

Twining with the Methodist Church of Sierra Leone

The breaking news at the end of November, 2021 is that the PLHIV centre we have built in Freetown is now open on two days per month for work with people living with HIV / Aids. This is a start – and an answer to prayer!

We have received a status report from the MCSL Development Secretary with an indication that we will be getting regular updates from now on.

After stalling the project since the onset of the Covid 19 pandemic, a taskforce has been set up comprising the Lay President of Conference, the Development Desk Secretary and the Strategic Plan Facilitator to develop a road map for the resumption of work at the Clinic.

This group have identified the need for a start-up budget for the management of the Clinic for one year of £13,370 and the MCSL Conference is now embarking on a fund-raising drive through appeals from donor partners and local income generating means.

Meanwhile, the leadership of Conference is in continuous engagement with health-related organisations and the government for possible partnerships in managing the programme. So far there are some promising signs of collaboration and cooperation from both the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and the Christian Health Association in Sierra Leone (CHASL has committed to support the Clinic with supply of drugs for the treatment of patients with opportunistic infections).

Regular meetings of the People Living with HIV (PLHIV) are now being held on every second Saturday of the month at the new building. During such meetings, the former social workers who are also HIV positive, serve as volunteers to advise their colleagues on the importance of positive living with HIV. They also provide psycho-social counselling support for those people who know their HIV status and struggle to accept that reality.

If funds are available, management will consider the launching of the revived programme in the New Year. Meanwhile MCSL is requesting for prayers to enable them continue with the humanitarian assistance to the vulnerable and marginalised members of society.

Clearly this news is very welcome although we perhaps need to be cautious in our response. At the start of the PLHIV project, Lannoonaghey was very careful to avoid contributing to running costs or taking on any long-term funding commitment. On the other hand we don't want to see the clinic fail.

Lannoonaghey will meet early in the new year to consider our options and explore the best ways that we could help to make the PLHIV start-up successful. One way forward might be to look to support the start-up of the PLHIV working in partnership - perhaps with All We Can, the Methodist World Mission Fund, the Lancashire District, the North West and Mann Region or others.

This would be a good time for anyone interesting in the work of the twinning team (Lannoonaghey) to let us know and join us. It looks as though we may have a busy year ahead.

Sierra Leone Sunday in 2022 will be on 13 February.

Paul Craine