

Christmas Mass December 18, 2024 @ 10:30am



Canadian Food for Children

La Nourriture du Canada pour les Enfants

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Christmas Newsletter

Reflections from Sierra Leone - October 2024

In October, we had the privilege of traveling to Sierra Leone on our first trip to Africa with CFFC. Together, we set out with the goal of connecting with families supported by CFFC, witnessing how our shipments are received and distributed, and visiting with those in need. We hoped not only to see CFFC's impact firsthand but to better understand the daily lives of those we serve.

Every day, we visited children, families, and hospital patients, distributing donated items from the CFFC warehouse along with food sourced from local markets. Trips to the bustling city markets became a cherished routine, where we purchased essentials like rice, bulgar, onions, milk powder, and seasonings. Children often approached us in the markets, selling small items to support their families, and the vendors were grateful for our bulk purchases—something rarely seen, as most locals buy only what they need for a day. These simple ingredients provided nourishment, accompanied with small amounts of local currency to buy fresh vegetables or protein to supplement their meals.



Local food market



Boy selling potatoes



Girl selling bananas



Local food market

The living conditions we encountered were humbling. Homes had no electricity or running water, and beds, if any, were padded with dried grass. Families fetched water in buckets daily, storing it in large basins for drinking, cooking, and washing. Meals were typically prepared just once each day, often after children returned from school, and some were even cooked at the fields where parents worked, with children joining after school to help. This reality struck a deep chord within us. Imagine what it might feel like to eat only once a day—or to rely on a handful of leftover rice to sustain your energy for the morning. The careful planning of every meal, knowing it's all you'll have until the next day, was something we had never needed to consider. Yet, these families displayed incredible resilience, making each meal count. Their resourcefulness was equally inspiring: plastic bags became makeshift diapers, winter jackets served as protective gear on motorbikes, and mothers wrapped cloth around their children to carry them on their backs. Even extension cords found new purpose as clotheslines.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, our strength and our glory
Jésus, Marie et Joseph, notre force et notre gloire



Humble homes in Sierra Leone



Baby with cloth and plastic diaper



cooking rice at home



water storage at home

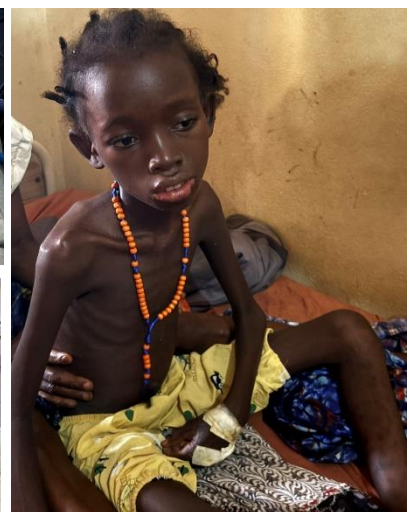
Our visits to hospitals revealed both resilience and heartbreaking challenges. Outside, mothers set up cooking areas, preparing meals to sustain their families while they stayed with their sick loved ones. This was essential, as the hospitals provide only minimal nutrition to patients, leaving families to make up the difference however they can. During one hospital visit, we met a young boy who urgently needed a blood transfusion—a \$27 expense that equates to nearly half a month’s salary in Sierra Leone. In the neonatal ward, we found newborns in bassinets in a heated room, without incubators despite the critical need. Another experience that deeply moved us was meeting a 12-year-old girl, severely malnourished due to complications from HIV. We visited her often, bringing food and support, but sadly, after returning to Canada, we learned that she had passed away. This loss reminded us of the immense support that is needed in Sierra Leone.



Mothers cooking outside hospital



Twins in neonatal ICU



Francess (12), malnourished

Reflecting on this journey, we are reminded of Pope Francis’s words: “Our work with and for the poor does not make any noise. Yet, day by day, it causes growth for the common good.” This truth resonated deeply as we quietly handed out rice, shared meals, and paid small medical bills. In these simple, steady actions, we saw hope and strength growing in the communities we visited. We learned that our presence was a blessing, especially during the “hunger season” between harvests, when families often have little to sell, trade, or earn.



Sharing food donations with local families



Mom & baby eating bread and fish

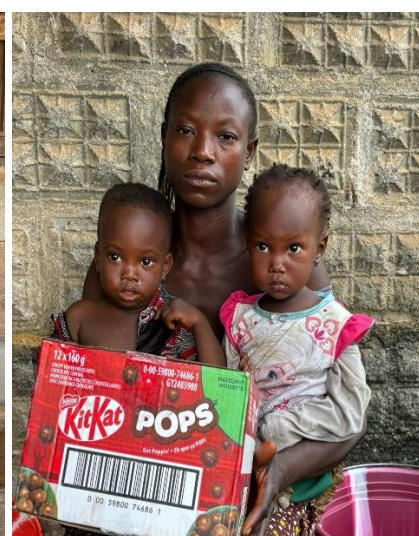
The need for containers and donations is immense, as CFFC supports communities throughout Sierra Leone, reaching cities and parishes across the country. Every two weeks, we send containers filled with essential items, but they are quickly distributed upon arrival, and families wait eagerly for the next shipment to reach their area. Sending these containers to Africa delivers life-changing resources to those in need.



Pain relief drug donation



Pasta donation



Chocolate donation

This trip left us with deep gratitude and a renewed commitment to give back. Even a modest sacrifice from our Christmas budgets can have a profound impact—whether it's a can of soup, bag of pasta, or a can of fish, all achievable for under \$5. Imagine eating just once a day, as many families do, and how a small monetary or food donation could mean they have a more nutritious meal that one time of day—or even a second meal, which is uncommon for so many. Each small gift brings relief and joy to a family. We returned inspired by the importance of thoughtful giving, knowing that even the simplest gestures can carry blessings to those in need. Reflecting on the idea that helping those in need—whether through small donations, support, or care—may seem humble or invisible, we realize that over time, these consistent, small actions accumulate and create lasting, positive change. Every gift, no matter how modest, creates a ripple of hope that quietly nurtures growth and well-being for all. We invite everyone to consider making a small yet impactful contribution, knowing that together, our collective kindness can help build a better world for everyone.

Christina & Gloria

Newsletter now available online!

If you would like to receive the newsletter online, visit: <http://www.canadianfoodforchildren.net> to register, otherwise we will be happy to continue mailing it to you.

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From the Warehouse # 32

As I write this entry, it is mid-November, the month of remembering our deceased loved ones. We honour all the saints, who have given us examples of service and holiness - among whom our Blessed Mother and Saint Mother Teresa are “patrons” of CFFC. Along with the students of St. Augustine, our volunteers paused activities at the warehouse on Nov. 11 to remember those who have died in wars, and to pray for peace. We would also like to remember in this space, from time to time, all those connected to Canadian Food For Children – volunteers, donors, supporters - who have died. Recently those people include Rita de Santisteban, mother of Lilly (in the office), Josephine Kozlowski, Fr. Jack (El Salvador), and Rosann Cinelli. May the souls of all the faithful departed rest in peace. Amen.

Recently one of our donors informed me that CFFC had a fairly low rating on a certain website – I would like to remind all of you that year after year, our accountant finds that 98% of every dollar donated goes towards assisting the poor. While we do have 3 excellent staff, the vast majority of those involved with the charity are volunteers. We want all donors to know how much we value their gifts and that we do our best to use them wisely.

We appreciate that donors drop off donations in person during warehouse hours (M -F till noon) whenever possible. Sometimes things left outside or in the shed get wet or removed by critters. In September, members of the CWL of St. Mary Star of the Sea dropped off 1,030 bars of soap from their parish soap drive (see picture). We sent those off to Sierra Leone and El Salvador. One of our Catholic teachers at Nativity of our Lord school, Rommel d’Souza, and his team of amazing student leaders sold freezies during the fall, and with the proceeds bought a large load of food to send off to our mission partners (see picture). Linda and Rick, from Washago, purchased and wrapped about 100 Christmas gifts (see picture). Many teachers and students have brought us Hallowe’en candy once again. (I am the official quality control sampler!) It is very moving and humbling to see people sharing their blessings. I am aware that for every act I have mentioned there are countless gifts and donations that I do not see. We are grateful for all the acts of kindness of our donors.

For the second straight year, our elves, Lorne, Rosella and Mary have been making Christmas crafts. Come and see them at the warehouse. Make a donation and take something home.

Next up, Advent, as our eyes turn towards the Infant who changed the world. O come, let us adore Him. May the peace and blessings of Christmas be with you all.

Sal Badali



Rommel and the freezie crew



CWL soap drive



Gifts delivered by Lynn

Monetary donations can be made on the CFFC website: <http://www.canadianfoodforchildren.net/> or by cheque written to: Canadian Food for Children or e-transfer at cffc.aasimone@yahoo.ca.

If you wish to receive your tax receipt via email, please give us a call to **905.274.9239** or send us an email to cffc.aasimone@yahoo.ca with your donation details and we will be happy to email it to you.

Contact Information:

CFFC Warehouse hours of operation Monday to Friday 8 am – 12 pm. (drop offs).

Address: 1258 Lakeshore Rd E. Mississauga, ON L5E 1E9

To book a visit for groups and students email us at: cffc_studentgroups@hotmail.com

Talks in Ontario or across Canada – Call the office @ **905-274-9239**.

Dr. Simone is now available to give talks at schools and churches.