



Love Sierra Leone Annual Report 2023

Charity #1157847

lovesierraleone.org

Trustees: Richard Bayfield, Rev David Bendor-Samuel, Ian Gill, Norm Robins

Thank you

The first and most important message within this short report is to thank you, our Supporters, and our Trustees. We are thankful to Pastor Yatta Samura for his multiple ministries to those in need, irrespective of whether they have a Christian faith or not, and to David Sandi for his ongoing dedication to Ahkom School and to RightToRead.

Times are getting harder for many in Sierra Leone. Inflation reached over 50% during the year. The money we send to Pastor Yatta (C3M) and David Sandi (Ahkom) does not go as far as it did in previous years. Yet they achieve so much with the support we are able to give them.

C3M – Pastor Yatta’s ministry

2023 was a memorable and unforgettable year in our ministry, marking our ministry’s 25th anniversary. Our first church was started 6th September 1998 and we now have 9 churches with almost 1500 members. We had a celebration with the theme “Making the most of every opportunity” Eph. 5:15-16. We brought all the branches together in Kono and ended with a national Thanksgiving Service. Many other denominational heads were also invited.



Our Sports Life

ministry put together a planning retreat for leaders to plan our 2024 program. Sports Life works in schools and the community with various sporting events and disciplines, including Jog4Jesus when many hundreds of community members join us. We are using sport to bring people together.

The Youth of the Mission held a 3-day Youth camp that brought together all the other branches even though there were lots of financial challenges we were happy that they managed it.

The Mambo Church celebrated Children's Sunday which made the children excited. Thank God for what he did.

We are grateful to God for what he is doing and how he is taking us through.

Pray for the pastors and their families for God to provide for us to adequately help.





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Christmas Meals for Children – from Pastor Yatta

The hunger in this country is too much and the poverty rate is very high. Where parents are finding it very difficult to look after their children. Children are hungry going up and down in this country. When you talk about food they will be there. The XMAS meal was held in 2 locations this year.

Freetown: The program was held by the women of the grace Community Church. They had good food, music and dancing. It was joyful for them and they had a lot of fun.



They also had hand-outs to take home. 66 children attended from both the church and the community.

A woman by the name of Mrs. Kamara came and said thank you to one of our organisers. She said they had nothing to eat that day in their home. So the feeding was a blessing to her family - she sent all her 3 children. She came in tears. She was very

grateful and asked me to say thank you to you guys.

St. Andrews church and school, Meama, Kono: This is the first time they had such a wonderful program. We decided to take the program to the school in Meama. The children come from neighbouring villages; many walk 3 miles to school from their villages.

This is a village setting and a very poor community. It was difficult to stop people from coming. It was organised for the church children and school. Many elderly people came with pans to beg for food. It was a blessing to the children and community. They had 178 children.

Some of the children were drinking soft drinks for the first time. Oh what a Christmas for them! The Chief and the community heads were very happy and grateful. They asked us to remember them every time we have the opportunity. On behalf of the children the Churches and communities I say a big thank you for putting smiles into the faces of our children. Thank you we are grateful.



Ahkom School – David Sandi

In 2020 we applied to become a Government supported school. However, since then none of our teachers have been placed on the government payroll. Being a government supported school precluded us from collecting school fees (however small) to pay teachers and cover other necessary costs. In 2023 the school governors decided to revert back to private-funded status, which is a slow, ongoing process requiring various government approvals. As we await the ministry's response our financial woes mount. We need to cater for stipends (we cannot afford salaries) for 29 teachers plus other support staff and school maintenance. Ahkom school has retained its high academic achievements thanks to our dedicated, hardworking and underpaid staff, a student body that is



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determined to achieve, and support from our friends at LSL in the UK. Our teachers and staff live on less than £30 a month – a small sum when you consider a bus ticket from Kono to Freetown is £10. We are very, very grateful for their dedication in the face of our current financial hardship.

In difficult times like this, we feel compelled to appeal to anyone who can contribute towards the salary of a teacher or two, or an ancillary staff. Or to sponsor a student, many of whose impoverishment takes its toll on our meagre income because at Ahkom, our credo of “helping the poor” makes it difficult for us to turn our backs on the most disadvantaged, particularly students, preferring to share the little that comes our way to ensure they meet some, even if not all, of their education needs. Which, even if not always the best financial decision for us, gives us the satisfaction of being able to “help” the neediest.



On a more positive note, Ami (left) and Esther (right) are former Ahkom students whose schooling was sponsored by LSL. Ami passed her diploma in Civil Engineering with distinction. She was our first student to receive an invitation from Milton Margai University to progress on to the BSc level in Civil Engineering. Esther is completing a course in Public Health at Njala University.



RightToRead

RightToRead (RTR) uses technology to improve English language outcomes for pupils. We launched the programme at Ahkom School in 2015 with a plan to reach many thousands of pupils within five years. However, for various reasons, including lack of funds, the program has not grown beyond 6 schools and under 1000 children. Schools that currently use RTR continue to see a 10-20% improvement in pupils' results and we will continue supporting them (ongoing running costs are small) but from 2024 we will not be investing to expand the program to new schools until we have a clearer route to widespread adoption.

Financial Summary

In 2023 income was £31,366 and we spent £33,672. Donations for C3M and Ahkom school were lower than in previous years. We maintained the same level of giving to C3M and Ahkom by using money from the LSL general fund. Our reserves stood at £1,931 at the end of the year. Our expenditure is summarised below:

- Christian Community Church £17,175
 - Church & Sports Ministries £13,250
 - Office rent (SL) £1,000
 - 25th Anniversary celebrations £1,250
 - XMAS meal £1,500
 - Bank fees etc £175



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- Ahkom School £9,003
 - Teachers salaries, sponsored children £8,465
 - Books, seeds for farm £138
 - David Sandi UK visit £250
 - Bank fees, etc £150
- RightToRead £7,050
 - Salaries, teacher allowances, IT Support £6,975
 - Bank fees, etc. £75
- LSL General Fund £444
 - Accountant fees £168
 - Bank fees, etc. £276

Outlook for 2024

We continue to support the 3 strands of Education, Sport and Ministry. The act of helping our neighbour fits with our Christian perspective, although many of us ask whether we can do more.

We recognise that we are a charity of its time. That is we Trustees and many supporters have now reached pension age or are close to it. We Trustees believe that by 2028 (when the Trustees average age will be 70) we should have a plan for succession (or closure).

So we are actively looking for a Charity that works in Sierra Leone that we may partner with and would welcome any introductions that our supporters can facilitate.

AHKOM CHARITABLE STATUS ENDING DECEMBER 2024

We send our love and thanks to Dr Diana Snape, the former Chair of Ahkom charity, who is now residing in St Luke's Hospital Oxford. Diana gave up the Chair's role of Ahkom a few years ago and, as no Committee member or Ahkom supporter came forward as a replacement Chair, the charity had to be closed. On an interim basis the Ahkom charitable status has been maintained through Love Sierra Leone. However, this temporary arrangement will be closing at the end of this year. If any of you or your contacts would like to establish a new Ahkom charity then please do get in touch.

Giving

If you would like to support our activities you can donate online (one off or standing order) at www.lovesierraleone.org or by cheque, payable to "Love Sierra Leone". For further information please contact Richard Bayfield, 25 Davenant Road, Oxford, OX2 8BU, (01865 311800), email info@lovesierraleone.org.