,591** and **$46,290** respectively. *These donations help us pay school and tertiary education fees, provide school materials and provide a monthly allowance to each of the children's carers.*

# THE FIG TREE GIFT SHOP:

Throughout 2023–2025, Jane continued to nurture and grow The Fig Tree Gift Shop as an important part of our long-term sustainability. Alongside the online store at thefigtreegiftshop.com.au, the Gift Shop was also represented at local markets including Bardon Market, Witton Barracks Market, Northey St Solstice Events and the Brisbane Christmas Fair Trade Market at QPAC. These opportunities helped raise awareness of The Fig Tree Children while strengthening community connections.

Between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2025, the Gift Shop donated **$1,072** directly to The Fig Tree Children. While this financial contribution is modest, this period has been an important investment phase, with profits being reinvested to build stronger foundations for future growth and greater impact.

In addition to financial contributions, the Gift Shop has provided significant **in-kind support** to The Fig Tree Children. **Jane works full-time across both the charity and the Gift Shop and does not charge the charity for her time**. This ongoing contribution represents a substantial operational donation that supports the day-to-day running, development, and sustainability of the programme.

**Jane also employs a virtual assistant, Leslhie, who she shares her time equally between managing social media for the Gift Shop and for The Fig Tree Children. As a result, half of this cost (circa $3,900 p.a.) directly supports the charity's communications, visibility, and donor engagement and can be considered another valuable in-kind contribution.**

Looking ahead, Jane is excited to expand the Gift Shop further into the **corporate gift box space**, appealing to conscious consumers and offering businesses the opportunity to gift their staff, clients, and partners in a way that is both meaningful and purposeful. This growth has the potential to create a stronger, more sustainable funding stream for The Fig Tree Children in the years to come.

# DEVELOPING OUR STRATEGY:

Over the 2023–2025 period, we have continued to strengthen the foundations of The Fig Tree Children while remaining realistic about our capacity and resources. Our focus has been on building sustainability, improving communication, and exploring long-term pathways that will support children beyond school.

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

Actions taken:

We have made steady progress in strengthening our online presence by sharing a virtual assistant, Leslhie, whose time is split between The Fig Tree Gift Shop and The Fig Tree Children. Leslhie has helped improve our visibility and consistency on Instagram and Facebook, platforms that best align with our current and aspirational supporters. We have also increased our use of LinkedIn to share impact, milestones, and programme updates.

While our reach has grown, we recognise there is still significant opportunity to expand our network and connect with new donors and sponsors. The Fig Tree Gift Shop continues to play an important role in raising awareness of the charity and introducing new people to our work.

**2) Identify and apply for Grants:**

Actions Taken:

There has been no major change in this area during this period. Securing grants for work in West Africa remains challenging within the Australian funding landscape, which is largely focused on the Pacific and South East Asia. However, applying for suitable grants remains a future priority, and we continue to keep this goal in sight.

**3) Identify and develop relationships with Corporate Partners:**

Actions Taken:

We are now approaching this objective through The Fig Tree Gift Shop, particularly via the development of corporate gift boxes. This offers a natural entry point for businesses wanting to support a cause while also sourcing meaningful, purpose-driven gifts for staff, clients, and partners. We see this as a promising and sustainable pathway toward future corporate partnerships.

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

Actions Taken:

The Fig Tree Gift Shop has continued to grow as a social enterprise, with a strong focus on gift boxes. These provide an opportunity to appeal to conscious consumers while generating funds and awareness for the charity. This remains an important long-term strategy for financial sustainability.

**5) Life after school – pathways beyond education:**

As more of our children reach school-leaving age, the question of "what comes next?" has become increasingly important. While many young people aspire to attend

university, employment opportunities in Sierra Leone remain limited, and we are mindful that university is not always the most suitable or realistic pathway for every child.

We continue to seek guidance and in-country insight into vocational training, skills development, and alternative pathways that may better match both employment opportunities and individual strengths. This remains one of the most complex and critical areas of future planning for our programme.

**6) Develop a Sponsor Platform:**

Progress to Date:

We have continued to work closely with Capstone teams from Queensland University of Technology (QUT) to design and build an online sponsor platform that will strengthen our ability to manage data, communicate with sponsors, and share the impact of their support more effectively. This project has been an important focus throughout 2023–2025 and remains ongoing.

We are deeply grateful to the students who have contributed their time, skills, and creativity to this work. Many have gone beyond the requirements of their course, with some choosing to continue volunteering even after their formal placements ended. Their commitment reflects a shared belief in the purpose of the programme and brings us closer to a platform that will support The Fig Tree Children's growth and sustainability into the future.

**7) Strengthening partnerships in Sierra Leone:**

In late September 2024, Jane travelled to Sierra Leone again, accompanied for the first week by Akash Rooprai, who wished to better understand the work of TFTC. During this visit, they stayed at the Ravera Children's Rehabilitation Centre (RCRC), a remarkable organisation that supports abused, abandoned, and mentally ill children through psycho-social care and rehabilitation.

RCRC provides a safe home for around 26 children and works to help them reintegrate into society with dignity and support. While the founder, Roberto Ravera, was not present during the visit, his team welcomed Jane and Akash generously and shared their work openly.

There is a strong alignment between the values and impact of RCRC and TFTC. While our programmes differ in focus, they complement one another, and we are now exploring how a future partnership might allow us to support each other's work and strengthen outcomes for vulnerable children in Sierra Leone.

# A LETTER FROM ROBERTO RAVERA

## Ravera children's rehabilitation centre (RCRC):

**Building Healing Through Education - A partnership between Ravera Children Rehabilitation Centre and The Fig Tree Children in Sierra Leone**

For over twenty years, I have been working in the field of children's mental health in Sierra Leone through our NGO, the Ravera Children Rehabilitation Centre (RCRC). From my experience, this work requires a genuinely integrated approach, bringing together clinical care, rehabilitation, social support, and education.

This is why, since we met in 2015, I have been in discussion with Jane Shakespeare and The Fig Tree Children. Healing trauma and addressing the many forms of neurodevelopmental disorders cannot be achieved through clinical intervention alone. Long-term recovery depends on a strong and continuous connection with education and schooling.

A child who attends school is encouraged to feel part of the community they live in. School provides not only knowledge, but also language, relationships, and a sense of belonging. It gives children the tools to communicate with others, to understand the world around them, and to imagine a future for themselves.

Our collaboration with Jane and The Fig Tree Children is still at an early stage, but it is built on shared values and a common vision. The next steps will focus on deeper integration and closer cooperation between The Fig Tree Children and RCRC, strengthening our joint commitment to supporting children not only in recovering from trauma, but also in growing, learning, and taking their place within their communities.

# FINANCIAL STATEMENT:

For the YE June 2025, 88.65% of the funds spent from funds raised through events, donations, sponsorship and campaigns goes directly to supporting our programme, children and their carers in Sierra Leone. At the moment our management team in Brisbane and our Fig Tree Board in Sierra Leone work are volunteers. Our only full-time employees are our in-Country Programme Manager Aminata Kpagoi and Programme Assistant, Massah Nabieu. 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, Alfred Sankoh who we hire to take videos and photographs for us.

In addition, we have a small office in Freetown which has been made available to us by Caritas. There are costs incurred for telecommunications, transport (fuel), occasional accommodation 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 & LOSS | | |
|---|---|---|
| The Fig Tree Children<br>For the years ended 30 June 2024 and 30 June 2025 | | |
| **Account** | **2025** | **2024** |
| **Trading Income** | | |
| Donations | 1,812.36 | 2,101.50 |
| Goodwill Wines | 2.00 | 6.00 |
| Other Revenue | 112.50 | 229.98 |
| Shop | 1,050.00 | 322.07 |
| Sponsorship Revenue | 46,866.25 | 45,591.06 |
| **Total Trading Income** | **49,843.11** | **48,250.61** |
| | | |
| **Gross Profit** | **49,843.11** | **48,250.61** |
| | | |
| **Other Income** | | |
| Ambassador Programme | 3,345.44 | 1,977.21 |
| Campaign Income | 6,668.36 | 10,091.57 |
| Fundraising Events Income | 11,175.14 | 5,493.91 |
| **Total Other Income** | **21,188.94** | **17,562.69** |
| | | |
| **Operating Expenses** | | |
| Advertising | 161.02 | 150.75 |
| Bank Fees | 72.22 | 120.48 |
| Donation Expense | 61,416.15 | 58,821.87 |
| Freight & Courier | 225.00 | 0.00 |
| Fundraising Costs | 5,386.54 | 3,572.96 |
| General Expenses | 0.00 | 114.39 |
| Networking | 0.00 | 120.00 |
| Paypal Fees | 232.83 | 555.54 |
| Printing & Stationary | 150.00 | 0.00 |
| Stripe Fees | 358.71 | 718.91 |
| Subscriptions | 1,815.06 | 1,855.83 |
| Travel - International | 0.00 | 1,558.50 |
| **Total Operating Expenses** | **69,817.53** | **67,589.23** |
| | | |
| **Net Profit** | **1,214.52** | **(1,775.93)** |

## Children & Women of Sierra Leone:

Santiki gathers bundles of dried rice stalks and beats them on an old “Matawodo” (a traditional African blending tool) to release the grains.

As the rice falls free, it is collected, lightly boiled, and then taken to the village mill. By this stage the husks are already weakened, making it much easier for the mill to separate them from the kernels.

The cleaned rice kernels are then packed into large bags, each weighing approximately 70 kilograms.

Buyers, mainly from Guinea, purchase the rice for around 800,000 ($52 AUD) to 1,200,000 ($78 AUD) Leones per bag.

The bags are loaded onto “pampas” (large traditional canoes), which begin their journey to Conakry, Guinea. Each pampa can carry between 200 and 250 bags, and the trip takes about eight hours.

Once in Conakry, the rice is resold either individually or in bulk for between 1,200,000 ($78 AUD) and 1,600,000 ($104 AUD) Leones per bag.

Sierra Leonean rice is highly valued in neighbouring countries because it is naturally nutritious and grown without pesticides or chemical fertilisers, making it both sought after and deeply respected.

*Photograph and commentary © Issam ElSammad*

The Fig Tree Children

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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

## FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

https://twitter.com/TheFigTreeChild

https://www.facebook.com/thefigtreechildren

https://www.instagram.com/thefigtreechildren

*Photographs © The Fig Tree Children*

** Pseudonyms are used for all of the children in our programme*

*Left: Mohamed, Dec 2024 graduated with a Higher Diploma in Computer Science*