LAUGHTER AFRICA

England & Wales · Charity number 1154712

Details

Status	Registered
Legal form	CIO
Registered	2013-11-22
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	124 Princes Boulevard Wirral CH63 5LP
Phone	01516457322
Email	info@laughterafrica.org.uk
Website	www.laughterafrica.org.uk

Activities

Objects: 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.WE AIM TO DO THIS IN 3 MAIN WAYS:1) BY ESTABLISHING A HOME/DROP IN CENTRE WHICH IS A SAFE SPACE FOR CHILDREN OR YOUNG PEOPLE LIVING ON THE STREETS WHO ARE NOT ABLE TO BE PLACED BACK WITH THEIR FAMILIES FULL TIME BUT DO NOT WANT TO LIVE ON THE STREETS ANY LONGER. AT THE HOME, FOOD, CLOTHING, HEALTH CARE, EDUCATION, TRAINING, COUNSELLING, SUPPORT AND OTHER ESSENTIALS WILL BE PROVIDED.2) BY STARTING THE REUNIFICATION PROCESS OF STREET CHILDREN WHO WANT TO BE REUNITED WITH THEIR FAMILIES (THIS IS DEPENDENT ON IF THE FAMILY SITUATION IS SAFE AND SECURE).3) BY ESTABLISHING STREET CLINICS FOR THOSE STREET CHILDREN WHO CHOOSE TO STAY ON THE STREET. STREET CLINICS WILL INVOLVE THE PROVISION OF FOOD, EDUCATION, ASSISTANCE, COUNSELLING AND OTHER SUPPORT.

Activities: 1.Dealing with the immediate needs of the street children.Whatever they need,we are willing to provide. 2.The Interim Care Centre is where the street children live while we find their families. At the centre, food, clothing, health care, and other essentials are provided.3.Reuniting street children with their families.Once they return home,we pay for school fees or vocational training.

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Classification

- **How:** Provides Buildings/facilities/open Space, Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information
- **What:** Education/training, The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty, Overseas Aid/famine Relief, Accommodation/housing
- **Who:** Children/young People

Geography

- Sierra Leone

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£131,368	£120,104	-	-
2024-03-31	£113,478	£113,539	-	-
2023-03-31	£117,531	£116,434	-	-
2022-03-31	£115,466	£128,438	-	-
2021-03-31	£137,068	£126,341	-	-

Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
JAMES FRANCIS ROBERT TYRRELL BA MA	Chair	2013-11-18
DAVID JAMES CARTMELL		2013-11-18
Dr Anne-Marie Stead		2024-01-17
QUENTIN MARK NEAL		2013-11-18

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LAUGHTER AFRICA

England & Wales - Charity number 1154712

Accounts

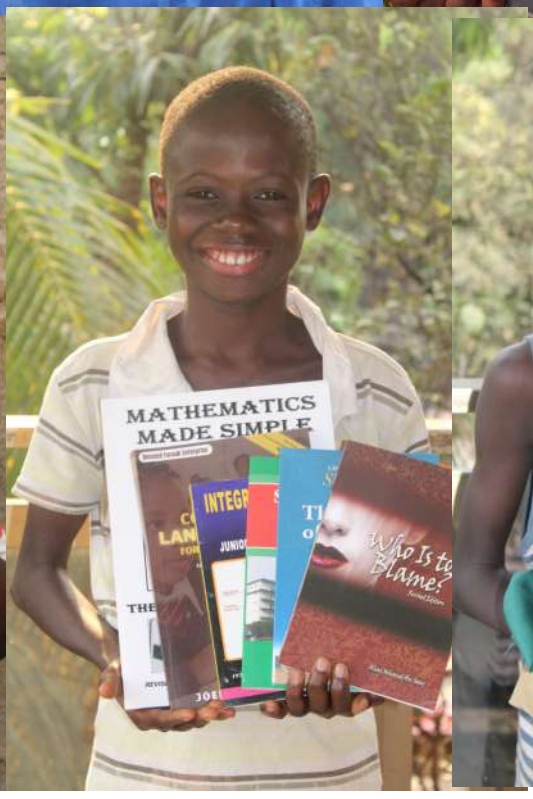
LAUGHTER AFRICA TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024/2025













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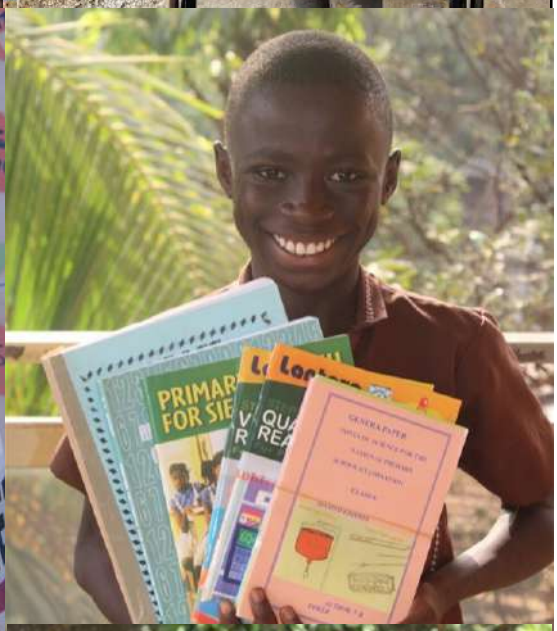


A. REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS OF THE CHARITY













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			
Albert Daniel Gbow			
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		
Dr Anne-Marie Stead			

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 and Finance) (Sierra Leone)

Isata Samura (Director of the Interim Care Centre/ Director of Advocacy, Communications and Campaigns) (Sierra Leone)

Ansumana Tamba Lamin (Director of Family Tracing and Reunification) (Sierra Leone)

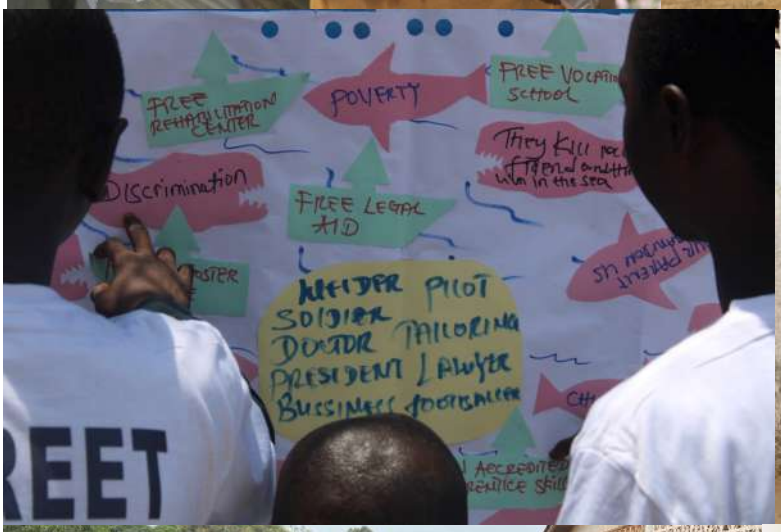
Abibatu Kamara (Director of Outreach) (Sierra Leone)

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

B. STRUCTURE, GOVENANCE 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 Whistleblowing 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 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 the Charities Act 2022 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 2024/25 due to the 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 five Directors in Sierra Leone. The Directors are responsible for different departments:

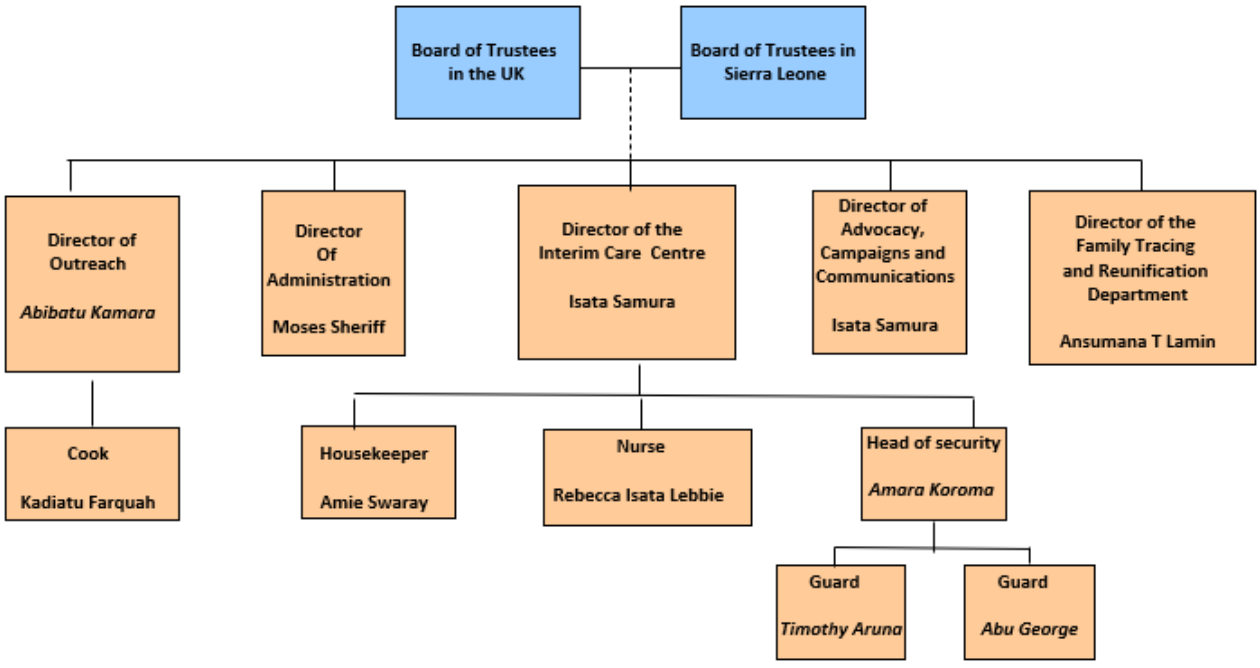
- Outreach Department
- Interim Care Centre Department
- Family Tracing and Reunification Department
- Administration Department
- Communications, Advocacy and Campaigns department

All 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.. incompliance 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
Laughter Africa's serious incident reporting policy and procedures	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/ Paternity Policy	Flexible working policy
Annual leave policy	PSEAH policy
Adoption policy	Sickness and Absence policy
Retirement Policy	Time off for personal reasons policy
Laughter Africa's Social media policy	Trustee declaration of interests forms

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





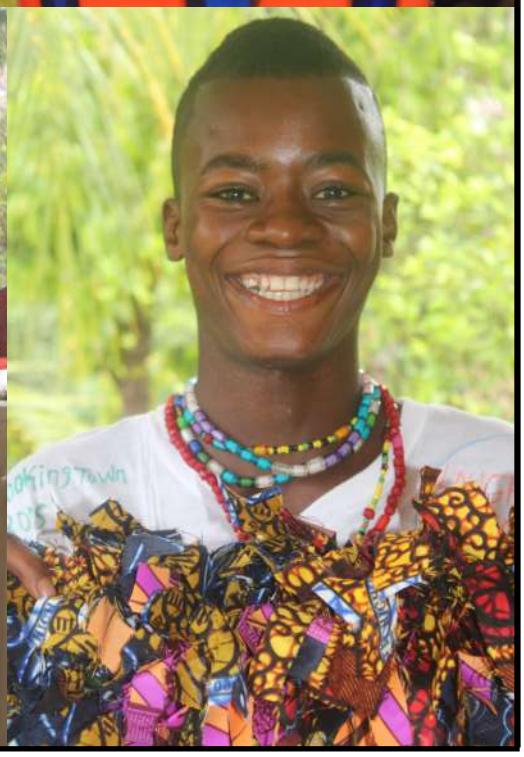












Summary of the Objects of Laughter Africa set out in its governing document

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 18. 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:

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

The Outreach department

- 315 children (201 girls, 114 boys) received food, medical assistance, and support.
- Over 100 children fed each evening.
- Activities such as yoga, cultural dance and sports.
- 15 children received a Hepatitis diagnosis, 3 children received a diagnosis for HIV. All are receiving support.
- Many young girls received access to medical assistance for pregnancy and childbirth.
- 3 young mothers received access to emergency medical assistance.

Our new mobile project started in Tombo, a fishing community, on 10th February 2025 and finished at the end of June. Altogether we reached 315 street children (201 were girls; 114 were boys). It took about 2 hours to get there and 2 hours to get back everyday from the Interim Care Centre as we don't have a vehicle and used public transport. It would take three vehicles just to get there. The taxi would not leave until it had 6 passengers. Sometimes we could be waiting up to an hour for a taxi to leave.

Tombo in Sierra Leone is a coastal fishing town south-east of Freetown, primarily known for its vibrant fishing industry, which also serves as a major trade and transport hub. It is located on the southern coast of the Western Area Rural District, about 30 miles (49 km) southeast of Freetown.

Impact of the Covid riots

Tombo is famous because in 2020, there was a big riot over covid restrictions, and many people were killed. At least a quarter of the street children at mobile knew someone who died in the riots- either a family member or friend. For some this is the reason they turned to the streets in the first place. There have been other riots in Tombo as well since 2020. 17 year old Genevieve, one of the street champions said, ***"My mum died in the riots. The police shot her."*** This story was repeated time and time again.

15 year old A also lost his dad in the riots. He said,

"I lived on the streets for about 5 years. I slept on the market tables at pepper wharf. I don't know where my mum is or who she is—I have never met her. My dad was a fisherman. My dad and I moved from the village to Tombo to fish. He fought in the riots. He was shot by the police. I ran and hid up the hill. I spent three days hiding in the bush. When I returned to Tombo I saw his dead body.

The streets were not fine. I didn't have a person that I could go to. The gangsters flogged me on the streets. The community boys would drive me when I wanted to play football with them. They said that I was dirty and smelled bad. I was always hungry unless I went to sea. I had no place to pull money. I would look for pan.

My friend Amara died while living on the streets. He died from kush. He was the same age as me. My other friend Sallay died on the streets after being caught stealing. They stabbed him in the neck with cutglass. I was arrested once as I stole money—400 leones.

A policeman gave me a choice from staying in a cell or letting him butterwaiss me so I chose butterwaiss (male sex). The gangsters would beat me and steal my fish.

To make money I would find pan with Abdulai or tote. Once I lay down with a man for money. I was hungry and crying at the wharf. A gangster came along and paid me for sex. He gave me 20 leones. On the streets, I would take tramadol. I would like to be a tailor."

Impact of the fishing ban

The majority of the boys fish to make money, while the girls are heavily dependent on survival sex. Our mobile opened at exactly the right time as in February 2025 the government of Sierra Leone banned all fishing in Sierra Leone for the month of February. This meant that the street children who depend on fishing for their livelihoods were struggling even more than usual.

Positive impact of sports

We carried out our usual activities of sports, cultural dance and yoga as well as feeding over 100 street children per night. The sports they played included football, rounders, basketball, volleyball and badminton.

Every month, we held a sports tournament. We had four teams competing for victory; 'Team Mobile', 'Team Africa', 'Team Laughter' and 'Team Tombo'. Team 'mobile' won the sports tournament for February and March while Team 'Africa' won the Tournament in April and May. All the players received medals. The captain of Team 'Mobile' was Solomon who is 16. He is amazing at every sport he plays. He has lived on the streets for three years, sleeping on the markets tables at Pepper Wharf. He went on the streets after the death of his mother. What I love about Solomon is that, even though he could just pick himself to represent his team all the time – he actually gives everyone a chance- no matter what their ability- even if it means they lose certain games.

Like most of the street children in Tombo, Solomon makes a living through fishing. He loves football and basketball and his favourite team is Barcelona. Previously Solomon took lots of different drugs- Kush, Tramadol and jamba. In fact, he was even arrested by the police and put in a cell for three days after they caught him smoking kush. He said,

"Football made me stop taking kush. My foot was swelling and it was affecting my ability to play. Football gave me the motivation to give up all of the drugs."

It just shows the power of sport!

Solomon has been home for over six months. He has just started vocational school and he is studying electrical engineering!

Disease, illness, and providing medical assistance and awareness

The most common medical conditions that we see include sickle cell, malaria, typhoid. hepatitis, HIV, TB and different STIs. One of the most common conditions is rotting legs caused by kush addiction. From February 2025 until June 2025, we took all the young people at Tombo for different medical appointments including pre-natal checks, dentist appointments and hospital appointments. We wanted the young people to be in perfect health before they returned to their families at the end of June. Our nurse also carried out HIV and Hepatitis tests for all the young people at mobile so that they are aware of their statuses. We provided all the necessary counselling, medication and support necessary. 15 of the young people tested positive for Hepatitis and three tested positive for HIV.

We also provided medical treatment for a lot of the girls who gave birth from February to June 2025. If we were not there - they would have given birth on the streets, instead of a hospital. We also provided treatment to the babies/children of the young people as well. Three of the girls from mobile, S, S and M, needed emergency operations -one for hernia and two for problems with their appendix. Without us paying for the appendix operations, S and S would have died.

One girl M, 15, is epileptic and is constantly having fits. Her mum and dad are dead. Before she went on the streets she lived with her aunt. The reason she went on the streets is because her aunt rejected her because of her epilepsy. Her aunt thought her seizures were acts from the devil. M lived on the streets for 2 years. Sadly M is provoked a lot on the streets by the other young people who mock and make fun of her because of her condition. We took her to the hospital and she has started treatment to get her epilepsy under control. She said,

"You have given me my life back. Everyone used to look at me like I was a witch or a devil but now I can start to have a normal life."

We reunified M with her family in June and since then we have paid for her to study tailoring!

Sierra Leone had a huge Mpox outbreak in 2025. As of the 28th November 2025, there were 5442 confirmed cases of mpox and 60 deaths as a result of mpox. Thankfully cases are now on the decline and the emergency has been declared over. During the height of the crisis, we decided to run an interactive training at our mobile project in Tombo in April about how to

recognise the symptoms and protecting yourself. We played 'symptom charades,' 'protection Pictionary' and 'pass the virus' among other activities such as quizzes and role play.

We are glad to say that our training worked - none of the street children in Tombo contracted mpox which is a huge achievement especially as street children were one of the most at-risk groups.

One of the boys who took part in the training was Kemoh. Kemoh is 18 years old. Before he went on the streets, he lived with his step-mum. His mother died of sick when he was young and he doesn't know where his father lives. Kemoh lived on the streets for two years. Kemoh said,

"After the death of my mother, I went to live with my step mother. However, she beat me, she didn't give me food, and she didn't pay school for me. The violence and maltreatment I experienced is what led me to the streets."

On the streets, Kemoh would take tramadol (also known as 225). To make money on the streets, Kemoh would sell fish at pepper wharf. Kemoh would carry a knife and he was a member of the gang RFM. One of his friends, Abu, died while living on the streets. He was killed in the riots at Mile 91. He was shot by the police. Kemoh was arrested once for fighting. He was in a cell for one night. He has since been reunified with his family and we are currently arranging school for him.
He said,

"I loved the training about mpox especially all the different games like 'Pictionary' and 'Guess the symptoms.' I was one of the people who acted out the symptoms and people had to guess what the symptom was. I learned a lot from the training especially how one of the main ways that mpox spreads is through sex. It has made be a lot more careful as I definitely don't want mpox. I will tell my friends who weren't here everything that I learned so that they don't catch it either."

Supporting mothers and babies

Meanwhile in June 2025, we had a mother and baby training at mobile led by our staff Biba and Isata. Although we usually have the baby training in December in the ICC, we decided to have an earlier training in Tombo as so many of the girls had young children.

One girl who attended the training was Rosalind. She doesn't know her age but we guess that she is around 20. Before she went on the streets, Rosalind lived with her aunt. Rosalind lived on the streets for 7 years. She said that the reason she went on the streets is ***"my mum is crazy and my granny is dead and I don't know who my father is."*** She has a lot of burns on her arms and chest from when she fell into hot water when she was younger. The streets were not an easy place for Rosalind. She experienced abuse and lost her best friend Isatu, who died from malaria. For her own safety Rosalind joined a gang- RFM – and would carry a knife for her protection.

She has given birth twice. Once to twins and another time to a baby girl called Nannah (who turned 2 at the end of November). Sadly the twins tragically died a few years ago. In her grief, Rosalind turned to tramadol and kush to numb the pain. Nannah gave Rosalind the strength and determination to leave drugs behind for good.

Rosalind is a fantastic mum, she really tries for her daughter and has sacrificed so much to be the best mum that she can be. She has a lovely way with Nannah. She is always patient which is not easy when you have an inquisitive and energetic two year old who is always getting up to mischief. The love she has for her daughter just radiates from her. Nannah is an enthusiastic bundle of joy who loves biscuits, baby shark and waving at people and she has already started saying quite a few words including 'Five o.' She also likes dancing and recently started singing the tune of 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star.' We recently bought her a few toys. Her favourite toys are her barbie doll and a Miss Piggy toy which plays the 'Muppet Babies' theme tune. She loves to pretend that her toys are her baby and she can be often seen carrying them on her back.

Nannah was very ill in August 2025 and nearly died. She also had a huge infected abscess. We paid the medical treatment for her and hospitalisation for two months. Rosalind stayed at her side the entire time, without complaint. Once she was released at the beginning of October, Nannah and Rosalind moved into the ICC where our nurse helped with her recovery. Rosalind said, ***"Being a mum is the only thing in life that I am a good at. I just want to provide for my daughter. She really is my everything. Thank you for saving her life. I don't know what I would do if I had lost her too."***

Rosalind is pregnant again and we know that she will be a fantastic mum to her new baby too. Nannah was well enough to go home, so we reunited Rosalind with her family. We have already paid vocational school fees for Rosalind. She wants to be a tailor and we will do everything in our power to make sure that her dreams become a reality.

Offering valuable vocational training - hairdressing

Other activities we carried out at mobile included teaching the girls hairdressing throughout the month of May 2025, adding a valuable skill that they can use in the future. A lot of the girls discovered a passion for hairdressing during the sessions and many of them have now signed up to hairdressing courses at vocational schools. In fact for the academic year 2025/2026, 62 young people are learning hairdressing in different vocational schools.

One of them is our newest hairdressing student Kadiatu. She is 15 years old and we met her at our mobile project in Tombo earlier this year.

She said, ***"My mum died in 2020. After my mum died, I lived with my stepmother. My stepmum maltreated me. She made me sell bananas. She would beat me and didn't pay school for me. I had no choice but to escape to the streets."***

Kadiatu ended up living on the streets for two years. Kadiatu experienced a lot of suffering on the streets. She is still haunted by the death of her friend Fatmata. She said,

"My friend Fatmata died while living on the streets. She was raped to death. She was only 16. The same men who killed her also chased after me but I ran away and left her. I felt so guilty that I didn't stay and fight for her. But I have realised that I can't blame myself. They would have killed me too. I did what I had to do to survive. I miss her everyday and I will never forget her. They never caught the men who killed her. They tossed her away like she was worth nothing, after they had finished. I have been sexually assaulted three times by different gangsters who smoked kush. I was the lucky one- I lived unlike Fatmata and so many other girls living on the streets. Because of what happened to Fatmata, I decided to carry a knife for protection while living on the streets."

To make money on the streets, Kadiatu had to do whatever it took to survive. She would also pick plastic at the wharf. After all she experienced, Kadiatu turned to drugs to ease her pain including tramadol, jamba and Guinea snuff but she has stopped taking then since she returned home at the end of June. She said,

"Just before Laughter took me home, I discovered I was pregnant. I am due early next year. So I decided to learn hairdressing so that I can provide for me and mi pikin [my child] I want to give my child the life that I never had. I am scared about the future but I know that I am not alone. Laughter will be there for me every step of the way."

Sadly, Kadaitu lost her baby in December 2025.

We provide food at mobile for every young person. In fact, one of the most popular times for the children and young people at mobile is dinner time! This is especially true for Fatmata who loves her food! She said,

"My favourite part of mobile is the food. If it wasn't for mobile, Mohamed (her 2 year old child) and I wouldn't always eat. It takes a lot of my stress away knowing that every day I will be able to feed him at least one meal a day. It takes the pressure off me and the money I save on food, I can buy other things for him instead like pampers or medicine. Auntie Kadie is the best cook. My favourite food is casava leaf."

Fatmata is 18 years old. She has scars over her body from an accident a few years ago. She was stealing from somebody and ran away but during her escape she was knocked down by a car.

Before she went on the streets, she lived with her aunty. Her mum is dead and she doesn't know the whereabouts of her father. She's lived on the streets for 5 years. Fatmata said,

"My papa left and then my mum died when I was 12. My aunt took me but she did not treat me fine. She paid school for my cousin but not for me. She made me sell and she beat me."

On the streets, Fatmata experienced a lot.

"My friend Isha was raped to death. I was also attacked over five different times by different fishermen. I don't know who the father of my son is. To make money, I had to do things that I never wanted to do. Be with people who I didn't want to be with. Just to raise the money I needed to provide for Mohamed. The police arrested me for stealing once. I have been pregnant twice but I lost the first baby I carried. To look after my son, I carry a knife at all times. To cope with everything I have been through I would take tramadol. It just helped me relax for a bit and forget about my problems."

Violence and murder

The violence from the street has never been more apparent than when talking to the boys, including multiple stories of horrific murders. One of the boys living on the streets was caught stealing so the people he was stealing from, nailed him to a tree and he died. He was literally crucified. Afterwards they threw his body in the sea to hide all the evidence. A lot of the boys had friends who were caught stealing. As a result they were thrown into the sea with their hands and feet tied together

and drowned.

Paying it forward - kindness and generosity from the community

My favourite moment from the whole mobile project in Tombo is the story about the local sports field. Usually you would have to pay to hire it. However, we got the field completely free. It turns out the caretaker of the field, Dominic, is the father of one of our old girls from Bomeh, Regina, and the grandfather of one of our old kids, Amidu. We reunified them both last year in Tombo and have paid school fees for them both. He knows that we are genuine so he didn't charge us a penny. He said. "The field is yours. Anytime you want to use it." I love the idea of paying it forward. And Dominic was true to his word: whenever we wanted the field- it was ours- free of charge. It was the perfect location for our sports tournament. Regina gave birth to Abdul in April and is happily attending vocational school. She graduated in December 2025 and received a business starter pack from Laughter which included a sewing machine and different lappa.

My other favourite moment is the kindness showed to us by the young people themselves. Saidu, one of the street champions, gave me a coconut to say thank you for everything we have done for him. He climbed up a tree and picked it himself. When we first met him - he couldn't see properly. It turns out that he had loa loa worms in his eyes. Even when he closed his eyes, he could see them moving. Now thanks to the medicine we bought him, he can see perfectly again. Saidu also presented me with a bag of dead locusts for the boys in the Interim Care Centre to eat. It is a delicacy loved by the kids in Tombo. He just wanted the boys in the ICC to know that they weren't forgotten. Saidu definitely paid it forward!

Similarly, Bio, the long lost nephew of the President of Sierra Leone who also lives on the street, gave me a coconut which he picked himself, to say thank you. Bio's father was the older brother of the president, but after his father died, Bio and his mother lost touch with that side of the family. They even look alike. He's actually named after the president.

Helping children with disabilities

This year at our mobile project in Tombo, we met three remarkable young people living with different disabilities. Two were blind in one eye while one girl, Isata, had severe learning difficulties. She's not even able to talk. We believe that her mother was infected with zika virus while she was pregnant with Isata. We believe that she is around 16 years old. We reunified her with her family and she has just started to learn tailoring. She is always smiling and is always a delight to have a round.

There were also two boys who were blind in one eye, B and Ibrahim. Ibrahim, 17, lost his mother when she died in a motorcar accident and he has had no contact with his dad since he was born. Ibrahim had lived on the streets for 5 years. In the streets, Ibrahim took tramadol and smoked jamba. Ibrahim was arrested once for taking tramadol. To make money on the streets, Ibrahim would grind groundnut in the market and he would also dreg. Ibrahim carried a knife for protection. His friend Abdulai died while living on the streets. He drowned.

18 year old B lived on the streets for 3 and half years since he was 14 years old. His dad died years ago. He went on the streets after stealing from his uncle. To make money on the streets, Bio would pick plastic and rubber and collect cup cup (aluminium tin cans). He would take tramadol and jamba.

He was once arrested for smoking kush. For his protection, he would carry a weapon. He said,

"I feel scared. Being blind in one eye is very dangerous especially living on the streets. Lots of people have taken advantage of me and taken me by surprise. I was sexually assaulted by three gangsters once. They tied my hands so that I couldn't fight back. I didn't go to the police. It made me very sad. They wouldn't have done it if I could see properly- I would have fought them back but they knew that I was vulnerable and weak especially at night when its dark and it's even harder for me to see."

This is why we were determined to try to improve their eyesight in some way. We took them to the eye hospital lots of times. B was delighted when we bought him some glasses on the recommendation of his doctors. B told us that the glasses made him feel a lot safer and protected on the streets. Thankfully both Ibrahim and B are back at home now and attending school.

Other stories of impact and change

At the end of June, we reunified 173 street children living in Tombo. One of the children we reunified is 15 year old Umuro. He is a complete cheeky chappie and always has a huge grin on his face. Every time we saw Umuro he was wearing the same T-shirt. A political T-shirt with President Bio on the front which he got free during the election. He never took it off. It was completely filthy. The only time he wore a new t-shirt was when he was paid 120 leones for fishing and he bought a new pair of shorts and a T-shirt which he proudly showed off. He would sleep on the fishing boats. His mum is dead and he doesn't know where his father is so he lived with his grandmother, before turning to the streets. He doesn't know how long he has lived on the streets but he thinks a few years. To make money on the streets, Umuro would fish and pick up iron and rubber. His friend, Yusif, died while living on the streets. He drowned. Umuro was arrested once by the police. A phone went missing where he was sleeping and the police arrested him and his friends. He was kept in a cell in Tombo for over a month from mid April until May 2025. According to Umuro, the police would beat him regularly– they would take him to the tent. We have never met anyone who loves their granny so much. He would constantly worry about her as she is sick and elderly. We were delighted to reunify the pair of them again- it was probably his happiest moment in a long time!

We still provide medical treatment for the street children who live on the streets in other areas where we have previously worked.

At the end of September 2025, one of our old young people Ramadan turned up with another old boy, O. He was literally carrying O on his back. We have known O for the last 10 years. O was living on the streets and was completely ravaged by HIV, TB and hepatitis. I have never seen somebody so near death. When he came he could hardly talk- he was breathing so shallow. I didn't have much hope that he would survive! Ramadan said,

"I passed O on the street. He was coughing and looked so sick. I couldn't abandon him. I knew that he was my Laughter brother so I decided to bring him to Laughter so that he could get the help he needed."

Ramadan paid the transport for both himself and O which wasn't cheap but he was determined to help O in anyway he could.

Sadly O lost his mum, S, in February 2025. He was completely devoted to his mother and we knew her very well. She was a good woman. After her death, he gave up all hope.

Thankfully after we admitted O to hospital, we saw a 360 degree turn in his condition. He has put on weight and he is talking and walking like normal. He is now an outpatient and is attending hospital everyday to get his treatment. He turns up everyday without fail.

In even better news, O is back at home with his stepfather and once his health has improved, we will be paying vocational school for him, giving him a fresh start and a new focus. Its thanks to Ramadan that O is still alive and fighting fit. O said,

"I will never forget the kindness of Ramadan. He could have walked past and left me to die- like so many people did. You should have seen how people treated me. They called me names, they drove me away. They told me to just "Go and die in a corner." They were scared of me in case they caught something. I was like a leper and rejected by everyone. But Ramadan didn't. He picked me up and carried me on his back. He is my hero and I will never forget his kindness. I had given up all hope- now I know that this is just the beginning. I have a second chance!"

Interim Care Centre (ICC)

- 40 children (12 girls, 28 boys) welcomed at the ICC

When children are ready to leave the streets, they stay with us, temporarily, at the Interim Care Centre in Adonkia, a coastal town about nine miles south-west of Freetown. It is the heartbeat of Laughter Africa – we couldn't do our work without it. The ICC is refuge, a safe place for them to escape, to heal, to learn new skills and most of all let them be children again. It gives them a chance just to be.

Since the last annual report (published in December 2024) until the end of June 2025, we have welcomed 40 children and young people into the ICC - 12 were girls while 28 were boys. All the children lived on the streets of Tombo. They only stay at the ICC for a month.

The brutal realities of street life - stories from children at the ICC

"I don't know my age but I think I am around 13. I lived on the streets for about three years. I slept on the table at Pepper Wharf. I went on the streets after my mum drove me. She discovered I was HIV positive. She said I was dead to her and I brought shame to our family. She told me that I disgusted her and she no longer had a son. I am her only child yet she still drove me. My dad died the day I was born so it has always just been the two of us against the world. I contracted HIV when was at home. I was late on the streets one night and two gangsters raped me. They were wearing facemasks. A few weeks after the attack, I was feeling sick so my mum took me to hospital where they diagnosed me being HIV positive. The streets were not fine. There are too many disadvantages on the streets. One of my friends was killed on the streets. Hs name was Bodor. He stole money but they caught him. They tied his hands and his feet and threw him into the sea. He drowned.

Sometimes the police would beat me. They said that we aren't allowed to go to sea at night. They found me at sea and beat me. Sometimes they would take me to the tent and beat me. On the streets, I was raped twice by gangsters. To make money on the streets I would fish or help the fishermen at the wharf and hold the rope. I am a member of RFM— they used to send me to steal. On the streets I would take trama but I smoked Kush once. One day I would like to be a doctor. I want to help kids who have HIV+ like I do. I want to find a cure and stop their suffering. I want to show them that having HIV is not a death sentence and we can lead a normal life."

This story was shared with us in May 2025 by one of the boys who came to the Interim Care Centre. The day he shared his story, he didn't stop crying for over an hour. He had been rejected by everyone he had ever loved and left alone on the streets, sick, rejected and scared. It was such a relief for him to share his story and be listened to without stigma and judgement. And that is what the ICC is for. A place of rest and recovery. A place to heal and feel accepted. He is now back home living happily with a family member and attending school.

We also welcomed to the ICC, a cheeky chappie called A. He too doesn't know his age but he thinks that he is 13 or 14 years old. He said,

"*Before I went on the streets, I lived with my mum. Whenever I did something wrong, she wouldn't give me food as a punishment. So I stole her expensive new shoes. I sold them for 400 leones. I bought food to eat, a bike and gambled so she drove me from the house. My dad died in the sea. He was a fishermen. I was small when he died. My mum would beat me and made me sell — banana and coal. Abubakarr looked after me and introduced me to street life. The policemen beat me on my first day on the streets. No one would go with me to beg my mama. The streets are not fine. *I lived on the streets for 4 years. I slept by pepper wharf by the chains. There are lots of disadvantages. Unless you dreg (do odd jobs) — you don't get money. When you tote (carry loads) for people - the money is small or they won't pay us at all. One of my friends who lived on the street was Almammy. He stole fuel money from the boat men. The boat men found out. They tied him to a chain and a stone and dropped him in the water. He drowned. Another boy living on the street stole and he was caught. They nailed his hands and his feet to a tree. It happened at night and threw his body in the sea. I stole fish once so the policeman butterwaissed me. I felt really bad– I cried. To make money on the street, I would dreg and help the fishermen at the wharf. I am a member of RFM. I would steal phones for them. I would take 225 aka tramadol. In the future, I want to be a tailor."

Now A has been home nearly 6 months and is happily learning tailoring. For the first time in years he is optimistic about his future.

We heard so many stories like the two above. We can't include them all otherwise this annual report would be about a thousand pages long. But the sexual violence and torture experienced by these young people was excruciating. The female street children also suffered immeasurable pain and suffering.

Here is a brief breakdown of their reasons for migrating to the streets and their experiences while living on the streets:

Reasons for migrating to the streets

- *Not living with their biological parents*

Most of the young people in the ICC didn't know where their mum and dad were so they lived with different family members. 25% of the boys lived with their uncles or aunts; 11% lived with a step-parent; 18% lived with their grandmothers while 11% lived with a sibling. Only 29% of the boys lived with their mums. Meanwhile 50% of the girls lived with their aunts or uncles; 25% of the girls lived with their grandmothers while 17% lived with a stepparent. Only 8% of the girls lived with their parent. Parental death was a major factor for the young people not living with their parents. For instance, 16 year old IS said,

"My mum died during an operation. She was pregnant. Her baby died as well. My dad died of a snake bite so I lived with my sister. "

Similarly, 14 year old A said,

"I lived on the streets for about 5 years. I slept on the streets in Pepper Wharf, under the chains. My mum died of Ebola while my dad drowned when I was small so I lived with my aunt. "

14% of the boys had lost their mother while 29% of the boys had lost their father. A lot of the fathers of the young people we met had drowned showing how dangerous fishing can be in Sierra Leone. For the girls, 50% had lost their mothers. One girl, 17 year old G said,

"My mum died in the riots. The police shot her. I don't know who my father is so I had nowhere to go."

Meanwhile 8% of the girls had lost their fathers. A few girls mentioned that their fathers had died through their use of kush.

Probably the biggest reason for migration to the streets for both boys and girls is Men Pikin, which is where children are not brought up by their biological parents.

- *Physical violence*

Another factor for migration to the streets involved physical violence against the young person. Usually this was interconnected with child labour. The young person usually lost money while engaged in selling and was therefore beaten as a consequence by their caregiver. 75% of the girls had been beaten at home while 57% of the boys had.

- *Child labour*

Child labour was another commonly cited reason for migration to the streets. 67% of the girls cited it as key factor while 54% of boys did. Child labour usually involved selling different items such as cold water, biscuits, mint, pepper among many more. This also involved being responsible for all the domestic work such as fetching water, washing clothes or cleaning the house.

- *Stealing*

46% of the boys cited the fact that they had solen something from the house as a key factor in migrating to the streets. This usually involved money although one boy admitted stealing a goat. None of the girls admitted to stealing as being a factor in migration.

- N*o school fees*

The fact their care giver hadn't paid school fees was a big factor in migration to the streets. 58% of the girls and 36% of the boys mentioned this as a reason. One complaint was that the caregiver paid school fees for their own biological children and not for them.

- *Maltreatment*

32% of boys and 67% of the girls mentioned maltreatment as a factor in migration. This involved lots of different things. However, the most common complaint in this category was that the young person was not given enough food to eat. This complaint was usually mentioned by those young people not living with their biological parents.

- *Sexual abuse*

This was only a reason cited by the girls (8%). For instance, H said, ***"The reason I went on the streets is because my aunts' son raped me. When I told my aunt she didn't believe me and told me to f##k off."***

- *Miscellaneous reasons*

Other reasons cited for migration included parental drug addiction (8%), caregiver mental health issue (8%) and grandmothers being to old to look after her grandchildren properly (17%)

- *Age*

The ages of the boys in the Interim Care Centre were between 11 and 16. 36% didn't know their ages. However the average age was 14. Meanwhile the ages of the girls in the Interim Care Centre ranged from 12 to 15. 33% of girls didn't know their ages. Again the average age was 14.

- *Length of time on the streets*

For the boys in the Interim Care Centre, the length of time they lived on the streets varied from one year to five years; 32% had lived on the streets for 2 years, 25% had lived on the streets for 3 years and 21% had lived on the streets for 5 years.
For the girls in the Interim Care Centre, the length of time they lived on the streets varied from five months to 4 years. 58% had lived on the streets for 2 years.

Experiences on the streets

- *Drug use*

Interestingly the most popular drug of choice by far for both the girls (42%) and boys (89%) was tramadol. This is probably an encouraging sign that more young people are now more aware of the risks of Kush. Some of the young people had seen the devastating effects of Kush on their families which had acted as a deterrent. For instance, a few mentioned that their fathers had died from kush while others mentioned that they had had seen friends die from kush while living on the streets. In fact only 14% of the boys had tried kush while only one girl had smoked kush. This is an encouraging sign that the public sensitisation of the effects of kush is having an impact and reaching through to the most vulnerable. Maybe the public sensitisation needs to focus on others as well such as tramadol. Interestingly, one boy 19 year old A, said he gave up kush for two reasons, ***"I gave up kush as three of my friends died from kush. I didn't want to die too. Another reason is because kush makes it hard to have an erection."***

- *Deaths of their friends on the streets*

79% of the boys had at least one friend who died while living on the streets. The most popular cause of death was being murdered as a result of being caught stealing (36%). At least three of the boys had friends who were crucified after being caught stealing. The bodies of their friends were then thrown into the ocean to destroy all the evidence. Another common way of killing the street children was by tying their hands and legs together and throwing them into the wharf. They would then drown. Another common method of killing street children was using a cutglass (a bit like a sword) to stab them. For instance, M said,

"My friend, Abu, who lived on the streets died. He stole and the people who he was stealing from caught him. They used cutglass to chop off his hands."

Meanwhile 14 year old A said,

"My friend Abdulai died after being beaten and chapped (stabbed) with a cutglass."

The second cause of death was from drug use, particularly kush, although some did die from tramadol too (32%).
The next cause of death was fishing related accidents such as drownings (18%). There were also one-off causes of death mentioned by the boys including tetanus, motorcar accidents and shootings. For instance, one boy K said,

"One of my friends, Abu, died while living on the streets. He was killed in the riots at Mile 91. He was shot by the police."

Meanwhile among the girls, 100% of them had at least one friend who died while living on the streets. The most cause of death among the girls was sexual violence (67%). The most common heard phrase was ***"My friend was raped to death."***
Some of their friends who had been 'raped to death' were just 11 years old. Some of their friends were beaten to death as they refused to have sex with men.

The next cause of death was kush related deaths (25%) while 17% of all deaths were a result of sicknesses such as cold, hepatitis, AIDS related illness or "belly hurts." One girl had a friend who died after problems with her appendix while two other girls had friends who died in motorcar accidents. One girl R said,

"My friend Aminata died while living on the streets. She was shot dead by the police during the riots in Tombo."

- *Police Brutality*

67% of girls admitted to being raped by the police while 7% of boys were sexually assaulted by the police. Usually the sexual assaults happened in the police station. The young people had been arrested for a crime, usually loitering, stealing or fighting and the only way they would be released was if they slept with the policemen. 96% of boys complained that the police would beat them whereas only 33% of the girls made the same complaint. What came to light during our interviews was that the police would take the boys to a special place called the "Tent." One boy said,

"The police beat me boku. They would take me to the tent. They would beat me with a cable or rope."

Another boy said,

"The police wicked me. The police beat me when they found me lying on the table. They would beat me and then take me to the tent for more beating."

The justification given by the police to the boys were, "***no pikin should sleep on the street."***

- *Rape*

100% of the girls had been sexually assaulted on the streets either by fishermen, Kush men or local gangsters while 18% of the boys admitted to being raped by gangsters. One girl R had been raped 7 times by different local fishermen. One boy, M said,

"I was raped by a gangster. Afterwards I sat and cried. I had no place to complain - the police wouldn't take it seriously."

While another boy S said,

"I was raped once on the streets by two gangsters. They ran after me. After they raped me, they threw 20 leones at me afterwards. I didn't feel fine. I was bleeding heavily in my bottom."

Another boy, A, who was addicted to kush at the time admitted that he had been raped by a gangster once when he was high on kush, ***"I was nearly unconscious and I couldn't fight back. This was another reason why I gave up kush."***

The boys (57%) were more likely to complain that the gangsters would beat them and steal their money.

- *Income generation*

To make money on the streets, the majority of boys would fish or help out the fishermen in other ways (57%). Usually they would be given money or fish in lieu of payment. They could sell some fish for 30 to 50 leones. The next popular activity to make money was carrying loads for people or "toting" (36%). Other ways of making money included:

- Find pan/iron and sell it
- Pick plastic and sell the plastic
- Stealing
- Sweeping and collecting rubbish for people
- Washing pans and plates for people
- Fetching water for people

Only three boys engaged in survival sex. For one boy, it was a one off. It was not a regular occurrence. The other boy was called S. He is 13 years old. Before he went on the streets, he lived with his aunt. His mum died in a motorcar accident while his father drowned while fishing. He has been living on the streets for three years. He said,

"After my mother died, I went to live with my granny but my granny sent me to my Aunt in the village. My aunt maltreated me, she made me sell plastic, she beat me and I'd only get food if I worked. On the streets, I lived by the kush den. I would smoke kush and take tramadol. To make money I would lay down with men, just so I would have enough money for kush. I would also dreg. I carried a weapon on the streets for protection—a blade. I was constantly beaten by the kush gangsters. On the streets, I was raped three times by the kush men. I was completely out of it on Kush- I couldn't fight back. I am a member of the gang RFM."

He said,

"Mobile was the one place that I knew I was safe. I knew that thanks to mobile I would be able to eat at least one meal per day, that I could drink water, receive medical treatment. No one hurt me at mobile or judged me. I wasn't a kush bobo or drug addict at mobile – I was just S. No one looked down their nose at me. Kush took over my life and I made decisions that I wouldn't normally make. All I could think about was where I was going to get my next fix. Its not easy giving up Kush but I did it. I am a survivor. I am a changed man. Laughter made me realise that I am a somebody and I do have a future. They gave me the strength to quit Kush. To believe in better for myself. If it wasn't for mobile, I would be dead by now."

Thankfully S has now been home for 6 months now and is happily attending school and the streets are a distant memory.

Another boy, 17 year old U, was the only out member of the LGBTQ community in Tombo. He admitted to engaging in survival sex. He would receive 20 leones each time. This was his main way of survival on the streets. U lived on the streets for the last 3 years - since he was 14 years old. We first met him this year on the streets of Tombo. Despite the challenges he has faced in life, U is always infectiously happy and positive.

He said,

"My Dad was addicted to kush so my Mum and Dad separated. I went to live with my mum as at that time, my dad wasn't able to look after me. Sadly my mum maltreated me and would beat me so I went to live with my aunty. However, she maltreated me too. She made me sell groundnut and beat me. She didn't pay school for me and didn't give me food. It got even worse after she found out that I was gay. She called me a witch and told me that I was bringing shame on my family. She called me disgusting and so many other hurtful words. She even took me to Dems (the young offenders centre in Freetown). I couldn't stay in a house where I was treated with nothing but hate for just being who I am."

On the streets, U went through a lot. His friend Sorie, 17, who lived on the streets with him died after complications from his kush addiction. To survive, U had no choice but to sell himself or to tote (carry heavy loads for people). As a coping mechanism, U would take tramadol and jamba which would numb the pain of what he'd been through. He was arrested once for fighting at the wharf but he ran away before he was put in a cell. For his own protection, he would carry a knife and a nail in case he was ever attacked. He was also a member of a gang- RFM- which he joined for extra protection. When U came to mobile, he found a safe space where he could stay without judgement, fear or discrimination. He could just be himself without pretending. He said,

"The cultural dance sessions are my favourite bit of mobile. I love dancing. It makes me forget about everything I have been through. For two hours, I just dance my worries away. Its great exercise and most of all I have a great laugh. I have learned so much from Uncle Joseph (the dance teacher)."

For now, U is living back with a supportive family member. We paid school for him in November 2025. For the future, U said,

"I haven't told many people that I am gay. I have a nice boyfriend but we meet in secret. But I am scared if anybody finds out. Look at how my aunt treated me and she is meant to love me. I don't want to be rejected by my friends, be discriminated against, end up in jail or worse. I didn't choose to be gay. Just because I love men doesn't mean that I should be treated differently from anybody else. I am exactly the same as anybody else- the only difference is who I love. I hope that one day in my lifetime, people like me will be accepted by everybody in Sierra Leone."

Meanwhile the main source of income for girls was survival sex. 92% of the girls did so. They received anything between 5 and 25 leones each time. However, a lot of the men they had sex with did not pay them. Instead they would beat them. Sadly one girl B, once miscarried as she was beaten by a client when she was pregnant. Another girl, N, was beaten so badly by a client that he broke her arm. Picking plastic (50%) was another popular activity for the girls to raise money. Other ways of making money included:

- Begging
- Washing pans for people
- Selling fish
- Picking Wood

- *Where they lived on the streets*

75% of the boys slept at Pepper Wharf either under the fishing chains, on the market tables, or near where they smoke kush. Other places they slept in Tombo included:

- fishing boats
- tyre-base
- PS centre
- Kaka pole, near where the gangsters spoke kush.
- big wharf
- a baffa in Tombo field
- under the table where they sell the fuel.

- *Gang membership*

There were two major gangs in Tombo: RFM and Black Leo. 54% of the boys were a member of a gang while 58% of girls were. For girls there was a sexual component to their membership. As one girl said, ***"To join I had to lay down with the different members."***

Meanwhile the boys had different roles within the gangs. Some would fight, others would be sent out to steal.

Activities and events at the ICC

Activities carried out in the ICC are the same as outlined in previous year's annual reports and include:

- Education
- Counselling
- cultural dance
- Drama
- Yoga
- skills training (including making jewellery, crochet, carpets, shoes, hairdressing, etc.)
- Sports
- Games
- Music
- To celebrate the International Day of Dance 2025, we had our annual Danceathon with the pupils of Hope Academy in Newton le Willows. The boys in the ICC busted some great moves….

One of the most popular events in the Interim Care Centre is the Annual Easter Egg hunt. This year, MJ, my godson, found 11 chocolate eggs while in second place was Abass who found 6 eggs. Abass has a very sweet tooth so was delighted with his victory!!! We first met Abass at our mobile project in Tombo in February and brought him to the centre in March. He's

14 years old and lived on the streets for 5 years. He lived on the streets in Lumley and Tombo. In Tombo, he lived on the streets in Pepper wharf, sleeping on the market tables. His father died when he was small. Abass went on the streets after he stole his mum's money– 400 leones. He said,

"The streets are not nice! When you have money the bigger boys seize advantage of us. The police beat us and say "Go back to your mother's house." To make money on the streets, I would wash pans and plates for people, I would tote or fish. I am a member of RFM (a local gang). They send us to steal slippers and clothes from the market. On the streets, I would take tramadol.

Now Abass is back home with his mum and attending school every day. He was elected as a street champion at the election in Tombo. He is a natural leader and has high hopes for his future - he wants to be a bank manager! I have no doubt that he will succeed! Abass said,

"I loved the Easter Egg hunt. I have never done one before and I loved the chocolate! It was really yummy. I shared my eggs with all my friends who didn't find any chocolate so that they could some too. We had to eat them all quickly before they melted though."

Another boy who took part in the Easter Egg hunt was 13 year old Mohamed. Mohamed lived on the streets for two years before we met him at our mobile project in Tombo. He slept on the market table where they sell fish in Pepper Wharf. He has never been to school. Before he went on the streets, he lived with his mum. She would wake him early to make cake and then he would have to sell the cake. If he lost money, she would beat him. He wouldn't get much food at home either. He said,

"I did not like the streets. There is sufferness in the street. To make money I would find iron to sell. I would take tramadol. One of my friends, Abu, died while living on the streets. He went to steal but they caught him so they tied him up and threw him in the sea and he drowned."

Mohamed said, ***"I loved the chocolate. It was sweet. The Easter egg hunt was my favourite day in the centre."***

The amount of laughter I heard during the Easter egg hunt just proved to me how special the gift of sweets really is! I haven't seen the kids that excited in years- it was like they were hunting for gold!

Our young people giving back to the ICC

What we love about the ICC is seeing so many of our old young people giving back in some way. For instance, one of the first kids we ever worked with was Sorie F, who is studying social work at university. In March, April and May 2025, he volunteered every Sunday in the ICC, just so he could get more practical experience. He is fantastic and had a real connection with the boys. Similarly, one of our old girls, Jenneh, who is about to graduate from vocational school, came to the ICC to teach the young people how to make carpets in March, April, May, June 2025. One of our young people Junior who we have known since 2017, came to teach the girls in June 2025 how to carry out pedicures and manicures! It's so rewarding to see our old kids use their talents and become young leaders to inspire the next generation of street children.

This year the boys in the Interim Care Centre joined a local football league in Adonkia. They absolutely loved being part of the community in this way (especially when they won!). When the boys left, we saw them swapping phone numbers with one of the local teenagers who they were playing football against in the league every week. They said, "He's our coach - he is going to arrange some games for us." They really did make life-long friends while staying in the Interim care Centre.
The team captain for the boys was Almammy. He is football mad! He doesn't know his age but we guess that he is 14 years old. He said,

"I lived on the streets for about 5 years. I slept on the streets in Pepper Wharf, under the chains. My mum died of Ebola while my dad drowned when I was small. I lived with my aunt. My aunt would make me sell puff cake and she would also beat me. She didn't pay school for me. I was accused of stealing money from my aunt but it was her own son. But he lied and said that it was me so I ran away."

Almammy said,

" I love watching Barcelona and Real Madrid play. My favourite player is Lamine Yamal. I love playing football. I used to play football on the streets with my friends. The street kids would play against the community kids. It brought us together and for those 90 minutes- there was no difference between us- just lads playing together as a team. One day I want to be either a footballer or a lawyer."

Almammy's Laughter nickname is Mango Boy as once he came to mobile and gave the staff some mangoes to say thank you for all we had done for him! He was very appreciative and used what little money he had to buy the mangoes. He could have spent that money on anything else but he chose to spend it on us. We also allowed the boys to watch international football matches at the local cinemas. They particularly loved watching Barcelona and Real Madrid. There were a lot of Lamine Yamal fans!

<u>Family Tracing and Reunification Department (FTR)</u>

- 173 children reunified with family members

The FTR department 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. Between 1st January 2025 and now, we reunified 173 street children with their families. One boy who was delighted to be reunified with his family was 14 year old Abdulrahman. He said,

"I lived on the streets for 3 years. I lived on the streets at Pepper wharf, sleeping on the market tables. I don't know where my mama and papa are so I lived with my grandmother. When my grandmother died, I went on the streets. When I went to my aunt for help, she drove me saying that I was a 'streetna.'

Abdulrahman faced a lot on the streets including the death of his friend and horrific violence. He said,

"My friend Abubakarr died while living on the streets. He stole a chain. They caught him and took him to the sea and tied his legs and threw him into the water. He drowned. The gangsters were always beating me. They wanted to sleep in the

place where I was sleeping so they beat me so that I would move. Thats why I started taking tramadol- to stop the pain from the beatings."

To survive Abdulrahman would fish. In 2025, Abdulrahman was reunified with his family. He said.

"Laughter took me home to family and gave me hope. Now I am going to school and I am about to sit my NPSE exam. In the future want to be a pilot."

School fees, educational support, and accessibility initiatives

- 678 young people provided with school supply kits
- 16 young people attending university
- 583 young people supplied with a uniform
- 135 young people sitting exams received textbooks
- 123 young people received extra lessons
- "Extra support" provided to the most vulnerable children (transportation costs, lunch money, mattresses, bicycles, wheelchairs, neonatal care kits, bags of rice.
- 803 children received medical treatment

This department is responsible for the payment of school and vocational school fees. Between 1st September 2024 and July 2025, we provided school supply to approximately 678 young people and paid university fees for 16 young people. We paid fees for new schools or new vocational schools for 355 young people. The rest were continuing students. Meanwhile we paid uniforms for 583 young people. We also provided text books for 135 young people who sat external exams in 2025 and paid extra lessons for 123 students. 19 year old Musa received text books for his WASCE earlier this year. We met him on the streets in Grafton in 2023. He said,

"I lived on the streets for three years. I don't know anything about my mum and dad. No one in my family will ever tell me about them. Whenever I ask about them, they get vex. I lived with my granny. She treated me nicely but as she got older she couldn't provide for me anymore so I went on the streets."

Musa confirmed that the streets are not as easy place to live,

"The streets are not fine. All about the streets is pain and loss. The streets do not pay. One day enjoyment, one day loss. I would bloom and blye, throw dirty and find iron and cup cup. I slept under market tables. The mosquitos would bite me too much."

With no other way to make money on the streets, Musa turned to a life of crime, just to survive. He said,

"I was a thief man on the streets – I would thief the plasas from market sellers and sell it. I would also steal people's phones and rice money. I would pretend in the market that the police were coming and sellers would leave their phones in a panic. I was stabbed in the leg and the neck. I was stabbed by the person who I tried to rob. I stabbed someone in the arm once when I was robbing their phone."

To find a sense of belonging, Musa joined a local gang,

"I was in a gang – diamond clique. To join the gang, they test you first. I had to have a trial. To join they had to slap me. My response to the slaps made them choose me. I grabbed a bench and I hit the person slapping me with a bench three times. They liked my speed. I was arrested 3 times on the streets. The first thing you notice when you go in a cell is the smell. Its so overwhelming. I have never smelt anything like it. I got into a lot of fights in the cell as the other prisoners beat me and I tried to fight back. But they were bigger than me. The cell is like the devil's hole. I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy."

He experienced a lot while on the street,

"On the streets, I took panda, cocaine and Kush. During corona, two of my paddies died- Joshua and Governor. An ambulance came and took them. I don't know what they died from."

Since we took him home in 2023, Musa has impressed us by his determination and willingness to change and we can't wait to see where he ends up in the future. He was so grateful for the text books,

"Thank you so much for the text books. They were a massive help in my exams. I did really well in my exams. If you had told me three years ago that I would have sat the WACSE- I would never have believed you. Now look at me."

One boy who was given text books for BECE was 16 year old Samuel. Samuel went on the streets after he lost money when he was involved in child labour. He was scared to go back home and face the wrath of his family. He lived on the streets in Bomeh for one year. He said,

"The streets were not nice. I used to sleep on a rubbish dump. The smell is something else. After a time you get used the smell but it takes a while…. We are suffering on the streets. We were cold, we had no shelter and no clothes. To survive I would pick plastic, rubber and iron. I would take tramadol and smoke jamba."

Samuel had this message for Laughter Africa supporters,

"Thank you because I am now at home. I am a changed man. They made me realise that I am a somebody. I want to be lawyer in the future so the text books I got really helped me. I want God to provide for them for them to continue to support me."

Meanwhile we gave Rasta a set of text books for his NPSE earlier this year. We first met Rasta living on the streets in 2018 when he was about 5 years old. He had never been to school when we met him. He ended up on the streets after his mother had issues with alcohol and was unable to care for him. However, we have been paying school for him ever since! He sat his NPSE exams in May and not only did pass- he smashed them. He started secondary school this September. He said,

"Thank you so much for paying school for me over the last 7 years. When I was on the streets, I used to see other piken go to school and I used to cry as I couldn't go. But now I have finished primary school. I can't believe it. I can't wait to go to Junior secondary school. The text books helped me study for my exams and were a big help so thank you."

The FTR team also give extra support to the most vulnerable children, which can include transportation costs, lunch, bikes, bags of rice, mattresses, 'help a baby basket' support kits, rental costs or wheelchairs. One example of those children who received a bike recently was 16 year old Gbassay who lives in a remote village in the middle of nowhere. Thanks to the gift of a bike he is now able to get to school every day.

He first went on the streets aged 10 after the death of his mum. After his mum died, he moved in with an aunt who maltreated him. She forced him into child labour and used to beat him whenever he lost money. He lived on the streets for 3 years until Laughter found him and reunified him with his grandparents. His grandparents are farmers who live in a village where they plant rice and groundnut.

On the streets, Gbessay went through a lot. He suffered abuse and he also watched two of his friends- Mohamed and Abdul die on the streets from different sicknesses. To make money he would help the blind beggars beg, tote (carry heavy loads) or collect plastic. He would be beaten by the local gangsters regularly and they would try and steal his money. He was raped by the police while living on the streets. He said,

"When I slept outside. They would butterwaiss me. If I didn't do it - then they would arrest me. It happened once. There were two policemen. It made me angry and sad. My waiss was hurting."

Gbassay has stayed home for the last three years and we were delighted to buy him a bike. He said,

"Every day I am beaten at school for being late. My village is an hour and a half away from my school. I tell you plenti tenki for my bike. May God bless you. I will take very good care of it. This bike is the best present I have ever had and means so much to me! Hopefully I won't get beaten at school for being late anymore now I have this bike. Some of my friends already have bikes. I used to feel left out as they all go to schools on their bikes and I had to walk. But now I can feel like part of the gang again!"

Another boy who recently received a bike was 16 year old Albert. We have been supporting Albert since 2020. He said,

"My mum and dad died so my auntie took me from my granny and brought me to Freetown. She said that she would look after me and pay school for me. But instead she made me sell and she beat me."

For Albert, his main challenge on the streets were the police,

"The streets are not sweet because the police used to run after me every blessed day. They beat me and they put me in a cell. Usually I was just sleeping on a table and then they chased after me and started beating me."

Since being reunified with his granny, five years ago, Albert has stayed home. He lives in the middle of nowhere so he really struggles to get to school. He said,

"This bike means the world to me. My granny doesn't have much money so I couldn't afford to get a vehicle to school.

Instead, I had to walk there and back every day. Now I have my own bike, I can spend more time helping my granny at home, playing with my friends or even studying. Thank you so much Laughter for not forgetting me even though I live in the village."

One example of those children who received a wheelchair in 2025 was Abdul. We first met Abdul living on the streets in 2016 when he was 10. We paid school for Abdul from class 1 until ss3 and he sat private WASCE in November 2025.

Helping young mums

One of the young mums we have helped recently is one of our old girls Fatmata who we met in 2016. At the end of November 2025, we were visited by Fatmata and her 8-week old baby Mohamed James. The T-shirt he was wearing said 'Out of this world.' And he truly was!

"He is my second chance, Five 0" said Fatmata. Fatmata tragically lost her first child Francess in 2022. She's channelled her extreme grief into something constructive and has just enrolled on a hairdressing course. ***"I will never forget Francess. And when Mohamed James gets older- I will tell him all about his amazing big sister. He is named James after you, Five 0."***

And this is what Laughter Africa is all about: second chances. A chance to have a fresh start, no matter what mistakes you might have made in the past. We gave Fatmata a 'help a baby basket' support kit.

Providing medical treatment

The FTR department also provides medical treatment for any of the children who remain at home. In fact across all the three departments, we provided at least 803 young people with medical treatment between 1st January 2025 and now. Just one example of this is S. S is 18 and is mum to two beautiful children. She is devoted to her son I, who has just turned two. He is always by her side. S lived on the streets for 7 years. Sadly, her child's dad is addicted to Kush, so he is unable to provide for S. S does whatever she has to to provide for her son. She never complains and just wants to give I the best life possible.

Her body is ravaged with different 5 different illnesses including HIV, Hepatitis, TB, syphilis and suspected cancer, and she was really struggling for breath when we saw her in September. We took her to hospital on 22nd September and she stayed there fighting until they discharged her on 25th November. We can't believe that she lived! We were told on numerous occasions by the doctors that she was going to die- but they don't know S. She is a fighter. The nurses were shocked. When she arrived at the hospital- she couldn't walk or do anything for herself- now she is singing and dancing around the hospital.

Throughout her stay in hospital, her only concern was what would happen to her children if she died. She kept crying out for her children. Although it wasn't safe for her children to come to visit her- she kept looking at photos of them on our nurses' phone so she could still feel close to them. Her only thoughts were about her kids. Sadly, S's daughter died, just before she was discharged from hospital.

I spoke to S during her stay and I assured her that Ibrahim would be looked after. Laughter would pay for his school fees and keep an eye out for him if anything happened to her. This seemed to reassure her and gave her some peace of mind. After that conversation, she kept repeating to people “Five O will look after my pikin. Five O will look after my pikin.”

One thing that really touched me was when S needed blood transfusions, all S’s friends came as soon as they could. The place was full of willing blood donors. It was lovely for S to see how cared for and loved she is by the Laughter Africa community. She is not out of the woods yet- but she is home and taking medicine and most of all, she is reunited with her son again – just in time for Christmas!

Providing business support

This department is also responsible for providing any business support. One of the young people we gave business support to was 22 year old Edwin aka Junior. Junior completed an apprenticeship as a pedicurist and manicurist as well as other beauty techniques in 2025. We first met Junior in 2017 when he was living on the streets in Susan’s Bay. He had lived on the streets for four years. He said,

"I went on the streets because of lack of love from my mum and dad. They separated when I was young and they had no time for me. No one paid me any attention. I suppose I went on the streets as I was looking for somewhere to belong."

On the streets, Junior faced many challenges. He was a member of a gang and was arrested numerous times, usually for fighting. Junior said,

"My dream is to make my business a big success. Open lots of salons. I want to teach street children how to do pedicures and manicures so they can make a living too. Thank you to Laughter Africa and all the staff. It’s not easy in this economy to do these things. I really appreciate everyone who helps us by donating money. By God’s grace, if my dreams come true, I want to open a salon in England. For the first time in my life, I now know what it’s like to be loved thanks to Laughter Africa.”

One of the girls who received business support is 20 year old Massah who finished a 3 year tailoring course in 2025. We first met Massah in 2018. She lived on the streets in Aberdeen after both her parents died. On the streets, Massah experienced a lot of hardship including the death of her friend Kadie who died after complications after having an abortion. It went wrong and she bled to death. We gave a machine to Massah in March and since then she is starting to make a small income through her designs. She said,

"I want to make a living and I also want to teach other street children how to be a tailor. They suffer in the street. They take kush. When you don’t learn anything - you suffer. But when you learn something - its better. I am proud of myself. Now I work and I have my own business. I can hold my head up high. Thank you so much for paying my vocational school fees and the sewing machine and materials. Thank you for changing my life."

We also gave Jenneh, one of our old girls, a sewing machine and lots of material to kick-start her tailoring businesses in July. Jenneh went on the streets after the death of her parents and her aunt’s maltreatment. Jenneh experienced a lot of trauma

while living on the streets. She saw her best friend Khadeja die after falling ill and not having enough money to go to hospital. She gave birth on the streets but tragically her baby died. She said,

"I had no choice but to give birth on the streets as if you don't have money- the nurses won't treat you. He was a baby boy. I think of him often."

However, Jenneh is a fighter and didn't give up. Her life turned around for the better when she met Laughter during our mobile project in Waterloo. Jenneh is now optimistic about the future and she is about to graduate from vocational school. She said,

"I want to tell you tenki. I want to open my own tailoring shop. I want to teach people- especially street children- how to sew and be a tailor."

We also paid for one of our old boys Agu to receive new tools for his carpentry business. Agu is mute and is unable to communicate with anyone. He is mocked a lot by society and people take advantage of him. We have known him since 2016. He attended vocational school years ago and graduated in carpentry. Sadly all his tools were stolen in 2025 so we bought him more tools so that he can restart his business again. We also provided business support to Mabinty, a disabled girl in Funkia who we met in December 2023. She is now selling commodities such as toiletries, sweets and biscuits.

Most of the staff receive phone calls from the children and their families. Often the children just phone to say hello but sometimes they might need something or have an issue at home. The team are on call 24/7 for the children and respond immediately whenever they are needed.

<u>Campaigns, Advocacy and Communications Department</u>

Our Communications, Advocacy and Campaigns department started in September 2016 and it has been in operation ever since. In 2025, our advocacy work has focused on four distinct areas;

- the International Day for Street Children
- a consultation in preparation for a UN report
- Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process
- the repeal of the loitering law.

International Day for Street Children 2025

Every year on 12th April, street children organisations all over the world celebrate the International Day for Street Children (IDSC). This year the theme of the day was ***'the Power of Participation,'*** so we held elections for 'street champions' to join the Children's Forum Network and amplify the voices of children living on the streets in child-related law and policy development. On 13th March, 4 new 'street champions' were elected (out of 14 candidates) for Tombo; Saidu, Genevieve, Abass and Adamma. The first representative elected was 17-year-old Saidu, who has lived on the streets for over 5 years. He went on the streets after his mum died of malaria in 2020. His dad, a fisherman, also died. He said,

"I have nobody to support me. I have suffered a lot because of the effects of police brutality. The police raped me twice. They handcuffed me to a stick and shoved a bottle up my bottom. They do it so that we will go home. They don't realise that we don't a home to go to. I cry when I am by myself. I am scared and fearful of the police. Its all about power. They flog us during raids. I was once raped by a gangster."

About being a street champion, Saidu said,

"I was so happy to be elected and I promise that I will make sure that I will fight for the rights of street children particularly in relation to the police and the repeal of the loitering law. Thanks to everyone who voted for me."

Adama, 17, was the final street champion selected for Tombo. She too has lived on the streets for over 5 years with her 19-month child, Yusif. Adama said,

"It feels good to be chosen. I particularly want to advocate for pregnant girls and young mothers at the CFN to make sure that they are also represented in policy decisions. We are always forgotten about. I also want to see justice for those who are killed as a result of sexual violence. My friend Mariama, 15, was killed in the street. Her dead body was abandoned in Pepper Wharf. She had been raped to death. They never caught the man who killed her. My friend Kadiatu who lived on the streets died in the riots. She was only 16. She was shot dead. I want to be the voice of the forgotten and the abandoned. I want to save my friends on the streets from more suffering."

Altogether we appointed 10 'street champions' representing Laughter Africa from different areas in March and April 2025. We were extremely busy over March and April in the build up to the International Day for Street Children, carrying out different workshops and focus groups with 136 street children in Tombo. It was a chance for them to tell their 'street champions' what they would like them to advocate for at the Children's Forum Network meetings. We did this via the 'island, shark, boat' activity.

In collaboration with the Network for Street Children Sierra Leone (NSCSL), we led a training for all of the 28 street champions on 5th April 2025. The training was about what makes a good advocate as well as teaching them about key communication and advocacy techniques so that they would have the confidence they need to speak out. The training consisted of two major activities. The first activity was a body mapping activity where different groups wrote down what they think makes a good advocate which they wrote on the inside of the body and what makes a bad advocate, which they wrote on the outside of the body. The street champions looked at all the drawings made from the street children in Tombo during the consultancy to see what issues they would like the advocates to campaign on. We followed this by carrying out the 'Flower, bugs and spray' activity at the training where the street champions discussed the challenges they face on the streets and the possible solutions. By far the most prominent issues which was of most concern to them were repealing the loitering law and having a law particularly focusing on the rights of street children (UN General Comment 21).

On the 11th April, we held a press conference officially introducing the street champions, which was attended by the Irish Ambassador, a representative from the National Commission for Children (NCC) and the CFN President. Street champion Khadija urged the Government to repeal the loitering law and adopt UN General Comment 21. She said,

"Good morning everyone,

My name is Kadeja, and I am proud to stand here today to speak on behalf of street-connected children in Sierra Leone. Tomorrow we celebrate the International Day for Street Children.

I want to talk about something that is very important to us: participation. Too often, decisions are made about us, without ever talking to us. We are not invisible. We are not criminals. We are children—with dreams, with rights, and with voices that deserve to be heard. We know what it feels like to sleep outside in the rain. We know what it means to go hungry or to be discriminated against by the community just for living on the streets. We know the pain of being judged by how we look instead of who we are. That is why we are asking for real participation—not just in speeches or promises, but in action.

Our priority as members of the Children's Forum Network and street champions is to urge the government to follow the Ecowas ruling made on 7th November 2024 which states that the loitering law in Sierra Leone must be repealed or changed. That law has been used to harass us, arrest us, and silence us. But we are not loiterers—we are survivors. We are street champions. And we have a right to live without fear. We call on our government: honour the ECOWAS ruling. End the loitering law. Respect our dignity.

The second thing we are asking for is the introduction of UN General Comment No. 21 here in Sierra Leone. This document shows how governments can protect the rights of children in street situations. It talks about listening to us, involving us in decisions, and making sure we get access to education, health care, and protection—just like any other child. We believe that if General Comment 21 is used here in Sierra Leone, it can change lives. It can help people understand that street-connected children are not a problem to be solved—we are part of the solution.

Participation means giving us a seat at the table. It means asking us what we need, not assuming you already know. It means involving us in the programmes meant to help us. Because if it's not done with us, it's not really done for us. Today, I am not just a street child. I am a voice for change. I speak for the boys sleeping on market tables, the girls hustling to make ends meet, and the children forgotten in the slums. We are tired of being left out. We are ready to be heard. So, to everyone listening: let's make this more than just a day of awareness. Let's make it a turning point. End the loitering law. Introduce General Comment 21. Listen to us. Work with us. Stand with us.

Thank you."

James, the founder of Laughter Africa also spoke at the conference, representing the Network for Street Children Sierra Leone. He said,

"Good morning everyone,

It's a great honour to speak with you today as we mark the International Day for Street Children, celebrated every year on the 12th of April. This year, we gather under the theme of Participation—a powerful reminder that every child, including street-connected children, has a right to be heard and involved in the decisions that affect their lives.

Five years ago, something special happened. Organisations working with street children across Sierra Leone came together to form a united front—The Network for Street Children Sierra Leone. This Network includes groups like Don Bosco, Pikin Padi, St George's Foundation, and Laughter Africa, among others. We realised that by coming together, our voices could be louder, stronger, and harder to ignore.

Since then, we've done a lot. We supported the children to write and record a pop song and music video that shared their real experiences of life on the streets. It was raw, powerful, and honest—because it came directly from them. We've also delivered training to over 4,000 street-connected children across 8 different areas on the topic of sexual violence—helping them understand their rights, how to stay safe, and how to seek support.

But today is about more than the past. It's about a future where street children are not just seen—but heard. Not just helped—but involved. That's why this year, we took a bold step forward.

Across different areas in Sierra Leone, street children have been holding their own elections. In places like Tombo, where Laughter Africa currently works, four children were elected to represent their peers. And they're not alone. We have now appointed 28 Street Champions from across the country—from Susan's Bay to Portee, from Ecowas Street to Funkia, from Bomeh to Lumley, from Rokel to Black Hall Road, Grafton, Waterloo, and more. Some of these champions are still living on the street. Others were once on the streets but are now reunited with their families. But all of them share one goal: to speak up for children whose voices are too often ignored.

These Street Champions will now have a seat at the Children's Forum Network—a platform where young people from across Sierra Leone can participate in national conversations. It is a huge opportunity and a moment we must all support and protect. Because participation is not a privilege. It's a right.

And today, one of those street champions is here with us. In a moment, they will take the stage to share the priorities and hopes of street-connected children across Sierra Leone. They will tell you what they will be campaigning for first. This is not just symbolic. This is real. The voices of street children are finally being heard—not as an afterthought, but as leaders of change. And we, as social workers, NGOs, partners, and policy-makers, must walk alongside them—not in front of them, not behind them, but with them. Because when children participate in shaping their future, the results are always more meaningful, more lasting, and more just.

Let's continue to build a country where no child is silenced because of their circumstances. Let's honour the strength, the courage, and the leadership of street-connected children—not just today, but every day. Thank you."

In response, Addie Valcarcel, Director of Advocacy, Communications and Outreach at the NCC, made a public commitment to lobby the Government on the repeal of the loitering law. This is a real step in the right direction and shows the "Power of Participation" in action! We can't wait to see what further changes the 'Street Champions' scheme brings.

To see a video of some of the media coverage of the conference, please visit here.

Since the press conference, the street champions from Laughter Africa have been attending every CFN meeting which takes place every Thursday. Although the 'Street Champions' is only a pilot scheme, we are delighted with the success and hope to appoint a lot more street champions in different areas in the coming years ahead starting with our upcoming mobiles.

The International Day for Street Children 2025 was a big success worldwide. Altogether there was a reach of over 51 million on social media and there were more than 2,500 mentions of the campaign hashtags **#ListenInvolveAct #PowerofParticipation #IDSC2025 #streetchildrenday**.

Consultation with the street children in Tombo about sexual exploitation

We carried out a consultation in April with over 129 street children (45 boys and 84 girls) at mobile about sexual exploitation in preparation for a UN report. The report was dedicated to the theme: "A child-centred response to the sexual exploitation of children in street situations." It was presented at the 80th session of the General Assembly (October 2025). We are very proud of our research. To see a copy of our research, please click here. We were very happy to see that the Consortium for Street Children used a lot of research from our paper to write their own response which can be viewed here. The Consortium for Street Children were delighted with our focus groups discussion and called our research ***"dynamite."*** We hope our research will trigger lasting change. The Consortium for Street Children sent me this message at the launch of the report,

"Hi James, just messaging to pass on a huge personal thanks for giving so much to the Mama Fatima inquiry, and for your determination to ensure the voices and perspectives of street connected kids in Sierra Leone are heard and acted upon at the UN, despite the risk of reprisals you face for reporting on abuse. K is in New York and our evidence and the report from Mama Fatima are making waves. Looking forward to building on momentum from the side event tomorrow to help propel legal and policy reforms in Sierra Leone!"

In summary we found that, there were three major types of sexual exploitation facing street connected children in Tombo:

1. Sexual violence committed by police officers
2. Sexual Violence committed by other men in the community e.g. gangsters, local fishermen
3. Sex work in exchange for either money, fish or drugs such as tramadol or Kush

A summary of the findings.

	Sexual Violence committed by Police officers	Sexual Violence committed by others	Engaged in sex work
Number of Boys	2	3	4
Number of Girls	20	50	77
Total (%)	17%	41%	63%

Sexual violence committed by Police Officers:

Many of the young people (17%) admitted to being raped by the police. Most of the time, the young people were threatened with arrest for "loitering." However, if they had sex with the police officers, then they wouldn't be arrested. Those incidents increased ten-fold when there were curfew orders and lockdowns.

It wasn't just females who were raped by the police. Our consultations revealed that males had also been sexually assaulted by law enforcement officers. Being detained also led to sexual exploitation and violence. One male teenager confirmed, ***"One policeman raped me in a cell. He threatened to send me to jail unless I had sex with him so I had no choice."*** This story was echoed by lots of other participants. One girl was taken to the cell for fighting. She was told that these charges would be dropped as long as she had sex with the officer in charge of the case.

Most of the participants, especially the boys were beaten repeatedly by the police. ***"They take us to a place called the tent to beat us."***

One girl mentioned how she was brought to the tent after being caught stealing a Bluetooth***, "It was so degrading. They hung me up in the tent and beat and kicked me."***

Although it is not technically sexual violence, the police officers involved seem to get some perverse gratification from such behaviour.

Sexual violence by others

41% of all the participants had experienced sexual violence by other men in the community (not policemen). The most common perpetrators were gangsters, teachers and Sierra Leonean fishermen. Shockingly at least 30 of the participants (23%) had at least one friend who died as a result of sexual violence. The most common phrase that we heard during the discussion was ***"my friend was raped to death."*** In every single case, no perpetrator was ever apprehended.

Sex work

63% of the participants were engaged in sex work. Some participants had sex for money, others had sex for drugs such as Kush while others had sex for fish which they would then sell. One girl received a phone in lieu of payment or some just received food. One girl shared her disappointment, ***"Once I received an old cake with a fly inside."*** Sex without payment is a significant issue for many of the girls. As one girl said, "***Sometimes the men will not pay you- but beat you instead."*** Other times, ***"the men don't pay us as we agreed and pay a lot less. If you argue, then they will physically attack you."***

Problems with the police

According to every focus group we spoke to the major issue with the current system is the police themselves. The problems with the police can be divided into 7 subcategories:

1. Money

The repeated complaint from all the focus groups was that even if they went to the police, the police wouldn't take their complaints seriously. One Participant said, ***"When you go to the police without money, they won't take your case seriously. They didn't accept my case as I don't have money."*** Another participant said,**" *Justice equals money. Without money, there is no justice."***

2. Sex with police

All the focus groups mentioned that the only way the police would take their cases seriously would be if they had sex with the police officers. One participant said,

" When you go to the police- if you want them to take your case further- you have to sleep with them. The police will only take action if you sleep with them."

This was re-iterated by another participant who said,

"After they take our statement - they sleep with us. They are meant to pay us 30 leones, they give 10."

3. Police corruption

All the focus groups mentioned ***"table talk"*** or ***"buff case"*** which is local slang for corruption. Every focus group had examples of police corruption, where the police dropped the case after the accused or their family paid the police a huge amount of money. Many street children mentioned that even if they pursued a case against the perpetuator, the perpetrator would just pay a bribe and they would be released. The street children don't have any faith in the system.

4. Lack of respect

All the focus groups mentioned the lack of respect shown to them by the police officers. One participant said,

"They are meant to protect us - but they provoke us, laugh at us, call us hustlers. And they don't take our cases seriously"

Another participant complained,

"The Police dismiss us because they say that it is our work. They say it's not a big deal- sort it out among yourselves. That it's your job."

Another participant said

"They call us names to hurt us and insult us. The police don't value us. They drove me as they said that I smell."

Some of the names the participants had been called include:

- *"hustler"*
- *"Late water"*
- *"Streetnar"*
- *"bastard pikin"*
- *"raray girl"*
- *"No wear drawers"*

- *"Kush woman"*
- *"Thief woman"*

5. Fear of Police

Many of the focus groups mentioned that they were scared to go to the police as they had been raped or beaten by the police previously. One participant said,

"Why should I go to complain to the police- they rape us too"

Another participant accentuated this,

"The police do the exact same thing to us so why bother to report them. They are all the same. They are all in it together."

6. Difference between 'house pikin' and 'street pikin'

All the focus groups mentioned that street children are treated differently from those children who live at home. They are denied access to justice because of their circumstances. One participant said,

"If you are living at home with your parents the case will be taken seriously but if you are living on the streets - the police do not care. If you are home- you are more likely to get justice."

Another participant stated,

"On the streets we do not have a person to report for us. No person to stand with us. They take house pikin cases serious but not our cases."

7. Uselessness of police

A lot of the focus groups said that the police were incompetent so didn't even bother going to the station to report the crime in the first place. One participant said,

"What's the point? I didn't even think about going to the police. They are useless."

Other participants said that even if they go to the police, the rule of law is not adhered to anyway,

"The police just say "sort it out in the house" or its "family business.""

Apart from the police, other problems with the current system is that it is very gynocentric in nature. For example the Government campaign ***"Hands off our girls"*** – solely focused on females. Male sexual violence is still very much culturally

taboo and there is still a lot of shame associated with it. This is further compounded by the religious nature of the country – where homosexuality is seen a "sin." One of the male participants said,

"I was scared to report it. People might think I am a homo."

Some of the participants (both boys and girls) said that they feared the stigma if members of the community had found out that they had been sexually assaulted.

Another problem with the system emphasised by the participants was that some of the survivors had been threatened by community members to keep silent- particularly if the accused was seen as someone important within their society. The participants also mentioned fear of reprisals from the perpetrator. A participant said,

"I was afraid of the man and what he would do to me if he found out that I had reported him. There was no safe space for me to go and hide after I had made the report."

And finally, some focus groups mentioned more practical problems with reporting. For example, one participant said,

"I don't know the man. He was a stranger in the street- a passerby. So how can I report him when I don't know his name or who he is?"

A lot of participants said that even if they managed to report a case of sexual violence to the police successfully, the men just ran away and there was no way to find them. From the focus group discussions, it is obvious that there are systematic failures within the current system and it is not fit for purpose. In fact, it further compounds feelings of shame and humiliation.

The consultation concluded by looking at practical solutions suggested by the young people themselves:

1. Repeal the Loitering Law

Every single focus group mentioned that the Sierra Leone Government need to ***"repeal the loitering law."*** The street children urged the government to follow the ECOWAS ruling made on 7th November 2024 which states that the loitering law in Sierra Leone must be repealed or changed.

2. Stricter discipline measures for police who commit crimes

Stricter discipline measures or procedures, so for example if a police officer is found guilty of beating or sexually assaulting a street child then they are imprisoned and dismissed immediately. As one child said, ***"sack police who rape" and another said "Send rapist police to prison."***

Similarly the street children also recommended to ***"punish, sack or jail corrupt police who accept bribes"*** or who ***"do not investigate or take our rape cases seriously."*** One suggestion was to ***"Cut the salaries of any corrupt police. "***

One thing all the focus discussion groups agreed on was that we should ***"stop police bribery and corruption. No table talk (buff case) for rape case."*** One participant continued not only should we punish the rapist, ***"but we should also punish those who want to settle rape cases on a community level."***

3. Implementation of a complaints mechanism to which street children can go in order to report any police officers who beat or rape them.

There needs to be an implementation of an independent complaints mechanism to which street children can go in order to report any police officer who beats or sexually assaults them-perhaps a toll free phone line. Although there is currently the 'Independent Police complaints board (IPCB'), It lacks teeth and one has to ask how "independent" it truly is. It is also very inaccessible to street children so there needs to be a complete overhaul of this complaint system as it is unfit for purpose.

4. Training for the police

A lot of the focus groups said, ***"Better training for the police so that they learn not to beat or rape us."*** This could be as part of their training at the police academy. It would not cost a lot of money. It should be a mandatory part of all studies otherwise they cannot not graduate as a police officer. A lot of NGOs are put off from training police officers as the financial expectations for the training is too high. They expect per diem, travel expense etc…By making it a compulsory part of their course at the police academy would limit the cost tenfold.

5. Better application and enforcement of laws already in place

The focus groups underlined the need for a better application and enforcement of existing laws, for example, rape legislation, when it comes to street children. They noted that the law should be applied equally and without discrimination. As one girl said, ***"When we are raped, the man should get life imprisonment, but they don't. It's like the law doesn't apply to us. That we don't matter. We just want the police to follow the procedure of the law. The strict laws need to be applied. Let the perpetrators go to jail."***

Some of the young people complained that when they went to report a crime, the ***"The police man just drive me."*** As one girl summarised*," We* ***just want the same rights as everyone else. We just want to be listened to. We just want the police to take our case seriously. Make the police take action. We need justice."***

6. Some practical recommendations that could have an impact on sexual violence committed by police officers

The participants also suggested the following recommendations:

- ***"Make police work in pairs. Preferably one male and one female officer- rather than two men."***
- ***"Make female police work night shift. Mostly male officers work at night."***
- ***"Get rid of 'The Tent'"*** in Tombo where the police officers take the street children to be beaten.

7. "Sensitisation among police and community members"

A lot of the focus groups mentioned community sensitisation. A lot of the groups praised the campaign by the government "Hands off our girls" which celebrated its 6th anniversary in December 2025. However, many in the groups stated, ***"Hands off our girls is no longer in existence."*** It actually is but the campaign is no longer effective as it once was. From 2020 to 2023, it was a lot more prominent and the message was everywhere. Now, you hardly hear anything about it and the campaign has gone silent. This should be re-started. What the focus groups liked about the "Hands off our Girls" campaign was that it ***"sensitised people about rape and the consequences one would face if they raped a girl."*** However, like we mentioned above, it should also include more sensitisation around the cultural taboo of male survivors of sexual violence too and not be completely gynocentric. As one participant said, ***"we need to change the whole mindset of the law and society."*** Like we argued above male survivors are too ashamed to speak out because of fear of being labelled ***"homo,"*** especially in a deeply religious society. Particularly in the male focus discussion groups, one suggestion that was recurring was that the boys needed "***better male role models (mentorship)"*** and **"better training for men."**

8. Provide free drug rehabilitation Centres

As one participant argued, ***"Provide free rehabilitation centres because some of us engage in sex work so that we can have money to buy our drugs. If you take away our dependence on drugs, then we would stop sex work."*** The focus groups believe that by providing drug rehabilitation centres many of the children living on the streets would finally break free of the cycle of addiction and thus stop engaging in sex work.

Although there is meant to be a free government drug rehabilitation centre this remains completely inaccessible to street children. The only way to be admitted to the centre is through an assessment at the Ministry of Social Welfare. Most street children don't even know the process involved or where the Ministry of Social Welfare even is. There are also not enough spaces in the centre as there are thousands and thousands of people addicted to Kush.

9. Lots of practical solutions to make sex work safer:

All the focus groups agreed that the government need *to* ***"Provide better protection for girls living on the street" including providing "a safe space for sex workers"***

The participants had a lot of practical suggestions about making sex work safer including:

- ***"Improve street lighting"***
- ***"Provide sex workers with rape alarms"***
- ***"Government should provide self defence training for girls"***
- ***"Provide more security guards in high risk areas of sexual violence e.g. Pepper Wharf at night."***

10. More support for young mothers

Many girls in the focus discussion groups were young, single mothers. They usually became pregnant as a result of sexual exploitation either through rape or sex work. One girl said the government need to "***provide free child support or extra care for single mothers because some of us do sex work to provide for our kids."***

11. *Provide an alternative way to make money*

By far the most popular recommendation which was mentioned in all focus discussion groups was that the government needs to ***"provide an alternative way to make money so we don't have to sleep with random men."*** The participants gave practical examples of how the government could provide an alternative way to make money including vocational schools, jobs and apprenticeships.

12. *Appoint a free advocate for the survivor*

Some of the participants mentioned that they would like to the government to ***"appoint a legal advocate for us who can stand up to the police and make sure that they take our case seriously."*** This advocate would be completely independent from the police and would be based in all the local police stations.

13. *The need for a special police unit to investigate sex crimes.*

There is a real need to have a specialist police unit established to investigate sex crimes. These specialist police should be based in all the local police stations so that there is a specially trained officer in every station. These specialist units would investigate any form of sexual exploitation from sex work or sexual violence.

14. *There needs to be a more comprehensive system in place to stop perpetrators running away*

One complaint from the focus groups was that the police need to ***"stop the men from running away."*** A lot of time the men who have been accused are released on bail. Once they are released, they leave the community for good and cannot be traced again. Perhaps any person accused of sex crimes should have their bail automatically refused and placed on remand instead. The participants also recommended that there needs to be a ***"better tracking mechanism for men who rape and run away."*** As once they run away, they are never found again.

The social worker who carried out the consultations had a few other key recommendations,

1. Have more robust police clearance certificates

"The Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs in Sierra Leone have announced that they will be producing a National Safeguarding Policy in 2025. I would implore them to use this opportunity to create a robust 'DBS' check based on the UK system. This would vet any police officer, teacher, social worker etc….to ensure that any person who has abused

children before would be barred from working with children again. This could be rolled out to cover all adults working with children Currently the police clearance certificates which are in use are ineffectual and pointless and many perpetrators of abuse are able to operate as police officers."

2. Invest in better equipment

"Sierra Leone needs better equipment. There is no DNA testing facility in the country. If DNA needs to be tested it has to be flown to another country. This is why there is no justice. Most rape cases just involve a doctor confirming that sexual assault has taken place but that's it. Even if evidence is found, it still can't be tested. This limits justice greatly."

3. *Need a better recruitment process*

"Sadly like most jobs in Sierra Leone, becoming a police officer is not necessarily based on merit. Many get the role because of connections. Some because of their tribe or because of which political party they support. We need better qualified police – most police haven't even passed their WASCE examinations (the Sierra Leone version of A-levels). We need more university educated and qualified individuals. Sadly the pay is too small to attract high quality candidates. Unlike in the Western world, being a teacher, nurse or police officer are not respected professions."

4. More flexible procedures to report sexual violence perpetrated by police officers

"There needs to be a different procedure if a girl or boy has been has been raped by a police officer. Under current rules, you must report a rape at the nearest police station. What happens if the police officers who carried out the rape are stationed at the same police station? There needs to be new laws introduced regarding police brutality and a specialized procedure to report an assault by law enforcement officers. Maybe have a specialized police complaints centre where survivors of assault by police officers can go."

5. The attitude of Government and the general public needs to change

"The police are too politicised. If you criticise the police - the government take it as a personal insult. It is like you are insulting them. Change cannot happen unless you are willing to listen and improve. A few years ago I attended a meeting with the government and when I mentioned that the street children were claiming that they were being sexually assaulted, the government's immediate response was "They are lying. The police would never do that." A few years ago I attended a meeting with a government official. When I mentioned that police officers were beating the street children, their response was "Good. They deserve to be beaten." The mentality in the country has to change before any lasting change can take place."

6. Lack of funding for the police

"Resources are very limited. You need to pay for everything. The police don't even have a piece of paper to write a report or take a statement. They don't even have fuel for their cars. How can they investigate a crime if they can't travel to the scene of the crime? The police service needs to be better funded."

We hope that through our research, the UN will be able to implement lasting change and justice for street children, not only in Sierra Leone, but worldwide. We were very happy that we were able to give the street children in Tombo a chance to amplify their voices. We were also very proud to see that a lot of our research featured in the final UN paper. It was also an honour to see that our research was used as an annex to the report.

Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a peer-review mechanism where all 193 UN member states have their human rights records examined every four and a half years by the UN Human Rights Council. Other states can ask questions, make recommendations, and highlight concerns. Civil society organizations and national human rights institutions can also provide inputs. The outcome is a report with recommendations, which the state under review can accept or note (reject). The last UPR of Sierra Leone took place in 2021 and is due again in 2026. The government will be reviewed against its previous voluntary pledges. The UPR puts extra pressure on the Government of Sierra Leone to act on Human Rights violations as the UPR is a key human rights document for international partners.

Laughter Africa in collaboration with the Consortium for Street Children wrote our recommendations for the UPR and submitted them to the OHCHR in September 2025. Our recommendations included; repealing the loitering law, the implementation of General Comment 21 and implementing the recommendations from the UN paper entitled, “A child-centred response to the sexual exploitation of children in street situations." We are hopeful that when the UPR is published in 2026, at least some of our recommendations are embraced. We then submitted the recommendations to all the key embassies working in Sierra Leone including the Embassies of Britain, Ireland, Germany and Iceland and the EU delegation. We had very positive responses from the British and Irish Embassies and the EU. For instance, the British embassy said,

“Many thanks for your email, which is timely as we start considering some of our human rights work in the run up to the UPR and next Parliamentary session here in Freetown. I was coincidentally already considering recommending some of these issues as a UPR recommendation in the upcoming round. It would be great to discuss your findings further at your convenience.”

The follow up meeting with the British embassy took place at the end of September 2025. It was a huge success. Afterwards I met with one of the advisors for the British embassy who attended the meeting and she told me that the meeting was one of the most inspiring meetings that she had attended in months and she agreed that she would follow up on our recommendations.

We had similar positive responses from the Irish embassy and the EU delegation. Our contact at the EU shared our emails with the EU Ambassador and his deputy. Later when we met our contact with the EU, he was very interested on the topics particularly of sexual violence perpetuated by the police. He had a lot of questions and showed a genuine interest in the topic. He mentioned that he had discussed it with his colleagues at length.

From February 2026 onwards, we will lobby UN member states and other permanent missions in Geneva and ask them to also raise our recommendations. Key countries we have identified to lobby include supportive Permanent Missions who've

got a strong global record on children's rights or tackling sexual abuse (e.g. Norway, Sweden, Netherlands, Canda, UK, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, Australia, New Zealand) as well as those Member States that fed into the last UPR of Sierra Leone in 2021 or have fed into related issues such as birth registration previously (South Africa, France, Bolivia, Chile, Angola, Cote d'Ivoire, Eswatini). There is not much else we can do until early February 2026 as the embassies and UN member states are waiting on a self-assessment from the Sierra Leone Government which is due at the beginning of February. Member States / governments tend to feed in a lot later to the UPR process and only finalise recommendations closer to the actual review date which is around mid 2026 (tentatively schedules for May 2026).

Other highlights from the advocacy department

We are active members of the Consortium for Street Children (CSC) and last year we were selected to become members of WASAG (the West Africa Strategic Advocacy Group). The idea of WASAG is to give feedback on different issues in order for the CSC to advocate for West Africa as a whole. James, the founder of Laughter Africa attended a conference in Ghana for the members of WASAG in July 2025. The conference was titled, 'Turning Rights into Reality for Street-Connected Children in West Africa.' A big thank you to the Consortium for Street Children who paid for James to attend.

We are still leading members of the Network for Street Children Sierra Leone (NSCSL) and worked closely with them in the lead up to the International Day for Street Children events. We welcomed a few new members to the Network too including AdvocAid. As a Network our main focus this year has been focused on repealing the loitering law.

Laughter Africa also joined the newly established 'Community of practice on safeguarding.' It's a group where NGOs come together in order to promote safeguarding in all areas of policy and practice.

And finally, we celebrated International Women's Day on 8th March 2025 by making a video which we shared on all our social media channels. It was made by Biba, one of our social workers, with the help of the girls from mobile.

Administration Department

The duties outlined in last year's annual report remain the same for the administration department. The main responsibility for this department is the Sierra Leonean accounts. Their role is to also oversee compliance with different Government laws and regulations including re-registration with the ministries, SLANGO and MOPED.

To see more information about our work please visit our facebook page.

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 and Fundraisers

The trustees would like to say a huge thank you to all our volunteers and fundraisers. However, special thanks to the following people who have gone the extra mile for Laughter Africa this financial year:

- A massive thank you to Laughter Africa's newest volunteer Amanda C for all her fabulous work. She is the driving force behind the new website and logo (which will be unveiled in January 2026) and a few other initiatives which we will announce soon. Last new year's eve, Amada and her friends gathered around and made new year resolutions. Amanda's resolution was to have a little more laughter in her life. And she achieved that last year by becoming a Laughter Africa volunteer. She has established a Laughter Africa group in Ireland and has a lot of exciting plans including university volunteer schemes, reaching out more to corporate entities and approaching celebrities in order for Laughter Africa to grow. A few months ago she asked me to buy a new domain name laughterafrica.com. She then said, "while you are at it buy another domain for laughterasia.com. You never know what the future holds." To meet a volunteer who believes so strongly in myself and Laughter Africa really meant the world to me.

- A big thank you to year 6 and their teacher Miss Brennan at The Annunciation Catholic Junior School in Edgware who took part in a colour run to raise money for Laughter Africa during their Lenterprise! They raised a brilliant £543.35! A big thank you to Deputy head Mr McCreadie for all his support!

- Also a mammoth thank you to Cardinal Newman Catholic High School in Warrington who raised over £1000 for Laughter over Lent. A big thank you to Saint John Henry Newman Parish who also gave them a helping hand! Thanks to Head of RE Mrs McCurry for all your hard work!

- A big thank you to Mr Gopsill and the post 16 class at Meadowside School in Woodchurch, Wirral who raised money for Laughter Africa by baking and selling Kenyan biscuits. Yum!

- A big, huge thank you to Laughter Africa volunteer Edward Finlay for his amazing work making the banner for the International Day for Street Children 2025 event. He also helped us put the finishing touches to the Network for Street Children Sierra Leone logo for the T-shirt for the same event. He also made the 2025 Laughter Africa Christmas gifts which were very popular.

- I particularly want to say a huge thank you to one of our youngest supporters, Faith. Over Advent 2025, she made and sold bookmarks to raise money for Laughter Africa. Tenki to her and her dad Willow for all their hard work! You are superstars!

- A big thank you to our friends Sophie and Lorien who joined us in Sierra Leone from University College Cork for a few months. It was great to have them join us and they were a huge help!

- A massive thank you to our friend Carla Van der Velpen who took some amazing photographs when she visited our mobile project in Tombo in February 2025. Carla made Laughter Africa calendars using the photos she had taken and raised a brilliant £515.

- A gigantic thank you to KitAid for providing some football kits to the street kids in Sierra Leone. Like always, the kids absolutely loved them!

- A ginormous thank you to all our visitors to our mobile project in Tombo since February 2025; Aidan, the Ambassador for Ireland; Joe Manning, the Honorary Consul for Sierra Leone in Ireland, and Ralf Luenstedt and Kaat Janssen, two German Doctors working for Cap Anamur.

- A mammoth thank you to Laughter Africa volunteers Tobi and Fanta Große, who sold all their belongings in Sierra Leone to raise money for Laughter Africa, when they emigrated to Germany. We wish them all the happiness in the world and we miss them.

- An enormous thank you to our Sierra Leonean volunteers; Victor, Sarah, Timothy and Fatmata who worked in either our mobile or Interim Care Centre. You were all brilliant and made a huge difference to our work.

-A big thank you to one of our youngest supporters Bailey who lives in Australia. He recently celebrated his first birthday and his mum, Thomasine, decided that rather than give out sweets, she wanted to give his friends something special. She said,

" I was delighted to buy a bunch of gifts to give out as party favours for Bailey's birthday party. These Aussie kids don't need any more lollies!! Having visited Sierra Leone, I know that very cent will go towards making a big difference in thousands of lives. As Bailey grows up I want his life to be enriched with learning about lots of different cultures, including his Laughter Africa Family."

-A big, big thank you to our friends Jacqui and Jess who ran the Liverpool Santa Dash at the beginning of December 2025 to raise money for Laughter Africa! As devout Evertonians, Jacqui and Jess ran in Blue Santa outfits rather than the typical red costume! For those who haven't heard of a Santa dash -it's a 5k fun run where all the runners are dressed as Father Christmas!

- A big thank you to the organisation Inner Vision who paid for two of our young people to receive business support in December 2025.

- A big thank you to the companies 'Nexithon' and 'Cornhouse Consulting' for their generosity throughout the year.

-A big thank you to our friend Rico and his workplace 'Alte Leipziger Insurance Company' in Oberursek, Germany for their kindness.

- A massive thank you to Peter who has been a great advocate for Laughter Africa. His choir. 'Levantate Choir' and workplace 'Zwickroell' both raised a huge amount for Laughter Africa.

- A big thanks to Andrew Wood Photography for their continued support over the years.

D. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

















Achievements

Our vocational educational programme

- *43 children graduated vocational school*
- *149 children attended vocational school*

One of our proudest achievements since the last annual report is the success of our vocational school programme which has been a bigger success than we ever imagined possible. Since the last annual report (December 2024), 43 more of our young people have graduated or are about to graduate from vocational school. On 13th December 2025, we had a graduation party at the ICC to celebrate all the graduates. They came from all over Freetown including Grafton, Tombo, Waterloo, Susan's Bay and Funkia. We bought all the graduates business support packages in order to establish their own businesses including tailoring machines or hairdressing equipment. It was a very emotional day. Here are some of young people who received business support:

Mamusu

"My name is Mamusu. I am about 27. I lived on the streets for about 5 years. I lived on the streets in Susan's Bay and at the bus station. My Mum died after ebola and I never knew my dad. When my mum died, I went to my grandmother's house. But we struggled to survive so I went on the streets. My granny was nice but she just couldn't provide anything for me. She was looking for me even when I went on the streets so I know that she loved me.

There is nothing nice on the streets unless you bear and face it. I struggled for food. I had to give myself to men just to get food to eat. On the streets, I became pregnant twice. The first time I lost my baby. I was running away from the police and I fell over. The police caught me and beat me and I lost the baby. The second time I was pregnant when Laughter took me home. I now have a 4 year old boy called Emmanuel.

I am the lucky one. Plenty of my friends died while living on the streets. I sit and cry and I remember them. I will never see them again. They have left forever. Some died mysteriously. Bruises and signs of torture. But they didn't explain how they got them as they were at the point of death.

The police raped me lots. Its painful to talk about. They would meet us on the streets. At the bus station. Corner corner. They asked me to sleep with them. If you don't have sex with them they will put you in a cell. If you don't want to go to prison, you can bail yourself with whatever the police demand: money or sex. They use the loitering law to arrest us. Then rape us in the cells.

I was raped once by a gangster. Just one man. The police never find them, they never catch them so what is the point in reporting it. To make money I would raray (Commercial sex work). I am very cheap. Sometimes I get 20 leones or 15 leones or 10 leones. I never went to the chinese fishermen. I was scared of them so I never went on board. Boys would come and collect my friends on small fishing boats and take them to the Chinese fishing boats. I didn't take the risk. My friends who went came back with lots of cash. They slept with dogs to get the money. Some of them died with no flesh on their bodies. I was a member of the reds- RFM- I joined with my boyfriend. The only drugs I smoked was jamba. Laughter took me home to my brother in 2021.

I would like to say thank you to everyone who helped me achieve my dream to be a seamstress. I will be able to take of myself and my family. May God keep you safe so you can help many other street children like me. It is very difficult to survive in Susan's Bay. If you pass one year in the street you will hustle (commercial sex work). You will sit down and think this life is not the right life for me- I need to change. But its hard to change. I finally changed after I met Laughter. Aunty Lucy (one of the social workers) talked some sense into me. When I listened, I survived the streets!

In the past, I made plenty of mistakes but I am proud of myself now. I will never go back. I will never look back. My dream is to have many branches of my tailoring shop!"

Ishmeil

"I am 22 years old. I lived on the streets for 8 years. I mostly lived in Albacha street and Grafton. My dad died in 2018 from sick and my mum lives far away in the village. I lived with my granny. It was not easy in the house. There was nothing to eat and I had to sell bananas so that my family could survive. I have a younger brother who I feel responsible for. No one paid for me to go to school so I decided to go on the streets to find the money to pay for myself.

I have a talent for dancing and in the past I took part in lots of competitions including for AYV (a local television station). The streets were not nice. When I came home, I saw the difference and how life was much better in my house than the streets. On the streets, I had a baby. He was called Alusine. But he died when he was one of a cold.

On the streets, I lost four of my friends. Three died from kush and one died from a cold. When I lived on the streets, I took Kush and tramadol. I sat down one night and thought about my three friends who died and I realised that I didn't want to die yet. It's not easy to give up kush but I managed to in the end. My friends who died gave me the motivation to succeed. I need to be clean as I have to look after my little brother, Richmond (who sadly is living back on the streets). I am the man of the house so I have to be responsible and provide for my family.

I was arrested twice when I lived on the streets. I had to spend time in the cells. The first time I stole money and was in a cell for 6 days. The second time I was arrested for taking tramadol and I spent 15 days in the cell. I was never raped on the streets but the gangsters would beat me and steal my money.

To make money on the streets, I would dance and perform for people. I even performed for uncle Joseph's wedding (the Laughter Africa cultural dance teacher). I would also tote (carry heavy loads). In the past I was a member of RFM. It is a gang. I am ashamed to say that I beat and stabbed people in rival gangs.

I can't wait to open my own tailoring shop. I want to show my little brother that it is possible to change. I am happy for their help (the supporters of Laughter). In the past I had bad intentions. I would chook people (stab) and fight in riots. I would join in the gang fights of RFM versus Black Leos. My dream for the future is to be a better person. Plenti tenki for all you do for me in helping me become a better person. I know it won't happen overnight but I am working on it every day."

Sorie

"I am not sure how old I am but I think I am about 20 years old. I lived on the streets for 6 years before Laughter took me home. I lived on the streets in town, Jui and Grafton. My Mum and dad separated when I was younger and my dad married another woman. My stepmum maltreated me but when I explained it to my dad - he didn't take it seriously. My dad died of a cold so I left the house and went to the streets as I couldn't live with my stepmum any longer. She would beat me and starve me. And make me sell cold water for her. So I decided to join my friends who picked iron on the street. The streets were not good. I am not able to fight. Gangsters would steal from me. I would lay down on market tables. They force you to give them money otherwise they will beat you.

I lost a lot of my friends through kush. Four of them died. I didn't smoke kush myself. I just hung around them to pick up iron. I was arrested 4 times and put in a cell for stealing. The police beat me but didn't rape me. To make money on the streets, I would collect iron, wash peoples' cars and bikes and sometimes steal.

I would like to tell everyone at Laughter tenki. You have helped me greatly in life. When my dad died I had no one. When I was in the streets, it was not easy for me. But you picked me out of the street and are still supporting me until now. I can see the difference. I see my friends who still live on the street. I begged them to join the Laughter mobile but they didn't want to leave the streets behind. Not only did you pay vocational school for me but you also gave me medicine when I was sick. And now you have provided me with my own sewing machine. You have made me a somebody. I even have a small phone now. I never had a phone on the streets. I pray that God will give you more money so that you can help more street pikin."

Fatmata

"I am 25 years old and I lived on the streets in Jui for 8 years. My dad died when I was small and my mum died of pressure. When my mum died, I went to my auntie. She made me do boku work in the house and wouldn't feed me. She wouldn't pay school for me and she beat me.

The streets were not nice. The men would use me but then not pay me. They would only beat me. I only became pregnant once on the streets. I gave birth to a boy called Hamza who is now 9. He lived with me on the streets. Two of my friends died while living on the streets; one form kush and one from AIDS related illness. I slept with the police two times but they didn't pay me. I slept with them on the streets. I was arrested once – I stole money from a man who didn't pay me. So he lied against me and took me to the police. I would take tramadol. Laughter took me home to my grandfather in 2023.

I want to tell the supporters of Laughter Africa plenti tenki. God pulled me off the street and made me learn a skill. I tell papa god tenki. I want to have a shop where I sew things for people. My son is now in school. I pay for him through my tailoring. I sewed his uniform for him. I sewed a uniform for my son's friend too for free. Thanks to my skill, I am well respected in my community. I am not a raray girl anymore. I am a Mum. I am warrior. My son will be at my graduation. This is all for him!"

Ramatu

"I am 27 years old. I lived on the streets in Susan's Bay for 5 years. My mum died after Ebola and my dad is upline but I don't sabi where. When my mum died, I went to my uncle. He maltreated me. He didn't pay school for me but he made me sell water and soft drink. He didn't beat me but he would talk talk at me. The streets were not easy. I got belly twice while living on the streets. The first time I spoiled the belly. The other belly I got when Laughter had taken me back home. I gave birth to a girl pikin called Jattu Kamara. She is one year and 8 months.

When you are in a cell, unless you sleep with the policemen- they won't release you. I was raped three times. They arrested me for loitering. It was different policemen who raped me each time. I was raped plenty of times by gangsters - I can't remember how many. To make money, I would hustle (commercial sex work). I charged a different amount per man. To survive on the streets, I would take tramadol. I was a member of the red gang- RFM. I joined with my boyfriend. Laughter took me home to a different uncle in 2021.

I would like to tell the Laughter supporters tenki for the great effort. I had given up all hope. You pulled me from prostitution. You took me to my uncle. You put me into tailoring school. I appreciate. I am so proud that I am now a somebody. My dream is to own a big shop and fill it up with lots of machines."

Fanta

"I am 21 years old. I lived on the streets for three years. I lived on the streets all over - in town, waterloo, Imatt and Lumley. My stepmum maltreated me. She beat me and made me sell butterscotch. She didn't give me food.
The streets were not sweet. They beat me. They raped me. The men didn't give me money after I slept with them. I got belly once. I gave birth to Abibatu. She is 8 years old now. She lived with me on the streets. My paddi FA died while living on the streets. A motorcar banged her. The policemen raped me twice on the streets. It was two policemen each time. To make money on the street, I would raray. I would make 250 leones per man. I was member of RFM. Laughter took me home to my stepfather in 2020.

To all the Laughter Africa supporters, I want to say let God bless them for what they do for me. For the help. I won't be able to pay them back but God will. When I graduate I will have my own shop. Abibatu will be at the graduation. I am proud of myself that my daughter is seeing me achieve something great!"

Sorie Bangura

"I am 23 years old. I lived on the streets for 8 years in Grafton. I went on the streets because my dad died of Hernia. I suffered when he died. My mum was old and couldn't provide for me. I didn't get much food so I had to dreg to survive. I would have to bloom and blye and collect dirty. The streets were not nice. The street is bad. Boko bad things happened. I lived a bad life. I was arrested once and put in a cell for three days. I stole a phone. The gangsters would beat me and stole my money when I was sleeping. They would finger pocket me. To make money on the streets I would use my talent which is dancing. I would enter lots of competitions. I even provided entertainment at uncle Joseph's (our

cultural dance teacher) wedding by dancing. I would take tramadol and kush on the streets. Laughter Africa took me home to my mum in 2023. In the future I want to open my own tailoring shop and have a family. To the Laughter Africa supporters, I want to tell them tenki tenki. You have done plenti for me!"

Regina

"I think I am 23 years old. I lived on the streets for over 11 years. I lived on the streets in Magazine, Bomeh and Tombo. I lived with my Granny in Black Hall Road but she didn't put me in school so I went on the streets. The streets were not nice. I didn't have a person to care for me on the streets. I gave birth on a market table in Cow Yard, on top of the pepper table. I spread a cartoon on the table (cardboard box). I gave birth to my son Amidu. He is 11 now. I was 12 years old when I gave birth to him. He lived on the streets as well.

Three of my friends died while living on the streets; Messi, Theresa and Hawa. Theresa McCarthy was raped to death in Bomeh in 2024 while Hawa was raped to death at Peace Market. 4 men raped her but the police caught two of them.
I was arrested for selling on Albacha Street. To make money I was a raray girl and would get between 30 and 50 leones. I would also sell for people. I was a member of Black Leo. I would sleep with some of the members. On the streets, I would take tye.

Laughter took me home to my mum and dad in Tombo in 2024 and paid for me to attend vocational school where I learned tailoring. I gave birth to my second child Abdul in April 2025. I graduated in December 2025 and Laughter gave me a sewing machine. I want to tell you (Laughter Africa supporters) tenki for pulling me off the street. I want to say thank you for the machine. Thank you for taking care of me and mi piken. I can't wait to set up my tailoring shop."

For the academic year 2025/2026, we have paid for 149 young people to attend vocational school. One of our latest vocational school students is Jariatu who is studying to be an electrician. Jariatu doesn't know her age. Before she went on the streets, she lived with her sister. Her mum died while giving birth to Jariatu, while her father died of Ebola. She thinks that she lived on the streets for 10 years. She gave birth to a baby boy who is now ten years old. She lived with him on the streets.

Jariatu had been sexually assaulted over five times by different gangsters. She also said that some men ask her for sex but when she says no– they rape her anyway. To make money on the streets, Jariatu engaged in survival sex. However, a lot of the men she slept with did not pay her. Instead they would beat her. Jariatu has been arrested for loitering. She had to sleep with the police officers otherwise she wouldn't have been released from jail. She has also been beaten by the police on many occasions. To survive on the streets, Jariatu took tramadol and jamba. She was a member of the gang Black Leo and she would steal for them. One of her friends died while living on the streets. Her friend slept with a man and felt ill afterwards. Eventually her friend died without explaining what happened. We reunified Jariatu with her family in June 2025. She said,

" I want to be an electrician because they say that a woman cannot do a man's job. So I want to challenge them. To show them that anything a man can do, a woman can do a hundred times better. I am not going to let a man tell me what I can or cannot do. I know that people, especially men will laugh at me and make fun of me but I don't care what they say. This is my dream and I am going to live it. I want to inspire other girls and show them that if I can do it- then they can do it too. I

want to be a trailblazer. I want to show them that they shouldn't limit their dreams because of what society tells them what a woman should be and do. Thank you for helping make my dream a reality. I am determined to make a life for me and my child."

Jariatu has already inspired other girls to become electricians including her friend Martha, who is now attending the same course!

The success of our advocacy work especially the repeal of the loitering law

"That will never happen. Not in a million years. You can try but don't get your hopes up!"

This was said in 2020 when I said I wanted to lobby the Sierra Leone Government to repeal the loitering law. This was after our first consultation with the street children in Susan's Bay where issues such as sexual violence perpetuated by police officers was raised. Now fast forward 5 years and the loitering law is all set to be repealed in the next parliamentary session 2025/2026 under the 'Decriminalisation of the Petty Offences Act.' This is a HUGE achievement.

We have been working closely with the Irish Embassy throughout 2025 who have been meeting with key government officials such as the Attorney General, the Chief Minister, the Minister of MoPED and the Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs. The former Irish Ambassador has been leading the cry for repeal ever since we met with him in December 2024. For instance, on International Women's Day 2025 in his speech, the Ambassador mentioned about repealing the loitering law. This was in front of the Vice President as well as all the Ministers and cabinet members.

I met with two staff from the Irish Embassy in September 2025 who told me to keep putting pressure on the different embassies as it was working! At a recent meeting with senior level ambassadors and dignitaries, as soon as the repeal of the loitering law was mentioned, everyone present nodded their heads vigorously. The UPR we submitted and the research from Tombo has been making waves in the right circles. They told me to keep at it so that the people at the top were pressurised to keep acting on the issue. It is now well known in diplomatic circles that the Irish Embassy are taking responsibility for the repeal of the loitering law and are leading the way forward for the other embassies.

We have already started to see the Sierra Leone Government repeal some of the loitering laws. For instance we welcomed the adoption of the Criminal Procedure Act 2024 which explicitly repeals "loitering" and "idle and disorderly offences" (Section 198) under the 1965 Act. However, urgent statutory guidance and standard operating procedures for police are needed on section 15(1)(e) which allows police to arrest anyone without warrant for "disturbing the peace, whether in a public or private place or causing annoyance to another person". This provision is vague and imprecise, and risks enabling police harassment, arbitrary arrest and round ups of children in street situations. There's at least a partial repeal of the loitering laws which is a major win and is a very good start in itself. However this means that loitering is still an offence in Sierra Leone for now under two other Acts:

- Section 7 of the *Public Order Act 1965*;
- *Section 31 of the Summary Conviction Offences Ordinance 1906*.

In July 2025, the Sierra Leone government adopted the Child Rights Act 2024 which now includes specific protections for children in street situations, promotes diversion, ensures their right to be heard, and strengthens penalties for exploitation. Street children were not recognised at all in the previous 2007 version so this is a victory in itself. The Network for Street Children submitted a response to the draft version of the Act so we happy to see at least some inclusion of street children, maybe as a result of our feedback.

Success of our university programme

- 2 female university graduates (diplomas in social work, and banking and finance)
- 16 young people currently attending university
- 2 females set to graduate in the coming months
- 5 young people applying for university

A huge congratulations to two of our young people, Zainab and Ya Alimammy who graduated from University in December 2025. They are our first girls who have ever graduated from university. Two other girls Yealie and Mbalu are also about to graduate in the coming months. Ya Alimammy, received a diploma in social work from EBK University while Zainab received a diploma is banking and finance at Milton Margai University. We first met Ya Almammy, 22, in 2020. She had lived on the streets in Tombo for 2 years from the age of 15. She went on the streets after living with her aunt,

"She made me sell cold water. She maltreated me. Flogged me. She wouldn't always give me food. I got fed up with everything so went to the streets."

For Ya Alimammy the streets were tough, ***"The men used to flog us. Sometimes you don't have food."*** However, the hardest thing she faced on the streets was the death of her friend,

"My friend Masaray died of AIDS related illness while living on the streets. I want to save lives so that other people don't need to die a pointless death like she did. There was no need for Masaray to die. There is free treatment. Masaray's only sin was being poor and being unable to access the treatment. I miss her every day. Her death makes me determined to be a social worker for the most vulnerable and less privileged."

Ya Alimammy wants to specialise in working with street children and also people living with HIV in honour of Masaray.

"I want to work with street children and give them the same opportunity that Laughter gave to me."

We know that Ya Almammy will be a fabulous social worker full of compassion and empathy. She completed her internship at Laughter Africa's mobile project in Tombo earlier this year. She was fantastic and the kids really looked up to her. She comes from Tombo originally so she was a great role model for all the street children at mobile. We were so proud of her and she was a great asset for the project. Ya Alimammy had a special message for Laughter Africa's supporters,

"I want to tell you boku boku tenki. I really appreciate you for your help. Your concern, the opportunity you have given me. I am so grateful and so happy. Thank you. May Allah continue to guide and protect you."

In 2024/2025, we paid for 16 young people to attend university. They are studying a variety of subjects including social work, banking and finance, procurement and logistics, human resources, midwifery, para-legal studies, public health, public administration and nursing. Since September 2025, 5 of our young people have applied to university.

22 year old Mabinty has been accepted to study social work at Milton Margai University. We found Mabinty living on the streets in Susan's Bay 5 years ago. She had lived on the streets for 3 years from the age of 14 until she reached 17. She said,

"I lived in the village with my aunt in Kambia. I don't know anything about my parents. I went on the streets because of poverty. I would have to sell okra and pepper for my aunt. She would also beat me."

Mabinty struggled on the streets. She had a miscarriage, was sexually assaulted twice by gangsters, saw her friend Sarah die after falling sick and was a member of a gang - RFM. She said,

"The streets are not nice. There are so many disadvantages. There is lack of understanding on the streets. I lived a bad life; smoking, drinking, moving from one club to another. I had to sleep with different people for money. I took drugs including jamba and tye."

Mabinty has been home since 2021 when we reunified her with an aunt in Freetown. She said,

"Thank you so much for paying university for me. This is a great opportunity. Its life-changing! I want to be a social worker and work with street children. I want to encourage them to leave the streets. I hope that they can learn from my story. I'll always remember the social workers at mobile like Aunty Lucy. Auntie Lucy explained her past to me. She encouraged us. I want to change lives!"

Another girl who has applied to university is 20 year old Fatmata aka sing girl. We first met Fatmata at our mobile project in Grafton 3 years ago. Fatmata was living on the streets in town when she bumped into another girl, FA, living on the streets of Grafton who told her all about our new mobile project in Grafton. FA ended up bringing Fatmata back to our mobile in Grafton. We love it when the street children tell other young people about us. They are the best ambassadors to have!
At the time Fatmata had lived on the streets for three years and was really struggling to survive. She said,

"My aunt took me from Makeni. She said that she would put me in school but she didn't. She paid for her own children to attend school but she made me sell cold water instead. They suffer me in the house. My aunt beat me."

Fatmata wants to study banking and finance. She said,

" I want to work in a bank. Thank you for being there for me until now. Thank you for paying university for me. Let God add more sugar to your cake."

Meanwhile her friend 17 year old Abibatu has applied to study laboratory diagnostic studies. She wants to be a lab technician. Abibatu lived on and off the streets for 4 years. She said, ***"After my mum died, I lived with my aunt who brought me to Freetown. Her man tried to sleep with me but I didn't agree so I ran away before he hurt me."***

The streets were not an easy place for Abibatu. She said,

"The streets were so bad. I went through so many things. No food to eat… nothing to drink. I had to beg just to survive. I would take tramadol just to help me cope."

The death of her friend now motivates Abibatu. She said,

"The reason why I want to be a lab technician is because my friend Aminata died while living on the streets. She was a hustler and one night she went off with a man. The next day she was found dead with foam in her mouth. I saw her body. No one knows what killed her so no one was held accountable. She needed lab tests to determine what killed her but no one did them. She got no justice. I miss her every day. Her death makes me determined to be a lab technician."

Abibatu had a final message for our supporters,

"I want to say a very big thank you. You have tried a lot for me. I am so happy."

Blessing is 17 years old and wants to study medicine. We found her on the streets of Bomeh. She said,

" My mum was straining with us. I decided to go and hustle as my dad is dead. We had no food to eat at home. I could see my mum struggle every day to provide for me and my brothers and sister. I thought that I was helping her by giving her one less mouth to feed. The streets are horrible. Its cold and some people take advantage of us. To make money I swept, brooked or cleaned for people. We met one street kid – Mansaray who told us about the Laughter mobile project in Bomeh and thank God he did!"

Meanwhile her friend Veronica is 18 years old and wants to study nursing. She lived on the streets for one year. She said,

"I had no one to take care of me. My mum died of a stoke and I don't know the whereabouts of my dad. So I lived with my aunt who never put me in school. She forced me into child labour instead and made me sell rubber drinks. Its not easy as I had nowhere to sleep. To make money, I swept and picked plastic."

Meeting up with our old children

One of the biggest achievements of this year is reconnecting with over 40 of the young people we've helped in the past. Street children by nature are very transient so it can go years before we see them again. Sometimes they return home and don't tell us. With the drug kush out there, I want to know our kids out there are safe. I want to give them hope for a future. A future which kush has no part. One girl, Fatu, turned up in December 2025 after 7 years away!

Many of them bring good news. John is a mechanic in Lumley while Ibrahim fixes tyres in Lumley. Another girl who we met at mobile in Waterloo is now working on the government buses as an apprentice. She refused to accept any money for my ticket and said, “this one is on me!” Another boy Foday is now a security guard for ‘Life Care’ Hospital in Lumley.

Some of our old kids have now made lives for themselves abroad. Adama, who featured on our pop song in 2021, is now living in Gambia. She is studying nursing at university and also supports herself by working in a supermarket. Meanwhile Tapalapa and Sheku are now living in Liberia, making a living by driving kekehs. Sheku makes the equivalent of 4000 leones per month. Salieu and Sheka are living in Senegal, providing for themselves.

Sadly some bring bad news with them. I found out that Momoh, one of our old kids whom we first met in 2016, was caught stealing so was injected with acid and died. Another boy, Father Freco was caught stealing zinc so the people he was stealing from stabbed him, beat him and chopped off his genitals and stuffed them in his mouth as a warning to anyone else tempted to steal. Another boy Shakka died in prison. Others have died from the effects of Kush like CCC or Mohamed Lamin. Another boy James from Kroo Bay was knocked down by a car and tragically died from his injuries.

For the children who are at home like Kai or Alie we have paid vocational school or school fees. For others like Obai we provide medical treatment. Obai lives in Kono and we lost touch with him as his family moved house and we couldn’t find him. Two years ago Obai became disabled. His mother turned up at Laughter in the middle of December begging us to heal her son. She had tried everything. We took Obai to hospital straight away and he was diagnosed with sickle cell. The doctors believe that Obai will be able to walk again, once he finishes his treatment and we will be walking alongside him on his road to recovery every step of the way.

Some are still in the street. They are happy there and just want to say hello whenever we meet. Others we meet in the streets want to be reunified, like Momoh, so we are happy to take them home. One lovely encounter happened at the end of November. Chernor, one of our old boys from 2017, turned up at the centre in a yellow T-shirt. He was so dirty and smelly. His hair hadn’t been cut for years and was so bushy. But we gave him a warm welcome. We gave him a place to wash up, one of my old T- shirts, gave him a haircut and gave him some spray. We also gave him a HIV and hepatitis test to make sure that his health is ok as he was looking very skinny. He announced that he will be returning home in a few months when his mother returns from Guinea. Who knows if he will but the fact that is when he came here, he was welcomed like the prodigal son. He knows that he always has a place with us. Wherever you may live: the streets, home or abroad- you never truly leave the Laughter Africa family!

Our 10th Birthday

On 15th June 2025, we celebrated Laughter Africa's 10th birthday. We can't believe that we have survived 10 years, particularly when so many charities are closing. To celebrate we had a party for the kids at mobile in Tombo. Over 150 kids joined us for party games, dancing, scrumptious food and cake. They were very excited. Some had gotten haircuts especially for the party while some of the girls came in their best frocks. The party meant so much to them. We also had a small gathering for the girls in the ICC so they could celebrate the day too! When I start to think about how much we have achieved over the last ten years, I start to well up. Its so overwhelming to think about all the lives we have changed.

The success of the school support programme

We are delighted with the success of our school support programme. The children and young people are really benefiting from our support. We are still in the middle of providing school fees, vocational school fees and uniforms so we haven't got any final totals yet for the 2025/2026 academic year. However, at the time of writing this report (December 2025) since September 2025, we have provided:

- 308 young people with new schools or vocational schools. The rest were continuing students.
- 633 young people with their school supply (which includes a bag, shoes, ledger books, vests, socks and pens).
- 558 young people with uniforms.
- 28 young people with private WASCE entry.

Our support is making a difference. At the end of November 2025, the Government released the BECE results (the Sierra Leone equivalent of GCSEs) and all of our young people passed with flying colours. One of the young people who passed was Michael. Michael, who we first met in June 2015 when was 9 years old, was among the first kids we ever worked with. He has just passed his BECE exams and had brought his results to show me in December 2025. Two years ago he nearly died after falling off a ladder and being impaled by a metal spike. Although he survived - he uses a colonoscopy bag so the fact that he passed all his exams despite all of these setbacks is a miracle in itself. He is about to start SS1 but in the future he wants to be a social worker and work for Laughter Africa.

Successes of our staff

Whenever one of our staff succeeds and achieves their dreams, we share their joy. With this in mind, we want to wish Ansumana Tamba Lamin a huge congratulations. Lamin, one of our social workers, married the love of his life Hawanatu on 14th December 2025. Lamin has been a member of Laughter Africa since 2017 and we are super happy for him. What was extra special about the day was that some of our girls from GISA vocational school baked the wedding cake and decorated the venue for the wedding! One of the girls Mabinty said,

"Over the years, Uncle Lamin has really tried for us. He has encouraged us and supported us in so many ways. We were hounoured to be able to do something for him for a change. It was lovely to be part of his special day."

We are happy to report that the cake was scrumptious. We wish him and his new wife all the laughter in the world for their future together.

The successes of the young people we work with

Whenever one of the young people we work with succeed, we share their joy. Here are some of their most amazing successes since the last annual report (published in December 2024):

Alkaline

Never have I been prouder of someone than Alkaline. In January 2025, I was told that he had died. You can imagine my surprise when he walked into Laughter in March, alive and well and looking better than ever. Alkaline aka Mohamed is in his early 20s. He had lived on the streets for ten years and we have known him for at least eight years. In 2022, a passerby took a video of Alkaline when he was high on kush, without his permission. The video went viral on social media and Alkaline found himself on the end of a lot of hostility and judgement. He was the poster-face for kush. He said,

"It was not fine to put that video of me on social media. They had no right to video me. After the video, plenty of people came up to me and insulted me. "You na kush bobo. You na thief man." They made me feel like scum. They told me that I would amount to nothing and I "should just go and die in a ditch somewhere." I have never felt more alone and hopeless than when that video came out."

At the end of last year, he finally made the courageous step to go back home for good and we have paid for him to start attending vocational school to study construction. He is now living with his mum and step-dad. When asked what encouraged him to finally return home, he answered,

"My small brother is about to sit his final school exams. It was the motivation I needed to change. It was also not nice when people thought that had died. I suppose that gave me the kick up the bum I needed. The street does not pay. You either go to jail or die. I have lost three friends on the streets. Sheku who was stabbed in 2018, Lamin who died of AIDS related illness and Osman who died of kush. I am the lucky one. The streets are not good."

Alkaline is determined to succeed,

"I want all the people who talked bad about me to see that I have changed. I want to prove them wrong and show them that they were wrong to dismiss me, provoke me, mock me and give up on me. Thank you to everyone at Laughter for believing in me and never giving up on me. Thank you for always being at my side. I will not let you down. I promise that I will not smoke kush again."

Amie

Congratulations to Amie, our famous footballer. Her football club Ram Kamara Female Football Club won the 2024-2025 Sierra Leone Women's Premier League! Its the first time they have ever won the league! Even better, Ram K represented Sierra Leone in the CAF Women's Champions League qualifiers in Senegal!

Feedback from people who have visited the projects/supporters

We have had fantastic feedback from people who have visited Laughter Africa and seen our work first-hand. For instance, the Irish Ambassador to Sierra Leone said,

"James / 5-0,

I know I speak for my wife too when I say that you were definitely one of a small number of really incredible dedicated and committed people we met in our short time in Sierra Leone. What you do and how you support some of the most vulnerable people in society is truly inspirational. The visit to your work was one of the best days of my limited time here, and your bravery which we witnessed in stepping in and up to protect vulnerable kids in our visit to the village was remarkable. As one of our most valued and admired Irish citizens here in Sierra Leone please keep the lines of communication open with the Embassy. Do reach to us if there is anything we can do to support your incredible work."

Similarly when he visited our project, he emailed,

"Thanks to you and the Laughter Africa team and participants for hosting us on Friday afternoon at such short notice. It was brilliant to finally get to witness the great support and care you and your team are providing to the street children in Tombo and across Freetown and the peninsula. It was great to get meet some more of your huge 'family' of street kids, this time in their home-place. It was fantastic too to see the way in which you support, protect and care for them."

After he attended a press conference for the International Day for Street Children, he wrote,

"James, it was an honour. It was so refreshing to participate in a short concise and focused event. I do hope it gets deserved coverage. Your champions are impressive."

Becky, a former NGO worker in Sierra Leone, said,

"From all the international people in Sierra Leone I have ever met. You are the bravest. You have a strength and a will to survive and a will to help and support. That is so unique. I have never ever ever met someone in my life like you who is doing charity without being paid and without having your career in mind. You are unique. To survive Salone for 10 years, without having a big organisation behind you, backing you up. Be proud of yourself. You are doing a fabulous job and you are a fabulous person. I am very proud to call you my friend."

Sophie (One of our interns), emailed

"Maybe it's because the new year is coming up and I've been doing some reflecting, but I genuinely from the bottom of my heart want to thank you for the most amazing experience I've ever had. The work that you do everyday is genuinely so inspiring. I think of you and the kids all the time and I can not put into words how you have changed my perspective on things, which I am incredibly grateful for!"

Ralf, a doctor who worked for another NGO who visited Laughter said,

"You are doing such a good thing. I want as many people to save money and spend money on Laughter Africa. You are helping thousands of kids. They are the ones who suffer. So keep on doing the good stuff you do. Thank you so much. Since I met you and I have you in my life. That is the best thing that has happened to me. Cos you are such a good person. Thank you James."

The Consortium for street children emailed us on different occasions,

"Great to speak to you then and thank you so much for gathering such powerful evidence that will strengthen our case for action with the UN!"

"Huge thanks for going above and beyond to strengthen the evidence base for our network submission and ensure the voices of street connected children in Sierra Leone are heard at the highest level at the UN!"

"Thanks again for all your help on this and for being so dedicated!"

"Thanks for putting so much dedication and passion into the UPR advocacy - it's clearly paying off!"

David, one of our supporters, emailed,

"The report is extremely detailed & comprehensive, it is a credit to you & the life/vocation that you have chosen to follow. Emotions run high when reading about the work that you do & the poor & desperate children that need your help & support. Anger, frustration & desperation due to the abuse & lack of care & concern shown to them by the authorities, families & community, followed by a heartwarming & overwhelming realisation that the care, support, attention & most of all - unconditional love shown by Laughter Africa can literally turn their lives around. Keep up the good work mate, you are truly a modern day saint!"

He emailed again on another occasion,

"What an in depth & comprehensive report you've produced, & what amazing work you continue to do in such difficult circumstances. I've just watched the video link about "kush" & was shocked & saddened by the size & scale of the problem. You have my every admiration for all the good work & support you give in such an overwhelming situation. Well done mate & keep up the amazing work!!"

Susan, a supporter emailed,

"Wow, James. You are a whirlwind! It is so lovely to hear from you, all the news and all that you have been up to. I don't know where to start with my Congratulations. That you continue to fight on is beyond admirable!"

Carla, a volunteer photographer who visited us in February 2025, wrote on a few different occasions,

"Nice video Biba !! Keep doing that splendid work with the whole team!! You all are amazing people with a warm heart."

"In February, I travelled with James in Tombo, a small fishing village just outside Freetown to do a photo report for Laughter Africa. Thought I was going to capture images... but what I saw and experienced got under my skin far deeper than I could have imagined. The children James cares for – children without a home, without protection, yet with so much strength – touched me right in the heart. Their smiles despite everything, their resilience, their quiet longing for opportunities. I am selling a Laughter Africa calendar, filled with images and moments that stayed with me. All proceeds go directly to Laughter Africa, so James can continue his incredible work: feeding children, giving them safe shelter, guiding them, and providing hope for the future."

Jackie, one of our supporters emailed,

"You are truly inspiring, so much respect for you."

Similarly Anna, one of our supporters emailed,

"I am glad things are still going well for you and you are able to keep helping so many. You are such an inspirational person and when I am having a bad day at my job I just look on your social media and remind myself why we do what we do!"

Maria, another of our supporters, wrote,

"You are so inspiring and an example to us all."

Abu, a community member, said,

"Tenki for your sacrifice. Only God can bless you."

Finally one of our beneficiaries said,

"I remember back then when everyone looked down on us . but you were there for us and ensured that we become someone."

Our success on social media

We are having a great success on social media. From 1st September 2025 until 8th January 2026, we had 36,076 Views on facebook and Instagram.

Challenges

The Kush Epidemic

In April 2024, President Bio declared the Kush epidemic a national emergency needing immediate action. Kush is one of the biggest problems facing Sierra Leone at the moment. The side effects of kush are absolutely horrific. Most kush users have massive chunks of their legs missing- their legs look like they have been hacked at with machetes. There is no way to describe it apart from its like half their legs have been eaten by a piranha. Sorry for the graphic imagery but there is no nice way to describe it. It is truly a grotesque sight and the users of Kush are in horrendous pain as their legs have been completely decimated.

Between September and December 2025, we have heard that at least 7 street children have died as a result of Kush addiction; Bible, Apieh, Tiago, Silver, Tortoise, Sasco and Foday Baboo. Foday Baboo was the first child that we ever worked with in June 2015 and I just feel completely useless that we were not able to help him in some way. Most of the time the victims of Kush just die in the streets and then their bodies are taken away by the local council and buried in a mass grave somewhere. The problem is that by the time we have heard that they have died, a few days or even weeks have passed so we are unable to bury them in a dignified manner or let their families be aware of their passing. Sometimes some of the street children have died from kush and we will be just unaware as their bodies have been taken by the council without ever being identified.

The young people who are dying seem to be those who have been on the streets for 5 years plus and are long term users of kush. Their bodies seem to just shut down after 5 years of continual kush use. There are so many of our old boys like Bumpest and Sahr who are also close to death due to their continual use of Kush. Its horrible to see it happening right in front of your eyes. Every time that I see a rotting leg or hear that another young person has died, I ask myself “How many kids have I failed or let down?” Whatever we do never feels enough….

Its not just males who are addicted to kush. Female users of Kush are also increasing daily. A few months ago, I met a girl called R, who I have known for 9 years. The smell of rotting flesh was completely revolting. It just permeated from every pore on her leg. Her legs are covered in bandages but the sores are all still infected. I believe that her legs might need to be amputated soon if she does not get the infection under control. Sadly R was also showing signs of HIV: blemishes and rashes on her chest and back so our nurse carried out a HIV rapid test. The test confirmed our diagnosis- she is also HIV+. We had to break the news to her as gently as possible. Her addiction is making R engage in risk taking behaviour in order to feed her habit. Thankfully, R has just been admitted to a rehabilitation centre and we hope she gets the help she needs to beat this addiction once and for all. R is one of the lucky ones, although there are some rehabilitation centres in the country there are limited spaces. Its very overwhelming.

In 2026, we will be dedicating more time and resources to our emergency response to kush including both sensitisation and government advocacy.

The deaths of some of our beneficiaries

Since the previous annual report (published in December 2024) we tragically lost two of the young people that we have worked with:

Mohamed Conteh

At the end of February, we lost one of our boys Mohamed Conteh who lived in Portee. We first met Mohamed in 2016. Mohamed had been making a living by riding a motorbike and picking up passengers. One late Wednesday night, he picked up two passengers who asked to be taken to a secluded location. When he arrived they tried to rob his bike. He fought back and the thieves assaulted him – they stabbed him in the head. Sadly he died from his injuries. Mohamed leaves behind a little boy called Ishmael. He and his best friend Alie came to Laughter in 2016. Alie said, " Every time I think about him, I feel sad. Every time I see his son, I feel so sad that he won't see his dad again. Mohamed was a good friend. I loved him so much. When we lived on the streets together he protected me and kept me safe. Thank you Mohamed for being my best friend."

After he passed, we gave a contribution to his family to give him the send off he deserved! Rest in peace old friend!

Lamin Suma

We found out recently that one of our old kids Lamin died of AIDS related illness. We first met Lamin in 2017 on the streets of Susan's Bay. We still saw him throughout the years but he was never able to leave the streets behind. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family. We miss you son!

Cost of living crisis

As we mentioned in the last annual report, the cost of living situation is deteriorating rapidly in Sierra Leone. Things are still so expensive. In conjunction with this, the cost of living crisis is also hitting the income of Laughter Africa. We have noticed a huge reduction in the numbers of donations received in 2024/2025. We want to say a special thank you to 'Let Yourself Trust' who came to our rescue in January 2025.



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 £5007.19.

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, small businesses/companies and churches. In the financial period the total raised from supporters was **£68,552.99 (unrestricted). £9,966.90 (unrestricted)** was raised from Gift Aid. **£8.18 (unrestricted)** was earned through bank interest. **£19,144.08 (unrestricted)** was received from corporate donations**. £33,696 (restricted)** was raised from Trusts and Foundations. In total, **£131,368.15** was raised in 2024/25. Laughter Africa had **£8,164.35 (unrestricted)** remaining from the previous financial year. In total, **£139,532.50** was available for Laughter Africa's use in 2024/25.

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 the European Union, USAID, UKAid 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.

We are committed to achieving the highest standards in fundraising. We comply with all relevant statutory regulations, including the Charities Act 2011, the Charities Act 2022, 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 2024/25, we received no complaints related to our fundraising activity.

The trustees would also like to say a big thank you to all the trusts, foundations and businesses who gave a donation to Laughter Africa in 2024/25:

Schroders

THE JUMPING DEV

ANDREW WOOD PHOTOGRAPHY

GILCHRIST EDUCATIONAL TRUST

BENEFACT TRUST

WEBMART

Cornhouse Consulting
MAKING THE RIGHT CONNECTIONS

KITAID

Let Yourself Trust
Providing a choice and a chance

THE TRELIX TRUST

CELASAR LTD

Thank you so much to all of the trusts, foundations and businesses for all your support. It is through your generosity that we are able to continue our work.

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 **£118,547.13.** Laughter Africa lost **£1,556.61** via multi currency exchange rate losses. A total expenditure of **£120,103.74** was spent in the 2024/2025 financial year. There was **£19,428.76**' held in the bank accounts and petty cash at the end of the financial year. A total of **£139,532.50.** 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 for 1 year	£8,740.27
Salaries for National Staff	£12,418.29
Food	£3,436.92
Non- food items	£2,578.36
Skills training costs	£1,949.65
Staff travel costs during reunifications	£2,937.33
Educational equipment	£27,368.91
Generator fuel for the ICC	£1,278.79
Street children travel costs	£2,702.96
School fees/vocational training	£30,875.84
Medical costs for the street children	£4,353.02
Volunteer costs	£674.70
Travel subsistence for staff	£181.23
Family support for the street children	£2,104.95
Clothing	£634.38
Campaign and Advocacy	£59.37
Toiletries	£227.68
Staff travel accommodation	£303.75
Travel subsistence for the street children	£13.94
Audit Fees	£681.82
Water supplies	£509.66
P.O. Box (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£11.04
Legal services	100.64
Bank Charges in Sierra Leone	£495.15
Hire of Premises for Mobile	£210.97
Rent Tax	£1,704.56
DBS and safeguarding costs	£1.70
End of Service Benefit	£2,373.61

Electricity for the ICC	£246.61
Insurance (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£108.02
Work permit and residential permit (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£345.36
Annual leave allowance for National staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1,467.22
Medical Treatment for National Staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1,459.68
Country Registration fees	£1,969.34
NASSIT (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1,088.27
Telephone costs	£235.24
PAYE (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1,297.14
Hire of Equipment	£37.16
Redundancy	£517.60
TOTAL	**£117,701.13**

Expenditure in the UK

Type of expenditure	**Cost (Pounds)**
Bank Charges in the UK	**£846**
TOTAL	**£846**

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 **£4,353.02.** Similarly, food is provided at both the mobile project and the Interim Care Centre. The total cost spent on food in 2024/25 was **£3,436.92.** Coupled with this is the cost of non food items (both at mobile and the Interim Care Centre) which totalled **£2,578.36.** Non food items include things like coal, bleach and plate/ cups etc….. **£1,949.65** was spent on skills training activities including art & craft materials, hairdressing materials, cultural dance and yoga at both mobile and the Interim Care Centre. The travel costs of the street children across all three departments was **£2,702.96.** Meanwhile staff travel across all three departments reached **£2,937.33.** This travel was for the payment of school fees and reunifications. 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 **£235.24.** Water supplies for the children at the ICC and mobile totalled **£509.66** for the year.

Costs associated solely with the Outreach department

The only payment solely associated with the outreach department was **£210.97** for the rent for the mobile in Tombo. 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 **£8,740.27** for one year. Connected to this is the rent tax which is a legal requirement in Sierra Leone. The rent tax totalled **£1,704.56.** Other costs associated with the interim Care Centre include clothing **(£634.38)** and toiletries **(£227.68)** for the street children. Meanwhile the cost of electricity for the ICC totalled **£246.61** while **£1,278.79** was spent on fuel for the generator for the ICC. All the other costs are listed above like medical expenses, food/non-food items and skills training activities. 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/university fees **(£30,875.84),** educational equipment (uniforms, school bag, school shoes, stationery, equipment for vocational schools, text books) **(£27,368.91)** and family support for the most vulnerable street children once they have returned home **(£2,104.95).** This support could be a mattress, a bag of rice, a wheelchair, business support, baby 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 2025, as well as the new children with whom we will work in 2025/26. Family reunification is a key objective of the work and paying for school support is a major factor in keeping the street children at home. Other costs associated with this strand of work include; travel accommodation for staff during the reunification process **(£303.75);** travel subsistence for staff during the reunification process **(£181.23);** and travel subsistence for street children during the reunification process **(£13.94).**

Costs associated with the Campaigning and Advocacy department

In 2024/25, the communication and advocacy programme for Laughter Africa revolved around the International Day for Street Children (12th April). The total cost spent on advocacy and campaigning was **£59.37**. We also spent **£37.16** on hiring equipment for the event for the International Day for Street Children.

Costs associated with staffing

Laughter Africa spent **£12,418.29** on national staff salaries. 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. At the time of writing this report (December 2025), Laughter Africa employed 10 full 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 **(£1,459.68)** and GPA insurance **(£108.02).** Laughter Africa also paid NASSIT **(£1,088.27)** and PAYE **(£1,297.14)** 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 **(£1,467.22)** and End of Service benefit **(£2,373.61).** The staffs' work has been greatly enhanced by the work of volunteers. Costs associated with the volunteers totalled **£674.70.** We spent **£1.70** on DBS and safeguarding costs and spent **£517.60** on redundancy payments for one staff member.

Country registration and other associated fees

In this financial year we had to pay re-registration fees to SLANGO and MOPED. The total cost of re-registration was **£1,969.34.** The audit costs were **£681.82** while we paid **£100.64** for legal services. 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 **£345.36.** To be recognised as a registered charity in Sierra Leone, one must have a PO Box. Laughter Africa has one at a cost of **£11.04** per year.

Bank charges in Sierra Leone

The bank charges in Sierra Leone were **£495.15.**

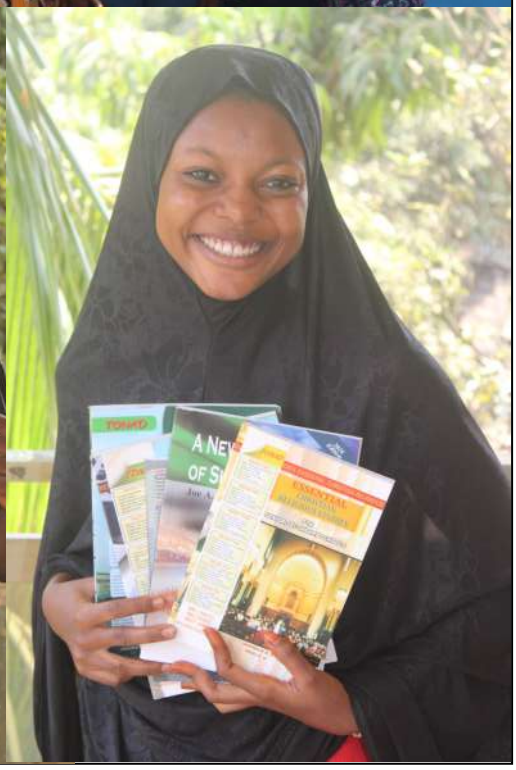
Bank charges in the UK.

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 **£846.**









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

Over the next year, we do not plan to introduce any new components to our work due to the cost of living crisis and the political instability within the country. We will just continue our normal outreach, Interim Care Centre, Family Tracing and Reunification work and our Advocacy and Campaigning work.

Mobile

So far our mobile project has taken place in Susan's Bay, Regent Road in Town, Portee, Waterloo, Grafton, Bomeh, Funkia and Tombo. For 2026/2027, we hope to have a mobile project in Lumley/Aberdeen/Cockle Bay. This is because they are the only big areas which have a large congregation of street children where we have not had mobile projects yet.

ICC

For the ICC, we don't have any specific new plans as such. We plan to just keep doing what we have always done. We have a strong rehabilitation programme in place and know that it is successful.

FTR

The school support programme is one of our most successful components and is the reason why so many children remain home after they are reunified with their families. We are also hoping to repeat the success of our vocational training programme including the provision of business support equipment. Our university fee programme is still a huge success and we will be continuing with this. One young man James, received the highest marks in his year. He is studying 'Para-Legal studies' and is excelling in his studies at the University of Makeni.

Advocacy, Campaigns and Communications

The repeal of the loitering laws in Sierra Leone will be our primary campaign issue for 2026 and beyond.
If the loitering law is repealed in 2025/2026, then the next stage will be to educate and sensitise the street children in the different areas. Our plan is to visit each area one by one like we did during the 'Sexual Violence Prevention' Training and carry out workshops with the street children. We would probably target the same areas such as Susan's Bay, Tombo, Lumley, Waterloo, Portee, Grafton, Cockle Bay and Funkia. We plan on printing business cards with different social workers' contact details on where the street children can report any human rights violations committed by the police, especially if they are still arrested because of loitering.

We plan on producing posters in Kreo which we hope to display in all the police stations. We plan to carry out lots of media engagements, particularly radio shows in order to disseminate the message that loitering is no longer a crime! This could also take the form of "radio jingles" or a pop song, similar to the pop song we did for the International Day for Street Children 2021.

If the loitering law is repealed then we also hope to train the police so they are better quipped in their interactions with street children.

Otherwise, if the law is not repealed we hope to continue working in partnership with the Irish embassy as they lobby MPs, different Ministers and Ministries about the issue.

Another key campaign we hope to promote in 2026 is for the Sierra Leone Government to implement the recommendations from the UN paper on "A child-centred response to the sexual exploitation of children in street situations." There are some fantastic recommendations which if implemented would vastly improve the safety of children living on the streets.

The Government of Sierra Leone have made a further commitment to review their National Strategy for Addressing Issues of Children in Street Situations 2021-23 in their recent submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (July 2025). We hope that this review takes place in 2026 and that the street children and NGOs can be more involved in the process as they were largely excluded in the formulation of the last strategy. We are hopeful that this time, the review will be more aligned with General Comment 21 and that the voices of street children will be heard loud and clear. We would also like to expand our 'street champion' programme in other areas as well as that has been a big success probably in Aberdeen/Lumley/Cockle Bay.

In 2026, we will be dedicating more time and resources to our emergency response to kush including both sensitisation and government advocacy. We attended a meeting at the beginning of November 2025 with the Government about Kush and the government promised that there would be another meeting again in the future. We will not stay silent anymore!

Administration Department

In January 2026, we need to start the NGO re-registration process in Sierra Leone which is always a difficult, complicated and time-consuming process.

Conclusion

To finish off this report, I want to talk about three of our old kids, Ibrahim Sorie, Al Hassan and Santigie. I haven't seen Ibrahim Sorie in years. We first met him in 2015 when he was just 10 years old. He came running to the office at the end of November and was towering over me. He's now 20 and has truly transformed his life. He is working in a popular bar 'Sunnyside' as a bartender. Every month he makes 1,200 leones which is a decent wage in Salone. He has been working there for the last few years and has been slowly climbing up the ranks. He has impressed his bosses by his honesty, commitment and hard work. All this while, he has been living at home with his aunt. He is extra excited as his girlfriend Isha is pregnant. He is about to become a dad for the first time and he is brimming with excitement. He wants to be the best dad that he can be and is determined that his child will want for nothing- especially love!

"I don't want my child to ever go to the streets. I was on the streets from the age of 7. I don't want that for my child. I know how lucky I am. So many of my friends have died from Kush."

Meanwhile another young dad is Santigie, who is devoted to his 2 year old son James, named after yours truly. We have known him since 2016. Santigie recently passed his driving test and now has a job as a delivery driver! He is saving up the pennies as one day he wants to open his own computer game business. He is determined and focused and I know that he will achieve his dreams.

And finally, Al Hassan turned up just before Christmas with his girlfriend and twins in tow. He became a dad to twins in August - Sio and Gina. Al Hassan was the first kid that we ever worked with in June 2015- in fact he was the one who christened me 'Five O.' We gave him money for another driving license as he lost his old one and he needs it as he makes a living as a kekeh driver. He said,

"Thank you for teaching me how to be a good father. I am going to try to be the best dad I can be. I learnt from the best."

Meeting with old kids like this fills me with hope and reminds me the reason why I am here in the first place. This is the reason why I stay. Despite all the challenges. Despite all the drama. Even though I am completely exhausted. It's moments like this that makes everything worthwhile.

Just before Christmas 2025, I was walking around the Centre and found graffitied on one of the cupboards, scribbled in a red marker a message saying, ***"Five O thank you for coming into our lives."*** The thanks is all mine!








G. DECLARATION















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

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature (s)	James Tyrrell	
Full name (s)	**James Francis Robert Tyrrell**	**Mark Quentin Neal**
Position (e.g. chair or secretary)	**Chairperson**	**Secretary**
Date	**09/01/2026**	**09/01/2026**













CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Laughter Africa	1154712

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	01/04/2024	To	31/03/2025

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	68,552.99'		-	68,552.99'	66,716.09'
Gift Aid	9,966.90'	-	-	9,966.90'	11,757.78'
Trusts and Foundations		33,696	-	33,696'	35,000'
Bank interest	8.18'	-	-	8.18'	4.15'
Corporate Donations	19,144.08'	-	-	19,144.08'	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total *(Gross income for AR)*	97,672.15'	33,696	-	131,368.15'	113,478.02'
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	97,672.15'	33,696	-	131,368.15'	113,478.02'
A3 Payments					
Charitable Activities	85,270.41'	31,153.11'	-	116,423.52'	107,878.16'
Bank charges (UK)	846'	-	-	846'	705'
Bank charges (Sierra Leone)	495.15'	-	-	495.15'	451.06'
Governance	782.46'	-	-	782.46'	1,296.49'
Multi currency exchange rate loss	1,556.61'	-	-	1,556.61'	3,207.82'
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	88,950.63'	31,153.11'	-	120,103.74'	113,538.53'
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	88,950.63'	31,153.11'	-	120,103.74'	113,538.53'
Net of receipts/(payments)	8,721.52'	2,542.89'	-	11,264.41'	-60.51'
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	8,164.35'	-	-	8,164.35'	-
Cash funds this year end	16,885.87'	2,542.89'	-	19,428.76'	8,164.35'

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

B1 Cash funds

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	Funds in Sierra Leone	1,955.70'	-	-
	Funds in the UK	9,922.98'	2,542.89'	-
	Reserves	5007.19'	-	-
	Total cash funds	16,885.87'	2,542.89'	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

B2 Other monetary assets

Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

B3 Investment assets

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
James Tyrrell	James Francis Robert Tyrrell	27/05/2025
	Mark Quentin Neal	27/05/2025

In accordance with the Charitable Incorporated Organisations (General) Regulations 2012 the Trustees confirm that:
a) the CIO has given no guarantees, where any potential liability under the guarantee is outstanding at the date of the statement of assets and liabilities;
and b) the CIO does not have any debts outstanding at the date of the statement of assets and liabilities which are secured by an express charge on any of the assets of the CIO

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	**Laughter Africa**		
On accounts for the year ended	**31st March 2025**	**Charity no (if any)**	**1154712**
Set out on pages	**1- 2**		

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31 / 03 / 2025**.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed: Peter Kamaraygee **Date:** 30/5/2025

Name: PETER KAMARAY

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any): **The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sierra Leone**

Address:

Peter Kamaray & Co
20 Wilberforce Street
Freetown, Sierra Leone

Section B Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

PETER KAMARAY & CO.
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS
20 WILBERFORCE STREET
FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE
DATE

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.



LAUGHTER AFRICA

England & Wales - Charity number 1154712

Accounts

LAUGHTER AFRICA TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT 2023/2024









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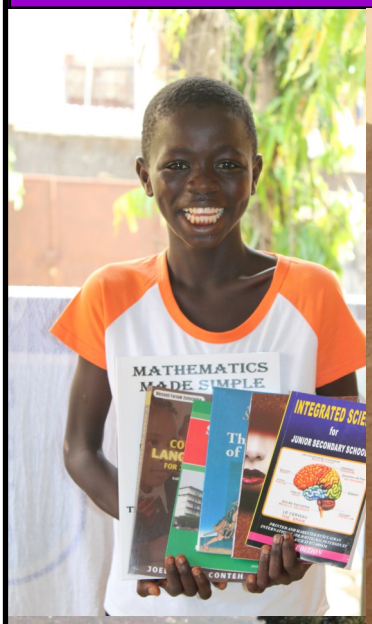








A. REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS OF THE CHARITY















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			
Albert Daniel Gbow			
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		
Dr Anne-Marie Stead		Started in January 2024	

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 and Finance) (Sierra Leone)

Abubakarr Kargbo (Director of Outreach) (Sierra Leone)

Isata Samura (Director of the Interim Care Centre/ Director of Advocacy, Communications and Campaigns) (Sierra Leone)

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

B. STRUCTURE, GOVENANCE 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 Whistleblowing 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 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 the Charities Act 2022 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 2023/24 due to the 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 five Directors in Sierra Leone. The Directors are responsible for different departments:

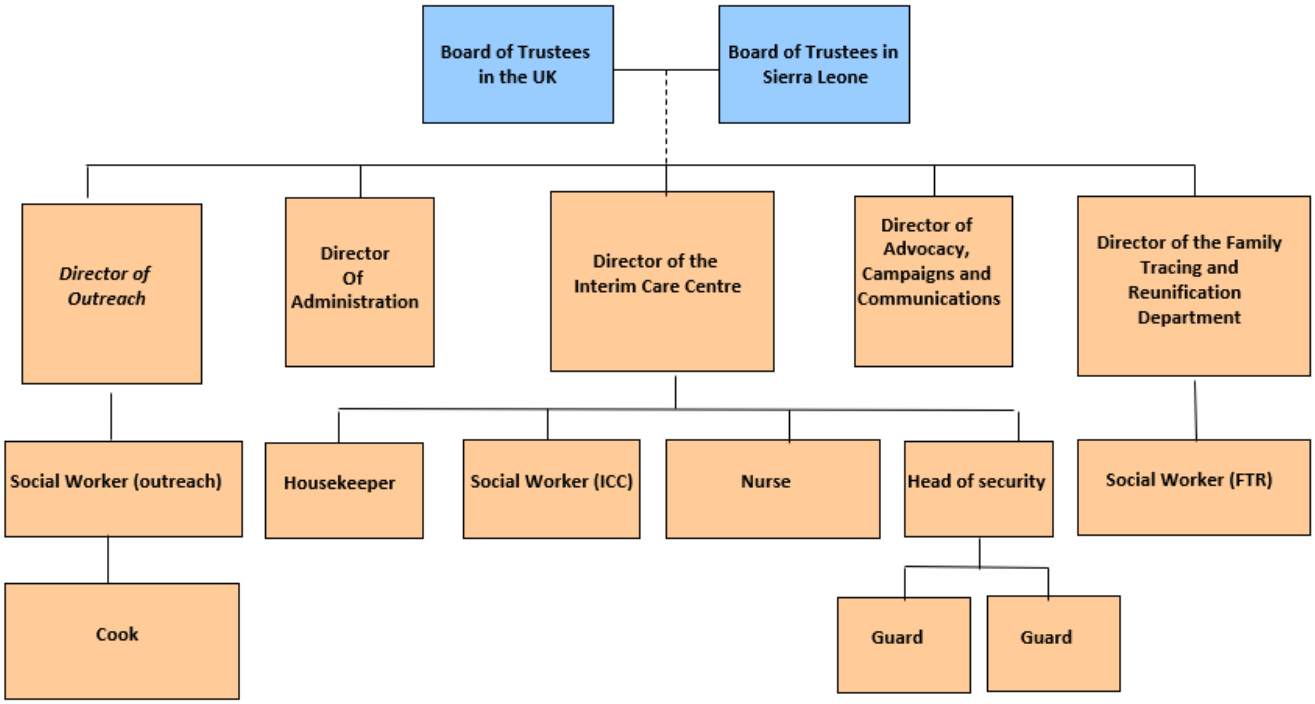
- Outreach Department
- Interim Care Centre Department
- Family Tracing and Reunification Department
- Administration Department
- Communications, Advocacy and Campaigns department

All five 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.. incompliance 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
Laughter Africa's serious incident reporting policy and procedures	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/ Paternity Policy	Flexible working policy
Annual leave policy	PSEAH policy
Adoption policy	Sickness and Absence policy
Retirement Policy	Time off for personal reasons policy
Laughter Africa's Social media policy	Trustee declaration of interests forms

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.

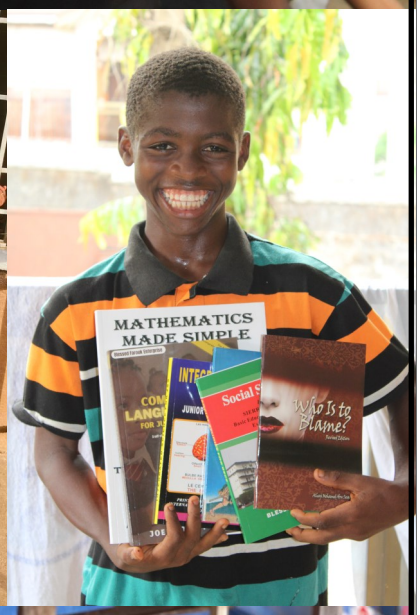
C. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

















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 18. 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:

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

The Outreach department

The mobile project takes place five times a week from Monday to Friday from 4pm to 7pm. Each day, medical treatment, food, water, and different activities (such as cultural dance, yoga, art and crafts, counselling, education, games and sports) are provided.

The main focus of our outreach work since the last annual report (published in December 2023) has been the mobile projects in Bomeh and Funkia.

We wound up our mobile project in Funkia at the end of January 2024. Altogether we welcomed 305 street children since October 2023. We finished on a high, reunifying 65 young people with their families before we left. 90% of them were girls!

Bomeh was the location of our new Mobile project from February until June 2024. It's in the Eastern part of Freetown where most rubbish ends up. During the day, the street children scavenge for materials such as plastic or copper while they sleep on the dump at night. Altogether we reached 343 street children during the lifespan of the project.
During the project, we noticed that the street children were coming from all over Freetown - not just Bomeh. The boys from Aberdeen even took a boat to come to mobile everyday. Now that is dedication! We confiscated at least three knives from mobile over the last few months and have noticed a rise in knife crimes affecting street children lately.
One thing that has become apparent is the danger of the dump where the kids live. Francis talked about his friend Thomas, 15, who died a few months before Laughter arrived. He was dregging for different items like plastic, copper or brass in the dump and he got pricked by a used syringe. Soon after his foot swelled and a month later he was dead. One of the girls, Rasta, also came to see the nurse recently, after stepping on a syringe. Another boy Amara talked about the death of his friend Almammy, 10, in 2020, who ended up being crushed and suffocated by the rubbish which fell on top of him when he was digging in the dump.

Thanks to funding from KitAid we held a sports tournament every month from March 2024 to June 2024. Team Champion, Captain American, All Stars and Young Shall Grow battled it out in games of rounders, badminton, football, volleyball and basketball.

One of the best players in Captain America was 17 year old "Skinny" aka Aminata. After being forced out of her home by her new step father, she's spent seven years on the streets. She is the mother of 1 year old Ibrahim who is her biggest cheerleader. Sadly she doesn't get any support from Ibrahim's father who is addicted to kush. Throughout the tournament she showed no fear and just got stuck into every activity. She said, ***"I love sport- it helps me forget about my past. When I am on the streets, no one gives me encouragement, but when I come here I know I will get encouragement. Sport gives me courage to carry on with my life."*** Meanwhile the youngest team member of Captain America was 10 year old Ibrahim Sorie, said, ***" I like sport as I can have fun with my friends. I feel free. It makes me happy. On the street we don't play games like this."***

'Captain America' were the victors in March while Team 'All Stars' won the tournament in April! Meanwhile 'Young Shall Grow' were the champions in May while 'Team Champion' were the winners for June. This means that every team won a tournament once. The members of each winning team received a medal. All the winners slept with their medals around their necks on the streets. That medal is the only thing that they have of their own and they are fiercely protective of it. They guard their medals as if they were the crown jewels. They are just so proud of themselves! One of the highlights over the last few months was a sports day where different events included tug of peace, three legged races, egg and spoon races and my favourite race- carry your baby.

One of the youngsters we welcomed at mobile was 12 year old Karim. In his short life he's faced many challenges; being born with a disability, being orphaned by Ebola, suffering maltreatment with his adoptive family and being in hospital for six months battling cancer. Sports are a favourite at our mobile project and at first none of the other children wanted him on their team. However, Karim shocked them all by being a basketball pro – easily one of the best players on the court. All with a smile on his face. It was lovely to see how Karim through his natural ability won over his teammates and made them realise that they can't judge someone by a disability. After about two sessions we didn't see Karim again and learnt he had returned home to his family as he was struggling with the rainy season. His friend Sheku kindly took us to visit Karim at his Aunty's home. The good news is that Karim is now safe and sound and living with his family again. We paid school for him in September 2024 and we have never seen a child so excited to start school again!

Our mobile project in Bomeh ended at the end of June. Between 19th February and the end of June 2024 we reached 343 street children. Over the 5 months, we reunified 136 children and young people with their families. One of the boys we reunified with his family in June 2024 was Abdul Salem. In 2017, he was kidnapped and tortured for 9 days whilst living on the streets. The perpetrator put a hot iron on his head, which has left a permanent scar. Abdul Salem recalled vividly the smell of his burning flesh. Abdul Salem has not let this define his life, he is a hero. In May, a girl, Betty came to mobile looking emancipated and hardly able to walk. I have never seen anyone so close to death, she needed a hospital immediately. Abdul Salem lifted Betty onto his back and carried her all the way to hospital, without breaking a sweat. A boy who had been through the most unimaginable torture- who had been left so broken from his experiences-treating this girl with so much love, compassion and dignity. It is a picture that will stay with me for a long time.

Although we paid for Betty to receive medical treatment and reunified her with her family- she tragically died in July 2024.

Another time, one girl Isata was rushed to hospital after she experienced complications during labour. Sadly she lost her baby but what touched me the most was that when the doctors thought that she might need blood, three street children volunteered and offered her their blood straight away without any hesitation. I am so proud of their kindness, commitment and loyalty to each other.

Mr James, a local headteacher, said that there has never been another charity like us in Bomeh before. He said that "***you actually do what you say you will do.***" He particularly complimented the staff on their interactions with the children, ***"The children really love you."***

We will be opening a new mobile project in a new area in February 2025.

Interim Care Centre (ICC)

When children are ready to leave the streets, they stay with us, temporarily, at the Interim Care Centre in Adonkia, a coastal town about nine miles south-west of Freetown. It is the heartbeat of Laughter Africa – we couldn't do our work without it. The ICC is refuge, a safe place for them to escape, to heal, to learn new skills and most of all let them be children again. It gives them a chance just to be…

Since the last annual report (published in December 2023) until the end of June 2024, we have welcomed 25 children and young people into the ICC - 13 were girls while 12 were boys. All the children lived on the streets of Bomeh. Activities carried out in the ICC are the same as outlined in previous year's annual reports and include:

- Education
- Counselling
- cultural dance
- music lessons. To see one of their performances visit: https://fb.watch/wGV9_hmnen/
- Drama
- Yoga
- skills training (including making shoes, jewellery, soap, crochet, carpets, hairdressing, etc.)
- Sports

We opened the ICC from April 2024 until June 2024. We couldn't open the centre earlier due to a shortage of funds. In April 2024 we welcomed 12 boys from Bomeh. Our nurse, Rebecca, has moved into the ICC full time so the kids have medical attention 24 hours a day.

Interestingly we are starting to see the societal impact of kush. One boy Francis, 12, who stayed at the ICC in April/May 2024, went to the streets 2 and a half years ago. He said,

"My mum died so I was brought from the village to live in Freetown with my dad. My dad is addicted to Kush. He doesn't care about me. I would never see him. My dad would go to ghettos for 2 or 3 days, just to smoke kush. He wouldn't leave

food for me. I would have to dreg for food. My dad loves kush more than me. I am scared that my dad is dead from kush - I have not seen him for a while."

Sadly we found out that Francis's dad tragically died at the beginning of May 2024. We had to break the news to Francis. Sadly we think that we will be seeing more children turn to the streets because of the effects of Kush addiction on their families. However, Francis's story does have a happy ending. We reunified him with his family in May 20224 and in September we paid for Francis to attend a new school. Francis was so excited about his fresh start – he couldn't stop smiling! Meanwhile to celebrate the International Day of Dance on 29th April 2024, we had our annual Danceathon with the pupils of Hope Academy in Newton le Willows. The boys in the ICC busted some great moves….

After the boys left to be reunified with their families, we were joined by 12 girls from Bomeh in May. They were later joined by 17 year old Aminata and her 1 year old son Ibrahim, who was suffering from malnutrition. They came after they were discharged from the hospital and he needed some time to recuperate. He is fully recovered now. The girls in the ICC had a 'design the cake' competition in June 2024 a few days before Laughter Africa's birthday party and the winner was 14 year old Samuella. Her prize was to have her design made into our birthday cake. She said,

"I lived on the streets for about 2 years and 5 months. I was living with my mum and dad but my mum died on 14th December 2021. Then I found out my dad had a secret girlfriend. As soon as my mum died he moved his girlfriend into the house. She maltreated me. She lied about me to my dad that I was a thief. She said that I was witch and that's why I was skinny. My dad would beat me every time my step mum complained about me."

Laughter reunified Samuella with her aunt in June 2024 and she is about to start SS1 in January 2025 (which is the equivalent of year 12 in the UK).

After the death of Theresa McCarthy, we re-introduced the self-defence classes in the centre. The girls were reunified with their families in June 2024.

<u>Family Tracing and Reunification Department (FTR)</u>

The FTR department 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. Between 1st January 2024 and 31st December 2024, we reunified 245 street children with their families. The street children came from a variety of places including Funkia, Bomeh, Aberdeen, Grafton and Susan's Bay. If the children that have been reunified with their families stay at home, we pay their school fees or vocational training costs. Between 1st September 2023 and July 2024, we provided school support to approximately 614 young people and paid university fees for 21 young people.

The FTR team also give extra support to the most vulnerable children, which can include transportation costs, lunch, business support, bikes, bags of rice, mattresses, 'help a baby basket' support kits, rental costs or wheelchairs. One example of those children who received a bike recently was Lamin (aka chicken leg) who lives in a remote village in the middle of nowhere. Thanks to the gift of a bike he is now able to get to school every day. We first met Lamin living on the streets in 2017 when he was 6 years old. He went on the streets after his mum died and his father wasn't able to look after him properly. On the streets he was sexually exploited by the older street children who assaulted him. Thankfully he came

to our mobile project in town and we were able to reunify him with his uncle in a village outside of Freetown. We have been providing school support for him ever since. During Covid we gave business support to him and his family- they were farmers so we gave them tools and seeds to help their income during tough times. When we had first met Lamin, he had never been to school. Now he has just started secondary school. What an achievement! And he is still as cheeky as ever!!!! When we gave him his bike he said, ***"Thank you so much for the bike. I am so happy."*** All the other children in the village were also very excited by the bike and it had a lot of admirers! The bike was the talk of the village that day!

Another example of extra support is when the young people have their external exams. We give each young person who asks, financial support for lunch and transportation during the exam period. In May 2024, Zainab came to visit, and kindly brought plantain chips for me as she knows they're my favourite! She was about to sit her WASCE, so we gave her some money. She burst into tears. I asked her ***"why are you crying?"*** and she replied, ***"You do great for me. You give me what my own dad wouldn't give me."*** She was so grateful. I wish I could convey with words how humbling and reaffirming it is. Life on the streets in Susan's Bay is the worst of the worst. For her to stay home for four years and sit WASCE is a massive achievement and I am super proud of her! Next step for her is university!

The FTR department also provides medical treatment for any of the children who remain at home. In fact across all the three departments, we provided at least 465 young people with medical treatment between 1st January 2024 and 31st December 2024. One example is the case of Michael. We first met Michael in June 2015 when we first opened Laughter Africa. He was living on the streets in King Jimmy. He was around 12 years old. He went onto the streets after his step-father maltreated him. Since then Michael has stayed home and been making steady progress at school. In December 2023, Michael fell from a ladder and was impaled by a metal spike. He very nearly died and he needed an emergency operation. He was in hospital for over a month. Thankfully the operation was a success. However, he now has to use a colostomy bag for the rest of his life. At the time, he was told that he will never be able to have children. He reacted in such a mature way. He didn't go off the rails which we were half expecting. I could never have reacted as maturely as he has. We are so proud of him. He didn't let this setback affect him and his attendance and results have been phenomenal this last academic year. His school report for 2023/24 was his best yet! He has just started JSS3 and is about to sit the BECE in 2025 which is the equivalent of GCSEs in the UK. At the beginning of September 2024, he came running into the office smiling with absolute joy. He told me that the doctors made a big mistake and he will be able to have children in the future after all. Michael said,

"Thanks so much to Laughter Africa for everything you have done for me. You have been part of my life now for over 9 years. I am proud of you for all you have achieved. Since I became a child of Laughter Africa, my life has been so much better. I love Laughter Africa."

Good luck in your BECE next year Michael. We know that you will succeed in anything that you put your mind too!!!

Another young person we provided medical care to was 17 year old former street child Ishmael who recovered the gift of sight in his left eye. Ishmael said, ***"My eyes have been painful for over 1 and a half years. I woke up one day and my eye was sore. My eyesight got gradually worse. Eventually I could only see with one eye. Thanks to Laughter Africa, I had an operation and now I can see again with both eyes! I was blind but now I see. Tenki so much for paying for me to see***

again. I love you so much. My dream is to be a doctor. I also want to help others who are blind, see again like the doctors helped me. Happy Christmas everyone. This is the best Christmas ever."

Despite the challenges he faced, he recently passed his BECE (the Sierra Leone version of GCSEs) which was a real triumph. I want to thank our nurse Rebecca who is our unsung hero. Any time, any day, she is always on call and ready to jump into action. Thank you for all you do.

Meanwhile, the FTR department take responsibility for organising our annual mother and baby training. On 7th December 2024, we had our 5th annual mother and baby training led by Isata and Rebecca (our nurse). We had young mums or mums to be join us to develop vital skills such as nappy changing, bathing, first aid and soothing practices. Most of all we wanted to teach the girls how to show their child love. Sometimes the girls don't know how to express their love for their children as they were never shown love by their own families. At every training we teach the girls about positive parenting techniques and non-violent forms of discipline.

One of Laughter's newest mums is 21 year old Musu aka Pessi. Her mum died during Ebola and Pessi was left to support all her brothers and sisters as she was the oldest child. They ended up living with an aunty but her aunty did not treat Pessi well. Pessi wasn't able to go to school as there was no one to pay her fees. Instead she was forced into child labour "where I was treated like a slave." When we first met Pessi at our mobile project in Bomeh, she was pregnant. She said at the time, ***"I am a dancer. I used to always dance in the village. Dancing gives me pride and helps me forget about my problems. I am pregnant and there is only me to bring up the baby. The dad is not around. I am scared. But when I dance, I can escape reality…even just for a bit."*** Pessi was dancing right until she gave birth to a bouncing baby boy in October 2024 and she will be starting to attend vocational school in a few months time. We also welcomed three dads to the baby training for the first time including Ibrahim the welder. Ibrahim became a dad to baby Mohamed 8 months ago. Ibrahim is absolutely besotted with Mohamed and is already shaping up to be a fantastic dad!

Most of the staff receive phone calls from the children and their families. Often the children just phone to say hello but sometimes they might need something or have an issue at home. The team are on call 24/7 for the children and respond immediately whenever they are needed.

<u>Communications, Campaigns and Advocacy</u>

Our Communications, Advocacy and Campaigns department started in September 2016 and it has been in operation ever since. Since we published the last annual report in December 2023, this department focused on the International Day for Street Children.

International Day for Street Children 2024

Every year on 12th April, street children organisations all over the world celebrate the International Day for Street Children (IDSC). This year the theme of the day was 'Belonging.' We carried out focus discussion groups with 43 street children at our

mobile project in Bomeh at the beginning of April to find out what did belonging mean to them. For 19 year old Musu, ***"Belonging is about being accepted, cherished, respected, encouraged and loved."*** Musu has lived on the streets since she was 10 years old after her father died and she had no choice but to live with her aunt. Her aunt didn't pay school for Musu and instead she was forced into child labour. Her best friend Aja died while living on the streets in 2019 after being beaten to death. She said, ***"I am just looking for a place where I can belong. I just want us to be as one with the community. In Togetherness."***

Meanwhile Ibrahim, 18, who has lived on the streets for two years after the death of his father, said, ***"I don't always feel like I belong, especially in the community. Being rejected makes me feel lonely, discouraged, angry, sad and discriminated against. Laughter Africa is one place that always makes me feel like I belong. I feel happy, good and safe here."***

As a result of the focus group discussions, the young people decided to have a dialogue with local community members which took place on 12th April (Please see the achievements section for more information). This poem was written by Ibrahim and Musu, with the help of Biba, one of our social workers. They performed the poem during the community dialogue. To see a performance of the poem, please visit here: https://www.facebook.com/reel/1093765608511645

Voice from the Street

In the alleyways where shadows play,
I wander lost, in the light of day.
With hunger gnawing, and dreams deferred,
I navigate this world, unheard.
Through the dust and debris, I roam,
A silent witness to a broken home.
In Sierra Leone's streets, I find my stage,
A life of hardship, a silent rage.
No mother's embrace, no father's hand,
Just the harsh reality of this unforgiving land.
1 dream of books, of pens, of rhyme,
But survival takes precedence, every time.
Oh, government, NGOs, can't you see?
The potential in a child like me.
With a little help, a guiding hand,
I could flourish, I could understand.
On this day, as we gather 'round,
Let my voice be heard, let hope abound.
For every child like me, with dreams so grand,
Deserves a chance to flourish, to take a stand.
Together, let's pave a brighter way,
For the street children of Sierra Leone today.

Campaign to repeal the loitering laws

On 7th November 2024, the ECOWAS Court ruled that Sierra Leone must amend or repeal its loitering laws. It ruled that the law discriminates against poor vulnerable persons who may be going about their normal business at night, and that it also gives the police "excessive" power to arrest and detain, which is open to abuse. It orders that Sierra Leone "as a matter of urgency must take steps to either repeal the law or amend it" to conform to its international obligations under the African Charter on Human and People's Rights and other appropriate instruments it has signed up to. It declares that the law violates the freedom of movement under international law, adding that the country should take "appropriate legislative measures to amend, modify or repeal the loitering laws."

The case was brought by ADVOCAID with Amicus briefs submitted by the Consortium for Street Children and Amnesty International. I am very proud to say that Laughter Africa contributed a lot of research for the Amicus Brief submitted by the Consortium for Street Children so I am very proud of the small part that we played in this historic moment to deliver lasting change for children living on the streets! Everyday I hear from the street children that they have been arrested for loitering. This ruling by ECOWAS is just the first step in making life better for them. We have a lot of work to do but we won't give up. This is just the beginning....

Since the ruling we have been very busy. We contacted all of the five main embassies: the US Embassy, the Irish Embassy, the British Embassy, the German Embassy and the EU. The Irish Embassy agreed to a meeting in mid December 2024 which the Irish Ambassador also attended. It was a big success. It will take years for the law to change but we have made a good start! This will be our main advocacy focus in 2025 and beyond. In particular we are calling on the Sierra Leone Government to repeal the following laws:

- Section 7 of the Public Order Act 19657;
- Section 13(1)(e) of the Criminal Procedure Act 19658; and
- Section 31 of the Summary Conviction Offences Ordinance 1906.

By doing this street children will no longer be punished by police officers for sleeping on the streets which currently is a regular occurrence.

<u>Other highlights from the advocacy department</u>

We are active members of the Consortium for Street Children (CSC) and this year we were selected to become members of WASAG (the West Africa Strategic Advocacy Group). The idea of WASAG is to give feedback on different issues in order for the CSC to advocate for West Africa as a whole. In particular we contributed to the CSC response to the 'Access to Justice' paper for 'UN General Comment 27: Children's Rights to Access to Justice and Effective Remedies.' Also as a member of the Network for Street Children Sierra Leone (N.S.C.S.L.), we wrote a position paper on the Child Rights Act 2024 which was sent to the Government of Sierra Leone. We took the lead on this position paper and were pleased by the final results. We advocated for the new Child Rights Bill in Sierra Leone to include a section about street connected children as currently they are not mentioned anywhere within the current Bill.

Administration and safeguarding department

The duties outlined in last year's annual report remain the same for the administration department. The main responsibility for this department is the Sierra Leonean accounts. Their role is to also oversee compliance with different Government laws and regulations including re-registration with the ministries, SLANGO and MOPED. We are delighted to announce that in May 2024 we officially re-registered as an NGO. It is a long and bureaucratic process that takes place every two years but it means that we can continue working in Sierra Leone.

Trustees

The Trustee Board were delighted to welcome Dr. Anne-Marie Stead to the Trustee board in January 2024. Anne Marie has been a Laughter volunteer for 9 years. She helps write most of the applications to Trusts and Foundation. She said, ***"I am absolutely honoured to be a Trustee for Laughter Africa. I hope I do you all proud!"*** We would also like to continue to expand our Trustee board in 2025 order to make it more diverse.

Some of the Trustees also attended three webinars ran by the Charity Commission in October and November 2024:

- ***'Safeguarding Expectations in an international context'***
- ***'Due diligence and monitoring the end use of funds'***
- ***'Responding to crises overseas: guidance for charities and trustees'***

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 and Fundraisers

The trustees would like to say a huge thank you to all our volunteers and fundraisers. However, special thanks to the following people who have gone the extra mile for Laughter Africa this financial year:

- A massive thank you to everyone at Andrew Wood Photography who have chosen Laughter Africa as their charity of the year. They are fundraising for projects related to female empowerment. We are so grateful to them and so many girls have already benefitted from their support. They have raised ***£9,554.86*** between January 2024 and December 2024 and have been a huge support.

- A big, huge thank you to Laughter Africa volunteer Tricia Gill for her amazing work making the video about the IDSC. To see her amazing video, visit https://fb.watch/s-JnmfEDFO/

- A big thank you to Pastor Dirk Große and his church Eivind Berggrav Centre in Altenjolz, Germany. Pastor Dirk retired on Sunday 7th July 2024 and his one wish for a present was to have a collection for Laughter. The whole church raised a significant amount. Thanks Pastor Dirk – we wish you a long and happy retirement.

- A big thank you to our friends Sara and Evan who recently got married in Italy. They had a collection for Laughter Africa and raised a whopping amount. We wish you both all the happiness in the world.

- A big, big thank you to our friends Jacqui, Liz and Alison who ran the Liverpool Santa Dash on 1st December 2024 to raise money for Laughter Africa! Jacqui and Liz ran with their kids, Louis, Ruby, and Jess. As devout Evertonians, Jacqui and Jess ran in Blue Santa outfits rather than the typical red costume! Meanwhile our favourite Ukele player Alison ran the Santa Dash with her niece Sophie! For those who haven't heard of a Santa dash -it's a 5k fun run where all the runners are dressed as Father Christmas! To see a video of them in action, please visit: https://www.facebook.com/reel/1076385257555585

- A big , big thanks to Laughter Africa volunteer, Sarah Padden, who made 22 new gifts for the Laughter Africa Christmas Gifts for 2024. We know how hard you worked on them so thank you! We really appreciate your dedication and support. To see the new gifts , please visit: https://laughterafrica.squarespace.com/

- Thank you to De la Salle High School in St Helen's who wrote Christmas Cards to the young people at Laughter. They were delighted with their cards!



D. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE













Achievements

The International Day for Street Children

One of the biggest highlights since the last annual report (December 2023) was the International Day for Street Children 2024. On Friday 12th April 2024, the street children in Bomeh performed a show for the community members. Over 200 people attended the performance. The idea behind the performance was to initiate a dialogue with the community members in order to foster a sense of belonging for the street children in their area.

The show was absolutely amazing! It was electric. The crowd was buzzing. It was over 2 hours long. The performance included acrobatics, juggling, singing, cultural dance, poetry, drama, modern dance and miming, interspersed with stories from some of the young people about their lives and what belonging means to them.

Two of the community leaders, Mr James and Mr Kemoh also spoke during the performance about what belonging means to them. Mr James was very complimentary about Laughter Africa's work. He thanked Laughter Africa and told the street children,

"***We see you. We accept you. You are wanted. You belong. We are one."***

Most of the street children had never performed in public before but they still had the audience enthralled. They were so proud of themselves. Amara, 13, who went on the streets after the death of his father, was one of the young people who spoke during the show. He said afterwards,

"This is the first time that me and my friends have done something like this. A chance to share our story. A chance to share our talents. For the first time, I really feel like we have been accepted by the community now. Like we belong. They now see us not just as street pikin, or kush users, or thieves. They see us as human beings. As children and young people. A child with potential. A child with talent. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to let our voices be heard and our stories told."

The show we put on for the community left a big impression. Mr James said that the community loved the show and kept stopping him to talk about it. He said that there has never been anything like that before in Bomeh.

To see a video of some of the performances, please click here:

https://fb.watch/s-JnmfEDFO/

Our vocational educational programme

One of our proudest achievements is that since the last annual report (December 2023), thirteen more of our young people have graduated from vocational school.

On Saturday 9th March 2024, Hawanatu, Isatu, Jariatu, Hannah and Rebecca all graduated from GISA Vocational School in either tailoring or hairdressing. Each of them received different equipment so that they could establish their own businesses. We met them all through our mobile project in Susan's Bay in 2020-2021.

One of the girls who graduated in tailoring is 18 year old Isatu. Isatu lived on the streets from the age of 12 for three years until Laughter reunified her with her aunt. She went on the streets after her brother brought her from the village, promising to pay her school fees. He never paid. Instead he and his wife forced Isatu into child labour. If she lost any money- they would beat her. One day while living on the streets Isatu was stabbed in the face by a man who wanted to steal her money. She says,

" I thought I was going to die. I can't describe the pain I felt. He stabbed me on the right side of my face. The knife went right through to my mouth.

She continued,

"When I used to look in the mirror all I saw was the scar. Its how people would describe me. The girl with the scar. It was all I was known for. I thought that was all I would ever be. But I knew I was more than that. The scar was a constant reminder of the street and what I had been through. Now when I look in the mirror I see a business woman. A tailor. A strong, independent woman. A woman whose brother is ashamed of how he treated her. A woman who is somebody. Somebody who deserves respect. A woman who has her own business. The scar reminds me that I survived. It reminds me how far I have come over the last 3 years. I have taken back control. Now people describe me in a different way. I am no longer the girl with the scar. I am the girl with the business. I am the girl whose just graduated from vocational school. I am more than just a scar."

Isatu had a special message for Laughter Africa,

"***Plenti tenki for paying for my vocational school fees and the tools for my new business. If it wasn't for you, I would be dead."***

Congratulations to all the girls who graduated – we can't wait to see your new businesses grow.

Meanwhile a big congratulations to Abdulai, Aminata, Naomi and Ramatu who graduated from Use-Us Technical and Vocational Institute on Saturday 24th February 2024. They have been studying tailoring for the last 2 and a half years. All four of them received business support last year and have since set up their own tailoring businesses. We first met them at our mobile project in Portee in 2021 and now look at them …

Life has not been easy for the four of them. Both Abdulai and Ramatu were orphaned by Ebola while Naomi lost her father to the same disease. The deaths of their families had a huge impact in them turning to the streets. Naomi, 23, was delighted to be joined at the graduation by her 5 year old daughter, who she gave birth to while living on the street. She said,

"I am so happy that I have finally made my daughter proud of me. Now she can stand up tall and say my mummy is a tailor. I want to be a role model for her and give the opportunities that I never had."

Meanwhile, Ramatu, 19, said,

"I tell God tenki that Laughter pulled me off the streets. If not for Laughter, I would be dead by now. Thanks to Laughter I have a future. I have hope."

Meanwhile Abdulai graduated in Electrics from Muraldo Vocational school in May 2024. What I love most about Abdulai is his kindness to the most vulnerable. For instance, he always carries Fatmata, who has a disability, from Portee all the way to the centre in Adonkia on his back whenever she needs anything. It's about 2 hours away. Although she has a wheelchair- it's easier to travel on public transport without it. Whenever he arrives, he is exhausted and drenched in sweat but he really puts himself out. He also brings children from Portee who might be sick to the Interim Care Centre. He puts himself out for anyone, at any moment. When I asked him why he shows such kindness to the most vulnerable, he said,

"I have a heart that feels sorry for those who might not have anyone to defend them. I need to help them- just like Laughter helped me. I had no one on the streets to look after me so I know what it feels like. They are my friends from inside laughter. They are my family."

He is a great example to others. Abdualai is 23 and lived on the streets for 7 years because his mum and dad died of Ebola. We are so excited to support the young people whose lives were significantly impacted by the horrible pandemic. We gave business support to Abdulai last year and his business is booming!

In September 2024, Adama, who lives in Bo, received her new business start-up kit after recently graduating from vocational school in tailoring. Adama turned to the streets after the death of her mother, and suffering maltreatment from her Aunty. She lived on the streets of Freetown for three years and faced many challenges, all whilst raising a child, Abubakarr. Abubakarr is now 6 years old! She reflected,

"Ever since I met Laughter Africa, my life turned around for the best. They paid vocational school for me and that has changed my life in so many ways. I want to express my deepest gratitude to Laughter Africa. You guys have no clue what you've done for me. How you have changed my life and the life of my son. For the first time in his life, he is really proud of his mummy and that is what I am most happy about. Abubakarr has not had an easy life so far but from now on I am determined to give him the world. Thank you for making this possible!"

On 30th November 2024, Rugiatu and Isatu graduated from Divine Vocational School in Grafton. We gave them both a sewing machine and materials to kick-start their tailoring businesses. 21 year old Isatu lived on the streets for three years. She said,

"After the death of my mother, my dad remarried another woman. She was horrible to me. She wouldn't give me food. She forced me into child labour. She would beat me. She didn't pay school for me. She made my life a living hell. She made me feel like I didn't belong."

Isatu went through a lot while living on the streets.

"***While I was on the streets, I gave birth to my son called Moses. He's 4 years old now. I raised him all by myself without any help from anyone. I had to do things you couldn't even imagine just so I could provide for him. Moses is so proud of me. He is going to be at the graduation cheering for his mummy."***

"For the first time in a long time, Laughter made me feel like I belonged- that I had someone in my corner who cared. I can't believe it. Two years ago I was on the streets- now I have my own business. My dream is to have my own tailoring shop and I know that one day I will make it happen."

Isatu had a special message for Laughter supporters,

"Tenki Tenki. You have provided for me. You took me off the streets. You paid for me to learn work and now you have paid for me to have a business. This is not just a sewing machine for me. It's a way to provide for me and my child for life. I am so happy that I can look after myself and my child and never worry about money again. I am proud of you and appreciate you!"

For the academic year 2024/2025, we have paid for over 160 young people to attend vocational school. One of the young people we have paid vocational school for this year is 17 year old Mohamed. After living on the streets in the rubbish dump of Bomeh for over 4 years, we took him and his sister, Kadeja, home in June 2024.

Mohamed did not have a safe time on the streets. He said,

"On the streets, I became a member of the Blacks (a local gang). We would constantly fight the Reds (a rival gang). We would fight with bottles, sticks, stones, cutglass and chappers. My weapon of choice was a bottle and I would smash it over peoples' heads. One day, my friend OrCombeh went for a walk by himself and he was killed by a rival gang. They stabbed him to death. I would take different drugs on the streets including cocaine, kush, jamba, tramadol and tappa. I got in trouble with the police lots and I once even spent a week in a police cell."

We enrolled Mohamed at vocational school in September and he is now learning hairdressing. He said,

"Since Laughter took me home, I have stopped taking drugs and being a member of any gangs- that's all in my past now. If Laughter hadn't taken me home- I would be dead by now. I am proud of the life that I live now. Allah helped me and I have changed. I want better for my life. My mum and my sister motivate me to change. I want to make them proud of me. I changed everything when I left the streets behind. I am determined to make life better for me and my family."

Mohamed is very enthusiastic about his course and his future. He continued,

"I love hairdressing. I have never seen another man plant or cut hair before. I am learning how to make different hairstyles, apply make up, how to do pedicures and manicures and how to attach eyelashes. My dream is to have my own salon and be a hairdresser for men and women."

Mohamed had a special message for Laughter supporters. He said,

"Tenki for your help. Please keep helping us. Don't give up on me. To change is not easy. But with Laughter by my side - I know that I can face whatever challenges might come. Thank you!"

Amie

We have mentioned Amie in previous annual reports. In 2021 we met a girl called Amie living on the streets. She had lived on the streets for 2 years. Today she is playing football in the Sierra Leone Female Premier League, playing for Ram-Kay. Her dream has always been to represent her country and now that moment has finally happened.

Amie was asked to represent her country for the first time as part of the National Sierra Leone football team in the Ramkay Female Tournament (Women's day Cup) which took place in March 2024. Sierra Leone scored 8 points altogether in the tournament which was enough for them to clinch the trophy! Amie even scored a goal in the final game. She says,

"After I scored the goal, I cried because I have been so desperate to wear that jersey and play for Sierra Leone for such a long time. Its all I have ever dreamed of. Then the first chance I get to play for my country and I score a goal. I cried tears of joy. I couldn't believe it. I feel so good."

You can see Amie's amazing goal here (Its at around 59 minutes into the video) :

https://www.facebook.com/61556068204876/videos/394199963242235

Amie was also selected to represent her country again in Senegal in May 2024 for the CAF qualifier and in Sierra Leone in December 2024 for the Mano River Union Female Tournament. Amie received 26,200 leones from the government as prize money for taking part in the tournaments. Amie has bought land in Wellington and is slowly building a house for herself with any money that she earns. She also earns a monthly salary while playing for Ram K in the national league which is more than enough to provide for her and her daily needs.

Thank you to all the Laughter Africa supporters who sent in photos, videos and messages of support for Amie. She was really touched to know that people were watching her from all over the world in solidarity and support! She says,

"Sometimes I feel sad when I watch the other girls - they are surrounded by their families being cheered on and I have no one. But then I remembered all the messages of support and I realised that I am not alone and I do have a family. Thank you!"

Our University Programme

Our university programme has been a great success. Two of our young people, Amidu and Osman graduated from Milton Margai University on 14th December 2024. They are our first young people who have ever graduated from university.

Amidu received a diploma in Social work. He completed his internship at Laughter Africa in November/December 2024. He inspired all the children at Laughter he met as he showed them it is possible to achieve their dreams. He literally was one of them in 2017 and now look at him!

Osman, our resident artist, received a diploma in laboratory diagnostic studies. He has just completed an internship at Kono Government hospital. This comes fresh after he was nominated for student personality of the year at the ALMS-SL dinner & awards night. Osman had a special message for Laughter Africa's supporters,

"Laughter Africa has done so much and I will be forever grateful. Thank you so much- you really have done very great work in my life. From living on the street to becoming a graduate. I am really blessed to have met you. There is no amount of words or phrases that expresses how happy I am for this kind of transformation that you have done in my life."

In 2023/2024, we paid for over 20 young people to attend university and this year we have another 12 young people eager to further their education via a variety of University degrees. They are studying a variety of subjects including para-legal studies, nursing, midwifery, public administration and human resources. So far 4 young people have been accepted into university while the others are still waiting for their acceptance letters.

One of our newest university students is James. After a tough three years on the streets following his mother's death, James started at UNIMAK to study a diploma in para-legal studies in November 2024. His eventual aim is to be a lawyer.

"I want to be Laughter Africa's lawyer. I have suffered a lot and I want to fight for those less privileged who are suffering too. I know what it's like to be ignored and have my rights trampled on."

James had a special message of thanks to Laughter Africa supporters,

"I am overwhelmed. Even though I don't know you- I am so appreciative of what you have done for me. I promise that I will make a difference and not let you down."

Another new student is Faith who has just gained admission to the School of Midwifery in Kenema. She lived on the streets for over two years in Funkia. She has been through a lot in such a short space of time….

After the death of her mother and father in the village, her sister brought her to Freetown and paid school for her. Tragically Faith's sister died in a traffic accident coming home from Guinea. She said,

"After the death of my sister, I had to live with my uncle. He married a new woman and the woman maltreated me. One day my uncle tried to sleep with me so I ran away for my life."

The streets were not easy for Faith but now Faith is extremely excited about her future. She said,

"So many women here die in childbirth and I want to help. They die because we don't have good facilities or trained professionals. I want to save lives."

She wanted to pass on her thanks to our supporters for making this possible,

"Tenki. I promise that I will make you proud."

Another new student is 19 year Isatu who is about to start studying nursing at EBK University in Makeni. We met her living on the streets in Portee in 2021 during our mobile project. She lived on the streets for three years. Isatu went on the streets after her mother remarried another man after the death of her father. Her step father maltreated her, including beating her with a cable. Isatu said that she wants to be a nurse because she wants to save lives and help the nation. Isatu also had a special message for Laughter Africa supporters,

"I really appreciate what you have done for me. I appreciate your effort. Since I started at Laughter I have seen plenty of positive changes in my life. Thank you!"

One of the young people who is still waiting for an acceptance letter is 20 year old Gibrilla. We first met Gibrilla in 2018 and fast forward 6 years later, he is hoping to start an accounting diploma at IPALM. He first went onto the streets at age 13 and lost three of his friends while living on the street: one was beaten to death while another died after he fell sick and his face swelled. Gibrilla had a special message for Laughter Africa supporters,

*"**I tell you plenti tenki for all the help you have given me over the last 6 years. If not for you, I wouldn't be here. Whenever I have been sick, you have always come to my rescue. Thanks to you I have now achieved what I have always dreamed of. I wouldn't have gone to school if it was not for you. I would have been a drop-out. You have helped me greatly in life. My dream is finally starting to come true. This is just the beginning…. Thank you!"***

The success of the School support programme

We are delighted with the success of our school support programme. The children and young people are really benefiting from our support. We are still in the middle of providing school fees, vocational school fees and uniforms so we haven't got any final totals yet for the 2024/2025 academic year. However, so far, since September 2024, we have provided:

- 304 young people with new schools or vocational schools
- 630 young people with their school supply (which includes a bag, shoes, ledger books, vests, socks and pens)
- 525 young people with uniforms.

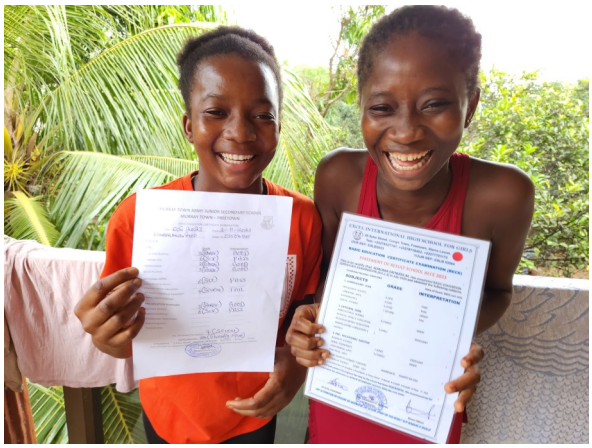
This is the most young people we have ever supported on the school support programme so far. Our support is making a difference. At the end of November 2024, the Government released the BECE results (the Sierra Leone equivalent of GCSEs) and all of our young people passed with flying colours.

One of the young people who passed was 17 year old Jamil. We first met Jamil nearly 5 years ago at our mobile project in Town. He was one of the lucky boys who was selected to go on our bowling trip all those years ago just before Covid hit. Jamil first went on the streets aged 12, after the death of his father left his family without any money to survive. He lived on the streets for over one year and went through a lot including sexual assault and begging for food. Jamil is one of the most dedicated young people we have when it comes to his schooling. Although his family still do not have much (they don't even have a phone), he has such passion and enthusiasm for his education. He is determined to be a lawyer.

One girl who benefitted from the school support programme was Salome. We met Salome after a fire destroyed her shack in Cockle Bay on 17th October 2022. Nine street girls lost their home that day. Salome moved in with her uncle. She recently passed her WASCE University entrance exams and she is just looking at the university courses available. Her dream is to become a nurse. Salome said,

"I lost everything in the fire. I had lost all hope. Everything was destroyed. Then Laughter Africa came to my rescue and found me a new place to live. They were there when I had no one else. And now I am about to go to university. Laughter Africa changed the worst day of my life into the best day. Thank you!"

Jamil and Salome are just two examples of some of the 630 children who we have provided school supplies for. Most of them have similar stories, similar dreams and we are proud of every single one of them.





The successes of the young people we work with

Whenever one of the young people we work with succeed, we share their joy. Here are some of their most amazing successes since the last annual report (published in December 2023):

Albert and Ramadan

We have witnessed firsthand the impact of the business support over the last few months. One boy Albert, who we paid a driving license for, is still happily driving his kekeh – he gave me a lift recently. He makes around 3,000 leones per month. Meanwhile Ramadan, whom we provided with a tailoring machine last year, has now saved 25,000 leones in a bank account - a combination of his work in the curtain shop and his tailoring business. We are super proud of them both! The latest recipient of tools was Sheriff. After being reunited with his family two years ago after living on the streets of Waterloo, Sheriff is currently studying electrical engineering at Muraldo Institute and he desperately needed tools for practical lessons. I will never forget the screams of excitement when we gave him them in February 2024 as a late Christmas present. It was like we had given him the world!

Fatmata

Fatmata lives with a disability, and we've been supporting her for the past three years, including through her recent Primary school exams –the NPSE . She came to the Interim Care Centre in May 2024 with a list of about 20 names of street children in her community who she wants us to help saying***, "Five 0 you helped me go to school. There are so many street children in Portee now. You need to help all the others too. They are suffering."*** It takes her over two hours to get here from Portee but she still made that sacrifice for people she barely knows where she doesn't get anything in return. Empathy shines out from her. We are very proud of her and her kindness to others. It has been an honour to support Fatmata over the last three years and we are happy to confirm that we have just paid JSS1 (the equivalent of year 7 in the UK) for her at a new school.

Mabinty

Remember Mabinty, the disabled girl we met living on the streets in December? We mentioned her in the last annual report. Mabinty is a 19 year old with a disability who was living on the streets in Funkia after she was rejected by her family. In December 2023, we had to get her medical treatment after she was thrown from her wheelchair. Fast-forward a year and Mabinty is like a different woman. She is always beaming. She is back living with her mother and we provided her with a bed in February 2024.

Mabinty gave birth to a bouncing baby boy at the beginning of May 2024. We bought her lots of essential items for new born babies as she literally had nothing. She has named the baby, Moses, after my Godson MJ. She is really looking after baby Moses brilliantly and she is a wonderful mother. In November 2024, we paid for Mabinty to attend vocational school. She is learning hairdressing and is loving it! What was shocking was how hard it was to find a school for Mabinty to attend as unfortunately most schools in Funkia rejected her as they do not have disabled facilities, particularly toilets.

Our staffs' successes

Whenever one of our staff succeeds and achieves their dreams, we share their joy. With this in mind, we want to wish Isata Samura a huge congratulations. Isata has worked for Laughter Africa since 2016. She graduated with a degree in Public Administration from Milton Margai University in December 2024. Isata achieved a first class degree and got the highest mark in her whole department. Her dissertation was based on street children in Susan's Bay. Isata- you are a superstar! Training and building staff capability is important to us. In February and March 2024, Lamin, Isata, Biba and James received training from the Consortium for Street Children about 'Trauma informed approaches to street work' and 'Introduction to Street Work.' This follows on from the training they had in October 2023.

Positive Feedback from other reputable NGOs

We have a fantastic reputation among other reputable NGOs who have visited our projects. For instance, one Doctor from Germany said, ***"Your project is a wonderful project! Of the NGOs I know, the work of you is - next to the IIMC in Calcutta - the best I have ever come across. You are truly inspiring! You are also doing a great job! Thank you very much for your commitment, because this is not a matter of course."*** We have also had other similar comments from different NGO workers from abroad including staff from Helen Keller, Cap Anamur and Agiamondo. It is nice to be recognised by our peers.

Social media views

We are very happy with the growth of our social media following. In just December 2024 alone, we had 17,000 views on facebook and Instagram.

Challenges

The deaths of some of our beneficiaries

Since the annual report (published in December 2023) we tragically lost seven of the young people that we have worked with:

Theresa McCarthy

On 3rd June 2024, one of our girls from mobile, Theresa McCarthy tragically lost her life. She was found lying dead at the side of the road in Upgun, from a suspected sexual assault. Her body was removed and buried straight away. This means that no postmortem or police investigation took place so no one can know for sure what happened to her. To honour Theresa, we carried out a memorial service at mobile so that her friends could have a chance to say goodbye. They all wrote messages to Theresa. Through their tears, her friends shared their memories of Theresa as well as said Christian and Muslim prayers. We finished by singing Theresa a song. What makes it even more tragic is that we were about to reunify Theresa with her family again after 10 years on the streets. She was really looking forward to starting vocational school and having a fresh start. Rest in Power Theresa McCarthy! We will miss you!

Alpha James Kai

On Tuesday 9th April, we received some sad news. Two of the boys we support Alpha James Kai and Sallu Turay were in a serious vehicle accident. Sadly Alpha James died instantly. Sallu was in critical condition. Sallu and Alpha were joined at the hip-they were best friends and did everything together. As soon as we heard the news, our nurse Rebcca and myself rushed to Sallu and took him to hospital for treatment. Thankfully he was given the all clear. He stayed in the Interim Care Centre while he received medical attention. We also bought him clothes as his own clothes were covered in blood. Alpha had lived on the streets for at least 3 years. He was 20 years old. While living on the streets, he raised money for his school fees by engaging in different jobs. Despite all these challenges, he got a fantastic mark in his school exams which shows his strength of character and determination. In May 2023, we reunified him with his family. He started attending university in January 2024, studying Public Health.

On the way to Alpha James's funeral a few days later, we passed the site of the accident. The ruins of the truck still remained at the side of the road -the truck was completely pulverized. It's a miracle that Sallu survived the accident. Only him and one other man survived out of seven passengers. Alpha's funeral took place in Grafton on 11th April 2024. Over 2000 people came to bid farewell to Alpha and another boy Wurie (the brother of one of the girls we support) who also died in the same accident. At least 200 Laughter Africa children came to say goodbye to their friends. It was a very emotional, overwhelming day.

We have known Sallu since 2019. He is 19 years old and he went on the streets in 2016 after his dad and step mum maltreated him. Sallu has been through a lot recently. In January 2024, his mum died in a car accident. And then he lost his best friend Alpha. Only a few months later, Sallu had to sit the WASCE (the Sierra Leone equivalent of A-levels) which was not easy for him after all the trauma he had suffered this last year. The good news is that in October 2024, Sallu received his exam results and he got the results he needed to attend university. He will be applying next year. Sallu said,

"Thank you so much for you all your prayers and thoughts. I still have no idea why Allah spared me. But I promise I will make a difference in my life. I want to be a lawyer and I promise that I will honour Alpha and Wurie everyday by my actions. I will never forget them and what they meant to me. Thank you for paying for my medical treatment. I would be dead if it wasn't for Laughter Africa."

Mohamed Lamin and Fatmata

The first week in May 2024 was particularly tough - we lost two of our young people who lived at home with their families. Mohamed Lamin died on 5th May 2024. He was 20 and he left behind a 7 month old daughter called Adamma. He was studying tailoring at vocational school in Grafton. He was out with friends when he suddenly collapsed and began foaming at the mouth. It is looking likely that he was poisoned. The police arrested the suspects. We lost Fatmata in Portee on 4th May 2024. She was 22 and she died of AIDS related illness. She was sick for a long time so she decided to visit a traditional healer upline and that's where she died. We visited both the families of Fatmata and Mohamed Lamin to offer our condolences and to pay a contribution towards their burials. Rest in Power Mohamed and Fatmata!

Rasta

It is with profound sadness that we announce the death of Mohamed Tarawallie aka Rasta. He was one of the first children we worked with in 2015 and sadly his life was cut short following a lifelong battle with sickle cell disease. He died on 22nd June 2024. Rasta was such a chilled-out and relaxed person, so this is a big loss to the Laughter Family. He was a talented tailor and was always making clothes for his friends and family. The last time we saw him was at our birthday celebration a few weeks ago. It was like he had come to say goodbye. We told him that we were proud of him and how loved he was. We attended his burial and commiserated with his family members. Bakarr one of the social workers carried his coffin. Rasta- rest in peace buddy. You will be missed and never forgotten. Thanks for being an original!

Alhaji Koroma

The new year started sadly for Laughter Africa when one of our old boys Alhaji Koroma died on 8th January 2024. He was 18 and a half. He died after a long battle with sickness. We first met Alhaji at our mobile project in Portee. He came to the ICC in July 2021 after living on the streets for one year. We reunified him with his mum. His nickname in the ICC was Blues boy and he was an open and cheerful young lad who had so much left to give. He had so many friends because of how kind he was. Lamin, one of our social workers, went to visit Alhaji's family to give our condolences and to give a small contribution towards the funeral so that Alhaji could get the send off he deserved.

Betty

We first met Betty at the mobile project in Bomeh in May 2024. When she arrived at mobile, she was very, very sick and could hardly walk. She was diagnosed with HIV and TB. However, she started treatment and we thought that she was on the road to recovery. We reunified her with her family who live in a village outside of Bo on 2nd July 2024.

Sadly our nurse Rebecca received a call on 22nd July that Betty's condition was deteriorating rapidly so the nurse travelled immediately to see Betty. Although we took Betty to hospital and tried our best to save her, Betty tragically died on 24th July surrounded by her family. She was in a lot of agony so at least Betty is at peace now. By the end she couldn't even feed herself. She had to be fed spoons of water. Although this story has a sad ending, there are also moments of hope. Betty died knowing that she was loved and cared for by us and her family. Her family were just so grateful to be reunified with her before she died- so that they could say their goodbyes.

Mustapha (a former staff member)

Tragically one of our former staff Mustapha died in May 2024. Mustapha worked with us from 2015 until 2017. We want to thank him for his contribution into making Laughter what is it today.

Kush

Although we mentioned kush and the effects on street children in the last annual report, over the last year we have noticed it affecting the young people who have been living at homes with their families as well. Some of them have been home for 8 or 9 years and are now turning to kush despite the fact that they are sitting their exams or have set up their own businesses. They are turning back to the streets to feed their addictions. Its soul destroying to witness and makes me question whether happy endings ever truly happen here. We even had one boy turn up from our old mobile project in Funkia, S. His legs have been completely decimated by his use of kush. The smell is revolting and we are trying our best to find him treatment. Kush makes our job ten times harder and it is like we are fighting a losing battle. This 10 minute film clip appeared on channel 4 news. Its all about the affect of Kush in Sierra Leone. One thing that even shocked me while watching the video was the fact that now people are mixing kush with human bones. I hope that you find the video as informative as I did: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKc3SDBoFtA

Cost of living crisis

As we mentioned in the last annual report, the cost of living situation is deteriorating rapidly in Sierra Leone. Things are still so expensive. In conjunction with this, the cost of living crisis is also hitting the income of Laughter Africa. We have noticed a huge reduction in the numbers of donations received in 2023/2024. To counter-act this, the Trustees have decided to diversify our income streams, particularly focusing on Trusts and Foundations more in 2025. We also decided to temporarily close the Interim Care Centre and mobile project from July 2024 until January 2025. Instead we focused all our resources on the provision of school starter packs, uniforms, school fees, vocational school fees and on university fees for all the former street children we support. However, the street children still came to the ICC for medical treatment even when we are closed.

Political instability

Although Sierra Leone is a lot more stable than the previous two years, there are still times of great unrest. For instance, on the 19th June 2024, there were rumours of a nationwide strike. People stayed in their homes due to fear and although nothing actually materialised - the whole country was on a knife edge. This was because of the tripartite report and the politics surrounding the report. There were further rumours that the strikes would last nearly a week but this didn't happen. However, the strike did effect our plans for mobile as the safety of the staff and the young people is paramount. There were similar rumours of a protest in December 2024 but again nothing came to fruition.

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 £5003.74.

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, small businesses/companies and churches. In the financial period the total raised from supporters was **£66,716.09 (unrestricted). £11,757.78 (unrestricted)** was raised from Gift Aid. **£4.15 (unrestricted)** was earned through bank interest. **£35,000 (restricted)** was raised from Trusts and Foundations. In total, **£113,478.02** was raised in 2023/24. Laughter Africa had **£8,224.86 (unrestricted)** remaining from the previous financial year. In total, **£121,702.88** was available for Laughter Africa's use in 2023/24.

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 the European Union 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.

We are committed to achieving the highest standards in fundraising. We comply with all relevant statutory regulations, including the Charities Act 2011, the Charities Act 2022, 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 2023/24, we received no complaints related to our fundraising activity.





The trustees would also like to say a big thank you to all the organisations and trusts and foundations who gave a donation to Laughter Africa in 2023/24:

We have already received funding from the following Trusts and Companies in the 2024/2025 financial year; Let yourself Trust, Schroders, The Gilchrist Education Trust, The Trelix Trust, KitAid, Webmart and the Benefact Group. Thank you so much. It is through your generosity that we are able to continue our work.

Thank you so much to everyone for your support over the last 9 years. We have the best supporters and friends ever. Our existence is testament to your never-ending loyalty and solidarity. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I have nothing to repay you with apart from my thanks and appreciation. I still can't believe that we have survived 9 years! Its a miracle! Here's to another 9 years....



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 **£110,330.71** and there was **£8,164.35** held in the bank accounts and petty cash at the end of the financial year. A total of **£118,495.06.** Laughter Africa lost **£3,207.82** via multi currency exchange rate losses. A total expenditure of **£121,702.88** was spent in the 2023/2024 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 for 1 year	£8482.30
Salaries for National Staff	£11,220.49
Food	£4567.96
Non- food items	£4,095.47
Skills training costs	£2900.87
Staff travel costs during reunifications	£2778.82
Educational equipment	£23,742.85
Generator fuel for the ICC	£709.04
Street children travel costs	£1715.98
School fees/vocational training	£23,388.97
Medical costs for the street children	£4,349.61
Volunteer costs	£1653.25
Travel subsistence for staff	£194.31
Family support for the street children	£8311.27
Clothing	£423.77
Campaign and Advocacy	£179.96
Toiletries	£152.29
Staff travel accommodation	£346.87
Travel subsistence for the street children	£17.45
Audit Fees	£1296.49
Water supplies	£752.34
P.O. Box (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£13.80
Staff Welfare	£79.49
Bank Charges in Sierra Leone	£451.06
Hire of Premises for Mobile	£285.99
Rent Tax	£727.01
DBS and safeguarding costs	£3.55
End of Service Benefit	£925.22

Electricity for the ICC	£211.72
Insurance (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£97.93
Work permit and residential permit (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£218.73
Annual leave allowance for National staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1629.80
Medical Treatment for National Staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1276.13
Country Registration fees	£67.95
NASSIT (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1161.88
Telephone costs	£221.23
PAYE (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£973.86
TOTAL	**£109,625.71**

Expenditure in the UK

Type of expenditure	**Cost (Pounds)**
Bank Charges in the UK	**£705**
TOTAL	**£705**

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 **£4,349.61.** Similarly, food is provided at both the mobile project and the Interim Care Centre. The total cost spent on food in 2023/24 was **£4,567.96.** Coupled with this is the cost of non food items (both at mobile and the Interim Care Centre) which totalled **£4,095.47.** Non food items include things like coal, washing powder, towels, bleach and plate/cups etc….. **£2,900.87** was spent on skills training activities including art & craft materials, hairdressing materials, cultural dance and yoga at both mobile and the Interim Care Centre. The travel costs of the street children across all three departments was **£1,715.98.** Meanwhile staff travel across all three departments reached **£2,778.82.** This travel was for the payment of school fees and reunifications. 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 **£221.23.** Water supplies for the children at the ICC and mobile totalled **£752.34** for the year.

Costs associated solely with the Outreach department

The only payment solely associated with the outreach department was **£285.99** for the rent for the mobiles in Funkia and Bomeh. 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 **£8482.30** for one year. Connected to this is the rent tax which is a legal requirement in Sierra Leone. The rent tax totalled **£727.01.** Other costs associated with the interim Care Centre include clothing **(£423.77)** and toiletries **(£152.29)** for the street children. Meanwhile the cost of electricity for the ICC totalled **£211.72** while **£709.04** was spent on fuel for the generator for the ICC. All the other costs are listed above like medical expenses, food/non-food items and income generating skills. 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 **(£23,388.97),** educational equipment (uniforms, school bag, school shoes, stationery, equipment for vocational schools, text books) **(£23,742.85)** and family support for the most vulnerable street children once they have returned home **(£8,311.27).** This support could be a mattress, a bag of rice, a wheelchair, business support, baby 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 2024, as well as the new children with whom we will work in 2024/25. Family reunification is a key objective of the work and paying for school support is a major factor in keeping the street children at home. Other costs associated with this strand of work include; travel accommodation for staff during the reunification process **(£346.87);** travel subsistence for staff during the reunification process **(£194.31);** and travel subsistence for street children during the reunification process **(£17.45).**

Costs associated with the Campaigning and Advocacy department

In 2023/24, the communication and advocacy programme for Laughter Africa revolved around the International Day for Street Children (12th April). The total cost spent on advocacy and campaigning was **£179.96.**

Costs associated with staffing

Laughter Africa spent **£11,220.49** on national staff salaries. 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. At the time of writing this report (December 2024), Laughter Africa employed 11 full 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 **(£1276.13)** and GPA insurance **(£97.93).** Laughter Africa also paid NASSIT **(£1,161.88)** and PAYE **(£973.86)** 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 **(£1629.80)** and End of Service benefit **(£925.22).** The staffs' work has been greatly enhanced by the work of volunteers. Costs associated with the volunteers totalled **£1,653.25.** We spent **£79.49** on staff welfare and **£3.55** on DBS and safeguarding costs.

Country registration and other associated fees

In this financial year we had to pay re-registration fees to Freetown City Council and Western Area Rural District Council. The total cost of re-registration was **£67.95.** The audit costs were **£1,296.49.** 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 **£218.73.** To be recognised as a registered charity in Sierra Leone, one must have a PO Box. Laughter Africa has one at a cost of **£13.80** per year.

Bank charges in Sierra Leone

The bank charges in Sierra Leone were **£451.06.**

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 **£705.**









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

Over the next year, we do not plan to introduce any new components to our work due to the cost of living crisis and the political instability within the country. We will just continue our normal outreach, Interim Care Centre, Family Tracing and Reunification work and our Advocacy and Campaigning work.

Mobile

So far our mobile project has taken place in Susan's Bay, Regent Road in Town, Portee, Waterloo, Grafton, Bomeh and Funkia. For 2025, we hope to focus our mobile projects on the Eastern area of Freetown. In particular we are thinking of focusing on Wellington Wharf. Wellington Wharf would encompass all the areas nearby Wellington including PMB, Old Wharf, Calaba Town and Congo Water.

In the years further ahead, we also hope to have mobile projects in Tombo, Lumley and Aberdeen as they are the only big areas which have a large congregation of street children where we have not had mobile projects yet. Then we plan to start all over again and work in the same areas where we have worked previously particularly Susan's Bay, Mill Street and other areas in town which have a high concentration of street children.

ICC

For the ICC, we don't have any specific new plans as such. We plan to just keep doing what we have always done. We have a strong rehabilitation programme in place and know that it is successful.

FTR

The school support is one of our most successful components and is the reason why so many children remain home after they are reunified with their families. We will keep doing what we have always done as we know it works. We are hoping to repeat the success of our vocational training programme including the provision of business support equipment again in 2025.

Advocacy, Campaigns and Communications

The repeal of the loitering laws in Sierra Leone will be our primary campaign issue for 2025 and beyond. We plan to be lobbying MPs and different Ministers and Ministries, training the street children and training the police so that they are better trained in their interactions with street children.

Work in the UK

Laughter Africa is ten years old in 2025. It is a real achievement for us to have survived for so long. We hope to hold special events throughout the UK to celebrate such a landmark.

G. DECLARATION











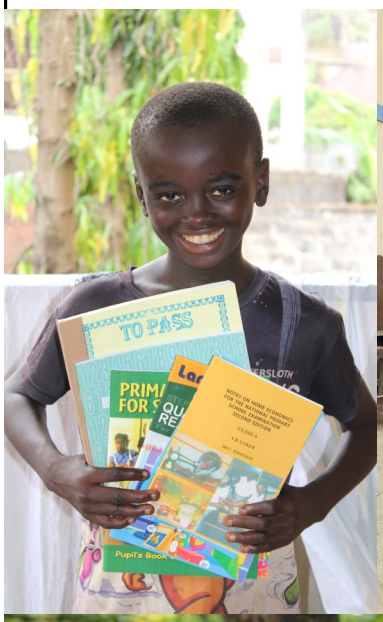




The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)	James Tyrrell	
Full name(s)	**James Francis Robert Tyrrell**	**Mark Quentin Neal**
Position (e.g. chair or secretary)	**Chairperson**	**Secretary**
Date	**27/12/2024**	**27/12/2024**





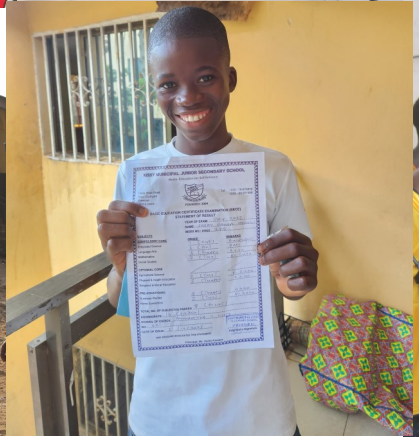














CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Laughter Africa	1154712

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	01/04/2023	To	31/03/2024

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	66,716.09'		-	66,716.09'	102,740.50
Gift Aid	11,757.78'	-	-	11,757.78'	14,790.60
Trusts and Foundations		35,000	-	35,000'	-
Bank interest	4.15'	-	-	4.15'	0.25'
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total *(Gross income for AR)*	78,478.02'	35,000	-	113,478.02'	117,531.35'
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total receipts	78,478.02'	35,000	-	113,478.02'	117,531.35'
A3 Payments					
Charitable Activities	72,878.16'	35,000	-	107,878.16'	109,695.59
Bank charges (UK)	705'	-	-	705'	811
Bank charges (Sierra Leone)	451.06'	-	-	451.06'	469.42
Governance	1,296.49'	-	-	1,296.49'	110.25
Multi currency exchange rate loss	3,207.82'	-	-	3,207.82'	5,347.79
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	78,538.53'	35,000	-	113,538.53'	116,434.05'
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	-	-	-	-	-
Total payments	78,538.53'	35,000	-	113,538.53'	116,434.05'
Net of receipts/(payments)	'-60.51'	0'	-	-60.51'	1,097.30'
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	8,224.86	-	-	8,224.86	-
Cash funds this year end	8164.35'	0'		8164.35'	8,224.86

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

B1 Cash funds

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	Funds in Sierra Leone	1,363.44'		-
	Funds in the UK	1797.17'	-	-
	Reserves	5003.74'	-	-
	Total cash funds	8,164.35'	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

B2 Other monetary assets

Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

B3 Investment assets

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
James Tyrrell	James Francis Robert Tyrrell	20/05/2024
	Mark Quentin Neal	20/05/2024

In accordance with the Charitable Incorporated Organisations (General) Regulations 2012 the Trustees confirm that:
a) the CIO has given no guarantees, where any potential liability under the guarantee is outstanding at the date of the statement of assets and liabilities;
and b) the CIO does not have any debts outstanding at the date of the statement of assets and liabilities which are secured by an express charge on any of the assets of the CIO

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	**Laughter Africa**		
On accounts for the year ended	**31st March 2024**	**Charity no (if any)**	**1154712**
Set out on pages	**1 -2**		

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31 / 03 / 2024**.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

** Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.*

Signed:	Peter Kamaray	**Date:**	28/5/2024
Name:	Peter Kamaray		
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):	**The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sierra Leone**		
Address:	**Peter Kamaray & Co** **20 Wilberforce Street** **Freetown, Sierra Leone**		

PETER KAMARAY & CO
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS
20 WILBERFORCE STREET
FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE
DATE

Section B	Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

PETER RAMRAY & CO
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS
20, WILKENSON STREET
FREETOWN SIERRA LEONE
SIGN
DATE

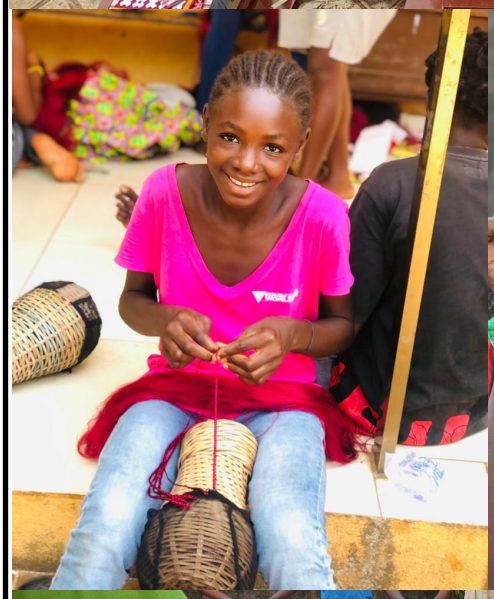
LAUGHTER AFRICA

England & Wales - Charity number 1154712

Accounts

LAUGHTER AFRICA TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023











Laughter AFRICA

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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			
Albert Daniel Gbow			
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 and Finance) (Sierra Leone)

Abubakarr Kargbo (Director of Outreach) (Sierra Leone)

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

Isata Samura (Director of the Interim Care Centre/ Director of Advocacy, Communications and Campaigns) (Sierra Leone)

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

B. STRUCTURE, GOVENANCE 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 Whistleblowing 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 the Charities Act 2022 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 2022/23 due to the 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 five Directors in Sierra Leone. The Directors are responsible for different departments:

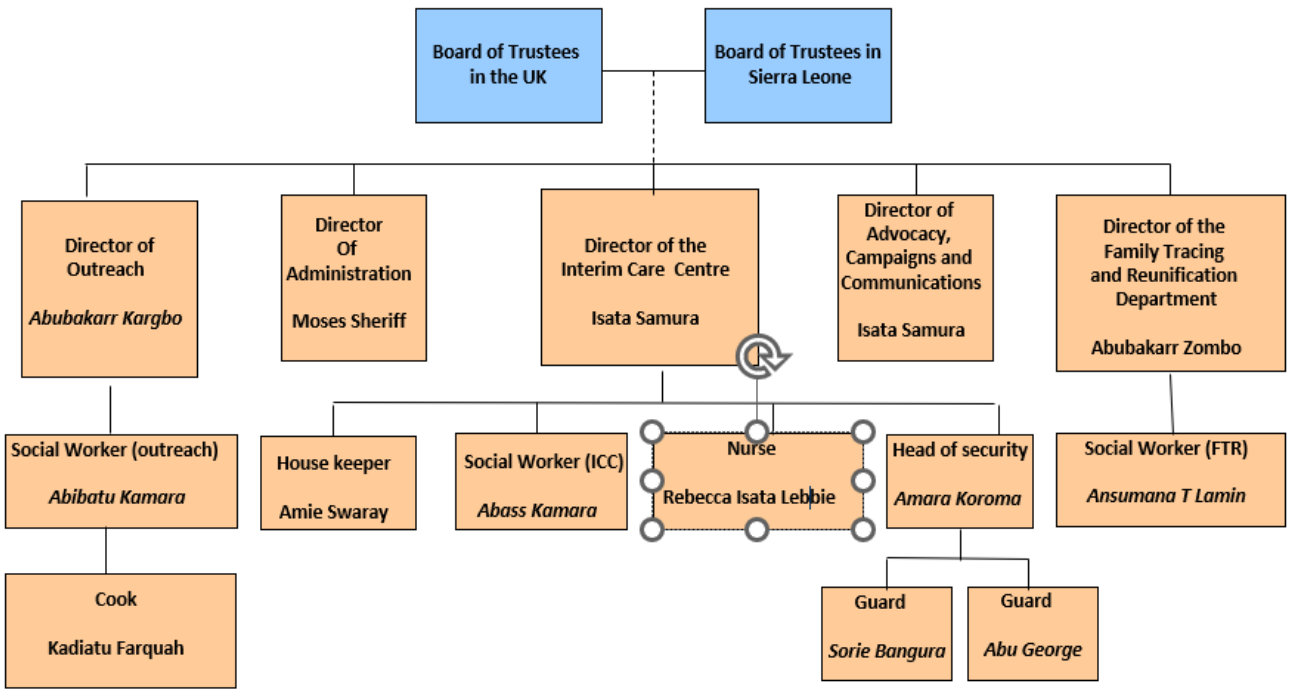
- Outreach Department
- Interim Care Centre Department
- Family Tracing and Reunification Department
- Administration Department
- Communications, Advocacy and Campaigns department

All five 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.. incompliance 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/ Paternity Policy	Flexible working policy
Annual leave policy	PSEAH 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 18. 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:

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

The Outreach department

The mobile project takes place five times a week from Monday to Friday from 4pm to 7pm. Each day, medical treatment, food, water, and different activities (such as cultural dance, yoga, art and crafts, counselling, education, games and sports) are provided. To see a video of the street children playing 'Tug of Peace,' visit the comments here.

The main focus of our outreach work since the last annual report (published in November 2022) has been the mobile project in Grafton, a city twenty miles east of Freetown. Between 11th October 2022 and the end of May 2023, our mobile project in Grafton reached 314 street children. In the final week of the project we reunified 75 street children with their families - a rewarding way to leave the area.

We are delighted that Laughter Africa's reputation is spreading via word of mouth among the street children all over Freetown. In fact 11 out of the 15 boys that stayed at the ICC in January 2023 were not originally living on the streets in Grafton – they came to the Grafton mobile especially after hearing about Laughter's work from other street children in Eastern parts of Freetown (which are far away from Grafton). The street children share among themselves places to go for help and support and the fact that we are the top of their recommendations mean a lot. An example of this is FA (15) and Fatmata (17) who we met at our mobile project in Grafton. Fatmata was living on the streets in Grafton. She was at a bar in Town one night and met FA for the first time. FA had lived on the streets for one year in Town and was really struggling to survive. She turned to the streets after experiencing men piken and abuse at home. Fatmata also knows what it's like to struggle on the street. She had lived on the streets for 8 years since the death of her father during Ebola so she could recognize when someone else was struggling. Fatmata said, ***"I was at a club in Town and I met another girl living on the streets called FA. She was really struggling on the streets so I told her about the new laughter programme starting in Grafton so she came with me all the way back to Grafton."*** We love it when the street children tell other young people about us. They are the best ambassadors to have! We found that a lot of brothers and sisters were living on the streets together in Grafton. One of the boys, Simeon begged us to help his sister before him as she was really suffering on the streets.

We have had a variety of different medical cases at the new mobile, from Elephantiasis through to Fibroadenoma where the child's stomach was so swollen she looked pregnant. Our nurse provided the needed medical attention to these children. Other medical emergencies over the last 6 months Include Mbalu who brought her 20 month old baby Hassan to see us. He was so malnourished- we could see his ribs. Mbalu has not had an easy life. Her mother died of Covid and sadly, her sister died in childbirth. With nowhere to go, Mbalu ended up on the streets where she became pregnant. Tragically the father of her baby died after being hit by a vehicle. We took baby Hassan to hospital and he underwent intensive treatment to save his life. He has since been released and made a full recovery.

Meanwhile, just before we closed, one of the girls from mobile was very sick. She had given herself an abortion using traditional medicine. However, it went wrong and although her baby died, she herself nearly died due to complications from the medicine she took. Thankfully our nurse Isata took her to hospital and the girl lived but it was a very close call. Sadly her experience is not unique - we hear so many stories of girls living on the streets nearly dying by giving themselves abortions. Another girl, Mariamma, came to us in May 2023 with horrific burns on her legs after an argument with her friend who threw hot water all over her. They had an argument over Kush– a new drug which is highly addictive. We got her treatment and she make a full recovery. It brought back sad memories of Alhaji who died in June 2021 after having boiling hot water thrown over him. At least this time, it was a happy ending. Sadly, one of the young ladies at mobile, Mariatu, lost her baby daughter, Medisha, in the middle of May 2023. All the mobile staff attended Medisha's burial and we paid the costs of the burial.

From January 2023 until June 2023 our main focus at mobile was on election sensitisation. We concentrated on different activities to encourage the children to refrain from any political violence which may take place. We didn't want to see a repeat of the riots that took place last 10th August 2022. Street children are usually one of the first groups to get involved in any conflict; as they say prevention is better than cure! We did this through drama and music. To see a video of one of the music lessons in action, visit the comments here.

One of our favourite stories from the Grafton mobile is the story of 'TTM.' Ibrahim, Ishmael and Sorie, children living on the streets of Grafton, have set up a dance troupe, 'TTM' to raise money. They are quite famous, even being booked by Laughter Africa's dance teacher Joseph Lavelie to perform at his wedding in January 2023. We reunified them with their families at the end of May 2023. One of them even wants to study hairdressing which is fantastic as it is really challenging traditional gender norms. A big congratulations to Joseph and his new wife Mariamma too! We have known Joseph since 2016 and he is a valued member of our team!

Mobile is the frontline of street life so our social workers at mobile never know what to expect each day. For instance, on 19th May 2023, one of the girls from mobile, Aminata, was summoned to appear before the chief in Grafton for abusive language. One of the social workers, Bakarr, represented Aminata in the hearing. Although they wanted to detain her at the police station, Bakarr stepped in. They asked Aminata to pay the fine of le250. However, Bakarr negotiated the fine down to le50. We closed mobile just before the election in June 2023, due to safety concerns but we reopened the mobile project in October 2023.

Our new mobile opened on the 9th October at Funkia - a small, local fishing community. We have been welcomed into the community by everyone from the local gangsters to the headsman. This project is ably looked after by Rebecca, Biba, Bakarr, and Kadie, so I headed out there for the first time one week after the opening. Its a densely populated area, not quite as poor as Susan's Bay where we had a previous mobile, but very poor just the same. I had no directions and had left my phone at the ICC as I wasn't sure how safe the area would be.

I wandered through the market, the noises from the sellers, the smells, the sights, it would be quite overwhelming if I'd not been here for nine years. I asked several of the sellers if they had heard of the hall we were going, but no-one could help me. After hours I found the location of the hall. It was a wonderful moment and as I opened the door I saw over 75 street children were in the room.

Since October until 11th December 2023 we have welcomed over 257 kids into the mobile project but not all of them come every day. The children all sang a welcome song and afterwards we went outside to play a game of football on the beach. The beach was quite a walk and to get there we had to go through the shacks and homes of the local people. We then waded through a river, stepping through the fish heads and filth on the dump that covered the coast down to the sea. We had a great game of football and I even headed the ball!

On my way back I met a young lad picking through the rubbish dump with the pigs to find old aluminium cans to sell. He's probably around 10 or 11 years old. I could tell from the state of his clothes that he was on the streets and invited him back to meet the others in the hall and share our food. He sat down and could barely keep his eyes open, almost falling off the bench twice before the food arrived. I've never seen anyone so completely exhausted. He had almost certainly taken some drugs- probably Kush.

Rebecca gave medicines to everyone who needed them, and as I was almost leaving to go home, one of the girls pointed out to me that one of the boys, Sallu, was bleeding from his groin. It was the kind of wound that you don't want to even look twice. Really turned my stomach. I found out that he had been caught stealing and had been beaten by the community. In his attempt to get away he'd impaled himself on a spiky metal pipe and cut himself very severely; without treatment he would probably die. He wasn't even asking for help, just bravely sitting quietly and bleeding profusely. One of my team took him to every pharmacy and hospital in the area but nowhere would accept him as he was too smelly. It makes me so angry. He was getting weaker, so we carried him back to the ICC where he was able to shower, put on fresh clothes and we eventually got him to a hospital that would treat him properly. I wish I could say that this was an unusual day, but this is a pretty standard day at mobile. A few weeks later, by the middle of November, Sallu was dead. He was caught stealing again so he was beaten to death. The children told me in such a a nonchalant way. Sallu was treated like dirt when he was alive, and he is still treated like dirt in death. Even in death, he is just treated like a joke. No one is crying for him. No one is mourning him. One thing that I am immensely proud of is the fact that at least before he died- Sallu knew that he was cared for. While everyone else mocked and jeered him, Laughter showed him kindness. When he had his injury, he could hardly walk so myself and the staff had to carry him to the ICC. We were there for him when no one else was. My favourite photo of Sallu is when he had just won his first game of Bingo. And this is how I choose to remember him. Not in the way he died but in the way that he lived; full of life. Again there is no consequence for the people who killed him- they just carry on with their lives as if nothing ever happened. I am not justifying stealing. But how can it be ok to beat someone until they are dead just for stealing?

Interim Care Centre (ICC)

When children are ready to leave the streets, they stay with us, temporarily, at the Interim Care Centre in Adonkia, a coastal town about nine miles south-west of Freetown. Over 100 street children stay in the ICC each year. It is the heartbeat of Laughter Africa – we couldn't do our work without it. The ICC is refuge, a safe place for them to escape, to heal, to learn new skills and most of all let them be children again. It gives them a chance just to be…

Since the last annual report (published in November 2022) until the middle of December 2023, we have welcomed 106 children and young people into the ICC - 51 were girls while 55 were boys. All the children lived on the streets of Grafton or Funkia.

Reasons for migration to the street

	Men pikin	Child Labour	At least one parent dead	Care giver is disabled or elderly	No school	Maltreatment	Poverty	Resented by the step -parent	Abuse at home
Boys	11%	55%	73%	5%	55%	73%	16%	13%	0%
Girls	55%	67%	59%	14%	71%	80%	14%	16%	8%

These children are not on the streets due to choice. They had no other options. For boys and girls, their reasons for migrating to the streets were very similar and it often involved a combination of factors.

Quite often they didn't live with their parents. The majority lived with either a step parent or another relative such as a grandparent, aunt or uncle. This was either because of men pikin or because either both or one of their parents had died. Men Pikin is where a person takes a child from their family under the guise of providing them with an education. But instead they put the child to work and take any money the child makes.

The children would usually turn to the streets because:

- They were forced to take part in child labour.
- They were maltreated or beaten by a step parent, grandmother, aunt or uncle
- No one would pay school for them. However, they would complain that their step parent, uncle or aunt would pay school for their own biological children, just not pay for them.

Usually it was a combination of all three. Here are just some of the examples of the maltreatment they experienced at home:

- ***"My aunt would send me stone mining or she wouldn't give me food. She beat me. She would set plastic on fire, melt it and put it on my skin so that my skin would burn."***
- ***"I had to do all the domestic work including laundry. Sometimes when I took too long at the waterside, she would come and grab me by the ear and pull me all the way home."***

- ***"My mum and dad died when I was a small pikin. My sister took care of me. But she didn't have money for me. She beat me too much. Maltreated me. Whenever she beat me I would go in the corner and think about my mum and cry."***
- "***My mum and dad died during Ebola. So I had to live with my aunt. She maltreated me. She wouldn't pay school for me so I had to pay school for myself by fishing. She would beat me a lot- she would strip me naked and I would have to lie on the floor and be beaten. I would be hit by a cane one dozen times each time she beat me."***
- ***"My step mum flogged me. She would set fire to pieces of plastic and drop it on my body. I still have the scares. It was so painful. When the plastic melts on my body- the agony I felt."***

Experiences on the streets

The issues identified in the table above were the major issues experienced by the young people in the ICC when they lived on the streets. The issue of foreign fishermen was not a problem in Grafton as Grafton is nowhere near a wharf area. The issue with the foreign fishermen takes place mostly in areas like Susan's Bay, Portee, Aberdeen and Tombo.

	Raped by Police	Raped	Friend died	Pregnancy	Abortion	Baby died	Miscarry	CSW	Drugs	Gang	HIV
Boys	5%	11%	55%	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	9%	38%	31%	2%
Girls	14%	69%	59%	49%	14%	8%	20%	75%	37%	27%	6%

Gang membership:

Interestingly gang membership was high up amongst the girls and was nearly comparable with the boys. This membership is usually dependent upon sexual favours. R said, ***"I was a member of the Reds. To join I had to sleep with the leader of the Reds"*** while Y said, ***"I was a member of Black Leo. I had to sleep with all the members."*** This was repeated often amongst all the girls who were members of a gang.

Death of a friend living on the streets:

A lot of the young people had at least one friend who had died while living on the streets. For the girls, the death was usually a result of gender based violence indicating there is still so much to do on this issue. Maybe our sexual violence prevention training has only scratched the surface. One girl, S, said,

"***My paddi Augusta died while living on the streets. We went to a club. I wanted to leave but she decided to stay longer. On her way home, she was raped by 5 men. They pepper sprayed her in the eyes and in the vagina. They raped her to death."***

Another girl, K said,

"Aminata and me went to a club. We met two men and they brought us back to their house. I could hear her screaming from a room next door. I found her eventually bleeding in the room. They had forced their hand up her vagina and it had caused her to bleed profusely. We went to the police and they came and saw but didn't do anything. Aminata died 2 or 3 days later."

Meanwhile K said,

"My friend FA died while living on the streets. She was 17 and died one year ago. FA went out and slept with two men. However they refused to pay her and they beat her. When she came back to the baffa, she was vomiting blood. We didn't have money to take her to hospital so she died of her injuries. I was by her side when she died."

Most of the girls we interviewed had story like this.

Raped by a police officer:

Being raped by a police officer was an experience which had happened to both the boys and girls living on the streets in Grafton. Interestingly the boys were only ever raped on the streets, while a big majority of the girls were raped in police stations (although some were raped on the streets as well).

One boy, M, said,

"I was raped twice. Three policemen raped me the first time. Two policemen raped me the second time. The first time, they saw me on a market table sleeping so they held me and butterwaissed (the kreo word for gay sex) me. They had one heavyweight iron. After they finished I was bleeding heavily. The second time- they locked my mouth with pieces so that I couldn't shout out."

Meanwhile another boy called M said,

"The Policeman raped me boku boku times. Different policemen each time. Two policemen raped me each time. They held my mouth. When I was sleeping on a market table they came and took my clothes off and made me naked. Its happened too many times to remember. It hurts. I was bleeding lots. They tell me that if I don't sleep with them then they will lock me in a cell."

One girl, S, said,

"They arrested me and put me in a cell. I don't know the reason but I think it was for loitering. I was in the cell for 1 day. They made me sleep with them before they released me. They raped me just because i lived on the streets."

Another girl, M, said,

"I was arrested for loitering. I was in a cell for 3 days. I had to sleep with three of the policemen at the same time. It happened twice in the three days. They arrested me for loitering and made me sleep with them."

There were so many similar stories echoed time and time again. This is why it is so important for the loitering law to be repealed (see the Future Plans section for more information on this).

Babies dying:

A lot of the girls who gave birth on the streets, sadly lost their children. One girl called S said,

"***On the streets I had a baby. I gave birth to a girl called Kadiatu but she died 2 weeks later. I gave birth in the street as I couldn't afford to give birth in a hospital- even though child birth is meant to be free. She died after her body got too hot."***

Similarly S said,

"On the streets, I gave birth to a boy called Abdulrahman junior. He was only 1 month and a few days old when he died. He lived on the streets with me. He was sick. I didn't have money so that's why we couldn't go to hospital."

F stated,

"On the streets, I got belly. The pikin died 3 days later after she born. I didn't get a chance to even give her a name."

Some of the girls conceived after being raped on the streets. Meanwhile quite a few of the girls miscarried due to the violent nature of the streets. Many were beaten by gangsters and as a result lost their babies.

Commercial sex work

Shockingly we found that the girls from Funkia were being even more exploited than usual. Instead of paying the girls for sex, it turns out the local fisherman were just giving them fish. The value of the fish is around a quarter of what they used to be paid in cash.

Activities carried out in the ICC are the same as outlined in previous year's annual reports and include:

- Education
- Counselling
- cultural dance
- music lessons (to see a video clip of the girls singing, please click here, here, here and here)
- drama
- yoga
- skills training (including making shoes, jewellery, soap, crochet, carpets, hairdressing, etc.)

We also celebrated three special days in the ICC over the 6 months:

- In April 2023, to celebrate the International Day for Dance, we had a 'danceathon' with the staff and pupils at Hope Academy, a secondary school in Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside, UK. We even had a live link from the school to the ICC, so that the street children here could dance along to the same songs. To see a video of the danceathon in action, visit the comments here.

- In April 2023, we celebrated Easter with the children by having an Easter egg hunt. We hid over 100 Easter eggs all over the compound. The winner was Margaret who found ten!
- And finally we had an early birthday party for Laughter Africa on 25th May 2023 before the boys in the ICC went home. We decided to invite the children from the community to join us. We had between 80 to 100 children join us. We played musical statues, musical bumps and musical chairs and had a dancing competition. We finished the party with yummy food and a gorgeous cake! The boys in the ICC had a 'design the cake' competition and the winner was Junior's design. His prize was to have his design made into our birthday cake.

One of our favourite stories from the ICC was when Alie, one of the boys who stayed with us in April/May 2023, celebrated his 13th birthday while he was staying with us. We gave him a packet of biscuits as a present- but it was like we had given him the world. He had never received a birthday present before and he couldn't stop smiling for days.

Family Tracing and Reunification Department (FTR)

The FTR department 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. Between 22nd October 2022 and 7th June 2023, we reunified 166 children/ young people with their families (plus 3 old children were re-reunified with their families). If the children that have been reunified with their families stay at home, we pay their school fees or vocational training costs. Altogether in the 2022/2023 academic year, we provided:

- 557 school starter packs (bags, books, pens, vests, socks and shoes).
- 483 young people's uniforms
- 322 young people's new school/ vocational school charges
- 115 young people's extra lessons in preparation for their exams.
- 119 young people's exam charges
- 116 young people to receive text books in preparation for their exams.
- 12 young people to go to university

We also give extra support to the most vulnerable children, which can include transportation costs, lunch, business support, bikes, bags of rice, mattresses, 'help a baby basket' support kits, rental costs or wheelchairs. The FTR department also provide medical treatment for any of the children who remain at home.

After the success of our mother and baby training in December 2020 and 2021 we decided to repeat the training programme on 10th December 2022. 105 girls attended with their children to develop vital skills to help them through Motherhood, such as nappy changing, bathing, first aid and soothing practices. Most of all we wanted to see if we could help make a difference in building their relationships with their children. Sometimes the girls don't know how to express their love for their children as they were never shown love by their own families. We don't want the wounds of the past to be inflicted on the next generation. So we taught the girls about positive parenting techniques and other non-violent forms of discipline, by emphasising the idea of showing their child love. We gave each girl a teddy bear to give to their child. When they presented the toy, they told their child "You are my piken and I love you." For some it was the first time that they had expressed their

love to their child. That was pretty powerful to witness. We were joined at the training by one of the newest members of the Laughter family 'Ezekiel' who was born on 14th November 2022. His mum, Sento had a 5 hour operation as she had a complicated delivery but we were able to afford all her medicine and save the lives of both mother and son. To see Sento sing two new lullabies that she had learned at the training, visit here and here. Another new member of our family was 6 day old Isha, whose mum was Emma.

Our latest mum is Isha. She came to the Interim Care Centre in October 2023. We found her living on the streets of Funkia were she lived for 3 years. She was seven months pregnant. She was originally from Guinea, but was brought over on a boat to Sierra Leone by a much older 'boyfriend' when she was 14. She has absolutely no family here to support her and her 'boyfriend' isn't around any longer either – he has two other "wives" and he had no use for Isha once she became pregnant. Her mum and dad are dead so she is truly isolated. She is about to turn 18 on Christmas Eve. Since the attempted coup on 26th November 2023, there is a curfew and no one is allowed outside of their homes during the designated times. So of course, Isha went into labour around 2am on Friday 15th December during the curfew. As we have no vehicle, Isata (our social worker) had to ask our neighbour Murray who has a kekeh (a bit like a tuk- tuk) to drive them to the hospital. Isata said, ***"I was so scared. We had to pass about 10 different checkpoints with soldiers/police with guns. I thought that I was going to get arrested. Isha and her baby's life were at risk so I had no choice– I had to act!"*** Thankfully they got to the hospital in the nick of time and Isha gave birth to a bouncing baby boy called Andrew. We have already paid for a place to rent for Isha for two years and have provided her with a bed and a 'help a baby' basket which includes lots of baby clothes and other baby items so Andrew has everything that he needs. We know that Isha will make an excellent mother – she is already very motherly to the children in the centre and keeps an eye out for each of them. She is also a great cook! She has never been to school so once she has settled with the baby and gotten into a routine then we will pay for her to attend vocational school where she would like to learn tailoring. We will also be providing Isha with business support so that she can support herself and her baby. On 16th December 2023 we had our 4th annual mum and baby training led by Isata and Rebecca (our nurse). We had around 40 young mums/pregnant girls join us and again it was a huge success.

The role of the FTR department is to respond to any emergencies. On Monday 9th January 2023, there was a huge fire in Susan's Bay. It's a densely populated area with flimsily constructed houses made from scavenged materials, so the fire took hold quickly and ravaged the area leaving thousands of people displaced. Fatmata was one of the young girls displaced, we met her five years ago and she's stayed off the streets ever since. She said, ***"I just ran and took my baby. My brother took some of the baby's clothes. I was so scared. The whole house was destroyed."*** Her beautiful baby boy Idrissa was less than one month old (we had paid for Fatmata's medical treatment during labour). We provided Fatmata with an emergency response pack which included clothes, toiletries and baby supplies. Tragically Idrissa died at the end of June 2023. We have been supporting Fatmata through her loss and she recently enrolled back into school in September 2023. She will be sitting the BECE this academic year. To see a video of the fire, visit the comments here.

Most of the staff receive phone calls from the children and their families. Often the children just phone to say hello but sometimes they might need something or have an issue at home. The team are on call 24/7 for the children and respond immediately whenever they are needed. The following scenarios gives an example of the variety of situations that the FTR team have faced within the last year alone.

One of our old girls from Funkia, Isatu came back to visit us with a heart breaking story. Last July while she was visiting family in Lungi, her two year old baby was kidnapped by a group of bike riders. They said that the witch doctor told them that her child would give them luck. She refused to hand over her baby so they hit her in the back of the head and stole her baby for a ritual. She never saw her baby again. We believe that the child died in a ritualistic killing. It was a timely reminder that witchcraft and witch doctors still have a lot of power in Sierra Leone especially during election years. To read more about ritualistic killings, please see an old article from the BBC website.

One of our old girls is Kumba who we reunified with her family last year. In the middle of February 2023, she was involved in an accident in Waterloo. A car crashed and the driver killed 4 people and injured 5 more. One of the girls injured was Kumba. She was found underneath the vehicle after the accident. Although she is stable now, we are still worried about her feet. To see coverage of the accident, visit here.

Communications, Campaigns and Advocacy

Our Communications, Advocacy and Campaigns department started in September 2016 and it has been in operation ever since.

Since we published the last annual report in November 2022, the communications, campaigns and advocacy department purposely kept a low profile in the build up to the election in June 2023. This meant that we focused mainly on the International Day for Street Children as well as continuing our work on sexual violence prevention.

International Day for Street Children

Every year on 12th April, street children organisations all over the world celebrate the International Day for Street Children (IDSC). This year the theme of the day was 'Keeping Street-connected Children Safe.' In February/March 2023, we asked the street connected children we worked with about the biggest risks facing them on the streets at that moment. The overwhelming issue that came up was the upcoming election. So the Network for Street Children Sierra Leone decided to localise this years' theme to 'Keeping children safe before, during and after the election.' We know that during election times, many children, particularly street children, are given incentives to join political events such as rallies or community meetings to increase the numbers of the crowd. Incentives such as money or T- shirts are offered.

On 12th April, the Network for Street Children Sierra Leone held a press conference to mark the International Day for Street Children. The idea of the press conference was to condemn such actions and to appeal to political parties, community members, family members and children themselves, not to let children, particularly street children, be involved or engaged in any political events or election violence that may occur before, during or after the election.

13 media houses attended the conference including Lion Mountain Radio, the Calbash newspaper, Awoko newspaper, SLBC Television, AYV television, SLBC radio, Radio Democracy, the Salone times, Afri Radio, the Standard Times, Culture Radio, Rise Radio and Epic radio. We appeared on lots of TV, radio and newspapers afterwards. We had four main speakers.

- the President of Children Forum Network (CFN), Mahmoud Barrie,
- the Director of Gender and Children's Affairs, Human Rights Commission Sierra Leone, Gloria Bayoh,
- the Admin Officer at the Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police, Lansana Tarawalie,
- Henry, a former street child, representing Laughter Africa

The President of Children Forum Network (CFN), Mahmoud Barrie, said that the issue of children's involvement during elections has been a great concern in the country. He also spoke about how the rights of street children are ignored especially when it comes to access to justice.

The Director of Gender and Children's Affairs, Human Rights Commission Sierra Leone, Gloria Bayoh, applauded the Network of Street Children Sierra Leone for calling for the protection of children. She said that the Commission has noticed with disdain that during electioneering processes in the country, children have become the most useful tools that some politicians use to cause mayhem in the country. She said that this practice must stop. Gloria Bayoh assured the gathering that the Commission will not relent on its activities and commitment in order to protect children during the election.

The Admin Officer at the Family Support Unit (FSU) of the Sierra Leone Police, Lansana Tarawalie, said that people take advantage of children living on the street which he said is a growing concern in the country. He added that because of this concern the FSU has established a desk in order to collect data of any election related cases involving children. He assured everyone that the FSU is very committed towards the protection of children during the election.

Henry, one of Laughter Africa's old boys who has stayed home since his reunification, made an appeal to all street connected children not to get involved in any election violence. He discussed some examples of election related violence that he witnessed on the streets: ***"During the last election in 2018, I lived on the streets and witnessed lots of election violence. I lived around King Jimmy, Ecowas Street and the Government Wharf areas. Every few days during the election period (October 2017 until March 2018), different politicians would come and give the street children 10 leones each to support them in political rallies. My friend Lahai used the 10 leones to buy some drugs and get high. During the rally he got into a fight and was hit over the head with a bottle. Lahai was injured and then he was arrested and spent over 3 weeks in a police cell for election violence until Laughter Africa managed to get him released."***

One of the most touching things that happened during the conference was when all the speakers and media made a pledge to protect children during the election. It was a hugely powerful moment.

In addition to the press conference, Isata, Laughter Africa's Head of Advocacy and Henry appeared on radio and tv across Sierra Leone including Culture Radio and SLBC radio. To hear one of the radio shows, please visit here. To see a television report about the press conference, please visit here.

The Network for Street Children produced a Vox Pox which can be viewed here. The Vox Pox features Mrs Bayoh, a representative from the Council of Imams and other Sierra Leoneans who urge the country to keep children safe before, during and after the election. Keep an eye out for Henry, one of our old boys, who features in the Vox Pox. The vox pox has been playing on television since April 2023. The International Day for Street Children was a huge success all over the world.

Campaign engagement across all social media was at an all time high, with over 61,900 interactions, 186.7 million reach and 7,600 uses of #IDSC2023 and/or #SafeStreets so the message spread far and wide.

To celebrate the International Day for Street Children in April, the girls in the ICC took part in workshops written by the Consortium for Street Children (CSC). They had to draw a map of all the places where they spend time in while living on the streets and had to decide whether they felt safe in those spaces or not. The girls discussed the different people they came across on the streets and whether they trusted them.

We then carried out the 'circle of trust' activity. They worked in small groups and then scrunched up their papers and threw them in the middle of the compound. They then looked at each paper and discussed the results as a big group. Then we carried out the 'circle of trust' activity. Anyone they trusted remained in the circle while anyone they didn't trust was put in the outside of the circle. The people the girls trusted most on the streets were social workers while the least trusted groups were gangsters, the police and community members. Other professionals such as doctors, teachers, soldiers were more mixed. After the workshops the girls in the ICC had a party and celebrated in style!

Meanwhile at mobile for the International Day for Street children, the young people wrote about what would make them feel safer on the streets. The most common suggestion was to repeal the loitering laws while another suggestion was a free drug rehabilitation centre. One huge concern expressed by the young people was about Kush, a drug flooding the streets of Freetown. They wanted the government to tackle this issue urgently. To see a video of some of the street childrens' messages to the government, visit the comments here.

Our sexual violence prevention work

As we mentioned in the last annual report (published in November 2022), since October 2021 our advocacy work has focused on our sexual violence survivor support workshops which took place in eight communities as well as launching the survivor support hotline. Over the last two years we reached 4000 street children and 318 community stakeholders. The second part of the campaign was about appointing and training 15 community advocates who live in their community, offering the street children a safe space to go to immediately after they have been sexually assaulted.

In December 2022 Isata, the Head of Advocacy and Communications, started the final part of the campaign; introducing the street children to their new community advocates. The advocates we have trained are fierce warriors. We know that the street children are in safe hands. One of the advocates for Grafton, Marie, is the chairlady of her community. She is a formidable woman. Even before she became a community advocate she had already reported three different sexual assault cases to the police. Thanks to her intervention, these three men are now in prison. At the Grafton introduction session, Marie gave a rousing speech about how she would fight for the street children on their journey to justice. To see some videos of Marie giving her speech, visit here and here. Isata also gave a refresher course to the young people to remind them about what she taught them in May 2022 about what to do if they or a friend are sexually assaulted and what support (including our hotline) is available.

Since then Isata has also visited Tombo, Funkai, Lumley and Susan's Bay to introduce the street children to their very own community advocates. At the end of January 2023, Isata visited the community of Cockle Bay to introduce the street children to their new community advocate – the local female Chief. While we there, we found out that one the girls living on the streets recently died in Cockle Bay after being bitten by a scorpion. Sadly they never phoned us otherwise we would have tried to help. The girls in Susan's Bay were delighted when we visited as the previous complimentary cards we had given out in April 2022 had burned in the fire in January 2023. Isata has also been busy responding to all the phone calls that our hotline is receiving and following up each case with the police.

Contribution to research

James, the founder, had a meeting with a UN special rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery who was carrying out research about the links between modern slavery, child exploitation and homelessness. The research was recently published and it was an honour to be able to contribute to it. It was submitted as formal evidence to the UN Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery. The interview was arranged by the Consortium for Street Children.

Administration and safeguarding department

The duties outlined in last year's annual report remain the same for the administration department. The main responsibility for this department is the Sierra Leonean accounts.

In December 2022/January 2023, a PSEAH policy (protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment) was written by the Trustees as well as a PSEAH implementation work plan. Laughter Africa officially joined the Misconduct Disclosure Scheme which gives extra protections to the children and young people we work with and was recommended by the Charity Commission for all INGOs. To find out more, please visit here. James, the founder, has been trained on the new scheme. James also attended a webinar on '**Safeguarding Expectations in an International Context'** by the Charity Commission for England and Wales which took place on Wednesday 7th December 2022.

Other safeguarding measures introduced over the last year include:

- a CBCM (Community Based complaints mechanism) was established in 12 communities where we work.
- There are now extra resources in the ICC addressing PSEAH issues including safeguarding posters and signs indicating phone numbers as well as a suggestion box.
- A Referral Mapping for Sierra Leone was written in January 2023.
- A SEAH incidence form template was written in January 2023.

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 and Fundraisers

The trustees would like to say a huge thank you to all our volunteers and fundraisers. However, special thanks to the following people who have gone the extra mile for Laughter Africa this financial year:

- A massive thank you to everyone at Andrew Wood Photography who have chosen Laughter Africa as their charity of the year. They are fundraising for projects related to female empowerment. We are so grateful to them and so many girls have already benefitted from their support. They have raised £11,092.76 between September 2022 and November 2023 and have been a huge support.

- A big thank you to Andrew Wood who came to join us in Sierra Leone in the middle of October 2023 for a month's visit. He was really useful and just got stuck in! Thanks to him, I finally have a shower after 9 years of using a bucket wash which is the most amazing feeling in the world! He also taught me so many different administration and managerial skills.

- A big thank you to Sarah who helped us to design all the Laughter virtual gits for Christmas 2022/2023. This year we had 22 gifts available. It was our best year yet and we raised more than we ever have raised before from the gifts. Visit here to see the gifts.

- A big thank you to our friends Sarah McCurry and Alison Benson who completed the Yorkshire Three Peaks (Y3Ps), a 25 mile walk up the 3 tallest peaks in Yorkshire in one day in May 2023.

- Solomon and Louis completed the UK 3 peaks challenge to fundraise for Laughter. This challenge entails climbing the highest mountains in Scotland, England and Wales (Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike and Snowdon) within 24 hours including the driving in between. Well the good news is that they completed it in 18 hours, 20 minutes, climbing a total of 3,407 metres and 61,477 steps in all. A big thanks guys and we hope that you didn't have too many blisters afterwards!

- A big thank you to all the generous staff at St Anne's Primary School in Rock Ferry. For Christmas 2022 the teachers requested that instead of buying them presents at the end of term, that the parents bought some Laughter virtual gifts instead.

- A big thank you to volunteer Chris Lunt who is currently in the process of redesigning the Laughter Africa website. He started in August 2023 and he should be finished over the next few months.

- A big thank you to Eivind– Berggrav Zentrum, a Church in Altenholz, Germany who have been raising money for our work. The pastor and his family visited us in November 2023 and saw our work firsthand.

- A big thank you to the pupils from 'Cardinal Wiseman School' in London who made cards for the street children we work with. The young people at mobile and the ICC loved receiving them.

D. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

















Achievements

Our vocational educational programme

One of our proudest achievements since the last annual report (published in November 2022) is the success of our vocational school programme which has been a bigger success than we ever imagined possible.

On 6th May 2023, 15 of our girls graduated from GISA vocational school in either tailoring or hairdressing after studying for two and a half years. We first met the girls at our Susan's Bay mobile project in 2020 and we couldn't be more proud of them even if we tried. Susan's Bay is by far the worst place to live on the streets- its dangerous and a particularly violent place for young girls to live. Its particularly hard for young people to leave the streets once they have lived in Susan's Bay. As Lucy, a staff member said once about Susan's Bay, "Susan's Bay is like the university of the streets." During their graduation ceremony at GISA there was a one minutes' silence for one of our old girls, Findah Moseary, who should have been graduating with her friends. Tragically she died two years ago in June 2021. Six of the girls, who graduated from GISA, brought some vegetables and fruit for the Laughter staff to say thank you for everything that we had done for them. It was really touching.

Similarly two more of our girls from Cockle Bay, Lombai and Isatu, graduated in tailoring from Women in Action Vocational school, on 13th May. We have known them both for 5 years. Isatu won the most hardworking student award while Lombai won the best tailor award and the best behaved tailor award. Lombai was even offered a job at the school to be a teacher – which she gladly accepted. To see videos of both graduations, please visit the comments here.

On 27th May 2023, we had a graduation party at the ICC to celebrate all the young people who recently graduated or were about to graduate from vocational school. We bought all the graduates business support packages in order to establish their own business. We gave support to 35 young people including tailoring machines, electrical engineering tools, welding tools and hairdressing equipment. During the party we asked Ibrahim, who Laughter Africa helped forge a fantastic welding career, to give the keynote address to inspire and give advice to the graduates. To see a copy of his speech, please click here and look in the comments section.

When the graduates got their machines most of them burst into happy tears. It was a very emotional day. One girl Fatmata said, ***"I am happy that I have earned something by myself. I have earned respect and added value to my life. We appreciate you so much to help us leave the streets."***

Here are a few examples of some of the young people who received business support in May 2023:

A

We first met A in 2021 and since then he has remained home. Despite the challenges he has faced in life, A is always happy and positive. He is very passionate about tailoring. He said: ***"I am 21 years old. I lived on the streets for 6 years after the death of my mum and dad from Ebola. After they died, I had no place to go so I lived on the streets in Fourbay road,***

Bomay market, Portee. Just sleeping on the market tables. I am gay. The community are horrible to me. They discriminate against me. They provoke me. They beat me. They say I am dirty. They say I smell. My friend Sorie died. He was 17 and he was gay. They killed him because he was gay. They raped him. They stabbed him. They haven't killed me because when they want to rape me, I don't fight back- Sorie did. I was raped 7 times by the gangsters on the streets. Each time, there were two of them. They would threaten me with a knife. The police have raped me times without number. Each time, it's a different policeman. Sometimes there are two or three of them. They slap me. They handcuff me. Then they push me on the ground. They threaten me and tell me that they will kill me. I feel so bad. They say to me, "You should be having sex with women but since you want men we'll give you men." I feel pain afterwards. It even hurts when I walk. Its so painful. I feel so bad. They rape me to humiliate me and make me feel worthless. They want to show me that they have all the power and control. I am so angry but there's no justice- I can't report it as I have to report it to the police-the very same police who raped me. They will protect each other and drive me away."

R

One of the girls who is about to graduate from vocational school is R. She is 18 years old. She first lived on the streets at the age of 13. She lived on the streets for 3 years. Laughter Africa took her home two years ago. She said, ***"My mum and dad died during ebola. So I lived with my aunt but she didn't pay school fees for me. But she paid school fees for her own biological children. I just felt like no one cared for me. She made me sell cold water. I really suffered on the streets. I gave birth to a baby girl but she died during the labour. I was raped twice on the streets. Both times there were two men. They held a knife. Two of my friends died while living of on the streets Isatu and Aminata- both died after becoming sick. To make money I would have to lay down with men. I used to go to the foreign fishermen on their boats. I saw girls killed there. Sometimes girls fainted so the men threw them overboard and they drowned. I tell God tenki that Laughter pulled me off the streets. They saved my life."***

Z

One girl who recently graduated from vocational school is Z. She graduated in hairdressing. She is 21 years old and lived on the streets for three years. She said: ***"I went on the streets because I lived with my aunt but she maltreated me. She would make me sell and if I lost money, then she would beat me. She didn't pay school for me. I lived on the streets in Susan's Bay. The streets are not fine – the pain is boku on the streets. The police arrested me boku times for loitering. They would put me in cell. I had to give them all the money I had and then they would release me. When I didn't have money, they would sleep with me. I can't remember how many times I had to sleep with the police. They rape you in the cell – usually two police officers at a time. To make money on the streets I would lay down with man. I would get between 5 to 10 leones (20p to 40p). However, sometimes the men wouldn't pay me. I used to go to the foreign fishermen lots. Sometimes they don't pay you at all and if you argue then they throw you into the sea. I saw one girl die. I didn't know her but they refused to pay her. She caused palova and they threw her overboard. I watched her drown. I was gang raped by gangsters twice. There were lots of men each time. They would hold my mouth and tie my hands. I gave birth on the streets in Susan's Bay. I didn't sabi the dad. On the streets, my friend Esther died. We were the same age. She had a cold."***

Meanwhile in December 2023 we gave business support to Albert and Isha, who both live in Bo, and are about to graduate from vocational school. Albert was the very first child that Laughter Africa ever worked with. In fact he was our first ever profile picture on Facebook all those years ago. Well fast forward 8 and a half years and he is about to graduate from vocational school in electrical engineering. In the middle of December 2023, we gave Albert the tools he needs to set up his own business. Albert, now 22, was only 14 when we met him in 2015. He had lived on the streets for one year during the Ebola crisis.

Albert said, "***My dad died when I was 9 so I lived with my granny. I went on the streets because my granny couldn't pay school for me. I really want to thank Five 0 for his timely intervention in my life because life on the streets was very difficult. I encountered so many difficulties that I thought I was going to die on the streets. The day uncle Amaa (a social worker who worked at Laughter) found me- I was so sick and had no medication. I was about to give up because the sickness was very severe. But God got me as Laughter came to my rescue. Ever since that moment my life began to change gradually. Laughter reunified me with my aunty and I have been home ever since. Laughter enrolled me into secondary school until I sat my WASCE. Then they enrolled me into vocational school. Today I can proudly boast of my life - the skills I have acquired have made me a better man. I am so lucky that Laughter came into my life."***

Meanwhile Isha, 21, who is about to graduate from vocational school, received a sewing machine and lots of different tailoring equipment and materials. Isha went on the streets after the death of her parents. She lived on the streets for about three years until Laughter met her at our mobile project in Waterloo. We took her home to her uncle two years ago- just in time for Christmas. She said***," I am so grateful for the business support - my life has turned around all thanks to Laughter. I am independent at last and I can make money for myself."***

Since September 2023, we have paid for over 100 young people to attend vocational schools for the 2023/2024 academic year. This is a record for Laughter. We have never paid vocational school for so many young people before. Most of them will be graduating in 2025 so we have to provide a lot of business in the academic year 2024/2025.

Our documentary

A documentary about the work of Laughter Africa was made for free by the amazing VAfrica team. Special thanks to Hassan and S'phongo who worked so hard on the project. We are delighted as it gives a great example of some of our work to our supporters and is a huge success. To see the documentary, visit here.

Exam success and University

We are delighted to announce that most of our young people who sat the WACSE (the Sierra Leone equivalent of A-Levels) passed with flying colours – the results came out at the end of September 2023. In 2022/2023, we paid for 12 young people to attend university. For the academic year 2023/2024, we currently have another 22 young people who are in the process of applying for university. 16 of them are girls. They are applying to study a variety of subjects including international relations, banking and finance, procurement and logistics, human resources, public health and nursing. At the time of writing this report (December 2023), 12 of our young people had already received acceptance letters.

Ibrahim Sorie found a passion for making jewellery while staying at the Interim Care Centre. We have worked him since 2019 and are super proud of him and his determination to make life better for him and his family. He was homeless in 2019. We reunified him with his step mum in August 2019 as he is an orphan. His step mum had a disability and was unable to provide for the family so every day he made jewellery which he then sold in Lumley. He provided everything that his family needed while still attending school himself. Without him, his family would have suffered. His step mum was plagued by ill health since we met him. He learnt how to make the jewellery while at the Interim Care Centre in the arts and crafts lessons. In June 2020, we bought him all the materials he needs to make jewellery. He saved up all the profits to pay for his step mum to have an operation which was very expensive. He could have spent that money on anything but he chose to spend it all on his step mum. Sadly in September 2021, his step mother died despite all of Ibrahim's support. However, Ibrahim is a survivor and is determined to make his step mum proud. He has just been accepted to study a degree in international relations.

Meanwhile one of the girls applying to university this year is Aminata. Last year Aminata left Sierra Leone to travel to India, without telling anyone. She thought that all her dreams had come true and that she had gotten a job as a housekeeper. Sadly her dream job turned into a nightmare. The job was a scam and the woman whom she was working for tried to force her into prostitution. Aminata refused to comply so the woman stole her passport so that she couldn't leave the country. Aminata fled in fear and had nowhere to turn. Luckily she still knew Zombo's number off by heart. Zombo is the head of the Family Tracing and Reunification department. We contacted IOM straight away and they arranged for Aminata to fly back to Sierra Leone. In October 2023, Aminata was back where she belongs. Aminata is putting the last year behind her and is looking forward to a brighter future at university.

Another one of the girls who have applied to University this year is Amie. Amie went on the streets when she was 10 years old after the death of her mother and father. Her uncle had stolen all of her inheritance. We see this often, extended family believe the girls have no rights to the inheritance- just because they are under 18 and female. Amie is also a young mother ***"I gave birth to my beautiful daughter Fatmata on 28th March 2021. Sadly my boyfriend died a few months after Fatmata was born - he was a bike driver. He was involved in a motorbike accident so I am alone with my pikin. I decided to start making country clothes to make money for my daughter. I taught myself how to crochet. My baby gives me pleasure-she is my pride and joy."*** Amie is hoping to study Public Health at University. She is just waiting for her acceptance letter.

Another young man applying to university is A. He ended up on the streets after his dad died of Ebola and his mum moved to the village. While living on the streets, he raised money for his school fees by engaging in commercial sex work. On the streets, A faced many challenges including sexual assault, being arrested and smoking drugs. Despite all these challenges, he got a fantastic mark in his WACSE. He is about to study Public Health and is just waiting for his acceptance letter.

We are really proud of all our children who sat the NPSE (the UK equivalent of the SATS) as they all passed! We particularly want to congratulate Al Hassan who has been with Laughter Africa since 2016. Al hassan, lives with his grandparents after his parents died during Ebola. We met him when he was living on the streets when he was just 6 years old. Al Hassan graduated from primary school and has already started secondary school after getting a fantastic mark on his NPSE. We have paid school for him from class 1 until class 6 and it is lovely to see the progress he is making on his academic journey! Meanwhile the BECE results came out in October 2023 (the Sierra Leone equivalent of GCSEs). All our young people who sat the BECE passed and were promoted to SS1.

The successes of the young people we work with

Whenever one of the young people we work with succeed, we share their joy. Here are some of their most amazing successes since the last annual report (published in November 2022):

Adamma

One of the girls who we have mentioned in previous annual reports is Adamma. Adamma is in the process of starting her own vocational school in Waterloo - she is just in the process of registering everything with Freetown City Council. The school plans to teach beneficiaries skills such as gara dying, make up, pastries and shoe making among other skills. The institution is called 'Laughter Women Empowerment' and will be free. To raise money for the initial costs for the project she organised a beauty pageant on 24th December 2022. The winner was crowned 'Miss Laughter.' It was a huge success and the place was packed. Adamma says, ***"Laughter Africa gave me hope when I gave up on myself and I thought that I had no future. I want to do the same thing for other girls. Be the light they need so that they don't give up on themselves either."*** Adamma is a world changer and we know 'Laughter Women Empowerment' will go far!

Amie

We mentioned Amie the footballer in last years' annual report. Well Amie is still making waves in the female premier league and she had an amazing first season. So far she has played for SL Police, the Koya Queens and Ram K - all of them are major teams in the league. She is currently playing for Ram K. Her dream one day is to represent her country in the World Cup. Imagine…. from the streets to the World Cup! And now her dreams are finally coming true. She has been asked by the head coach for the Leone stars (the National Sierra Leone football team) to represent her country in December 2023. Amie gets about 300 leones per match which is enough to pay for her essential needs while she is studying 'public health' at university. Despite all of her achievements, Amie still remains humble and grateful for the opportunities that he has been given. She wrote to me recently, "Being asked to represent my country was my happiest moment. Thank you Laughter for making me who I am today."

Amie also played for the 'Hands off our Girls' football match organised by one of the Ministers. She got voted 'Man of the Match.' To see a video of her scoring a gorl during the match, please visit here.

Ibrahim the Welder

We mentioned Ibrahim in last years' annual report. His business is going from strength to strength. He recently bought his own land in Mambo, paid for by the proceeds from a gate he made and sold for 17,000 leones. He has already been to the Ministry of Lands and its all been officially registered by the Government. We cannot tell you how proud we are of him. Just a few years ago he was on the streets- now he is running a reputable business and owns his own land. There is just no stopping him.

Al Hassan

James, the founder of Laughter Africa, has a nickname in Sierra Leone which is 'Five-O.' Five O means 'boss of the streets.' Its what you call the head gangster on the streets- a bit like Fagin. He was given the name in the first few days of Laughter opening in June 2015. Now, no one calls him James. Everywhere James goes, he gets called Five O-even by the Government. Sometimes he actually forgets his own name as no one calls him James anymore.

The boy who named him 'Five O' was 15 year old Al Hassan. Al Hassan said, ***"You're the boss so I am going to call you Five O."*** And those 11 words changed James's life. And from that moment on, the name 'Five O' just stuck.

To earn a living Al Hassan used to run a PlayStation business. He would run a small shop where people would come and pay to play PlayStation games. He had 4 Televisions and 4 PlayStations. Recently there was 'bad current' and all his equipment was destroyed.

In February 2023, we provided Al Hassan with a new life line. We paid for him to get his driving license. Al Hassan is desperate to start a driving business- he just needed a helping hand to help him on his way. We are so proud of him for his determination to provide for himself and his family and stand on his own two feet. Al Hassan says, ***"I want to say thank you very very very much to Five O and all the social workers for all your efforts. Thank you very much for everything that you have done for us. I believe that as soon as I get my license I will get a job. When I get a job, I believe that my life will change. May God bless everyone in Laughter. May Laughter grow more and more and more. Thank you."***

Sorie

We mentioned Sorie in the previous annual report. We first met him living on the streets in 2015, during the Ebola crisis. Well at the end of May 2023 he graduated from driving school. He invited James the founder to his driving graduation saying that he needed a family member there and James was the closest thing he has to a father. Sorie, who is currently studying social work at university, paid for the driving course himself. He wanted to add another skills set to his repertoire and have another way to generate income.

Osman

We mentioned Osman in the last annual report. Not only is he studying at university to be a Laboratory Technician now, but he is still creating art. Osman took part in two more art exhibitions from the 27th April until 29th April 2023 and from the 28th November until 16th December 2023. The exhibitions took place at Freetown City Council. The theme of the exhibitions were 'Sierra Leone.' His work is getting better and better with every exhibition.

Ramadan

We first met Ramadan living on the streets six years ago. Since his reunification with his family, he's stayed home. He's 22 and for the last 2 years he has been working in a shop in town selling curtains. Its not easy for people to find jobs here so

its testament to his hard work and dedication that he has been employed for so long. He found the job as he had a baby son and was determined to provide for him. Sadly last year his baby died but Ramadan kept his job determined to have a better future. He gets paid 1,000 leones a month and he is currently saving his money in the bank for his future. He's hoping to set up his own tailoring business this year so that he will work in the shop during the day and on his own tailoring business at night. At the end of May 2023, we provided him with a tailoring machine to make his dream happen.

Mariatu

We first met Mariatu 6 years ago while she was living on the streets. She came to visit us with her BECE results in April 2023. Mariatu is the girl who bravely stood up against her family, who sold her to an older man for marriage for £90 during the COVID pandemic. She refused and stood her ground. She insisted on completing her education. Well Mariatu's determination paid off- she got a fantastic mark in her BECE and she will be starting SS1 soon. Congratulations Mariatu! We are so proud of you and the journey you've taken.

Sylvester

Sylvester was one of the first children that we ever worked with in June 2015 when we first opened our doors.
After we reunified him with his family, we helped him get an apprenticeship as a mechanic, we gave him tools, got him driving lessons and paid for his driving license. Well since then Sylvester has gone from strength to strength. We hadn't seen him for years but in the intervening years he got a job with a local NGO called 50/50 as a driver. In the middle of December 2023, he came to visit us with his car, to say goodbye. His sister, who lives and works in Turkey, has got him a job there with a reputable company. They have paid for his passport, flights, visa and work permit. He is hoping to move there in January 2024. Before he left for good, he wanted to say goodbye. He said, "I had given up. I didn't have anyone to encourage me. You gave me hope. You gave me courage. And you made me become a person again. To help me become the person I am today." And this is the reason why I am here. This is the reason why I stay. Despite all the challenges. Despite all the drama. Its moments like this that makes everything worthwhile. Sylvester-have the most amazing time in Turkey. We are so proud of you and everything you have achieved! Fly high and shine!

Our staffs' successes

Whenever one of our staff succeeds and achieves their dreams, we share their joy. Training and building staff capability is important to us. So we want to wish a huge congratulations to our social worker Lamin who graduated in BSC Information and Communication Technology from Limkokwing University in the middle of February 2023. We currently have three staff who are attending university. They will be graduating in the next year. It is important for us that our staff achieve their dreams too.

Our reputation is still spreading locally

We have good relationships with the local Ministries that we work with: the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs and the Ministry of Social Welfare. Our quarterly reports are still praised at meetings and used as an example to other NGOs as an example of good reporting. At a 4 day training programme run by the Ministry in June 2023, one of the staff at the Ministry said, ***"Laughter Africa might be small but you do things that bigger organisations do not do…"*** In the same meeting, another staff from the ministry suggested to another NGO to approach us for advice and help in structuring their own organisation as they were struggling. He said that Laughter Africa were doing a great job and we could be a great help to their organisation. In February 2023, another staff member of the ministry said that he knew that Laughter Africa was a genuine organisation: there are a lot of fake NGOs in Sierra Leone so to hear that the ministry know that we are genuine meant a lot.

Its not just the ministries that appreciate the work of Laughter but the schools and communities with whom we work. On 27th April 2023, our staff attended the sports day at Prince of Peace school (PoP) one of the schools were a lot of our children attend. The headteacher at PoP, recently said, ***"Out of all the organisations that I have been working with, Laughter is by far the most outstanding. You have done everything for them. All of the students you support are attending everyday and are making the most of the opportunity you have given them. In fact one boy Ibrahim is even a class prefect. In recognition of this the school has decided to name one of the sport house teams for sports day after 'Laughter Africa.'"*** This is a very big honour and accolade in Sierra Leone! And the staff had a brilliant day!!!

Meanwhile, every time, one of the social workers is in Portee, if the headsman sees them he will always ask them for Laughter Africa to go back to his community. He said that he misses us and he said that we are one of the best NGOs in Sierra Leone. We actually do what we'll say we'll do and he is desperate for us to come back and help even more street children in his community.

Meanwhile, in September 2023, the founder James was in a Kekeh and he was talking to the passengers. One of the passengers recognised him by the name Five O and said the boys in her area always mention a five o and how he pays school for them. So word is spreading about Laughter Africa around the different communities.

The medical treatment we provide

The medical treatment we provide is truly life saving. The following is just a snapshot of some of the different medical cases that we have seen since September 2023;

- A needs an operation as she has a huge fibroid,
- A has suspected ovarian cancer,
- 5 cases of HIV (It's never easy to tell someone that they have tested positive).
- 7 hepatitis cases,

- Mohamed who lost his eye last year is back living on the street. He was beaten by a group of gangsters with a cable. They beat him in the eye which became infected so we had to get him another prosthetic eye,
- Many pregnant girls or young mums with their babies constantly needing treatment.
- M was crushed by a wall which had collapsed in the rain,
- I who needed his feet and toes treated after he was in a horrific motorbike crash,
- R has a hole in his heart and problems with his liver. He is really struggling to breathe. His father has disowned him and when we phoned his father and told him that R was in hospital, he replied, ***"I don't have a son. He is dead to me."***
- I had an operation on his eye
- F spilt boiling hot water over her arms
- M fell off a ladder and was impaled by a metal spike.
- and finally one case of TB; When F arrived to collect his school supply in September, he could hardly breathe, he was coughing all the time and he was just skin and bone. He could hardly walk. He was soon diagnosed with TB. He stayed with us in our ICC during the first week of treatment but he really struggled. One night, he woke up at 3am, his heart was racing and he couldn't see. We stayed up with him for 2 hours, just singing to him and calming him down. I think that it was a panic attack. Thankfully he is undergoing treatment and is already getting much better.

I want to thank our nurse Rebecca who is our unsung hero. Any time, any day, she is always on call and ready to jump into action. Thank you for all you do.

<u>The success of the School support programme</u>

This academic year 2023/2024, we have paid more school support than ever before. So far, since September 2023, we have provided:

- 323 children with new schools or vocational schools.
- 598 children with their school supply (which includes a bag, shoes, ledger books, vests, socks and pens)
- 193 children with extra lessons in preparation for their external examinations
- We have provided text books to 197 children and young people this year as they are all sitting external exams during the academic year.
- 537 children with uniforms. Some of these uniforms have been made by Lombai and Isatu two of our beneficiaries who graduated from vocational school in May. They received machines from us in May 2023 and they decided to combine their equipment and set up a joint business venture together. They have already made the school uniforms of all the Laughter children in Cockle Bay and Aberdeen. They said, ***"We are delighted to be able to help our Laughter brothers and sisters. That was us just a few years ago. Now it feels like we have come full circle."***

We are still in the process of paying for more children between now and the end of January 2024 so these are not our final totals yet….

Challenges

The deaths of some of our beneficiaries

Since the annual report (published in November 2022) we tragically lost four of the young people that we have worked with:

Blessing

Sadly on the 19th May 2023, one of our girls from mobile died. Her name was Blessing and she was 17 years old. She was from Lungi and her parents died from Ebola. No cause of death is known but she told her friends on Thursday night that she was not feeling well. When they returned the following morning they found her laying lifeless.

The street children all helped with the funeral arrangements. The boys living on the streets in Grafton dug her grave while the girls living on the streets provided all the food for a small reception afterwards while Laughter Africa carried out all the legalities such as burial permits and informing the police. She is now buried in Grafton cemetery. Our hearts swelled with pride when we heard how the street children had pulled together for Blessing to give her the send off she deserved. They wouldn't accept any money from us at all as they wanted to do it for themselves. However, they did let us provide ten bundles of water for the reception.

We managed to find out where her remaining family lived so the staff from mobile and some of her best friends on the streets informed Blessing's aunt about her passing. They took Blessing's cousin to her grave to pay her final respects.

The Aunt was so grateful for what we did for Blessing. The last time Blessing saw her aunt she told her all about Laughter Africa and how we would be reunifying her soon and paying vocational school for her. She was so full of hope for the future. She would have been reunified in just 10 days time before she died. Rest in Power Blessing! You will be missed!

Mabinty

Sadly we found out that one of our old girls, Mabinty, also known affectionately as Pikito tragically died in May 2023. We first met Pikito at our mobile project in Portee in 2021. She came to stay at the ICC in February/March 2021. She was only 15 years old when she died. She died after a long term battle with illness. She was such an innocent and cheerful soul with such a sunny disposition- her death is a real loss to those who knew her and the world at large. We miss you Pikito!!

Abdulai

Sadly on the 29th July 2023, one of our old boys Abdulai Bangura died. He lived in Portee with his grandmother. We first met him in 2021. Abdulai was just one of the most simple souls that we have worked with. He never had a problem and always had a smile on his face. He had some learning difficulties but he never used them as an excuse. In fact, it made him more determined to succeed. Last year he passed the BECE (the Sierra Leone equivalent of GCSEs) with flying colours and

was promoted to SS1. He was so proud of himself and just had a huge grin on his face.

On Saturday 29th July, Abdulai had been fishing with friends. Afterwards he decided to go for a swim but the current was stronger than he thought and he was swept away. His body was found a week later in Wellington. His funeral took place on 6th August which Laughter Africa paid for. His granny was just devastated and wouldn't stop crying! We provided school support for his brother Alie in September 2023 so that his legacy lives on through him. Thank you Abdulai for the many lives that you have touched. Until we meet again....

Sallu

Please see page 15 for more details about Sallu.

The election

The Sierra Leone election took place on 24th June 2023. Because of fears regarding staff safety due to escalating tensions, we decided to close Laughter Africa temporarily from 7th June 2023 until it was more peaceful. Eventually we opened at the beginning of September 2023. However, even though we were closed, the street children were still able to come to the ICC for medical treatment. The young people also had the numbers of all the staff in the cases of any emergencies so we were still available for them if they needed us. From January to June 2023, we scaled down our work, particularly our advocacy work due to the escalating tensions. Although we re-opened in September 2023, we had to close mobile for three days after the attempted coup at the end of November 2023 due to safety concerns. We are monitoring the deteriorating security situation closely and if necessary will scale down our work again in 2024, particularly our advocacy work.

Cost of living crisis

As we mentioned in the last annual report, the cost of living situation is deteriorating rapidly in Sierra Leone. With yearly inflation at 43 percent, one of the highest in the world, everyday items such as food are quickly becoming unaffordable for many in Sierra Leone, with a trade deficit and high levels of imports meaning the country's currency is particularly vulnerable to market fluctuations. We are really struggling with the increase in prices as our income has decreased. In November 2023, a new tax of 5% was added to all imported rice. Rice in 2018 was 180 leones. In December 2023 it is 800 leones and will be rising again in the new year. Similarly, on the 29th August 2023, the price of petrol increased from 25 leones per litre to 30 leones per litre. And there are consistent rumours that it will be rising again in the new year. The sad thing is that the people most affected by these increases are the poorest and most vulnerable. For example in mid July 2023, we heard about one of the girls living on the streets called Fatmata who had sold her newborn baby for 1,500 leones (around £60) as she had no money to survive. In the latest rankings from IMF, Sierra Leone is now the second poorest country in the world according to GDP per Capita, just behind Burundi. In conjunction with this, the cost of living crisis is also hitting the income of Laughter Africa. We have noticed a huge reduction in the numbers of donations received in 2022/2023. To counter-act this, the Trustees have decided to diversify our income streams, particularly focusing on Trusts and Foundations more in 2023/2024. We have not focused much on applying to Trusts and Foundations for the last five years as it can be quite time consuming.

Political instability

At the time of writing this report (December 2023), there is a huge amount of political instability in Sierra Leone as a result of the election in June 2023. The whole country is even more tense than before the elections. This all climaxed on 26th November 2023 when there was attempted coup in Sierra Leone. Since then, things have been very tense. I was scared and I still am. I am not scared for me but I am scared for the staff, the street children and their families. On 8th December 2023, the former president of Sierra Leone, Ernest Bai Koroma, was invited to questioning at the CID headquarters to be interviewed about the coup. If he is arrested in connection with the coup, then there are fears that there will be violence and fighting within the country.

After the attempted coup on 26th November 2023, a new curfew has been introduced. One boy Richard, who lives on the streets, complained to us that the police had started beating him and the other street children as they were out after the curfew. We are also worried that there could be an increase in sexual violence like we saw during the curfew during the Covid pandemic.

The drug known as Kush

Have you ever said goodbye to someone and known that it will probably be the last time that you will see them alive? How can you find the words to sum up everything you want to say?

That happened to me recently. I had to say goodbye to one of our old kids M. He is only 15 years old and I have known him for over 4 years. M came to our ICC one Sunday in November 2023. I hadn't seen him for years. He looked absolutely dreadful. He had been stabbed in the back three times during the night after an altercation with a gangster who tried to rob him while he was sleeping. The wounds were pretty deep. Our nurse Isata took him immediately to the hospital for treatment where he received stitches. He needed three days of treatment so he stayed at our ICC with me. He couldn't even last one night at the centre before needing to go back to the street and take the drug he's addicted to - Kush.

He was so thin that I suspected straight away that he might have HIV or hepatitis so we did a test. He has both. I suspect that he also has TB as he was coughing a lot in the night. Unfortunately, though I wanted to treat him, his addiction would make that impossible.

About 4 am in the morning, M woke up screaming, saying that someone was trying to kill him. He was having delusions – I think as a result of repeated drug taking. He kept saying that he wanted to return his old blood soaked clothes to the secret society – otherwise they would kill him. He wasn't making much sense. We were trying to calm him down but with no success. He was getting more and more agitated. He was just so desperate for Kush. I told him that he was sick and that he would die without treatment but it was to no avail - he still wanted to leave. Meanwhile one of the security guards' phones had gone missing. We found it hidden on M. Although we still begged him to stay, his mind was made up.

I said a final goodbye because I don't think he will come back. I told him that he would always be a child of Laughter Africa and I will always be there for him. I told him that he is always welcome back no matter what. He left happily but without a true understanding about what he is about to face. His final words were that "God will look after me." He promised me that he would come back that day but I knew that he wouldn't. He hasn't been back since. He will probably be dead by Christmas. And all this happened before 6am.

For more information about Kush, please visit the BBC website. In one week alone in November 2023, I saw 3 street children whose legs look like they have been hacked at with machetes. They all had massive chunks of their legs missing. There is no way to describe it apart from its like half their legs have been eaten by a piranha. This is because of the latest side effects of Kush. The Kush is making their legs swollen which makes them more susceptible to any injuries. So any slight injury will make their legs literally crumble away. Sorry for the graphic imagery but there is no nice way to describe it. It is truly a grotesque sight and the children are in horrendous pain. All three of the street children were beaten with iron rods for stealing. There is no consequence for the people who attack the street kids. They are "thieves" so they "deserve it." We have no choice but to treat them or they will die. Sadly, a few weeks after their attack, one of the boys Bumptalk was found lying dead by the Wharf in Funkia on Saturday 9th December 2023. No one knows what happened to him but he was buried on the same day.

The power of Kush is really destroying lives in Sierra Leone. Its not just taken by those children living on the streets but also those living in their homes with their families. It is hugely affecting mental health and at least 3 of our young people have been driven crazy by their use of Kush. One of the boys we have been supporting since 2017, Obai, is sadly now addicted to Kush. He should be sitting his NPSE this year but when we went to pay for his extra lessons and give him text books we heard the news that he is fully addicted to Kush and no longer attending school. It is heartbreaking. One girl, Fatmata, even sold her school supply, to buy Kush. Its not just children or young people who are taking Kush– its fully grown adults. There are lots of videos on social media of different professionals such as police taking kush. There is no free rehabilitation facility available here either so there is nothing much we can do. There doesn't seem to an end in sight to the Kush pandemic.

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 £5000.22.

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, small businesses/companies and churches. In the financial period the total raised from supporters was **£102,740.50 (unrestricted). £14,790.60 (unrestricted)** was raised from Gift Aid. **£0.25 (unrestricted)** was earned through bank interest. In total, **£117,531.35** was raised in 2022/23. Laughter Africa had **£7,127.56' (unrestricted)** remaining from the previous financial year. In total, **£124,658.91** was available for Laughter Africa's use in 2022/23.

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 the European Union 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.

We are committed to achieving the highest standards in fundraising. We comply with all relevant statutory regulations, including the Charities Act 2011, the Charities Act 2022, 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 2022/23, we received no complaints related to our fundraising activity.

Thank you to every person who has given us a donation over the last financial year. 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 particularly with the cost of living crisis. 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 **£111,086.26** and there was **£8,224.86'** held in the bank accounts and petty cash at the end of the financial year. A total of **£119,311.12.** Laughter Africa lost **£5,347.79'** via multi currency exchange rate losses. A total expenditure of **£124,658.91** was spent in the 2022/2023 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 for 1 year	£8,424.72
Salaries for National Staff	£15,840.14
Food	£8,639.43
Non- food items	£3,582.66
Skills training costs	£4,058.84
Staff travel costs during reunifications	£2,825.96
Educational equipment	£22,469.87
Generator fuel for the ICC	£1,144.75
Street children travel costs	£2,760.53
School fees/vocational training	£17,984.26
Medical costs for the street children	£5,832.43
Volunteer costs	£3,181.21
Travel subsistence for staff	£87.89
Family support for the street children	£736
Clothing	£1,252.31
Campaign and Advocacy	£301.56
Toiletries	£350.03
Staff travel accommodation	£214.07
Travel subsistence for the street children	£17.45
Independent Examination	£110.25
Water supplies	£1,787.92
P.O. Box (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£21.73
Community Development	£47.17
Bank Charges in Sierra Leone	£469.42
Hire of Premises for Mobile	£394.72
Rent Tax	£688.88

Electricity for the ICC	£210.27
Insurance (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£170.36
Work permit and residential permit (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£170.73
Annual leave allowance for National staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1496.41
Medical Treatment for National Staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1,773.63
Country Registration fees	£181.57
NASSIT (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1,693.10
Telephone costs	£207.53
PAYE (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1,147.46
TOTAL	**£110,275.26**

Expenditure in the UK

Type of expenditure	**Cost (Pounds)**
Bank Charges in the UK	**£811**
TOTAL	**£811**

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 **£5,832.43.** Similarly, food is provided at both the mobile project and the Interim Care Centre. The total cost spent on food in 2022/23 was **£8,639.43.** Coupled with this is the cost of non food items (both at mobile and the Interim Care Centre) which totalled **£3,582.66.** Non food items include things like coal, washing powder, towels, bleach and plate/cups etc….. **£4,058.84** was spent on skills training activities including art & craft materials, hairdressing materials, cultural dance and yoga at both mobile and the Interim Care Centre. The travel costs of the street children across all three departments was **£2,760.53.** Meanwhile staff travel across all three departments reached **£2,825.96.** This travel was for the payment of school fees and reunifications. 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 **£207.53.** Water supplies for the children at the ICC and mobile totalled **£1,787.92** for the year.

Costs associated solely with the Outreach department

The only payment solely associated with the outreach department was **£394.72** for the rent for the mobiles in Waterloo and Grafton. 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 **£8,424.72** for one year. Connected to this is the rent tax which is a legal requirement in Sierra Leone. The rent tax totalled **£688.88.** Other costs associated with the interim Care Centre include clothing **(£1,252.31)** and toiletries **(£350.03)** for the street children. Meanwhile the cost of electricity for the ICC totalled **£210.27** while **£1,144.75** was spent on fuel for the generator for the ICC. All the other costs are listed above like medical expenses, food/non-food items and income generating skills. Without an Interim Care Centre, we would not be able to carry out our key objectives: it is crux to our work. This year we paid **£47.17** to the headsman in Adonkia for community development where the ICC is located.

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 **(£17,984.26),** educational equipment (uniforms, school bag, school shoes, stationery, equipment for vocational schools, text books) **(£22,469.87)** and family support for the most vulnerable street children once they have returned home **(£736).** This support could be a mattress, a bag of rice, a wheelchair, business support, baby 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 2023, as well as the new children with whom we will work in 2023/24. Family reunification is a key objective of the work and paying for school support is a major factor in keeping the street children at home. Other costs associated with this strand of work include; travel accommodation for staff during the reunification process **(£214.07);** travel subsistence for staff during the reunification process **(£87.89);** and travel subsistence for street children during the reunification process **(£17.45).**

Costs associated with the Campaigning and Advocacy department

In 2022/23, the communication and advocacy programme for Laughter Africa revolved around the International Day for Street Children (12th April) and the sexual violence prevention programme. The total cost spent on advocacy and campaigning was **£301.56.**

Costs associated with staffing

Laughter Africa spent **£15,840.14** on national staff salaries. 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. At the time of writing this report (December 2023), Laughter Africa employed 13 full 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 **(£1,773.63)** and GPA insurance **(£170.36).** Laughter Africa also paid NASSIT **(£1,693.10)** and PAYE **(£1,147.46)** 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 **(£1496.41).** The staffs' work has been greatly enhanced by the work of volunteers. Costs associated with the volunteers totalled **£3,181.21.** At the time of writing this report (December 2023), Laughter Africa currently has 1 volunteer; Miguel.

Country registration and other associated fees

In this financial year we had to pay re-registration fees to Freetown City Council and Western Area Rural District Council. The total cost of re-registration was **£181.57.** The independent examination costs were **£110.25.** 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 **£170.73.** To be recognised as a registered charity in Sierra Leone, one must have a PO Box. Laughter Africa has one at a cost of **£21.73** per year.

Bank charges in Sierra Leone

The bank charges in Sierra Leone were **£469.42.**

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 **£811.**

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

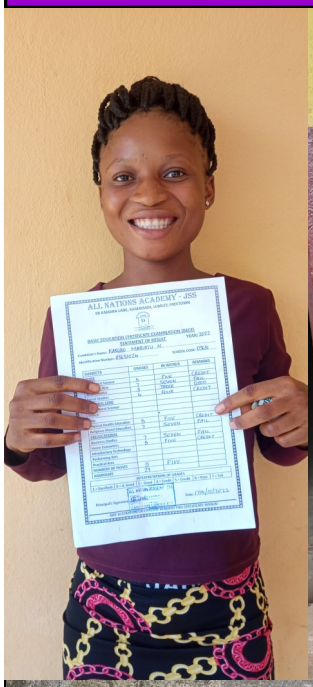
The trustees have also prepared financial templates and documentation for Laughter Africa including assets registers, chart of accounts, budgeting templates etc. All are available upon request.

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

Over the next year, we do not plan to introduce any new components to our work due to the cost of living crisis and the political instability within the country. We will just continue our normal outreach, Interim Care Centre, Family Tracing and Reunification work and our Advocacy and Campaigning work. However, we would like to work more closely with disabled street children over the next year. Disabled street children have a particularly hard time on the streets and are extra vulnerable. In mid December 2023 we came into contact with a disabled girl called Mabinty. She came to our mobile project in Funkia in desperation. Although she is 19 years old, she looks much, much younger – more like an 8 year old. She became disabled at the age of five following an illness. She has lived on the streets for over a year. Her mother disowned her, alleging she was evil and accused her of theft, leading to family members distancing themselves. Despite her aunt briefly providing support, she was later abandoned, leaving her to navigate the harsh realities of life on the streets. Regrettably, Mabinty has experienced further trauma, having been subjected to sexual assault, resulting in a pregnancy. Presently four months pregnant, her vulnerability was intensified as she was recently pushed from her wheelchair by gangsters and thrown to the floor. She was worried that she had broken her leg. We provided medical treatment for her and she needed plaster putting on her leg. One thing that really touched me about Mabinty is the fact that she didn't have a wheelchair so the other street children shared their money together to buy her one. And a wheelchair is not cheap here… Meanwhile in mid December 2023, we paid school for one disabled boy called Abdul. He was born with half a leg missing and uses a locally made crutch to move around. We met him at our mobile project in Grafton. He ended up on the streets as he moved from the village to his sister's house in Freetown. But his sister couldn't provide for him so he turned to the streets. To make money he would work as a cobbler on the streets. Now he is back with his family in the village. To survive he hobbles on his crutches and travels around village to village, fixing shoes. However, now Laughter has come along, he has a renewed hope for the future.

Mobile

So far our mobile project has taken place in Susan's Bay, Regent Road in Town, Portee, Waterloo, Grafton and Funkia. For 2024, we hope to focus our mobile projects on the Eastern area of Freetown. In particular we are thinking of focusing on the following two areas:

1. Ferry junction

Ferry Junction would encompass all the areas nearby Ferry Junction including Bomay, Upgun, Peace Market, Black Hall Road, Kissy Brook and Moriba.

2. Wellington Wharf

Wellington Wharf would encompass all the areas nearby Wellington including PMB, Old Wharf, Calaba Town and Congo Water.

However, these locations depend on the stability of the country- we will not choose any locations which will put staff in danger. In the years further ahead, we also hope to have mobile projects in Tombo, Lumley and Aberdeen as they are the only big areas which have a large congregation of street children where we have not had mobile projects yet.

ICC

For the ICC, we don't have any specific new plans as such. We plan to just keep doing what we have always done. We have a strong rehabilitation programme in place and know that it is successful.

FTR

The school support is one of our most successful components and is the reason why so many children remain home after they are reunified with their families. We will keep doing what we have always done as we know it works. We are hoping to repeat the success of our vocational training programme including the provision of business support equipment again in May 2024.

Advocacy, Campaigns and Communications

Unfortunately the country is not stable enough to carry out high profile advocacy at the moment. Unfortunately, the major campaign we hoped to introduce in 2023 has still not materialised: to repeal the loitering law. The reason being that ECOWAS has not even heard the case yet. Although the case was meant to be heard in November 2022, at the time of writing this report (December 2023), the case has still not been heard. We have put this on the back burner for now as there is nothing we can do until ECOWAS announce their ruling. If a ruling is announced by ECOWAS in 2024 then this will become our primary campaign issue. The good news is that Amnesty International have joined the fight and have also submitted their own Amicus Curiae to ECOWAS in support of the motion joining AdvocAid and the Consortium for Street Children. There is strength in numbers and each of the three NGOs have argued different legal arguments in support of the motion. We believe that if the loitering law is repealed, the numbers of sexual assaults perpetuated by law enforcement officers will be greatly reduced. After Christmas 2022, James the founder saw John John - who lives on the streets. John John told him that he and 20 other street children in Lumley were arrested for loitering and spent over a week (including Christmas day) in prison. It is essential that the loitering law is repealed and Laughter Africa will not rest until this becomes a reality. However, there is some hope….

On 11th December 2023, Laughter Africa was invited to attend a screening of a documentary 'Bayo bayo baby.' We met the Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs Dr Isata Mahoi at the screening. She was very passionate, approachable, humble and honest. She admitted publicly that some members of the security forces were sexually assaulting street children. She also talked about the issue of foreign fishermen. Two issues which are both close to Laughter Africa's heart. We are hoping to work in collaboration with Don Bosco and approach the Minister about taking practical steps in combating these issues- including repealing the loitering law and investing in more police training so that the police are better trained in their interactions with street children. Meanwhile at the beginning of December 2023, James spoke to a new staff member at the Ministry, Khadija, who is currently working on the issue of street children. In particular, she was very enthusiastic about General Comment 21 and she intends to inform the Minister about it. The current national street child strategy was written under a different minister and was valid from 2021 to 2023. This means that there could be an opportunity for the national strategy to be reviewed. If so, there is a possibility that it could be rewritten using General Comment 21 as its crux. James arranged a training session for Khadija with the Consortium for Street Children all about

General Comment 21. James and Khadija have met in person and have also had a few telephone conversations. James has sent her all the previous documents that he had given to the Ministry during the formulation of the 2021 National strategy. Khadija seems to care and is very passionate about the issues affecting street children and could be a good ally to have. This is a real opportunity for General Comment 21 to be introduced and over the next few months we will be focusing on working with the Ministry in order to see if we can get a national strategy for street children that works for all. Under General comment 21, we will try and raise the issue of the loitering law and see if this issue can be addressed without having to wait upon the ruling from ECOWAS, which could take years to arrive.

G. DECLARATION









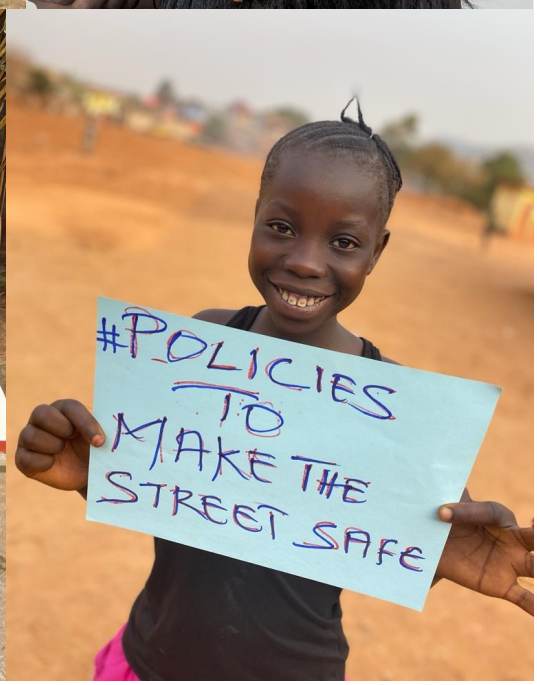












The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)	James Tyrrell	
Full name(s)	**James Francis Robert Tyrrell**	**Mark Quentin Neal**
Position (e.g. chair or secretary)	**Chairperson**	**Secretary**
Date	**22/12/2023**	**22/12/2023**









CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Laughter Africa	1154712

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	01/04/2022	To	31/03/2023

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Endowment funds	Total funds	Last year
	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £	to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	102,740.50'	-	-	102,740.50'	99,323.13'
Gift Aid	14,790.60'	-	-	14,790.60'	11,961.78'
Trusts and Foundations			-		4,180.59'
Bank Interest	0.25'	-	-	0.25'	0.12'
			-		
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total *(Gross income for AR)*	117,531.35'		-	117,531.35'	115,465.62'
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	
Total receipts	117,531.35'		-	117,531.35'	115,465.62'
A3 Payments					
Charitable Activities	109,695.59'		-	109,695.59'	120,712.93'
Bank charges (UK)	811'	-	-	811'	611'
Bank charges (Sierra Leone)	469.42'	-	-	469.42'	594.08'
Governance	110.25'	-	-	110.25'	896.78'
Multi currency exchange rate loss	5,347.79'	-	-	5,347.79'	4911.15'
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	116,434.05'		-	116,434.05'	127,725.94'
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
Generator for the ICC		-	-		712.31'
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total		-	-		712.31'
Total payments	116,434.05'		-	116,434.05'	128,438.25'
Net of receipts/(payments)	1,097.30'	-	-	1,097.30'	-12,972.63
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	7,127.56'	-	-	7,127.56'	
Cash funds this year end	8,224.86'	-	-	8,224.86'	7,127.56'

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

B1 Cash funds

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	Funds in Sierra Leone	1946.97'	-	-
	Funds in the UK	1277.67'	-	-
	Reserves	5000.22'	-	-
	Total cash funds	8,224.86'	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

B2 Other monetary assets

Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
None	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

B3 Investment assets

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
None		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
None		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
James Tyrrell	James Francis Robert Tyrrell	**16/06/2023**
	Mark Quentin Neal	**16/06/2023**

In accordance with the Charitable Incorporated Organisations (General) Regulations 2012 the Trustees confirm that:
a) the CIO has given no guarantees, where any potential liability under the guarantee is outstanding at the date of the statement of assets and liabilities;
and b) the CIO does not have any debts outstanding at the date of the statement of assets and liabilities which are secured by an express charge on any of the assets of the CIO

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	Laughter Africa		
On accounts for the year ended	31st March 2023	Charity no (if any)	1154712
Set out on pages	1- 2		

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31 / 03 / 2023**.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: Peter Kamaray & Co Date: 20/6/2023

Name: PETER KAMARAY & CO

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any): The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sierra Leone

Address: Peter Kamaray & Co
20 Wilberforce Street
Freetown, Sierra Leone

PETER KAMARAY & CO.
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS
20 WILBERFORCE STREET
FREETOWN. SIERRA LEONE
SIGNATURE Peter Kamaray & Co
DATE

Section B Disclosure

Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).

Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.

PETER KAMARAY & CO.
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS
20 WILBERFORCE STREET
FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE
SIGN.....
DATE.....

LAUGHTER AFRICA

England & Wales - Charity number 1154712

Accounts

LAUGHTER AFRICA TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT 2021/2022







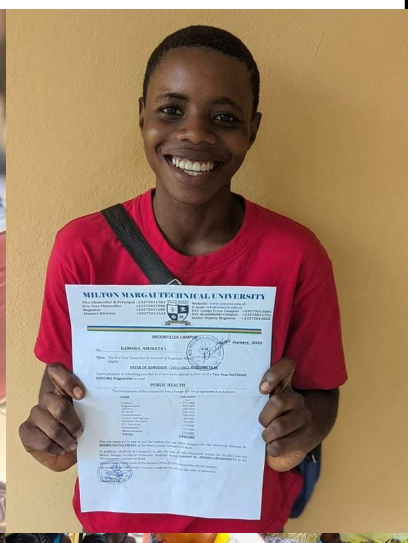


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G.	Declaration	Page 55

















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			
Albert Daniel Gbow			
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 and Finance) (Sierra Leone)

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

Abubakarr Kargbo (Director of Outreach) (Sierra Leone)

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

Isata Samura (Director of Advocacy, Communications and Campaigns) (Sierra Leone)

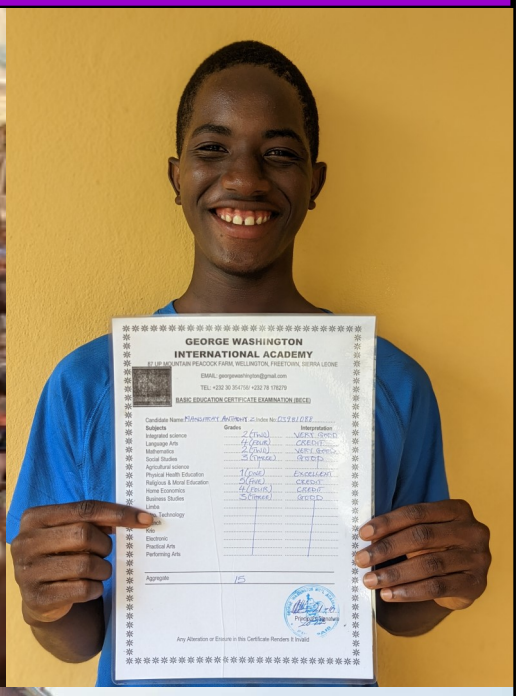
James Tyrrell (Country Director in the UK in a volunteer capacity)





B. STRUCTURE, GOVENANCE 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 Whistleblowing 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 2021/22 due to the 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 five Directors in Sierra Leone. The Directors are responsible for different departments:

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

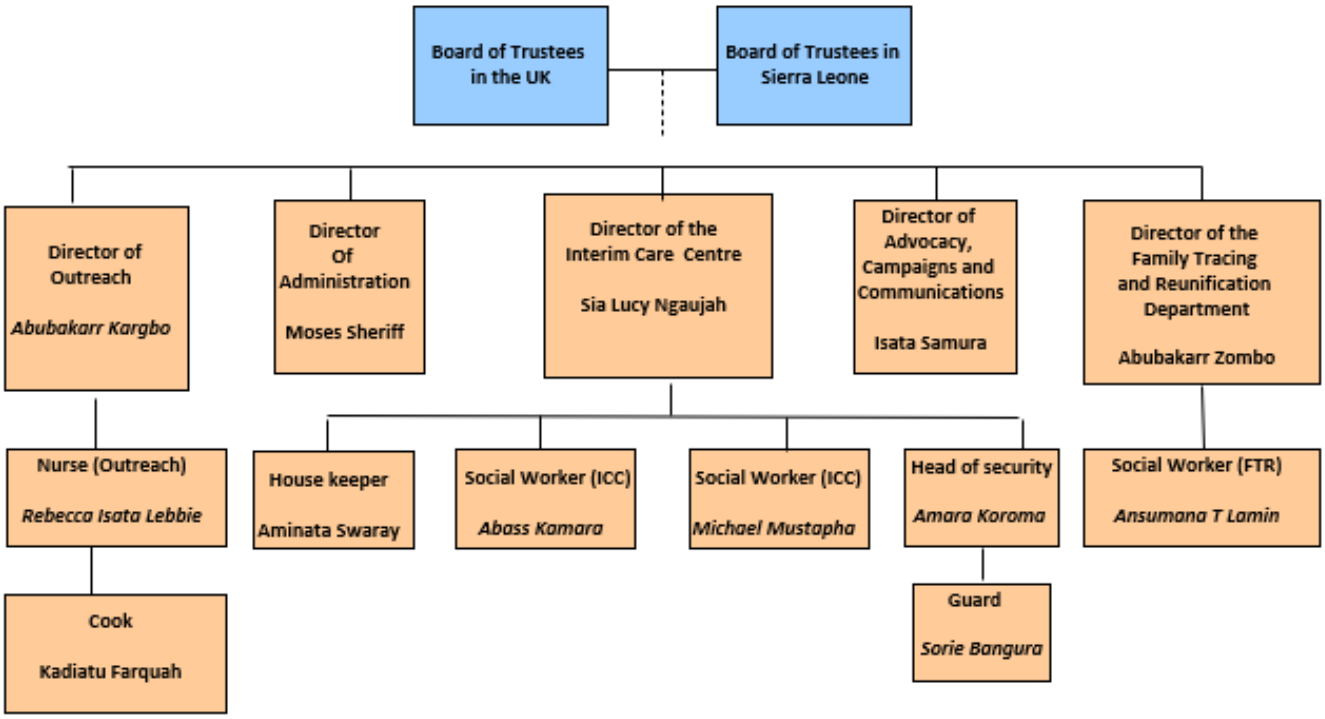
All five Directors are responsible for the day-to-day operation of Laughter Africa in Sierra Leone and managing the national staff and volunteers. The Directors report to the Trustees regularly and the Trustees delegate to the Directors accordingly.

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:

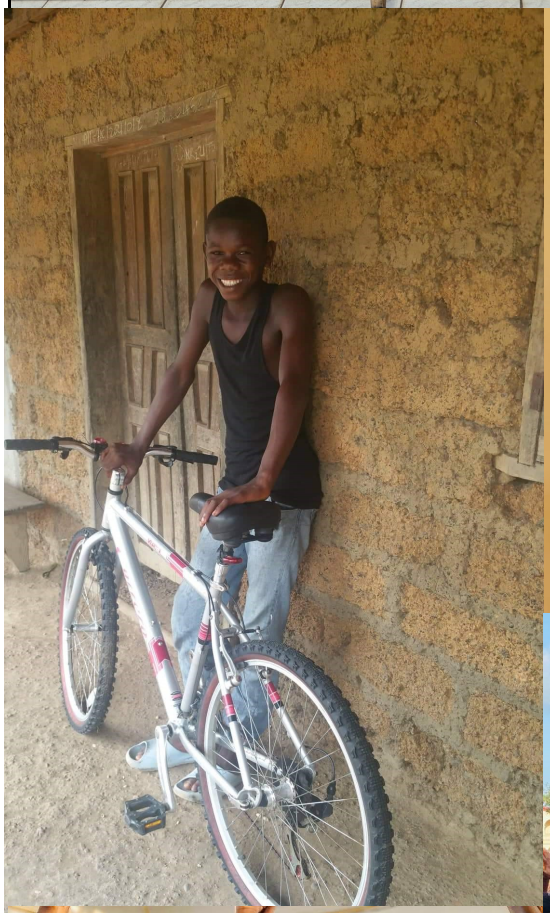
Treating Donors Fairly Policy	Supporter Promise
Acceptance of gifts and hospitality	Environmental Policy
Data Protection Policy (now updated to comply with the GDPR) and privacy policy.	Evaluation Policy
Dignity, Diversity and Equality Policy	Complaints Handling Policy and Procedures
HIV Workplace Policy	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.. incompliance 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:

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

The Outreach department

The mobile project takes place five times a week from Monday to Friday from 4pm to 7pm. Each day, medical treatment, food, water, and different activities (such as cultural dance, modern dance, art and crafts, games and sports) are provided.

The main focus of our outreach work in the last year has been the mobile project in Waterloo, a city twenty miles east of Freetown. Between August 2021 and September 2022, our mobile project in Waterloo reached 685 street children. In the final week of the project we reunified 51 street children with their families - a rewarding way to leave the area.

In October 2022, we relocated our mobile project to Grafton, a large rural town outside of Freetown. Grafton was chosen because the majority of calls to our sexual violence helpline come from this area, and we felt compelled to offer the young people in the area some much needed support. Our new mobile project in Grafton opened on 11th October 2022 and 147 street children attended. After just three weeks in operation, we have already welcomed 181 street children. So far, we have had at least 100 street children join us every night. Because of the unexpected numbers, we needed to urgently procure extra seats. We first met Agu 6 years ago, when he was living on the streets. He is a mute boy who, with the help of Laughter Africa, graduated from vocational school in carpentry a few years ago. He now owns a carpentry shop based in Grafton, so we commissioned him to make us some benches. He was delighted to help us out!

We introduced yoga as an activity at the mobile in Grafton because of the success of Yoga at the Interim Care Centre (ICC). The lovely team from 'YAMA' now work twice a week at mobile: Mondays and Fridays.

Another highlight for the outreach department was when some of our social workers helped with the headcount survey of street children on 22nd April 2022. Although 1,655 children were found living on the streets that night, we suspect that number is understated. However, it gives a good snapshot of the situation.

Another highlight was the story of Sahr K. We have known Sahr for 6 years. Although he still lives on the streets he recently set up a business selling ice cream. It's going well but he needed a megaphone to help promote his business further, which we provided him with. Sometimes young people just can't leave the streets behind. But for Sahr, having his own business gives him a feeling of self-worth and dignity, and we are really proud of him. He might be living on the street but he is supporting and providing for himself.

Laughter Africa is always ready to respond to any emergencies that affect street children. On the 17th October 2022, a huge fire swept through the Cockle Bay area. Some of the street children lost everything in the fire- their whole lives were destroyed. We responded straight away and reunified 7 of them with their families. We will be paying school for them as soon as they are settled.

We love it when an old Laughter young person "pays it forward" and helps other street children. For example, Foday found a brother and sister, Dennis and Kadeja, living on the streets. Dennis and Kadeja have lived on the streets since the Ebola crisis in 2014, when their mother died. Dennis is a protective big brother and he has kept Kadeja safe all this time. When Foday found them, he brought them to Laughter Africa. We reunified Dennis and Kadeja with relatives, and we are pleased to say that they haven't returned to the streets and we are about to pay vocational school fees for both of them. Similarly, Kabba, who we've known for 6 years, found a young boy, Frank, living on the street in February 2022. Frank ended up on the streets after he was abandoned. Out of sheer starvation, he stole a chicken. He was caught, and his community drove him away. Kabba brought him directly to Laughter Africa. We reunified him with another member of his family, all thanks to Kabba!

Interim Care Centre (ICC)

When children are ready to leave the streets, they stay with us, temporarily, at the Interim Care Centre in Adonkia, a coastal town about nine miles south-west of Freetown. Between 1st September 2021 and 21st October 2022, we welcomed 175 children and young people into the ICC. Activities carried out in the ICC are the same as outlined in previous year's annual reports and include:

- education
- counselling
- cultural dance
- music lessons (to see a video clip of the boys singing, please click here)
- drama (to see a video clip of one of the dramas, please visit here)
- skills training (including making shoes, jewellery, soap, crochet, carpets, hairdressing, etc.)

Since March 2022, we have joined forces with YAMA, a wonderful new local organisation which teaches yoga. The yoga teachers, Babardee, Sulcut, Meeky are all former street children themselves and they teach the children every Thursday. They have been a big hit!

Meanwhile Adamma, one of our beneficiaries who appeared in last year's annual report, and who studied make-up and beauty, is now providing beauty therapy training to the girls staying in the ICC.

We also celebrated three special days in the ICC over the last year:

- In April 2022, to celebrate the International Day for Dance, we had a 'danceathon' with the staff and pupils at Hope Academy, a secondary school in Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside, UK. We even had a live link from the school to the ICC, so that the street children here could dance along to the same songs. To see a video of the danceathon in action, visit here.

- In January 2022, one of the girls Martha, stayed in the ICC with her baby son Bobson. He is so young, he has only ever known life on the streets. We celebrated his first birthday at the ICC, and the girls made him a cake. Jesse, the young son of our ICC Director, Lucy, gave Bobson one of his teddy bears. It was a party to remember!

- On 15th June 2022, we celebrated Laughter Africa's 7th birthday and we did it in style. We had a scrumptious cake made by the amazing team at Frankie and Grace's (a local restaurant), and we had delicious food cooked by our ICC Director, Lucy. To see a video of the celebrations in action, please visit here.

We have also welcomed eight interns from local universities into the ICC over the last few months. It has been an honour to train the next generation of change-makers. We found that Laughter Africa was a very popular choice for many students.

Family Tracing and Reunification Department (FTR)

The FTR department 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. Between 1st September 2021 and 22nd October 2022, we reunified 276 children/young people with their families. 113 reunifications were children/young people we reunified directly from the streets mainly from the Susan's Bay and Waterloo areas of Freetown. Our social workers sometimes have to travel great distances to reunify children with their families, sometimes riding on dirt roads for hours. For example, one of our social workers undertook an incredible journey to reunify Emmanuel with his family. It took her three days to get to his village, Falaba, and back again. Emmanuel didn't know the way and they tried four different villages before finding the right one. In the end, they had to go by river! To see a video, please visit here.

If the children that have been reunified with their families stay at home, we pay their school fees or vocational training costs. We are still in the middle of providing school materials for the 2022/2023 academic year. Between 1st September 2022 and 3rd November 2022, we supplied 446 reunified children with school supplies (which includes a bag, shoes, ledger books, pens, vest and socks). We still have a lot more children to pay for between now and the end of January 2023. We hope that by the end of January 2023, we will have provided school supplies for between 500 to 600 reunified children. Before receiving their school supply, each child had to show their report card so we could assess their previous school attendance record. If the child had not been attending school regularly in the previous academic year, we did not provide school support for this coming year. Unfortunately, we have to be very strict, due to the large number of children we aim to sponsor, and the very limited funds that we have. As well as the school fees, we also pay for extra lessons and the required

text books for those pupils who are taking external examinations in the coming academic year (e.g. NPSE, BECE and WASCE), as well as paying for all the additional exam fees and charges.

We also give extra support to the most vulnerable children, which can include transportation costs, lunch, business support, bags of rice, mattresses, 'help a baby basket' support kits, rental costs or wheelchairs. One boy, Sahr Augustine, who sat the WACSE, cried after we gave him the transportation money, saying, ***"without Laughter Africa I would have gone back on the streets a long time ago."*** He couldn't believe that he had made it this far. He has just applied to university to become a social worker.

We provided bikes to some of our former street children, who, living in rural villages, are miles and miles away from the nearest school. Without the gift of a bike, they would have had to walk for hours to get the education they need and deserve to make their lives better. The perfect examples of this are Laughter's very own three Musketeers: Thomas, Almammy and Abass who live in the village of Rorenka. Last year, a woman took them from the village promising them that they were going on holiday to Waterloo. However, when they arrived, they forced into child slave labour. Eventually they couldn't take anymore, and they escaped to the relative "safety" of the streets. They couldn't go home as their village was too far away and they had no money. Thankfully, our mobile project, which was operating in Waterloo, was able to provide the boys with support. We reunified all three boys with their families. We paid for the boys' school fees, but their school was over four miles away from their home. They each had to walk there every day, getting up at the crack of dawn arriving at school exhausted. They were delighted with the bikes and they couldn't wait to start riding them.

After the success of our mother and baby training in December 2020, we decided to repeat the training programme in December 2021, with some of the girls who had become mothers that year, and some who were currently expecting. Fifty -one girls attended with their children to develop vital skills to help them through motherhood, such as nappy changing, bathing, paediatric first aid and soothing practices. In addition, we have a psychologist who also works with the girls. This is because some of the girls that we meet are not mothers through their own choice and have become pregnant as a result of commercial sex work or sexual assault. This makes the relationship they have with their baby challenging and sometimes they even feel resentful. The psychologist helps the girls work through these feelings as the girls ultimately want to be the best mother they can for their child. The mother and baby training is very important because the infant mortality rate is so high in Sierra Leone. In the last few months, three of the girls and one of the boys now living at home have lost their children. Isata, our social worker, spent a week visiting the girls who are now living at home to inform them about the training. She came across two girls in Grafton who had recently given birth. One girl had been stuck in her house by herself crying, holding the baby, as she was so overwhelmed. She didn't have a clue how to care for her newborn baby who had just been born a few days before. Thankfully she attended the training and you could just see her grow in confidence. Another girl who attended the training was Fatmata, the girl who gave birth while staying at the ICC (we mentioned her in last years' annual report). We're so proud that she has remained off the streets and is doing a wonderful job at raising baby Fatima. We even paid for her to study hairdressing at vocational school.

In July 2022, Messi visited us at the ICC. We lost contact with her four years ago. We discovered that she had been living with her aunt in a village without a phone network. She had had it tough for the last four years, just working for her aunt after her mum had died. She had tears in her eyes when she saw us again - it was like she knew that life would be okay from now on. She wants to attend vocational school and we will be paying her fees from November 2022. It means a lot to

us that the children know that we are always here for them, no matter how long it's been. The fact that they never doubt that gives us so much pride.

The FTR department also provide medical treatment for any of the children who remain at home. Most of the staff receive phone calls from the children and their families. Often the children just phone to say hello but sometimes they might need something or have an issue at home. The team are on call 24/7 for the children and respond immediately whenever they are needed.

Communications, Campaigns and Advocacy

Our Communications, Advocacy and Campaigns department started in September 2016 and it has been in operation ever since.

Sexual violence Prevention Programme

This year the main focus for our Communications, Campaigns and Advocacy Department was our sexual violence prevention programme for street children. In our work with street children we hear shocking tales of suffering. But nothing breaks our hearts more than the horrific stories of sexual violence. One child being a victim of sexual assault is unacceptable, but unfortunately in our work we hear of many more. When living on the streets children are particularly vulnerable. Sadly, children we work with have suffered from the most harrowing sexual violence including gang rape, assaults from those in positions of authority, bestiality, and death. Even worse, justice is not guaranteed. One of the girls we support said: ***"When we are raped, the man should get life imprisonment, but they don't. It's like the law doesn't apply to us. That we don't matter."*** It is usual for the children living on the streets not to take any further action after they have been assaulted. We wanted to change this, and ensure they feel safe and supported to access relevant services and achieve justice. We decided to hold workshops to educate the children on what sexual assault is, what support available is available, and what to do if they or a friend are a survivor of sexual assault (e.g. no washing, keep the clothes that they were wearing).

We created a process for street children to report sexual assault and appointed community advocates in areas with the highest numbers of street children (please see Part 2 for more information). The role of these advocates is to be the person whom the street children can approach if they have been assaulted. The community advocates will then call one of the Network for Street Children Sierra Leone members who will take the street child to the police and then to the Rainbo Centre or Aberdeen Women's Clinic for medical examination. One of our social workers will accompany the girls or boys the whole time. Our job is to walk alongside them on their journey to justice. We will ensure DNA testing is carried out on any forensic evidence gathered if necessary.

We also decided to train 20 key community members (such as imams, Pastors, priests, youth leaders, teachers and headsmen) in each community and invited them to help communicate the support that is available. We hope that more prosecutions of perpetrators will serve as a message to any future offenders that sexual assault against street children is taken seriously and has severe consequences, so that we will see a reduction in the number sexual abuse offences.

The programme was split into two parts:

October 2021 to June 2022 (Part 1) - The first part of the programme focused on the training of street children and community engagement and sensitisation.

We decided to work within eight communities around Freetown: Funkai, Tombo, Portee, Grafton, Waterloo, Lumley, Cockle Bay and Susan's Bay. They all have a high proportion of street children.

The aim of the workshops was to get justice for any street child who is a survivor of sexual assault. The training followed a similar structure at all the workshops. The first part of the session was an interactive discussion about key terminology (e.g. sexual violence, exploitation, consent, etc) and establishing what the children think these terms mean. This was followed by group work where the street children discussed the following questions:

- What are the biggest dangers/risks for street children in regards to sexual violence?
- How do they protect themselves already?
- What are the solutions that the Network could help with to reduce the danger?

After the group discussion, Isata explained the new strategy and the pathway to justice. This was the section where we mentioned the fact that you do not wash, do not change clothes, do not take bribes, etc. We also outlined the process that the survivor will go through when reporting the crime to the police.

We concluded each workshop by explaining the role of community advocates and asking the street children who they would like as an advocate.

The street children trainings took place on the following dates:

- Funkia - Saturday 16th October 2021
- Lumley (wash Car) - Saturday 27th November 2021
- Cockle Bay – Saturday 12th February 2022
- Portee- Saturday 19th March 2022
- Tombo- Saturday 2nd April 2022
- Susan's Bay – Saturday 23rd April 2022
- Grafton - Saturday 14th May 2022,
- Waterloo – Saturday 21st May 2022.

For a more in depth look at what happened at the trainings, please visit here. To see videos of some of the training in action, please visit here.

Probably the highlight of all the street children trainings was the one which took place in Susan's Bay. We had nearly 1000 children and young people attend. The street children felt great ownership over the programme and were delighted that we had put on a programme especially for them. There was a slight altercation between the children living at home and the street children over chairs and the street children said with pride***,' this is our programme.***' The altercation was easily solved but we were glad to see them so empowered. During the training, one man in the community was overheard saying to the girls***, "0h great - we can't do anything to you now or they will come after us."***

During the course of the trainings, we decided to expand the programme to also include children who live at home. In fact it was one of the girls staying with us at the ICC who reminded us of the importance of spreading our education to all children, not just those already living on the streets. She was sexually assaulted whilst living at home by her stepfather. ***"I told my mum and granny but they didn't believe me. I ended up pregnant but they forced me to have an abortion. Then my stepdad kicked me out of the house and I went to the streets."***

Community trainings

At each community meeting we invited 20 key stakeholders usually consisting of local police, the headsperson, the Chief, the chairlady, the youth chairperson, teachers, the Harbour Master, the local pastor, the local Iman, the Chairman for the Bike Union, the Chairlady for Market Women and the Chairlady for Cookery sellers among many more.

The structure for the community training followed the same format as the street children's session. The only variation were some of the group discussions. Questions included:

- What are the biggest dangers/risks for street children in regards to sexual violence?
- How, as a stakeholder, can I help protect the children more from sexual violence? (e.g. how can I, as an Iman, help protect the street children? How can I, as a teacher, help protect the street children from sexual violence?).
- What are the solutions that the Network could help with to reduce the danger?
- Do they think our plan/strategy will work? Any suggestions to make it better?

The community trainings took place on the following dates:

- Funkia - Saturday 23rd October 2021
- Lumley Wash Car - it was decided not to have a training in Lumley Wash Car as there was no community structure in place
- Cockle Bay – Saturday 19th February 2022
- Portee- Saturday 26th March 2022
- Tombo- Saturday 9th April 2022
- Susan's Bay – Saturday 30th April 2022
- Grafton - Saturday 7th May 2022
- Waterloo – Saturday 4th June 2022.

Interestingly, each community meeting was scheduled to last for one hour but quite often ended up lasting for 5 to 6 hours which is an indication of how much the communities enjoyed and participated in the training.

Some of the attendees had children who had been sexually assaulted so the issue was close to each community's heart. The community meetings were much livelier than expected. For instance, at one stage during the meeting in Grafton, a male police officer took offence by the children's assertion that they are assaulted by policemen. However, a female police officer stood her ground and said, ***"No it does happen. Maybe not by you, but other police officers do rape girls on the streets."***

Although each community is different, most of the recommendations were very similar including:

- ***"Need someone on the ground to help make sure that people adhere to what has been discussed"/"Create community Advocacy."*** (This has been achieved via the creation of the community advocates).
- Give the community advocates ID cards/letter of authority from the NGOs (All advocates have now been given ID cards).
- ***"An office in the community where cases can be reported."*** (This doesn't necessarily need to be an office – all community advocates agreed that children could come to their homes).
- Buying each community a megaphone to be used for community sensitisaton - this was by far the most common request in each community. (Each community has been given a megaphone).
- Have quarterly child safeguarding meetings where key stakeholders and the Network come together and discuss any pressing child safeguarding concerns in regards to street children. This meeting could also include representatives from the street children themselves. (These will be carried out informally every quarter by Isata who will speak to the advocates, street children and key stakeholders. The first is due to take place in December 2022).
- The community members of Waterloo emphasized that Waterloo is very big. They said that would like the community stakeholders training to take place in different areas of Waterloo so that other areas in Waterloo could also benefit. Waterloo was too big an area for one or two advocates to cover. (We took this on board and trained four more communities in Waterloo in July and August: Bassah Town, Five Five, Monkeybush and Mabureh).

July to September 2020 (Part 2)- The second part of the programme focused on implementing the recommendations from the community members and street children themselves.

After we finished the workshops, we moved onto the next stage of the project in July and August 2022 which focused on appointing, training and embedding the community advocates in eleven different communities as well as implementing the recommendations the street children and the community members had from our initial phase of workshops including holding five more community trainings in Waterloo, and Crab Town, in Lumley. The street children in Funkia said that they did not want people in their community acting as community advocates as they didn't trust them. They wanted an NGO to take that role so the girls would just go direct to the NGO without an intermediary. In this case, the NGO will be Laughter Africa.

On Saturday 24th September 2022, we trained fifteen community advocates who live in their community, offering the street children a safe space to go to immediately after they have been sexually assaulted. The session involved training on the survivor centric approach and role play. We also gave the advocates ID cards, megaphones and lots of posters for their community.

The advocates we have trained are fierce warriors. We know that the street children are in safe hands. One of the advocates for Grafton, Marie Sesay, is the chairlady of her community. Even before she became a community advocate she had already reported three different sexual assault cases to the police. Thanks to her intervention, these three men are now in prison. We know that she will be a fantastic advocate and we are honoured that she has agreed to take on the role.

One of the advocates told us that she joined the training because she was raped when she was a child by her cousin but no one believed her. She wants to make sure that something like this never happens again. She doesn't want another child not to be believed ever again.

We also held a press conference to introduce the new community advocates. Six media houses were invited including Radio Democracy, SLBC, Lion Mountain and Epic Radio. You can watch one of the television reports , here (from 37:10 min). Isata Samura, the head of communications for Laughter Africa, was interviewed for the television programme.

This is not the end of the project: this is just the beginning. Every day we receive calls to our confidential helpline. Although we are receiving calls to report sexual violence to our helpline, so far all the survivors have been children who live at home including a case of a 15 year old girl sexually assaulted by her teacher and a 3 year old girl who had been assaulted by an unknown perpetrator. The Network for Street Children Sierra Leone members respond in person to every phone call that we receive and will continue to do so.

International Day for Street Children

We celebrated the International Day for Street Children on 12th April 2022. The theme was celebrating those workers who work with and advocate tirelessly for street connected children.

At Laughter Africa, we have the most amazing team. Our staff not just staff - they are family. The journeys that they have travelled and the obstacles they have overcome in their own lives are so awe-inspiring. Through their dedication, courage and fighting spirit they have changed the lives of so many street children and we are so proud of each and everyone of them. We wanted to celebrate them and show them that their work does not go unnoticed so we made a video about some of their stories. We owe a big thank you to our volunteer, Joseph Little, who helped us with the video.

To celebrate the day, Laughter Africa combined forces with Dom Bosco Fambul, Pikin Paddy and St George's Foundation and we held a superhero carnival for over 500 street children and social workers. The children in the Interim Care Centre were so excited they were awake at 2am, asking if it was time to go yet. No one at the ICC got much sleep that night. The children and social workers were split into eight teams named after their favourite superheroes and they competed for points through different tasks. Their first task was to build their own shelter using leaves and wood. The other challenges included a group dance competition. They had to choreograph the song 'Street Pikin Dem' which our street children wrote,

recorded and performed last year. For a reminder of the song, visit here. They also had a poetry competition, drama performances and a games tournament.

Hassan represented Laughter Africa in the poetry competition. He learned the poem, "We too are!". To see his mesmerizing performance, please visit here. Hassan is amazing. He is a talented dancer, footballer and actor. He succeeds at everything he puts his mind to. Most of all he is the most amazing big brother. He lives on the street with his little brother Alpha (9) and his nephew Mohamed (10). He protects them with his life. Although many teenagers would resent the added burden of being responsible for two younger siblings, Hassan sees it as a pleasure. ***"I love them because they are my brothers. They are all I have left. It is my duty to protect them and keep them safe. I am the man of the house. If I don't look after them, who else will?"***

Hassan is 13 years old and had lived on the streets for six months before we found him. He turned to the streets after the death of his mother, ***"My mum died in 2021. She cried that her belly hurt for a long time and then one day she just died. She didn't have money to go to hospital. I don't sabi (know) who my dad is. After my mum died we had nobody to provide for us."*** With no place to go, Hassan turned to the streets for the survival of himself and his family. He would collect "cup cup" and scrap metal, just so his brothers would be able to eat every day. He has sacrificed a lot for his family but he never complains. Although Hassan is very bright, he can't remember when he last attended school.

Hassan, Alpha and Mohamed all suffer from Palmoplantar hyperkeratosis, a condition which affects their hands and feet. On the streets, he was mocked and called names by passers-by, ***"Some people call us 'cut cut feet' or 'lepers.' It makes me sad when people are horrible to Alpha and Mohamed or provoke us. I can stand up for myself but Alpha and Mohamed can't."***

To see some videos and photos from the day, please visit here.

Documentary

Local organisation VAfrica spent 4 days in May 2022 with Laughter filming a documentary all about our work. It should be ready to launch in November 2022. We are planning a special screening for all our children and young people so that they can see themselves on screen. From the bits we have seen so far - it looks amazing!

Administration department

The duties outlined in last year's annual report remain the same for the administration department. The main responsibility for this department is the Sierra Leonean accounts and the re-registration process with the Sierra Leone Government.

Work in the United Kingdom

Due to Covid-19, the founder, James Tyrrell, remained in Sierra Leone for two and a half years. This meant we couldn't undertake our usual education and fundraising programmes in the UK.

James spoke at the Consortium for Street Children Annual Conference and AGM online. It went well. Here was an email that he received afterwards from an attendee:

"I just wanted to say that watching your presentation made us feel animated, attentive, inspired, absorbed, amazed at the work you do….as well of course shock, frustration, anger at the way things are still in Freetown. My friend said that it was the most outstanding presentation of them all and will remain in her memory. My partner was equally impressed and, believe me, that takes a lot. Well done again for a brilliant presentation."

After the success of this talk, he was invited to speak in person at the CSC Fundraising Garden Party in July 2022. While he was in the UK he visited Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Kilburn and also arranged a 'Bongos Bingo' fundraising event in Yorkshire.

Due to the election in 2023, the founder will be in the UK for 6 months. During this time he hopes to re-start the school and church fundraising visits.

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. Between 31st August 2021 and 25th October 2022, we have had 14 Volunteers/interns come and join us. As of 25th October 2022, we have three volunteers.

The trustees would like to say a huge thank you to all our volunteers in the UK too. However, special thanks to the following people who have gone the extra mile for Laughter Africa this financial year:

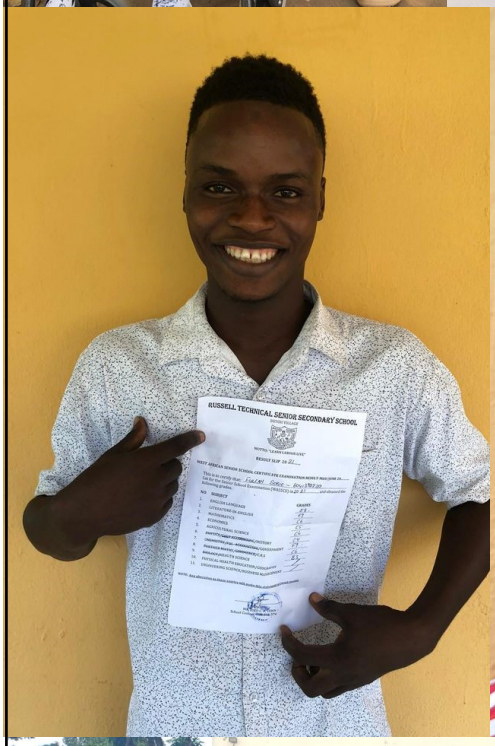
- Thomasine Warmington (Social media volunteer)
- Anne Marie Stead (Trusts and Foundations Volunteer)
- Marc North (I.T. volunteer)
- Mary Tyrrell (Administration volunteer)
- Joseph Little (Video Editor)

D. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

















Achievements

The success of our sexual violence prevention training programme.

Our sexual violence prevention programme was a huge success. The major successes of the programme include:

- Training **4000** street children and **318** stakeholders over twelve months. Our original target was to train 500 street children so the numbers surpassed our wildest expectations.
- Since our workshops, there hasn't been a single report of rape against a street child in any of the communities we visited. This is a huge success and more than we ever imagined possible. Isata has been visiting Funkia over the last twelve months intermittently as since the first training we hadn't received any phone calls to our hotline from Funkia. Isata spoke to the girls living on the streets and the community members who revealed that since our training – no girls or boys had been sexually assaulted while living on the streets! In fact some of the girls still had on them our complimentary cards (with our sexual violence support help line details on) even 1 year after the training. They said, ***"Don't worry we know to phone you if anyone rapes us."***
- The children have been making good use of the phone line to seek support and guidance. Although street children have been using the phone line, none of the calls has been about sexual violence – instead, it has been about physical violence, such as beatings, particularly from street children in Susan's Bay and Grafton. Just one example of one of the calls we have received was a few days after the training in Lumley. The girl came to the centre after being robbed at knifepoint and showed us the complimentary cards we had given out saying ***"Look I have kept it safe in my pocket."*** She said, ***"I did everything that you told me to too - I even bit him to get evidence."*** She really had paid attention to the training and we were glad that the message is sinking in. We gave the girl medical treatment and also took her to the police station to lodge a report, and she was able to reclaim some of the money that had been stolen. In June 2022, one of the girls living on the streets in Susan's Bay came running to us at the ICC. She had been thrown at a door, beaten, stabbed in the back, and bitten on her face by the father of her child. We supported her with medical treatment and accompanied her to the police station, which led to the police pressing charges. Whilst the occurrence of violence is shocking, it is at least heartening to see progress on justice being served.
- The feedback from the girls about the training has been really positive. One girl in Funkai said, ***"We are really suffering in the hands of these various men. We were crying but no one was there to give us a hand or a platform to come out and express ourselves. Since you are here now. No one will take advantage of us again. We now have a place where we can go and express ourselves. We have people to fight for us."***
- Meanwhile the feedback from the community members was equally glowing. For instance, the head of the Female Society in Tombo told us, ***"Other organisations come here and just talk at us about rape. But none of them talk about justice. You actually listen to our ideas and show us that justice is possible."*** Similarly a mother of one of the girls who attended the workshop in Cockle Bay found Isata later in the day to say her daughter recited the whole training word for word as soon as she got home.
- The community advocates are very enthusiastic. They have already started to phone us with different cases and remain really motivated.

Examination Successes

This year we have seen our best ever set of exam results for the NPSE, BECE and WASCE. For instance, at the end of September 2022, the WASCE results (the Sierra Leone equivalent of A-levels) were released. We're proud to say we now have 17 young people currently applying to University! The courses they want to study range from social work to nursing, banking and finance, to being a laboratory technician.

One boy that we are particularly proud of is Hassan. We first met Hassan in September 2015 when he was 11 years old. Now 7 years later he has passed the WASCE with flying colours. When he stayed at the ICC, he had quite a bad temper and he had his own catchphrase, ***"You offend me hey."*** As soon as we heard those words, we knew a fight was imminent. We reunified Hassan with his family in Mabuka and we have been paying for his schooling ever since. He has always dreamed of working in a hospital and now his dreams are about to become a reality. He is currently applying to university to study being a 'Lab technician.' However, with his marks we have no doubt that he will be accepted.

The first chicken that the founder, James, ever received as a gift in Sierra Leone was a chicken from Hassan's family who were so grateful that Laughter Africa had reunified him with them. They had thought that he was dead, since he went missing during the Ebola crisis. We named the chicken Hassan in his honour. The remaining kids in the ICC would tease James mercilessly saying ***"Five O, Blessing (our housekeeper's dog) has eaten Hassan"*** which would descend in a three animal race of James chasing Blessing to make sure that Hassan the chicken was safe.

Hassan has blossomed into a mature and calm young man and we couldn't be more proud. And each time he sees James, the first thing he always says with great affection is ***"You offend me hey."***

Another person we are particularly proud of is 20 year-old Mabinty. We first met Mabinty during our girls' project in Susan's Bay in 2020. She had lived on the streets for over five years. She has the best WASCE results we have ever seen and is about to apply for university. Just over two years ago she was on the streets and now the world is her oyster!

We are very proud of all our young people who sat the BECE (the Sierra Leone equivalent of GCSEs). The results came out in the middle of October 2022. Over 55 of our young people sat the exams and all of them passed with fantastic marks. A special congratulations to Tony whom we have supported since 2019 - he achieved the highest mark so far: 15. In 2019 we lost of one of our boys called Mohamed. He died after contracting TB and hepatitis. Since his death we have been paying school for his brother John. The good news is that John sat the BECE this year and got a mark of 16. Congratulations John, we know that Mohamed would be so proud of you.

Meanwhile 29 of our young people sat the NPSE (the Sierra Leone equivalent of the SATS) and all did very well. A big congratulations to Al Hassan. We first met Al Hassan when he was 6 years old in 2017. His mother had mental health issues and was unable to care for him. We managed to find a wonderful foster mother for him called Fanta who lives in Bo. Al hassan sat the NPSE this year and scored a fantastic mark of 301. He was admitted into a very prestigious boarding school called Bo Boys. It is a very well renowned school and is very difficult to be admitted to.

<u>The medical care we provide has saved hundreds of lives</u>

At Laughter Africa we provide medical treatment for thousands of children living on the streets. We know for certain that there would be children who would be dead by now if it wasn't for Laughter Africa. The best example of this is Mohamed. Mohamed is the face of strength, determination and resilience. We first met Mohamed in our Susan's Bay mobile project in 2017, wearing his Spongebob Squarepants T-shirt. He never took it off. Eventually we took him home and paid school for him but about three years ago, he returned to the streets.

On 24th March 2022, he was attacked in the eye by a fellow street child who beat him repeatedly in the eye with a rock. Rather than coming to us straight away, he decided to visit a 'nurse' in Lumley who butchered his eye more by giving him the wrong treatment. She just sewed his eye together. Eventually, we found out about what had happened and took him to two different eye hospitals. Both hospitals recommended that they removed his eye straight away or he would lose the sight in his other eye too.

Before the operation, Mohamed stayed a few nights at the Interim Care Centre. On the morning of his operation, Mohamed knocked on my door at 4am. Blood was dripping from his eye and he was in so much pain. It was horrible not to be able to do anything to stop his pain. I felt so useless but there was literally nothing I could do. All I could do was just sit with him.

On the 31st March the doctors removed his eye. As he was only 17, he still needed the consent of his mother, Fatmata. When we brought her to the hospital, she begged the doctor, ***"please take my eye instead and give it to him."***

Although Mohamed, his mother and the hospital all wanted the eye removed, the final choice was still with me. To make a choice whether someone loses an eye or not. And let me tell you it is not an easy decision to make. I never cry here. To survive in Sierra Leone, you have to be tough and I suppose I have put a barrier up to protect myself emotionally. That day I couldn't stop crying. I felt a mixture of guilt and pity. Mohamed assured me a few weeks later that it was the right choice to make and that he doesn't hate or resent me, which was my biggest fear.

At the beginning of July, Mohamed had another operation and now has a prosthetic eye. I am amazed by his courage, bravery and resilience. He has just brushed himself up and got on with life. He has no time for self pity, ***"I still have one eye and I can still live a normal life. Yes it was a shock at first but now I am just determined to live life to the full. To make my life count."*** Even more remarkably, Mohamed has forgiven the boy, Hassan, who destroyed his eye. "***One thing I have learned is that life is to short to hold grudges. What use is anger? What will that achieve? I just want to move forward and not look back anymore. To do that I need to forgive Hassan and let go of all that anger and resentment. What has happened has happened."***

Mohamed is now living at home again with his mum and has just started JSS1 at a new school. His dream is to be a lawyer and we are determined to help make his dream a reality. He wants to be the first one eyed lawyer in Sierra Leone and we know with his courage and determination that he will achieve his goal!

Just this year alone, since 1st January 2022 until 1st November 2022, the nurse has treated at least 1582 young people, including Kingteller who was stabbed in the arm, and Mohamed who badly damaged his leg by falling down a gutter. One of our old boys, Alie came to us at the end of July 2022 and he was at the point of death. Without our knowledge he had had an operation for a hernia a few months previously but the operation went wrong. He was admitted into hospital and has now made a full recovery. But it really was a close call.

Similarly, one boy Joseph nearly died and had to be admitted into hospital straight away as he was struggling to breathe in June 2022. He was diagnosed with pneumonia, a heart condition (his heart is enlarged) malaria, typhoid and sickle cell. But, since his treatment he is as good as new and is back to running around with boundless energy.

One of our girls who now lives at home, Fanta, came to the office with her mother at the end of October 2022. She had found a lump in her breast and she was worried that it might be cancer. Our nurse Isata has taken her for a screening and we are just waiting for the results. No matter the outcome of the results we will be walking alongside Fanta on her journey to recovery. She recently received her BECE results and got a brilliant mark of 20.

Finally, one boy Joseph was admitted into hospital with Tropical Splenomegaly Syndrome in April 2022. We were told by the hospital that he would have died if he hadn't received treatment when he did. Sadly, when we visited his family to inform them that Joseph was sick, they replied, ***'we don't care if he dies.***' They rejected him, accusing him of being a witch.

We want to say a special thank you to our nurse, Rebecca Isata Lebbie. She is indispensable and we couldn't cope without her.

The successes of the young people we work with

Whenever one of the young people we work with succeed, we share their joy. Here are some of their most amazing successes:

Sorie

We are so proud of Sorie who recently received his WASCE results. He got 6 credits which is enough to get into any university of his choice! We first met Sorie living on the streets in Waterloo in August 2015. In fact, Moses and I found him when we were carrying out Laughter's first night survey in Waterloo (in the pouring rain). Sorie turned to the streets aged 13 after the death of his mother during the Ebola crisis. But ever since his reunification seven years ago, he has stayed at home. Sorie now wants to go to university to study social work, and aims to join our team. He said that the social workers at Laughter Africa inspired him. He said, ***" I want to study social work because Five-O and Laughter Africa have been with me since I was in class 6. They have been supporting me throughout. I want to study social work in order to give back to Laughter Africa and do for other street children what Laughter Africa has done for me. I believe that doing social work will make me be part of Laughter's life forever."*** Sorie will be starting his social work course at Milton Margai University in November 2022 when the new university academic year begins. He has already had his

interview – he is just waiting for his acceptance letter.

Osman

Osman, one of the young people whom we have worked with over the last 5 years, was recently invited to exhibit his latest artwork at an art exhibition at Mango Peak, a local bar in Freetown. It was the first time his work has been on show to the public and he has already been invited back to the next exhibition in December due to the popularity of his work.

Osman lived on the streets for 4 months in 2017 when he was 15 years old. He was maltreated by his grandmother who threw him out of the house and said that she never wanted to see him again. While staying at the Interim Care Centre in September 2017, Osman learned how to make shoes, carpets and bags and discovered a natural flair and talent for creativity. Over the last five years, Osman has been selling bags, shoes and paintings to raise money for himself and his future university fees.

In 2018 Osman started to teach the children in the Interim Care Centre how to make bags and shoes every month. He energises the children and his shoe-making and bag-making sessions are one of the most popular activities at the centre. He spends hours teaching the children and has a great deal of patience. He is a real inspiration to them. Osman says, ***"I really enjoy teaching the children. Every time I teach them it helps me remember my past and gives me the courage to continue and not give up despite all the daily challenges I face. Art gives my life meaning. I can escape from my life in my art. When I start painting I lose myself in the work. I am an orphan and whenever I start to get sad when I think about my mum, I just start to draw and it comforts me somehow."***

Osman's dream is to become a doctor, "***I particularly want to save the lives of street children. When I lived on the streets, I saw so many street children suffering from different illnesses – HIV, STIs, malaria, stabbings. I saw girls having to give birth in the streets. In fact one of my friends died while living on the street. His name was Suliaman. He was 15 years old and died of elephantiasis on 18th August 2017. He died in agony. He was always kind to me. We would play PS (PlayStation) together after sweeping the streets. I just wish that I could have done something more to save him."*** This memory drives Osman and still haunts him to this day. Osman has re-sat the WACSE three times in order to get the required grades to study medicine. His dedication and perseverance to achieve his dream is awe-inspiring. He never gives up and we know that he will get those grades eventually - we believe in him! Osman will be starting university in November 2022 - he is going to study ' Diagnostic Laboratory Technology.' He is just waiting for his interview. This is one way for him to start his medical training to become a doctor.

Aminata, Alice and Emma

We are very proud of Aminata and Alice who graduated from their 'Food and Nutrition' course at Camp Women, one of the best vocational schools in Freetown, in November 2021. If we rewind to just over four years ago when we met the girls, graduating from vocational school was a distant dream. We first met both girls in 2018. Aminata went on the streets after her father's death as her mother could not afford to pay her school fees, ***"Sometimes I went to bed hungry. My mother was poor and could not take care of me."*** Meanwhile Alice said at the time, ***"I want to do something with***

my life. I have never been to school. I was constantly rejected by people on the streets and they called me all sorts of names. I felt so lonely and didn't know where to turn."

She is definitely not lonely anymore. Not only did both girls get a huge cheer from fellow classmates when they collected their certificates but both Aminata and Alice were surrounded by family members with beaming smiles and pride on their faces. It was such a lovely moment that I was honoured to share.

We can't wait to see what the world has in store for Alice and Aminata but one thing we do know for certain is that the world is their oyster. You go girls! Alice recently completed a two month internship at the Golden Tulip Hotel.

Similarly a big congratulations to Emma who recently graduated from Portee Vocational School in Catering. We first met Emma living on the streets in Grafton in 2018. Since then Emma has worked tirelessly to achieve her dreams. She also got a job. She is now running a restaurant in Jui. We are extra proud of her as it is not really easy to get a job here so this is testament to her hard work and determination. We couldn't be more proud of her if we tried.

Henry

We first met 19 year old Henry living on the streets four years ago. We reunified him with his father and helped him set up a bakery. He got up at 3am every morning to bake bread, went to school and then sold the bread after school. That's a full day's work!

He came running into the office recently saying, ***"Five-O [my nickname] you will be proud of me now."*** Henry was waving his glowing leaving testimonial from his school and had recently sat the university entrance exam.

Now Henry wants to give back to society, and he was recently appointed as the chairperson of a local organisation called 'Let's Speak Sierra Leone.' It's a new NGO which advocates on different issues affecting young people especially focusing on disability, gender-based violence and human rights. For the International Day for Children, Henry appeared on radio and television paid for by UNICEF and Plan. He was recently invited by the Ministry for training on gender-based violence. Henry is a real leader and change-maker who is determined to achieve justice for others in society who are truly vulnerable.

I am so proud by his dedication to others. Henry's goal is to become a lawyer and he's currently looking for a night job so that he can pay his way through university. He is not scared of hard work and I know that one day he will achieve his dreams and be a real advocate for change.

Sahr Augustine and Abdul

Can you imagine carrying someone 30 minutes each day so they could go to school? That's what Sahr Augustine did for his foster brother Abdul, a former street child, after his wheelchair broke in October 2021. He never complained either. In his words, ***"He's my brother; it's what you do for your brother."***

We were thrilled to provide Abdul with a new wheelchair in January 2022, so he now has his independence back and can travel to school by himself. And it was worth it. Abdul recently sat the BECE- a year earlier than he should - and he got a brilliant mark of 23. He has just enrolled in SS1 and is one step closer of achieving his dream of becoming a lawyer. Wheelchairs are expensive and in limited supply in Sierra Leone, so we want to say a massive thank you to our friends at Dom Bosco and Cap Anamur who helped make this possible. To say Abdul was delighted would be an understatement, and although Sahr Augustine never complained we think he was secretly happy as well. Sahr Augustine recently sat his WASCE and he got enough credits to attend university. He is currently applying to study social work. Meanwhile Abdul continues to inspire us, even after six years. In his spare time, Abdul coaches a girls' football team.

Kadiatu

This year we met Kadiatu. She came to the Interim Care Centre in January 2022. Kadiatu's kindness shines out from her. One example of this is when she fetched 20 buckets of water from the river to help set up an epic water balloon fight – just so her new friends in the ICC could enjoy themselves.

Kadiatu has albinism and has been cast to the sidelines by most people. She grew up with her aunt, who only paid for her own children's education. Instead of going to school, Kadiatu was made to sell food on the streets. In her 13 years of life, Kadiatu has never been to school.

Her confidence has been completely destroyed by the cruel taunts of others. People refer to her as 'Jus', a very derogatory term. Kadiatu spoke of her life, "***When I try to play with other girls, their parents stop them. They are scared that I'll pass sickness to their children so I normally just stay by myself. They call me 'eye bend' since I can't see properly, or 'smelly,' or 'body rough.' People tell me not to go near them, so I sit and cry by myself. Even my family treat me as if I am not important. The most painful thing is when people see me and they start to laugh."***

Kadiatu spent five weeks with us at the Interim Care Centre (ICC). Since she has been with us, she quietly grew in confidence. We took her to a local albinism support group, where she learnt about protecting her skin from the sun. They gave her a pair of sunglasses and a hat and she loves to strike a pose to show them off. For the first time in her life she sees herself as beautiful.

Also for the first time in her life she has friends – Kadiatu and the other girls staying at the ICC were inseparable. Whilst there were lots of tears when they left us to be reunified with their community, we are comforted that now when Kadiatu faces the world, she does it knowing there are people who have her back. She is no longer alone and has a new life goal of going to school. Even as she was leaving us at the ICC a young boy yelled out ***"Jus".*** We were not letting that pass, so we responded, "***Don't call her that, call her by her name; Kadiatu."***

Lamin

We are really proud of 17 year old Lamin. He really has turned around his life for the better since we met him in November 2020. Before we met him, he had lived on the streets for four years. His life on the streets was engrained in

gang culture. He was a prominent member of a gang and knew all the different rival gang members in Freetown. He lost at least 6 friends who were murdered because of the gang culture they were involved in. Lamin was even stabbed twice himself. He told us that if he didn't leave Freetown and the gangs behind him soon then he would either be dead or in prison.

In the last few years, Lamin has completely changed his life since he moved to the provinces to live with his grandmother. He decided that it was better for him to get away from all the gangs and cliques in Freetown for a fresh start. The village he lives is miles and miles away from a school. It would take him hours to get to school everyday so we bought him a bike to make life that little bit easier. The bike worked its magic: Lamin has just received his BECE result - he got 27.

Amie

We wrote about Amie the footballer in last year's annual report. She's finally begun university! She's studying 'Public Health' at Milton Margai University. She started in January 2022. Meanwhile the Female Premier league finally officially launched in October 2022. There were lots of delays. Amie is now playing for SL Police - one of the major teams in the league. Her first game was on the 25th October 2022.

Albert

Recently we saw one of our old boys, Albert, driving a kekeh. We didn't even recognise him as he had grown so much. We first met him in September 2017. Now he is providing for himself by being a driver. He also wants to attend vocational school and learn tailoring which we are more than happy to pay for. His plan is to attend the school during the day and be a driver by night. We are so proud of him as he is making a living for himself.

Parliamentary committee on NGOs

Most NGOs in Sierra Leone were summoned to a Parliamentary Committee Hearing between March and June 2022. The Committee has 17 Parliamentarians on the panel. NGOs are only given five days' notice to prepare. In the past seven years, there have been parliamentary hearings but those were only for NGOs who received huge institutional donor funds. However, this time most NGOs were called. On 16th March 2022, we were summoned to appear before Parliament. James, the founder, Lucy, the head of the ICC and Isata, the head of Advocacy all represented Laughter. The Committee wanted 17 copies of documentation from each NGO. We had to answer questions from the MPs and give a presentation about our work. The hearing went well and lasted for only 20 minutes - particularly because we explained that we did not receive any institutional donor funds. We provided all the documents and they praised us saying that we were very organised. The MPs in the hearing even thanked Laughter Africa for our work. We think that James even impressed them with his grasp of krio, tenme and mende!

For some NGOs the Parliamentary hearings have been very antagonistic and some of the NGOs were recalled to Parliament for a second hearing. Some were even charged with contempt of Parliament and asked to pay huge fines.

A month after the hearing, we received a lovely email from one of the MPs in the Hearing asking if we could take on an intern from his constituency for 6 weeks. The fact that he thought of us first before any of the other NGOs, even a month later, showed us the impact we had made during the presentation. At a recent meeting with National NGOs in September 2022, SLANGO (the Sierra Leone Charity Commission) praised Laughter for our presentation to the Parliamentary Hearings in March, particularly in regards to the folders of information we provided. I tend to view things very negatively, so to receive such positive feedback was really affirming.

From the beginning of July 2022, the Parliamentary Committee for NGOs started visiting NGOs all over the country for "oversight visits." At the end of August, the Parliamentary Committee wrote to Laughter Africa and said that they would like to visit Laughter at the beginning of September 2022. The visit took place on 1st September. Moses, the head of Administration, and Lucy, the head of the ICC represented Laughter Africa during the visit. There were 9 MPs, and the visit went well.

In 2022, we've had meetings with other government agencies too, including the Director of the NGO Affairs Directorate (in charge of all NGO operations) and with the Human Rights Commission where we met with the Commissioner. We also met with Kadie Davies, the constituency MP where the ICC is based. All the meetings went well. We also finished our re-registration with the Sierra Leone Government in March 2022 and all other agencies required to conduct our work. Meanwhile, at a meeting with all NGOs at the Ministry of Social Welfare in September 2022, Laughter was praised publicly for the quality and consistency of our reporting.

Community popularity and solidification of our support

Over the last year, we have noticed how popular Laughter seems to have become within the communities we work in. Everywhere we go, people know us. One thing we noticed at all the sexual violence prevention workshops was even though there were other NGOs present, Laughter Africa received the loudest cheers by far each time. For instance, when I attended the sexual violence prevention workshops in Portee in March 2022 - it was like Beatle mania. I was crowd-surfed down a hill by a large crowd. One of the young people, Abdulai from Portee, came for school supply recently and said, ***"Five O if you stood for President - everyone in Portee would vote for you."*** As one priest said to me from another NGO a few years ago, ***"You are by far the best NGO here. You are on the ground. You are much better than us."*** At that time I didn't grasp the reality of what he meant – but this year I finally did. The name 'Laughter Africa' and 'Five O" (my nickname) mean something here and has really spread over all the different communities in Freetown over the last seven and a half years, especially in the last year. For example, during the night surveys in April 2022, one social worker, Abubakarr, was in Calaba Town. When Bakarr explained that he was from Laughter Africa, the first boy he spoke to replied, ***"How is Five O? Greet him for me."*** I have never been to Calaba Town but my name is still known there. Meanwhile one of our volunteers, George, was in town for the night surveys. He was a bit nervous but as soon as he said ***,"Five O sent me"*** all the street kids assisted George and kept him safe throughout the night. Another NGO reported something similar, "Whenever we are doing outreach and we see a street child the first thing they ask us is ***"Do you sabi (know) Five O?"*** When we went to Grafton for the sexual violence prevention training in May 2022, the community Chairlady said to us,***" I have heard Laughter Africa's name from all the street children that you have paid school for- I***

have wanted to meet you for a while." I feel like we have finally proven ourselves. It is like our work is speaking for itself. When you first set up a NGO in Sierra Leone, people are cynical and it does take time for the to accept you but I feel like we are well known and respected within our field now. This is due to the fantastic staff and volunteers that we have. They are so devoted, committed and energized. We are so lucky to have them.

We also have great relationships with all the community leaders in the different communities. For example, when we first approached the headsmen in Portee in March 2022 to ask if we could carry out the sexual violence prevention training, he said to Isata that Laughter Africa is one of the best NGOs who has ever worked in his community. He said that, ***"Laughter Africa does exactly what they say they will do. So many NGOs make fake promises but everything you say you'll do, you do."*** He said that Laughter could do anything that we liked in his community. He asked us to come back and work in his community as he missed us. During the planning of the sexual violence prevention workshops, a much bigger NGO (with a lot of funding) came at the same time. The headsmen said, ***"You can wait. I am dealing with Laughter first."*** It is unusual for a bigger charity to be ignored in favour of a much smaller charity but that truly showed me the impact of our work in his community. Similarly, in the community training workshop in Cockle Bay, one of the staff from another NGO claimed that that they were the best NGO. However, the community members replied straight away, **"We don't know you. The only organisation that we know is Laughter Africa and Aunty Isata. They are the best."** Although it is not a competition, to be so vigorously defended by the community was humbling. We have developed firm roots in the communities where we do work and have a strong foundation there.

<u>Our staffs' successes</u>

Whenever one of our staff succeeds and achieves their dreams, we share their joy. Training and building staff capability is important to us. So we want to wish a huge congratulations to our social workers Isata and Zombo who recently received their Masters in Psychomotricity after studying for four years. Psychomotricity is counselling children through play. They are only 22 people trained in psychomotricity in the whole country and two of those are from Laughter Africa. A huge thank you to 'Child Heroes' who provided the training and the opportunity for us to take part. We have another four staff who are currently studying at university too. It is important for us that our staff achieve their dreams too.





Challenges

The deaths of some of our beneficiaries

This year we tragically lost three of the young people that we have worked with:

'Ka ka feet'

It is with great sadness that we announce the death of 20 year old Bockarie aka 'ka ka feet.' who died at the end of September 2022. He had been bitten by a snake. Unfortunately, he lived in a village in the middle of nowhere and he was not able to get to a hospital in time. I had the honour of giving Bockarie his street name 'Ka ka Feet' in our Susan's Bay project in 2017. We were joking around one day in the rainy season and we were talking about how smelly his feet were and how dirty his shoes were and suddenly the name of 'ka ka feet' just caught on. Everywhere he went people called him 'ka ka feet' with such affection. He loved the name and wore it with pride. He was just a cheeky chappie! We took him home to his village in 2017 and have been paying school for him ever since. A few years ago his mum and dad died and he was left to bring up his younger brother and sister – a task he did without complaint. It wasn't easy for him and his family, but he made so many sacrifices in order for his siblings to have the best life possible. He grew old before his years. He had just started SS2 and we were about to provide his school supply for the new academic year when we received the tragic news. When our social worker, Lamin, went to the village to pay our respects, his brother just ran up to Lamin and burst into tears. In memory of Ka ka feet, we will be providing schooling for his brother. He has just started JSS1. Ka ka feet – forever in our hearts! We'll miss you buddy!

Princess

One of the girls living in the streets in Susan's Bay, Princess, died on 28th March 2022. We first met Princess five years go at our mobile project and she visited our mobile project intermittently throughout the years. She died after being beaten to death by two men. Rest in Power Princess!

Aisha

Sadly one of our former street children Aisha, who was now living at home, passed away in mid-December 2021. Although we paid medical treatment for her in August 2021, this wasn't enough to save her life. To add to the sadness her baby recently died as well. In August 2021, she was rushed to hospital with a swollen belly and after many scans was diagnosed with liver cirrhosis, typhoid and malaria. We found out she recently gave birth in secret and received some traditional healing.

The upcoming election

The Sierra Leone election is scheduled to take place on 24th June 2023. This will cause huge disruption to our work. Usually 6 months before an election, Parliament closes and the whole country pretty much shuts down. Life solely revolves around the election campaign. There are political rallies every day and traffic increases tenfold. We are already planning to scale down our work next year during the whole period of the election campaign due to staff safety.

Cost of living crisis

Like many other African countries, Sierra Leone has been particularly badly affected by rapid inflation caused in part by the war in Ukraine. Inflation rose to almost 28% in June 2022, fuelled first by the Covid pandemic easing and then the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Food inflation is at the highest level in decades, almost doubling since September 2021. In recent months doctors and teachers have gone on strike, with demands for pay increases to meet rising inflation. The prices of rice, onions, tomatoes and beef had all risen by about 50% over the last year, with the price of fuel and palm oil roughly doubling. We are really struggling with the increase in prices as our income has decreased. The increase in prices is also having a knock-on effect with crime rates increasing. In desperation, more people are turning to crime. In September 2022, the founder of Laughter Africa was the victim of a robbery in a taxi in broad daylight. The thieves stole some money. Thankfully he wasn't hurt.

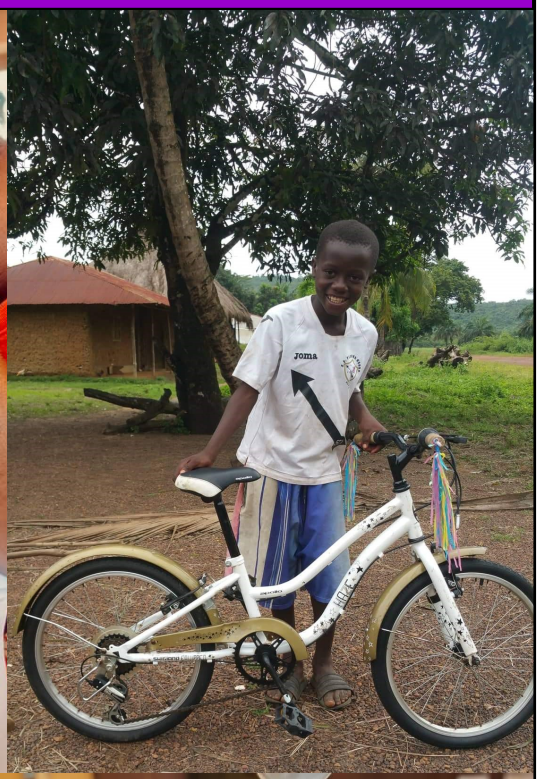
In connection to this are the serious riots that took place on the 10th August 2022. The protests were against soaring inflation and the rising cost of living all over the country including in Kamakwie, Makeni, Mabuka and Freetown. Thousands of people were involved. The anti-cost-of-living demonstrations degenerated into violent clashes between security forces and protesters. Businesses, government offices, police stations and buses were charred or destroyed completely in the violence. At least six police officers were killed. People are scared of similar riots happening again before or after the election. A lot of the street children witnessed these riots and have been left traumatized. We've been providing comprehensive counselling to these children and will be focusing more on peace building within the next year in the build up to the election in June 2023.

The cost of living crisis is also hitting the income of Laughter Africa. We have noticed a huge reduction in the numbers of donations received in 2022.



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 **£99,323.13 (unrestricted). £11,961.78 (unrestricted)** was raised from Gift Aid. **£0.12 (unrestricted)** was earned through bank interest. **£4,180.59** was kindly donated by different Trusts and Foundations (unrestricted). In total, **£115,465.62** was raised in 2021/22. Laughter Africa had **£20,100.19 (unrestricted)** remaining from the previous financial year. In total, **£135,565.81** was available for Laughter Africa's use in 2021/22.

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 the European Union 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. All of our fundraising plans have sadly had to been postponed due to Coronavirus.

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 2021/22, we received no complaints related to our fundraising activity.





The trustees would also like to say a big thank you to all the organisations and trusts and foundations who gave a donation to Laughter Africa in 2021/22:

HE Space
children's foundation
"...to raise up an astronaut"

Thank you to every person who has given us a donation over the last financial year. 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 particularly with the cost of living crisis. 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 **£123,527.10** and there was **£7,127.56** held in the bank accounts and petty cash at the end of the financial year. A total of **£130,654.66.** Laughter Africa lost **£4,911.15** via multi currency exchange rate losses. A total expenditure of **£128,438.25** was spent in the 2021/2022 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 for 1 year	£7,637.40
Salaries for National Staff	£18,114.05
Food	£8,983.52
Non- food items	£5,223.68
Games and entertainment Costs	£7,510.02
Staff travel costs during reunifications	£3,541.76
Educational equipment	£19,855.49
Generator fuel for the ICC	£482.54
Street children travel costs	£2,865.24
School fees/vocational training	£16,589.57
Medical costs for the street children	£7,353.21
Volunteer costs	£4,144.55
Travel subsistence for staff	£136.93
Family support for the street children	£2,319.10
Clothing	£1,590.23
Campaign and Advocacy	£941.67
Toiletries	£353.12
Staff travel accommodation	£344.73
Travel subsistence for the street children	£21.56
Audit fees (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£896.78
Water supplies	£1,396.71
P.0. Box (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£24.71
Community Development	£187.64
Bank Charges in Sierra Leone	£594.08
Safeguarding Costs	£6.60
Hire of Premises for Mobile	£480.90
Asset (A generator for the ICC department)	£712.31

Electricity for the ICC	£361.70
Insurance (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£162.51
Work permit and residential permit (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£239.59
Annual leave allowance for National staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£2,430.39
Medical Treatment for National Staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£2,510.82
Country Registration fees	1,453.93
NASSIT (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1,900.24
Telephone costs	£365.93
PAYE (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1,182.89
TOTAL	**£122,916.10**

Expenditure in the UK

Type of expenditure	**Cost (Pounds)**
Bank Charges in the UK	**£611**
TOTAL	**£611**

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 **£7,353.21.** Similarly, food is provided at both the mobile project and the Interim Care Centre. The total cost spent on food in 2021/22 was **£8,983.52.** Coupled with this is the cost of non food items, (both at mobile and the Interim Care Centre) which totalled **£5,223.68.** Non food items include things like coal, washing powder, towels, bleach and plate/cups, etc. **£7,510.02** was spent on teaching the children income generating skills/games and entertainment including art & craft materials, hairdressing materials, cultural dance, yoga, modern dance at both mobile and the Interim Care Centre. The travel costs of the street children across all three departments was **£2,865.24.** Meanwhile staff travel across all three departments reached **£3,541.76.** This travel was for the payment of school fees and reunifications. 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 **£365.93.** Water supplies for the children at the ICC and mobile totalled **£1,396.71** for the year.

Costs associated solely with the Outreach department

The only payment solely associated with the outreach department was **£480.90** for the rent for the mobiles in Waterloo and Grafton. 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 **£7,637.40** for one year. Other costs associated with the interim Care Centre include clothing **(£1,590.23)** and toiletries **(£353.12)** for the street children. Meanwhile the cost of electricity for the ICC totalled **£361.70** while **£482.54** was spent on fuel for the generator for the ICC. All the other costs are listed above like medical expenses, food/non-food items and income generating skills. Without an Interim Care Centre, we would not be able to carry out our key objectives: it is crux to our work. This year we paid a 250,000 leones payment per month to the headsman in Adonkia for community development where the ICC is located. This totalled **£187.64** in 2021/22. We feel that it is important to give back to the community that we have called home for over 7 years.

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 **(£16,589.57),** educational equipment (uniforms, school bag, school shoes, stationery, equipment for vocational schools, text books) **(£19,855.49)** and family support for the most vulnerable street children once they have returned home **(£2,319.10).** This support could be a mattress, a bag of rice, a wheelchair, business support, baby 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 2022, as well as the new children with whom we will work in 2022/23. Family reunification is a key objective of the work and paying for school support is a major factor in keeping the street children at home. Other costs associated with this strand of work include; travel accommodation for staff during the reunification process **(£344.73);** travel subsistence for staff during the reunification process **(£136.93);** and travel subsistence for street children during the reunification process **(£21.56).**

Costs associated with the Campaigning and Advocacy department

In 2021/22, the communication and advocacy programme for Laughter Africa revolved around the International Day for Street Children (12th April) and the sexual violence prevention programme. The total cost spent on advocacy and campaigning was **£941.67.**

Costs associated with staffing

The biggest expenditure was on national staff salaries which was a total of **£18,114.05.** 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 2021/22 financial year, Laughter Africa employed 13 full 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 **(£2,510.82)** and GPA insurance **(£162.51).** Laughter Africa also paid NASSIT **(£1,900.24)** and PAYE **(£1,182.89)** 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 **(£2,430.39).** The staffs' work has been greatly enhanced by the work of volunteers. During this financial year Laughter Africa had a total of 14 Sierra Leonean volunteers. Costs associated with the volunteers totalled **£4,144.55.** At the time of writing this report (October 2022), Laughter Africa currently has 3 volunteers; Marion, Abibatu and Komba. Safeguarding costs reached **£6.60** this financial year as all volunteers have to receive a police clearance before they are able to work at Laughter Africa.

Country registration and other associated fees

In this financial year we had to pay re-registration fees to SLANGO and MOPED (the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development). The total cost of re-registration was **£1,453.93.** To be re-registered as a charity in Sierra Leone, an audit must be completed. The audit costs were **£896.78.** 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 **£239.59.** To be recognised as a registered charity in Sierra Leone, one must have a PO Box. Laughter Africa has one at a cost of **£24.71** per year.

Assets

A generator was purchased in April 2021 for the Interim Care Centre due to the unreliability of the electricity supply. The cost of the generator was **£712.31.**

Bank charges in Sierra Leone

The bank charges in Sierra Leone were **£594.08.**

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 **£611.**








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

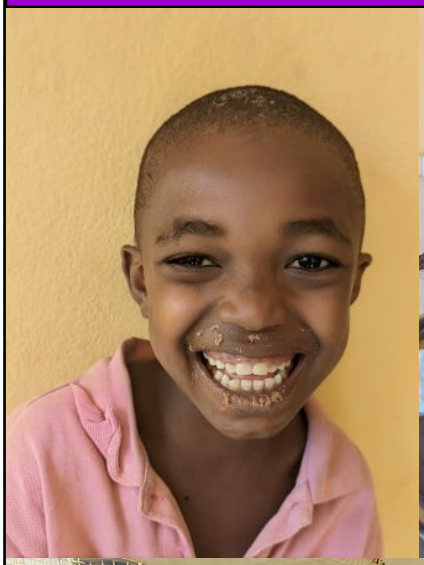
The trustees have also prepared financial templates and documentation for Laughter Africa including assets registers, chart of accounts, budgeting templates etc. All are available upon request.

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



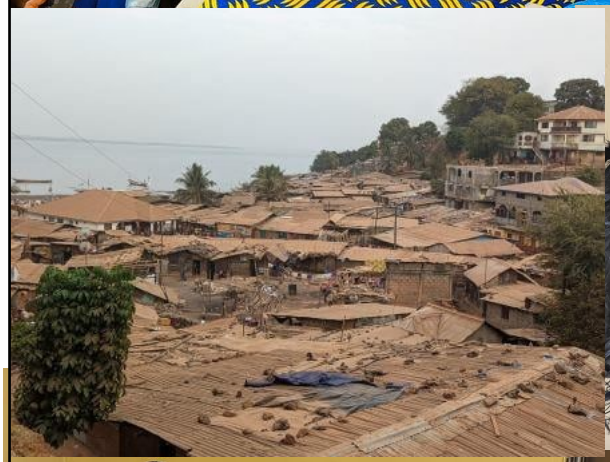






















Future Plans

Over the next year, we do not plan to introduce any new components to our work due to the upcoming election in June 2023. We will just continue our normal outreach, Interim Care Centre and Family Training and Reunification work. We plan to close completely for the whole of June 2023 and will monitor the situation regarding the election carefully before we re-open again in July 2023. The safety of our staff and volunteers is our paramount concern. Even schools are only opening for two terms for the academic year 2022/2023 rather than the usual three. The only new work we plan to introduce in the next year is our new advocacy campaigns, which will mostly take place after the election.

Our new Advocacy Campaign 1: Sexual violence committed by police officers

We have chosen the focus of our next advocacy campaign for the year(s) ahead. Over the last three years our advocacy work has followed a certain trajectory. In 2020, our advocacy work focused upon the government strategy for street children. Sadly, none of the recommendations made by ourselves or the street children were included in the strategy. However, as part of that advocacy campaign, Laughter Africa organised a consultation with 112 street children about what they would like included in the strategy. Through this consultation, the street children revealed that many of them had been sexually assaulted at the hands of the police and/or foreign fishermen. These were two of the most crucial issues identified. This led to our advocacy campaign in 2021/2022 where we trained 4000 street children about what to do if they are sexually assaulted, trained community members in twelve areas, appointed and trained community advocates and established our sexual violence report helpline. Our new advocacy campaign runs along similar lines: to repeal the loitering law. We believe that if the loitering law is repealed, the numbers of sexual assaults perpetuated by law enforcement officers will be greatly reduced.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) is the court that has jurisdiction to determine cases of violations of human rights that occur in any member states in West Africa including Sierra Leone. A case was lodged in ECOWAS in May 2022 by the Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa on behalf of plaintiff AdvocAid. The defendant is the state of Sierra Leone. The relief sought by the plaintiff is the repeal of Section 7 of the Public Order Act 1965 and national police human rights training. The plaintiff argues that the loitering law discriminates against girls and women, and those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, who are frequently arrested under the law to facilitate the police force's sexual and financial extortion. The case claims the law to be an unreasonable curtailment of the right to freedom of movement. The first hearing will be in November 2022. Until then additional submissions may be made to support the case, otherwise known as an amicus curiae or amicus brief. The Consortium for Street Children informed us about the court case and recently submitted an Amicus Curiae to ECOWAS which focused on the effects of the loitering law on street children. Laughter Africa helped CSC in the writing of the brief by providing evidence, research and advice. Rulings from ECOWAS are binding but there are reports of non-compliance by some member states, for example, Liberia. So it will be our job to keep up the pressure in order to convince the Government of Sierra Leone to change the law. Just one example of when a recommendation from ECOWAS became law in Sierra Law was the issue of pregnant girls attending school. So change is possible.

In October 2022, Laughter Africa carried out a consultation with 124 street children (57 boys and 67 girls) about the impact of the loitering law on their lives. To see a copy of the research please visit here.

The age of the respondents varied from 9 to 25. It soon became apparent from the discussions with the young people that there are four major consequences to the loitering law:

- Sexual violence committed by police officers
- Physical violence committed by police officers
- Arrests of minors
- Stealing by police officers

A summary of the findings.

	Raped by Police officers	**Beaten by police officers**	**Arrested for loitering**
Number of Boys	5	50	19
Number of Girls	19	50	44
Total (%)	19%	81%	51%

1.Sexual violence committed by police officers:

Many of the young people (19%) admitted to being raped by the police. Most of the time, the young people were threatened with arrest for "loitering." Most of the girls had been raped more than once by the police and usually there was more than one officer involved. A further ten girls admitted that they had experienced attempted rapes by police officers.

Many girls believed that the reason they were raped or beaten was because they refused to give the police money as expressed by Mariamma,

"I have been raped by the police twice. Each time I was raped by two policemen at the same time. Once on the way back from a club, the policemen stopped me as they recognized my face and started to search me for money. After searching me, they tried to take my money from me. But I refused to give them the money so they raped me instead."

It wasn't just females who were raped by the police. Our consultations revealed that males had also been sexually assaulted by law enforcement officers. One of the street children Abdulai is openly gay and he claimed that he was raped countless times by different policemen at night. The policemen say to him, ***"You should be having sex with women but since you want men we'll give you men."*** Abdulai continued,

"I feel pain afterwards. It even hurts when I walk. Its so painful. They rape me to humiliate me and make me feel worthless. They want to show me that they have all the power and control. I am so angry but there's no justice- I can't report it as I have to report it to the police-the very same police who raped me. They will protect each other and drive me away."

Meanwhile another boy called Amadu confirmed,

"I was raped by one police officer. He threatened to shoot me if I did not allow him."

Ibrahim, aged ten, declared,

"Two officers butterwaiss (a kreo term for male gay sex) me and beat me. They tied my hands behind my back and they also had a gun."

2. Physical violence committed by police officers

By far the most common consequence of the loitering law is physical violence. 81% of all those interviewed admitted that they had beaten by police for loitering, both boys and girls. One boy complained, ***"I was just sleeping on a market table and the police man woke me up flogging me. They tasered me."***

The physical violence takes place in many different forms - slapping, kicking or beatings. Many times the street children were beaten with weapons including canes, cables or sticks. One disabled girl, Fatmata, was arrested by the police who flogged her with a cane 12 times.

As Mabinty explains,

"I was sleeping on a market table and a policeman woke me up shouting, "What are you doing here at this time of night? What are you doing in the streets. You were not given proper training at home. You are stubborn. You are wayward. You should be at home. You shouldn't be here" Then he started hitting me on the head and slapping me."

Lamin continued,

"At night the police beat us to stop us sleeping on the streets."

While Patricia told us,

"The policemen would beat me at night for loitering. I had nowhere to go yet they still beat me."

As Sahr commented,

"The police think that if you beat a street child then they will go home. Its not true. Beating, raping or arresting street children does not encourage them to go home."

Osman agreed saying,

"I have nowhere to go. How can I be arrested for loitering when the street is my home? It just doesn't make sense to me. Just because you beat us doesn't make the problems that we have at home magically go away. Do you think that we would live on the streets if we had any other alternative?"

3.Arrests of minors

The reason most children on the streets are arrested in Sierra Leone is because of loitering. 51% of all those interviewed had been arrested and spent time in a police cell. The majority of those arrested, from our research, seemed to be female. Many of the young people shared that they had been detained up to a week without access to a lawyer or food. And the only way to be released was to pay money.

Esther explained,

" I was arrested for loitering. I was put in a cell for one week at Eastern Police. I had to pay to be released. 250,000 leones. The law says that if you are arrested, you must be released on bail after 72 hours. That didn't happen. I was there for a week. I didn't have a lawyer, I wasn't given any food. They don't care about us. They forget about us."

Another girl Emma confirmed that she had been locked in a cell after being arrested for loitering. She had to pay 100,000 leones to the police in order to be released.

Amidu shared,

"I was beaten and as I had no money to give the police, I was dragged on the ground to the police station and locked up. They asked me to give them money before they released me."

As Kadiatu commented,

"They release you once they realise that they are not going to get any money from you. If no one comes for us after 2 days they just leave us. "

Ibrahim confirmed this,

"I was sleeping in a garage in a car with a friend and some policemen came and beat me mercilessly and left me bleeding. They didn't arrest me as no one would bail me out and they wouldn't get any money. They told me that it was not worth the hassle. I had a huge cut on my leg after their beating."

Being detained also led to sexual exploitation and violence. Mamusu confirmed,

"I was arrested for loitering and detained in a cell for two days. I didn't have money so I was made to have sex in the police station at night with one policeman when the other police officers had left."

This is was reiterated by Fatmata,

"I was beaten with a cane. I was arrested and locked up for 3 days. I was raped by one police officer at night."

4. **Stealing by police officers**

Most of the young people were also robbed by the police during their arrest or beatings.

Mabinty said:

"They put their hands in our vagina to look for money. They make us open our bottoms so that they can see if our money is there. They search anywhere that we could keep money on our bodies."

Similarly Posseh shared a story,

"I was coming home from Salone bar one night. At Shell there was a checkpoint. There were 3 policemen. They asked why I was out late. They asked for money but I refused to pay them so they stole my bag but couldn't see any money. They tore my skirt and knickers and found the money that I had hidden in my underwear. They beat me and took the money."

Meanwhile Umunatu exclaimed

"*The police beat me. They arrested me once but didn't take me to the cell as I had money so they took my money instead."*

Along a similar theme, a huge amount of extortion seemed to take place. Some of the girls gave money so that they were not raped. As Kadiatu explained,

"If you give them money- they won't rape or arrest you."

Suggestions from the children and young people in regards to the loitering laws included:

1. Repeal the loitering law. As one girl said, ***"The reason why the police get away with beating and raping us is because of the loitering law. If you take away that law, then you take away their power over us."***

2. Better training for the police so that they learn not to beat or sexually assault street children, One girl commented, ***"I want you to talk to the police. We beg them please stop raping us."*** Meanwhile another girl said, ***"The policeman torment us on the street."***

3. Stricter discipline measures or procedures, so for example if a police officer is found guilty of beating or sexually assaulting a street child then they are imprisoned and dismissed immediately. As one child said, ***" Fire bad police."*** As another girl said, ***" The government need to advise the police to stop raping us. To stop beating us."***

4. Implementation of an independent complaints mechanism to which street children can go in order to report any police officer who beats or sexually assaults them-perhaps a phone line.

5. ***"Free legal representation for street children"*** and ensure that any arrests of minors follows the strict rule of law.

6. ***"Make police work in pairs. Preferably one male and one female officer - rather than two men."***

7. ***"There needs to be a different procedure if a girl or boy has been raped by a police officer. Under current rules, you must report a rape at the nearest police station. What happens if the police officers who carried out the rape are stationed at the same police station? There needs to be new laws introduced regarding police brutality and a specialized procedure to report an assault by law enforcement officers. Maybe have a specialized police complaints centre where survivors of assault by police officers can go."***

As Isata, the head of Advocacy and Communications, who carried out the consultations said,

"It seems that the law of loitering has become hijacked and weaponised to brutalise, beat and rape street connected children. And this practice needs to end immediately. The police think that they are untouchable and can commit any crimes with impunity. The only way to stop them is to repeal the loitering law. If the law of loitering was repealed, I believe that we would see a huge reduction in the number of street children being beaten, raped or arrested by police officers. If this law is repealed, it would make a huge difference to the lives of children living on the streets now and in generations to come. Please make the right choice. I beg you. I implore you. Repeal the loitering law today."

Laughter Africa submitted this research to the Consortium for Street Children when they were writing the Amicus Curiae. The Amicus Curiae focused on how the loitering laws contravene the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Even though we have only played a small part in the whole process, it will be one of our ever biggest achievements if the law is actually repealed. We allowed our children's voices to be heard. We were the 'voice of the voiceless' and this will make life better for generations of future street children.

The next steps

If ECOWAS rule in favour of repealing the loitering laws, then this is our plan of activities for the year(s) ahead:

- We need to lobby MPs and political parties. Although rulings from ECOWAS are binding, there are reports of non-compliance by some member states. This could involve a long process of trainings and meetings with MPs.
- If/once the loitering law is repealed then it is important that the street children themselves know that it has been repealed. Following the same structure as our sexual violence prevention campaign, we plan to work in a minimum of eight communities in community outreach and engagement.
- We plan to carry out a media awareness campaign including radio and television.
- We also plan to have a specialized helpline where street children can report any beatings, sexual assaults or arrests for loitering. We would then follow up each case with the police complaints commission. In Sierra Leone, sometimes

the laws say one thing but the reality is different. If the loitering law is repealed then we intend to make sure that that it happens in praxis.

The timeline for these activities depends on many factors including:

- The ruling from ECOWAS. Although the ruling is expected sometime in the next year, it might be delayed.
- The Parliament in Sierra Leone closes for six months before the election so we might not be able to achieve much between January and the end of June 2023. However, we hope to make some headway on this issue by the time that the next annual report is published.

All these plans are moot if ECOWAS decide not to repeal the loitering law. However, at the moment we are waiting in anticipation and hoping for a positive outcome. Many African countries have successfully repealed loitering laws or found them to be unconstitutional, for example, Angola Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. In 2020, the African Court of Human and People's rights issued an important advisory opinion that vagrancy laws are in breach of international law, including the African charter on the rights and welfare of the child. The courts observed that "children who are routinely in conflict with the law often belongs to vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society, including but not limited to the children living on the streets." It found that these laws violate children's rights to non-discrimination, a fair trial and to be treated with their best interests as the primary consideration so there has been a precedent already set. This is our priority over the next year.

Our new Advocacy Campaign 2: Sexual violence committed by Foreign Fishermen

In the middle of October 2022, we had a meeting with one of the UN agencies about the abuse that the girls living on the streets are facing from the foreign fishermen. We were delighted by their commitment and dedication to the issue. We know that any action will take a long time but the fact that the UN are aware of the issue and are taking it seriously is a huge positive step. If it was not for Laughter Africa, they would not have even been aware of the issue in the first place. It's only the first step on the road to change and justice. But sometimes the first step is the most important and difficult one to take. Although the project is only in its infancy and still at the planning stages, it is looking likely that a formal research project will take place about the issue. From this research, changes in the law might occur and extra protection measures put in place. Laughter Africa will do anything to help the UN in this endeavour.







G. DECLARATION



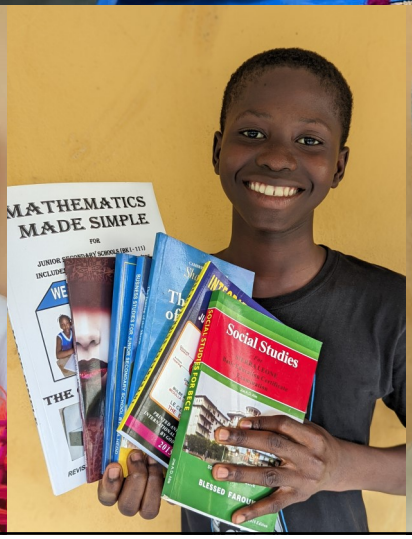


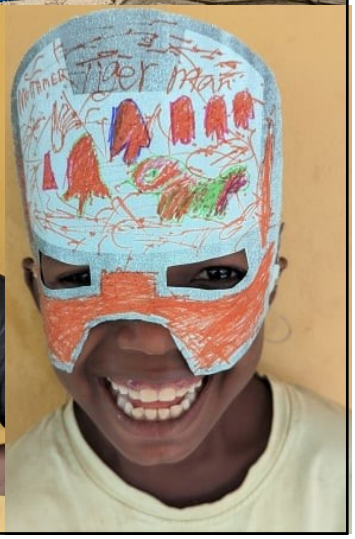










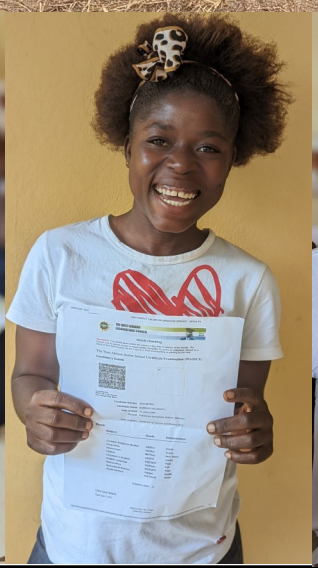
The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)	James Tyrrell	
Full name(s)	**James Francis Robert Tyrrell**	**Mark Quentin Neal**
Position (e.g. chair or secretary)	**Chairperson**	**Secretary**
Date	**8/11/2022**	**8/11/2022**











CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Laughter Africa	1154712

Receipts and payments accounts

CC16a

For the period from	01/04/2021	To	31/03/2022

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	99,323.13'	-	-	99,323.13'	100,634.11'
Gift Aid	11,961.78'	-	-	11,961.78'	12,121.02'
Trusts and Foundations	4,180.59'		-	4,180.59'	16,861.20'
Bank Interest	0.12'	-	-	0.12'	0.96'
Consortium for Street Children			-		7,450.23'
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total *(Gross income for AR)*	115,465.62'		-	115,465.62'	137,067.52'
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	
Total receipts	115,465.62'		-	115,465.62'	137,067.52'
A3 Payments					
Charitable Activities	120,712.93'		-	120,712.93'	120,072.20'
Bank charges (UK)	611'	-	-	611'	634.50'
Bank charges (Sierra Leone)	594.08'	-	-	594.08'	600.49'
Governance	896.78'	-	-	896.78'	951.40'
Multi currency exchange rate loss	4911.15'	-	-	4911.15'	4082.07'
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	127,725.94'		-	127,725.94'	125,870.20'
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
Generator for the Interim Care Centre	712.31'	-	-	712.31'	470.46'
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	712.31'	-	-	712.31'	470.46'
Total payments	128,438.25'		-	128,438.25'	126,340.66'
Net of receipts/(payments)	-12,972.63	-	-	-12,972.63	10,726.86'
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	20,100.19'	-	-	20,100.19'	
Cash funds this year end	7,127.56'	-	-	7,127.56'	20,100.19'

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

B1 Cash funds

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	Funds in Sierra Leone	839.01'	-	-
	Funds in the UK	1288.55'	-	-
	Reserves	5000'	-	-
	Total cash funds	7,127.56'	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

B2 Other monetary assets

Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
None	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

B3 Investment assets

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
None		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
Generator for the ICC		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
None		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
James Tyrrell	James Francis Robert Tyrrell	06/09/2022
Mark Neal	Mark Quentin Neal	06/09/2022

In accordance with the Charitable Incorporated Organisations (General) Regulations 2012 the Trustees confirm that:
a) the CIO has given no guarantees, where any potential liability under the guarantee is outstanding at the date of the statement of assets and liabilities;
and b) the CIO does not have any debts outstanding at the date of the statement of assets and liabilities which are secured by an express charge on any of the assets of the CIO

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	Laughter Africa		
On accounts for the year ended	31st March 2022	**Charity no (if any)**	1154712
Set out on pages	1 – 2		

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31 / 03 / 2022**.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: PETER KAMARAY & CO **Date:** 26/10/2022

Name: PETER KAMARAY

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any): The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sierra Leone

Address: Peter Kamaray & Co
20 Wilberforce Street
Freetown, Sierra Leone

PETER KAMARAY & CO.
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS
20 WILBERFORCE STREET
FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE
SIGN
DATE

Section B	Disclosure
	Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).
Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.	

PETER KAMARAY & CO.
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS
20 WILBERFORCE STREET
FREETOWN. SIERRA LEONE
SIGN
DATE

LAUGHTER AFRICA

England & Wales - Charity number 1154712

Accounts

LAUGHTER AFRICA TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT 2020/2021













laughter AFRICA

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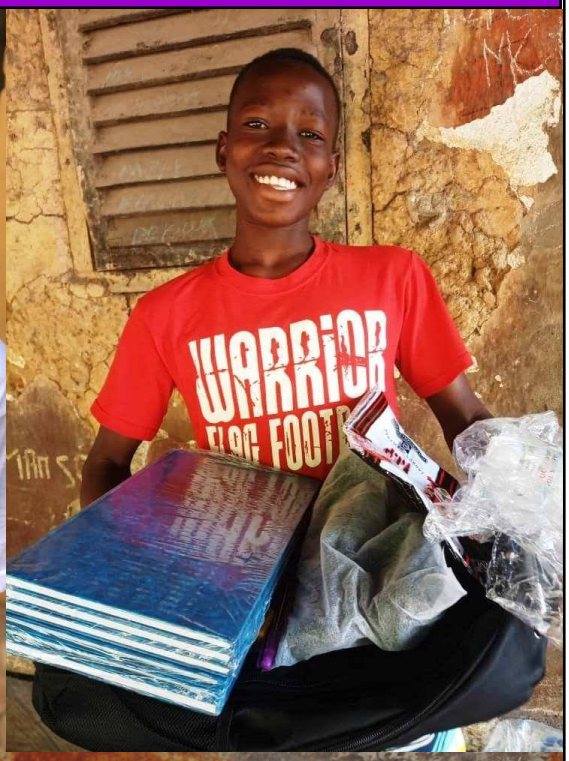





A. REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS OF THE CHARITY













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			
Albert Daniel Gbow			
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)

Abubakarr Kargbo (Director of Outreach) (Sierra Leone)

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

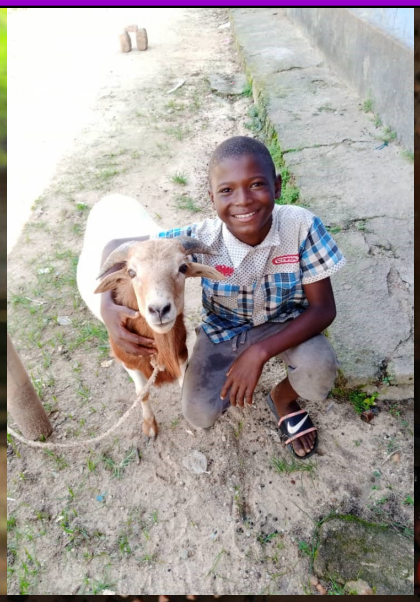
Isata Samura (Director of Advocacy, Communications and Campaigns) (Sierra Leone)

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





B. STRUCTURE, GOVENANCE 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 Whistleblowing 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 2020/21 due to the 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 five Directors in Sierra Leone. The Directors are responsible for different departments:

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

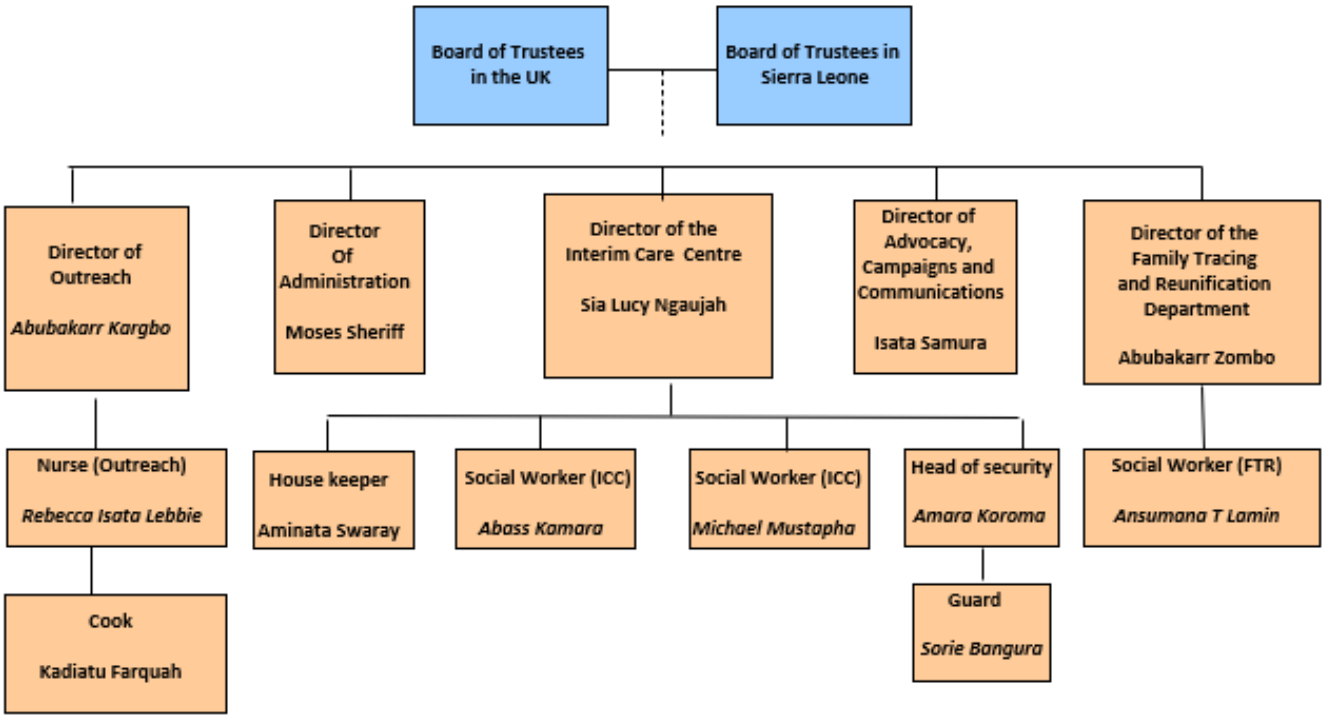
All five Directors are responsible for the day-to-day operation of Laughter Africa in Sierra Leone and managing the national staff and volunteers. The Directors report to the Trustees regularly and the Trustees delegate to the Directors accordingly.

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:



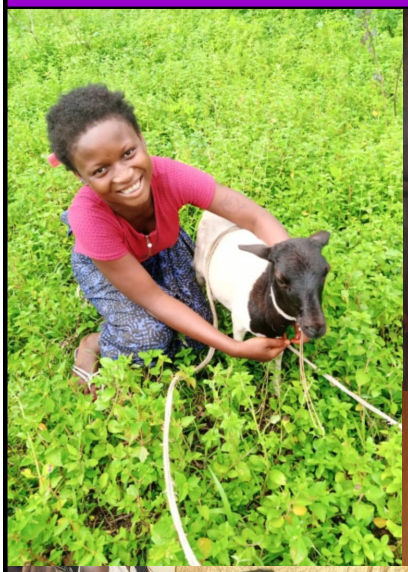
Laughter Africa's Policies and procedures

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.. incompliance 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.

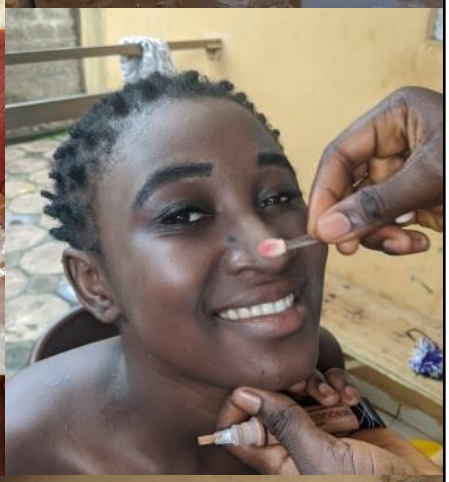
C. OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES













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:

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 Emergency Response Work

On Wednesday 24th March 2021 a fire broke out in Susan's Bay, one of the largest slums in Sierra Leone where many street children live. It's a densely populated area with flimsily constructed houses made from scavenged materials, so the fire took hold quickly and ravaged the area leaving thousands of people displaced. We are saddened that the fire claimed the life of a five-month old baby. Many people jumped into the bay to save their own lives but had to helplessly watch on in horror whilst their livelihoods were destroyed. So many people, including the girls from the mobile project, lost everything. We heard the story of 17-year old Famata who was having a fun night with a group of friends at a local football match. They returned to see the whole community on fire, including the Sugabar, where she had stored all her possessions. Famata was heavily pregnant at the time and lost all the money she had been saving and the baby things she had collected in anticipation of the birth. Laughter Africa staff attended the Ministry's Emergency Response meeting, and we sent our team to check on the safety and provide medical care for street children in the area. The Laughter Africa team worked tirelessly on the ground at Susan's Bay for a few weeks after the fire to check on the street children. Aminata, who was living on the streets, gave birth three days after the fire in the toilets at Susan's Bay and was living in the toilets with her newborn baby until we found them. Although the Susan's Bay project had finished when the fire broke out – we were in the middle of our Reunification Week - the project was a huge help in reaching the children in need, since the girls living on the streets already knew us, and they trusted us.

Nine girls, living on the streets in Susan's Bay, turned up at the ICC looking for help after the disaster. The nine girls included four pregnant girls and two girls with young babies. Laughter Africa supplied clothing and toiletries for the nine girls and provided nappies, pap and clothing for their babies. They stayed in the ICC for a few weeks.
In fact, one of the girls gave birth in the early hours of Saturday 3rd April 2021, while she was staying at the ICC. The labour took all night but Laughter's nurse, Isata, stayed by her side throughout. Fatmata was scared and she was refusing to push, so Isata phoned me to go to the hospital at 4am and see if I could get through to her. As any

one who knows me can testify, I am completely calm under pressure and never panic (not!). Thankfully after watching a lot of Neighbours episodes, I knew what to do. Any way to cut a long story short, the delivery was successful. Fatmata gave me the honour of naming the child, so I chose Sarah, who is the patron saint of Laughter, and Jane after the nurse who delivered her. What a welcome to the world she got! I might have shed a few tears as the dangers of childbirth are a sad fact here.

Meanwhile, four young people living in Susan's Bay, whom we had previously reunified with their families, sadly lost everything in the fire. We provided them with an emergency response pack which included sanitation items, clothing, education supplies, toiletries etc.….One of the girls was pregnant and another girl had a 7 month old baby.

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 8pm. Each day, medical treatment, food, water, and different activities are provided such as cultural dance, modern dance, art and crafts, games and sports. Over the last year mobile has developed in a new direction. Rather than being static in one area for a protracted period of time, it was decided to alternate the location of mobile in different communities where street children are known to live. For instance, since the last annual report, mobiles have operated in four different locations; Susan's Bay, the City Centre, Portee and Waterloo. The intention is to stay for six months to a year depending on the size of the area and the number of street children who attend. The reason it was decided to move from the City Centre is two-fold. Firstly, most of the young people who attended mobile in the City Centre were older (18 plus) which discouraged the younger street children from attending. These young adults were not serious about changing their lives so it was decided to use Laughter's limited resources to attract younger street children. Also the behaviour of the older boys was atrocious which caused difficulties with the local community. The rent, on the premises, expired at the end of December 2020 and the community and local counsellor would not rent the hall to us again. By working in different communities, the mobile projects attracts younger street boys and street girls which was the original intention of the mobile project idea. This never happened when the mobile was in the City Centre; the boys and girls segregated themselves from each other.

The Mobile girls' project in Susan's Bay

In October 2020, Laughter Africa established a girls' mobile project in Susan's Bay for a six month period funded in part by the Consortium for Street Children. It finished at the end of March 2021. The idea for the girls' only mobile project came about after hearing the story of Saffie. She is one of our old girls who already has a two year old daughter called Mary. Last year, Saffie had been living on the streets and gave birth without any pain relief in an unfinished building with only a passer-by for help. She never attended a single clinic throughout her pregnancy. We wanted to make sure that this wouldn't happen to anyone else. Sia's experience was similar to Saffie. She is another of our old girls who lives on the street. At the beginning of September, she turned up at

the ICC in labour. We managed to get her to the clinic in Adonkia in time and she gave birth to a beautiful girl named Josephine Sia. Throughout her pregnancy, she too had never attended a clinic or hospital and she received no check ups whatsoever. Both Sia and Saffie are great examples of why our girls' mobile was so necessary as there are so many pregnant girls living on the streets without any support in their pregnancies.

Another reason we believed that the girls mobile project was so important is because so many girls are dying unnecessarily of preventable deaths, particularly from severe STIs. When we speak to the girls about their friends who have died, they say they "died of sick." For instance, Yvonne told us about her friend Josephine, "Two years ago of my paddi Josephine died on the streets. Her private parts were rotten. And she died because she had no medication. She was only 15 years old." Similarly Susan said, "My friend Hawa died while living on the streets. Her private parts got sickness. She was 18. She died in 2020 before mobile started." As Posseh shared," Another friend Aminata died after her vagina rotted."

In total 296 girls attended the girls' mobile over the 6 month period. The girls came from Susan's Bay, Mo Wharf and Egan Street. The success of the girls' mobile project exceeded our expectations. The attendance, as one might expect, differed each day: the number ranged from 28 - 60 girls attending the centre each night. The initial target was to help 100 girls in 6 months which we achieved in the first month.

One of the main priorities of the girls' mobile project was the provision of medical care. Laughter's nurse, Rebecca Isata, worked full-time at the mobile. She took all the pregnant girls for prenatal check-ups and provided any additional care they needed. Many of the girls gave birth during the project. We provided the new mothers with a 'help a baby basket' kit. Approximately 30 of the girls who attended the mobile project are mothers. Between them all, they have 50 children. Their children often got sick so we looked after their health issues too.

The girls were offered different workshops including COVID-19 prevention and drugs awareness education. Most of the girls were taking the drug known as koosh even the pregnant girls. Koosh is highly addictive and we have seen at least three boys living on the streets who now have serious mental health issues caused by the use of it. And because girls are more at risk of violence and rape on the streets and much more likely to turn to transactional sex for survival, we incorporated sexual health advice, self-defense classes and our full-time nurse conducted HIV and hepatitis rapid tests.

Every day there was a different activity available for the girls to enjoy. On Monday, it was games, counselling and education. Tuesday was modern dance, Wednesday was cultural dance, Thursday was drama and Friday was teaching the girls different income generating activities. At Laughter Africa, we give street-connected children a step up in life, not a handout. A large part of this is teaching them life skills and providing them with career options. The skills we taught to the girls over the 6 months of the project included making jewellery, carpets, raffia skirts, soap, crochet, crochet balls, fish in batter, shoes, bags, king driver, rich cake, hairdressing and how to attach eyelashes, carry out manicures and how to apply make-up (as part of their hairdressing sessions). We are so happy they are starting to diversify their income generating activities from commercial sex work. Another activity we

promoted was music lessons at the girls' mobile. The girls learnt how to play different instruments and we taught them how to sing. Simeon from '*Music Heals'* led the sessions. At the end every session they received a meal. For more Information about the girls mobile project, please see the achievements section of the annual report.

The boys mobile in Ambrose Street

Due to the coronavirus restrictions, the mobile was temporarily closed from 1st April 2020 to July 2020. We provided food to street children, living in Lumley, in lieu of the mobile. At the beginning of July 2020, because the government restrictions were reduced, the mobile project was able to return to its original location in Ambrose Street, in the city centre of Freetown. As a precaution against infections we implemented social distancing as well as temperature checks and hand washing. There were no activities provided, just food provision and medical care. Between July and the beginning of October 2020, 96 boys was our highest number. This was our highest number since we started mobile 4 years ago.

The boys' mobile reached 111 street boys from October 2020 until the end of December 2020. By then, all the usual activities had returned to the boys' mobile project: education, counselling and the provision of food and medical treatment. Topics covered under education, include among others, ; hygiene, drugs, and sexual health education. We held a spelling bee competition on Friday 6th November which they loved.

During the last week of mobile of 2020, we suspended our usual activities and carried out different activities for the boys including arts and crafts, football and cultural dance. Arts and crafts involved making Father Christmas beards and hats. For a special Christmas treat on the last day of mobile, we took 52 of the boys to 'Climb Salone.' The new climbing wall which had just opened.

A highlight of the work of that mobile was the case of Tamba. He is a small boy under the age of 10 who had lived on the streets for only a few weeks. He was raped repeatedly by the older boys. They paid him 5,000 leones (less than 50p) so we brought him straight to the ICC while we carried out medical tests and psycho-social counselling. He came to the ICC in mid-December and we are delighted that he has now been reunified with his family. We paid school for him in January 2021. We were delighted that mobile was able to protect the boy in this way. It's one reason we established the mobile in the first place to protect the most vulnerable- boys or girls. It was the reminder that we needed that the boys' mobile is just as important as the girls. Sometimes, because of the boys' bad behaviour, it is easy to forget how vulnerable many of them truly are.

This mobile closed at the end of December 2020 and we moved it to Portee. Although we no longer operate in town we still have the street children come from Lumley and Town for medical treatment at the ICC. Abubakarr is one example. He came to see us in February 2021 very weak, coughing ,he'd lost a lot of weight and was struggling to breathe. The nurse, Isata, immediately took him to the hospital where he tested positive for tuberculosis. Fortunately, treatment for tuberculosis is free in Sierra Leone. When he was well enough to travel we took him home to his father to recover in Bo. Abubakarr is a HUGE fan of biscuits, so in the care package we gave him there was a huge supply of biscuits to keep a smile on his face. He has made a full recovery and he is still at home and we are about to pay his school fees. He has put on weight, stopped coughing and has not returned to the streets which is a miracle in itself. Another example is Sheku.

He was beaten up by a rival gang in the Aberdeen beach area in September 2021. They beat him so badly that his face was disfigured. It was difficult to even recognize him at first. Our nurse, once again, provided immediate treatment for him.

The Portee Mobile

We established our mobile project in Portee, in the Eastern area of Freetown, in February 2021. We closed at the end of July 2021. The project was a huge success. For six months we had 80 street children in attendance most nights. As one of the street children remarked at the end of July, "There's not many street children in Portee now, you have reunified them all." The Headsman and community members of Portee even offered us land to build a permanent structure as they were delighted with the impact we had had on the street children and really wanted us to stay past the initial six months as planned. It is very rare to be offered land, so we were thrilled. However, we had to turn down the offer. One of the highlights from the six months in Portee was our record breakers month when we attempted to break different world records. Some of their favourite record breakers included wife carrying (we changed it to street child carrying as we didn't have any wives available!) and how many rounds of the limbo they could complete in 3 minutes. Other highlights from the mobile project in Portee was when Isata, our nurse, saved the life of a girl who suffered complications after giving birth on the streets in May 2021. She had not pushed out the placenta. Thankfully, with Isata's quick action mother and baby are both doing well and are now back living at home with their family.

We increased the counselling and psychological support at mobile too. One counselling session involved the young people writing letters to people who had hurt them in the past, and then burning these letters as a cathartic symbol of moving forward with their feelings. We had a whole hall of 80 children in complete silent reflection, it was a sight to behold.

The good thing about rotating our mobile around different areas is that we meet the most vulnerable street children in those areas . We have come across more disabled children through our work within the different communities like Fatmata. Fatmata lives with a disability and needs to crawl on the ground to get around. Here's her story:

"My name is Fatmata and I am 16 years old. My mum died of Ebola. I don't know where my father is. The last time I saw him he denied me and told me that I wasn't his daughter. All my family have rejected me because of my disability. The only person who will let me live with them is my Grandma. I crawl on my hands for hours to go on the streets as my granny doesn't have money so I beg to get money for food. I feel like I am invisible to people. They don't see me. They just see my disability and think I am a fool. People provoke me. People beat me and slap me as they know that I can't fight back. My name on the wharf is the Temne version of millipede, "Nitoro." They just call me a cripple and treat me like I am not important. I can't fight back cos of my disability. I am an easy target."

The ultimate embodiment of the joy dance can bring is Fatmata. Fatmata lives with a disability that means she cannot walk although she does not let this define her, she lives life to the fullest - she performs on the floor. We would quote the cliche 'dance like no-one is watching', but when Fatmata dances everyone stops to watch and join in the fun she brings. To see a video of Fatmata dancing, please click here. At the moment Laughter Africa supports six disabled

former street children (Please see the achievements section for more information).

Waterloo Project

We moved the mobile project to Waterloo at the beginning of August 2021. Waterloo is a much bigger area than Portee but already by the beginning of October 2021 we have reached 209 street children. Interestingly, Kadiatu, one of the girls who we've met in Waterloo mobile, has Albinism. It is the first time we have met any street child living on the streets suffering from that condition.

Interim Care Centre

Activities carried out in the ICC are the same as outlined in last year's annual report. When children are ready to leave the streets, they stay with us, temporarily, at the Interim Care Centre (ICC) in Adonkia, where there is plenty of room, a big courtyard and most importantly it is very secure. It's a safe place for children to just be children... which after years on the dangerous streets is a welcome relief. We see the smiles back on their faces and they begin to open up to our social workers, who provide vital counselling, to support their return home. We provide activities to keep the young people busy while also teaching them skills which they may choose to pursue as a career. Meanwhile our staff in the Family Tracing and Reunification (FTR) team work with the children to trace down their family, and assess if it is safe and suitable for them to return to home. A lot of the time it is, and the family welcome the child back with open arms.

Unfortunately, not all of our tracing efforts have a happy ending. Sallu was staying with us at the ICC when we had to tell him his father had passed away. His father was working hard to provide for his family as a fisherman. In the dark of night, the small boat he was in on collided with a bigger vessel and his boat was destroyed. They found his body several days later. Similarly, one of the boys, Joseph, who came to the ICC in November 2020, lost his father earlier in the same year. He had not heard the news as he had been on the streets and had had no contact with his family. We had to tell him that his dad had died. He was bitten by a snake while looking for Joseph in the bush. The family had no idea where Joseph was until we traced them. He is now living with an amazing aunt who truly loves him and he is attending school everyday.

Between 1st April 2020 and 31st August 2021 we welcomed 141 girls and 46 boys into the ICC. Three of the girls (Gloria, Mariatu and Mariamma) we worked with in 2020/21 had babies of their own; Michael, Christiana and Abdul Aziz who they brought to the ICC. All three babies were perfectly behaved and were a joy to have in the ICC. The babies were between 5 months and 1 year old. All three babies had lived on the streets since their birth - the streets are all that they had ever known.

We provide extensive counselling in the ICC before the children return home to address the issues that caused them to turn to the streets in the first place. We introduced boxing counselling to our programme in May 2021; it's actually an idea which was sparked from a method shown on the TV show "How to get away with murder." The girls get to release their stress physically on a punching bag, whilst also saying aloud affirmations about what they deserve in life. You can see it in action by clicking this link.

We introduced 'Superhero counselling' in June 2021. In the session the young people create their own superhero to include a back story, special powers and design their own mask. So far all the young people have been very creative. Some of our favourite superheroes created include: 'Fly Boy,' 'Captain Salone,' 'Stone Boy,' 'Fish Boy' and 'Stick Boy.' They then starred as their new superhero alter-egos in a set of dramas, think Avengers but set in Sierra Leone. The session ends in a discussion that to be someone's hero you don't need a cape or special powers, you just need to be kind and treat people with respect.

We are always on the look out for new arts and crafts ideas for the children to learn while they stay in the ICC. One of the new activities we introduced in April 2021 was painting on canvas which the children loved. They are taught by one of our old boys Osman who also teaches them how to make shoes and bags.

Family Tracing and Reunification Department

The FTR department 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. We were very strict in 2020 and any child, who we knew was not attending school regularly or had returned to the streets (even for a few days), did not receive school support for the academic year 2020/21. Before receiving their school supply, each child had to show their report card so we could assess their previous school attendance record. 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. We provided bikes to two children, Lamin and Ibrahim, who live in the Provinces, where no school transportation is available. In September 2021, we will be providing school supply and paying school charges/vocational school fees for around 540 children/young people. This is due to the success of the mobile projects in Susan's Bay and Portee as well as our 'second chance' scheme.

As well as the school charges we also pay for 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. In 2020, 60 of our children sat either the NPSE, BECE or WASSCE. We are particularly proud of all the students who sat the BECE– 97% of all the students passed. In 2019, less than half of the young people did. We are particularly proud of Mohamed C and Ibrahim Sorie K who both got a mark of aggregate 13. This is one of the highest marks that you can get in the BECE and both achieved the best marks that any Laughter Africa child has ever got in the BECE. We are particularly proud as both of them have stayed home since their reunification – Mohamed for 5 years and Ibrahim Sorie K for 2 years. In the 2020/2021 academic year, there were about 92 children sitting external examinations. We pay for all the practical items for the young people in vocational schools. Most of the staff receive 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 go into action whenever needed.

One of the biggest change within the FTR department has been the growth of the business support scheme. We have started to provide tools or other equipment for our beneficiaries or their families to establish their own businesses. From the end of June to the beginning of August 2020, we provided business support (about 1,200,000 leones per family) to fifty families. The idea behind the business support scheme was to counteract the economic ramifications of Covid-19 as food prices increased dramatically in Sierra Leone during the pandemic. Our main fear was that many of the children who had stayed at home, since their reunifications, would return to the streets. The majority of the families (33 families) who benefited from this scheme were those who lived in the provinces. We provided tools, crops and seeds for those who are farmers; tools for those who are carpenters, tailors or welders; and equipment for those who are caterers, shoe makers, electricians, masoners, fish mongers, bread makers, soap makers or make jewellery. We provided livestock such as sheep, chickens or goats if the family didn't have any vocational skill. Here is a breakdown of the 50 businesses we supported through our business support scheme:

· 12 farmers
· 12 livestock (chicken, sheep or goats)
· 9 tailors
· 4 carpenters
· 3 soap makers
· 2 caterers,
· 1 bread maker,
· 2 welders,
· 1 electrician,
· 1 jewellery maker.
· 1 shoe/bag/frame maker
· 1 fish monger
· 1 stone masoner

One example of why this support was so necessary is the case of Mariatu. We first met Mariatu in June 2017 and she has stayed home since her reunification over four years ago. In May 2020, due to economic desperation, her family sold Mariatu to a man who wanted to marry her. He was more than double her age. He paid her parents 900,000 leones (less than £90). However she refused to marry him as she is only 16 years old. He threatened to take her family to the police so her family ran away from the village, leaving Mariatu by herself. He was constantly pressurising Mariatu to marry him even though underage marriage is illegal in Sierra Leone. Meanwhile, despite the fact Mariatu was living at the local chief's house, the man would turn up night and day to harass her, saying things like, "If you and I do not get married, one of us will die." When you hear threats like this and you are a susceptible teenager, of course you will be afraid . We managed to find more family members in another village. She now lives with her grandmother and her uncle. The man who wanted to marry her doesn't know where she lives so she is safe for now. No one will now force her to get married and her family have agreed that she can attend school. We provided her grandmother and uncle with two sheep. Mariatu is doing very well now and is back to being her bubbly, enthusiastic self.

24% of the support we provided was for farmers. In 2019 the farmers were affected by poor harvests caused by the heavy rains in July and August so most of the families had very little left. Some of the families didn't have seeds to plant or even food to eat so were trying to farm on empty stomachs. Most of the farmers usually end up borrowing seeds from Farmers' Corporations and then the family end up paying interest on what they borrow after the harvest. We provided seeds in excess so that the families did not have to borrow from corporations in 2020. This gave them financial stability and independence as they are no longer are getting into debt. The families were ecstatic with the support. Mohamed Ibrahim's granny in Kakuna was so happy she just kept bursting out into local tribal songs for the whole day. We can't put into words the impact of the business support scheme on our families. It really is restoring their dignity and gives them hope in ways we couldn't even imagine. For more information about the business support scheme, please visit our achievement section.

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. Over the last year (April 2020 - September 2021) we have supplied around twenty-three 'Help a Baby Basket' kits to our young girls who are living at home. 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. At the same time, we give them some training about how to care for their children. Most of them also attended our Mother and Baby educational training session in December 2020 (please see the achievement section for more information about the day).

Not only does the FTR department provide school charges, educational equipment, business support, baby support, etc., they also provide medical treatment for any of the children who remain at home. For instance, in October 2021, one of our old children, Mohamed came to us presenting symptoms of TB and hepatitis. At the time of writing this report, he is still undergoing treatment. Another example was in August 2021 when one of our old girls Aisha was rushed to hospital with a swollen belly, and after many scans, was diagnosed with liver cirrhosis, typhoid and malaria. We found out she recently gave birth in secret and received some traditional healing. Isata, our nurse, suspects something might have happened during the delivery. Laughter Africa paid for Aisha's hospital treatment, in total around £150. We learnt that there were three other patients on Aisha's ward with the same symptoms, who could not afford the treatment and unfortunately passed away. It is unfortunate that healthcare is a business in many countries, including Sierra Leone. Ramatu, who has been living at home and attending tailoring school whilst pregnant, was rushed to hospital in Spring 2021 after she gave birth at home and our nurse Isata rushed out there to support her. Ramatu required a blood transfusion, which you need to pay for in Sierra Leone. As her family could not afford to pay for it, Laughter Africa, paid for the treatment. Ramatu has made a full recovery, however, we are very saddened that her baby passed away only four days old. Similarly, another of our old girls Emma gave birth in her house in Spring 2021 and required urgent treatment. Isata went straight away to support her. The reason so many girls give birth at home is that hospitals often try to charge them for treatment; even though it is supposed to be free. Another example is Naomi. In September 2020, Naomi came to us in extreme stomach pain. We were very concerned so took her to hospital. It turns out that she had given herself a home-made abortion. The baby had already died and she herself was turning septic. Thankfully, the treatment was successful and Naomi has made a full recovery and is about to start vocational school in September 2021. We treat a lot of the babies of the girls that we have reunified. The infant mortality of under 5s in Sierra Leone is shocking so we encourage the young people to bring their children to us if they are sick.

Recently, the mother of two children we support came to us in agony, begging for medical treatment. We don't usually treat the family of the street children but she looked really ill and so we made an exception. Isata, the nurse, took her to hospital and it turned out that the mother was HIV positive. Thankfully, she didn't have TB which we suspected and was one of our biggest fears. We got her the HIV medication that she required, which is provided free in Sierra Leone, and she has now started her treatment. Thankfully, her children do not have HIV. The mother is a single mother and if she had remained undiagnosed - she would have died, then there would be no one to look after her children. It made us think that maybe we should try and offer some check ups for the parents /guardians of the children as if anything happens to them then their children will possibly end up back on the streets again. In this case, the mother was too ill to work to make money to provide for her family so this all had a knock on effect on her children: if the carer of any child is ever too ill to work, then how will the child/ children be fed?

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 than the boys and the FTR team respond to all the issues and difficulties facing our children and young people. The more girls that we work with, the more issues arise. One of the girls we reunified in June 2020, Mariamma, suffered an attempted rape by the son of her family's landlord. We took her to the hospital for medical treatment and also to the police to ensure that she received justice. She has now moved to a different area with a different family member and is recovering well from her experience. Thankfully, she used the moves that we taught her in the self-defense classes that we run in the ICC to defend herself. We have had to deal with similar issues with other girls like Fatmata in Cockle Bay who was horrifically raped in December 2020.

Communications, Campaigns and Advocacy

Our Communications, Advocacy and Campaigns department started in September 2016 and has been in full swing ever since. The head of Communications, Campaigns and Advocacy changed in 2020 as Kaday Turay left Laughter Africa to work for NACOVERC. Her replacement, Isata Samura, took over in September 2020. Isata has been involved with Laughter Africa since October 2016, so this was a well– deserved promotion.

The Communications team have had a very busy year. This is because the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs were writing a National Strategy on Street Children and were reviewing two other laws: the Adoption Act 1989 and the Child Rights Act. Advocacy and campaigning for this new National Strategy on Street Children was a major focus for Laughter Africa for 2020/21 and will continue to be so in 2021/22 during its implementation stage. Policy change is the best way that we can facilitate change for street children in Sierra Leone. Laughter Africa was asked to be a member of the Child Protection technical working group at the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs which is a huge opportunity to ensure that the changes needed are implemented. James, the founder of Laughter Africa, has attended every meeting of the Child Protection Technical working group since Laughter Africa joined in September 2020. James has also met with researchers from Harvard University and Mr Momoh Turay, the consultant appointed by the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, on several occasions to give his feedback on the new National Strategy on Street children. In fact, the consultant overseeing

the review of the Child Rights Act publicly thanked Laughter Africa at the last meeting in December 2020, for attending every meeting and for our contributions. They said that they had learned so much from Laughter staff especially about UN General Comment 21. Both the local consultant and the consultants from Harvard wrote similar sentiments in emails. Laughter Africa co-ordinated the chance for the street children in Freetown to give their feedback on the new strategy too. For more information about this, please see the achievements section.

In June 2020, Laughter Africa joined a coalition of street children organisations based in Freetown. The members include Don Bosco, Pikin Paddy, Street child and St George's Foundation. Laughter Africa is a founding member. The coalition focuses on policy change. We tried to devise a strategy for street children living in Sierra Leone based on 'UN General Comment No 21 on Children in Street Situations' (2017). This is the crux of what we are campaigning for and the coalition have discussed this with the researchers from Harvard and the consultant from the Ministry. Only two countries worldwide have officially adopted a strategy based on General Comment 21: Uruguay and the Philippines. If we are successful and the government adopt the strategy, we will be the first country in Africa to adopt a street child policy based on the UN convention for Children living in Street Situations. It could be the blueprint for other African countries to follow. It could really change street children's lives all over Africa. The coalition met with the Minister of Gender and Children's Affairs three times over the last year to talk about the strategy. To read what the consortium of members sent to the consultant in regards to the new strategy for Street children: please follow this link.

Every year on 12th April, Laughter Africa celebrates the International day for Street Children, which provides a platform for the millions of street children around the world to recognise the humanity, dignity and defiance of street children in the face of unimaginable hardships. The theme for this year was that all children deserve access to essential services. To get an education, healthcare and be protected from harm, no matter where they call home. Here's a summary of how Laughter Africa celebrated the day:

• Isata, Laughter Africa's Head of Communications and Posseh, one of the children we support, appeared on radio and tv across Sierra Leone. In addition, we held a press conference that was attended by 17 media outlets.
• A billboard was commissioned in Upgun, a busy thoroughfare in Freetown. Thank you so much to Laughter Africa's volunteer Anna Kirke who designed the billboard.
• Thank you to Laughter Africa's volunteer, Hannah van Helvoort, who designed our very own Laughter Africa Facebook frames for profile pictures.
• The Network for Street Children Sierra Leone website launched, check it out at here
• The Network also produced T-shirts and posters
• A pop song and video, written and performed by our street children, was released (please see the achievements section for more information).
• For the International Day for Street Children, Laughter Africa held workshops with over 130 children currently living on the streets in Susan's Bay and Portee. Our friends at the Consortium for Street Children developed the activities which explored this year's theme of access to basic services such as healthcare and education. The preconceptions and judgements of living on the streets was a big obstacle in accessing services, "Because we live on the streets, they treat us like we are worth nothing. They can do what they like to us and no one will believe us." Yet the street children had such fantastic ideas on what actions can be taken including free wheelchairs for disabled street children (which cost 5 million

leones), drug rehabilitation, mental health support as well a superb idea of a National Apprenticeship scheme. The most popular idea was the creation a complaints system, where street children can report any corruption or mistreatment to an authority for investigation.

• 80 young people in Portee mobile also got involved in the advocacy and campaigning side as we hosted another workshop with our friends at the Consortium for Street Children. The children wrote letters to the Mayor, President and First lady to advocate for change. To top it all off we held our young people in Portee the most wonderful party afterwards to thank them for all their advocacy work and to celebrate the International Day for Street Children in style!

The day was a huge success. Campaign engagement across all social media was at an all-time high, with over 40k+ interactions, 60.6 million reached and 2,154 uses of #streetchildrenday and/or #accessforstreetchildren!

Throughout the year, Laughter Africa commemorates different days. For instance to mark the Day of the African Child, some of the girls we support in Cockle Bay and Isata, our Head of Communications, attended a rally organised by the Family Support Unit, a part of the Sierra Leone Police to campaign against gender-based violence. The march went from the National Stadium to the famous Cotton Tree.

Various staff and children appeared on different media programmes throughout the year. For instance, Amie (one of the girls we've supported) and Isata (Head of Advocacy), appeared on STAR radio in the middle of August 2021 to discuss the topic of girls living on the streets. The show was a big success and they have already been asked back again for other shows.

Throughout the year, Isata, the head of Communications, Campaigns and Advocacy, Moses, the head of administration, Lucy, the head of the ICC or James, the founder of Laughter Africa have attended every meeting that we have been invited to by The Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, The Ministry of Social Welfare, SLANGO and the Directorate of NGO Affairs at MOPED.

Administration department

The duties outlined in last year's annual report remain the same for the administration department. The main responsibility for this department is the Sierra Leonean accounts.

We are proud of the incredible team at Laughter Africa who always 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 because of Coronavirus, Laughter Africa's staff continued to feed the boys on the streets every day from the end of March until July until we could restart our mobile project. The staff 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.

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. Between 1st April 2020 and 31st August 2021, we have had 15 Volunteers/interns come and join us. As of September 1st 2021, we have three volunteers.

The trustees would like to say a huge thank you to all our volunteers in the UK too. However, special thanks to the following people who have gone the extra mile for Laughter Africa this financial year:

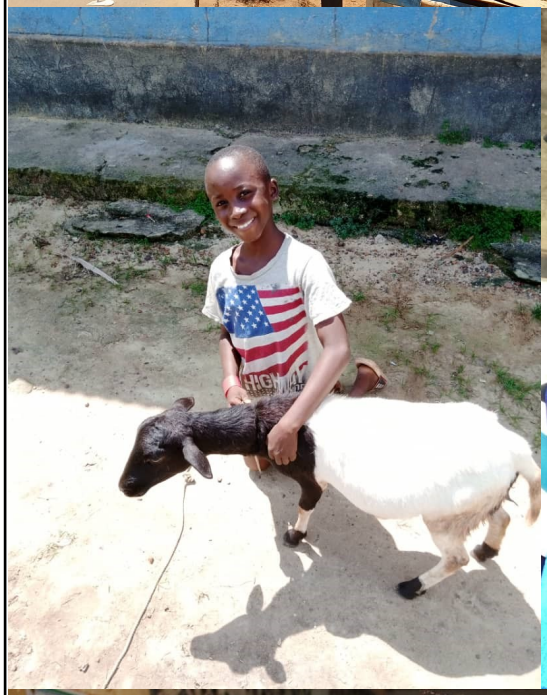
- Thomasine Warmington (Social media volunteer)
- Anne Marie Stead (Trusts and Foundations Volunteer)
- Helen Stead (creator of Laughter Africa's online gift shop)
- Dave Bixter (Graphic design volunteer)
- Hannah van Helvoort (Graphic design volunteer)
- Anne Kirke (Graphic Design Volunteer)
- Marc North (I.T. volunteer)
- Alison Benson (organised a Christmas concert on Facebook)
- Sarah Blake (who ran the Hackney Half Marathon for Laughter Africa in September 2021)
- Clare Finlay (who ran the Virtual London Marathon in October 2021)
- Five year old Toby (our youngest Laughter Africa volunteer who completed a 46 mile sponsored walk in August 2021)
- Mary Tyrrell (Administration volunteer)

We would also like to say an extra special thank you to our friends at St Patrick's RC High School in Eccles, especially Eddie, one of the teachers. They have been fundraising throughout the year and they arranged the first ever Laughter Africa Charity Golf Day in September 2020 at Styal Golf Club in Wilmslow. To see some of our volunteers, visit here.

D. ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE











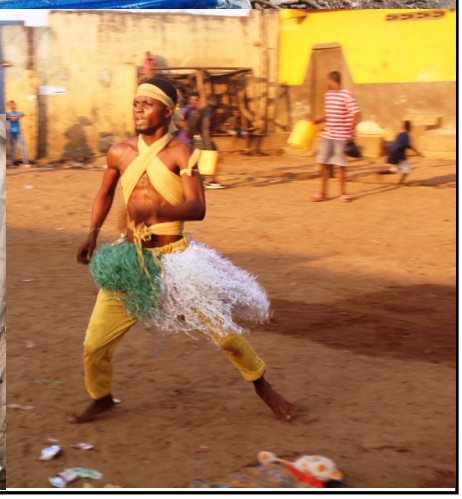












Achievements

Mother and baby training session

On Saturday 19th December we decided to carry out an education day for young mums and pregnant girls for the girls from the mobile project and the girls whom we had reunified with their families. This came about because in the last two years, five of our girls, who lived at home, have lost their babies. We wanted to teach the girls pediatric first aid, practical advice in raising a child and to see if we could help make a difference in building their relationships with their children.

About 30 girls who have attended the mobile project in Susan's Bay have children. Most of their children live with them on the streets, although some live with random community members. Between them, they have around 50 children- some girls have three children each. Some of them have no relationship whatsoever with their child. One girl called Naomi, who we reunified in 2018 after she stayed at the ICC, brought her child along. Her mother brings up her child for her so Naomi and her daughter have grown more like sisters. At the start of the day, Naomi said in front of her child "I hate pikin." For many of these girls, it is easy to understand their resentment towards their children: some of the girls are not mothers through their own choice and become pregnant because of commercial sex work or a sexual assault. This makes the relationship they have with their baby challenging. For example, at least two of the girls who we reunified in 2018 after staying in the ICC, Iris and Arunatu, both conceived after being sexually assaulted. Every time they see their children's faces, it serves as a reminder of what happened to them. Sometimes because of their pregnancy the girls are thrown out by their parents. As one girl said, "My family told me that I had brought shame upon them. That I was dead to them." Another girl agreed saying, "The day I got pregnant was the day I lost my mum and dad." Ultimately, we wanted to help the girls work through their feelings as the girls ultimately want to be the best mothers they can for their child- they just don't know how. Altogether we welcomed 70 girls and 42 of their children for the day.

The first session was a paediatric first aid session led by our nurse Rebecca Isata. Among other things, she taught them how to perform baby CPR/ child CPR, what to do if their child is choking, how to treat burns and how to treat a fever. After the paediatric first aid training session, we had lunch. After lunch, we started the psychosocial counselling which included meditation, art therapy and group discussion. We gave each girl and their babies a teddy bear and taught them how this can be used as a comfort or transitional object. It was important that the girls gave something to their child so we asked each girl when they presented the toys to say to their child, "You are my piken and I love you." After the counselling session there was a practical training session. The girls were taught how to change nappies, how to wash a baby and how to dress a baby. We also talked about positive parenting techniques so that rather than hitting their child to discipline them, they should use other non-violent forms of discipline. We taught the girls how to show their child love and different soothing practices including three lullabies. At the very end of the day, we gave the children some small Christmas presents as they left. The day was a huge success, and we plan on carrying out more training for pregnant girls and young mothers in the future. We want to break an otherwise generational cycle of poverty and street-connectedness.

Our Advocacy work

We are immensely proud of our advocacy work over the last year, particularly the consultations with the street children and the song that the street children released as part of our celebrations for the International Day for Street Children:

Organising consultations with the street children about a new National Strategy on Street Children

We carried out consultations with the girls and boys from mobile about the new National Strategy on Street Children which the Sierra Leone Government are hoping to introduce this year. The girls' consultation took place in Susan's Bay on

Friday 11th December 2020 and the boys' consultation took place in Ambrose Street on Tuesday 15th December 2020. There were 7 groups of 8 young people in each session so altogether 56 boys and 56 girls took part: a total of 112 street children and young people have therefore contributed their opinions and experiences to this process. The children and young people were consulted via the use of specially designed exercise, designed to encourage them to share their experiences and develop their ideas of solutions. This exercise incorporated the questions provided by the Consultant, generating responses from the children and young people in an engaging manner. We are really proud of how successful this consultation went. They gave great contributions. To see a list of the girls' and boys' recommendations for what they would like to see a National strategy tackle please visit here. To see their drawings, please click here. They are well worth reading if you have a bit of time. It gives you a huge flavour of what the children experience while living on the streets. If even just some of their recommendations are adopted into the new strategy then life on the streets should become a bit easier for the boys and girls. The consultant released a draft National Strategy for Street Children in January 2021. We are so proud that Laughter Africa is mentioned many times in the report, including the consultation workshops we held with 112 street children.

Song

"Street Pikin Dem" is written, sung and directed by children living on the streets of Sierra Leone. Pikin means child in the Krio language, and the catchy tune shares the challenges Street Pikin face in Sierra Leone, and their spirit to overcome adversity and triumph. To see a copy of the video please visit this link. On Facebook alone we had over 7500 views. Never mind the views on WhatsApp, Insta, Youtube and Twitter!

Contribution to a research paper for the UN

Laughter Africa contributed to a research paper submitted to the UN by the Consortium for Street Children for an International Conference. The paper focused on gender-based violence and children living on the streets. We provided evidence of abuse stemming from foreign fisherman and law enforcement. This paper aims to enact change and hopefully prohibit such atrocities in the future. The paper will be presented in Autumn 2021.

Building a relationship with the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs

One of our proudest accomplishments has been our input into the Ministry's Street Children strategy. We attended the regional validation in February 2021 where James, the founder of Laughter Africa, spoke publicly about the stories of abuse and even in some cases murder that the girls have shared to Laughter Africa. A lot of powerful people where present in the meeting. A representative from the Human Rights Commission said that they would launch an investigation into the foreign fisherman accused of these horrific crimes. However, this investigation has still not taken place. Laughter Africa was asked to join the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs specialist committee on street children. It was a huge honour for us and a fantastic opportunity for us to advocate for positive change.

Our prevention-based work

We are particularly proud of our prevention-based work. We love supporting the street children of Sierra Leone, but we'd be happiest if they never took to the streets in the first place. Unfortunately, many children think running away from

home will fix all their problems, which is why we've been ramping up our prevention work. Who better to help educate at-risk children about the reality of street life than street children themselves? On 9th December 2020, the girls and boys from mobile created and starred in a variety of short plays, dances, and musical acts about their experiences, and performed these for the community in Susan's Bay. It was an amazing showcase of talent and we are hopeful it will act as a preventative tool to stop other children from turning to live on the streets. One problem the girls identified is that they often feel discriminated by the community and often receive abuse from community members. So many of the community gathered to watch and it was a great way to begin to bridge the divide between the street children and the community. We are hopeful that the performance is the start of a better relationship between the children living on the streets and the community members who if they understand the reality of the girls' lives then they might have more empathy for them. Here's a video of the day.

We would like to replicate similar performances to the one we did in Susan's Bay in December but in other areas which have a big contingent of street children too such as Waterloo and Funkai. This is dependent upon coronavirus restrictions.

The impact of the Mobile projects in Susan's Bay and Portee

We are delighted with the success of the girls' mobile project- not just with the numbers of girls who attended every day – but with the long-term impact of the programme. Between October 2020 and the end of March 2021 we reunified 56 girls living on the streets in Susan's Bay with their families. Some of the families had thought that their girls had died as it had been so long since they last saw them. What's even better is that most of the girls that we reunified from the Susan's Bay mobile project also have children of their own which means that there are a lot less under 5s living on the streets. We realised, quickly, that we need to pay school charges / nursery for the children of the girls as otherwise the girls would be unable to attend school or vocational training if they had to look after their children during the day. Even though the girls mobile project ended at the end March, we still have girls coming from Susan's Bay asking for us to reunify them with their families. Since April, we have reunified another 37 girls from the mobile in Susan's Bay with their families. Some of these girls came in September 2021, nearly 6 months after the girls' mobile closed. Its lovely to see the lasting effects of the Susan's Bay girls' mobile. That means altogether we reunified 93 girls living in Susan's Bay. It can be difficult for these children to break the cycle of living on the streets, we are so proud of the wonderful resilience and commitment to a better life these young people show. We have been visiting all the girls from the Susan Bay mobile project whom we have paid vocational school for since January to see if they are attending school. We are flabbergasted to say that 81% of all the mobile girls we have paid for are still attending. This is about triple the number we expected and shows how key vocational education is to encourage the girls to remain home. Of all the stories I have heard from the girls' mobile project, the one story that touched me the most was the kindness the girls showed to others who were affected by the fire in Susan's Bay. One of the volunteers from the project, Musu, lost everything in the fire. The girls living on the streets knew this and bought clothes and other essential items for her (without anyone asking) so that at least she had something to wear. They told her, "You have been there for us, now let us be here for you." I was so proud of them. It showed me the impact that this project has had on them and the values that it has instilled in them: kindness, compassion, and dignity. We had similar success with our mobile project in Portee. The mobile project at Portee reached 275 street children at the project (151 girls/ 124 boys) in six months and reunified a total number of

124 children and young people from Portee with their families. And the even better news…they are all still at home.

Business Support scheme

One of our biggest achievements in the last year has been the introduction of the business support scheme. We are delighted to say that most of the families have been very successful in their businesses. One success story is the story of Abdulai and his family. Abdulai lives in the provinces. He lived on the streets in 2017 and we reunified him in December 2017. The reason he went onto the streets was because he was staying with an aunt in Freetown, but she was too strict and would beat him. We offered his family business support in June by buying his father lots of different material. His father is a tailor who used to sew clothes for people using materials that they had provided. Using the material he was given, he can now make clothes and sell those clothes on, increasing his profit tenfold. Every 2 months he makes approximately 1,800,000 leones which goes a long way for Abdulai and his family. When we visited him in October 2020, we found the business was booming. He now employs 8 apprentices and a local church in the village want to build him a training centre so that Abdulai's father can teach tailoring to the whole community. Abdulai, himself, started a small business selling face masks using the scrap pieces of material from his father. With the money he made he paid for his school charges, school bag and shoes himself. This support is a great example of empowerment and sustainability. The whole point of Laughter Africa is for the street children to become independent and self-empowered, so Abdulai is the embodiment of everything that Laughter stands for. We are so proud of Abdulai and his family.

Another story that particularly touched us was Mustapha C's family in Kenema. Mustapha's mother worked every day for a rich family from 7am until 11pm. She was only earning 20,000 leones per day (less than £2 a day). Even if she was late by a few minutes-they would deduct her salary. Thanks to the business support we gave her she was able to quit her job. She has decided to make and sell her own soap. She said, "I am no longer a slave. I can now a sleep at night. No one will ever take advantage of me again. You have given me back by life and my dignity. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

Another example of the success of the business support scheme are Ibrahim and Ibrahim. We bought them some welding machines. Since then, they have set up their own business. With the profits they have already made, they have bought themselves a grinding machine worth 1,200,000 leones. They have also rented a small shop with the profits so they now have their own premises. The business support we gave them and the profit it is generating is allowing them to invest in growing their business. Ibrahim even said, "We don't want to ask anything from you again. We want to do it for ourselves."

Another family we supported with business support was Ibrahim Sorie. He was homeless in 2019. We reunified him with his family in August 2019. 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. In June 2020, we bought him all the materials he needs to make jewellery. He saved up all the profits to pay for his mum to have an operation which was very expensive. He could have spent that money on anything but he chose to spend it all on his mum. He also paid his private school fees for himself. Laughter Africa's policy is that we only pay for government schools for the young people as we support the Government's agenda of free education so Ibrahim paid private school for himself. These are just a few examples.

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

The successes of the children and young people that we work with

Whenever one of the young people we work with succeed, we share their joy. Here are some of their most amazing successes from the last year:

Amie

A year ago Aminata (Amie) was living on the streets. Today she is playing football in the Sierra Leone Premier League.

Amie turned to the street after a fight with her Aunt, who believed only boys should play football. Like for most of the young people we support, the streets were a traumatic experience. After the market stalls closed for the day she would sleep under the empty tables though this was not a safe place. She was abused for being a girl who wanted to play football, was the survivor of sexual assaults and witnessed her best friend's murder in a gang attack.

Laughter Africa is proud to be supporting Amie from the sidelines; helping Amie off the streets, back home with her Aunt, paying for her education and medical treatment so she can be at peak fitness to compete at the highest level. The female Premier Football league officially launches in Sierra Leone on 17th October and Amie will be a part of it! Her dream one day is to represent her country in the World Cup. Imagine…. from the streets to the World Cup!

Not only is Amie a superstar on the pitch, she is one off the pitch too. In October she begins her Nursing degree at Njala University. She is the first young person we have worked with who has applied for university. As well as supporting her football career, we will paying for Amie to learn nursing so that she has multiple options for her future.

To quote Amie "Football is my dream and my passion. It is who I am". We are so unbelievably proud of you Amie, you are a role model to all the young people in Sierra Leone and around the world who have experienced homelessness.

Laughter Africa isn't just about supporting the young people through schooling or vocational work, it is also about letting their talents nurture and grow. It's about them reaching their full potential so that they can shine – whatever that talent may be - music, fashion, drama, dance, art or sport.

Adamma

One of the young women Laughter Africa has supported to leave the streets is Adamma and she has since found her way to Sierra Leone stardom!

At 14 she lived on the streets for two years as her father had severe mental health issues and couldn't look after her. Adamma's mother had abandoned her at a very young age. But Adamma is a tough cookie and she never gave up on her dreams.

Singing is a passion of Adamma. She's wowed crowds at birthday parties, schools, the stadium and the beach. She even featured on Laughter Africa's single "Street Pikin Dem." Adamma can also act! She stars as the daughter in a Sierra Leone comedy 'Family Issue.' You can see you all the episodes on their YouTube channel if you fancy a giggle.

Adamma auditioned for two Salone films on Saturday 28th August 2021. She was accompanied by Lucy, one of our social workers, for moral support who auditioned too. The films are being produced by Netflix and the famous Nigerian Frank Rajah Arase is directing. The film titles are 'Smart, Vicious and Dirty' and 'Fame & Fashion.' They are still waiting to hear back from the production company although they did have a great time at the audition. Imagine a former street child winning an Oscar!

In July 2021, Adamma graduated from a three month make up course that we paid for. Adamma is currently sitting her WASCE and wanted to learn a new skill for after her exams. Not only did she get first place on the course but the institution where she studied wanted to give her an internship. Adamma has set up her own business so when she finishes her WACSE she can make a lot of money by being a make-up artist. It is a new career for her. She also creates tie dye hats, t-shirts and socks.

That's not enough for Adamma. She sat her WASCE University Entrance exams in September 2021 and hopes to study medicine. The results come out in the new year. Laughter Africa is so proud of Adamma, and all the young women we support. We are proud to fund the education and tools these young people need to give them the step up in life they deserve.

Abdul

A huge congratulations to Abdul, who took first place in a local spelling bee competition in his area in June 2021. We first met Abdul living on the streets 5 years ago. He is disabled and didn't have a wheelchair. He would crawl on his elbows to get around the streets. He had never been to school, but had taught himself to read and write on the streets. Last year he got the highest exam mark in his school. He has an amazing foster family who really love him; their only complaint is he never sleeps – he is always studying. To see a video of Abdul talk about his life, please click here.

Ibrahim

Ibrahim is 19 years old. For five years he lived on the streets; "My mum didn't have money when I was growing up so she sent me to live with my uncle who had small small money. My uncle would flog me constantly so that's why I went on the street."

Ibrahim has been home now for 3 years and in that time he has trained as a welder. Thanks to support from Laughter Africa Ibrahim now runs his own welding business. We provide tools for him every year, just while his business is still growing. We could end the story here and still be proud of Ibrahim. But it doesn't end here. Ibrahim has made enough money from his welding business to pay a long-term lease for land to build his new workshop. He's also providing apprenticeships for other Laugher Africa children. "I want to help other street children. I want to show them love. I don't like them to strain in the streets. I have three boys from the streets now- Wilson, Mohamed and Ibrahim- who work for me. The same love that Laughter showed me, I now want to give back to my friends on the streets. I want to help more

after my business grows." We are so proud of him and his kindness to others.

Adamsay and Amie

Over the last few months we've become a lot more fashionable here at Laughter Africa. Thanks to Adamsay and Amie who have been making clothes for the Laughter Africa team, who wear their clothes with pride.

Amie went on the streets when she was 10 years old after the death of her mother and father. Her uncle had stolen all of her inheritance. We see this often, extended family believe the girls have no rights to the inheritance- just because they are under 18 and female. Laughter Africa is helping Amie attend school, and next year she will be her WASC Exams in order to graduate high school. Amie is also a young mother "I gave birth to my beautiful daughter Fatmata on 28th March 2021. Sadly my boyfriend died a few months ago- he was a bike driver. He was involved in a motorbike accident so I am alone with my pikin. I decided to start making country clothes to make money for my daughter. I taught myself how to crochet. My baby gives me pleasure-she is my pride and joy."

Adamsay's mother had severe mental health issues and was unable to care for Adamsay and her siblings which lead them to the streets. Her father and step father have passed away. She doesn't know her exact age but she thinks that she is around 17. Adamsay said, "Living on the street is like hell. Suffering, everyday I had to struggle to get my daily survival." However, Adamsay keeps a positive attitude," I enjoy learning tailoring. I have met different people at vocational school and I have made new friends." Her dream job is to one day do all the tailoring work for Laughter Africa. She is also a young mother to an 18-month year old son, Abubakarr who is named after one of Laughter Africa's social workers.

Amie, Adamma, Ibrahim, Abdul, Amie and Adamsay embody everything that Laughter Africa encapsulates giving street children the tools they need to empower themselves to change their lives and fulfil their potential. They then use this potential to empower others. We are so proud of each and every one of them.

Bilkissu

The NPSE (the salone equivalent of SATS) results came out in August 2021 and the majority of our children passed with flying colours. A special congratulations to Bilkissu who got a score of nearly 320!

<u>The successes of our staff</u>

Whenever one of our staff succeed and achieve their dreams, we share their joy. In June 2021 our staff members Moses and Lucy both graduated from UNIMTECH university. Moses's degree is in 'Networking and Telecommunications' while Lucy graduated in 'Development Economics.' Lucy is the first girl from her family to ever go to university. Moses has worked at Laughter since we first opened. In fact, he was the first person we ever interviewed for a job while Lucy started in November 2015. They have worked really hard to achieve their degrees and we couldn't be prouder. We have another four staff who are currently studying at university: Abass, Zombo, Isata and Lamin. It is important for us that our staff achieve their dreams too.

Long term success

Over the last few months, our FTR team have been visiting all our old young people as part of our 'second chance' months. The good news is we have now finished visiting them all and we now know the exact figure of young people at home since we reunified them with their families. As of June 2021, we found that 67% (532 children) of our young people are at home, 22% (168 children) are on the streets, 3% (26 children) are being supported by another organization, 7% (61 children) have either moved house or changed their numbers so there is no way for us to contact them and 1% (9 children) have died. We were pleasantly surprised with how many young people are living at home.

Recognition of work

We have started getting recognized in the different communities by the Headsmen and different community leaders. For instance, in September 2021, we approached the headsmen in Funkia to ask permission for us to work in their community for an event in October. He said yes straight away. He said that he knows all about our work as he has seen us carry out follow up visits with other girls who live within that area so whatever we want to do in his community- he is happy to support. Other headsmen with whom we have a strong relationship include the headsmen of Tombo, Waterloo, Portee and Susan's Bay. For instance, the chief of Tombo phoned us a few weeks ago to thank for us for supplying the school starter packs for a lot of the girls in his community.

Thanks to a lot of meetings over the last year at the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, the Ministry staff are a lot more aware of our work too and we have developed a good working relationship with them. In fact, we have been given a lot of referral cases from the Ministry of Gender over the last year.

We have also developed a good relationship with key members of the ministry. For instance, one senior member of the leadership team said to the founder after a meeting, ***"Why do you care about street children? Why are you so passionate?"*** It was nice to have Laughter's enthusiasm and passion noticed. Similarly, a senior member said once, ***" I wish I could live at Laughter. It sounds so much fun."***

Another member said of the founder, ***"He like kalo kalo."*** This is a compliment. It means he is fun. Another representative said this from the Ministry of Social Welfare too.

Meanwhile another member of the ministry said to Laughter Africa, ***" Thank you very much for your effort and your support in complementing the government's efforts in providing services for children. The ministry really recommends you. Most times when we have our meetings, we talk about Laughter Africa. That is very good."***

One time we had a referral from the ministry of a girl who was over 20 with a very bad attitude and was not really a street child. The following day we returned her to the ministry because of this attitude- she wasn't ready to change yet. One staff member told the girl, ***" If Five o (the founder's nickname) can't put up with you, then no one can."***

Meanwhile we received a lovely email in October 2021 from a Laughter Africa supporter based in Germany. He said:

"I heard about your work when I travelled through Salone in 2019. I am very happy that I could support your valuable work and thus the girls a little bit."

This really made our day as we didn't know that many people knew about our work apart from the street children. We are not able to afford media coverage as it is quite expensive in Sierra Leone and we prefer to spend our money on food, medicine and school fees/equipment. So the fact that a stranger heard about our work shows us the impact we must be having.

The Lila Foundation

The children we help go through challenges that are unimaginable to most. So wherever we can we give them the chance to just be kids. Thanks to the Lila foundation, we had one of those days in September 2021. Our Interim Care Centre was filled with games that brought a smile to everyone's face, and a few tears of joy on mine. We were joined by over 100 children from the community of Adonkia where the ICC is based. The giant carousel made from scratch was an absolute favourite, there was so much joy and laughter. We definitely lived up to our name Laughter Africa!

Sallieu

A few years ago we met a young boy who was deaf and couldn't speak living on the streets. He was affectionately known as 'Mumu boy.' He used to visit our mobile project, but stayed in the outside and was too shy to join in. One day we were doing an activity involving the children writing messages to the Government about their lives on the streets, and in came Mumu boy, who had found a piece of scrap paper and signalled for a pen so he could join in. Whilst his message was illegible, he still wanted to be heard. For someone who couldn't speak, his voice was the loudest that night.

We lost touch with Mumu boy as being unable to communicate made it very difficult for us to reunify him. But we never give up! In September 2021 we discovered where he lived and learnt his real name...Sallieu! We met with his mother and provided him with a school starter pack as well as paying his school fees. His joy is contagious. As he so grateful he has told all the other mute children in Freetown. It was wonderful to be reunited with Salieu again after all this time!

A verbal commendation from the Ministry of Social Welfare and the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs

At two different meetings with all the NGOs in September 2021, one with the Ministry of Social Welfare and another with the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs, Laughter Africa was publicly praised for our quarterly reports which are submitted regularly to the Sierra Leone government. Someone asked a question about the ideal report template and the representative from the Ministry said that Laughter Africa wrote the best reports. They told the crowd that our reports are always on time and full of information. The representative from the NGO unit also echoed this. It was very re-affirming to receive such praise as the administration team spend a long time preparing these reports and it was nice to know that they are read, acknowledged and appreciated.

Radio one show

James, the founder of Laughter Africa, appeared on Radio 1 Breakfast with Greg James on 29th July 2020 as part of the 'Up Yours Corona' segment. Originally, James was pencilled in as the backup option, but after the researcher spoke to James he was promoted as the main speaker representing Sierra Leone. While other participants only featured briefly, James was on the radio for 10 minutes. He was heard by over a million listeners. The feedback on social media was amazing- there wasn't one negative comment. His appearance on the radio led to a small influx in donations which was much needed at the time. James was even asked back by Radio one due to his popularity and listener feedback, but he politely declined. On Christmas day, Radio 4 repeated James's appearance as part of their highlights from the year show which was a huge honour.

Social media presence

Our social media presence has nearly doubled over the last year, thanks to the amazing work of Thomasine Warmington, our new social media volunteer. Our Facebook views alone have reached thousands. Just one example of this is that Laughter Africa went viral on a Facebook group called 'Bin isolation Outing-bin nation.' We had over 7,100 likes and 2,100 comments on the post of the boys singing 'Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.' We have also joined Instagram. It is great that a lot more people are hearing and reading about Laughter Africa than ever before.

New online virtual gifts shop

In November 2020, Laughter Africa volunteers Helen Stead and Thomasine Warmington helped design a new online shop for our virtual gifts which is now open all year round. The online shop was a huge success. In fact, in 2020 we doubled the amount raised from the previous year. Thomasine and Hannah Van Helvoort also introduced digital downloads which were hugely popular. The new gifts introduced in 2020 included:

- buy a sheep for a family
- buy a chicken for a family
- Provide business support for a family
- buy some hair (The hair will be used as part of our hairdressing sessions in the ICC and at the mobile project to teach the girls different ways to make income).

A big thank you to the ultra-talented graphic designer Laughter Africa volunteer Dave Bixter for his work updating all the old gifts as well as creating the 4 new ones.

Challenges

The raping and brutalizing of the girls

One of the biggest challenges we are currently facing is that there are issues that we need to speak out about which will anger the Sierra Leone Government. Everything is political in Sierra Leone - even issues which shouldn't be. For instance, during the consultations, the Ministry was very defensive when NGOs brought up the fact that there is no free education in Sierra Leone because the schools apply extra charges. This is a huge factor which causes children to migrate to the streets as their families cannot afford the charges. However, those present saw it as a personal insult against the government. We particularly wanted to speak out about the abuse perpetuated by the foreign fishermen and the fact that girls are being raped by the police but this will put us in direct opposition to the government. Our fear is that if we speak out about these issues then we will be unable to re-register as an NGO in January 2022. Re- registration takes place every two years. However, we cannot in good conscience just ignore what we know. Change only happens when people are brave enough to speak out! One of our core values is having the courage of conviction:

"Laughter Africa always speaks out for truth and justice. This requires us to be creative and radical, bold and innovative – without fear of failure – in pursuit of having the greatest positive impact on the lives of street children. We will not rest on our laurels; we constantly challenge ourselves to be more effective, creative and innovative and we will challenge others to think and act differently towards street children. We will strive to achieve this by being passionate, enthusiastic and courageous in our beliefs."

As we state on our campaign website page:

'When we see injustice we won't be silenced. No matter the issue. No matter the consequence. We will speak out.'

We made a promise to the street children when Laughter Africa first opened that we would be advocates of their truth and we must stick to our promise. Here are some of the issues that we need to address in the next year, some of which will put us in direct conflict with the government:

1. Police Rape:

Out of the 65 girls who have stayed in the ICC in 2021, 52% admitted to being raped by the police. Aminata said,

"The police raped me twice. The first time I was raped by two policemen. The second time there was one policeman. I was sleeping where the market women sell and it was past curfew. They said that they were going to take me to the police station for breaking curfew but they said if I had sex with them, then they would let me go. They took me to an unfinished house. The other policemen caught me smoking me koosh. He asked me for money but I didn't have any so he made me have sex with him."

Meanwhile Esther clarified,

"When you are out at night, the police will ask for money or they will hold you. If you don't have money, then you have to lay down with them. Its happened so many times to me- over 10 times at least."

This was reiterated by Ramatu,

"The policemen have beaten and raped me many times. Its so happened so many times- I lost count years ago. They tell me that if I don't lay down with me, they will lock me in a cell. I was scared and had no choice."

This type of story was repeated again and again. Most of the girls had been raped more than once by the police and usually there was more than one officer involved. This is something that we will be addressing as part of the Network for Street Children Sierra Leone in 2021/22. We hear those incidents have increased ten-fold since the Covid-19 curfew was introduced. Another girl called Esther confirmed,

"During the curfew, the police would arrest me but they forced me to sleep with them. It happened to me boku times. Sometimes two policemen at once would rape me. It has only just started happening since corona and the curfew was introduced. The only time I have ever been raped was by the police."

Although this matter has been brought to the attention of the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, no further action appears to have been taken in this matter.

2. Foreign Fishermen

Many of the girls we have supported have experienced serious sexual exploitation at the hands of fisherman, often from Korea and China, who arrive in Freetown's ports and commit offences against street-connected girls. The girls drew attention to one particularly horrifying incident in August 2020 when a girl died after she was made to have sex with a dog aboard a Chinese fishing vessel. Subsequently, another incident of the same circumstances has occurred in Freetown, with yet another girl dying after being forced to have sex with a dog. One of the girls from the Susan's Bay mobile, Elizabeth, told us about the death of her friend Kadiatu who also lived on the streets.

"We often go to see the Chinese fisherman on the trawler boats where we are paid money to sleep with the men. Usually we get around 100,000/150,000 leones. If you steal from the fishermen, they throw you overboard into the sea. Kadiatu went to the Chinese fisherman to find money. When she was at the boat, she was made to have sex with a dog. She was given 200,000 leones. After one day, she became sick. She said that she didn't have money for hospital. So she died on the streets at the age of 17 in August 2020."

Esther confirmed, ***"My friend Mariama died while living on the streets in 2019. She went to the foreign fisherman and they made her sleep with a dog. She got sick and she died afterwards."***

Laughter Africa are also aware of several reported incidences of girls in street situations being thrown overboard these fishing vessels after being sexually abused, where they have drowned. One girl Posseh said,

"My best friend FA went to the foreign fishermen and never returned. A week later I met the girls who went with her and they told me that she was thrown overboard and drowned in December 2020."

Her death was never investigated and she has just been forgotten about. As Zainab explained,

" I go to the Chinese fisherman. After I finish sleeping with them- they would pay me less than we agreed. And if you argue they will either beat you or throw you overboard."

Many girls have died in these circumstances, yet as they are living on the streets- no one notices their disappearances.

Although the issue of the foreign fishermen has been reported to the Human Rights commission, Head of Police, the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs and the UN by different street children organisations, including Laughter Africa, no further action has been taken. We believe that this is because of how dependent Sierra Leone is on China and Chinese money/investment.

3. Pregnancy and Childbirth:

Most of the girls ended up giving birth on the streets, as they could not afford the exorbitant prices charged by the hospitals. Even though childbirth is meant to be free in Sierra Leone hospitals, some of the girls were told to pay up to 500,000 leones. As Isatu says,

"I gave birth to my second child in a shack. I couldn't afford to go to the hospital as it is boku boku money."

Meanwhile Kadiatu said,

"I gave birth to a baby boy on February 20th 2021 but he died. I didn't give him name. I gave birth in a hospital. The hospital charged me 500,000 leones but I begged so they said that I could pay 300,000 leones instead even though it is meant to be free."

This also relates to pregnancy clinics. Even though clinics are meant to be free, the girls are unable to afford all the medicines and tests that are prescribed. 5 girls out of 65 had lost their babies on the streets. Adamsay said,

"I gave birth to a little girl on the streets in January 2020. I didn't have money to pay for the clinic so I had no choice but to give birth on the streets. Sadly my little girl died the same day."

Meanwhile Kadeja sadly lost her son on Tuesday 21st April 2020. He was called Yusif. He was eight months when he died. She said:

"He was sick. His body was warm, fever, he was crying. He had a runny nose."

One of the girls, Zainab from the mobile girl's project in Susan's Bay, sadly lost her child Zainab Junior in November 2020. She was born on 1st September 2020. She gave birth in a house as she couldn't afford money to go to hospital. She never went to any clinic throughout her pregnancy as she didn't have money to give the nurse. They both lived on the streets. Zainab took her child to hospital but it was too late. Her baby died aged just 2 and half months. Although there was no post mortem- we believe that she died from malaria.

At least two girls mentioned that their friends had died in childbirth. Mariamma mentioned that her friend F.A. died in childbirth:

"She gave birth in a shack because she couldn't afford hospital treatment. They rushed her to hospital as she was bleeding too much but it was too late for them to do anything. She was only 17."

Although this matter of hospitals illegally charging girls for child birth has been brought to the attention of the Ministry of Gender and Children Affairs, no further action appears to have been taken in this matter.

Connected to this issue is that at least five of the girls spoke about the fact that they miscarried their babies on the streets. They were beaten by men in the stomach. One girl, Ramatu. said,

"I got belly on the streets but I lost the baby. One man I lay down with beat me in the belly. I told him to pay me and he refused so when I argued back, he beat me and I lost my child."

This story was replicated time and time again.

4. Violence, mutilation, torture and murder:

The violence against girls living on the street is completely shocking and unacceptable. One girl, Absatu, talked about her friend Aminata:

"Mi paddi, Aminata, died in December 2020. She went to see a customer. They arranged for 150,000 but he only gave her 5,000. They argued and the man stabbed her in the throat. He ran away afterwards."

Another girl, Esther., talked about two friends who were mutilated:

"Aisha died last year. They found her body on the beach. She had her hands, toes and ears cut off. No one was ever caught but it is believed to be witchcraft. Another of my friends was Hawa. They found her in the same place as Aisha a few weeks later. They had cut off her breasts. And they had cut out her vagina."

Amie shared the heartbreaking story of her friend who was the victim of a hate crime,

"Mi paddi Marie (Kaka) was a lesbian. She died as a result of a hate crime. She was my best friend. She was gang raped by a group of men in Dryzac on January 24th 2021. They chose her because they knew she was a lesbian and they wanted to make her straight. Because she tried to fight back- they raped her to death. No one was arrested."

A lot of the girls from the Susan's Bay project talked about one of their friends Borotelli who died on 12th August 2015. She was raped and after she was raped the man put sand in her mouth, nose and vagina and she suffocated to death. The man was never caught.

At least eighteen of the girls talked about 18 different friends who had been "raped to death" on the streets. Usually, their bodies were found dumped the next day. In every single case, no one was ever held accountable. Not one of the girls has received justice. Probably the most heart-breaking story was Aminata F's story. She is 13 years old and lived on the streets for two years before Laughter Africa found her. She went over the streets after her mum and dad died in car accident. She said;

"The streets are bad. You lose your life quick. I should have died a long time ago. One friend I met on the streets was a small pikin. One day a group of men chased us. I ran and hid. They caught her. They raped her until she died. She was bleeding terribly. I watched her die."

Fatmata, told us the story of Zainab, 17, who was killed on 7th May 2020,

"We were coming home a from a club and a group of 4 men tried to attack us. They stabbed her in the stomach and they stabbed me in the arm. After they stabbed me- they took me to an unfinished house and raped me. When I returned, my friend was dead. No one was ever arrested for the crimes."

Similarly, Josephine, told us about the death of her friend Fatmata,

"We were coming home from a club and a group of men attacked us. They raped her and they raped me. I was the lucky one as they raped Fatmata until she died. I was right next to her as she died. I was yelling and screaming for help but no one came. She was my best friend. Fatmata was only 16. She died in November 2020."

Meanwhile Memunatu. talked about her friend, Kadiatu who was 16:

"In 2019, me and my paddi wanted to go upline to the provinces to hustle. On the way we hitched hike. The driver said he only had room for one girl so he took my friend. However, he raped Kadiatu and cut off her vagina and breasts. A farmer saw the whole thing and reported the man to the police. They took him to court but the father of the accused paid a bribe so they dropped the case."

5. Rape and the difficulty of reporting rape

50 out of the 65 girls had been raped while living on the streets (77%). Most of them had been gang raped. Lombai admitted that she had been raped over 20 times on the streets. Even the 8 and 9 year olds were survivors of rape. As Adamsay clarified,

"I have been raped over five times. But after a while I stopped counting as it happened so much. Once I was raped by nine men, one after the other."

One of the most heart breaking stories that we were told was Aminatas'. Aminata is gay and she talked about the horrific bigotry and violence facing gay people living on the streets. She experienced corrective rape:

" I am a lesbian. I have had a girlfriend for five months. I was raped one time on the streets by two men in Susan's bay- they raped me because they wanted me to become straight as they knew I was gay. They said that because I play football I have no time for men. They wanted me to know what a real man felt like. Afterwards I felt physically sick and I couldn't stop bleeding. I couldn't even walk fine. People bully me on the streets and in the community because I am gay."

Girls with disabilities were particularly vulnerable. Fatmata explained,

" I have been raped 5 times. 2 of those times I was gang raped. They said that if I refused then they would kill me. I can't fight back cos of my disability. I am an easy target."

Boys were also raped on the street. Out of the 30 boys that we had stay in the ICC in 2021, 20% had been raped while living on the streets. Alhaji said,

"I was raped once on the street by two men. I was sleeping on a market table and the two men came along holding a knife. They told me that If I didn't let them have sex with me then they would kill me. It hurt. I was bleeding afterwards. I was too ashamed and I didn't have any support to go to the police. I felt so angry."

Meanwhile Abdul confirm*ed,*

"I was raped once by two men. I was sleeping at a market table and they threatened to kill me if I didn't lay down with them. They held a knife to my throat. It hurt me. I didn't go to police. I didn't even think about going to the police. I cried afterwards."

Alusine confessed,

"On the streets they butterwaiss me once. I was sleeping and then a gangster put his hand over my mouth. He held a bottle and threatened to stab me. "

In December 2020, we came across the case of Tamba who was ten years was old and who was being raped by the older boys.

Most of the girls and boys did not report their rapes to the police. However, the few who did approach the police had difficulty reporting their rapes. Adamsay talked about her experience,

"The policemen will only help you if you sleep with them first. For example, when I was raped, I went to report the matter to the police but they told me that they would only investigate the matter if I slept with them first. It's happened four times now. Not just the same policeman or police station- I have been to 4 different police stations and they all did the same thing."

This was accentuated by many of the girls including Adamsay,

"One night I was raped and a police man found me crying and asked me what I was doing out late. I told him I was raped and he said that he would he help me as long as I slept with him first. But he lied, after I slept with him, he never helped me. He just dismissed me like I was nothing."

This has led to the girls no longer reporting their rapes. As Ramatu clarified,

"I was scared to report it to the police as I think that they will want to lay down with me again. I have no option but to bare."

Sometimes the police just didn't take their accusations seriously. As Isatu explained,

"I went once to the police station after the first time that I was raped to report it- they just told me to bare -they didn't do anything. So I didn't bother going back the second or third times that I was raped."

Meanwhile Susan commented,

"One time a man beat me so I went to the police to file a report. However, they told me to go to a different police station in Eastern. It's because I am a street child that they don't take me seriously."

Edna agreed,

"After they raped me, they beat me too. I went to report them at the police station but no one helped me. They just ignored my complaints."

The girls believe that there is a culture of impunity for sexual offences committed against them, rooted in gender norms.

One girl stated,

"When we are raped, the man should get life imprisonment, but they don't. It's like the law doesn't apply to us. That we don't matter."

One of the boys, Idrissa who had been raped said that, **"I was afraid to go to the police."**

This is something that we will be addressing as part of the Network for Street Children Sierra Leone in 2021/22. We want to make the whole process of reporting rape easier so that more perpetuators will be brought to justice.

6. Commercial sex work

97% of all the girls in the ICC this year had turned to commercial sex work for their survival. The girls could receive anything from 5,000 leones up to 50,000 leones. Some of the girls who engaged in commercial sex work were aged 8 and 9 years old. There are two problems related to commercial sexual exploitation include non-payment for sex and physical assault when having sex for money. As Nancy explained,

"Sometimes after I lay down with them. They wouldn't pay me. They would beat me instead."

Another girl reported,

"I was stabbed, beaten and cursed by a man that refused to pay me for sex."

This was a common problem for many of the girls. Some of the girls would not receive money, but other things instead. As Fatmata explains,

"I have to lay down with man to get food. The fisherman don't always have money so they sleep with me for fish. But people exploit me when I try to sell the fish. Sometimes I am paid 10,000 leones for a fish that is worth 30,000 leones. Because of my disability, people think that I am stupid and take advantage of me."

10% of the boys who have stayed in the ICC in 2021 also admitted to engaging in commercial sex work to survive while living on the streets. Usually this is the domain of the girls. Boys usually collect cup cup, tote or bloom and blye. This is a stark reminder to focus on all genders in our upcoming sexual exploitation advocacy campaign plans which will be starting in October 2021 (please see the future plans section for more information).

7. Child Trafficking

One of the boys Alusine who stayed with us in September 2021 shared with us a story before he left,

"On the streets, someone tried to kidnap me. A pastor. However, he was arrested and I was saved. I was at the beach and he offered to give me and my friends a lift home. Instead he tried to traffick me."

This is the first time that we have come across a child trafficking case but we know that it does happen in Sierra Leone. Sometimes the young people might be trafficked for forced labour, sexual abuse or for rituals. To see an article from the BBC in 2018 about children being kidnapped for rituals, please click here. Locally it is known as 'catcha catcha' and street children are an easy target as no one knows if they been taken. This is something we will monitoring in the build up to the 2023 election and will be educating the children about.

Corruption and political instability

The major challenge facing our work is the political and civil instability in Sierra Leone. Corruption in the country is at an all-time high. Every day there is a new story about corruption. There is a lot of tension and dissatisfaction within the country. In April 2021, there were a few days of riots between bike riders and the police over the brutality of the police. The images were scary. Land grabbings are also at an all time high. One man was shot in Hastings by a police officer over disputed land in April while students, who were protesting peacefully at their university, were shot at by police in April. The best example of this tension in the country is in Adonkia, where Laughter Africa is based. Adonkia is usually the most peaceful area. However. in July 2021, I was caught up in a riot in Adonkia. I was returning from a meeting. In the next village Dodo, there was lots of fighting and violence over the issue of land rights which spilled over to Adonkia. A politically connected person claimed that they owned all the land in Dodo so she 'arranged' for the police to raid the area. The police brought with them local gangsters from Lumley to help them. The gangsters from Lumley were armed with machetes and cut glass and were standing side by side with the police. The gangsters destroyed all the houses in Dodo and stole people's money and property. It was terrifying. There was over 50 of them. The police also released tear gas. I rushed to a neighbours' house for cover (Thank you Neneh. Alhaji and SorryBintu!). We rubbed potato leaf in our noses as that stops the effects of the tear gas. As usual in the face of danger, I stayed immensely calm. I might have yelled. "Run for your life" to Auntie Amie (our cook). The next day the community members from Dodo retaliated against the police and there was another day of fighting. Thankfully peace has now been restored in Adonkia but it was terrifying at the time! We are quite apprehensive about the upcoming election in March 2023 as the campaigning is about to begin. The Government of Sierra Leone reportedly bought more ammunition in August 2021.

Coupled with this is the fact that costs have risen extortionately over the last 3 years. A bag of rice has risen from 180,000 leones in March 2018 to 330,000 leones (as of September 2021). The cost of cooking oil has followed the same trajectory. People really are struggling to survive. For instance, if you walk around different communities you will hear the slang "the game don big. The game don bafta. The ground don dry." The increase in food prices is fuelling the tension within the country.

Connected to this is the fact that the country ran out of money in January 2021. There was no money in the banks. Sometimes we could only access 1 million leones from our account, even though we had more than that in the account. We needed a lot more than that to operate. We could not open at full capacity and thus the ICC remained closed until February.

Strategy

Sadly, we realised that the Ministry of Gender and Children's Affairs' agenda is different from the NGO's agenda when it comes to producing a strategy on street children. The NGOs working with street children would like a rights-based approach based on General Comment 21 whereas the ministry just want to remove street children from the streets. Not one of the street children's suggestions was included. This dichotomy in agendas came to a head at a very tense meeting in March 2021. Harvard University carried out research, but the Ministry never published that research, although it has been completed. We saw a summary of their report and the Harvard researchers seemed to accentuate all the same points made by the NGOs and the street children themselves. Their report emphasized the issue of police rape and the issue of the foreign fishermen. Sadly, it seems that this research has not been used to inform the strategy. At the end of May 2021, there was a meeting between the Minister, Dom Bosco, AMNET and SOS about a new pilot scheme for street children. Only Dom Bosco out of those NGOs actually work with street children. AMNET have never worked with street children, they work with women. As of September 2021, the strategy has still not been shared with the NGOs. All we have been told is that ANMNET is responsible from Calaba Town to Eastern Police, Dom Bosco is responsible from Town to Congo Cross and SOS is responsible from Congo Cross to Lumley. Since the end of May 2021, there has been no further updates from the ministry about this strategy. We did hear, in July, that a strategy has been presented to Parliament but we have still not seen a copy of it. Between now and March 2023, Laughter Africa will only be working in the Western rural area which is outside the parameters of the pilot scheme which focuses only on the Western Urban Area.

New labour law

A new labour law for Sierra Leone was introduced in January 2021 which increased staff costs. This meant that we had to reduce staff and volunteers as we didn't have enough money to pay all the increases stipulated. One staff was made redundant as well as other volunteers. We could face further redundancies too….

Deaths of some of our young people

Since the last annual report, we have sadly lost 5 of our young people which is always challenging:

Alhaji

One of the street children with whom we have worked with since 2015, Alhaji, tragically died. On Sunday 6th June Alhaji was in an altercation with a gangster over ginger beer. The gangster retaliated by throwing hot burning liquid all over Alhaji's body. The street children brought Alhaji straight to Laughter and we took him direct to Emergency hospital. He was transferred from there to Connaught Hospital. Our nurse, Isata, visited him every day and stayed with him for about 4 hours to make sure that he was comfortable. We paid for all the medicine that he needed for the week (over around 1,500,000 leones) and his feeding. Sadly, Alhaji started to misbehave in the hospital. The other street children would come and give him illicit drugs. On Friday 11th June, the hospital was about to throw Alhaji out but thankfully our friends at Dom Bosco came to our rescue and offered for Alhaji to stay at their hospital. However, Alhaji finally succumbed to his injuries on 14th June 2021. He really suffered in the end from the burns and the different infections but at least now he is at peace. Lucy, one of our social workers, attended Alhaji's funeral in Mile 91 on Sunday 20th June. She travelled with our friends from Dom Bosco. She met with Alhaji's mum, granny and sister. We

promised Alhaji's family that Laughter will pay the school fees of Alhaji's sister until she sits the WASCE starting in September. Thanks to Alhaji's legacy, his sister will have an education and will be able to provide for her family. A lasting legacy! A post mortem later revealed that Alhaji had died from Covid-19.

Abdul Aziz

Abdul Aziz was one of our old boys who lived at home with his family. He first came to Laughter Africa in October 2016. Abdul Aziz definitely had presence. You could never accuse him of being shy and retiring. He had the greatest dress sense and style for any street child I have ever met. He died early on Friday 9th October 2020. He and his 2 friends broke into a house and when he was caught outside the house, some of the community members beat him to death. He died in the most agonising and terrifying manner, His friends were beaten to death too. His body was thrown away like rubbish and his family couldn't even trace his body. His killers will face no justice and no charges will ever be laid against them.

He might not have died in the most heroic way, but Abdul Aziz was capable of great compassion and kindness. I don't want his good deeds to be forgotten. There's no doubt he wasn't a saint. He never claimed to be. He was human like the rest of us. One thing that I will always be grateful to Abdul Aziz for is the kindness that he showed to Sylvanus when he was on the streets. It's no exaggeration when I say Abdul Aziz saved Sylvanus's life. Without him, Sylvanus would no doubt be dead by now. Sylvanus did an interview for a school a few months ago. In the interview he mentioned Abdul Aziz by name:

"When I was on the street, I was helpless and had nowhere to stay. No one cared about me - not because I was horrible or naughty-just that people didn't care. I became sick on the street. I had malaria and cancer. Some of my friends on the streets ran away from me. I was left with only one friend and that was Abdul Aziz. We stayed together on the streets for a few months. One day I was unable to fight for our survival because I was sick. So, he went alone and did not return. I didn't know that he had gone to Laughter Africa, I was on the streets alone. When Laughter Africa took him home a few months later, he came back on the streets looking for me. When he saw how sick I was he took me straight to Laughter Africa. "

I still remember the day that he brought Sylvanus here. He might not have a cape but that day Abdul Aziz was a true superhero. Rest in peace Abdul Aziz. Til we meet again.

Adikalli

Another challenge was the death of Adikalli, one of the street children living on the streets, who died on 3rd December 2020 of TB. His death came to us as a big shock- we thought that he was on the road to recovery. Adikalli came to us directly off the streets at the beginning of September. We have never seen anyone look so thin. He couldn't walk more than two steps- I had to carry him on my back to get to the transport to take him to the hospital. We managed to get him admitted into the TB hospital at Laka which wasn't easy as apparently he has been there twice before. Each time he started to improve, he would steal from the other patients and run away. Sadly, his condition worsened and he didn't pull through. He was 22 years old.

The saddest thing is that we don't know anything about his family. We are unable to tell them that he is dead. All we know is the area in the provinces that he is from. So, when we buried him- he had no family present- just his Laughter family. He was over 18 so he could consent to have treatment for himself. We were going to trace his family when we were about to reunify him but now it is too late. We will still try to find his family to let them know of his passing but the chances are slim that we will find them with the minimal information available. I can't imagine what it must be like having a child and not knowing that they have died. He is buried in Adonkia where the ICC is based so we can visit his grave very easily. I want to say thank you especially to our nurse Isata who had shown such kindness to Adikalli over the 3 months that he was in hospital. She would visit him every few days to keep company and make sure that he had everything that he needed. I also wanted to say a huge thank you to the community of Adonkia. The whole of Adonkia came out to give him the send-off he deserved. Although none of the community knew Adikalli, they know Laughter. After 2pm prayers, the whole Mosque came together and prayed for Adkalli and then they carried him to his final resting place and buried him. He is buried in Adonkia where the ICC is based. We were joined by some of our old boys too. We have never felt so much part of the community as we did that day. Although his family were not there- we did Adikalli proud.

Finda

One of our old girls Finda died on 20th July 2021. We first met Finda at our mobile project in Susan's Bay in October 2020. We reunified her in March and since then she has stayed home. She was attending vocational school every day and had a renewed outlook on life. After feeling sick, she decided to visit some of her family in Kono but as soon as she arrived in Kono she died. Her cause of death is not known. Our team member Lucy travelled to Kono and attended her funeral, gave condolences on behalf of Laughter and committed we will pay for Finda's younger brother to attend school as part of her legacy. Rest well Finda!

Sallu

Sadly, when we were checking in on the old children which we do every quarter, we learnt that one of our old boys Sallu had passed away from Malaria in January. Rest in Peace Sallu.

The death of Edrisnatu

Another challenge was the death of Edrisnatu. We mentioned Edrisnatu in last year's annual report. Edrisnatu, the daughter of one of our old girls tragically died on 11th July 2020. She was only 9 months old. She died due to complications caused by HIV. Her face and feet were swollen. We had been supporting the family since Edrisnatu's birth providing monthly support for nappies, food and other essentials. We used to visit the family monthly but because of the inter district curfew ban during the height of the coronavirus, we were unable to visit her to check on her health. We were due to visit the baby, a few days after she died. Her mother has gone back to living on the streets again, so she wasn't there when her daughter died. The baby was with her father's family. The family had to leave a message with local gangsters to inform the mother that her baby had died. She came the next day, saw Edrisnatu's body and just left, but did not wait for the funeral. The mother was already going off the rails since January 2020, and with this tragedy we

are scared that she will further spiral out of control. She is not taking her tablets and her face and feet are starting to swell, another indication of the final stages of her own battle with HIV. It is a difficult time for all concerned. Edrisnatu had not had an easy life since she was born as she has been battling ill health such as TB and HIV, but now she is finally at peace and her suffering has ceased. Lucy, the head of the ICC, travelled to visit Edrisnatu's family to pass on our condolences and give a contribution for the funeral.
















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 **£100,634.11 (unrestricted). £12,121.02 (unrestricted)** was raised from Gift Aid. **£0.96 (unrestricted)** was earned through bank interest. **£16,861.20** was kindly donated by different Trusts and Foundations (**£7,400** was unrestricted while **£9,461.20** was restricted). Laughter Africa received **£7,450.23** from the Consortium for Street Children for our Girls' mobile project in Susan's Bay**.** In total, **£137,067.52** was raised in 2020/21. Laughter Africa had **£9373.33 (unrestricted)** remaining from the previous financial year. In total, **£146,440.85** was available for Laughter Africa's use in 2020/21.

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. All of our fundraising plans have sadly had to been postponed due to Coronavirus.

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 2020/21, we received no complaints related to our fundraising activity.

The trustees would also like to say a big thank you to all the organisations and trusts and foundations who gave a donation to Laughter Africa in 2020/21:

EDUCATIONAL AND GENERAL CHARITABLE TRUST

Christadelphian Samaritan Fund

HE Space children's foundation "...to raise up an astronaut"

CONSORTIUM FOR STREET CHILDREN

THE FORE

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 **£122,258.59** and there was **£20,100.19** held in the bank accounts and petty cash at the end of the financial year. A total of **£142,358.78.** Laughter Africa lost **£4,082.07** via multi currency exchange rate losses. This is to be expected due to the uncertainty of Brexit and the economic consequences of Covid-19. A total expenditure of **£126,340.66** was spent in the 2020/2021 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 for 2 years	£15,326.84
Salaries for National Staff	£20,003.35
Food	£8,688.41
Non- food items	£4,622.71
Games and entertainment Costs	£7,812.86
Staff travel costs during reunifications	£3,552.71
Educational equipment	£12,464.75
Generator fuel for mobile/ICC	£315.20
Street children travel costs	£1405.46
School fees/vocational training	£9,753.44
Medical costs for the street children	£6,922.79
Street children travel accommodation	£11.30
Volunteer costs	£3,427.93
Travel subsistence for staff	£244.80
Family support for the street children	£9,624.42
Clothing	£1,510.79
Campaign and Advocacy	£321.77
Rent Tax	£1,297.66
Toiletries	£293.96
Staff travel accommodation	£683.03
Travel subsistence for the street children	£13.55
Audit fees (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£951.40
Redundancy (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£79.56
Water supplies	£719.28
P.0. Box (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£13.19
Community Development	£248.69
Bank Charges in Sierra Leone	£600.49
Safeguarding Costs	£23.00
Hire of Premises for Mobile	£277.48
Asset (A laptop for the Admin department)	£470.46

Electricity for the ICC/mobile	£408.03
Insurance (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£203.12
Work permit and residential permit (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£288.36
Annual leave allowance for National staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£3,009.40
Medical Treatment for National Staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1,924.03
Country Registration fees	£73.42
NASSIT (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£2,036.90
End of service benefit for National Staff (legal requirement in Sierra Leone).	£455.28
Telephone costs	£372.05
PAYE (legal requirement in Sierra Leone)	£1,172.22
TOTAL	**£121,624.09**

Expenditure in the UK

Type of expenditure	**Cost (Pounds)**
Bank Charges in the UK	**£634.50**
TOTAL	**£634.50**

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 **£6,922.79.** Similarly, food is provided at both the mobile project and the Interim Care Centre. The total cost spent on food in 2020/21 was **£8,688.41.** Coupled with this is the cost of non food items, (both at mobile and the Interim Care Centre) which totalled **£4,622.71.** Non food items include things like coal, washing powder, towels, bleach and plate/cups etc….. **£7,812.86** was spent on teaching the children income generating skills/ games and entertainment including art & craft materials, hairdressing materials, cultural dance, modern dance at both mobile and the Interim Care Centre. The travel costs of the street children across all three departments was **£1405.46.** Meanwhile staff travel across all three departments reached **£3,552.71.** This travel was for the payment of business support for families, payment of school fees and reunifications. 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 **£372.05.** Meanwhile the cost of electricity for both mobile and the ICC totalled **£408.03** while **£315.20** was spent on fuel for the generator for the ICC and mobile. Water supplies for the children at the ICC and mobile totalled **£719.28** for the year.

Costs associated solely with the Outreach department

The only payment solely associated with the outreach department was **£277.48** for the rent for the mobiles in Susan's Bay and Portee. 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 **£15,326.84** for two years. Laughter Africa also paid rent tax for two years which is a legal requirement in Sierra Leone. This totalled **£1,297.66.** Other costs associated with the interim Care Centre include clothing **(£1,510.79)** and toiletries **(£293.96)** for the street children. All the other costs are listed above like medical expenses, food/non-food items and income generating skills. Without an Interim Care Centre, we would not be able to carry out our key objectives: it is crux to our work. This year we also started a 250,000 leones payment per month to the headsman in Adonkia for community development where the ICC is located. This totalled **£248.69** in 2020/21. We feel that it is important to give back to the community that we have called home for over 6 years.

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 **(£9,753.44),** educational equipment (uniforms, school bag, school shoes, stationery, equipment for vocational schools, text books) **(£12,464.75)** and family support for the most vulnerable street children once they have returned home **(£9,624.42).** This support could be a mattress, a bag of rice, a wheelchair, business support or rent. Thanks to a grant from the Fore this financial year, we were able to provide business support to 50 of our most vulnerable families, who were hardest hit by Covid-19. 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 2021, as well as the new children with whom we will work in 2021/22. For instance, in September 2021, we will be providing school support for 540 children and young people. Family reunification is a key objective of the work and paying for school support is a major factor in keeping the street children at home. Other costs associated with this strand of work include; travel accommodation for staff during the reunification process **(£683.03);** travel subsistence for staff during the reunification process **(£244.80);** accommodation for street children during the reunification process **(£11.30);** and travel subsistence for street children during the reunification process **(£13.55).**

Costs associated with the Campaigning and Advocacy department

In 2020/21, the communication and advocacy programme for Laughter Africa revolved around the International Day of the Street Child (12th April). The total cost spent on advocacy and campaigning was **£321.77.**

Costs associated with staffing

The biggest expenditure was on national staff salaries which was a total of **£20,003.35.** 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 2020/21 financial year, Laughter Africa employed 13 full 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 **(£1,924.03)** and GPA insurance **(£203.12).** Laughter Africa also paid NASSIT **(£2,036.90)** and PAYE **(£1,172.22)** 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 **(£3,009.40)** and end of service benefit **(£455.28).** Due to the introduction of the new labour law during the financial year, we unfortunately had to make one staff redundant **(£79.56)**. This was because of the increases in salaries and annual leave allowance which was mandated within the law. We had no choice but to comply but because of limited funds, one staff had to leave. The new increases within the law has not only led to an increase in annual leave allowance and salaries but also had a knock on effect on NASSIT and NRA payments too. The staffs' work has been greatly enhanced by the work of volunteers. During this financial year Laughter Africa had a total of 15 Sierra Leonean volunteers. We needed extra volunteers this year due to the Girls mobile project in Susan's Bay. Costs associated with the volunteers totalled **£3,427.93.** At the time of writing this report (August 2021), Laughter Africa currently has 3 volunteers; Humu, Emmy and Komba. Safeguarding costs reached **£23.00** this financial year as all volunteers have to receive a police clearance before they are able to work at Laughter Africa.

Country registration and other associated fees

As we paid country registration fees in the last financial year, we had no need to pay again this year as registration is every two years. However, Laughter Africa still have to pay registration charges to Freetown City Council and Western Rural District Council yearly. The total cost of re-registration with these councils cost **£73.42.** To be re-registered as a charity in Sierra Leone, an audit must be completed. The audit costs were **£951.40.** 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 **£288.36.** To be recognised as a registered charity in Sierra Leone, one must have a PO Box. Laughter Africa has one at a cost of **£13.19** per year.

Assets

A laptop was purchased in January 2021 for the Administration department as the old laptop that they were using broke. The department need a laptop for all the administrative tasks of the organisation. The cost of the laptop was **£470.46.**

Bank charges in Sierra Leone

The bank charges in Sierra Leone were **£600.49.**

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 **£634.50.**

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:

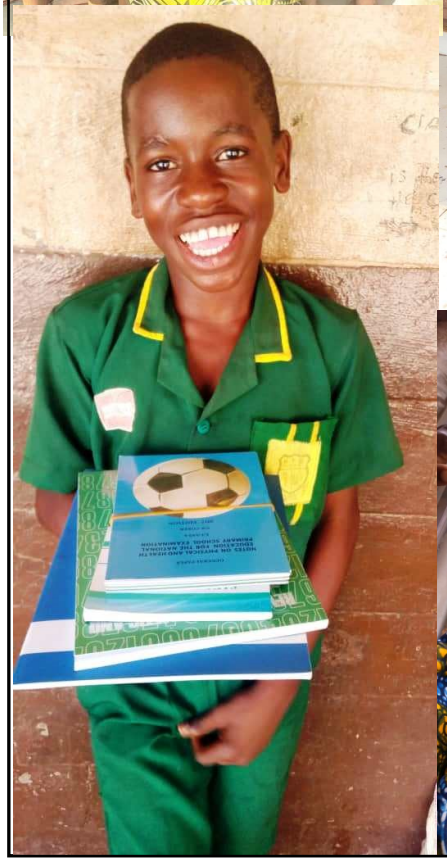
The objective of the investment policy is to maintain high liquidity while ensuring maximum security by avoiding risk to capital. This is to comply with Laughter Africa's ethical standards and to achieve the best possible return within these limiting parameters. To meet this objective, the charity plans 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

Laughter Africa will continue to carry out its usual outreach work, Interim Care and Family Tracing and Reunification throughout the year. We have set targets for the year. **The Outreach Department** aims to work with a minimum of **200** new children through the mobile projects by the end of December 2022. **The Interim Care Centre Department** aims to work with **120** new children in the Interim Care Centre. **The Family Tracing and Reunification Department** aims to pay school fees for the children with whom we have previously worked (between 2015 and 2021) who are still at home in addition to the street children with whom we will work with in 2021/2022. Here are the more specialised future plans we have for each department:

Advocacy and Communication

The plan that we are most excited to be delivering in the upcoming year ahead is our sexual violence initiative as part of the 'Network for Street Children Sierra Leone' focusing on street children and sexual violence. It is a key component of the 'Lef mi bodi' campaign. The 'Network for Street children' will be advocating on behalf on any girl or boy living on the streets who experiences sexual abuse. It is usual for the children living on the streets not to take any further action after they have been assaulted. We want to change this, and ensure they feel safe and supported to access relevant services and achieve justice. We will hold workshops to educate the children on what sexual assault is, the support available and what to do if they or a friend should do if they are a survivor of sexual assault E.g. no washing, keep the clothes that they were wearing.

We have created a process for street children to report sexual assault and will be appointing community advocates in areas with the highest numbers of street children. The role of these advocates is to be the person whom the street children can approach if they have been assaulted. The community advocates will then call one of the Network members who will take the street child to the police and then to the Rainbo Centre for medical examination. One of our social workers will accompany the girls or boys the whole time. Our job is to walk alongside them on their journey to justice. The lawyers at Dom Bosco will then follow up each case with the police. We will ensure DNA testing is carried out on any forensic evidence gathered. There has been no DNA testing machine in Sierra Leone until very recently. It is privately owned and each test costs 3 million leones.

We hope to work within ten communities over the next year including : Funkai, Tombo, Portee, Grafton, Waterloo, Lumley, Aberdeen, Congo water, Culvert in Clein Town, Susan's Bay. We will focus on one area at a time. The training will start in Funkia in October 2021. The community advocates will be trained by the Network so that they are able to respond to any problems in a professional manner. We hope to train key community members (Imams, Pastors, priests, youth leaders, teachers and headsmen) and invite them to help communicate the help that is available. We hope that more prosecutions of perpetrators will serve as a message to any future offenders that sexual assault against street children is taken seriously and has severe consequences, so that we see a reduction in the number sexual abuse offences.

Staff from the different network members had a fantastic training session about sexual violence presented by the 'Rainbo Initiative' on 22nd September 2021. After the training session, the network members wrote the resources and

planned the workshops for the community and the street children. James (the founder) spoke at a Press conference on 24th September as part of the launch of the new campaign, 'Lef mi Bodi.' 18 different media houses were present including Television. Our target by the end of March 2022 is to have trained 20 community members in each community which in total will be 200 people across 6 months. We aim to train 50 street children in each community which in total will be 500 young people within 6 months. By the end of 6 months, we hope to have 20 specially trained community advocates. Our hope is that by the end of March 2022, we will have helped around 25 girls report their attacks to the police. One of our old volunteers, Francisco, is now working at the Humans Right Commission and he has offered to follow up any gender-based cases reported to the police to make sure that appropriate action is being undertaken.

Mobile

Our five-year plan for Laughter Africa in Sierra Leone is to have a mobile project in each community where clusters of street children can be located. We would prefer to work more in the communities and have earmarked the following areas for future mobile projects Grafton, Tombo, Waterloo, Funkai, Lumley, Aberdeen/Cockle Bay, Town, Portee and Congo Water. We want to be at the heart of the communities so that all the street children know Laughter Africa and not just the street children in the city centre. Presently, there is no funding to support more than one mobile so we plan on rotating our mobile project via one community at a time. After every six months to one year, we will move onto a new community. We will replicate the current programme of activities which has already occurred in Susan's Bay and Portee. Through these mobile projects in the community we can also carry out prevention work and a lot more community sensitisaton. In 2021/2022, we plan to run a mobile project in Waterloo followed by a mobile project in Funkia.

ICC

The ICC was bursting at the seams in August 2021 as the young people for whom we pay school brought their school reports. One worrying thing from the reports is that some of our more serious girls were absent during the third term. It turns out they went to the village as part of 'secret society' business or 'bondo.' Known in the Western world as Female Genital Mutilation. Since learning of this we have contacted the girls involved to provide them with support. It gave us a frightening reminder that this brutal practice unfortunately still happens in Sierra Leone. In the year ahead, we plan on educating all our children and families on the dangers of FGM in the ICC and during reunifications.

FTR

In August 2021, when we saw the reports of some of the children we supported, we were disappointed by their attendance figures as they were absent so often. One girl didn't even know the name of her school. Similarly, we discovered that some of the attendance figures were just invented by the teachers. For instance, we visited one girl in Grafton throughout November/December 2020 to provide extra lessons and textbooks but whenever the social worker went to the school, she was absent. But her school report said that she had had no absences. This has made us review the FTR programme. Our social worker, Lamin, will be visiting every school in Freetown monthly to check on attendance. Each school will be visited ten times between October 2021 and July 2022. If a child is absent any more

than three times, when Lamin visits, then they will no longer receive school support.

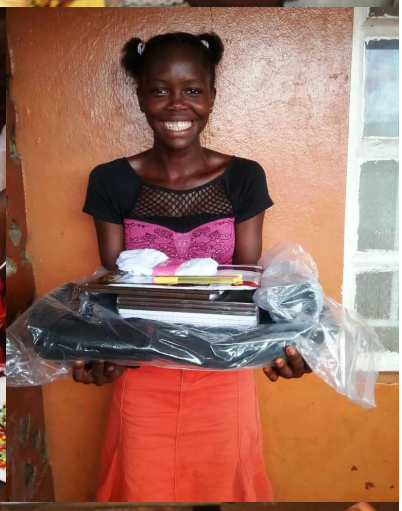
Prevention

We also hope to carry out more prevention based work in 2021/2022. Currently our focus has been on response and reintegration work. In 2021/2022, we would like to carry out similar performances like the one we did in Susan's Bay in December 2020 but in other areas which have a big contingent of street children too. This will be dependent upon coronavirus restrictions.














G. DECLARATION

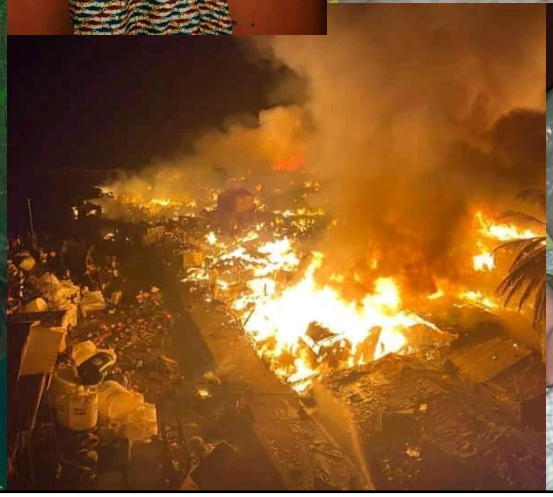








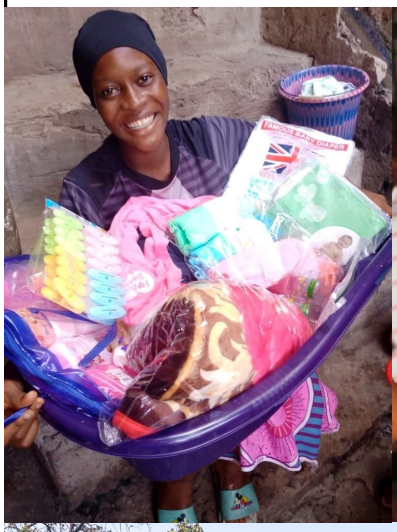




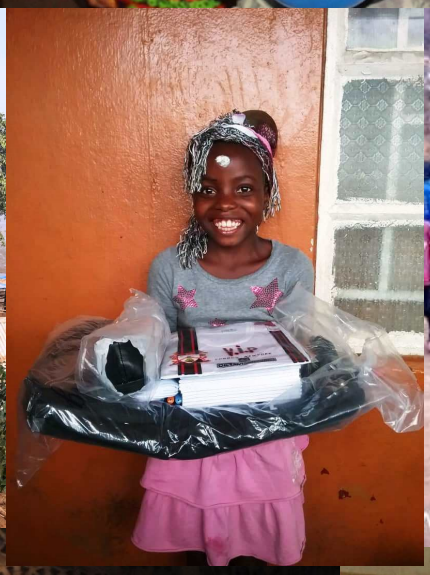

The trustees declare that they have approved the trustees' report above.

Signed on behalf of the charity's trustees

Signature(s)	James Tyrrell	
Full name(s)	**James Francis Robert Tyrrell**	**Mark Quentin Neal**
Position (e.g. chair or secretary)	**Chairperson**	**Secretary**
Date	**08/10/2021**	**08/10/2021**










CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Laughter Africa	1154712	CC16a

Receipts and payments accounts

For the period from	1/04/2020	To	31/03/2021

Section A Receipts and payments

	Unrestricted funds to the nearest £	Restricted funds to the nearest £	Endowment funds to the nearest £	Total funds to the nearest £	Last year to the nearest £
A1 Receipts					
Donations	100634.11'	-	-	100,634.11'	85923.82'
Gift Aid	12121.02'	-	-	12,121.02'	9399.81'
Trusts and Foundations	7400'	9,461.20'	-	16,861.20'	8000'
Bank Interest	0.96'	-	-	0.96'	150.05'
Consortium for Street Children		7,450.23'	-	7,450.23'	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total *(Gross income for AR)*	120,156.09'	16,911.43'	-	137,067.52'	103,473.68'
A2 Asset and investment sales, (see table).					
	-	-	-	-	
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	-	-	-	-	
Total receipts	120,156.09'	16,911.43'	-	137,067.52'	103,473.68'
A3 Payments					
Charitable Activities	102,690.31'	16,911.43'	-	120,072.20'	98,670.25'
Bank charges (UK)	634.50'	-	-	634.50'	976.50'
Bank charges (Sierra Leone)	600.49'	-	-	600.49'	627.42'
Governance	951.40'	-	-	951.40'	1124.16'
Multi currency exchange rate loss	4,082.07 '	-	-	4082.07'	2149.97'
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
	-	-	-	-	-
Sub total	108,958.77'	16,911.43'	-	125,870.20'	103,548.30'
A4 Asset and investment purchases, (see table)					
Laptop for the Admin Department	470.46'	-	-	470.46'	
	-	-	-	-	
Sub total	470.46'	-	-	470.46'	-
Total payments	109,429.23'	16,911.43'	-	126,340.66'	103,548.30'
Net of receipts/(payments)	10,726.86'	-	-	10,726.86'	-74.62
A5 Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-	-
A6 Cash funds last year end	9373.33'	-	-	9373.33'	
Cash funds this year end	20,100.19'	-	-	20,100.19'	9373.33'

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

B1 Cash funds

Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
	Funds in Sierra Leone	1,428.84'	-	-
	Funds in the UK	13,671.35'	-	-
	Reserves	5000'	-	-
	Total cash funds	20,100.19'	-	-
	(agree balances with receipts and payments account(s))	OK	OK	OK

B2 Other monetary assets

Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
None	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-
	-	-	-

B3 Investment assets

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
None		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use

Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
Laptop for the Admin Department		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-
		-	-

B5 Liabilities

Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
None		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	
		-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees

Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
James Tyrrell	James Francis Robert Tyrrell	**6/10/2021**
	Mark Quentin Neal	**6/10/2021**

In accordance with the Charitable Incorporated Organisations (General) Regulations 2012 the Trustees confirm that:

a) the CIO has given no guarantees, where any potential liability under the guarantee is outstanding at the date of the statement of assets and liabilities;
and b) the CIO does not have any debts outstanding at the date of the statement of assets and liabilities which are secured by an express charge on any of the assets assets of the CIO

CHARITY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of	**Laughter Africa**		
On accounts for the year ended	**31st March 2021**	**Charity no (if any)**	**1154712**
Set out on pages	**1 - 2**		

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended **31 / 03 / 2021.**

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (other than that disclosed below *) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: Peter Kamaray & Co. **Date:** 11/10/2021

Name: Peter Kamaray

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any): **The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Sierra Leone**

Address: **Peter Kamaray & Co**
20 Wilberforce Street
Freetown, Sierra Leone

PETER KAMARAY & CO.
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS
20 WILBERFORCE STREET
FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE
SIGN
DATE

Section B	Disclosure
	Only complete if the examiner needs to highlight matters of concern (see CC32, Independent examination of charity accounts: directions and guidance for examiners).
Give here brief details of any items that the examiner wishes to disclose.	

PETER KAMARAY & CO
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS
GEORGE STREET
FREETOWN, SIERRA LEONE