

April 2007

Year 2, number 2

Newsletter Friends of Masanga



With this newsletter for 'Association Friends of Masanga' we hope to give you an impression of what's going on at our hospital in the jungle 200 km from Freetown in Sierra Leone.

You can also stay current with the news on our website

www.masanga.dk.

If you wish to donate, contact our treasurer povl.schoen@lions.dk with your name and address.

This newsletter was written by Knud Anker Iversen, Peter Bo Jørgensen, Bent Børresen, Lene Gall.

Translation: Ole Hansen.

Next issue in August.

Address for any contributions to the newsletter: mec@mec-ht.dk.

Successful AGM.

There was a good turnout at the Annual General Meeting of Friends of Masanga with 45 members attending.

The Board received full support for its further work, and that was a fine feeling. We thank the many members, who have given their backing to the project and especially the many, who give of their time.

As it appears in our Newsletters, we have gotten off to a good start, and we expect the good development to continue. It's no secret that to succeed in this, we need a lot more money. Yet again thanks to everyone, and foremost to our main sponsor The Lions Clubs dis-

trict 106A.

Peter Bo Jørgensen, Chairman.

For just 30 DKK a day, you can ensure that a child receives treatment at the children's ward for one day, is one of the things Dr. Peter Bo Jørgensen told the AGM.



Fixed monthly contributions?

At the AGM five members volunteered to call all of our members to inquire whether they would be interested in supplying monthly donations to the hospital. Payments would be by automatic payment service 'Betalingsservice'.

We will therefore contact you all by phone during the end of May, or early June. We hope you will receive us well.

We will of course fully understand if you want to limit your obligations

to the annual membership fee.



From one of the wards. It is Dr. Else squatting beside the patient.

Bequests and gifts.

Friends of Masanga is in the process of being approved by the authorities as a privileged recipient of testamentary bequests, so that these need not pay death taxes. Our friends will in the future be able to leave part of their estate to the Masanga hospital. If you wish to do this, we can offer legal assistance.

No death dues if you bequeath your assets to Masanga Hospital.



Ever more patients at Masanga Hospital.

Sometimes there are many people in the waiting rooms. It requires some patience, but it is usually a minor problem compared to suffering lasting illnesses.

We are now receiving on average 2500 patients every month at our hospital.

Successful photo-exhibition at Høje-Taastrup Town Hall.



We had the premiere of our photo exhibition of 20 Photo-stats in A3 format at the Town Hall on March 12th – 23rd. It was very well received, and it has now been moved to The Surgical Clinic.

You too can borrow the material for an exhibition. Send your ideas to Dr. Peter Bo Jørgensen, The Surgical Clinic.

Children's Ward now up and running

During February we renovated one of the old wards for receiving our first child patients. On this ward there is room for 15 children. Including the existing ward we can now soon admit up to 40 children at a time.

The children can be admitted for up to 3 days for observation. Those admitted are primarily suffering from diarrhoea, pneumonia and severe malaria. The object of the admission is to stabilise them enough for them to continue their treatment at home. If the children do not get better we transfer

them to the children's ward run by Doctors without Borders in Magburaka.

On our website www.masanga.dk you can read the travelogues from one of our volunteers Nunu Lund, who is attached the children's ward until May 1st.

Status for the volunteers: Nunu Lund and Martin Kjær Andersen will return May 1st. Morten Jess and Rasmus Dahlin will remain until August 1st.



The Children's ward before



.... and after the renovation

Report from Dr. Else.

Else Iversen is a doctor at The Danish National Hospital (Rigshospitalet), and member of the Board of AFOM. She spent three weeks at our hospital during February. Here she conveys some of her impressions.

It was with some trepidation that I left Kastrup Airport an early winter morning on the trip to Sierra Leone. I was excited about seeing Sierra Leone and Masanga, which I had heard a great deal about and worked for on the Board.

I am a physician and I was to help Peter perform a series of hernia operations. It went far beyond my expectations and I was very impressed at how you could perform even major surgery under local anaesthesia. And yet I have to report, that the first word I learned in Temne the local language in Masanga was OBANG which means OUCH. But the patients coped very well and many had come from far away to get their operations. Money is tight in the country and many came to us, because we were their only chance for an operation since we would do it for free.

He made a great impression.

One of the patients that made the greatest impression was a patient that we did not operate. He approached me on the sole evening that we had finished our scheduled eight operations a little early. The time was about 6:30 PM and he told me that he had a problem that was destroying his life. "So what is it?" I asked. "Well I have this great big hernia, and I have no money for the operation, so Masanga is my only hope." I explained to him that we couldn't operate any more people this day, but that he could be scheduled for the next time. There is an amazing need and you are completely humbled to be able to make that much difference in other peoples' lives just by doing the things you have been trained to do.

Impressive staff.

My greatest impression though was of the hospital staff. They were incredibly dedicated and just wishing to bring the hospital back to its former splendour

and efficiency. It is difficult for me to single out anyone in particular, but I must mention Abu, our African doctor who does an enormous job. He sees and treats some 100 patients every day and always has a smile for you. That is such a contrast to medical work and stress back in Denmark.

Another person that I grew to like very much is B.S. Konte who is our lepra-assistant. He lost his wife during the civil war and his two youngest daughters were abducted by the rebels. He managed to get his daughters back, so he is now the single father of four teenage children all attending school in Freetown. What was most compelling to me was his outlook on life, his ability to forgive and move on. I was impressed with the will to live of these people, and their wish to go on unimpaired by bitterness over their loss. I felt very small and a bit like a spoiled Dane in my meetings with the victims of war, and I hope that I and others can learn from these people.

I lost a part of my heart to Masanga and its people, but left the hospital a far richer person.

And with the certain knowledge that I must return someday ...



Dr. Ellen didn't work all the time. There was time for a break where she could ponder life.

Major wish: Establishing solar energy.

Each day the generator runs for three hours, but it would be better if it could run 24 hours a day. But this would cost more money than we have just for oil. In fact we spend more money on energy than on salaries. That is why it is such a high pri-

ority for us to install solar cells or some other form of renewable energy. We are currently in discussions with “Engineers without Borders” who we hope can help us.



Job profiles for volunteers on the website.

The young volunteers currently in Masanga are doing a fantastic and inspiring job. It has meant that other young people are now applying for a chance to help out. We are now trying to set out job profiles that people can apply for. We hope also to establish collabo-

ration with a Danish Folk High School for initial training, so that young people get a more formalised education. The volunteers pay all their expenses themselves. It should be possible for young people to use a stay at Masanga as part of their

education – or to achieve extra points for admission to university.

That is why in the near future we will put up on the website a number of job profiles, which people can reflect on.

During the summer

holidays we expect to have two trainee nurses helping out at the hospital as part of their education.

Apart from volunteer work in Africa, we are also seeking assistants to help us in Denmark with the fundraising.

We aim to make the hospital more self-sufficient.

It is not a run-of-the-mill normal hospital we are running. Apart from helping people to a better health, there are a number of workshops that partly helps the hospital, and partly makes an effort for the local community.

There is a carpentry shop, a tailor shop, a computer shop and a renovation shop. In all of the four shops it is the aim to offer help to the peo-

ple of the district – for pay. This payment is supposed to help out with the hospital finances. We expect that these incomes will pay for an increasing part of the running costs of the hospital.

The carpentry shop is furthest along – mainly due to the work of Martin Kjær Andersen one of our young volunteers.

Local garbage collection

“The Big Five – Masanga Social Club” That’s the name of a new active association formed in Masanga town. They have assumed the responsibility for the garbage collection in the district. The garbage will be delivered to our incinerator, which we expect to have running some time during the summer. Apart from a secure incineration of the garbage it will also produce energy for the hospital.

Support the hospital by buying a beautiful reproduction made by local artist Artero Wistremundo. Price 300 Dkr.

The reproduction can be bought in the Fair Trade-shop Høje Taastrup Boulevard 47. Open every day 12-17, Saturday 10-14.

