Day 8

Today was a very productive day for the roof work. This update will not be as long as yesterday.

Theme of the Day: Belly Woman Day (does anyone get this theme??)

T-shirt of the day: Let the games begin! (I get this one!)

All the trusses on the main building went up today. It went well and everyone is very excited to get this done. We have a picture of Jose’s lean-to cutting station, a good view of a large truss having to be manually lifted into place, and view of the trusses on the main house. You will see a lot of physical changes when the roof material goes on.
This picture below is Suliman- a student at the Centennial School who helped us on many projects. He stopped by to see if there was any work this year.
Here is Tom’s punch list for today.

* Big truss purlins are laid out. Manufactured “Y”s to assist in installing trusses.

* Cut steel plates for gussets on the trusses.

* Located toilets, showers and sinks with help from Tamba, Dr. Yoder, and nurse matron Fatmata; and many others with strong opinions. Wound up in the location we had planned. Ahmed will make the floor slope south to north as we planned for best floor cleaning.

* Conference room walls are painted and the WIFI router options discussed again.

* Cesspit digging continues despite the lava rocks that continually show up. They are put aside and local residents will come and pick them up for their own use.

The team was very busy getting the work done and not making pictures. That’s a good thing. That’s all for today. Thanks for staying with us.

**Day 9**

This will be another short report today. The work today is continuing from the previous days, and there were some logistics issues they had to deal with also.

Most of the smaller trusses for the open area and hip roof are complete. The locations of the roofing purlins were marked on the large main house roof trusses for installation.
They continue to have issues with the hospital generator. The air cleaner was disintegrating when they pulled it out to clean it. Possibly, the original element.

The hospital ran a generator test to show the community they cannot supply them power at night. This is good news for the patients, but also good for us since the team is counting on hospital power around the staff house for construction at times.

Ahmed went to Bo today for more supplies, and the remaining items from Soufan hardware in Freetown. We are just waiting for the MiG welder which is supposed to clear Customs tomorrow (which didn’t on Thursday as we thought) and then the Bishop’s son will bring it down. Ahmed returned from Bo at close to 11 pm their time.

If you recall I mentioned Ahmed had to go get more cement the other day. Well, it turns out the amount of cement needed for the job got screwed up because of a miscommunication. We sent Ahmed the number of bags needed for everything, except the making of the blocks, which we wanted him to calculate. He thought the amount we told him included the blocks. Go figure, he’s only 5,000 miles away. Cement is getting really scarce in Mattru and Bo. Joe called a guy who is bringing a truck full from a town an hour away. Of course, the truck broke down, but is expected tomorrow.

The wireway is almost complete in the conference room. They also laid out the new chairs and had Joe, Augustine and Chiara sit in various places to determine if they could see the TV. Chiara scrolled through a PowerPoint on the TV and all 25 seats were fine. One snafu is the HDMI jack is in the middle of the back of the TV and sticks straight out. This means we’ll have to mount the TV brackets on wood, unless Jim Butt can find a right-angle HDMI adapter. I hope Jim reads this update!

The conference room painting is complete(-ish). (Tom’s word). The router should come Monday and Augustine will wire the electrical then also.

Some general interest stuff:

Patience (the cook for the team) is having trouble getting food in Mattru and had to go to Bo also today. I don’t recall any team reporting that before. Tom says Mattru and the country is “booming”, at least population wise. Our delivery trucks must not be the only ones breaking down then...
The team is already getting tired. They’re telling me they are trying to figure out what this is! Patience brings them every day. Tom didn’t say what she does with them, but come on...we all know it’s a dog bowl!

Sullay is now filling in as Tomba’s storeroom guard. That is a very important job. We keep a lot of good stuff in there.

And, speaking of population growth, Tamba has a new son today!! Congratulations, Tamba.
Day 10
The team reported they had a very productive day and only sent a couple pictures to me. We had a coordination teleconference this afternoon on the Zoom Conference app which has been set up between the Mattru Hospital and Lehigh Valley Health Network and Cedar Crest College. This will be the platform for regular information sharing and training. Our call with them included video, which was amazing considering the new wifi router from Bo is not due until tomorrow. Tom connected his PC using the hotspot feature on his cell phone. It worked OK, but we had to stop video after awhile because of screen freezing. During the call we had a snack of lime corn chips with guacamole, and the SL team had their snacks of puffed rice chips and popcorn. Yumm!
The team used the new training room for the call and tried out the new chairs and tables that Lauretta bought somehow through Costco. You saw them in pictures a couple days ago with the “testers” in them. They are the typical white plastic seats and backs and tabletop on a metal frame. No one in town has anything like them, so if they go missing, they should be easy to find.

Anyway, here is a list of what was accomplished today.

* They feel they are a little ahead of the planned schedule at this point, which is good. There was concern before they left that if enough pre-work was not done before they got there, they would be behind schedule for Team 2 to pick and finish.

* Most of the main house truss purlins for attaching the roof metal are done. Should finish those up tomorrow.

* The small trusses over the open porch kitchen area and toilet-bathroom area are fabricated.

* Two of four the steel beams that carry the porch overhang are done. The other two are fabricated and ready to be installed.
* After the beams are installed the open porch area and bathroom trusses can go up.

* They expect to start laying the roof metal (generically called “zinc” in SL) by the end of next week and continue while team 1 returns and team 2 arrives.

* The truck from Bo (that broke down yesterday) showed up with the extra cement that is needed for the cesspit and tile work. We all hope this is the last of the cement needs. It is becoming hard to get.

* The cesspit is about 48” deep and will go to about 72”. They are back to mostly digging soil after removing about 3 feet of volcanic rock.

Jose explained about the welding crew trainees mentioned a couple days ago. The local VoTech school has many students working at our site to see and learn. Jose is coordinating with the instructor on what the students can do to help the welding crew. They mostly carry material and move frames, and help the welders hold stuff to set up welds. It’s very good exposure for them.

That’s all for today. Thanks for tuning in.

**Day 11**

Theme of the Day: “Where in the world is Carmen Sandiego”
January 27. A very productive day. The remaining purlins on the large trusses were installed. The front hip roof was also installed. The tricky part was joining the two sections together. The corners of the hip meet the corners of the big trusses requiring everything to line up perfectly. It went so well I think Sean and Jose even amazed themselves.

Meanwhile, the masons started the kitchen area knee walls and got the north and west walls finished.

But they weren’t done yet! The welders and carpenters continued and soon the wooden purlins were flying up on top of metal purlins. (The zinc roofing sheets get screwed to the wood. The wood purlins are held to the metal purlins by little metal purlin tabs that are welded to the metal and screwed to the wood)

Of course, all the metal had to be painted with rustproofing and the wood had to be sealed with preservative to keep termites away. All done.

Late in the day they started staging the trusses up on the kitchen and bath area.
Over at the conference room Augustine, his son Claudius, and their crew wired the lights and outlets. They need a little carpentry work in the morning to mount the fans but once that’s done, they’ll have the whole room done in no time.

Bishop Pessima, head of the UBC church in Sierra Leone, and his assistant Justin Marva stopped by to see the work. They were very excited about the quality of work. They also discussed their plans for the hospital. Bishop Pessima has been a big supporter of Centennial and the hospital and also of our efforts.

Only three days left but it looks like the roof structure will be done by the time we leave. Even the zinc roofing may get started soon.

A little plumbing work is needed in the bathrooms and Sean and Chiara are looking to do survey work on Wednesday. Tom hopes to get to Centennial on Tuesday.

Of course, the generators continue to be a challenge - the diesel generator that had the filter replaced blew that new one out. It’s back in operation but definitely a lesson in ‘Do your maintenance!!’

And lastly, our poor MiG welder continues to roam the planet. Take a close look at the locations and dates on DHL’s tracking. Everywhere but Sierra Leone! (Sorry... I couldn’t copy and paste his image for some reason. It turns out it started in UK, then Germany, then Belgium, and now is in Nigeria. At this rate it should be in Freetown when all the welding is done. Go figure!)

**Day 12**

Theme of the Day: “Build the staff housing, we will”

There was not many photos today from the staff housing job site today. It would be mostly the same-old of the work trying to finish up items you have seen. So, Tom has sent a summary with a couple pics of what is different today.

The wiring was completed in the conference room today. The TV will be rehung tomorrow. The router arrived finally and will be tested tomorrow. The second TV location is left for the second team to decide, and they can decide on the HDMI cable configuration. Notice how small this new router is in Tom’s hand. It doesn’t seem big enough to handle a teleconference. What do you think?
All the trusses are now up! Built the wall on the second-floor stairway and completed the roof section. Wooden purlins were installed on the main roof and zinc was competed half of the main building; a big accomplishment. It looks like a few more pieces of steel tubing may be needed, but we'll determine that once the hip roof on the north porch is complete.

Amazingly, the MiG welder finally arrived in Freetown and is on its way to Mattru tonight. It may never get used unfortunately.

Centennial School Check Up:
Tom and Chiara went to Centennial and gave them the soccer uniforms. Sengeh on the left, is principal of the school.
Chiara toured the campus with Tim, a finance guy on the medical mission at MH. Tom checked the different Photo Voltaic systems as a part of our ongoing vigilance. A lizard shorted the classroom system lighting charge controller! They have a spare charge controller but need a new breaker and are being cautious in checking out the wiring and other components. The Library system is functioning well.

The well pump system controller had a lizard incident also. Apparently one of the control panel unused knockouts had gotten knocked out, so the lizards could get in. They had never sealed when it happened. Tom sealed everything with silicone caulk.

Abdul has been manually shutting the well pump on and off. He mentioned that the well pipe was clogged with mud one day. We’ll have to get Bill MacNair to discuss that with them.

The admin office is running off pure solar with the batteries disconnected. Abdul stated someone had changed settings while he was away; interesting. In the short term, they may use some of the batteries from the library system while they get new batteries for the admin system.

The Centennial campus looked great. They've really been focusing on picking up trash and landscaping. While at the school today we ran into Christian, on the right, is one of our longtime volunteer students who is also working on his teaching degree.
Wrapping up Mattru Hospital

Tom discussed possible sites for next projects with Abdul Karim, Hospital Administrator, Dr. Yoder, Dr. Toupin and Bishop Pessima, Head of the UBC Church in SL. The possible projects are a central stores room and a surgical suite addition. Sean and Chiara will survey the sites Wednesday to collect information we will need to analyze, evaluate, and design a project.

That’s all for today. Thanks for following along.

Day 13

Theme of the Day: Hello, Big Ass Fans, how may I help you”

Today, the final pieces of the roof structure were installed with only intermediate supports for the screen on the porch to be added. There is corrugated “zinc” on the west side of the main roof, the front hip, the second story, and the kitchen/bath area. We will get good pictures Thursday.

The cesspit was completed at 75” deep, after the diggers got through the rock layer. It looks like there is good on the bottom of soil and most of the walls to help leaching.
Channels were cut in the floor for the drain pipes in the bathroom, and some pipes may be installed tomorrow.

The MiG welder finally arrived after its international travels. You make a lot of contingency plans, since you never know what will work out. Although it didn't play a big role on this installation, the machine may be a star on the next project.

The router had a little test today in the conference room, and it works very well. Tomorrow we may try another Zoom call and maybe even with video. Chiara has been working on the manual for the conference calls and has recruited CHO Abdulie as her first trainee. No problem...start with the boss!

Speaking of the conference room, we used it to show Jim Saake's video from last year's construction to all the workers. It was a big hit. (if you haven't seen it, check it out at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PXnyKFyLF_U&feature=youtu.be

We also started looking into assessing some sites for future projects. One potential project is a new surgical suite addition. We talked with the staff about the location for it, and several locations came up. Sean raised some great points and the east side of the existing operating theater is looking more desirable. We'll have to get Jim Butt to do shading calculations for some of the solar panels, but other than that it's looking ideal.

Another project is the central storage facility. The site for this one will be next to Tamba's storeroom. It's a great location from a construction point of view.

Tomorrow we will go to Occupational Instruction College where the welders train. We'll take a picture of the class and then bring a few of them back with us to work on the screen for the porch.

We'll also assemble the bookshelves for the conference room, test all the equipment with the new router, then put it in the storage cabinet.
Late in the day we’ll had back to CSS to connect the charge controller that failed we reported before, and talk how to manage and replace the batteries with Principal Sengeh.

The medical missionaries left today, although one of them, Lance, a resident in Wichita, KS is here for another week. He came to dinner tonight, and it was a very enjoyable evening.

We will leave first thing Friday morning for Freetown. Our time is coming to a close here in the best place in the whole universe. We are excited to have completed the construction, but we’ll be sorry to leave. It's always a little amazing when we actually finish the crazy amount of work we set out for ourselves. It's long hours and can be challenging, but the problems we encounter are just puzzles to solve, and we have the help of a great crew of workers. The hospital staff is incredibly supportive and very tolerant of the major construction happening right on their front door.

I was talking to Dr. Ron Baker, whose father founded CSS and who worked at the hospital for many years. He offered to take us canoeing, swimming, and hiking. He said we had to make time for fun. He's right and I think we all would have enjoyed joining him but it’s hard to explain, though, that we were doing the fun thing already...designing, building, solving challenges, and making plans with skilled craftsmen...that IS our fun. Watching a building appear before your eyes, knowing you are providing a home for people doing life-saving work, all while having a good time? It's hard to beat that.

More tomorrow. Thanks for reading.

**Day 14**

The team was very busy all day wrapping up what was planned for this trip and prepare for Team #2 to arrive there on February 7th to complete their tasks. There have been pictures and lists of items Team #2 will shop for in Freetown when arrive. The team also had a guest for dinner tonight, don’t know who, that took up their time. So, Tom hopes to have more details from today for me to report on tomorrow. And, because the team is traveling tomorrow back to Freetown, there is always interesting events to talk about on Saturday’s final report.

Here is the cast of characters for this trip. I hope I have the names right. Standing in the back row left to right is Sean and Chiara, Jose, Sullay, Joe, and Tom. Left to right squatting Augustine and his son, Ahmed, and Tamba.
Two more reports and this team is done. Thanks for following.

**Day 15**

Themes of the day: I still have your trousers. “After Work” “Auntie Bea”

With a mad dash to complete an onduline sample installation, an intense roof flashing session, a quick maternity ward staircase/railing modification, and a challenging conference call training session, the team finally wrapped up the job.

Tom didn’t have time to get back to CSS as planned, as he was on onduline duty, but hopefully he can work things out over the phone.

Tamba and Tom did come to terms on some plumbing issues in coordination with John Cecchini on Team #2...

Team #1 then traveled to Freetown today and made it safely. But before they left, they asked the crew installing the Ondulin siding on the gable ends for picture of how they install it. This is what they got!
You can see the new porch screening is installing on the front of the house.
The team headed back to the Mattru guest house for another outstanding meal from Patience. They were joined by medical missionary Lance who is a lot of fun and has many interesting stories. We hope to connect him with the rest of the medical skills exchange program.

Leaving Mattru is always challenging, and this time proved no exception. A ‘quick’ stop at the ex-hospital grew and grew. Finally, everyone was ready to go. The team decided to take the new Bo road rather than go the ferry crossing/mining road route. Joe, sit turned out, was worried about his car and wanted to go on smoother roads. They made great time, going faster than google maps projected...until they got to (I don’t know what Tom has typed here) "BBC th Dec" triad closure and had to turn back. Fortunately, there was an alternate route. Unfortunately, the route christened by Sean as the “BMX road”, proved to be quite challenging. Eventually they made it to the Bo-Freetown highway and moved along nicely. When they got close to Freetown, they chose the quicker mountain road to the beach. Joe stopped for gas at the usual gas station at the top. After getting gas, his car wouldn’t start. It turned out to be a loose battery connection-so simple they were back on track in no time. Things went well until, just miles from the hotel, Joes cv joint started smoking. Apparently, the mechanic had used some random grease on it, and it had liquified. After letting the cv joint cool they made it to the hotel.

After checking in at the Guest House in Freetown, they went to their favorite restaurant on the beach Roy’s for some needed drinks and good food. They did notice a change when they showed up. Roy’s doesn’t take any other currency except Leones! Go figure that.
Tomorrow, is Cleaning Day throughout Sierra Leone until noon. The team will sleep in, do some shopping for themselves and our April Auction Extravaganza, and walk on the beach! If I have some interesting pictures and information from them tomorrow, I’ll post it. They are due home on the 3rd. Thanks for staying with us on this trip.