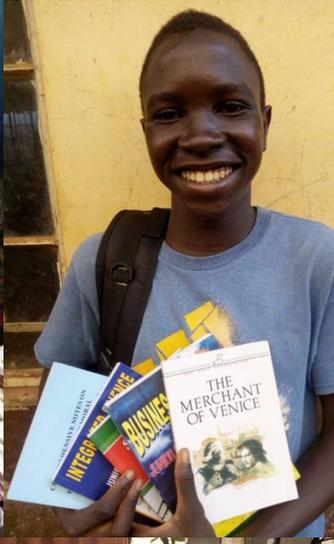


LAUGHTER AFRICA TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT 2019/2020



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A. REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS OF THE CHARITY



Charity Name: **Laughter Africa**

Other names charity is known by:

Registered charity number in UK: **1154712**

Charity's principal address in UK: **124 Princes Boulevard, Bebington, Wirral, CH63 5LP, UK**

Charity's Principal address in Sierra Leone: **Laughter Africa, Adonkia, Freetown, Sierra Leone**

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity in Sierra Leone:

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
Aminata Sheriff	Chairperson of Trustees		
Amadu Alpha Bah	Treasurer		
James Tyrrell	Secretary		
Shellac Davies			
Eric Massallay			
Mira Koroma			
Mariama Doe			
Sinneh Bockarie			
Alhaji Safieu Bah			
Abubakarr B Sheriff			
Joseph Dennis Koroma			
Ansumana Konneh			

Names of the charity trustees who manage the charity in the UK

Trustee name	Office (if any)	Dates acted if not for whole year	Name of person (or body) entitled to appoint trustee (if any)
James Tyrrell	Chairperson of Trustees		
David Cartmell	Treasurer		
Mark Neal	Secretary		

Names and addresses of advisers

Type of Advisor	Name	Address
Bankers in the UK	Royal Bank of Scotland	1 Dale Street, Liverpool, Merseyside, L2 2PP
Bankers in Sierra Leone	GTB	12 Wilberforce Street, Freetown
Auditor in Sierra Leone	Peter Kamaray &Co	20 Wilberforce Street, Freetown

Name of chief executive or names of senior staff members (Optional information)

Moses Sheriff (Director of Administration) (Sierra Leone)

Sia Lucy Ngaujah (Director of the Interim Care Centre) (Sierra Leone)

Michael Mustapha (Director of Outreach) (Sierra Leone)

Abubakarr Kargbo (Director of Family Tracing and Reunification) (Sierra Leone)

James Tyrrell (Country Director in the UK in a volunteer capacity)

B. STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT



Description of the charity's trusts

Type of governing document

Constitution adopted on 02/04/2013

How the charity is constituted

Charitable Incorporated Organisation

Trustee selection Methods

The existing trustees are responsible for the recruitment of new trustees. Each new trustee must be appointed by a resolution passed at a properly convened meeting of the charity trustees. In selecting individuals for appointment as charity trustees, the charity trustees must have regard to the skills, knowledge and experience needed for the effective administration of Laughter Africa.

Trustee training and induction.

Once a new trustee has been appointed, they will be given all the necessary training in accordance with Laughter Africa's 'Trustee Induction Policy' which outlines the induction, support and training programme involved.

As well as training, the following documents will be given to a newly appointed trustee:

- A copy of the constitution
- The latest Annual Trustee Report and accounts
- All Laughter Africa's policies and procedures (particularly highlighting the code of conduct, Safeguarding children and vulnerable Adults policy, accepting donations from Companies policy and the whistle blowing policy).
- The Corporate Risk Register
- Trustee job description.
- Contact Details of Trustees and minutes of previous trustee meetings
- Organogram of Laughter Africa
- Financial Framework and details of resources and assets that belong to the organisation.
- The new Charity Governance Code published in 2017/18

A number of publications from the Charity Commission are also provided including the guidance on Charity Law and Public Benefit, the new Charity Trustee Welcome Pack published by the Charity Commission in April 2018 and 'The essential trustee: what you need to know, what you need to do (CC3)'. This ensures that new trustees are aware of the scope of their responsibilities under the Charities Act 2011 and to brief them on their legal obligations.

Risk management

The Trustees in the UK have established a risk management policy for Laughter Africa. The key to Laughter Africa's risk management policy is the 'Corporate Risk Register and Assurance Framework' which identifies the key risks pertinent to Laughter Africa in meeting its objectives and map out the key controls in place to manage them. The Risk Register is updated annually. The major risks to which Laughter Africa is exposed have been identified and reviewed: procedures have been established to mitigate those risks. The Trustees are confident that strong systems and procedures are in place to manage the risks that have been identified. The Risk Register is available for the Charity Commission to see upon request. Appropriate insurance cover is in place for Laughter Africa both in the UK and in Sierra Leone to cover every eventuality. Laughter Africa also insists that all staff and volunteers receive a DBS check (in the UK) or a Police Clearance certificate (in Sierra Leone) as part of the safeguarding policy and procedures. No safeguarding concerns were reported to Laughter Africa in 2019/20 due to our effective and robust safeguards that we have in place.

Trustee's remuneration

All of Laughter Africa trustees give their time voluntarily and receive no remuneration or other benefit for their work with Laughter Africa.

Laughter Africa's organisational structure and how decisions are made

The principles of local ownership and local empowerment are at the heart of all Laughter Africa's work. We have a local Trustee Board. It is important to everyone at Laughter Africa that only local Sierra Leonean staff are employed; thus supporting national capacity building and the long-term sustainability of our activities. The Trustees both in the UK and in Sierra Leone have delegated the running of Laughter Africa to the four Directors in Sierra Leone. The Directors are responsible for different departments:

- Outreach Department
- Interim Care Centre Department
- Family Tracing and Reunification Department
- Administration Department

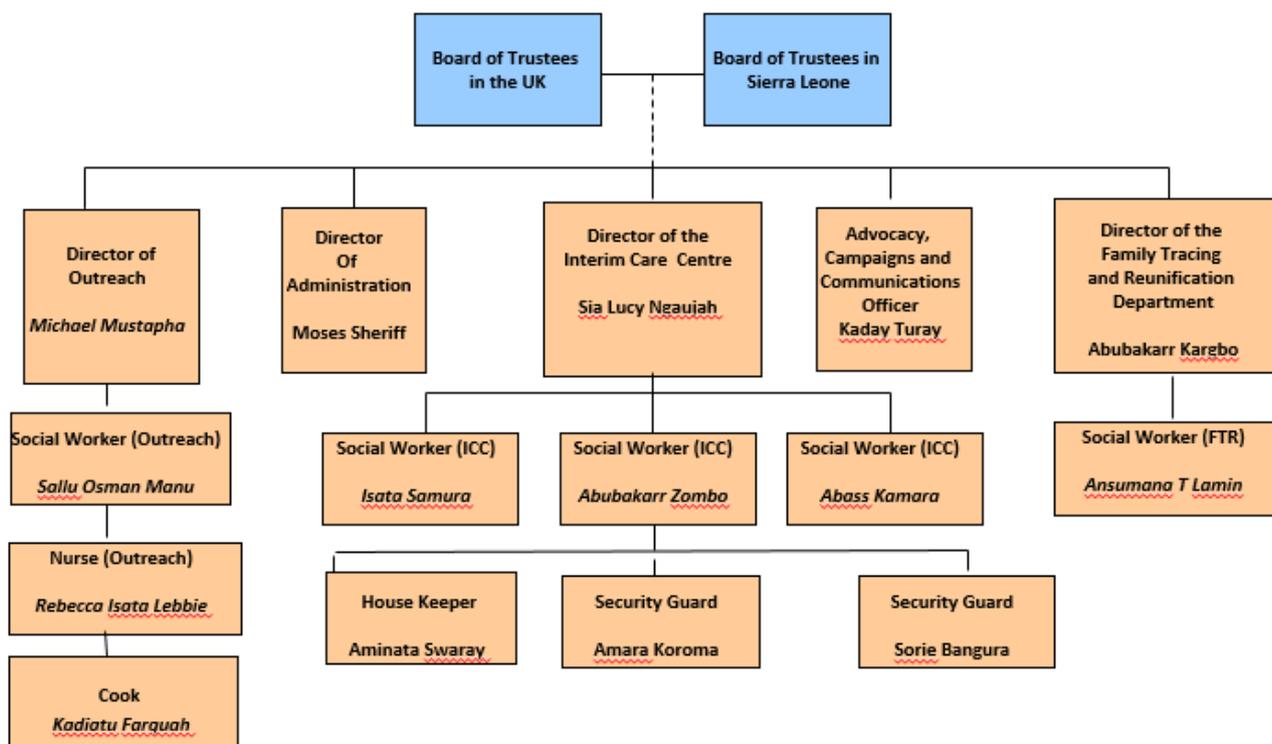
All four Directors are responsible for the day-to-day operation of Laughter Africa in Sierra Leone and managing the national staff and volunteers. The Directors report to the Trustees regularly and the Trustees delegate to the Directors accordingly.

The Trustees are responsible for the overall direction and decision making of Laughter Africa. The Trustees are ultimately responsible in law for the charity, its assets and activities. They take responsibility in the following areas ensuring that:

- Laughter Africa complies with its governing document, charity law, employment law, health and safety legislation, safeguarding legislation, equal opportunities legislation, data protection and fulfilling any other relevant legislation, regulations or statutory duties.

- Laughter Africa prepares reports on its work, and submits Annual Returns, the Trustees Annual Report and financial statements in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
- Laughter Africa applies its resources exclusively in pursuance of its objectives (Laughter Africa must not spend money on activities which are not included in its own objectives, no matter how worthwhile or charitable those activities are).
- The organisation pursues its objects as defined in its governing document.
- Laughter Africa's vision, mission, values and identity are promoted and maintained.
- There is accountability to all Laughter Africa's stakeholders.
- All employment procedures are in place.
- All the potential risks to Laughter Africa are mitigated.
- Operational management of the organisation is supported.
- Policies are established, monitored and implemented.
- Proper accounting records are kept.
- There is effective and efficient administration of Laughter Africa's resources including funding, insurance and premises.
- They give firm strategic direction to the organisation, setting overall policy, defining goals and setting targets and evaluating performance against agreed targets.
- The organisation is financially stable.
- The assets of Laughter Africa are protected and safeguarded and taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.
- There is proper investment of Laughter Africa's funds.
- The budget is approved and that there is agreement on all financial planning.
- Suitable accountancy policies are selected and then applied consistently.

Here is an Organogram of how decisions are made currently at Laughter Africa:



Laughter Africa's Policies and procedures

The Trustees, staff and volunteers are also held accountable by the Laughter Africa constitution and all the internal policies which can be requested via the open information policy. The organisational policies include:

Treating Donors Fairly Policy	Supporter Promise
Acceptance of gifts and hospitality	Environmental Policy
Data Protection Policy (now updated to comply with the GDPR) and privacy policy.	Evaluation Policy
Dignity, Diversity and Equality Policy	Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures
HIV Workplace Policy	Safeguarding Children Policy
Bullying and Harassment Policy	Position statement on vulnerability and inequality
Health and Safety Risk Assessment	Communications about children policy
Laughter Africa's statement of Accountability	Security policy
Laughter Africa's safer recruitment statement	Security manual
Laughter Africa's human resources policy for all staff working in Sierra Leone (This includes our grievance policy, disciplinary policy, probation policy, redundancy policy, maternity leave, paternity leave, annual leave policy, sick leave policies etc.. in compliance with Sierra Leonean law).	Risk management policy
Laughter Africa's vision, mission and values	Trustee Induction policy
Whistle blowing Policy	Register of Trustees
Staff Code of Behaviour	Capability Procedures
Trustee declaration of interests forms	National staff job descriptions and contracts
Conflict of interest policy	Trustee Declaration Forms
Health and safety policy	Volunteer policy
Security Manual version 2	Gender policy
Vehicle policy	Laughter Africa's volunteer handbook
Supply Chain Manual (procurement policy)	Laughter Africa's Open Information Policy
Security country plan for Sierra Leone	Trustee Job Descriptions
Grievance Policy	Disciplinary Policy
End of Contract Policy	Redundancy Policy
Probation Policy	Working time and office hours
Maternity Policy	Flexible working policy
Annual leave policy	Paternity policy
Adoption policy	Sickness and Absence policy
Retirement Policy	Time off for personal reasons policy

Please note that the financial policies are listed under the financial review (section E). Laughter Africa has every applicable policy recommended by the Charity Commission.

C. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES



Summary of the Objects of Laughter Africa set out in its governing document

The object of the CIO is the relief of poverty, particularly but not exclusively by the provision of housing, and the advancement of education for street children and other children or young people at risk in Africa.

An explanation of Laughter Africa's strategies for achieving the stated objectives

Laughter Africa carries out a wide range of activities in pursuance of its charitable aims. The trustees consider that these activities provide benefit to street children aged 0 to 15. Laughter Africa works with street children in Freetown, Sierra Leone to fulfil their aspirations and to help them to bring about positive change in their lives. Laughter Africa delivers this objective through assisting children in leaving the streets, through the following three-phased approach:

1. **Outreach Work.** This involves the social workers meeting the children living on the streets through day or night surveys. The first priority is dealing with the immediate needs of the street children. They may be hungry and need food. They may be ill or in need of medical care. They may be lonely or grieving and just need a listening ear. They may have been raped and need someone to talk to. They may be having legal trouble with the police or judiciary and need someone to advocate on their behalf. Whatever they need, Laughter Africa is willing to provide. Whilst Laughter Africa's trained social workers will try to encourage them to leave the streets, they are not forced to do so.
2. **The Interim Care Centre.** The Laughter Africa Interim Care Centre is a safe place for street children to live while attempts are made to find their families. At the Interim Care Centre food, clothing, health care, education, counselling, support and other essentials are provided. Activities such as drama, music, sports, cultural dance, arts and crafts and cookery are also available. The Interim Care Centre is a place where the street children can be children and learn to laugh again.
3. **Home-tracing and family reunification work.** This is an integral part of Laughter Africa's approach, through which social workers trace the street children's families in the hope that the parties can be reunited. Reunification with their families is dependent on whether the family situation is safe and secure. If this is not the case, for instance if there is sexual or physical abuse known to have taken place, then an alternative long-term home will be found. Before reuniting a child with their family, we work with both parties to understand the reasons that led to the child turning to the streets in the first place. Our goal is to ensure that the child feels happier and the original issues that precipitated their move on to the streets are resolved. Once the children have returned home, Laughter Africa offers continued support and pays for their school fees and other school support until they finish their WASCE (the Sierra Leone equivalent of A-levels) or pays for vocational training - whichever option the child prefers. Social workers keep in touch with each child and their family to check on their progress and make sure that all is well. If any problems arise then the staff will intervene before the child is tempted to return to the streets again. Social workers visit the children at home at least once a quarter or more often if necessary.

Through its outreach work, establishment of a safe care centre and family reunification activities, Laughter Africa seeks to protect vulnerable children from the dangers of living on the streets, meet their basic health, education and nutrition needs, and ensure their long-term well being.

Activities

A summary of the main activities undertaken by Laughter Africa in order to carry out its charitable purposes for the public benefit:

Between 15th June 2015 and 15th June 2020, Laughter Africa has worked with over 1,500 street children: 750 street children in the mobile project and 750 street children in the Interim Care Centre (ICC). Many of the children have been affected by different issues; substance abuse; violence and sexual abuse (at home and on the streets); commercial sex work; HIV; FGM; pregnancy; underage marriage; even cancer. We have worked with girls, the orphaned, the disabled and even children as young as four years old who were living on the street. You can visit our [online book](#) to read some of the stories of the children that we have worked with since June 2015.

The main premise of the work of Laughter Africa will never change: the outreach work; the Interim care Centre and the Family Reunification work. As outlined in last years' annual report, Laughter Africa is divided into five departments:

- Outreach Department
- Interim Care Centre Department
- Family Tracing and Reunification Department
- Communications, Advocacy and Campaigns Department
- Administration Department

Our response to Coronavirus

Like all countries throughout the world, Sierra Leone is in the grip of Coronavirus. At the time of writing (13th June 2020), Sierra Leone now has had 1,132 Coronavirus cases. There have been 51 deaths. However, we expect that this will escalate rapidly.

Apart from Coronavirus itself, there are three main dangers facing Sierra Leone as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic:

- 1) The financial and economic implications for Sierra Leone have been catastrophic and it will likely get worse. Sierra Leone is solely dependent on imported food products e.g. rice, cooking oil etc....Since the end of March 2020 there have not been as many imports because of the pandemic. This means that food shortages will probably occur in the near future and food prices which have already risen tremendously will rise exponentially e.g. a bag of rice has now gone from costing 240,000 leones (pre-Corona) to 285,000 leones. That is a meteoric rise when the national minimum monthly wage is 500,000 leones.

2) Civil unrest has been on the rise. Even before Coronavirus, there was a lot of discord in the country. Since the virus arrived in Sierra Leone this has been exacerbated ten-fold. For instance, there were riots in Tombo, Lunsar and other villages across Sierra Leone recently. I fear that the price rises might be the light to the fuse and tipping point leading to unrest and perhaps even civil war.

3) Connected to this is political instability. At the end of March 2020, the President declared a State of Emergency. This State of Emergency will be in place for 12 months. There are many restrictions in place. The SLPP are currently arresting key opposition leaders under the laws created by the "state of emergency." In a meeting recently, the President branded the main opposition party "terrorists." The coming months will also see the release of a report called the 'Commission of Inquiry'- all about the alleged corruption of the last government. According to the inquiry the previous government stole \$98 million. The President will be arresting more key figures from the rival political party and that will cause even more tension. However, some people in Sierra Leone think that the government are using this 'State of Emergency' to crush their rival political opposition.

Since Coronavirus came to Sierra Leone, all three main departments have remained opened - we have adapted our work in different ways. Even before Coronavirus came to Sierra Leone, we had introduced hand washing at the ICC and the mobile project. We carried out training about Coronavirus to both the children in the ICC and at the mobile project and talked about the different ways that they could protect themselves.

Mobile was not allowed to remain open as gatherings have been prohibited under the 'State of Emergency.' By the end of March 2020 we were having up to 91 children attend mobile. Since the mobile project closed at the end of March, we have still been feeding the street children daily. They were coming to the ICC, in a specially cordoned off section of the compound. Up to 50 street children were coming for food daily for about 3 weeks. Sadly, after the bad behaviour of the street children in the community (stealing chickens, gambling and fighting/mass bawls), we decided to move the location of the feeding to Lumley where the majority of the street children currently reside. Many of them have moved from Freetown to Lumley temporarily. We are feeding between 30 and 50 street children. The stories they tell us are terrifying. The police are tasering and beating the street children at night because they are not abiding by the curfew. Some of the injuries are horrific. We still give the street children medical treatment when they are sick. We have also been reunifying any of the street children who want to go home to their families. Meanwhile the mobile department have still been carrying out outreach in Tombo, Grafton and Waterloo during the Coronavirus crisis looking for girls living on the streets who are particularly vulnerable at this time.

The ICC has remained open throughout the state of Emergency with all the usual activities taking place. Since January 2020 to the middle of June we have had 46 girls stay with us in the ICC. We have been teaching the girls all about Coronavirus. For instance, in our cultural dance sessions, we don't just teach the children different dances - we also teach them traditional songs. Our very talented cultural dance teacher Joseph, wrote a song about Coronavirus which includes tips about how to stay safe during the pandemic. You can watch the video [here](#).

Songs are the best way for the street children to learn about how to protect themselves. We know that these children will take this message to their communities when they return home to their families. It's a way of community sensitisation through song. For instance, the girls who stayed in the ICC in April/May 2020, not only performed the song for their local community in Waterloo but also performed a drama all about the Coronavirus which they first performed at the ICC. The chief was delighted with them. Even the boys from mobile have been learning the song when they come for their food and medicine in the ICC. They are singing it to the other boys on the streets so the song is spreading around the streets and the different communities.

The children in the ICC also performed a song for our supporters around the world, 'Keep holding on' by Glee/ Avril Lavigne about not giving up hope during the pandemic. You can view the video [here](#).

The FTR department have been extra busy during this period even though schools were closed on 31st March 2020. We are particularly worried about the children who have been reunified and are now back home with their families. Some are really suffering. We receive frequent phone calls from our old children - children who have never asked for anything - begging for help as times are so tough. Our fear is that they will either return to the streets or go back to commercial sex work in order to generate money for food. We want to help them but we also don't want to create a culture of dependency. So rather than giving them food, we have been giving every child who visits or phones us in need 100,000 leones in order to establish a small business. While they live in the ICC, we teach them how to make over 25 different food items or arts and crafts which they can make and then sell to make money locally e.g. fish in batter, groundnut cake, butterscotch etc. We hope they will use any profits to buy ingredients for the next day's food items to sell as well as for food for themselves and their families. The children who have already received business support are already flourishing. One girl Nata is selling Mangoes. She is making 200,000 leones per day. 100,000 leones goes to her grandmother to provide food for the whole family while the other 100,000 leones goes to buy more mangoes for the next day. I have never seen her so confident and her business is already flourishing. This is just one example. At the time of writing we have provided 135 children with business support. We still have about 109 children to give business support too but we are making inroads. We are only giving the business support to those children who we know are at home and attending vocational school or school. At the beginning of June 2020, we phoned all our children at home and we are glad to say that every single child that we phoned is still at home so we must be doing something right. Not one had returned to the streets during the crisis. We have continued to give extra support to all our children who are at home and who have chronic illnesses such as HIV, TB, sickle cell or the disabled to make sure that they have extra support/protection in case Coronavirus does become more widespread here. Our old children are still coming to the ICC for medical treatment. Our nurse treats them or if she is unable to treat them she takes them to the hospital.

So far we have had two lockdowns (each one lasting 3 days). The first lockdown was from Sunday 5th April until Wednesday morning of the 8th April. The other occurred from Sunday 3rd May until the morning of Wednesday 6th May. Lockdowns in Sierra Leone are terrifying as you are not allowed to leave your house for any reason. You have to buy all your food and water in advance. If you are spotted outside the police or military will beat you. What really breaks my heart is that during the second lockdown, we had two heart breaking phone calls from our children at home and we couldn't do anything for them until after the lockdown. The first call was from one of our old girls Mariamma. She recently had a baby but we only found out on the Friday before the lockdown when we went to give her business support - she was ashamed to tell us before then. We promised that we would give her some supplies for her baby e.g. clothes, nappies etc...but it would be after the lockdown. Sadly on the first day of the Lockdown, her baby died. Another phone call was from one of our girls in Tombo, Kadiatu. She phoned us crying that her mother had died. The fact that we couldn't reach them to console them or offer support until the Wednesday was so soul destroying.

For the first lockdown at the beginning of April (when there was only ten cases) we were joined by 11 of our children who are at home including one of our disabled children, Abdul. They didn't have enough food at home for the lockdown so came to us as they knew that we would welcome them. Altogether we had 23 children for the last Lockdown (including the ICC children). However, for the lockdown at the beginning of May 2020, we realised that we couldn't take the risk of having any of our old children come and stay as Coronavirus is now in all the communities- we have to keep the children in the ICC safe. Instead we gave a bag of garrie (10 cups) and a bag of rice (8 cups) to each old child who came for the lockdown. The food was to sustain them for the 3 day lockdown. We gave the food to over 35 children. For the lockdown in May, we only had the 10 children who were already in the ICC when the lockdown was called and some extra staff. If there are any further lockdowns, we plan on providing rice and garrie again to our children as that was a big help to the children and their families last time.

The Outreach Department

As outlined in last year's annual report, the Outreach Team established a mobile project in January 2017 in response to the death of two street children, Augustine and Mohamed who died on the streets in 2016. The mobile project takes place five times a week from Monday to Friday from 4pm to 9:00pm. Each day, medical treatment, food, water, and different activities are provided ranging from cultural dance, modern dance, art and crafts, games and sports. There have been many new developments at mobile during the year. The biggest change was a staff revamp in October 2019. The outreach department lost four staff and one volunteer in October 2019. They moved onto pastures new. The department is now headed by Michael Mustapha, a qualified social worker who started at Laughter Africa in October 2016 as an intern and has stayed working in the ICC ever since. He joined the only original mobile staff remaining, Kadiatu Farquah, who is the cook and also a qualified social worker. In November 2019, Michael was joined by a new member of staff Sallu Osman Munu, another qualified social worker who has greatly impressed us since he started work. The current mobile team was completed by a qualified nurse Rebecca Isata Lebbie who was transferred from the ICC in November 2019. The street children have been delighted by the new staff line up especially the nurse. The reason we decided to introduce a nurse was because we were spending far too much on hospital treatment and pharmacies. Already having a nurse has saved us so much money. Some days, she treats up to 25 street children.

The usual ailments are gonorrhoea and other STIs, malaria, cold and pain. News has spread among the street children so much so that even some of those boys we haven't seen for a long time are now coming to receive treatment. She also treats the children in the ICC and the children whom we have already reunified with their families. We were joined by a new volunteer Dominic who started officially in January 2020 but who had a trial period in November 2019. We were also joined by another great intern Komba who interned at the mobile project from September to November 2019. Although there have been changes within the staffing for mobile, we are delighted with the children's response. We have started 2020 on a very positive note. There is a lot of energy, enthusiasm and excitement among the staff. For instance, although mobile is meant to start at 4pm, most of the staff arrive between 2pm and 3pm everyday. The boys are noticing this passion. The attendance has skyrocketed. We reached our highest ever attendance in March 2020— we peaked at 91 boys in one night. In the final five weeks of mobile before we closed, most nights we had over 80 boys. We are really delighted with the figures. We are also happy that we had four street girls turn up some days. They are not regular but we are happy when they come as one of our aims is to appeal to more girls living on the streets at the mobile project.

Having a nurse has just transformed mobile and is a big factor in the increase in attendance. The nurse introduced HIV and Hepatitis rapid tests for the street children at mobile just before we closed. The boys who come to mobile are all sexually active, and despite us teaching them about safe sex, they still refuse to wear a condom. We are very worried about the possibility of HIV and Hepatitis as the infection rates for both are increasing. If we test a street child who turns out to be HIV positive then we can take them immediately for a retest at a hospital. If their status is confirmed by the hospital, then the treatment starts straight away. HIV treatment is given free in Sierra Leone. One example of why these tests are so important is the case of Betty. Betty is now 15 years old but we first worked with her in July/August 2017. Betty has lived on the streets since she was 9 years old. For the last six years all she has known is the streets interspersed with staying at different organisations from time to time. Whenever she is reunified with her family, she just goes back on the streets. Most of her family have washed their hands of her and have flat out refused to ever take her back again. She is just as adamant that she will never return home. On the streets, she is a commercial sex worker and she has been raped horrifically a number of times on the streets in the past. There is no doubt, she is also very, very hard work. She has an attitude the size of the Mersey tunnel which is completely understandable after what she has been through but she is not easy to live with. She came to us at the ICC/mobile on Thursday 13th February in agony. We gave her a rapid test and also took her to hospital for a re-test and she was diagnosed with HIV. She was in extra pain because of an ulcer. According to the doctor, HIV, TB and ulcers are all inter-linked. On Friday, she said she just wanted to collect her belongings but she would come after the weekend. On Monday she arrived and she started treatment for her ulcer. Thankfully on Wednesday morning, she started to feel better from her treatment on Tuesday night. She ate for the first time in days and she washed and dressed. We were chatting nicely and then all of a sudden,

Betty: *"Five o, get me soft drink."*

Me: *"Betty, I'm afraid that I can't get you soft drink as the doctor said it would make you sick. You are only allowed hot water."*

Betty: *"If you don't get me soft drink then I will to go back to the street."*

While I am getting her hot water, she sneaks out of the compound, steals a soft drink from a seller and then proceeds to vomit all over the street. After they bring her back to the ICC, she says she wants to leave. Despite talking to her there was no changing her mind- she was adamant-she wanted to go back on the streets. She said, ***“Just let me die. I want to die on the streets.”*** It was completely heart breaking. After all our patience and kindness and effort, it was like she just chewed us up and spat us out. I was so worried about her and was pre-occupied with her situation for days afterwards. Thankfully she came to see us on the Saturday afterwards to collect her things in a much better frame of mind. She said that she was staying with her step mother. She left in a much calmer more pleasant way and even said thank you. She left with a list of phone numbers of all the Laughter staff so she has plenty of people to call if she needed anything. She came to visit us in May 2020 and we gave her business support of 100,000 leones. She is now living with an aunt in her community. She has started treatment for HIV and looks to be in much better shape than she was. We are not sure how long this will last for but at least it is a step in the right direction. In the next few months when she is settled she would like to start vocational school to study catering. Betty has a long road ahead of her.

A few more examples of some of the most interesting cases the nurse has seen at mobile include Adamma, Sahr and Ralpheous. The first was the case of Adamma who had vagina wax. However there isn't much we can do for Adamma as she will not return home. As she needs an operation, she needs family permission and without it the operation is not allowed to go ahead. One of the new boys, Sahr, was also bitten by a dog so needed rabies shots. Finally another boy called Ralpheous had a rotting leg as he was hit by a poda poda last year and he hadn't received any treatment from his family at home. All these cases happened in the space of one week so you can see the variety of cases that the nurse faces.

After the success of last year's themed months (Harry Potter, Christmas, Super hero and record breakers), we introduced a few more this year. In October 2019, we had a Halloween themed night which involved lots of Halloween themed games and even pumpkins. We played Halloween themed games like “ducking apple”, “The Mummy game”, the “Pumkin Broom game”, “Trick or Treat” and “Musical broomstick.” They absolutely loved ducking apples and the whole floor of the hall was soaked. March 2020 saw the start of our Easter month. We kick started Easter month by celebrating Shrove Tuesday. We made pancakes and played lots of different pancake games such as ‘a pancake toss relay’, ‘who can toss the pancakes the highest’ and ‘how many times can you toss a pancake in a minute.’ We played Easter themed games as well as made Easter themed arts and crafts. We made Easter bonnets and had an Easter bonnet parade. We made Easter eggs using balloons, skewers and chocolate. And we also made different Easter cards. We had more arts and crafts activities planned before the State of Emergency including an Easter egg hunt but hopefully we can do those if and when mobile is allowed to reopen.

Probably one of the highlights of mobile this year was the first anniversary of Sheku's death. Sheku tragically died on 5th November 2018 after being stabbed in the neck. On the 5th November 2019 we had a memorial service to remember him. 57 boys came. The room started in darkness and the boys held a candle each. As the boys shared their memories of Sheku, they passed the light around the circle. The stories they shared included a story of how one boy was severely sick with malaria and how Sheku paid for medical treatment as well as carried them on his back as they couldn't even walk. After they finished sharing their stories we said Muslim and Christian prayers. Sadly after mobile on the way out, two boys got into an argument and one of them pulled a knife on the other boy. The staff managed to sort out the altercation but the scary thing is that Sheku's death has taught them nothing. Rest in Peace Sheku. You will never be forgotten.

Another highlight of the year was the bowling trip on Wednesday 11th March. Our friends at Lagoonda gave us half price tickets so we took 24 street children with us. They had a blast. They have never been bowling before and all of them asked, ***“Can we have mobile here every day?”*** The winner of bowling was Chernor who got 106 points. Second place was ‘Whiteboy’ with 96 points and in third place was Alusine with 94 points. The trip was definitely a hit with the boys! We hope to have another trip there again in the coming year. It was the best trip, by far, we have done.

The night surveys we usually carried out looking for girls living on the streets were rested from the end of March to December 2019 due to staff maternity leave. These night surveys re-started again in January 2020 and have carried on ever since. We have decided to focus our efforts on girls living on the streets in the following areas; Grafton; Tombo and Waterloo because from our previous experience we have found that girls living on the streets in Funkia, the City Centre or Cockle Bay/Aberdeen are not serious about changing their lives whereas we have had a lot of success with girls from Waterloo, Tombo, and Grafton. We might also try more night surveys in the Eastern area of Freetown this year too.

Interim Care Centre

All the activities carried out in the ICC are the same as outlined in last year’s annual report. The major challenge facing the ICC in 2019 was the maternity leave of two staff from May 2019 until December 2019 . This meant that we had to have boys in the ICC rather than girls. In January 2020, we started to have girls in the ICC again. Between January 2020 and now (June 2020), we have had 46 girls in the ICC.

After popular demand from the girls over the last few years, we have now introduced hairdressing at the ICC. The teacher Fatmata started in February 2020. The girls were desperate to learn as it is an easy way for the girls to make money when they return home. They could make 50,000 leones per wig. I have never seen any of the children concentrate so much when they are practicing. The teacher also taught them how to do manicures and eyelashes. It has been such a success that it is now a regular fixture of the timetable.

We have introduced a music session as a new item on the timetable. Simeon, the founder of a local organisation called ‘Music Heals,’ started coming in May 2020 to teach the children music and how to sing. He teaches the children how to play the recorder, guitar and keyboard. He has donated 3 key boards to Laughter Africa already. When he first began he was only coming on Fridays. However he and the girls have requested that he does an extra session per week so he is now coming on Mondays too. Simeon is willing to attend mobile once it re-opens.

Some new arts and crafts activities we have introduced over the last year include rous rous, yoghurt, ginger beer and b sap. This was due to requests from the girls who wanted to know how to make them for when they return home.

Family Tracing and Reunification Department

Not much has changed for the FTR department; their duties are still the same as outlined in last year's annual report. The FTR department's role is to trace the street children's families and reunify them. If the children stay home, we pay their school fees or vocational training. In the last financial year, we paid school or vocational training for over 400 street children. Every street child who stays home receives educational support. Each year, we provide a school starter pack to each student which consists of uniforms, shoes, a vest, socks, books or ledgers, pens and a bag. Not only do we pay for school fees but we also give extra support for the most vulnerable including transportation costs, lunch, bags of rice, mattresses, rent or wheelchairs. Apart from school fees we also purchase extra lessons and the required text books for those pupils who are taking external examinations in the academic year e.g. the NPSE, BECE and WASCE as well as pay all the additional exam fees and charges. We pay for all the practical items for the young people in vocational schools. For example, those who study catering need to have ingredients to cook the food. This is quite a big expense. Most of the staff are constantly receiving phone calls from the children and their families. Often the children just phone to say hello but sometimes they might need something like medical care or have an issue at home. The team are on call 24/7 for the children and are ready to jump into action whenever needed.

Not only does the FTR department provide school fees, educational equipment etc... they also provide medical treatment for any of the children who remain at home. This last financial year saw the Laughter Africa nurse start treating the children who fall under the FTR programme. We used to use pharmacies or hospitals but having a nurse to treat the FTR children is preferable, We introduced rapid testing for HIV and Hepatitis for the reunified children who are still at home. Just because a street child returns home, doesn't mean that they automatically stop being sexually active. Even when the FTR children come for medical treatment, they sometimes have STIs. For instance, one of our old boys Amadu lives in Kono. We first met Amadu in March 2016 and he has stayed home ever since. In January 2020 we received a very worrying phone call from him. He had been to hospital and was told that his organs were shutting down. We told him to come to Freetown with his mum and we took him to hospital straight away. After further medical investigations, we discovered he had contracted Hepatitis and this was causing the damage so we got him the treatment he needed straight away. He returned home and we have visited him a few times since he returned to Kono to check on his progress and to deliver more medication. Although he is still struggling, there is small improvement in his health. It will be a long journey but we will be with him every step of the way. The rapid tests for HIV and Hepatitis have been very successful so far and we now plan to introduce tests for other medical conditions including pregnancy and malaria and typhoid.

One thing we have realised is that just because a child goes home and stays off the streets, doesn't automatically guarantee them a happy ending. This is why the FTR department is so, so important. Girls certainly face more challenges at home than the boys do and the FTR team have to respond to all the issues and difficulties facing our children and young people. The more girls that we work with, the more the issues that arise. Sometimes some of the girls' cases take a lot of time and effort even after their reunification. One of the more complicated cases was Hassanatu's case. We mentioned Hassanatu in last year's annual report. Well since last year's report Hassanatu gave birth to a baby girl at the end of September 2019 called Edrisnatu. We provided one of our 'Help a Baby Basket' kits for her. which provides basic support such as nappies, baby clothes and a baby bath as well as milk for the baby. Sadly her child, Edrisnatu tested positive for HIV in December 2019.

In January 2020, she was rushed from Lunsar to Freetown as she was very sick. When we took her to Cottage and Connaught Hospitals we were told that not only was the baby HIV positive but she had also tested positive for TB. In January 2020, the baby was extremely malnourished. In fact rather than looking four months old, she looked more like a new born. We could even see the baby's ribs and her arms were just so thin. The family admitted that they only fed the baby 2 times a day as opposed to the eight times a day that is recommended by the hospital. The baby is not being cared for properly. Hassanatu sneaks out every day, leaving the baby with her boyfriend's family. She leaves first thing in the morning and only returns home at night. In fact even when the doctors told her not to breast feed her child, she would purposely sneak into the baby's room at night and breast feed her. We just hope that the family will start taking better care of the baby as otherwise she will not live past the age of one. Thankfully we have already noticed a great improvement since she started treatment. Edrisnatu was coming to Freetown fortnightly for treatment in February and March and the doctors are very happy with her progress. In March, they gave Edrisnatu tablets for 5 months as Coronavirus restrictions has banned all inter-district transport. We are still keeping a close eye on Edrisnatu.

One of the main jobs of the FTR team is to provide 'Help a Baby Basket' kit to all those girls who give birth while living at home (please see the achievements section for more information). Sadly in the last year and a half, four of our girls (Isatu, Adamma, Mariamma and Christiana) who have been reunified with their families have lost their babies. They did not tell us that their babies were sick. They only told us afterwards once their babies had died. We would have happily provided medical treatment for their babies if only they had told us. In past reports we mentioned a girl called Christianna who we met in July 2017. Christiana was the girl who gave herself an abortion on the street. She gave birth in June 2019 but sadly in December 2019, her baby girl died after falling sick. She didn't tell us until it was too late and there was nothing we could do. Christiana was completely devastated as were we all. Even when she was pregnant, Christiana was attending vocational school every day. In the middle of February 2020, we bought Christiana a sewing machine- she had completed her training at the school and she wanted to set up her own business. She has the only sewing machine in the whole village so she was delighted and is kept very busy. Although nothing could ever make her get over the loss of her child- she is determined to honour her daughter's memory and make her daughter proud. Her new tailoring business is giving her that purpose. Although Laughter Africa already provides support such as nappies, milk, clothes, baby baths, flasks, lappa for wrapping etc...once the girls have given birth. we feel like we need to do more. We are hoping to introduce a training programme for all of our girls who have given birth. We hope that the training will take place sometime in 2020. It will be in very basic child care and administered by our female staff especially those who have given birth so recently themselves.

In August 2019 the FTR department's time was spent responding to the flooding crisis. Many of the children, we have already reunified, were badly affected by the heavy rains. Some of the girls lost their homes while others have had all their possessions swept away or damaged. The girls most affected were from Tombo, Cockle Bay and Funkai. The staff checked on each of the children affected by the flooding to see what we could do e.g. either provide medical treatment or alternative accommodation while their families found somewhere else to live. We even had some of the girls from Tombo stay with us in the Centre for a while. As one can see from all the above, the FTR team deals with matters of life and death on a daily basis.

One of the biggest change within the FTR department has been the growth of the business support scheme. With this we have started to provide tools or other equipment for our beneficiaries or their families to establish their own businesses (Please see the achievements section for more information).

The FTR team hosted one party for all the children who have been reunified and stayed home. We had our Christmas party on 14th December 2019 for all our children whom have remained home since their reunification. We had between 200 and 300 children come. We played a variety games in the morning. We played the most popular games that we played throughout the year including from our super hero month, our record breakers month and our Halloween night. This year the games where staff versus the children with the losers having to face the gunge. The winners were the children so the staff faced their punishment. This resulted in chaos and a huge gunge fight where the children were chased by the staff with gunge. We had the usual talent show with singing and dancing as well as prizes for the winners. The day ended with our usual party food Jallof rice, chicken and rubber drinks. The children really had a ball!!! Miss Sierra Leone came to visit and perform at the party too!

The Communications, Advocacy and Campaigning Department

Our advocacy and campaigns department started in September 2016 and has been in full swing ever since. This department was not as active in 2019 as the staff member in this department was on maternity leave for much of the year.

We celebrated the International day for Street Children (IDSC) (between 8th and 15th April 2020), with our friends from the Consortium for Street Children (CSC) and other street children organisations. Each year there is a different theme and ask. This year's day revolved around the ramifications of Coronavirus on street children's lives. In the face of lockdowns and curfews, street children around the world are struggling to get money to buy food, are being rounded up into crowded detention centres, losing access to shelters and drop-in centres and losing access to trusted adults as street outreach work becomes more difficult. The theme for the 2020 campaign was Safe Spaces – an issue that has become even more pressing as street children around the world struggle to figure out what curfews and lockdowns mean for them. For many, drop-in centres and shelters that they relied on are closing down, the streets are being heavily policed to enforce curfews and for those who have homes that they can return to, it may mean returning to an unsafe environment where they are subjected to violence and abuse. Safe spaces for street children are more important now than ever during Coronavirus. We were calling on governments to ensure that there are [#SafeSpacesForStreetChildren](#), particularly as measures are taken to stem the spread of Coronavirus during lockdowns. We were calling on governments around the world to make sure that street children have access to safe spaces, feel protected and to make sure that street children are not overlooked in plans to tackle Coronavirus

The day revolved around 3 asks:

- Safe spaces to self-isolate.

Street children lack safe places to go during lockdowns and curfews. Governments must make sure they can access somewhere to safely self-isolate. Governments must also ensure that lockdown measures do not punish or discriminate street children who have nowhere else to go.

- Access to essential services.

Street children are increasingly vulnerable during the pandemic. Many will be unable to access food, water, healthcare and sanitation. Governments should allow social workers to continue street outreach work during lockdowns so that they can provide food and medical care.

- Access to vital information.

Please visit [here](#) for more information about the day.

We carried out different activities to celebrate the day. In the first lockdown, the children in the ICC produced banners highlighting different issues. We then posted these on social media throughout the day. Then to celebrate the day, the girls in the ICC held its own version of The British Bake Off. The street children had to design their own cake. The theme of the cake had to be where they feel safe and where their safe spaces are which was the theme for the day. I was delighted to see that every single child put Laughter Africa and Five O's house as places they felt safe. The children voted on their favourite design and the winner was Hawa. Her prize was that she got to see her design made into a cake. We all ate the cake and I am happy to report that it was scrumptious!

As mentioned in the last annual report, this department does not just concentrate on campaigning and advocacy. The department also focuses on building relationships between Laughter Africa and the Ministry of Social Welfare, the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, the NGO unit and SLANGO.

Administration department

The duties outlined in last year's annual report remain the exact same for the administration department so there isn't much to add. The main responsibility for this department is the Sierra Leonean accounts. Our Administration department worked very hard particularly between January and the end of March 2020 trying to get all the registration completed with the different Sierra Leonean Government authorities. The process has slightly changed this year. Rather than just registering with the Ministry, we now have to get a Service Level Agreement (SLA) from them. This involves a lot of extra new paperwork and new procedures. We are now officially registered with the NGO Unit at MOPED, SLANGO (which is similar to the Charity Commission in the UK), Freetown City Council and Western Rural Council as well as the Ministry of Social Welfare. We collected our registration certificate with the NGO Unit on Wednesday 25th March which was a big achievement for us and the final step in the re-registration process. We also received our temporal SLA from the Ministry of Gender and Children and Children's Affairs in April 2020. They are not signing permanent SLAs with NGOs yet. The Administration Department is also responsible for arranging the Sierra Leone board of trustees. We have had a little bit of a re-jig of the board after the departure of some previous trustees. We now have a representative from the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs and a representative from someone at the Ministry of Social Welfare. We also have a new community member representing the community after the previous Trustee whose role it was to represent the community left the country. We also have one representative from the financial sector recently join us too. Our Trustee board is now at 12 again.

To see more information about our work please visit our [facebook page](#) or our [website](#).

Public benefit

The trustees of Laughter Africa have complied with their duty in section 17 (5) of the Charities Act 2011 and The Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 to have due regard to the Charity Commission's public benefit guidance when exercising any powers or duties to which the guidance is relevant. The Trustees paid particular attention to the guidance when reviewing, planning and shaping Laughter Africa's aims, objectives and activities for the year ahead. The trustees have considered how the charity's planned activities would contribute to the aims and objectives that had been set.

Volunteers

The Trustees would like to take this opportunity to thank all of Laughter Africa's volunteers in Sierra Leone. Late 2016 saw the creation of our Sierra Leone volunteer scheme. It has been a huge success. We are very lucky to have such a dedicated, hard working and committed volunteer base. We couldn't have achieved everything we have done, without their support. At the start of 2020, we only have one volunteer who is Dominic who volunteers at the mobile department.

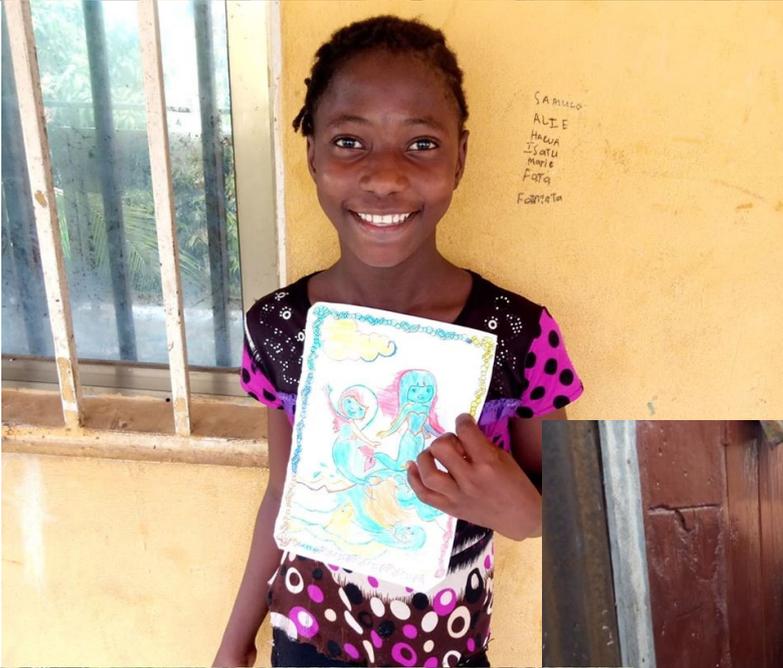
The trustees would like to say a huge thank you to all our volunteers in the UK too. We want to say a particular thank you to Darren Rimmer, our graphic designer volunteer, who created four new gifts in Autumn 2019. The four new gifts he created were:

- 'Help a Baby Basket' kit
- Water for street children for one week
- Buy a bed
- Feminine hygiene product

The trustees would also like to say a huge thank you to Anne-Marie Stead who has offered to become Laughter Africa's Trust and Foundations Volunteer. She started in May 2020. We know that her empathetic and compassionate nature will shine through all the proposals that she writes. With the impact of Coronavirus affecting all our other fundraising streams, her role is more important than ever.

A big thank you to everyone who took time out of their busy lives to come and visit Laughter Africa in Sierra Leone to see our work first hand; Thomasine, Val, Grainne and Ben. We were also meant to be welcoming David Smith and Frances Lee in April/May 2020 but because of Coronavirus, their trip was postponed. We look forward to welcoming them in 2021 instead. We were also expecting another visitor from Germany, Ricco, at the end of March 2020 but again due to Coronavirus, he had to cancel his trip. The children and team in Sierra Leone love meeting new people especially our friends from overseas. They still talk about the visitors, even years after they have left. To see some of our volunteers, visit [here](#).

D. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE



Achievements

Business Support scheme

One of our biggest achievements in the last year has been the introduction of the business support scheme. With this we have started to provide tools or other equipment for our beneficiaries to establish their own businesses. For example, we first met Agu in July 2016. Agu is a mumu boy meaning he can't hear or speak. Mumu people are laughed at and treated horribly by society. After living on the streets for five years, we reunified him with his mum and supported him through two and a half years of carpentry school. We are proud to say that Agu graduated with flying colours from his vocational school in December 2019. His new year's resolution for 2020 was to establish his very own carpentry business. Agu came to stay at the ICC at the end of January 2020. It was the first time that I had seen him since he went to live in the provinces 2 and a half years ago. As soon as he saw me, he gave me the biggest hug and the hugest smile. For anyone who knows Agu they know he never smiles. We bought him tools and he has now set up his own business in his village and is very happy. When we gave him the tools he showed us how to use each and every one. He was so excited. He loved being in Freetown again and was desperate to go for a swim at the beach. We can't wait for Agu's business to start to grow. His is the only carpentry shop in the village. All his life he has been belittled and mocked but he has never let it get him down, he keeps on going with his head held high and with his infectious enthusiasm in place.

Another example of our business support scheme in operation is Henry's new business. Henry is one of our old boys. We first met him in 2017 and since we reunified him with his family, he has never returned to the streets. He attends school every day. For the last year, Henry has been getting up around 3am every morning to go to a bakery to make bread for someone. Once he has baked the bread he goes to school. After school, he goes to sell the bread in Wilberforce. I have seen him many times selling bread there. Henry approached us at the end of February 2020 with a business proposal- he and his friend Ansu (another former street child who we met at mobile in 2017 and has since stayed at home) wanted to establish their own bakery business as they were doing all this work for someone else and not getting much money in return. They asked if we could give them business support just to get them started. We agreed that we would pay one month's rent for the bakery and all the ingredients that they needed for the first few days of bread making as well as the fuel, wood and pans that they needed to get started. After that, they were on their own. The agreement in place is that if Henry's school work starts to suffer then we close the bakery. The idea is that Ansu and Henry will use the profits from the bakery to pay for the ingredients and rent for the bakery every month. Henry will also give us 1,500,000 million leones every month to save for him. His aim is to pay for university through the bakery. He wants to be a lawyer. Tuition fees for law at university is 10 million leones per year and is a four year course. If he wants to sit the BAR, the fees are 20,000,000 million leones per year. So he needs to bake a lot of bread!!!! Their business is called 'Baion's Bread' (Henry's surname). I am so proud of him as rather than just asking for money – he is out there raising his own. He is dependent on no one and is truly self-sufficient. The whole point of Laughter Africa is for the street children to become independent and self-empowered so Henry is the embodiment of everything that Laughter stands for. Henry and Ansu hope to be employing staff soon and have agreed to let some of our boys who are at home work for them too.

Similarly, I saw one of our boys, Ibrahim Sorie selling bead bracelets and necklaces in Lumley. Again I was very proud of him. His mum has a disability and is unable to provide for the family so every day he makes jewellery which he then sells.

He provides everything that his family needs while still attending school himself. Without him, his family would suffer. He learnt how to make the jewellery while at the ICC in the arts and crafts lessons. I love the fact that we teach the children income generating skills that they then use to provide for their families. He never asks for anything from us. Again, like Henry, he is independent.

We have plans to grow the business support scheme over the next financial year. Laughter Africa has just been awarded a £5000 grant from the Fore to provide fifty families with business support. We will be providing equipment and tools for some of the families of the children who have stayed home since their reunification. The majority of the families who will benefit from this grant will be those families who live in the provinces. Some examples of what we will do: provide tools, crops and seeds for those who are farmers; tools for those who are carpenters, tailors, welders or fishermen; and equipment for those who are caterers. We are hopeful that this business support scheme will flourish and it could be something that we provide to all families of the children we reunify in the future.

Registration with the Sierra Leone Government and different inspections

One of our biggest achievements in the last financial year was how quickly we registered with the Sierra Leonean Government between January and March 2020. Usually country registration is cumbersome and problematic and takes up to 7 or 8 months but for the first time in five years it was relatively straight forward. We are particularly pleased as other organisations which are much bigger than us are having a difficult time receiving their registration certification. In fact at the time of writing this report (mid June 2020), some of them still haven't received their certificates. We also had a successful inspection from the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs on 29th April 2020. We have not had any feedback yet but it seemed to be a productive and positive assessment. We also had a successful inspection from SLANGO and the NGO Unit on 25th October 2019.

'Help a Baby Basket' kits

We are proud that, unlike other organisations, we still support female beneficiaries even if they become pregnant, without judgement and condemnation. Over the last year we have supplied around ten 'Help a Baby Basket' kits to Hassanatu, Theresa, Adamsay, Isata, Isata, Mariatu, Christiana among others. We give them the 'Help a Baby Basket' kit as most of the girls don't have anything when their babies are born. They are always delighted with their supply. In particular one highlight for the FTR department was the birth of Abubakarr. His mother is Adamsay, one of our girls who we met in June 2016. Isata, one of our senior social workers, supplied Adamsay with one of our 'Help a Baby Basket' kits. Isata also showed Adamsay how to look after baby Abubakarr properly as Adamsay doesn't have much support at home. Her mother has mental health issues. Isata trained her how to feed her baby, how to change a nappy, how to wash the baby, how to sterilise bottles, what to do if the baby is sick etc. Adamsay named her baby after Abubakarr, the head of FTR. She just loves him, as do all the children. He is so very kind to them and often buys them extra things, such as lunch, out of his personal resources. He always goes the extra mile for the children. The fact that Adamsay named her child after Abubakarr shows the level of appreciation, trust and respect she has for him. We currently have five girls who are expecting babies in the months ahead and we are providing medical treatment and other support when necessary.

Recognition from the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs

On 2nd and 3rd April 2020, we were invited to a meeting with different charity organisations with the Minister of Gender and Children Affairs. It was about street children in general as well as the effects of Coronavirus. We were very enthused by the meeting and are very excited about the future for street children in Sierra Leone. The Minister told us that street children are in her top 5 priorities and she wants to put together a new strategy for dealing with them. James, the founder of Laughter Africa, has been invited to be on the committee for the new street children strategy. This will mean that Laughter Africa will be at the forefront of helping street children, not just through providing services, but by advocating for their rights. It could be the perfect opportunity to introduce a street child law based on the 'UN General Comment No 21 on Children in Street Situations' (2017). It is the UN recommended policies and laws that could be put in place for children living in street situations. It would give street children extra protections in law, not just for now, but for generations to come. We have already emailed the Minister a copy of the General Comment. During the first lockdown, the Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs repeatedly mentioned Laughter Africa on the radio in all her interviews. In one interview she said, there are just two organisations working with street children on the ground all the time- Dom Bosco and Laughter Africa. She said she hadn't heard of Laughter Africa until recently but she said ***"I hear that they do fantastic work."*** It was nice to get some recognition from the authorities.

Recognition from Community Members

In April 2020, I had a few conversations which made me realise the impact of our work. I was getting off a poda poda and a man approached me and said,

"How are the boys doing? The ones you work with at Regent Road. I haven't seen you in a while."

I had never seen him before so I was a bit puzzled but then I started to explain how we had to close mobile because of the State of Emergency and the rules on gatherings. I then explained about the difficult situation with the neighbour (please see the challenges section). He said,

" But you do great work. I am a policeman and I see you there all the time with the children. Do you want me to go and speak to this neighbour and tell him to leave you alone? The government should appreciate everything you do. Not be stopping you."

It just made me realise that although we don't know lots of people, people know us and see the work we do even if they never say anything. They are even prepared to defend us.

Another man I don't know came up to me on the same Sunday in Adonkia, where the ICC is based, and said,

" Thank you for the great work you do" and just walked off.

It is very rare for a Sierra Leonean to praise you and for two people in one day to do so is just flabbergasting. Similarly in October 2019, a shop owner next to the mobile project came up to me saying,

” Thank you for the work you do with the boys. Someone should video you with the kids as no one believes me when I tell them about you.”

This community recognition is really uplifting as they are seeing the commitment that we have for the street children. After five years of conducting outreach, the chief and headsman in most areas all know about us and our work. In May 2020, the headsman in Tombo even phoned me up to thank Laughter Africa for everything that we do there. They see the fruits of our work in their communities.

Response to Coronavirus

I'm so proud of the incredible team at Laughter Africa who go above and beyond to make sure that children on the streets and their families are safe. despite the risk to themselves. While other NGOs stopped direct service delivery on the ground in the wake of Coronavirus, Laughter Africa's staff continued to feed the boys on the streets every day from the end of March until now. We told the staff that they didn't have to work but they didn't want to just abandon the children. The fact that the mobile, ICC, FTR and administration teams kept working throughout the Coronavirus is a testament to their dedication and commitment to the children.

Capacity Building of Local Staff

Dom Bosco are kindly paying for two of our staff, Isata Samura and Abubakarr Zombo. to complete a Diploma in psychomotricity. This is a type of counselling which will have a huge impact on our work particularly in the ICC. They started the course in 2019 and the course is expected to last for two years. We hope if the diploma course is successful, the course might be repeated in the future so that other staff can participate too.

The Appointment of the Laughter Africa Nurse

Probably one of our biggest successes over the last year has been the appointment of the Laughter Africa Nurse, Isata Lebbie. She not only treats the children in mobile but also the children living in the ICC and the children who fall under the FTR programme. She has saved Laughter Africa so much money in terms of medicine and hospital treatment since she started in November 2019. It is better for the children as they all know Isata as she worked at Laughter Africa since June 2018 (albeit in a different capacity). The children already know and trust her. Since she arrived at mobile, we have seen attendance increase ten fold. She is a great asset and we would be lost without her. She is worth her weight in gold. Coupled with this is the success of the HIV and Hepatitis rapid testing that she introduced for the children in all three departments in March 2020. Already it has been a big success.

The children really appreciate us

Anyone who has heard me speak about Laughter Africa has heard me talk about Sylvanus. We met him in 2016 when he had cancer. He had lived on the streets for two years before we met him. His mum had died of Ebola. Since that time, he has turned his life around. He is at home and he is now in JSS2. He works very hard at school and his health is 100%

improved. In February 2020 Sylvanus knocked on my door, came into my room and started hammering a wardrobe rail into my wall. He had paid someone to make it for him. He then got some coat hangers out and then proceeded to hang about 6 T-shirts and shirts that he had bought for me. When I offered to pay for them, he said, **“No. Let me do something for you.”** He saved up the money from jobs he had done in the previous months- just to do something for me. I was speechless.

Similarly at mobile in February 2020, Yusif Bah, one of our old boys, came up to me and for about a week, just handed me an energy drink every day with no explanation. He just wanted to give me something to say thank you without having to say thank you! Meanwhile one Saturday in April,

I saw one of our old girls, Nata. We first met her living on the streets two years ago. She is still at home and has been attending school. She was selling mangos in Lumley. I greeted her and then went on my way. She came running after me about 2 minutes later saying, **“Five O- these are for you.”** She handed me 4 mangos. I offered to pay but she said **“no- they are a gift.”** I was so touched. I gave them to the girls in the ICC who had coincidentally asked me to get them mangoes that day. These children still find ways to surprise me every day even after 5 years. They might not have much but if you look after them and fight for them, then they will do the same for you! Although it sounds twee, the children really do see Laughter Africa and the staff as their family and vice versa.

The long term effects of our work

In June 2020 we celebrated our fifth birthday in Sierra Leone. We are now seeing the long term effects of our work here – the fruits of our labour. We have been supporting some of our children for over five years now. Some of those children are now in SS3 and are about to sit the WASCE (the Sierra Leone equivalent of A levels) and then graduate. We currently have 6 children about to sit the WASCE. We met Sorie Fullah living on the streets in Waterloo in August 2015. He was an orphan after both his parents died from Ebola. In 2019, he sat the BECE and achieved a score of 24– the best result of all of the Laughter Africa children who sat the BECE in 2019. Meanwhile one of our disabled children Abdul who we met in 2016, after he had been abandoned by all his family, is finally sitting the NPSE (the Sierra Leonean equivalent of the SATS) in 2020. He started class 6 in September 2019. He had never been to school before we met him and now look at him soar. Sorie and Abdul are just two of the hundreds of the street children we have helped. And we are proud of each and everyone of them. Many of the young people have graduated or are about to graduate from vocational school after 2 years or more such as Rasta, Emma, Aminata, Elizabeth, Agu and Christiana.

Numbers of street children worked with:

The numbers of street children whom Laughter Africa has worked with over the last year is astronomical. Mobile has been a huge success particularly in February and March 2020. We reached our highest ever attendance in March 2020– we peaked at 91 boys in one night. In the final five weeks of mobile before we closed, most nights we had over 80 boys. If it wasn't for the lockdown, we believe that we would have reached over 100 boys as the momentum was building. To date we have reached an estimate of about 750 children since the project began in January 2017. We are constantly attracting new street children. In addition, Laughter Africa has worked with over 750 street children at the Interim Care Centre since 15th June 2015 which is when Laughter Africa commenced its work in Sierra Leone. Of this number, 75 to 80% are at home. Given the differing needs and backgrounds of every child, this figure is likely to fluctuate; it does

however indicate the positive and lasting impact of Laughter Africa's activities. Of the street children who went back on the streets, 90% still come to mobile regularly so we still come into contact with them. In 2019/20, we worked with 118 children in the Interim Care Centre. In the last financial year, we have paid school support for over 400 street children to attend school or vocational training. By the end of March 2021, we estimate that we will be providing school support for over 600 children. Altogether we have worked with 1,500 street children since Laughter Africa began five years ago.

Lack of duplication

Another achievement is that we have stopped the duplication of our work with Dom Bosco. Some of the street children would exploit both charities and each of us would pay school fees for the same child. However, this has now stopped. In particular Dom Bosco and Laughter Africa have built up a close working relationship so we are aware of exactly which child is being helped by which organisation. Where there is any overlap, only one organisation will pay for them. Dom Bosco have been particularly supportive to Laughter Africa over the last year. During the build up to Coronavirus, Dom Bosco offered numerous advice to Laughter as well as any extra support such as food or cleaning materials if needed. Similarly after the trouble with the neighbour, Dom Bosco offered Laughter Africa the expertise of two lawyers if necessary. There is a mutual respect between the two organisations.

Connected to this is that Laughter Africa has become a lot stricter about who we provide school support for. In the past we would give the street children numerous chances for school support, even if they were not attending. However, now we have a strict policy in place that we need to see the child's report before providing school supply and extra school support. If they did not attend the previous academic year then we will not provide support for the next academic year. We have a new policy: from January 2020, we will only provide extra support for those children attending government schools. We will not pay for private schools in any circumstance. We will still provide school starter packs, extra lessons and text books. The money saved from private school fees might be able to pay university costs for some of our most serious children.

International Day of the Street Child

Finally, we are particularly proud of the fact that we were one of the more visible organisations on social media during the 'International Day for Street Children' (IDSC). While other organisations worldwide were restricted by what they could do to celebrate the day, due to Coronavirus or government restrictions, we were still able to do a lot of different activities to celebrate as Coronavirus wasn't as prevalent here at that time. We were flying the flag for other organisations who would normally be doing something to mark the day but couldn't through no fault of their own. We were in solidarity with them and felt responsible to represent them and their message as best we could.

Challenges

The death of Fatmata

In May 2020, we lost two of our children who were living at home, Fatmata and Adamma, in the same week. Fatmata died on Monday 11th May 2020. Fatmata was with us in the ICC in February 2020 and stayed for a month. She was only 12. It is not known what she died of but she complained of pains in her feet on Saturday. Two days later, she was dead. She had lived on the streets for 8 months before we found her. Her mum and dad died during Ebola so she lived with her aunt and uncle. The week before she died, there were riots in Tombo (where she lived). Because the local chief reduced the number of fisherman allowed out on the sea at any one time, local youths set fire to the hospital, police station and local chief's house before the riot was quelled by the military shooting live bullets. As a result of the violence, more restrictions were put in place. No vehicles were allowed to enter or leave Tombo. The day she died was the first day that we were able to enter Tombo. But it was too late for Fatmata. Our social workers, Zombo, Bakarr and Isata had originally planned to go to Tombo on the day she died to see our children as they were struggling with the extra restrictions in place. We wanted to offer them and their families business support money. After we received the phone call telling us of Fatmata's death, I went with them to Tombo too. When we arrived her house was full of mourners. All we could hear were the wails of anguish from her aunt. I just hugged her aunt, words were not necessary. The staff were just amazing. As we were waiting for money to arrive from the English account, Bakarr used his salary to pay for everything for the funeral. Zombo sat with Fatmata's aunt consoling her. All our girls who live in Tombo where there (about 20). They were all devastated and crying.

I asked to see Fatmata, just to say goodbye. One of the reasons I struggled with Sheku and Mohamed's deaths was that I was unable to say goodbye as their funerals were both in the provinces. I have never seen a dead body before. I only saw Sheku's body on a photograph at his autopsy as I had to identify him for the post-mortem. Fatmata was already wrapped up for burial so they removed the material covering her face. She looked so peaceful-just like she was sleeping. I told her goodbye on behalf of Laughter and all the children and staff and thanked her for coming into the family of Laughter Africa and being an amazing daughter. At Muslim funerals, as it is only men who can attend the graveside - 10 of us went. Zombo and Bakarr helped to carry the coffin for over 30 minutes to get to the graveside. At the graveside, I said to Bakarr ***"Thank you for carrying her."*** He replied, ***"There's no need to thank me. She's my kid too."*** After she was buried, the Inman led us in a quick Muslim prayer and then we all left. She's buried in an anonymous grave. I was worried that we would never find the right grave again but the grave diggers assured me they would find her grave again. The grave is overlooking the sea, in one of the most beautiful views I have ever seen.

Before we left Tombo we met with our girls and gave them their business support. After that we bade farewell to Fatmata's family, her aunt and uncle, older brother (Amidu) and little sister (Mabinty). We assured them of our support for Amidu and Mabinty and told them that we were here for them too. The last time we saw Fatmata was the end of March 2020. We were meant to pay school for her but schools were shut at the end of March so we were just waiting until they re-opened. We were meant to see her on the day she died to give her business support.

Adamma's death

Two days after Fatmata's death, another one of our girls Adamma died. She died on 13th May 2020 around 10pm. Adamma was amazing. She had guts. She was feisty. No one messed with her. She was 17 years old when she died. She had a cold which developed into pneumonia as well as TB. Adamma had been through a lot in her short life. Yet despite this she wasn't a victim. She was a survivor. Here's what she told us back in October/November 2018 when she stayed in the ICC:

"The reason I went on the street is because I wanted a millay (a type of vest). I went on the streets to find the money to buy one. Once I got the money to buy clothes, my friend wouldn't let me go home- they told me to stay on the streets with them. She took me to 'Bay' and introduced me to drugs such as marijuana, ashe and tramadol and she sent me to sleep with men. I got addicted. I refused to go back home. My parents do not care for me because of my attitude. Life on the streets is not sweet because on the streets they rape me and they choke me. They strangled me and tied my hands and my feet. They beat me and I fainted and I couldn't even get up. Blood poured from me everywhere. Another time, I was forcefully raped by 6 men. They stabbed me with a knife in my back. I used to sleep on the bare floor. I used to hang out and wait for men to go home with. I did prostitution to survive on the street. I had no food to eat and no place to sleep."

We reunified Adamma with her family in mid November 2018 and we paid school fees for her at the end of November 2018. She sat the NPSE in 2019. She gave birth to a baby boy in September 2019. Sadly, Adamma lost her little boy at the end of January 2020. He was only a few months old. However, she had started to attend school again in February 2020. She was in JSS1. We last saw her at the end February when she came for medical treatment. We took her to the pharmacy as she was complaining of an ulcer. She was determined and back to her old self.

As soon as we received the phone call from her family about her death, we rushed to Waterloo to visit them but she had already been buried. In Waterloo, we bumped into two of our old children Sorrie Fullah and another girl called Adamma and her baby Mary. They joined us (myself, Isata, Bakarr and our mobile volunteer Dominic) at the graveside. We had a chance to say a final goodbye to Adamma in our own way and all spoke about how Adamma had touched our lives in one way or another. We gave her mum, dad and little baby sister a contribution to cover the funeral costs. We also promised that we will pay school for Kadiatu (Adamma's sister) in memory of Adamma as soon as schools reopen. Her family were so grateful and appreciative.

As you can imagine it was a week from hell with losing both Adamma and Fatmata but I was proud of how the team and the children here remained strong and steadfast despite the losses we had experienced. Both Adamma and Fatmata's deaths coincided with the first anniversary of Mohamed G Sankoh's death. He died on Sunday 12th May 2019 after contracting TB and Hepatitis. He was just 15 years old. We had known him since January 2017 after we had found him living on the streets. He was making a success of his life at school and home when he contracted the illnesses. We phoned Mohamed's mother on his anniversary just to give our condolences to her and tell her that we are thinking of her. She was delighted that we hadn't forgotten him. We marked the occasion by holding a minute's silence in honour of Mohamed and we also invited our supporters to do the same which many did so.

A new troublesome Neighbour

We have been happily running our ICC for the last 5 years without any problems. The community of Adonkia have welcomed us with open arms and they have no problem with us. Then in December 2019, we had our new neighbours move in next door. This neighbour works for the Government. He keeps constantly complaining about the noise. He claims that he tried to talk to me about the situation. The only time he came was on the day of our Christmas party when we had 300 children. He came shouting at me and I asked him to come back as we were busy running the party. He never did come back. On Tuesday 21st April 2020, the neighbours' wife started recording the children and the compound without our permission. I think she was trying to get proof about the noise during our talent show. One of our staff tried to go to talk to her at her house to explain what we do here but she refused to come to the gate. Recording the children in our care is illegal in both Sierra Leone and the UK and it is against our child protection policy. On 22nd April, her husband accosted me in the street saying that I am inconveniencing him. He spoke to me like I was something he had stood in. He tried to intimidate me saying, "***I am researching you. I have been on your website.***" However, Laughter Africa is doing nothing wrong. And I won't be intimidated or silenced for doing the right thing. Our girls in the ICC have been through so much trauma. Trauma you can only imagine. When the girls first come here, they are broken and destroyed from so many years living on the street and the continual exploitation they have faced. We recognise that sometimes we are quite noisy but we have tried to be considerate. We even changed our timetable at weekends to accommodate the neighbour. We no longer do any outdoor activities- instead the children stay indoors. However, during the week, we kept our timetable as we knew the Director was at work then so we wouldn't be disturbing him. We are mostly inside for the whole day anyway. The only real noisy activities take place Monday to Friday between 11 and 1 and also Saturdays between 9 to 11 and are modern dance, cultural dance and drama. The rest of the activities are relatively quiet. We have to keep these 11 to 1 activities in our timetable as the children really enjoy them and it is conducive to their recovery. We are always quiet at night as the children just watch films. We were here first. You don't move next door to an ICC if you want a quiet life. We have been here 5 years without any trouble and had no other complaints from community members. These neighbours make noise too. Their generator is always on - even when there is EDSA light. It is a constant racket but we have never complained. Thankfully after five years, we have connections here too. We contacted all our own contacts who also work with the government and they spoke to him. He told our contacts that him and his wife hadn't even noticed us, had no problem with us and they had never even spoken to me. They denied everything as they were embarrassed by their behaviour. Since then he has left us alone. We are protected for now. I think he now realises that we cannot be bullied or intimidated just because he works for the government. It was a real David versus Goliath moment. Yes we might not have much money but that hasn't stopped us doing a fantastic job. The whole situation lasted over a week and was a very stressful time but it made me realise how valued we are as an organisation and how respected we are locally and by people in positions of power too.

Maternity leave

Another huge challenge that Laughter Africa faced in 2019 was that two of our female staff took maternity leave. This meant that we did not have enough female staff to work with female street children. From May 2019 until the end of December we worked with male street children in the Interim Care Centre. We prefer working with female street children as they are a lot more vulnerable than boys living on the streets. Girls are more likely to stay home after their reunification too-boys are a lot less serious. 2018 was such a great year for Laughter and a big factor was our work with girls. In 2019 we lost momentum. Thankfully in January 2020, all female staff have returned so we are able to work with girls again in the Interim Care Centre. We are hoping to work with girls in the ICC throughout the whole of 2020/21. We are really looking forward to rebuilding the momentum that we had gained in 2018 in 2020.

The effects of Coronavirus in the UK and in Sierra Leone

We are concerned about the effects of Coronavirus on our funding. We generate the majority of our funds through churches and schools fundraising for us. At the moment schools and churches are closed and we have no idea when they will re-open. We know of at least two schools who were planning big fundraising events for us before they closed. We had planned to arrange Bongo Bingo nights throughout the UK from September to December 2020. These will now have to be postponed until another time. This means that we will have to depend on funds from Trusts and Foundations for the majority of the 2020/21 financial year. However, not many trusts and foundations support work with street children and I am not sure how successful we will be.

Coronavirus has also effected our work in Sierra Leone too. Since the 'State of Emergency' was introduced, restrictions on gatherings has been introduced. This means that:

1. Mobile is unable to meet.
2. The Annual 'International Day for Street Children' Party in April was cancelled.
3. Schools are closed
4. All external school examinations are postponed.

This all affected the way that we work and will effect our original plans and budgets for the year ahead.

E. FINANCIAL REVIEW



Brief statement of the charity's policy on reserves

The Trustees of Laughter Africa have established a general Reserves Policy which is in place to protect our overseas programme work from risk of disruption at short notice due to a lack of funds and other financial risks that the organisation faces, while at the same time ensuring that we do not retain income for longer than required. The trustees have determined that Laughter Africa's general reserves should be equivalent to approximately three months' running costs and expenditure for each country programme where Laughter Africa is based. The trustees believe that the reserves should be maintained at this level as it will ensure that Laughter Africa's core activities could continue for at least 3 months during a period of unforeseen difficulty. At the moment Laughter Africa is only working in Sierra Leone so the reserves are quite low. However in the future, the Trustees hope to expand Laughter Africa's work in other African countries too which would increase the reserves needed. Laughter Africa reserves are held in our UK bank account. The Trustees have estimated that 3 months running costs for Laughter Africa's work in Sierra Leone is around **£5000**. The trustees will review Laughter Africa's reserves policy each year, ensuring a balance between spending on the immediate needs of our charitable programmes and setting aside a reserve to protect Laughter Africa and our work by providing time to adjust to changing financial circumstances. The basis of determining the target reserves level is kept under periodic review and will be adjusted as perceptions of risk and other factors change. By the end of this financial year, our reserves were £5000.

Details of any funds materially deficit

Not Applicable

Laughter Africa's principal sources of funding and how expenditure has supported the key objectives

Laughter Africa's principal sources of funding in the financial period came mainly from donations from supporters, schools, churches and Trusts and Foundations. In the financial period the total raised from supporters was **£85,923.82 (unrestricted)**. **£9,399.81 (unrestricted)** was raised from Gift Aid. **£150.05 (unrestricted)** was earned through bank interest, compensation and refunds. **£8000 (unrestricted)** was kindly donated by different Trusts for our general funds. In total, **£103,473.68** was raised in 2019/20. Laughter Africa had **£5140.67 (unrestricted) and £4307.28 (restricted)** remaining from the previous financial year. In total, **£112,921.63** was available for Laughter Africa's use in 2019/20. Our income was smaller this year as Laughter Africa did not apply to any Trusts and Foundations in 2019/20 due to time constraints.

None of the money we have received from supporters is spent in the UK (apart from bank charges for the transfer of funds to Sierra Leone). All money received is spent directly on in-country operational costs and we are proud of the fact that Laughter Africa is managed entirely by volunteers at the central level, with no administration, fundraising or organisational support costs.

The trustees have purposely decided to stay away from government institutional funding sources such as DIFID, the European Union, the European Commission or the UN for the time being. The trustees have also decided that Laughter Africa will not fundraise via direct marketing methods or telephone fundraising and instead will concentrate on generating funds via individual supporters, schools, churches, community groups, businesses/ companies and trusts or foundations. Most of our fundraising plans have sadly had to be postponed due to Coronavirus. We have had to postpone our new fundraising strategy, our 'Bongo's Bingo' nights, which should have been implemented from September 2020 but due to Coronavirus, social gatherings are not permissible at the moment. Sadly, due to the closure of schools and churches in the UK due to Coronavirus, the founder James Tyrrell has been unable to carry out his usual visits in 2020. The plan originally was for him to visit schools and churches from September to December 2020. Now however, this might only be possible in Spring 2021 depending on the re-opening of schools and churches. One school, St Patrick's RC High School in Eccles had even planned to have a golf day in July 2020 in order to raise funds for Laughter Africa. We hope to expand the success of the Laughter Africa virtual gift scheme which we piloted in November/December 2018 and continued in October/November/December 2019. This year we plan on introducing some more new gifts including a new 'business support' gift as well as chickens, tools and seeds.

We are committed to achieving the highest standards in fundraising. We comply with all relevant statutory regulations, including the Charities Act 2011, the Charities (Protection and Social Investment) Act 2016, the Data Protection Act 2018, the Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations 2003 and the Telephone Preference Service. We adhere to and comply with the Fundraising Regulator's Code of Fundraising Practice and the Fundraising Promise, which set the standards for fundraising activity throughout the UK. We also comply with laws relating to health and safety, the environment and UK data protection legislation including the General Data Protection Regulation (May 2018). Laughter Africa does not use any third party fundraising agencies otherwise known as 'Professional Fundraisers' to undertake fundraising on our behalf. Our 'Treating Donors Fairly Policy' outlines how we manage fair treatment of all supporters and potential supporters and how any individuals who may be in vulnerable circumstances or are unable to make an informed decision are protected. We log and respond to all complaints. In 2019/20, we received no complaints related to our fundraising activity.

The trustees would also like to say a big thank you to all the trusts and foundations who gave a donation to Laughter Africa. The following Trusts and Foundations gave donations to Laughter Africa in 2019/20:

**THE EDUCATIONAL
AND GENERAL
CHARITABLE TRUST**

**THE MPM
CHARITABLE TRUST**

**THE TRELIX
CHARITABLE
TRUST**



**THE
FORE**

In the last financial year, Laughter Africa did not apply to any Trusts and Foundations. The only Trust that we applied to was the Fore Emergency Coronavirus Funding which we received in June 2020. Another volunteer, Anne-Marie Stead, has offered to write to trusts and foundations on behalf of Laughter Africa. She will start applying from the middle of June 2020.

Thank you to everyone who has given extra donations to Laughter Africa to support us in our struggle against Coronavirus. We have been so touched and humbled by your incredible kind hearted support and generosity particularly when we know that times are tough for everyone in the UK and around the rest of the world. I can't say thank you enough to all my amazing friends and family for all your help. We are so, so grateful - and none more so than the children and their families!

Discussion of how Laughter Africa spent the money and how this expenditure has supported the key objectives.

Laughter Africa's total expenditure in the financial period was **£101,398.33** and there was **£9373.33** held in the bank accounts and petty cash at the end of the financial year. A total of **£110,771.66**. Laughter Africa lost **£2,149.97** via multi currency exchange rate losses. This is to be expected due to the uncertainty of Brexit and the economic consequences of the Coronavirus. A total expenditure of **£103,548.30** was spent in the 2019/20 financial year. You can see a full breakdown of our costs in the table below:

Expenditure in Sierra Leone

Type of expenditure	Cost (Pounds)
Rent for the Interim Care Centre	£7, 633.59
Salaries for National Staff	£24,234.61
Food	£9,592.34
Non- food items	£3,769.03
Games and entertainment Costs	£4,952.45
Staff travel costs during reunifications	£2,507.86
Educational equipment	£9,998.10
Generator fuel for mobile/ICC	£454.31
Street children travel costs	£3,121.33
School fees/vocational training	£9,931.97
Medical costs for the street children	£6,058.42
Street children travel accommodation	£26.95
Volunteer costs	£692.20
Travel subsistence for staff	£167.44
Family support for the street children	£2,447.03
Clothing	£995.44
Campaign and Advocacy	£481.59
Rent Tax	£1281.46
Toiletries	£210.88
Staff travel accommodation	£445.49
Travel subsistence for the street children	£75.21
Audit fees (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1124.16
Hiring of equipment	£159.77
Water supplies	£480.81
P.O. Box (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£10.56
Bank Charges in Sierra Leone	£627.42

Electricity for the ICC/mobile	£562.28
Insurance (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£286.68
Work permit and residential permit (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£309.99
Annual leave allowance for National staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1475.19
Medical Insurance for National Staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£778.42
Country Registration fees	£1635.76
NASSIT (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1,899.90
End of service benefit for National Staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone).	£510.33
Telephone costs	£492.65
PAYE (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£990.21
TOTAL	£100,421.83

Expenditure in the UK

<u>Type of expenditure</u>	<u>Cost (Pounds)</u>
Bank Charges in the UK	£976.50
TOTAL	£976.50

All the above expenses are part of our charitable objectives, without them, Laughter Africa couldn't function.

Costs associated with all three departments: Outreach, the Interim Care Centre and Family Tracing and Reunification

(FTR)

Some of the costs overlap between the three different departments. For instance, medical care is provided for all children at the mobile project, the Interim Care Centre and for those who have been reunified with their families. The total cost of medical care was **£6,058.42**. Similarly, food is provided at both the mobile project and the Interim Care Centre. The total cost spent on food in 2019/20 was **£9,592.34**. Coupled with this is the cost of non food items, (both at mobile and the Interim Care Centre) which totalled **£3,769.03**. Non food items include things like coal, washing powder, towels, plate/cups and repairs to the house (as the street children are always breaking things and they need to be replaced for the next intake of street children for health and safety reasons e.g. toilets). **£4,952.45** was spent on games and entertainment including art & craft materials, cultural dance, modern dance, the mobile trips out, drafts, ludo and sports equipment at both mobile and the Interim Care Centre. The travel costs of the street children across all three departments was **£3,121.33**. Meanwhile staff travel across all three departments reached **£2,507.86**. All the social workers in all three departments are given monthly phone credit. This is because the street children are constantly phoning the social workers about different issues so the social workers need credit to phone them back. The total spent on telephone costs was **£492.65**. Meanwhile the cost of electricity for both mobile and the ICC totalled **£562.28** while **£454.31** was spent on fuel for the generator for the ICC and mobile.

Costs associated solely with the Outreach department

The only payment solely associated with the outreach department was for water supplies which totalled **£480.81** for the year. All the other expenditure such as food, non-food items, medical care and games and entertainment are listed above.

Costs associated solely with the Interim Care Centre

The main expense connected to the Interim Care Centre is the rent which was **£7, 633.59**. Laughter Africa also paid rent tax for two years which is a legal requirement in Sierra Leone. This totalled **£1,281.46**. Other costs associated with the interim Care Centre include clothing (**£995.44**); toiletries (**£210.88**) and the hiring of equipment e.g. chairs and musical set for the Christmas party 2019 or the party for the IDSC in April 2019 (**£159.77**). All the other costs are listed above like medical expenses, food/non-food items and games and entertainment. Without an Interim Care Centre, we would not be able to carry out our key objectives: it is crux to our work.

Costs associated solely with the Family Tracing and Reunification Department

The three major expenditures in the Family Tracing and Reunification department (FTR) were school fees/vocational training (**£9,931.97**), educational equipment (uniforms, school bag, school shoes, stationery, equipment for vocational schools, text books) (**£9,998.10**) and family support for the most vulnerable street children once they have returned home (**£2,447.03**). This support could be a mattress, a bag of rice, a wheelchair, business support or rent. It is expected that these costs will increase in the next financial year as Laughter Africa will continue to pay the school support for the children we worked with between 2015 and 2020, as well as the new children with whom we will work in 2020/21. However, family reunification is a key objective of the work and paying for school fees is a major factor in keeping the street children at home. Providing school fees and vocational training is crux to our charitable objectives. Other costs associated with this strand of work include; travel accommodation for staff during the reunification process (**£445.49**); travel subsistence for staff during the reunification process (**£167.44**); accommodation for street children during the reunification process (**£26.95**); and travel subsistence for street children during the reunification process (**£75.21**).

Costs associated with the Campaigning and Advocacy department

In 2019/20, the communication and advocacy programme for Laughter Africa revolved around two events; the International Day of the Street Child (12th April) and the Day of the African Child (June 16th). The total cost spent on advocacy and campaigning was **£481.59**.

Costs associated with staffing

The biggest expenditure was on national staff salaries which was a total of **£24,234.61**. However without staff Laughter Africa wouldn't be able to complete its work or charitable objectives. It is Laughter Africa's policy that only national Sierra Leoneans will be appointed as staff. Laughter Africa will never employ an international staff member in Sierra Leone. By the end of the 2019/20 financial year, Laughter Africa employed 14 full time staff and 1 part time staff. We have achieved gender equity in pay. All our female staff are paid the exact same as their male counter parts in the same roles. All staff are paid above the minimum wage and receive medical care (**£778.42**) and GPA insurance (**£286.68**). Laughter Africa also paid NASSIT (**£1,899.90**) and PAYE (**£990.21**) which are tax payments and are legal requirements from the Sierra Leone government relating to staff. Similarly Laughter Africa complied with all the labour laws in Sierra Leone including annual leave allowance (**£1475.19**) and end of service benefit (**£510.33**). The staffs' work has been greatly enhanced by the work of volunteers. Costs associated with the volunteers totalled **£692.20**. This includes volunteer stipends, volunteer travel as part of reunifications or outreach and accommodation and subsistence during long distance reunifications.

Country registration and other associated fees

To work in Sierra Leone, Laughter Africa has to pay registration fees to the NGO unit at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development and SLANGO (the equivalent of the Charity Commission in Sierra Leone). Laughter Africa also has to pay registration charges to Freetown City Council and Western Rural District Council. The total cost of re-registration with all these departments cost **£1635.76**. Laughter Africa also had to register with the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs. However it was free to register with both ministries this year. To be re-registered as a charity in Sierra Leone, an audit must be completed. The audit costs were **£1124.16**. Meanwhile another legal requirement is that any international volunteers must have a residential permit/work permit so this was purchased for the founder James. This cost was **£309.99**. To be recognised as a registered charity in Sierra Leone, one must have a PO Box. Laughter Africa has one at a cost of **£10.56** per year.

Bank charges in Sierra Leone

The bank charges in Sierra Leone were **£627.42**.

Bank charges in the UK.

The only expenditure in the UK is for bank charges when money is transferred to the Laughter Africa Sierra Leone Bank Account. This is because the Trustees believe that the money entrusted to us by supporters should not be spent on fundraising or administrative costs in the UK but on the street children themselves. The Trustees see each donation as an honour and a privilege as there are so many other charities which people could chose to support instead. The total cost of bank charges in the UK was **£976.50**.

Non financial support

The trustees would like to thank Dom Bosco for kindly paying for two of our staff, Isata Samura and Abubakarr Zombo to complete a Diploma in psychomotricity.

Principal Financial policies in force throughout the year

Laughter Africa has the following financial policies in place:

Laughter Africa's Earmarking policy
Foreign currency and exchange rate policy
Laughter Africa's Paying staff policy
Sierra Leone Financial procedures
Reserves and investment policy
Anti- bribery policy
Fraud and loss policy
Acceptance of donations policy
Policy on safeguarding resources from terrorist abuse
Credit card policy
Authorisation of expenditure policy
Payment of expenses policy
Internal financial controls policy
Laughter Africa's Accountancy manual

The trustees have also prepared financial templates and documentation for Laughter Africa including assets registers, chart of accounts, budgeting templates etc. All are available upon request.

Investment Policy

At the moment, Laughter Africa has no investments as the charity is still so new and we use every penny we receive for our work in Sierra Leone. However, there is an investment policy in place for when the charity is ready to make investments. This policy governs how cash resources are managed, which institutions may be used, security ratings and risk management etc. The policy is as follows:

The objective of the investment policy is to maintain high liquidity while ensuring maximum security by avoiding risk to capital. This is to comply with Laughter Africa's ethical standards and to achieve the best possible return within these limiting parameters. To meet this objective, the charity plans to invest in sterling deposits with financial institutions that hold a high security rating, ordinarily spreading the total invested across fixed terms from overnight to 12 months, and limiting the amount invested with any one financial institution. In response to the increased risks highlighted by the credit crunch, Laughter Africa plans to have limited deposits to UK domiciled banks for shorter periods to enable the charity to react more quickly to the fluctuating financial environment. The Trustees annually review Laughter Africa's investment policy. The charity has no long term investments.

F. OPTIONAL INFORMATION



Future plans for 2020

Dealing with the ramifications of Coronavirus

Looking to the future, with the rising cost of food, the likelihood of civil unrest and the onslaught of Coronavirus, I am expecting to find more and more children living on the streets. In the months ahead this will lead to an increase in our work when mobile resumes and schools reopen. There might well be an increase in numbers because girls will go and live on the streets because of pregnancy. According to recent research by Save the Children in Sierra Leone, there is a risk of a 65% increase in teenage pregnancy during the Coronavirus. Many girls are thrown out of their homes for falling pregnant and end up on the streets as they have nowhere else to go. For instance, Esther, a girl who stayed in the ICC in April/May 2020, said this during her enrollment interview,

" I lived on the streets for 2 years. My dad is dead and my mother and I had a problem. When I was pregnant she made me leave the house - she threw me out and I had nowhere to go. I gave birth on the streets but sadly my baby died when she was just a month old. She was a girl and her name was Christiana. She lived on the streets her whole life. After that I decided to stay on the street. I never wanted to see my mum again as I blamed her for Christiana's death."

I am expecting to hear many similar stories post Coronavirus. When schools were closed during Ebola, there was a huge increase in teenage pregnancy. We believe that the numbers of street children will increase because many families in Sierra Leone are grandparent led families. We are worried that older people, who are the most susceptible to Coronavirus, might die. There will be a lot more children moving onto the streets if their grandparents have died/their parents are already dead. Laughter Africa is going to be needed, more than ever, in the months and years ahead. Even after five years, we are still meeting children who are suffering from the aftermath of the Ebola crisis.

Laughter Africa will continue to carry out the usual cycle of outreach work, Interim Care and Family Tracing and Reunification throughout the year. **The Outreach Department** aims to work with a minimum of **100** new children through the mobile project until the end of March 2021. **The Interim Care Centre Department** has set a target to work with **120** new children in the Interim Care Centre. **The Family Tracing and Reunification Department** will pay school fees for the children with whom we have previously worked (between 2015 and 2020) who are still at home and all the street children with whom we will work with in 2020/21. The staff have estimated that Laughter Africa will be providing school supply and paying extra school support for approximately **600** street children by the end of March 2021. By the end of March 2021, we hope to have worked with over **1,700** street children since we started our work in Sierra Leone in 2015.

Here are the more specialised future plans we have for each department:

The Outreach Department

We plan to make mobile more accessible to female street children. At the moment the mobile project, although open to both genders, only attracts boys. For some reason female street children do not come. We plan on changing that imbalance this year. Since mobile began we have only attracted 10 girls to mobile. We plan on carrying out more

outreach in the centre of Freetown, informing the girls that mobile is open for them too. We might even try and change some of the activities to make it more female centric. Despite the fact that they don't all attend mobile, we have a lot of contacts among the female street children so we will be encouraging them to tell their friends to come to mobile. Usually the girls living on the streets come to the ICC directly as opposed to the mobile project.

The two year lease we have on the hall which we use for the mobile project comes to an end December 2020. We are considering moving the project from the city centre to Lumley or Waterloo. In the last year Lumley has become a popular place for street children to live. However, we may decide to stay in the city centre. We need to do more research before reaching any final decision.

The Family Tracing and Reunification Department

As mentioned earlier in the report, we are hoping to introduce a training programme for all of our girls who have given birth. The training programme would give advice about how to care and look after their babies. For example, such programmes could include:

- what signs to look for if their child is ill and what they need to do
- how to change a nappy
- how to wash a baby
- how to feed their baby

Such a training programme wouldn't cost much money as we already have 6 female staff who have given birth and brought up their own children so they would lead the training sessions. All we would need to do is to provide the girls participating in the training with lunch and transportation which wouldn't cost much at all. We already know of five more girls who are already pregnant and are due towards the end of the year.

We are hopeful that the current business support scheme will flourish and it could be something that we provide to all families of the children we reunify in the future. It makes the families truly empowered, self-sufficient and it makes the impact of Laughter Africa's work more sustainable.

One of our future plans, once we have come out the other side of the Coronavirus, is that we will provide sanitary towels to all our girls who live at home. At the moment, we only give sanitary towels to those girls living in the ICC. However, we recognise that many of our girls suffer from period poverty while at home and they miss school during this time. One of our ideas is that when they come to collect their school supply in September, we will also give them some sanitary towels.

As mentioned earlier in the report, at least 6 of our beneficiaries are about to sit the WASCE (the Sierra Leone equivalent of A levels) in the coming months ahead. We also have a lot of beneficiaries in SS1 and SS2. Many of these young people are hoping to study at university. We need to think of how we can help them achieve their goal. At present, we wouldn't be able to afford to pay for any of the young people to attend as most courses are around 4,000,000 million leones (around £400) per year. Perhaps business support is one option to be looked at — but we do need to address this issue and think of a solution in the coming year.

Communications, Advocacy and Campaigns Department

As mentioned earlier in the report, the Minister of Gender and Children Affairs is currently devising a new strategy concerning street children in Sierra Leone. This is an opportunity to introduce extra protections for the street children perhaps even producing a street child law based on the 'UN General Comment No 21 on Children in Street Situations' (2017). Advocacy and campaigning for this new strategy will be a major focus for Laughter Africa for the remainder of the financial year. Laughter Africa has been invited to be part of a consortium alongside Street Child, Dom Bosco, Pikin Paddi and St George's Foundation. We are hoping that this consortium will be able to push through the new strategy so that the momentum is not lost. It is great to have a Minister who passionately believes in street children and it is important to take advantage of the opportunity while the Minister is still in position.

If more money becomes available we would love to start the following projects this year:

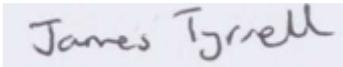
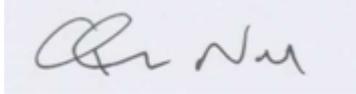
- Another Interim Care Centre - one for the boys and another for the girls. At the moment we can only afford one ICC.
- Expand the mobile project. After the success of the mobile project in the Urban area, we would love to expand the Mobile Project into different areas around Freetown including Lumley, Waterloo and possibly somewhere in Eastern. This will enable us to reach more street children but this is funding dependent as we have found that to provide a good mobile project costs money.

G. DECLARATION



The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)		
Full name(s)	James Francis Robert Tyrrell	Mark Quentin Neal
Position (e.g. chair or secretary)	Chairperson	Secretary
Date	15/06/2020	15/06/2020