



ANNUAL REPORT 2020 – 2021

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE SIERRA LEONE
supporting access to health care and
urgent medical treatment for communities
and individuals in Sierra Leone.



Medical Assistance
Sierra Leone

ACTION ON SPECIALIST CARE

Image: Warrah M Dainkeh, Feimata Jusu, Jeremiah Charles and Israel Charles collect the donated Altruist sunscreen

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Medical Assistance Sierra Leone supports access to health care and urgent medical treatment for communities and individuals in Sierra Leone. The organisation works with others to raise awareness of the key health and development issues facing communities in Sierra Leone – and to generate interest and support in meeting the health needs of the country. Working with local partners in the government health service and with a range of local NGOs, Medical Assistance Sierra Leone supports training for health workers, awareness-raising around health issues, and provides a range of medication and equipment to under-resourced services.

1. INTRODUCTION

The reporting year 2020 to 2021 was a challenging one, with COVID impacting on the work of our partners in Sierra Leone and affecting our ability to generate support for the range of work taking place. COVID resulted in people staying away from health services for fear of catching the virus and we saw smaller numbers of new epilepsy patients over the year.

We continued to send PPE to clinics and NGO delivery partners, as partners reported a lack of available protection. Epilepsy awareness-raising activities took place with much smaller groups, including individual households. The Epilepsy Support Workers also took on COVID awareness as part of their role, working closely with local health teams.

This year saw the end of our large three-year programme with Pro-Victimis Foundation, with joint funding from the UK's FCDO. The project outcomes are significant – over 6,000 new patients have come forward for treatment and there is a greater awareness of epilepsy in the communities where the project has been most active. However we cannot remain complacent: around 90% of people with epilepsy in Sierra Leone are not receiving treatment. Patient numbers need to increase dramatically and with urgency; we remain committed to working with

partners to bring epilepsy treatment to as many people as possible.

MASL continues to work with partners on increasing the numbers of people accessing epilepsy treatment, and advocacy and support to those experiencing isolation and discrimination as a result of the condition. We are prioritising maintaining the clinic and medication supplies as the core service, and delivering training, awareness-raising and support groups when resources allow.

Our work on supporting Persons with Albinism expanded this year; we were pleased to receive a very generous

donation of pallets of sunscreen from Altruist and together with the Sierra Leone Association of Persons With Albinism (SLAPWA) we published a booklet on *Advice & Support For People With Albinism and Caregivers*. The sunscreen was distributed nationally by SLAPWA at multiple forums, along with sunglasses and other protective materials. Pilot ophthalmology and dermatology clinics began in Freetown.

The report below details MASL activities from October 2020 to September 2021.

2. SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH EPILEPSY IN SIERRA LEONE

Our large epilepsy project, funded by Pro-Victimis Foundation and match-funded by UK Aid/FCDO came to an end this year. Over the project's three years we reached over 6,000 additional patients with epilepsy, meaning that there are now around 11,000 patients registered across the country. The evaluation showed that awareness-raising is contributing towards reduced stigma and promoting a more accurate understanding of epilepsy. We are seeing people come to clinic sooner after their first seizure as information about the condition and the availability of clinics becomes more widely available.



Image: Mary Johnson at school in Freetown

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Image: Distributing the *Jariatu has Epilepsy* books in Mano, Dasse

We support patients with six epilepsy drugs. We fundraise for and ship all of these drugs from the UK, except one - Roweepra. We are enormously grateful for our partnership with the Row Foundation who annually donate cartons of Roweepra (levetiracetam); this quality generic drug has helped to manage seizures in patients who were not responding to the other drugs.

We were pleased to also receive support from Row Foundation this year for the schools awareness-raising work. Our publication *Jariatu Has Epilepsy* is being used in schools across the country. Martyna Foday of Freetown Teachers College has been helping to take these books into the community:

'I cannot emphasise how much these books are needed. In Semabu in Njala Komboya chiefdom, I heard about a girl by the name of Baby Sam with epilepsy. People believed she was devil-possessed. One morning she was washing her clothes in the river and she had a seizure. The other girls with her were too afraid to help - they left her and ran to the village to report what had happened. By the time that people came to help from the village she had drowned. I have shared the books with the teacher in charge at

the local school - who happens to be the father of the late Baby Sam. He is using the reader to educate pupils as well as their parents about epilepsy. Once you start a conversation about epilepsy you really see how the condition is found across all of our communities - and the lack of information and support is causing so much pain and problems for people.'

MASL and our partners welcomed the news in July 2021 that the United Nations Human Rights Council passed the first ever resolution on Harmful Practices: Accusations of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks (HPAWR). We had submitted some evidence to this process based on the lived experience of people with epilepsy and sickle cell disease with whom we work in Sierra Leone. Huge thanks to the Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network for leading on this important work; the resolution will now be followed by a report and recommendations for Member States.

3. SUPPORTING PEOPLE WITH ALBINISM

MASL began working with the Sierra Leone Association of Persons with Albinism (SLAPWA) in 2019. There

are multiple local beliefs and myths surrounding albinism in Sierra Leone and very little support for the practical health problems faced by those with the condition.

*'Studies in Africa suggest that most people with albinism die from skin cancer between the ages of 30 and 40'.**

It is estimated that over 80% of Persons With Albinism in Sierra Leone will die an early death from skin cancer. Protective sun cream is expensive in Sierra Leone and out of reach of most people. Protection from the sun prevents cancer, saves lives and needs to start from an early age.

3.1 Shipping of Donated Sunscreen

Our partnership with sunscreen company Altruist Sunscreen continued and this year we were very pleased to be offered 5 pallets of sunscreen (8,000 tubes) free of charge for the Sierra Leone Association of Persons with Albinism. We fundraised online to cover the costs of their shipment to Sierra Leone and these were distributed at 'Living Safely With Albinism' forums at multiple locations across the country. For over 95% of the Persons with Albinism attending the forums, this was the first time that they had used sunscreen.

3.2 Production of Advice Booklet

With the support of the University of Lancaster and NGO Standing Voice, MASL and SLAPWA developed a Sierra Leonean version of Standing Voice's guide for Persons With Albinism (which they had developed for the Malawi context). We commissioned new photographs (kindly donated by Michael Duff of duff.tv), designed and printed the booklet. The booklet has been distributed widely at 'Living Safely With Albinism' forums where the sunscreen was also given out along

*Report by I.Ero, Independent Expert for the United Nations, 2015.

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with donated sun protection clothing and umbrellas collected by MASL from Reading Buses and Great Western Railway lost property offices.

3.3 Pilot Eye Care Clinic with Ophthalmologist

In June 2021, to mark International Albinism Awareness Day, we funded a one-day eye clinic at a private practice. The ophthalmologist saw 30 people over the day, provided detailed prescriptions and advised on eye care. We are now working through the prescriptions with our fundraising efforts, purchasing appropriate glasses for those who attended.

3.4 Pilot Dermatology Clinic

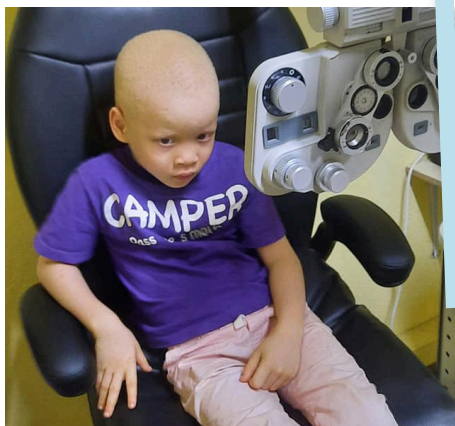


Image: Jeremiah Charles undergoes an eye examination

Dr Atika, a dermatologist working at a private hospital in Freetown, is working with SLAPWA to run skin screening clinics. So far over 50% of attendees require urgent surgery for suspected skin cancer. We are now seeking support for these surgeries and arranging our own fundraising to try to cover the costs which range from £500 to £1,000 per person depending on the number of operations needed, the medication and the care required for recovery. As always, patients in Sierra Leone are required to cover all hospital costs including food.



This is support that is urgently needed; in the last year we have lost SLAPWA members to cancer despite multiple operations as surgical treatment started too late to be effective. Surgical options only are available in Sierra Leone currently.

4. OTHER INITIATIVES

Wherever possible we aim to use our contacts and networks to support health care initiatives in Sierra Leone. This year we responded to a call for a paediatric bronchoscope after seeing an urgent request for help on twitter by a Sierra Leonean doctor:



Pharm. Dr. Catherine Jackson-Cole
@jacksoncolec

2. An 8 month old and a 10 year old are lying in Connaught waiting for a bronchoscope. They have foreign bodies in their airway. I was tempted to post the xray to give a visual but I refrain. The sad story is there is no bronchoscope at Connaught, and none at Emergency hosp...

We started a fundraising page and also reached out to Karl Storz, German manufacturer of bronchoscopes. They kindly agreed to donate a paediatric bronchoscope and we have since used the funds raised at that point (£4,000) to buy vital spares.

Through the Epilepsy Support Worker in Kabala we were alerted to the birth of quadruplets and also triplets within a very short period. We offered initial assistance to the quadruplets who quickly gained media attention and offers of support from multiple individuals and organisations. The mother of the triplets found herself alone with the babies and we have been offering more long term practical

support for the family, including renting accommodation so that they remain close to the hospital until the triplets are older.

5. FUNDRAISING

We are very grateful to all those who have supported us this year with in-kind donations and fundraising. Over 11,000 people rely on the epilepsy medication that we purchase and ship to Sierra Leone. Apart from the donated medication from the Row Foundation, we do not have a grant for these costs and the funds are generated from individual donations, cake sales and through other creative methods. We would be very grateful for donations to support this essential expenditure.

Like many organisations in the voluntary sector we have seen a decline in donations as a result of COVID.

We would love to hear from anyone who would like to run a marathon, hold a cake sale or organise a fundraising event for Medical Assistance Sierra Leone. We can help with publicity, materials and other support required.

Our sincere thanks to everyone who has supported our work this year.

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Medical Assistance
Sierra Leone

ACTION ON SPECIALIST CARE



Registered Charity Number: 1105330



Medical Assistance

Sierra Leone

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1st Oct 2020- 30th Sep 2021

	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total £	last year £
Receipts & Payments				
Receipts				
Donations	14,119		14,119	6,108
Grants:				
Pro Victimis Foundation		11,749	11,749	66,000
FCDO		10,391	10,391	37,918
ROW Foundation		2,854	2,854	1,460
Rotary Club of Reading Matins	340		340	
Small Charities Coalition		940	940	
HMRC JRS	8,600		8,600	4,734
other receipts		21	21	253
total receipts	23,059	25,954	49,013	116,473
Payments				
Epilepsy Support				94,324
comprising:				
Staff salaries in Sierra Leone		1,141	1,141	36,245
UK salary costs (financial & project mgmt)		11,878	11,878	13,433
Health worker training costs		9,111	9,111	7,482
Other epilepsy support costs	8,472	21,839	30,310	37,164
			0	
Fundraising & UK Admin	1,164		1,164	876
Maternal Child Health Support	791		791	106
Albinism Association project	3,886		3,886	2,868
			0	
other costs			0	265
Total payments	14,313	43,969	58,283	98,438
Net receipts/ (payments)	8,745	(18,015)	(9,270)	18,035
transfers between funds	(1,974)	1,974		
cash funds at last year end	2,518	16,041	18,559	524
cash funds at this year end	9,289	0	9,289	18,559

Statement of assets & liabilities at the year end

Cash funds		
Current account	9,289	18,559

Signature of Trustee

Sarah Snow
26-Jul-22

Independent examiner's report to the trustees of Medical Assistance Sierra Leone

I report on the accounts for the year ended 30th September 2021
Charity number 1105330

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts. The charity's trustees consider that an audit is not required for this year under section 144(2) of the Charities Act 2011 (the 2011 Act) and that an independent examination is needed.

It is my responsibility to:

- examine the accounts under section 145 of the 2011 Act
- to follow the procedures laid down in the general Directions given by the commission under section 145(5)(b) of the 2011 Act
- to state whether particular matters have come to my attention

Basis of independent examiner's report


My examination was carried out in accordance with the general Directions given by the Charity Commission.

An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeking explanations from you as trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently no opinion is given as to whether the accounts present a 'true and fair view' and the report is limited to those matters set out in the next statement.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

- (1) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with section 130 of the 2011 Act and
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with the accounting requirements of the 2011 Act have not been met or
- (2) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached



26/7/2022

Name: Richard Arnold ACA (ICAEW membership no. 7374835)
Address: Unit 6, Bulldog House, London Rd, Twyford, Berkshire, RG10 9EU
Date: 26th July 2022