



We have been supporting the work of St George Foundation since the Ebola crisis of 2015 left thousands of children orphaned and homeless on the streets of Freetown. The immediate danger of Ebola has thankfully passed but the conditions for hundreds of children in the city are little better.

From their founder, Philip Dean (September 2015 Newsletter):

Life for most people in Sierra Leone is now slowly returning to normal. St George is continuing to support children going back to school and we are currently assisting 20 children to proceed through exams and interview stage to Senior Secondary School. By the end of August we had helped 200 children return to school in the region of Port Loko; taken in 360 children into the centre prior to helping them back into the community, and assisted a further 140 children directly into foster care. A further 300 families in the Western Rural area have been provided with emergency packs of food and clothing. In addition, we have recently taken a further 50 children into the centre and we currently expect to continue our focus on children affected by Ebola until at least the end of the year.



Twelve months on, the orphanage is in crisis once again but for a different reason.

Philip writes:

It seems to be that since the Ebola outbreak the economy of Sierra Leone has not yet recovered and life has remained hard with not only less money around but also prices rising of all the basics. This has left many families struggling. At the same time the awareness of St George Foundation has become more prominent and we have found our role changing without us being prepared.

We still have focus on caring for homeless children and that remains our major area, but we have been receiving a steady flow of abandoned infants (sometimes just days old). We have never turned these babies away as they are clearly extremely vulnerable - but we have been struggling in terms of their health. Many have come in sick and or have become ill and these very young children can go downhill very quickly and sadly we have lost several children in the past months under the age of one.

If we turn the infants away their options and chances are very limited and so we feel we cannot do that. Our emergency medical/hospital bills have rocketed. Apart from the expense, we also have to train the staff to handle babies and to recognise early signs of sickness to seek treatment as quickly as possible. In emergencies we have a private hospital just 15 minutes away and in life or death situations we have always used that but the cost can easily be £30 or £40/day so a ten day stay is OK if it is the occasional child but if it's constantly happening is too much. There is government hospital in Freetown but due to traffic can be 3 or 4 hours away and that typically costs £70 or £80 for the entire stay (the standards are very different though).

I am sure that all our supporters and all our staff want to do the best we can to protect all our children and accepting these infant deaths is not an option. When we did our budgeting we were not planning for these medical expenses and we were quite alarmed recently to realise that on the present trajectory we will run be unable to operate fully in early 2017. If anyone feels that they can make a donation now just to help us get back into a reasonable condition we would very much welcome it. In the longer term we will have to make a real effort to find new funding

As a church, the PCC make a regular donation and many of us contribute personally so that the work of the foundation can continue ... but it's not enough ...

For those who may be wondering, St George do not receive funds from national campaigns or from UK Government for their vital work. 97% of our donations is spent on the actual project; this is achieved by very low UK overheads and no paid staff in the UK.

<http://www.stgeorgefoundation.org.uk/aboutus>

Can you help? Even if you are not able to contribute today, please pray for these children, for the staff, the organisation and for financial support ... and spread the word ... of the plight of orphans and abandoned children left on the streets of Freetown - and the difference St George Foundation can make.