

Lend a Hand Movement News Letter No. 77

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Dear all the benefactors of Lend a Hand Movement,
How are you doing in the season of fresh green? I would like to send you the News Letter No.77. It gives information about the reports of the group trip to Sierra Leone with some pictures. I hope you will enjoy reading the reports.

Joseph Mas aaki Sato, Director of Lend a Hand Movement

The Message from Sr. Leticia Negishi April 28th, 2008

All of the benefactors in Japan, I always thank and appreciate your support. I am in Japan now. I arrived at Narita Airport on April 25th. Renewal of my passport, a medical examination, and checking my diabetes condition are the reasons for my return to Japan. I thank that God for always guarding my health, and helping me to continue working. After I pass the check-up of my condition, I hope I will be able to return to Africa. I ask you all pray for me that God will help me to go back Africa. I will stay in Japan only two months, so it is difficult to meet all of you. But I always thank you and pray that God bless you all. In April Prof. Sato, Mr. & Mrs. Kanno and Mrs. Nishimoto visited Sierra Leone. You can read their reports about Sierra Leone. I will leave Japan at the end of June. I hope that I will meet you somewhere in Tokyo, or in Kyushu, or in Kansai during my staying in Japan. Sr. Leticia Negishi

The Event Reports

1. The Sierra Leone group trip which was planned as one of the 25th anniversary projects of the Lend a Hand Movement of foundation safely returned to Japan in good.
2. Sr. Leticia Negishi came back to Japan together with the group. Her schedule in Japan is below.
3. When they visited Rome on their way back from Sierra Leone, the members of the mission could meet the Superior General of the Clarissan Missionary Sisters of the Most Holy



Sisters in Rome with us, Japanese visitors
2nd from the left in the back row is Mother General.

Sacrament, Mother Julia Meifueiro Morosini. She said, "I would like to express my gratitude for your support and the contribution of all benefactors in Japan."

The Information

1. Fortunately, the publisher called "the Knight of Holy Mother" has decided that they would publish our 25th anniversary book titled "That lovely smile is seen again". You will be able to buy and read it soon! The publisher was founded by St. Maksymilian M. Colbe who died in the concentration camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau of the Nazis in 1941.
2. Sr. Leticia Negishi's schedule in Japan

May 12 th -19 th	reunion and a lecture trip to Kyushu area
May 20 th -22 nd	medical examination in Hospital / renewal of passport
May 25 th (Sun)	lecture at the Catholic Machida church
May 26 th -28 th	visit to Karuizawa
May 29 th -31 st	visit to Iida
June 1 st	charity reception at Mr.& Mrs. Hama's house in Setagaya, Tokyo
June 3 rd -7 th	reunion and a lecture trip to Kansai area
June 8 th (Sun)	lecture at the Catholic Fujigaoka church
June 9 th -10 th	reunion and a lecture trip to Sendai
June 11 th -14 th	visit her relatives to Hokkaido
June 16 th	hospital
June 19 th -20 th	visit her family in Gumma
June 25 th -28 th	prepare to leave Japan
June 29 th	departure to Sierra Leone
3. Sr. Bernadette Shirahata will visit Japan in the end of June. We don't know the details of her schedule in Japan yet.
4. We will open the steering committee on June 22nd (Sun)



Mother General (Center) with Prof. Sato



The Diary of the Sierra Leone Mission

Prof. Joseph Masaki Sato

April 14th (Mon)

We, 4 of the group trip to Sierra Leone departed from Narita Airport and the next day, we arrived at Lungi Airport at 18:30 p.m. on April 15th.

April 16th (Wed)

In the morning we visited Maria Ines Vocational center managed by Sr. Leticia Negishi, and also visited Mabesene Hospital. At the Vocational Center, we observed the classes. The students held a reception for us.

Now there are 15 sisters in Sierra Leone, 3 Mexican, 2 Japanese, 9 Nigerian and 1 Indonesian. Japanese women cooked "curry and rice" for dinner and everyone enjoyed it. After dinner we presented 3 microscopes from Mr. Kuniaki Sato, other presents, and US\$10,000.



from the left Mrs. Kanno, Mr. Kanno, Sr. Elisa, Sr. Leticia, Mrs. Nishimoto, Prof. Sato

April 17th (Thu)

In the morning there was a thunder storm.

From 10:00 a.m., we were invited to the reception that was held by all the children and the students, from nursery school to high school, at OLG schools. The chief of Lunsar also attended the reception, and he presented us with native costumes.

In the afternoon, we visited the mine in Marampa.

April 18th (Fri)

We took a field trip to the Mange Mission along the Little Scarcies River. We stayed there one night. Fr. Jose, a theological student, and 3 sisters work for this small mission. We viewed the daily life of fishermen.

April 19th (Sat)

We moved from Mange to a village of the Fula tribe. There, the villagers worked in agriculture, breeding cattle and planting watermelons. We bought a lot of watermelons for Lunsar.

In the afternoon, we visited Murialdo boy's school and watched their sports festival. After that, we visited Maria Ines Vocational Center again, and inspected their new schoolhouse.

April 20th (Sun)

We attended mass. A lot of people joined the mass when the bell rung. The church is large; it can accommodate more than 500 people can accommodate. The people sung and danced in the mass.

Hanna Kabba, the teacher of OLG schools, and Veronica Kamara, the student of Milton Margai Collage, came to see us. Both were scholarship students of Lend a Hand Movement. When I met them, I was deeply moved to confirm the results of our educational support. I thank God!

In the afternoon, we looked around the private houses of the people near OLG school campus. And we saw and experienced the reality of poverty.

April 21st (Mon)

Three of the members, except me, went sightseeing to Freetown.

I visited OLG elementary school and gave a speech to the children of the upper grades. Also I observed the nursery school and elementary school lower grade classes, and inspected the actual situation of the feeding program.

April 22nd (Tue)

As we were invited by Fr. John D. Tarawali, we attended the reception at the R.C. boy's school from 10:00 a.m. After that, we observed the feeding program at the OLG elementary school and the junior high school.

At 14:00 p.m. we left Lunsar with Sr. Leticia Negishi to go to Lungi Airport. We boarded on the airplane bound for Rome by way of Brussels.

April 23rd (Wed)

In the morning, we arrived in Rome. The Clarissan Missionary sisters welcomed us. We stayed at the Villa Maria Ines of the Clarissan Missionary, and rested for 4 days there. On April 28th we returned to Japan.

What I felt and what I learned in Sierra Leone

Mrs. Mieko Nishimoto, Representative of Toyama Group

I have committed myself to the support of the children in Sierra Leone for 15 years, but even so, I felt that Sierra Leone was a far away country for me. Fortunately I got the chance to visit Sierra Leone with Mr. & Mrs. Kanno and Prof. Sato.

On April 15th, I landed in Africa. I was overwhelmed to see a cloud of black people. We rode with Br. Peter on a bumpy road, we were going to Lunsar, to the convent. The sisters welcomed

us with smiles although we arrived at the convent in the night. My heart pounded with expectation for the coming days.

A call of a rooster woke me up from my sleep on the first morning. Well, let us meet the children of the school! We saw a lot of cheerful children and students wearing uniforms and shoes attending the OLG schools. I didn't find poverty in these children. I thought that it was the result of the efforts of Sr. Leticia Negishi and the support of Lend a Hand Movement beyond more than 28 years. When I watched the children in the OLG schools, they seemed to be happy, so I sometimes forgot the stern reality of the Sierra Leonean's true life.



Mrs. Nishimoto with children

But when I saw the children's homes, walking around the schools, I saw the children living in poverty in their home. If the feeding program is stopped, most children would not have food and could not continue their study.

I was born in Japan. I was fed enough. I was free to think anything, to see anything. Wow can the children in Sierra Leone get pleasure like Japanese? I muttered to myself, "What could we do for the children? At first I want to give them enough food." Then my heart was filled with passion. I firmly believed that I could do something for the children. After I return to Toyama, I will tell people exactly what I saw in Sierra Leone.

The Visit to Sierra Leone

Mr. Katsujiro Kanno, Vice-chairman of the Lend a Hand Movement
Ex-principal of Tamagawa-gakuen primary school

• The pilgrimage to the Holy Land for me

When Sr. Leticia Negishi often asked me, "Please visit Sierra Leone", I always answered, "I hope so, someday." But I knew that the visit to Sierra Leone was an unfinished dream for me, because I thought that it was better to donate the money of traveling cost than traveling to Sierra Leone. When the plan of the Sierra Leone group trip came up, just on the time of my wife's and my retirement, I finally decided to visit Sierra Leone, because I felt urged to meet Sr. Leticia Negishi in Africa, the land she loved. Then, I hoped that during the journey I could find a new vision that might support my life in the future.

And now that I have been back from the trip to Sierra Leone for two weeks, I really think that it was an amazing trip for me and I was given many blessings, more than I had expected.

I think that this Sierra Leone group trip was a pilgrimage to the Holy Land for me, in the same way as a Christian does a pilgrimage to a sacred place like the birth place of Jesus Christ.

The Bible says, "Whenever you did this for one of the least important of these followers of mine, you did it for me." (Matthew 25:40) I think the people of Sierra Leone seem to be one of the smallest flocks that the Bible says.

When I actually witnessed the sisters working for the people as a task they can venture only at the risk of their own life, I firmly believed that it was Sierra Leone where God's love and God's power was focused. Therefore, I feel that Lunsar is the Holy Land for me.

• To the ends of earth

There are many private houses, a market, and a post office around OLG schools. On one morning,

when we rode along the street by car, we could see a lot of students walking to the school wearing various uniforms. While in the evening we saw children who wore only underpants; they came and walked with us calling out "Opoto! opoto!" (this word seems to be a meaning of foreigner in the local language).

We also stayed with Fr. Joseph in the village called Mange for one day. The village, which was full of nature, was far from Lunsar, several hours by car. I was impressed that Fr. Joseph Fr. Joseph associated with the villager on equal terms.

There are many students who walk one or two hours to reach OLG schools. The sisters visit their house and talk about the Bible and pray with their parents.

I really think that this is the truth to preach the Gospel to the ends of the earth. I understand that the most important thing to preach the Gospel is not only to speak the words of the Bible, but also to show an act of love.

-The force of education

By this visit, I saw and heard a part of the darkness of Sierra Leone, for example, the corruption of international airport staff, the girls who easily sold their bodies just for a mobile telephone fee, the uproar of the disco in the no electricity town and so on.

There are a lot of men who do not work and sit around doing nothing in the daytime. They say that if they work on a farm as well as they can, the harvest would be stolen.

Even at the Vocational Center of Sr. Leticia Negishi, it is difficult to teach how to become independent economically by their work, than to teach the skills of cooking or beauty.

In Sierra Leone, it seems that their own language only has the verbalization of the present form; it means the language doesn't have the verbalization of a past form or a future form. I think that therefore it might be hard for people to have a vision of the future, looking back over the past.

Under these circumstances, it seems that education is the most important and urgent task to achieve a happy life for Sierra Leoneans. It is beyond my imagination how much patience would be necessary to realize the happiness in Sierra Leone. We easily understand that Sr. Leticia Negishi's and Sr. Bernadette Shirahata's beautiful smile would be held in lots of their tears and prayers.



Mr. Kanno visiting the town of Lunsar

I hope and pray that OLG schools and the Vocational Center will become the pioneer schools of the school education in Sierra Leone. Fortunately there are some sisters who were educated in OLG schools, and now some students in the schools want to be a sister.

Br. Peter is the director of the hospital in Lunsar and Fr. John D. Tarawali is the principal of R.C. boy's school; both are locals and persons with fine character. We had an opportunity to meet and talk with them.

And we also met the village mayor (chief); we were impressed with his character of tolerance. I believe

firmly that Sierra Leone is a country that has big hope for the future.

The meaning of "Lend a Hand"

When I watched the feeding program in Lunsar, I realized that "Lend a Hand Movement" activity had achieved good results for these 25 years and still now it is expected.

On the way home, we visited Rome, and there we had an opportunity to meet Mother Julia M. Morosini, the Superior General of the Clarissan Missionary Sisters. She expressed her gratitude for the activity of "Lend a Hand Movement" and thanked to Prof. Sato for his service.

On the occasion of the visit to Sierra Leone, I had an assignment to solve. "To whom or to what, we lend a hand?" I asked myself the meaning of lending a hand, and wanted to deeply understand our activity. After the visit, I firmly believe that we lend a hand for the Plan of God. Now I am thankful to participate such a precious work.

In addition, I was impressed with R.C. Boy's Elementary School near by OLG schools in Lunsar. The school also has a feeding program thanks to Fr. Kasuya's donation fund. But the feeding program runs only once a week there, and it seems the fund money will soon run short. When we observed R.C. school, the children seemed to lack ambition compared to OLG school children. I hope that the feeding program in R.C. school could be continued and, if possible, could increase in frequency. I also wish that Maria Ines Vocational Junior High School can be built and can be operated smoothly by Sr. Leticia Negishi.

Sr. Leticia Negishi often says, "Africa is an unknown land". She has lived in Africa for several decades, but even now she calls Africa, "an unknown land". "Seeing is believing", I was just a traveler in Sierra Leone, but I think that I have learned lots of things on my visit to Sierra Leone.

In conclusion, I thank Prof. Sato who led us through the trip, and thank Mrs. Nishimoto who was a good partner of our trip. And finally I would like to express my gratitude to Sr. Elisa and the sisters who welcomed us to Lunsar.



High school girls bringing lunch to their classes

Question & Answer

Prof. Joseph Masaaki Sato

As I have a responsibility to all of the benefactors, I checked some issues that all of you want to know about what is going on in Sierra Leone.

1. Q: Does the feeding program operate well?

A: Yes. All of the children and students have enough lunch.

2. Q: Does the children's smile rise up again?

A: Yes. Compared with the situation of 5 years ago, the damage of the war is gone, and there are lots of cheerful smiles filling the school and in the town.

3. Q: Should we continue the support to Sierra Leone, still now?

A: Yes. The children of OLG schools were so cute, because they wore the pretty uniforms and white socks. It looks like they are not starving. But if the feeding program ended, they would soon be starving. Sr. Elisa said, "In addition, if the feeding program ended, many children would not come to school." It might be the crisis of the education.

If anything we should rather be concerned about R.C. Boy's School. The feeding program of R.C. Boy's School faces financial difficulty now.

What is worse, the increase in the price of provisions begins to cause problem all over the world. The feeding program in Lunsar also will be affected soon. So, I would like to ask you to "Lend a Hand" for the present. Thank you.



A class of the children full of smiles