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BACSECT Newsletter No 6 February 2022



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Registered charity number: 1187921

AT LAST!!

We are thrilled to report that we have at last been able to travel out to The Gambia and visit the school. It has been just two years since we last visited and much has happened since then.

The most important news is that the school is flourishing and is at nearly full capacity. Our journey out was interesting with travel from Gatwick North instead of South terminal, and a newly revamped Banjul airport with staff just getting used to having paying customers coming through! Patience is needed but all went well.

Our hotel was about half full, one of the luckier ones, as we heard that a larger one nearby with over 500 rooms only had six guests. People are still very wary about travelling to Africa even though the incidence of Covid is lower than in the UK. All the staff at our hotel wore masks and used hand sanitizers.

The school has its full number of teachers and when we had a tour around the standard of work being done by the children was excellent and would at least rival, if not better, the standards in UK schools.

The Ministry of Education inspects the school at least once a term and gives very positive feedback which is also encouraging.

Because virtually everything used by the school, including food for meals for the children, is imported the prices are rocketing with some essentials costing 100% more than twelve months ago. At the same time people's incomes have shrunk because of the lack of tourism and most families are struggling to even get the basics.

Whilst we were at the school we had a distribution of food to the local community, see photos, which was enthusiastically received!

We are pleased to report that the laptop computers are now working ok having replaced the batteries and we were able to purchase computer training books for all grades. This learning aid is new in The Gambia and Richard, the Headmaster, was most anxious to be one of the first schools to have it!!

Knowing that they have support in the UK is very important to the school as are all the prayers said for them. It is very much appreciated especially by Richard and the Teachers. One of the senior teachers was "empowered" by the rest to give us a formal speech of thanks for paying their salaries during their lockdown and supporting the school financially during these difficult times. We found that most humbling.

The 30 folding exam desks that we managed to ship out last year have been a real success, but we now have to replace the desks in the Nursery classes as they are no longer fit for purpose. How easy it will be to purchase in the UK and, more importantly, ship out to The Gambia remains to be seen. The cost of freight out from UK in containers has shot up with a container which used to cost £2000 now costing £10,000! School desks are in very short supply in The Gambia and have to come from abroad which is why we try to purchase and send from UK.

We are hopefully going back out to The Gambia again towards the end of March which will give us an opportunity to focus on purchasing books and writing material locally which will help with the cost. We will also be making some crucial decisions on major works for the buildings to prevent water ingress during the rainy season.

Richard is getting some ideas and quotes for some new roofing and hopefully we can decide when we are there in March what is to be done and, most importantly, what we and BACSECT can afford.

Please keep praying for the school and the people of The Gambia. Our prayers are needed and really appreciated.

On the next page are some photos taken during our visit showing food bank distribution Gambian style and the children in the playground and some of the teachers.



Food and clothing for distribution.



Sacks of rice and onions.



Teachers with food to be distributed.



Teachers hand out the food bags on their day off.



Sweets are given to children as a treat.



School assembly.

God Bless

Revd John Baxter
Chair of Trustees