

'We never have enough money but what else are you going to do? There are kids that have been blown up'



A youngster awaits treatment on a trolley in the hospital corridor.



A survivor being treated at the local hospital.



A nurse treats stunned survivors of the blast.



A child lies unconscious in a hospital bed.



Left: In the operating theatre after the blast. There wouldn't have been any proper anaesthesia said Dr Susan Wilson.

Above: Classmates of the dead and injured children, wait to be checked over. Although not visibly injured, some may be suffering from hearing trauma.

The people of Bushubi, Tanzania, have endured famine, natural disasters and, most recently, a terrible accident at a primary school that killed five children and left 43 others needing hospital treatment. Guernsey-founded charity the Tumaini Fund has been working in the region for years and has launched an appeal to help the victims and their families rebuild their lives, as **Shaun Shackleton** found out when he spoke to the charity's chairman and co-founder Dr Susan Wilson

W E ALL hope that our children grow up with a curiosity for life and the world around them. A trip to the beach can mean a collection of seashells resulting in a handful of acorns or sycamore seeds. Here in the so-called civilised west we can usually take this for granted. Elsewhere, perhaps not so. Earlier this month a schoolchild from the Tanzanian district of Bushubi found a hand grenade in the bush and took it into school. It detonated, killing five children and leaving 43 others needing hospital treatment. The children were between six and eight years old. Surgeons are fighting to save the leg of one boy and two children have lost an eye each. Survivors are traumatised, some physically, mostly all of them emotionally. With the government short of funds and unable to act quickly in such emergencies, the closest non-governmental organisation able to help was Guernsey-based charity, the Tumaini Fund. 'In January 2018, Tumaini will have been in Kagera, Tanzania for 15 years,' said the charity's co-founder and chairman, Dr Susan Wilson. 'There has been two years of famine, an earthquake and we've built 40 homes. We never have enough money but what else are you going to do, there are kids that have been blown up. In 15 years I've never heard of this happen.' Susan knows the region inside out and has visited there many times. She gave

some background on the area and how she thinks this tragedy could have happened. 'Bushubi is near our Murgwanza area head office in Ngara, about an hour away. In 1990, Aids came into Tanzania from Rwanda and Burundi, from men who were driven out and who raped women and girls. HIV soared from 2.8% to 28%, which left one in three families orphaned. 'Rwanda is inclined to be safe now, but Burundi is still in turmoil, with bandits coming over the border and raiding villages. Tumaini look after a family whose mum and dad were murdered by bandits, leaving five kids. 'The Tanzanian Army are well regarded and get intel on where bandits camp. You get the impression that when they find out they surround the camp and the bandits are dealt with. A distinct "if you live by the sword you die by the sword" ethos. As well as guns they use grenades, which is standard in anti-terrorist activities. The grenade must have become detached from a soldier during one of these raids. There has been no armed conflict in Tanzania since its independence in the 1960s. 'The child must have found the grenade on the way to school, didn't know what it was and when they got there took the pin out. Instantly three were dead, two others mortally wounded and 43 injured. 'Bushubi is on the border with Burundi and it is desperately dry, suffering both drought and famine. We've been working with them and we have distributed grain in Bushabi bought with money from Guernsey.' Alex Nyamkara, who is Tumaini's head

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Dr Susan Wilson

of education and who visited Guernsey this summer as a guest of Les Beaucamps High School, immediately travelled to the scene of the tragedy, as did other Tumaini workers from Murgwanza. They have been giving blood. 'I have an email from Alex,' said Susan, which she read from her phone. "Forty three children were injured and were taken to hospital" – how, I have no idea. There are no ambulances. "Twenty two children were injured but not taken to hospital – minor wounds. Eleven children are still in hospital. Worst injuries are two children who have lost their sight and one boy who may lose his leg." Alex took the photos that we have published with this story. "The others I suspect have various injuries, such as shrapnel wounds and burns, and barotrauma to the ears from the noise of the grenade going off, but I need Alex to give more info. 'If you think about 43 injured children turning up at the Princess Elizabeth Hospital, a modern, well-equipped hospital, it would be very difficult for the staff to cope. There would be perhaps one doctor for two people. 'The hospital, which is called Rulenge Hospital, a small Catholic mission hospital, probably doesn't have an anaesthetist and it will have been ketamine, diazepam, lignocaine spinal injection. They will have operated two at a time. Sometimes they won't operate on the worst, only the ones they can save.' Susan said that the first thing the hospital needs is blood, bed sheets, blankets, antiseptic, wound treatment packs and antibiotics. 'The hospital didn't even have enough bed linen for all these casualties. The children are from extremely poor families and now need new school uniforms – their old clothes were either burned or covered in blood – and also school bags and exercise books.'

Susan has already allocated £350 of non-specified funds, which were originally to go to Tumaini university students for food. 'That will buy a lot of bandages to begin with, but we'll need to know their continuing needs. On Monday last week people were coming into Queen's Road Medical Practice [Susan's workplace] with envelopes. Tumaini in America and Canada have already sent money. The

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district commissioner is expressing his thanks to Guernsey for their support for the children. 'Tumaini parish workers – who are like social workers – have already been sent out to call on the homes of the children who were injured and not taken to hospital. 'Their homes are not really suitable for open wounds,' explained Susan. 'There is no plastic surgery so their scars will remain. In the short term we can get wheelchairs and crutches from the PEH and St John's. We have a container going up from Dar es Salaam [a major city and commercial port on Tanzania's Indian Ocean coast], we're just waiting for permission. All relevant medical supplies will be reallocated to go to Rulenge Hospital.'

◆ You can make a donation to help the children from Bushubi by contacting Dr Wilson on yesunitumaini@yahoo.com. Donations, clearly marked, are also being accepted at Queen's Road Medical Practice.

Meanwhile, Tumaini's regular work goes on...

W HILE doing as much as they can for the children in Bushubi, Tumaini's commitment to its own projects continues. 'I'll be going back to Kagera in January with Sarah-Jane Allen [Tumaini committee member],' explained Dr Susan Wilson. 'We have kids training to be primary school teachers, dispensers and carpenters. There is also a lot of clean water work being done. We'll be going along with members of the Rotary Club, which Tumaini Fund USA have linked up with, and who have raised \$150,000. We will possibly be taking a Guernsey Rotarian too. We'll be looking at projects that will bring clean water to 5,000 people and also irrigation projects to help people feed themselves. The water is there, in the ground.'



A child draws fresh water from a waterhole dug by Tumaini Fund workers in Tanzania.

After 15 years of improving the lives of widows and Aids orphans in Kagera, Susan says it will be a time of reflection. 'We'll be reflecting on the impact we have made over the years and seeking ways to improve the next 15. The main thing is sustainability. If funds suddenly stop, Tanzanians will need to be self-sustaining. We're helping them to help themselves.' One such way is the dairy goat programme. 'We give a widow a pregnant dairy goat. With back-up and support, the goat produces kids. The widow signs a contract that we get back two female goats, which we rear and then take them to two more widows.' Tumaini have 100 students going to university and £80 per student

is needed. 'We need £8,000 for them to be able to eat before their government loans come through,' said Susan. They are also starting to make a push to raise around £60,000 for January for Daffari – hard-backed exercise books that secondary school children need 10 of to be allowed to continue at school – to enable their 6,000 secondary school students to remain in school. 'We are also sending out laptops. The College of FE is reconditioning them and Specsavers are donating their old laptops and computers. ◆ If you would like to find out more about ongoing and upcoming Tumaini projects, visit www.tumainifund.org.uk