

# WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SIERRA LEONE?



It is always difficult to find a clear answer to this question. Statistics are hard to find and the government struggles in many areas. A recent newspaper article probably got very close to the truth when it said the hospitals in Freetown are not coping. The official figures since the first outbreak of Covid-19 show just over 6,000 cases. But in a country where there is very little testing it's unlikely to be correct. The Connaught hospital is short of oxygen and short of ventilators.

Patients' families are being asked to supply the oxygen but for most it is unaffordable. Vaccination figures are less than 10%. The government enforced curfew may be reducing the spread but many ignore it. The markets which are the main source of trade have been closed but the shops stay open. Trade with other countries has reduced considerably and this has increased the price of rice by 30% in a few weeks. Before the increase the majority of the population were living in food poverty. The food poverty is getting worse as costs rise.

What are we doing? Through the Outreach Fund and support from Living Water Africa we have completed three wells in 2021. Two of these are in villages where there were no wells previously and the villagers used river water. The third (pictured with Pastor John) is in Kafanta and located adjacent to the school. The project with the drilling machine was less successful and we are giving the machine to a Christian Charity called Mariatu's Hope where it will be used to deepen and restore polluted wells. The project is by no means over and once they have the equipment operational, they will train our team.

We have sent £100 to help buy rice for Pastor John and the other 12 pastors of Divine Grace Ministry. This will buy 4 bags of rice. One bag can feed a family for two months. We are hoping to continue to send £100 every six weeks. We also purchased rice and groundnut seed which the pastors and their wives have planted. Each year a proportion of the crop will be replanted so that their families have on-going support. We sent money so that the children of Howa, a lady, can be clothed, have food and go to school. We had been helping Howa but she died leaving three children. The children are now with Pastor Johns extended family in Kafanta.

Our friend James at Practical Tools Initiative continues his good work and has challenged the government over corruption and the pollution caused by gold mining. The government have made an official response with a press release outlining the corrective action they will be taking. Please pray for James, he is making a significant difference but at considerable personal risk.

Most importantly the Pastors continue to share the gospel in the villages in Tonka Limba region. Pastor Isaac who has a wife under the law of Sierra Leone recently had a formal Christian wedding. Pastor Amos is planning his Christian wedding and we are pleased to see this commitment. Travel between the villages is still allowed and Pastor John oversees the outlying ministry. Please pray for these pastors as Covid leaves them a little more isolated. Many of them have a strong faith but lack the knowledge and some are still struggling to read.

*Steve Baker*