News

Gibraltar charity helps school in Sierra Leon

Gibraltar charity Association for Kids in Need (Akin) and Toyota Gibraltar, are providing help to a run-down school in poverty-stricken Freetown, Sierra Leone

BRIAN MCCANN

Toyota in Gibraltar, part of the Bassadone group, provides most of the vehicles that are used in disaster areas throughout the world, after adapting them for various situations.

One of their staff, Jimmy Bruzon, came into contact with the primary school when he was in Freetown giving a course on 4x4 vehicle-use to local NGOs, and since then a variety of goods has been sent there, stowed away in the vehicles being delivered from Gibraltar. Once in Freetown, the international organisations that have ordered the trucks deliver the supplies to the 450-pupil Regent School.

This has been going on for the last three years, and Jimmy says, "We began sending stationery items in vehicles which were being shipped to Freetown in 2007 and have also sent many other items such as donated TV sets, a computer and scanner, a microwave, a photocopier, video players, DVD players, miscellaneous kitchen items, a small electricity generator, and even sports equipment, amongst other items. Everything is welcome and appreciated by the school."

Jimmy says that they will continue to send useful items whenever possible, but their main concern at the moment is to get the school refurbished. "The school desperately needs repairs, especially new toilet facilities and extensive repairs to the roof, ceiling, windows and doors," he said. "At times rain penetration is so bad that lessons have to be abandoned."

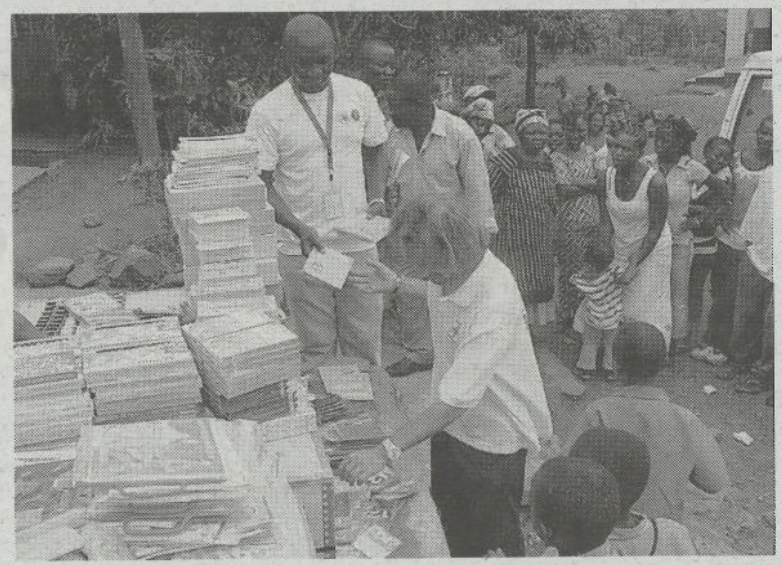
The total cost of the work is estimated at just over £15,000, and Akin has been raising money in Gibraltar through raffles, bingo nights and sponsorship. AkIn is involved in several other overseas charity projects, including Nepal, Sri Lanka and Tanzania.

They have also secured the help of two Spanish NGOs which are working in Sierra Leone. The Medicos del Mundo programme manager, Massimo Salvadori, is liaising with the school headmaster, the local Regent community council and with construction companies. "We also have the invaluable help of Natxo Garcia, a Spanish Red Cross water and sanitation expert who we know through our work contacts," said Jimmy. "Having their support will allow us to make the right decisions and ensure the best outcome."

At present, the group is asking for vouchers from retail outlets and restaurants to raffle, and to receive donations from individuals and organisations alike. Volunteers are also sought.

■ **INFORMATION** | There are more details on the Akin website.
www.akincharity.org
✆ (00 350) 20052919, 20059131 or 57631000

POVERTY STRICKEN. THE SCHOOL NEEDS ALL SORTS OF ITEMS



DISTRIBUTION. A HAPPY TIME FOR THE SCHOOL