

# Helping needy children

*The* **PANORAMA** *interview*

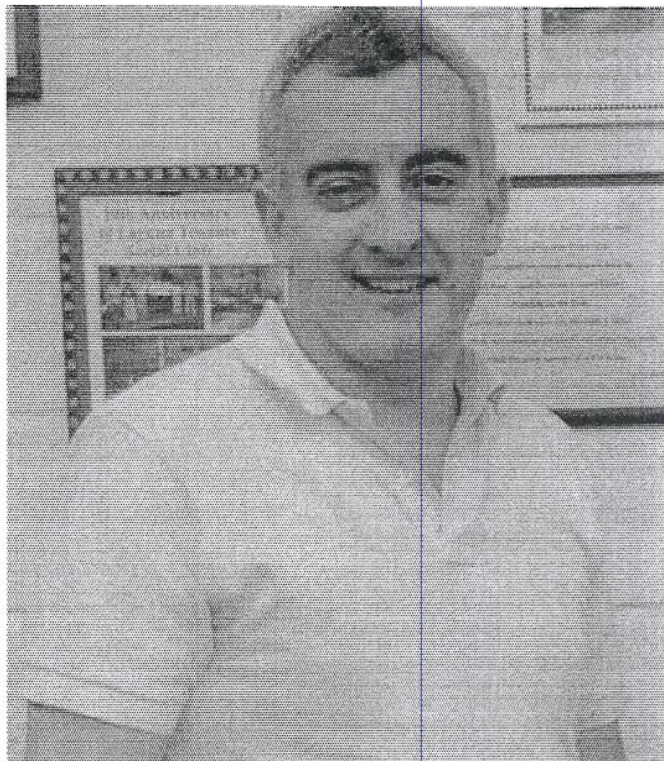
**BRIAN  
McCANN**

*interviews...*



## Jimmy Bruzon

Association for Kids in Need  
(Akin)



**You recently raised a significant amount of money to help with your direct action project in a Sierra Leone school. How much was raised and who organised it?**

Paul Earle, a local Gibraltar student undertaking one of this year's Flip Projects, (that's Future Leaders in Philanthropy, website [www.flip.gi](http://www.flip.gi)) recently organised a bingo event to raise funds for the Akin Sierra Leone school refurbishment project.

The bingo event proved a huge success and attracted over 180 supporters who packed the Laguna Social Club. There were a number of raffles held on the night and Paul also managed to raise funds through private and corporate sponsorship.

The Bonita Trust pledged to double the amount raised, up to a maximum of £3000, so in total we raised an incredible £6445.

**Can you summarise what the project is?**

The project basically entails supporting and im-

proving Regent Rural Primary School, which is located just outside of Freetown in Sierra Leone.

We have sent a number of useful items to the school and have since late 2009 begun fundraising in order to refurbish the building and improve facilities all round.

**How did you find out about the school and its needs?**

I travelled to Sierra Leone with some colleagues from my work at Toyota Gibraltar Stockholdings (one of the Bassadone group of companies) in 2006. We held a 4x4 course in a rural area just outside Freetown and it was there that we came across the school.

**Does your own company help with the project?**

The company has been very supportive from day one. They allowed me to send school items which were either bought locally in Gibraltar or donated by local stationery suppliers Trico, Beacon Press and Sacarello newsagents.

The company has also supported the school financially, and the staff continually supports fundraising activities such as raffles, bingo, etc.

**What work have you been able to pay for so far?**

During 2010 we raised enough funds to partly refurbish the leaking roof. The roof was in a terrible state and classes had to be cancelled whenever it rained.

We are proud of our achievement and also realise that there is still a lot of work to be done at the school: as an example, the roof no longer leaks but the water gets in through broken windows which need replacing. During late 2010 we also purchased new blackboards, gave the school a facelift with some exterior paintwork and purchased a number of items for the home economics centre

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such as stoves, cutlery, pots, pans, etc.

**What will you be able to do with the £6445 that has just been raised?**

The money raised during our Christmas chocolate Santa and advent calendar appeal together with the funds raised through the Flip bingo event held on the 17th March and which raised £6445 will be used to build much needed toilet facilities.

We are also planning to build a much needed playground and sports play area for the children. At present the children only have a hard soil and rock surface in which to play the few sports that they can.

We will also supply the school with much needed sports equipment and would like to continue sending books to improve this vital aspect of learning.

**Is care taken to see that all of the money goes to the project rather than having any skimmed off by possibly less scrupulous people in the area?**

Akin has established a partnership with the Spanish Red Cross' country director. He is very experienced and has been working in various countries for the Red Cross. All the funds which are raised locally in Gibraltar are paid out directly to well known construction and supply companies in Freetown after careful supervision.

In this respect we are confident that every penny raised is put to good use because we have no running costs at all because we are all volunteers, here and in Sierra Leone.

**What essential work remains to be done after this current phase?**

**We would like to thank everyone who has supported us over the past year and encourage more people and companies to support the needy children of Sierra Leone - it really is a worthy cause.**

We have recently found out the school is also going to be supported this year by the Rotary Club of Thunder Bay in Canada through its links with Rotary in Freetown.

This will hopefully mean that major improvements at the school will happen during the year in terms of them having new windows, doors, paintwork and other interior improvements.

During 2011 we are hoping to build a library and a playground area and supply the school with much needed sports equipment and books to further improve standards.

**When do you think the school will be in an acceptable condition and your work there finished?**

There is always room for improvement, we do however feel that it is important to support and improve as many schools as possible in order to spread the improvements around, so to speak.

We are constantly evaluating needs with our local project coordinator who liaises with the school committee regularly. It is important to ensure that we maintain what we build or refurbish so that the school does not fall back into a state of disrepair, so it is vital we keep in close contact on an ongoing basis.

**How many pupils are there and what is the age range?**

There are 450 pupils attending this primary school

and ages range between five and twelve.

The school is not large enough to accommodate pupils and staff comfortably and conditions are very poor. In the long term we hope to be able to build an extension or have a portakabin-type classroom which will improve on the space available and the general learning environment.

**Are you looking for other worthwhile causes at the moment or is it best to concentrate on one at a time?**

We are working on Regent school at the moment and will hopefully move on to other schools as Regent school improves; our idea is to support as many schools and improve the lives of as many children as possible in Sierra Leone.

We are in it for the long haul.

**What sort of help are you looking for in Gibraltar?**

We would dearly like people to set up regular standing orders so that we can have a steady flow of funds and be able to assist the school project on an ongoing basis.

It does not have to be a huge amount donated, it's

amazing what a huge difference a small amount of money can do; the impact is enormous and it goes along way towards improving the standards of those very needy children.

Corporate sponsorship is always appreciated and we would be happy to hear from companies who may wish to adopt our project as one of their chosen for support.

We are also keen to obtain retail vouchers to raffle and ask restaurant owners and retailers in general to contact us if they would like to donate vouchers, etc.

**If anyone wants to help or donate, how do they get in touch with you?**

We would like to thank everyone who has supported us over the past year and encourage more people and companies to support the needy children of Sierra Leone - it really is a worthy cause.

Support is always welcome and much appreciated! More information on our Sierra Leone project and on how to donate funds or how to become involved in this project can be found on the Akin website [www.akincharity.org](http://www.akincharity.org).

Alternatively, please phone me on 57631000 or email [jimbuzon@hotmail.com](mailto:jimbuzon@hotmail.com).

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