**Report on behalf of the Health Sub-Committee for the AGM - 23rd Oct 2021**

Little did those of us who travelled to Sierra Leone on the 14th February 2020 realise how much the world would change in the space of a few weeks. However, we did have an inkling that Sierra Leone was taking the news about a virus very seriously as - for the first time - we were asked to complete a questionnaire on the flight about our recent health and, on landing at Lungi , were met by a group of medics wearing surgical masks who checked the questionnaire and took our temperatures before we were allowed near customs. I believe this action came from the experience of Ebola suffered by S.L. a few years ago and whilst not completely Covid 19 free, the virus has certainly been contained. How strange for us that on travelling home and changing flights in Brussels to be joined by those travelling from China, that there was no checks at Heathrow whatsoever and, in fact we left the airport in record time. I make no further comment on this!! What I can report is that there have been very few patients in Hastings with Covid 19. So far as vaccination is concerned there appears to have been a certain amount of reluctance to take it up when offered but throughout Sierra Leone the Health Ministry have been administering the vaccine when available. Sallu Lansana who works with the Health Ministry was regularly travelling all over the country leading on this.

During our visit we were able to see the Health Centre as busy as always and confirm the need for a purpose built Triage and Isolation Unit and, as will be seen from the photographs, the building is rapidly moving towards roof level. We also agreed the ground repairs to the area near the gates, The TB/HIV building - which was the small separate building which had no purpose - we have been able to enlarge and is now in full use meaning that the patients are seen away from those attending other clinics in the main building.

I have continued to be in touch with Alice Thornton since our visit and what follows is her report to me this week (it did include further needs at the Health Centre but I have explained to her that the Link does need to meet its other commitments to our Schools etc.)

*Hastings Community Health Centre is peripheral health unit with a catchment community of seventeen (17) communities and a catchment population of twenty thousand three hundred thirty nine (20,339). The staff capacity is forty-eight (48) in number, of which thirty-one (31) are pin code staff and seventeen (17) are non-pin code* (this figure includes volunteers I believe) *These staff are assigned into three different shifts, which are; early, late and night shifts.*

*To ensure the continuity of care for general and COVID-19-related health cases, protecting healthcare workers from contracting the virus is paramount but there is a gross shortage of personal protective equipment in Hastings community health centre throughout the pandemic. Healthcare workers must have access to the equipment they need to do their jobs safely and effectively*

*During the pandemic patients were very scared to go to the tertiary hospitals so even if they were referred by us for further management they will prefer to stay than to go so all of this led to a high workload for such limited pin code staff in the health facility. Beds were quite inadequate to accommodate patients both in the maternity and the observation ward for observation at that moment. Since there is no staff quarter for staffs, it was very challenging for us to travel from our homes to the health facility more especially during the lockdowns.*

*During the pandemic Hastings health facility developed health promotion activities in several communities, sharing information with them on health practices and preventive measures.*

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Health Committee for their input previously and with whom I have been in touch individually during the past year. It is hope that we can recommence meeting together again soon - Covid permitting. I am also very grateful to my fellow Trustees for seeing the need and agreeing that we could go ahead with the building of the Triage and Isolation Unit.

CBL 23/10/21