Week 1 Travel Blog – Sierra Leone Staff Housing Team #1
January 17 – 23, 2020

Day 1

The team made it to SL this early afternoon our time after a slight delay at Newark last night. Apparently, the baggage scale was not weighing bags correctly (not because Tom and Sean overpacks their bags with tools and supplies)... and needed some maintenance attention to get everything loaded properly. Anyway, they are happy to be there and look forward to the hectic shopping day tomorrow. Just look at the smiles on their faces as they travel across the bay in one of the newer water taxis.

Even Joe Abu was glad to see them when he picked them up after the ride.
However, SL is an adventure. The Guest House hotel was a little short on power during the day and short on A/C in a couple rooms. But the good news is that the temperatures are fairly mild right now. Night night...sleep tight!

**Day 2**

The team (Tom, Sean, Chiara, Jose) started their supply and tool shopping early this morning in Freetown, around 5:00 AM our time here, texting with Ahmed on what they’re buying and verifying quantities of what he has and needs.

Ahmed, does the silicon you bought fit in this gun?

Ahmed, how many pointed and / or how many flat chisels?

Ahmed, Why do you need 5 lengths of 1/2” rebar?

Tom, Don't forget welding rod, cutting disc, grinding disc etc.

Also diesel for generator

I silenced the phone!

The good news is best said by Tom. “Grand Unification Theory” It all came together today in mind boggling simplicity. It turns out the place we were getting Onduline (wall siding) has all the building supplies and tools also. The team spent the morning at Fawaz’s and got all the remaining tools and all the electrical. Sullay (the driver and team chaperone) went with the truck to get the stuff from Lauretta (another supplier) and the zinc (corrugated roofing). We’ll get the plumbing at Fawaz’s also.

Fawaz is building on the right, and our white truck is on the left of the picture.
"And here’s the best part - Fawaz’s store is across the street from the Guest House (where the team stays). And they take dollars!"

This trip will completely remodel an existing house on the hospital grounds into staff housing. It needs a new roof, more bedrooms and bathrooms which we’re adding walls for that, complete painting inside and out, and a new cesspit. Carl and Joan’s favorite projects. The picture below is the staff house with the roof demolished. I am sure someone will send us a picture before they leave to see what Team #2 will be have to finish up.
Also on the list is converting an unused room at the end of the Maternity Ward building into a staff training and conferencing room. Liz, Sally, and Carl (Team #2) have already started coordinating with LV Health Network and Cedar Crest College here for the online conferencing training sessions. The picture below is the new door and window Ahmed has installed in the end of the Maternity Ward for access. Still a lot of work to do on the inside.

The team will now drive to Matru tomorrow. That is usually an all day adventure. We’ll see what happens tomorrow. That’s all for today.

**Day 3**

Tom sent me a late report on Saturday’s shopping. It was hectic as usual, but they got all the shopping done. The new thing in SL is a lot of stores close early on Saturday, but Fawaz stayed open until they were done, and they also gave them cups of excellent Lebanese coffee! Which they should considering we spent enough that day for a whole week of work maybe. Chiara and Tom got all the electrical items
and most of the plumbing items. New for this trip, the team used a ziploc sorting system, which worked extremely well.

Sean and Jose made out well with the tools at Fawaz’s. They were able to get almost everything except the extension cord. At Soufan, the tool store a few items didn’t come in as we ordered. They aren’t needed until later in the week and arrangements were made to get them to Mattru. The welder will be put on the bus to Mattru when it arrives Thursday.

After buying an enormous amount of bottled water, enough for both teams, they finished up with dinner at Roy’s. They deserved it! Here is a picture I found on the web.

![Picture](image)

Then there is today’s adventure trip from Freetown to Mattru. It is always an event that the teams look forward to, and today was no exception. Though the Bo road looked pretty good in the picture, the white truck in the picture yesterday they were loading up with supplies almost made it to Mattru. They got to within 40 of the 170 mile trip before the truck lost a wheel and broke the drive shaft. That was about 2:30PM their time. Tom and Chiara were with Sullay in the truck. Very fortunately, an empty truck passed by and loaded up the supplies and took them the rest of the way. That’s better than AAA here in the States! Sean and Jose were in another vehicle ahead of them and made it to the hospital without trouble.
Late in from the Team:

Sean and Jose arrived in under 6 hours and immediately jumped right in and came up with work plans for a lot of areas. When Chiara, Tom and Sullay arrived (in the daylight!) after 9 hours the truck was unloaded quickly. It was great to see all the workers from previous years and great to see all the incredible work they had done. We also were invited to dinner with the UBC medical mission. Dr. Ron Baker (the son of founder of Centennial Secondary School) was there. He grew up in Mattru and worked at the hospital. Dr. Toupin and his wife Cathy were there too. Dr. Toupin will take over from Dr. Yoder but will have an increased focus on administration. Dr Yoder and Helene Yoder were joined by many other others also. A very fun and inspiring bunch.

We got back to the Mattru guest house, had a quick powwow, and then unpacked. A very productive day!
Day 4

The team was pretty quiet most of their day today. There were a few leftover text questions early this morning on the new column and beam locations and that was it. After the exchange Tom told me to have a nice day.

As Tom put it “all those things you give to Goodwill wind up here!”

Today was focused on getting the job site ready and safe, debris and sharps cleanup, for the difficult task of building the trusses and raising them. The welding company was there and the final price needed some negotiation.
They also check measured the main building first floor and small second floor room, and the main chord for the building to see what adjustments may be needed in our plans. Sean said the building was square within a half inch! Those UB folks in the 50’s know how to build! Jose noticed the bathroom walls were lower than the main building, not how we assumed in our plans. He and Sean do not think that will be an issue. The gable ends on the second floor room was made ready for the new trusses when they’re built.

Chiara and Tom made extension cords and organized the tools and materials with Tamba. Tom likes things organized. Very satisfying!

The trusses will be built next to the Maternity Ward, where we are setting up the training conferencing room, and then moved to the Staff House about 125 feet away; a long carry it seems. They will do it the Africa way with no worry. You can see the new door and window in the end of the Maternity Ward building for the training room from Trip Report #2. Jose worked with the crew today to set up the fabrication area including the welding machines, chops saw, and the steel. Unfortunately, due to problems with the hospital power system, a generator had to be rented. He made the first purlin for the second floor room for Sean to use to lay out the other trusses and purlins.
Lauretta Will and Agnes White joined us for dinner. Lauretta, with Joe Abu, got our LVP Chapter involved in Centennial School (CSS). She was at CSS to make a video about our work there and see how the work has held up. Agnes White is a member of CeOSA-UK. CeOSA is the CSS alumni association.

That’s all for today. Stay tuned for tomorrow’s report to see how the truss fabrication kicks off.

**Day 5**

If you recall from Trip #4 update yesterday, Tom and Chiara organized the tools that we have left there from 3 previous installations and the new ones we bought this trip. Somehow we ended up with 8 pair of tin snips!

![Tin Snips](image)

**Themes of Today** - “Sierra Leone One Call” “Jose’s African Lean to” I’ll get to that.

After taking many measurements and preparing the gable ends of the second story on call room, the first truss was formed temporarily and then taken down and welded. Enlarge the left picture and notice the local style of scaffolding used by the crew. They are experts at it! The truss for the other side was built using the first as a template. These were followed by the more complicated center trusses. The steel purlins were cut and welding the purlin tabs on the trusses were also completed. The other welding team completed the main building bottom chords for all 6 trusses.
Now for the themes. Enlarge the picture on the right and you will see men standing around watching a water line repair. Not clear to me what happened, but prepping the fabrication site or erecting Jose’s lean to for shade broke a water line. All in a day’s work!

![Image of men standing around watching a water line repair.]

Jose has done a great job organizing the welding crew! Also, many, many thanks to Ray Proud for all his designs and guidance and his awesome purlin tabholders!

Meanwhile, Sean was busy laying out the walls and columns and checking measurements. Once he had it all lined out he turned to the masons and carpenters and they installed the columns in a flash. He could barely get the words out before openings were made in the half-height porch walls, forms constructed, steel columns inserted, and cement poured. A very productive construction day overall.

Chiara got to shadow one of the missionary doctors and did rounds with him. She even diagnosed a patient with liver problems! I’m sure she was excited about that.

Tom and Chiara were all over the site today: They helped with the building construction, laid out the conference room electrical, finished sorting out the new and old plumbing materials, and then went to layout the cesspit. With the help of Dr. John Yoder, they looked at the new proposed site. It had lots of challenges including rocks and nearby trees. (Save the Grapefruit Tree...the big one in the pictures) The tree supplies a large number of fruits each year. The site is between the crossing walk paths. After discussion with Dr. John and Dr. Carl (PhD) and KOTC (king of the cesspit) they decided it might be worth digging a test hole at the original site chosen months ago. The new alternative location besides having obstacles is much further away and a longer pipe run. Ahmed is sitting and strategizing... I guess.
And you put faces to names I’ve mentioned in the posts, left to right is Ahmed, Lauretta, Joe Abu, and Sullay.

That’s it today. Thanks for following.
Day 6

We left off yesterday with some concerns about where to put the cesspit, and decided to dig a test hole at the "original selection" site. The plan now is to start the pipe trench to that site tomorrow, and if all goes well then dig the pit. If they find too many rocks or obstacles, they will continue on to the "new proposed" site; while remembering to Save-The-Grapefruit-Tree! Not sure if there will be a perk test first or not. We’ll see.

Theme of the Day: Chocolate Rain (You’ll see why)

The workers had a good start to the day. The welding team cut all the steel columns for the roof overhang porches on the North side. The intermediate interior steel ceiling support beams were cut and welded. And work began on the first big truss for the main roof. Look closely and you’ll see women working in the welding crew. Many of these are students at various stages of training, so some just carry materials and some are welding purlin tabs. The water leak from yesterday is dried up, and in the far back left corner of the picture is the demo’d and prep’d Staff House waiting for a roof.

All was going well until the sky opened and the rains came down - Today's Theme. It rained heavily for an hour then steadily for another. Mud everywhere. It finally let up at 4 pm and the crews jumped right back to work, working until dusk. This rain sounds to be a harder and longer rain than those reported by the teams in the past.
I asked Tom what he was doing while it was raining and he said paperwork. Then sent me this picture. He sure has tanned a lot since he has been there!

A second generator was procured to avoid being dependent on the hospital power. It turns out both generators came from the owner of Amy’s; at one time the only local drinking establishment. Amy’s big draw is they show all the soccer matches, and is packed on game nights. So, what happens now if the power goes out on game night??

Sean and Ahmed’s men demolished the existing open area porch concrete half wall and formed and poured most of the new column supports. They only have the four on the west wall to do. He also laid out the big truss and the purlins on the main roof.
Tom discussed the conference room work with Augustine, the hospital electrician, and he volunteered to do the wiring with the help of his son who is planning to go to vocational school to become an electrician too. That helps to build country and community sustainability.

Painting has started in the conference room, and an access way to the attic will be constructed (a little scope creep as we say). Right now you have to go through patients bedrooms to get to the attic.

We may have reported about the Town Crier on previous trips, but the TC goes high tech - he used to ring a bell and shout the announcement. Now he uses a bullhorn!

It has turned out to be a very cool evening for Sierra Leone. It’s supposed to be sunny and 96 tomorrow. A good day for work!

**Day 7**

Theme of the Day: Slap Yourself

T-shirt: Gorgeous Lifestyle

The clear hot weather today was good for work progress. Tom sent a punch list of stuff they accomplished. Hopefully, I’ve interpreted, embellished, and matched up the pictures correctly.

The finish mortar and plastering on the walls, doors, and windows that started before the team arrived is still continuing. The welding crew was split into truss makers and truss installers. All of the second floor trusses were installed today, and almost completed installing the roof purlins. Sean is working closely with the crews to get the trusses placed correctly and anchored. I think that is Sean on the ladder
in the #3 picture. He spent a lot of time on how to anchor them without knowing exactly what to expect. Ahmed did a fantastic job in sending us pictures and measurements. The #1 picture is west side view, and the side where the cesspit will be. The #2 picture is the east side view. Look closely and you will see the steel pipe columns on top of the concrete pillars. The last open porch area columns (4 on the west side) were completed today. They are all done waiting for their trusses to be placed. Also, make a note of the aluminum ladders in picture #2. More on that later.
The first big truss for the main house roof was completed and is acting as template for the rest. This makes 2.5 of the 6 main house trusses are completed as of today. Jose and his welding crew are kicking butt on the fabrication.

We also have a returning alumnus in the welding crew. This is Mohammed. The first EWB team to the hospital got to know him. He made amazing vehicles out of tin cans. Some of them even had small motors to move them.
Remember the cesspit location question, well that was decided today and the digging started. I just
don’t know for sure which location this picture is! I will bet it is the original location, because Tom would
have made a big deal about it, if it wasn’t. What do you think? Compare this picture to Report #5 and
note the banana trees to the right and the screened structure in the background. Another one you can
ponder over is the paper below with numbers all over it Tom sent to Carl, the KOTC (remember). It must
be important.
As we all know, it takes a lot of people to get all this work done. You have the workers, and you have the watchers, and always the testers.

Here are the watchers of the trusses being installed...

And here are the testers! Our 3 wise men, Sullay, Ahmed, and Joe are testing the new chairs Lauretta purchased for the training room under the Jim Saake Shade Tree Carpenter Shop from the Pediatric Toilet Facility install last year.
The food prep and cooking will be in the open porch room between the main house and the toilet-shower rooms. Tom held a discussion today about the sink area and where they will cook to decide what to build there. One idea Tom will investigate with Sullay is making a cooking box with a metal chimney.

Yesterday, the team reported we now have two generators from Amy’s. We know why Amy’s let us have them now... they had to get a mechanic in to work on both of them. Dealt with a number of electrical plug challenges also.

The microphones and laptops were successfully tested with Zoom voip App. This will be used with LVHN and Cedar Crest College of Nursing training sessions that are being coordinated now. Still waiting for the cell router (a WiFi router that connects directly to cell service). After several options that didn’t work out, the Hospital Administrator Abdul Karim decided we needed to get one from Bo.

Aluminum ladders...here is an example of the quality of some tools and materials available in SL. You have to be careful what you buy. This is one of the hospital ladders. Incredibly thin aluminum over 2 thin wires.
And finishing up with this long report today, you must come to our Lehigh Valley Professional Chapter April 5th Fundraiser at DeSales University. Chiara went to the Mattru market today with Patience who is the cook at the Promised Land Guest House. Chiara I’m sure will be styling in a dress she is having made for her.

More tomorrow. Thanks for following our progress.