

Distinguished

- Bishop Natale Paganelli
- Honourable Minister of Technical and Higher Education Prof. Aiah Gbakima
- Members of the Government, Parliamentarians, the Paramount Chiefs and Tribal Authorities
- V. Chancellor Fr. Joe Turay
- Members of the Academic Senate
- All the Authorities
- The Students that are on the way to receive the diploma

Good Morning ,

I am honoured and surprised to receive this “Doctorate Honoris Causa” and I have been asked to send you a message, as I cannot be personally present.

I am an Italian guy and as many Italians I like to talk, don't be afraid, the organizer give me 10 minutes and I will do my best to stay within this limit.

First of all, I have to tell you why we are concentrating our efforts in Sierra Leone.

We (myself and my family) are Catholics and we believe that we all are sons of the only God, so we consider that you are our brothers and sisters and as a brother and sister of us, we love you all.

When our family decided to do something for people that are in a need, it was easy to think about Sierra Leone, as we have a cousin of mine, Fr. Victor Bongiovanni, a Xaverian Missionary, who is spending his entire life for the Sierra Leoneese. He was and he still is a great example of dedication. Therefore, we decided to help him.

We were in the nineties, the period of the terrible civil war. We started to do something, but what we were doing today was destroyed the day after.

After 2002, we started to cooperate with Bishop Biguzzi. We decided to concentrate our effort at first by supporting the development of the University of Makeni, at that time called Fatima Institute, being education fundamental for the development of the country. Preparing young people to become the future new leaders. We built 3 commercial buildings at the Azzolini High Way – library – hostel for the girls – computer lab and others, to guarantee a regular income for UNIMAK

Then we got the request to support the creation of the Agriculture & Food Science Faculty inside Unimak.

Thanks to the cooperation with the Prof.ssa Sorlini, dean of one of the most important Italian University, we started the first course in 2012 and after 4 years, we got the first young Sierra Leonean obtaining the Degree in Agrifood Science, let us not forget that in the same period the country was afflicted by Ebola.

Okay this is the summary of where we came from.

Let us now go in the today project and explain briefly, what has been done

- 1) Education cannot be the final target, it must create the basis for creating value for the country
- 2) We made a proper investigation and we realised that eggs were mainly imported, but to produce eggs it was not so simple as expected:
Eggs - chicken - feed - cereals.
- 3) No feed no cereals.

We decided to support the new graduates in developing the agro-food chain from land preparation to crops cultivation, mill for feed production and layers for egg production.

To develop this project we set up an original business model.

- a) We have done a donation to the Diocesi of Makeni and to Unimak
- b) The donated money has been put into a Sierra Leone company “SBD Social Business Development”, a no profit and charitable organization, that has as trustee the Bishop and the Vice Chancellor of Unimak.
- c) The Zanchi family has the right to nominate the CEO of this company, for the time being it is myself.

I do want to underline, that we do not have any share of the company. We are taking the responsibility to use our expertise in managing companies to guarantee the optimization of the usage of all the resources and to generate value for the Sierra Leone Country not for the shareholders.

The goal is not to maximize the profit for the shareholders (NO ONE)

But

to demonstrate that in Sierra Leone it is possible to produce

- Cereals
- Feed
- Eggs

in an economic and environmental sustainable way.

Result:

- We have hired 8 graduated and 6 specialist workers
- We engage almost 100 workers for the construction of the buildings for more than 1 year
- The team learned and improved a lot
- We have more than 10.000 layers producing 9.000 eggs per day, providing fresh eggs full of vitamin to replace imported eggs with 6 months of self-life. We obtain an optimal rate of egg production equal to the European standard. That means that we supply a good feed and the layers are managed in a proper way.
- We have the mill fully operative with a capacity that can be used to produce feed for many other farms.
- We have cultivated cereal in 70 hectares but with a poor result. To improve the yield we are launching an important research.
- We develop a great synergy between Unimak and SBD. The students have the possibility to make practice in the field and not only to study on books.

Now what are the targets for this year?

- Carry on the research for the cereal production optimization
- Today the corn market price in Sierra Leone is LLE 3.800/kg. To produce a competitive feed the cost must be not higher than LLE 2.500/kg .
- In Italy we pay corn at LLE 1.800/kg but the transportation cost and more than that the cost at Freetown port increase the cost to 3.800 ÷ 4.000 kg .

Our target is to produce cereals in Sierra Leone but some component for the feed (the concentrate) must be imported at least for a certain number of years.

I recommend to the government authorities to create the condition to have a more efficient flow of goods coming in and out, this will boost the development of your country.

What are our final goals:

- To have more and more young Sierra Leoneese well educated. We must support the growth of the University
- To extend our successful experience in agrifood activity and to spread the best practice to many farmers
 - More jobs
 - More good and healthy food
- To incentive the entrepreneurial spirit of the Sierra Leoneese to develop sustainable business
- To have Sierra Leone no more depending on import of **Egg / Cereal / Feed** .

Let me now talk to the guys that receive the diploma today

- First of all CONGRATULATION
- Think about how lucky you are that with your effort and the effort of your family, you reached this important target
- But please do not consider this as the final goal. Do not put yourself at the window, waiting for somebody offering you a job.
- You must consider yourself as an engine for your country.

Take initiative, identify among the many needs that your country has and develop initiative to respond to it.

CONCLUSION

The way your country overcome the civil war, the Ebola disease, impressed me. The way Muslim and Catholic live together in peace is an example for the entire African continent.

I am confident that a country with these capabilities has the energy to speed up the development and to reach soon a much better quality of live for all the citizen.

Finally let me say a great thanks to all the Sierra Leone SBD members, to our trutes Bishop Natale Paganelli and Vice Cancelor Fr. Joe Turay, to all the experts that in a voluntary base are supporting this fantastic project and in particular to Sergio Vitali. A special thanks to Claudio Nicoli that tomorrow will return to Italy after one year.

I am proud to carry on this experience with Sierra Leone guys.

They are the present and the future of Sierra Leone!

I am sure that with these fantastic people it will be possible to build a brilliant future for Sierra Leone.

Thank you