

Jan - March
31st 2019



"Le Chéile Twasonga Mbele - Together We Move Forward"

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IN THIS ISSUE

Issue 4

Le Cheile Africa Newsletter Jan 1st to March 31st 2019

"Le Cheile Africa was established as a non-profit organization (NGO Reg No, OP.218/051/17- 250/10860) by Derry Desmond and his partner Mary Kigo

Our mission is working towards a better tomorrow. Whose purpose is working, learning together and moving forward with local communities. Our four thronged purpose is as follows;

* Encourage community participation.

* Build healthier lives by enhancing the dignity and quality of life.

* Identify projects, resources and assist in their coordination.

* Enable Self sustainability to all we assist Le Chéile is a non-profit organization governed by an active 6 member volunteer board of directors (including two of the organizations founders). We offer a variety of services to meet the needs of those we serve. Our programs include:

* Provision of quality healthcare services through medical clinics/outreaches, mental health clinics, physical and occupational therapy, wellness programs (Yoga &

Mindfulness), Mother and Child care, Immunizations & HIV/AIDs support programs.

- * Education for disadvantaged and vulnerable children.
- * Disability Care programs which entails early intervention programs for children born with disabilities, physio and therapy services, social groups, home visits and carer to carer trainings.
- *Reproductive Health & Menstrual Health Management: Family Planning, Menstrual Health Education. Youth Friendly Services and Counselling

* Community Development projects like environment conservation, deworming programs, micro loans, sustainable IGAs, WASH programs, Community Sports activities, Peer Education and mentorship programs for children.

* Volunteer programs: Including Accommodation plus the option of Safari /Hiking /Site seeing ETC.



For weekly updates follow us on Facebook
www.facebook.com/lecheileafrica

Container Finally Arrives in Solai



At last after 5 weeks at sea and over 6 weeks at port in Mombasa the container finally arrived in Solai

A very tiring, Stressful process not one we will be taking up any time soon again or ever to be honest
Thanks to everyone in Ireland and Kenya for their help getting Container across the line was a really tough one to be honest

Once again
Thanks to everyone for their unreal generosity towards our Container appeal

The Goods
Donated will really have a positive impact on the community of Solai and surrounding

areas, From Clothes/Toys /Books donated to the larger items of Fridge-Freezer, Hospital Equipment which in time will all be used to kit out our

In-patient and Maternity unit once funding becomes available

Not forgetting our New Mode of transport Le Cheile Van which has already has been used in an emergency really was the difference in saving a life

Being a small organization help like this is priceless..



Disability Program Update

The Disability Program really is growing from Strength to strength

The monthly socials are held on the 1st Friday of every month and really are one of the highlights to this program where everyone get to meet, have a laugh, lunch along with the more Serious bits like Table Banking (Mini Credit Union) ran by the members themselves overseen by Caroline who works with Disability Groups in Nakuru County

On a monthly basis all the members Disability needs are covered i.e. Meds, Cost of seeing a Specialist Consultant + Transport to see same etc. by Le Cheile

Over the next few months we will continue the roll out of Our KuKu (Chicken) and fruit tree project which so far has been a real success story along with other training programs.

Also we are working tirelessly on getting everyone there Government Disability Card a real slow process so much red tape

Fr John called to our March Social and really stole the show with his jokes, prayers all in Swahili I may add

The over cost of running this program is approx. €250 a month and we are always on the lookout for a Partner /Sponsor for same





who work in the big farms etc.

Clinic Update

The last few months have been tough here in Solai no Rains means no money i.e. increased hardship, poverty, sickness etc.

With this in mind we launched our Health Care Plan ,Yes it's an additional expense, can we afford it well honestly not really but one we felt we had to do such is the need of the community

The plan insures all who sign up to same get all their out -patient needs attended too .No questions asked

The plan is going very well with over 100 families signed up so far the roll of this plan will continue over the next few weeks

Promoting this plan meeting after meeting with local chiefs their area members along with local workers

Well mainly Mary doing all the talking as all in Swahili and Kikuyu explaining the benefits of this plan.. I just introduced myself say a. Wee bit and the rest well all done by Mary.

The feedback from the community is very positive...and so far it looks the plan will be a major success

Can see it already in footfall to the clinic.

On April the 5th the Clinic will have been one year open and with the soli dam Disaster anniversary coming on May 9th it is going to be a hard time for the community one we see very day at the clinic the recovery here will take years a life maybe never, Word cant desrcied the pain .anguish , heart ache suffered here .





Sharon Njoki the 7 year old Girl who has captured the hearts of so many

The day is here..we were utterly lost for words .myself and Mary even shed a tear a really touching moving moment O my a Big Big thanks to Lennox' Hearing. Health Care Cork .for donating a pair of hearing aids.

As Sharon (7 year old girl) heard her 1st few words you should see the smile on her face the joy .the excitement she could hear us .. She beamed like a ray of sunshine / like an angel in the sky.. Words cannot describe this moment. As Mary put.the hearing aids on Sharon. She could. Hear her mother's voice for the 1st time in years.. Her grandmother overjoyed. Myself won't lie while taking photos there was tears in my Eyes what an emotional moment..

A true miracle unfolded before our eyes.. Sharon could hear thanks the generosity of Francis and the Lennox

A Simple Success Story Thanks To the Kindness and Generosity of the Lennox Family and Ber Desmond



Family of Lennox Hearing health Care Cork

Sharon's speech is improve all the time .this beautiful girl now has a real

Opportunity to enjoy life as other kids around her

As you can see from d photos the joy

..the utter disbelief yes yes Sharon can hear us ..

This was a. day that will live with us for many a. Year .can see wait see the change this is making in Sharon's life.. Watch her grow and hear the wonder of the world all around her..

Thanks also to John Mul contacting Lennox's.

Jess for offering to cover DHL cost..but Caroline saved the day here and brought them to Kenya with her on her visit to Nairobi ..

Following up on our visits to Sharon we discover her

Grandmother hearing was also an issue, but here down to age so again we set an appeal and it was answer quickly and a pair of hearing aids were donated by Ber Desmond

A family's life truly changed for the better Thanks to the Support of Le Cheile Supporters and well wishers

Thank You

A special thanks To Claire's Hair Salon, O Mahonys and Ross's Centra Watergrasshill .for allowing Le Cheile loose change box's in their premises. We really do appreciate this kind gesture as every cent / euro goes a long way to helping us maintain and grow our projects.

If you Know any other local business that might be interested in helping us re loose change box's etc we would be more than delighted there support.

Thanks again to Claire's Hair Salon, O Mahonys and Ross's Centra Watergrasshill plus Rob Knapp for his brilliant Design work ..



Up Coming Le Cheile Fundraising Events so Far?

Well as Derry will be back in Ireland in Mid May we have a few Fundraising events organized and would love if you could attend a few,be good fun ,have a laugh and met fellow Le Cheile supporters an amazing team you all are without your support and help we could not continue to do what we do ,So thanks again

Events

June 2nd Concert in Art Centre WGH for Le Cheile and Homeless Help and Support Cork

June 4th :Hill Albion Reunion Game / GetTogether 2.30pm (Full details to Follow)

June 6th: Fun Run Walk in Moanbawn Wood WGH

June 9th..BBQ time, at the Desmonds 12 Woodlawn WGH,



Emergency Medical Home Care – Go Fund Me Appeal

Over the last few weeks /Months on the ground here in Solai Kenya in the Rift Valley in East Africa

I have also seen poverty , hardship and illness on a scale I have never experienced in my life on my many home visits . From seeing people bed ridden , various illness from Cancer / AIDS / Chronic arthritis and many other unexplained illness , Its heartbreaking knowing that these people's quality of Life and care can be improved sad to say it's all down to Money rather the lack of it in these peoples cases , I have met 15 people during my many home visits that urgently need our help and support .Time is not on their side they need help now and with your support we can really improve these people quality of life and save a life

The rain haven't come we thought a few weeks ago they had but that was a false dawn , No Rains no water for life stock / farms to grow crops etc .,People ferry water up to 6 miles from Government /Community watering stations to drink and even then honestly it's not great due to its high level of salt in it, But once Boiled etc. its safe enough to drink so we are informed ?? ,In the distance Lake Solai is about 7 miles from us /undrinkable lake due to salt /Sulfur beautiful to look amazing scenery , but highly toxic even to animals

So as you can see life here is tough , But over the few Weeks -Months one



section of society really has hit me hard ,Can't seem to get them out of my mind and we really need to act now as time is not on their side , Some have Cancer, AIDS /HIV, Chronic arthritis / Bedsores and many Unexplained illnesses. But all have one Sad Sad Thing in common all are suffering from lack of support, Suffering so so Much it's hard to get them out of my mind

A Typical Case:

Person is Bed ridden 24/7 Room they sleep in a Room well how can i describe definitely not fit for a human being to sleep in /Seen animals her kept in better condition. Also no Toilet facilitates or water and being bed bound need I say any more , No Cleanliness-Hygiene now even the basics to wash ones hands. The family of 5 lives in that single room and depends on well-wishers for food.

Funds Raise will Provide

- >Improve their quality of Life through doing up there rooms to make them hygienic
- >A mattress to sleep on
- >Getting the Doctors to do a weekly house call,
- >Cover their meds and dietary needs (Ex Le Cheile)
- >Provide Transport to those that need Specialist care
- >Just doing what needs to be done as each case here has their own specific needs It's something

I can't seem to get out of my mind ,All down to Poverty / Illness / Bad luck so the time here to Act Is Now,

Over all there are 15 people that need this help now .so the aim is to raise if possible €2500 this is my personal aim before I head home in mid-May

[Link to appeal](#)

<https://www.gofundme.com/emergency-medical-home-care?>



Solai Sharks

Solai sharks Le Cheile Sport for All program, it more than a sports program it's an initiative to give the Kids of Solai a place to leave the outside world behind for a few hours a week ,

We look after Boys and Girls from 15 down with over 90 kids taking part every sat so far, Numbers really exceeded our expectations

Over the next few weeks we set simple structures in place so we get to see who is who and slowly help each and every one of them as best as we can

It's not all about sport it's about inclusion. Fun, teamwork, leaving the hardship of life behind them for a few hours at least .At the moment we doing Soccer and Athletics but aim to roll out Rugby ,GAA (Football + Hurling Skills) Rounder's and other fun games

Glad to say a few locals have come on board to help us with coaching here

Thanks to Watergrasshill UTD and Watergrasshill GAA for their support to Le Cheile to date hopefully it will grow with us as we roll out this Sports For all Program .

Also hopefully a few more Watergrasshill clubs will come on Board

Also Thanks to Gael Scoil Dehide Fermoy for the Jerseys and all the Chairs-Desks etc. The Jerseys look the Bizz to be fair



Hope you all enjoyed the read and we do apologize for any spelling mistake etc.

Thanks again for your ongoing support and do if ya can make one of our Fundraisers so we can meet up and chat + also if you could share our GoFund Me link we would be most grateful

Here it is again

<https://www.gofundme.com/emeergency-medical-home-care?>

So will Finish up this newsletter on piece about Mary “ On Daily Inspired Life” a fitting way to finish off this Newsletter with the Solai Dam Disaster Anniversary coming up next month ,Know it is a bit of long read but really does give an insight in to that tragic Fateful Night

Real life hero story. In one night Mary went from being a shy, unknown volunteer in her community to the "The Lady That Saved Many Lives"

When the police car arrived at the clinic with the first survivor, a one-month old baby boy, I had no idea what would lay ahead for myself and the clinic as the night unfolded. I looked down at the lifeless body of the child. White foam dripped from his mouth. His breathing was faint. I was shaking, confused. I had no doctors to call on. The two doctors scheduled to work at the clinic had fled the scene to safety. I prayed, "Oh God, please help me. Don't let this precious baby die in my arms!" I was so scared. That child was in my clinic, depending on me for survival. The

commotion had started that evening around 7pm. There had been a loud bang, a massive blast. Next came an unusual breeze followed by another mysterious sound - like an ocean viciously roaring, banging against a rock face.I walked outside to investigate the sound. A panicked group of local women and children were gathering. There were more women arriving – terrified mothers with crying children clutched to their backs. With them, they brought the terrible news. Patel dam, located close to the village of Solai, 190km (120 miles) north-west of the capital, Nairobi, Kenya, had burst. The waters were sweeping away homes and claiming people with it.The news was devastating. Shouts and screams grew louder. Phones started ringing. People were calling friends, family and neighbors, alerting others of the impending doom.I looked around the clinic. Inside and out. So many women and children had rushed to the clinic for refuge. What could I do to help them? Could they swim? How was I going to swim? I don't know how to swim. My mind raced, my thoughts tormented me. I thought of Derry. I thought of the Solai community and my family. And what about Le Cheile Africa, and all the efforts we'd gone to, to raise money to open the clinic. We had just opened the doors of Le Cheile Africa five weeks earlier. Anxiety gripped at me as I prepared for death. My hands shook as I texted my fiancé Derry. I wanted to hear his voice for one last time. I was too terrified to call my parents. I knew my dad would be devastated by what was happening. I prayed silently, "Oh God, please forgive me for my sins". I continued to shake uncontrollably. I was having trouble

breathing. Was this going to be the end? I took a couple of puffs from my Asthma puffer. Breath in, breath out. I took deep breaths and then I heard a voice speak from my heart, "*Mary, you may feel terrified inside, but you have to be strong. These women and children, and the elderly gathering at the clinic are frightened and desperate. They need you.*" I looked down at the precious baby boy in my arms. A renewed energy engulfed me. I felt a presence guiding me on how to act. Thoughts and ideas began flooding into my mind like the dam waters that had brought this child to me. I held the baby close to my chest to transfer the heat from myself to him. I started clearing his airways and removed the mud and debris from his fragile body. I patted him on his back.

I pleaded and begged that child would not die in my arms.

It was dark. The electric lines had been knocked down by flooding waters. One of the local women held up her phone light as I tried resuscitating the baby. I asked her, "Please, go boil water for us so we can clean the baby. It will be easier to clear his airways". She ran next door to her home and started a bonfire. She placed a big pot on it to boil water.A few minutes later we completely cleaned the baby. We wrapped him with my duvet and I held him close, cradling him in my arms. Next, the baby came out with a burp. Murky water came gushing out of his mouth. His airways were clear. I wouldn't lose this child. Slowly, slowly he started breathing and his body temperature returned to normal. I thanked God for this miracle. Seeing that baby boy

come back to life in my arms gave me the energy to keep going. Inside the clinic on the night of the disaster. Our clinic is very small - Each room 9 by 9, so we worked with the space we had. We had children, men and women in their own rooms respectively. As the co-founder of [Le Cheile Africa](#), I knew I must take charge. Our small clinic, that we'd struggled so hard to get off the ground, would become the rescue place for the community. We must fight for survival as a community. Within minutes another police car pulled up with another screeching siren. Three more children were rushed into our clinic. Their state was horrifying. They were covered in murk and mud everywhere with no clothes. Two of the children were hypothermic. I gathered all the courage left in me. I prayed the children be brave and that no lives would be lost.

Finding Courage From Within

The community say they saw a totally different Mary that night. Though I had co-founded [Le Cheile Africa](#), I personally, was very much an unknown in the community. I had always been a quiet person, working in the background. I never imagined I could take on the role of a leader. I was so wrong. I wondered how it could be possible, but the courage came when I needed it. To the community's surprise, when the survivors came pouring in, I gave instructions with authority. I directed the abled-bodied on what to do. "Please, sister get the boiled water!" "You, brother, please bring the blankets from the neighbors and give them to the families outside." "And aunty, please take this child. Hold her close, keep her

warm." I was shaking, moving with speed. The clinic was like a scene from an ER movie. I watched our clinic supplies fly off the shelves. I told myself that our clinic isn't about the supplies. We are about saving lives. And that is exactly what we did. By the end of the night I'd lost my voice, sense of smell, and I couldn't taste anything. But it was worth it! Everyone brought to our clinic, left stable and alive. No one died at our clinic that night. We saved lives.

When I Feel Like Giving Up

While those that sought refuge in the clinic survived the dam disaster, so many others didn't make it. People I had treated previously at the clinic were no more. One family who I dearly cared for, lost all their four children. It was not easy mentally. We spent every night and day offering counselling and psycho social support to that family and others that needed it. I was breaking into pieces and fell into a spate of depression. I had no one to release my emotions to, bar my fiance' Derry, who kept me sane with his loving advice and counselling. Even now, there are times when I feel like giving up. Running a small organization can be draining and stressful. [Le Cheile Africa](#) is still on its baby feet with no source of funding or support except for friends and family. It's difficult going back to the same people for support all the time. In my day to day journey I see much poverty, suffering and disease, and that motivates me to keep helping those that are in dire need. When I feel like giving up, I look to them. I personally, have been through much suffering in my life. In a way, my

character and inner person have been shaped by these experiences. I know the taste of poverty, homelessness, bullying, unemployment, sickness, being a family breadwinner at the age of 18 years old, looking after my dad and siblings. In experiencing these sufferings, I have vowed to myself and God, to always do good, treat others the way I would want to be treated. My desire when starting the clinic, was to see it grow and impact the community in Solai. The clinic is living up to its dream and making a difference in people's lives. We continue to support the survivors of the dam disaster, through healthcare, counselling, disability and mental health programs and also empowerment programs through small micro loans.

A Big Surprise - A Call From The Governor

Two weeks after the disaster there was mass for the victims. Entire communities gathered and the event was attended by high-end politicians including the president of Kenya and his deputy. I received a surprise call from the Governor, "Mary, will you be in attendance at the mass prayers? We'd like to recognize the clinic's efforts on the night of the Solai disaster." I never imagined, I would be called by the president and awarded for *Distinguished Service Rendered to the Country with a Head of State Commendation (HSC) award*. It still feels like a dream come true. When I was saving lives that night, it never crossed my mind that I might be recognized for my efforts. No, no. In my opinion, I did what was humane. That is all. There were many heroes who did amazing

work during the tragedy. Many risked lives for others.

People from different regions set-aside their differences and came together. They shared compassion, supported one another. There were men helping in the rescue mission, pulling people out of the deep waters. Women carrying children on their chests- kangaroo style. Others looking after the elderly and keeping them warm as people fled their homes. Many others spent the night looking out, to watch if waters were heading in our direction. In my opinion, the whole community gathered as heroes that night. The way we all worked together was a testament to humanity.

Our Dream Expands

Since the official recognition, I have become a hero for the Solai community. I feel so humbled. Many people come to the clinic looking for help, others come to **see the lady that saved many children**. With more people coming to the clinic for support, we need more funding to expand.

It is our intention to expand the clinic to include a maternity and in-patient ward for children and adults. We have some equipment and hopefully, we will get well-wishers that will support us with badly needed monetary donations. We also want to build a community centre that will house a library, computer room, sewing room, day-care with therapists for disabled children and adults and counselling for children and adults suffering from trauma. We are also looking to do fun sport days for kids to help with trauma, escape their daily harsh realities for

a few hours, and at the same time learn social skills. We need funding, partners, more friends, supporters and volunteers to help us realize this dream. There are big lessons in experiencing uncertainty and calamity with a sober focus - the most chaotic moments are the ones from which we can learn the most. I myself have learnt so many lessons ...

- We are so much stronger and courageous than we can ever imagine
- Humanity is full of compassion and ready to help where there is a need
- With hard work & determination, we can leave the world a better place than we found it
- That it is through many failures, you eventually find success

Today, though there is still so much to do, I thank God for the miracles that night. I'm so honored and humbled that the clinic saved so many lives. And I pray we will save many more in the future



Making a real difference
in real people's lives
 le cheile
AFRICA
"Le Chéile Twasonga Mbele - Together We Move Forward"
Every cent / euro helps
Thank you

Le Cheile Africa is a local Watergrasshill based non profit organization (CLG reg no 633699)

