

Inside freetown



Edition 36

December 2013



Picture: **Matthias Graben**

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GREETINGS FROM FREETOWN

This week a child has asked me whether God really became man. The quizzical face showed a certain astonishment and at the same time asked for explanation. This child shook me up again and made me wonder how little God's incarnation amazes me today. Much becomes routine and habit.

This is why the Christmas preparations are so important, leading us back to the centre of our faith. For this time I wish you to be able to look at Christmas through the eyes of a child feeling their amazement.

Lothar Graben

FAMBUL: RELEASE OF ALL CHILDREN POSTULATED

The prison conditions are horrible not complying in any way with international standards. On the occasion of a panel discussion at the British Council of Freetown Brother Lothar demanded to release all the children and adolescents from prison. "Even your own laws prohibit

the imprisonment of children together with adults," the religious said. According to internal calculations 300 children are currently among the 1,756 prisoners. The prison was built for 350 people. Fambul offers both pastoral and social projects at the prison.



Picture made inside Pademba Prison by **Fernando Moleres**



Our Premium Partner



FIDEL GÖTZ STIFTUNG
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VASTENAKTIE

AGAINST THE RECRUITMENT OF CHILD SOLDIERS

Don Bosco Fambul is known for its countrywide singular and innovative projects, be they on the streets, at prisons or the Girls Shelter. The Salesians of Freetown reach out for those most in need. Via mobile social work, family- and telephone counselling as well as rehabilitation Don Bosco Fambul is always where the problems are, inside young people's needs. Now another ambitious and – this time even – worldwide singular project follows: Together with the "Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative"

from Canada another preventive programme to impede the recruitment of child soldiers has started. The five-year project is a pilot scheme in Sierra Leone and, if it turns out to be successful, supposed to be transferred to other countries.

The project comprises several components. The focus is on the education and (advanced) training of policemen, soldiers and all the others employed in the field of state security. Part of this group are also the officials at the prisons. This year it was possible to attract top personnel to two extensive seminars. Don Bosco Fambul contributes to the training units with their experience and knowledge in the area of the protection of children and adolescents. Another focus is on the awareness raising of children. For this purpose teaching materials on the topic child soldiers were prepared. Don Bosco Fambul took on responsibility for this field and was able to fall back on its own well-working infrastructure. Furthermore various radio and TV- discussions are going to be broadcasted. Questions and comments can be handed in via the crisis line. In addition, the Don Bosco Bus will be on the road in the interior of the country with several information stands. To start with, the project is to be implemented until 2017; should it turn out to be clearly successful, it will be transferred to other countries.



PEOPLE WHO IS

Roméo Alain Dallaire

In his position as general of the Canadian troops Romeo Dallaire served as commander of the United Nations peacekeeping force UNAMIR in Ruanda. In 1994 the worst genocide after the Second World War took place in Ruanda, the genocide against the Tutsi. Within 100 days between 800,000 and 1,000,000 people were killed. In a subsequent report, Dallaire stated that he might have stopped the genocide of the Hutu against the Tutsi with a force of 5,000 men. As far as possible Dallaire tried to make the presence of his troops felt during the genocide and strived to create security zones to a limited extent despite the restraint imposed upon him. Suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder after his experiences in Ruanda, Dallaire was discharged from the Canadian Army in 2000. Convinced that he was partly to blame for the genocide in Ruanda, Dallaire attempted to commit suicide twice. Published in 2005 by Romeo Dallaire: *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*.



Supporters of the Pilot Project of the Romeo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative are the respective directors and heads of the following institutions: Police Sierra Leone, Military Sierra Leone, Security Officer State House, University Toronto, and Don Bosco Fambul.



Training successfully finished. 60 young women finished their trainings in the first labour market pedagogically assisted and guided by Don Bosco Fambul. The project "Hope" has been part of the overall programme since the institution was founded in 1998. 28 young women are now going to become self-employed. They receive micro-credits and business consultancy by small-scale entrepreneurs. Currently another 151 women are being trained who will finish their trainings by next year. The State Secretary of the Ministry for Social Affairs, Lahai Kargbo (picture), thanks the staff and the small-scale entrepreneurs for this extraordinary project: HOPE.



Don Bosco Fambul calls attention to particularly grave human rights violations. They do so via the local or international media or, as it happened in October, at the African Union in Addis Abeba (Ethiopia) or the **UN-headquarters in New York** by the Vice-director Samuel Thomas Bojohn (picture above).



Very popular is the final prayer of the month which includes a light procession at Fambul. Every last Friday of the month young people gather in order to thank God; nearly 300 last time.



Brima Kamara, former student of Don Bosco Fambul today organizes the music and culture lessons at REHA. Moreover, he has become self-employed. Meanwhile he and his "Culture Group" have become an attraction, particularly at the beach promenades of Freetown. He also enjoys performing with his group at Fambul refreshing pleasant memories with his former educators.

HELP IS ON THE WAY WITH THE DON BOSCO BUS

5 o'clock a.m.

Mustapha gets up. This night he slept under a market stall.

5.30 a.m. In front of a shop he sweeps the rubbish of the previous day. From the shop owner he gets some money for a piece of bread.

8 a.m. Mustapha meets his friends. After playing soccer they jointly smoke marihuana. **11 a.m.**

Mustapha takes some daisy tablets. They are popular among street children. Cheap and make you forget reality. **12.30** Mustapha on a round of theft together with others. **13.45** He is caught. The mob beats him up. In his drunken stupor he



does not feel the pain. **15.30** Registered street children take Mustapha to the Don Bosco Bus. **15.45** Mustapha receives medical assistance. **5 p.m.** A social worker takes him up. **19.45** Hand washing before dinner. **8 p.m.** A warm meal

included fresh fruit is served at the bus. After that singular and group counselling. **9 p.m.** Mustapha plays kicker. Mustapha is 7 years old and the 821st newly registered street child in 2013.

facts

*This year the bus was on the road in the centre of Freetown on 187 days *** 15 qualified members of staff cared for 1,321 street children *** 1,251 family visits took place *** It was possible to reintegrate 402 street children into their (extended) families ****

FAMILY TRACING DEPARTMENT: POWER FOR FAMILY



Every day 10 social workers gather for the daily briefing (picture above). Former street children have returned to their families and need further assistance in

their everyday lives. "We consider ourselves a family assistance centre," Brother Lothar says. In doing so he focuses on resource-oriented social work. "Family members have their potential. This is what we try to pro-

mote," the head of the department, Raymond Tommy says. Every month he invites (foster) parents for interviews and trainings to the Fambul-Centre (pic).

facts

*In 2013 13 seminars took place for parents and family members *** 2,081 home visits were carried out *** 401 school visits *** 312 former street children and their families were assisted and supported by the family counselling *** 217 youths were successfully (re)integrated into school *** Twice a year all the youths meet for the Don Bosco Festival and the Day of the African Child (16th of June) ****

"We are empowering families"

Brother Lothar Wagner SDB



THE ONLY REHABILITATION MEASURE...

...in Sierra Leone also is the last hope for a lot of street children in Freetown of gaining a foothold in normal life. This is why the selection procedures particularly attempt to

accept the most vulnerable children. For ten months the focus is on group experience. To learn to trust each other in acrobatics (picture), when jointly studying at the non-formal school, through common experiences on trips. Music and sports also serve the purpose to enhance the children's self-confidence. Into all these development processes the families are involved. Primary target is not only the street child's successful reintegration into the family of origin and extended or foster family. It also involves the child's successful reintegration into the existing school system, the family's neighbourhood (district) and society as a whole.



facts

48 children successfully finished the REHA. It was possible to reintegrate 10 children ahead of time into their families.

GROUP HOME: HOUSING AND EDUCATION IN ONE

Joseph (changed name) had to watch his mother dying in the street. This happened when he was just eight. There is no contact with his family, he does not know his relatives. After the rehabilitation period he continued living at Don Bosco Fambul until in 2011 the new forms of housing were opened. Today he is being trained as a welder.

facts

*12 youths aged 16 – 21 years live together in three different types of apartments *** 3 are being trained while 7 attend to school *** 2 young men are just deciding which vocational path to pursue*



MEDIA: TALK ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS



facts

*6 press conferences took place in 2013 *** 1,745 radio jingles were transmitted *** 34 newspaper articles about Fambul were published.*

It is the country's best opposition, according to Samuel Bojohn, the vice-director. He refers to the media. "Journalists from in- and outside the country visit us and learn what it means to be a street child or a prisoner at Pademba," Bojohn says. He regards information transfer his task. Another issue is the girls' situation in the country.

CRISIS INTERVENTION: **SHELTER FOR GIRLS**



95% of the girls in Sierra Leone undergo – mostly forced – genital circumcision which has still not been banned by law. United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone reports that the number of rapes against girls is currently higher than during the rebel war. In the predominantly Muslim country girls are forced into marriage with strangers or elderly people. Access to education is hampered. Violence at educational institutions like family and school, particularly against girls, happens every day. The girls do not know their rights. Adults, particularly the male ones, are not aware of the criminality of their acts.

Alarming is not only the rising brutality of the perpetrators of violence against girls, but also the increasing number of rapes against girls and young women under the age of 14. The Salesians have repeatedly sharply criticised the investigating authorities. They talked of a “culture of impunity”.

A 13-year-old girl had been raped for hours by five male youths. After five days of intensive medical assistance the victim died of her injuries. The police has never investigated the case despite repeated postulations by Don Bosco Fambul. Some girls now living at the Girls Shelter were held as slaves by their tormentors, oftentimes for years.

facts

Since the Girls Shelter was opened 521 crisis interventions included follow-up care for girls and young women who were violently abused were implemented. The house is open around the clock and staffed with professional social workers and medical nursing personnel.

ENTRY INTO EXIT: OUT OF PROSTITUTION INTO EDUCATION **HOPE+ PROJECT**

Mariama was twelve years old when she was forced into prostitution for the first time. She was not able to protect herself from illnesses. When she heard in a radio discussion about Don Bosco Fam-

bul she called the crisis line. A social worker told her about the Girls Shelter. As soon as she had arrived she was cared for and her family was



found. Eventually, she was able to opt out of street prostitution. Thanks to “HOPE+” it was possible to reintegrate her into school. She is still being cared for by social workers.

facts

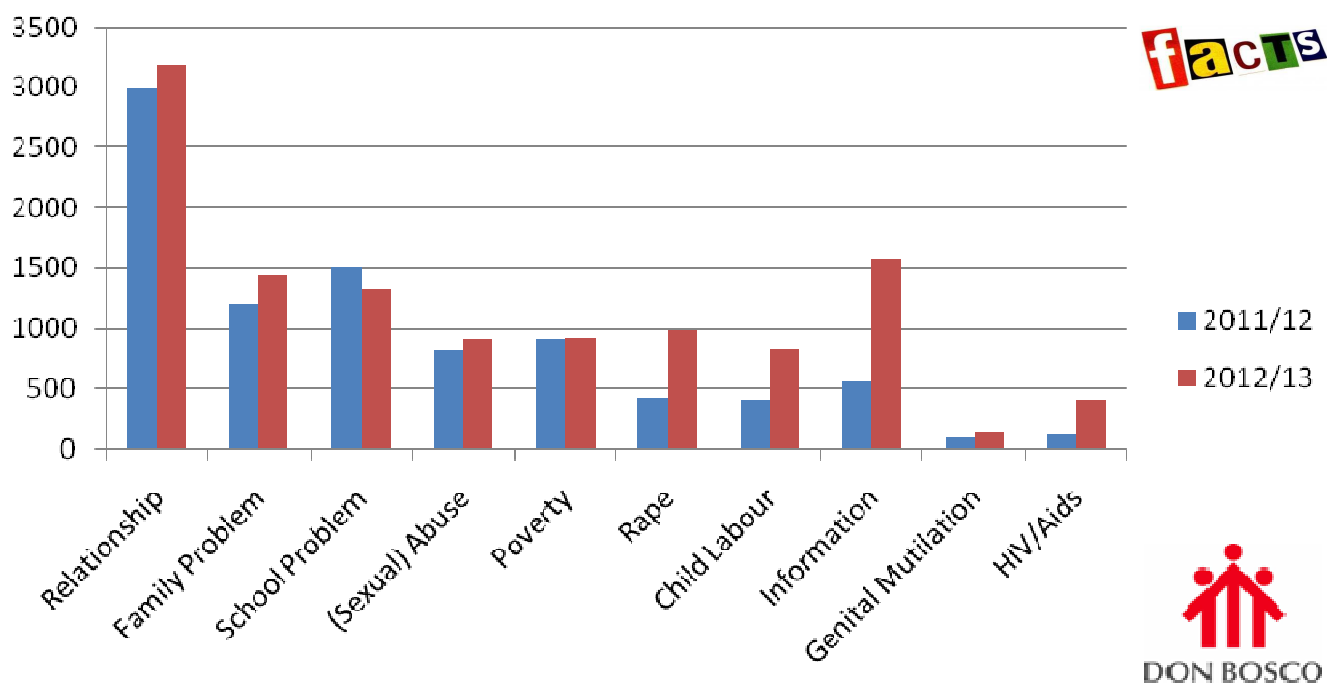
301 girls and young women who experienced violence received holistic care in 2013 via the HOPE+ project. The opportunity to enter into the exit from violence and exploitation into a self-determined life.

“HELLO, DON BOSCO CHILDLINE 116 SPEAKING”

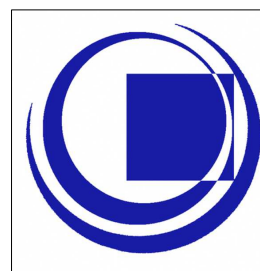
11,670 calls last year. Due to the high demand the social-pedagogic counselling service became an independent department. Since 2010 the crisis line was attached to the Youth Centre and financed by the Stark Stiftung. During these years it was possible to provide the staff with advanced training. The effect was that the service has ever since been lively used and appreciated by a lot of young people. Benjamin Koroma leads the department (right in the picture) and at the same time trains honorary teachers and educators. Telephone counselling is unique in Sierra Leone – since the 1st of September 2013 the “Kindermissionswerk” has been financing the project.



Topic during counselling session compared with last year



New premium partners in 2013: With the “Kindermissionswerk Die Sterninger” Fambul was able to win a worldwide operating relief organisation. It is with their means that the Child Line 116 (telephone counselling) is financed. The *Fidel Götz Stiftung – Liechtenstein* has been in contact with Fambul since 2011 and is strongly committed to the cause of girls who have experienced violence. The foundation expects its means to be invested effectively and exemplary. In return, they are deeply involved in the projects and deal closely and target-oriented with the persons in charge. Thank you very much for the good and benevolent cooperation!



PEACEFUL OASIS: YOUTH CENTRE



The lorry of Don Bosco Fambul is used in various ways. Saturday, however, is reserved for trips of both Youth Centres. These trips mark the end of a week full of events. Young people visit the Youth Centres in Fortstreet and Dzwazak in order to meet friends and to study. Not only cognitively, but also socially, emotionally and spiritually. This, at least, says

Brother Linus' weekly plan who coordinates both Youth Centres. The Youth Centres are open Monday through Saturday from afternoon until evening. They serve as a drop-in centre for disadvantaged children, too. For one year now gifted children have been supported by a scholarship programme. These children and youths in return have been in-

volved actively and honorary at the Youth Centres.

facts

Currently 601 regular adolescent visitors are registered at the Don Bosco Club and provided with an ID-card. These adolescents are regular visitors at the Youth Centres. Additionally, another 591 registered youths visited special events, like seminars, workshops, extra tuition or the music and dancing lessons so that in the reporting period 1,192 youths visited the various events.



HELPING CONTINUALLY: 12X12€ HELPS A CHILD MONTHLY



Street children are exposed to great dangers. Again and again they experience violence. Two nurses and a doctor care for the injured and ill children nobody else looks after.

facts

12 in-patient and 298 out-patient treatments were carried out in 2013. Average costs: 12€.

Help with a monthly donation of 12€ and support a child's life.

A STRONG TEAM: **121 STAFF MEMBERS AT FAMBUL**



Behind the Don Bosco Fambul programme 121 employees, volunteers and animators are active who are available day and night, around the clock. Whether at the Girls Shelter or the family counselling, whether at the Clearing Centre or on the phone: they are all led by compassion and empathy. They are guided by the vision to change the children's lives for the better. And this is the reason for Don Bosco Fambul's success.



Meetings and exchange among the staff is fostered: every month a common breakfast included a service at one of the departments; quarterly staff meetings, half-yearly retreats, the yearly staff trip and the Christmas Celebration as well as continual offers for advanced trainings.

I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been out on the streets, rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security.

Pope Francis in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Chapter 49.

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