



Sister Teresa McKeon : A Lifetime of Service and Education in Sierra Leone

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We, the Cluny Family, are overjoyed to announce that Sister Teresa McKeon, has been awarded the prestigious Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Working Abroad.



Sr Teresa McKeon



In 2024 Sister Teresa McKeon celebrated her 70th year of continuous service to the people of Sierra Leone, mainly in the field of education. A member of the St. Joseph of Cluny congregation, Sr. Teresa arrived by ocean liner in Sierra Leone in 1954, having just obtained her teaching degree in UCD.

Sr. Teresa's long and distinguished career led to her receiving the Order of the Rokel from the President of Sierra Leone in 2017. The citation highlighted her dedicated and meritorious service to the state in the fields of education and the development of women.

Sr. Teresa's first role in Sierra Leone was as teacher, and then principal, of St Joseph's Secondary School in Freetown, where she worked for 20 years. Following a period as Province Leader in West Africa, she moved to Bo District in the south east of the country. During the Sierra Leonean Civil War Sr. Teresa was forced to move to Guinea to carry on her work, providing continued service to Sierra Leonean refugees living in camps along the border between the two countries.

During her five years in exile, Sr. Teresa focused on supporting women and children, including through the provision of enterprise and literacy skills. On returning to Sierra Leone after the war, she was based in the Kono district. In addition to continued work in provision of primary, junior and secondary education over 20 years, she established and delivered adult education courses in the areas of business, financial management, nutrition, cooking and tailoring to thousands of women and men, providing them with access to jobs and economic opportunities in a challenging economic context.

On January 30th, 2025, the Presidential Distinguished Service Award ceremony was held in Ireland. Due to Sister Teresa's age and inability to travel to Ireland for the award ceremony at Áras an Uachtaráin (the official residence of the President of Ireland), Sister Angela Bangura, Provincial of West Africa, accepted the award on her behalf. Sister Maeve Guinan, Provincial of Ireland and Scotland, was also invited to the prestigious ceremony and dinner at Dublin Castle.



On February 5th, 2025, the prestigious award ceremony was held at Charlotte Street, Freetown, Sierra Leone. The event was celebrated by the Irish community and the Embassy of Ireland in Sierra Leone, where Sister Teresa McKeon was present to receive the Presidential Distinguished Service Award in recognition of her significant contributions to education and the empowerment of women in Sierra Leone.



This award is a recognition of her remarkable contributions to society and the enduring legacy she has created for future generations.

