

Welcome to the 10th Friends of Nixon newsletter. In these unprecedented times we bring you updates and news from the Nixon Memorial Hospital, Segbwema, Sierra Leone and the projects that Friends of Nixon (FoN) have recently been supporting thanks to generous donations to the charity.

In this newsletter...

- Covid-19 response
- Solar and electricity update
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Covid-19 in Sierra Leone: FoN Response

As the global pandemic continued to spread, it wasn't long before news of cases in Sierra Leone were reported. On the 30th April 2020, after just a handful of coronavirus infections had been recorded, Sierra Leone was placed under lockdown including restrictions to movement, school closures and border closures. Patients and staff have had to face the potential consequences of both the disease itself and of the measures put in place to combat its spread. In Segbwema, where the majority of people live day to day and hand to mouth, lockdown measures can have a major impact upon livelihoods and food poverty increases.

In response to a request from the hospital, Friends of Nixon has funded a Covid-19 support project to provide additional hand sanitizer and liquid soap for the hospital. *(Continued on page 2)*



Above – staff and patients’ families organising distribution of rice and oil

Below – Dr. Missa inspecting the delivery of hand soap



We have also funded a package of food aid to ensure patients, vulnerable individuals and staff have access to appropriate nutrition during this time. Further to this initial quick response additional donations for food aid have been provided by Methodist Churches in the UK.

Thankfully, the hospital has a level of surplus Personal Protective Equipment following the Ebola crisis. Currently this is being used together with procedures relating to infection prevention and control learnt during the Ebola epidemic.

Although there are currently signs of stability in the region with the re-opening of borders, much uncertainty about future waves of the pandemic remain. There undoubtedly will be multiple challenges ahead including ensuring patient confidence in the healthcare system. Our commitment to the hospital, its patients and its staff remains steadfast, and whilst some specific project work has been inevitably delayed, we are pleased to report progress and plans in a number of areas.



The hospital learnt many lessons from the Ebola outbreak in 2014 that have stood them in good stead to deal with the pandemic.

Continuation of Essential Medicines provision

Friends of Nixon made a commitment in 2015 to fund a proportion of the budget of essential medicines for the hospital to ensure that vital medication was readily available on the hospital site to treat the sickest patients as quickly as possible. It also ensured that quality and approved drugs were available to patients at a reasonable cost and reduced the need for patients to acquire the required medication from unsolicited suppliers selling medication of dubious quality. The initial commitment was for a four year period which has recently been extended for a further two years. As this partnership has developed, the hospital and the charity have worked together to source essential good quality medications at appropriate cost and now FoN has a direct account with a reputable whole-sale pharmacy in Freetown. Funds are sent quarterly directly to the pharmacy, an order is placed and collected by the hospital staff. (Photos: Upper Dispensary of Pharmacy inside and outside view)



Focus on... The Lab

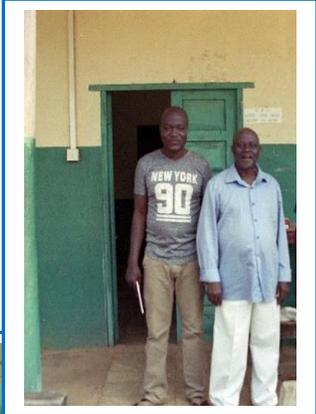
The hospital laboratory is an integral part of identifying and determining courses of treatment for patients presenting at the hospital. Trustee Michaela Fitzpatrick-Milton, a biomedical scientist, who has spent time working with the laboratory team at the hospital and continues to support from the UK, describes the working and challenges faced.

There are currently three technicians working in the Nixon hospital lab, Philip Fofana, the lab manager, Morrison Anthony and Moijueh Musa, both laboratory technicians. Testing in the lab includes; haemoglobin measurement for diagnosing anaemia, MPS testing for malaria, the Widal test for Typhoid, glucose for diabetes and hypoglycaemia, sputum staining for tuberculosis, urine dipstick analysis, urine and stool microscopy, and blood grouping for blood transfusions. All of these tests use relatively basic equipment and involve either going to the patient's bedside to collect samples and perform the tests, or patients coming into the lab to have samples taken. Lab technician training in Sierra Leone covers everything from phlebotomy and blood transfusion, through to biochemistry and even microbiology.

Although resources are limited, the lab staff make a huge difference to the treatment of so many patients in Segbwema. One of the most commonly requested tests is haemoglobin measurement on the HemoCue point of care analyser. This helps to assess whether or not a blood transfusion is required in patients presenting with anaemia, often as a result of malaria. There was a fault with the HemoCue machine whilst I was visiting the lab which meant we had to resort to spotting patients' blood onto filter paper and using the haemoglobin colour chart to estimate the haemoglobin level which can be very subjective and prone to inaccuracies. Fortunately, Friends of Nixon were able to replace the HemoCue which enabled the lab to measure Haemoglobin quickly and accurately again.

Many of these tests wouldn't be considered diagnostically accurate in the UK. For example, a positive malaria MPS result would usually be confirmed by inspection of a thin blood film under a microscope. However due to limitations in sourcing slides to prepare blood films the Nixon lab are not always able to provide this service. Often equipment is donated to hospital labs like Nixon, either from other laboratories in surrounding areas or from other countries. Although this can seem like a helpful gesture, implementing and maintaining such equipment can be problematic. Not only can it be difficult to source the appropriate reagents and consumables, but in the event that equipment breaks down there often aren't sufficient resources to troubleshoot or fix faulty instruments. The blood fridge used to store donated blood units for transfusions has been broken for some time, meaning that there is currently nowhere to refrigerate and store donated blood.

As a result, every time a transfusion is required, family members have their blood group tested and after finding a match, units of blood are taken from the donor and immediately transfused into the patient. The lab contacted an engineer a month prior to my visit, but due to travel problems, cost and a lack of trained engineers no one was able to fix it. Realising the barriers faced in a lab like Nixon reminds me of our privilege in the UK in having access to free healthcare resources and such reliable laboratory testing facilities.



Project Updates

Community Health

Friends of Nixon remains committed to supporting the development of health in the community. Following on from many years of funding the construction of over 100 latrines in many villages surrounding Segbwema, the focus has now turned to ensuring safe, clean drinking water can be provided in the villages that are in most need. The hospital's Public Health team plan to oversee the construction of two wells per year in villages identified in their needs assessment. Construction of the first two wells as a pilot project funded by Friends of Nixon will begin as soon as the rainy season permits.

The hospital also applied to Friends of Nixon last year for funding to construct new latrines for patients on the hospital site. These are now almost complete. See picture below for progress to date. Further pictures will be added to our website once they are completed.



Above: New VIP latrine on hospital site

Below left: The proposed new ultrasound scanner destined for the hospital

Below right: Kadiatu with newborn baby with Midwife Cecelia Kabba



Support and developments for maternity services

Maternity services are an integral part of what the hospital offers and the hospital's inclusion in the Government's Free Healthcare Scheme for pregnant women has increased the hospital's numbers of women choosing to come to hospital both to deliver their babies and for antenatal care.

Dr Robert Burnie, Chair of FoN and an Obstetric Registrar has worked with the hospital to identify two main areas of development that could dramatically improve outcomes of mothers and their babies. The first is to introduce basic ultrasound scanning. This would include providing the hospital with an ultrasound scanner and training the midwives to be able to use it to elicit a range of useful clinical information e.g. to identify twin pregnancies, breech babies, problems relating to the placenta and to date the pregnancy to ensure the mother knows when to come to hospital to deliver their baby. The second is to focus on family planning and to begin a needs assessment of family planning methods currently adopted by the women of Segbwema. Dr. Burnie planned to spend several months at the hospital delivering a structured training programme, teaching the midwives and Dr Missa how to use the ultrasound scanner. Unfortunately due to the coronavirus pandemic this has been delayed until later in the year.

MCSL and Government of Sierra Leone partnership

The Methodist Church in Sierra Leone (MCSL) and the Sierra Leone Government are continuing their discussions on how their collaboration to oversee the running of the hospital will work. Some progress has been made, for example, a number of staff members have been allocated Government PIN codes, which means they are now paid directly by the Government. We will update our website as further news comes to light. Friends of Nixon continues to build upon its good working relationship with MCSL and is in regular communications with Bishop Mark Ngobeh.

Education and training

Friends of Nixon continues to commit to the training and professional development needs of the hospital. The hospital management are regularly invited to make recommendations for the training needs of the staff at all levels across the hospital. This year two nurses have been undertaking training to upgrade their SECHN (State-Enrolled Community Health Nurse) to SRN (State Registered Nurse). Aminata Swaray has now completed her first year of study and continues into her second and we are pleased to announce that Rachael Koroma has now completed her qualification and has returned to put her training to use on the wards at the hospital. (See photo to the right)



Nursing School News

The Nursing School at Nixon Hospital has now seen its final cohort of SECHN students complete their training. The Nursing School remains in negotiation with Njala University to be able to offer the State-Registered Nurse qualification. Once appropriately qualified staff have been employed this will begin to be offered at the hospital.

Photos left: Trustee Elizabeth Conteh teaching final year cohort of SECHN students during her visit last year and Nurse Rachael treating patient on ward. Photo below: solar panel field

Hospital Power Supply

Several months ago Friends of Nixon commissioned a comprehensive assessment of the electricity supply on the whole of the hospital site. Since its re-development after the civil war, a range of electrical infrastructure equipment has been installed at the hospital, including generators and solar systems installed by different partner organisations. An increase in the use of technology and medical electrical equipment over the last few years, including items such as oxygen concentrators, together with upgrades or repairs for theatre equipment, had resulted in both capacity issues and technical issues regarding the electrical supply. It seemed a logical step to assess the system as a whole in order to plan and prioritise improvements.



A 3 day visit to the hospital produced an extremely detailed report containing a range of recommendations from minor alterations that were able to be corrected immediately, to the need for a new generator and adjustments to increase the output from the solar panels. Friends of Nixon with MCSL are supporting the hospital to start to put in place these recommendations over the coming year. We have committed to sourcing and funding a new replacement back-up generator capable of supplying the whole compound when needed.

Finances – How it works

Robert Dixon, Treasurer of Friends of Nixon gives an overview of what happens from receiving donations to applications from the hospital and the collaboration process between the hospital and the charity.

Financial Arrangements with Nixon Memorial Hospital

As a Trust our raison d'être is to provide charitable financial support to Nixon Memorial Hospital, Segbwema, in the form of grants towards projects or services that enable the provision of good healthcare and welfare to the mainly rural population of its catchment area, in the remote Eastern Province of Sierra Leone.

Applications:

The hospital management submit funding applications to Friends of Nixon. The trustees, using our agreed assessment criteria, consider whether they can support the request. Sometimes clarification or further details are required before a decision is reached and if the application meets the trusts criteria the grant is awarded. Our trustees have a variety of professional skills all with a connection to the hospital or the area. A good proportion are from the Sierra Leonean diaspora living and working in the UK and medical professionals who have served at the hospital. This enables the Trust to relate directly to the situation and better understand the proposals being submitted. As trustees we have every confidence in our partners at the hospital and a number of our trustees visit on a regular and voluntary basis and verify the projects we have funded.

How funds are dispersed:

Where possible funds are transferred directly to the suppliers of equipment, drugs or services but where this is not possible funds are transferred to the Trust's bank account in Kenema, Sierra Leone. Three local signatories appointed by the Trust, disperse, scrutinise and manage the account. Periodic statements are received by the Trust and are matched against transfers we have made.

Third Party Requests:

In the past the Trust has been approached by individuals and organisations asking it to use our accounts to transfer money to individuals or to the hospital to fund something they have identified as being a topical or relevant need. Due to our required governance processes and application system to ensure priorities and projects are locally identified and implemented, such requests are not usually possible. However, we are aware that donors may have a desire to support a particular area of work the charity is undertaking with the hospital. Although it is preferable to operate without ring-fenced funds, we are happy to discuss requests to allocate donations towards specific continuing projects identified by the hospital for which funding has been agreed.

Further information:

If you would like to know more about our financial management or have any specific questions do not hesitate to contact me by email or post: robert.dixon@hotmail.com or c/o 11a Denbigh Road, London W11 2SJ.

I should emphasise that both in the UK and in Sierra Leone all of us are unpaid volunteers.

Robert Dixon, Hon. Treasurer



Thank you for your continued support!

We are immensely grateful for the generous support we receive from individuals, trusts, groups and churches. We could not continue to support the hospital without you!

If you wish to donate either on a regular basis by **standing order** or a **one off donation** please contact our treasurer Robert Dixon *11a Denbigh Road, London, W11 2SJ*/Robert.dixon@hotmail.com

OR

donate directly to Friend of Nixon Memorial Hospital, Lloyds Bank Sort code 30-97-41 Acc. No. 02687413

and please remember to **Gift Aid** if you are eligible (see form below).

Please refer to our website soon for how to make an **online donation**, we are currently updating our online donation provider.

For general enquiries or to discuss the possibility of a trustee speaking on the charity's work please contact our Chair Dr Robert Burnie - Robert.burnie@doctors.org.uk

Gift Aid

Gift Aid enables charities such as Friends of Nixon to claim an additional 25% of a donation made.

Whether you wish to make a one-off donation or set up a standing order and are eligible to, please ensure you have completed a Gift Aid Declaration Form, either using the one below or contacting our Treasurer Robert Dixon for further assistance.



SINGLE GIFT AID DECLARATION

I confirm that I am a UK taxpayer and authorise *Friends of Nixon Memorial Hospital* to reclaim the tax through Gift Aid on my donation of £.....

Title:..... Surname:.....

Forename(s).....

Address:.....

.....

..... Post Code:.....

Signed:.....

Dated:.....

To qualify for Gift Aid what you pay in Income Tax or Capital Gains Tax must be at least equal to the amount that will be reclaimed this tax year.

Email: Robert.dixon@hotmail.com

Post: Friends of Nixon Attn. R. Dixon, 11a Denbigh Road London W11 2SJ

Come and join us!

Do you know anyone looking for a new challenge?

Friends of Nixon continues to look for voluntary medics to spend time at the hospital.

If you know anyone that might be interested or are able to display the advertisement please get in contact!

See the advertisement on the final page.



Left: Midwife Cecelia and Nurse Betty



Right: Dr. Tamba Missa

Nixon Memorial Hospital, Segbwema, Sierra Leone

Medical Opportunity Advertisement: Medical Doctor

Applications are sought for the post of a Medical Doctor at Nixon Memorial Hospital, Segbwema, Sierra Leone. A minimum of 2 years post-graduate medical experience is required (Completion of UK foundation Programme or equivalent) together with full registration with the GMC or equivalent. Experience in obstetrics, paediatrics and emergency medicine is desirable as is some experience of working in a low resource setting or an insight into tropical medicine.

About the hospital: Nixon Memorial Hospital is a mission hospital in rural eastern Sierra Leone, approximately 330km from Freetown. It serves an estimated population of 30,000 providing daily outpatient and 24 hour inpatient care across 5 wards including paediatrics and maternity. It has a functioning operating theatre and laboratory offering basic investigations. It continues on a programme of rehabilitation and progress after its destruction during the Sierra Leone civil conflict which ended in 2002. It was briefly closed during the Ebola Epidemic which impacted significantly upon the hospital, as it did all health services in Sierra Leone. However since the end of the epidemic the hospital has continued to make progress in providing much needed care to its local population and has benefited from a solar project giving the hospital 24 hour electricity. It is currently staffed by one Sierra Leonean doctor and a Community Health Officer supported by a small nursing team voluntary overseas medics. Nixon Memorial Nursing school is attached to hospital and students undertake their clinical experience at the hospital.

The role: Will include provision of inpatient and outpatient clinical care across medical specialities, although there is scope for the successful applicant to additionally focus and potentially lead care on an area of particular interest.

The opportunity will enable the successful candidate to:

- Gain exposure to, and develop skills in managing, common tropical diseases.
- Improve clinical skills and decision making in a low resource setting with minimal laboratory investigations or imaging support.
- Gain leadership skills and management skills through working with a multi-disciplinary team of nurses, midwives and students and being part of the hospital's management team, overseeing the day to day running of the hospital and its strategic development.
- Develop teaching skills and experience through working alongside the attached Nixon Memorial Nursing School.
- Develop clinical improvement processes, protocol or guidelines in their area of interest.
- Play a role in guiding and assisting the re-development of the hospital to meet the needs of its community.

Remuneration: The post is voluntary. A bursary of up to £3000 can be awarded to the successful candidate to contribute towards flights and living costs. Accommodation is provided free of charge as is transport from Freetown to the hospital on arrival.

Registration with the Medical and Dental Council of Sierra Leone is required and can be organized on arrival in country on production of original medical qualifications.

Duration: Applicants should be able to commit for a minimum of 6 months.

Start date: Flexible

Opportunities may also be available for nursing and midwifery professionals, especially those with an interest in education or management.

To apply or for further information please contact Dr Robert Burnie

Email: Robert.burnie@doctors.org.uk Mobile: (+44) 07742765819

(Chair, Friends of Nixon Memorial Hospital, Segbwema, Sierra Leone (UK registered charity no.1145455))