

# Genieri Collections - Newsletter No.12 - December 2018

So that's the end of 2018, certainly a year of eclectic trials, tribulations, frustrations and achievements during our efforts. Again we've got the children to a better place in terms of health, hygiene and nutritional quality, and the job is certainly not complete yet.

## Funding

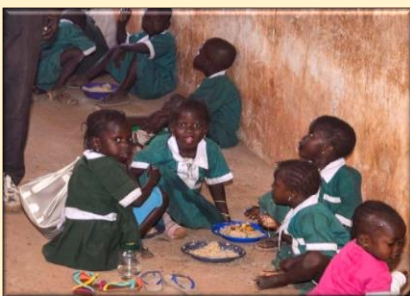
The most notable achievement must be Bob Woodcock's success penetrating the labyrinthine requirements of Gift Aid, and our total income rose about 18%, as we're now able to claim 25% income tax return on all **UK** donations. Whilst potentially making a lot of difference we do now have 11 more mouths to feed as the school role has increased. Gift Aid was just in time as those extra mouths bite deeply into the extra money – so more fundraising still needs to be done to further improve the situation for the children.

We're also examining Text Giving, to get our plea to a wider audience. This initiative has only just started, so we'll keep you up to date as things progress.

## Nutrition.



We notice also that the children are being provided with some small measure of protein in the diet more often than previously, which is great news. Jainaba Dampha cooks about 30,000 meals a year for us, and what she's holding represents the protein and potato supply for a single lunch for 85 people. The Luncheon Meat, or as they call it "Canned Beef" will be a total novelty – to our knowledge they've never been able to afford such *luxuries* in the past. So we're slowly but surely moving in the right direction. It's seemingly such a small thing but does represent meaningful progress when measured against their previous dietary situation. There are now far fewer strained faces.



## Health and Hygiene



This is another area where we've made a small but particularly meaningful improvement, as we provided funding towards the construction of a new toilet block for the Day Care Centre.

Just £135 from our funds was all it took to eliminate what can only be described as disgusting playground habits of the littlest children, and largely remove a significant disease vector.



Within the £135 was money for initial supplies of soap, detergent and cleaning materials. Again this seems so primitive to the western eye but is relevant and helpful in the developing world. They simply cannot afford such things when they are very hungry. They really do need to prioritise expenditure, and food understandably comes very high on the list.

## Malaria

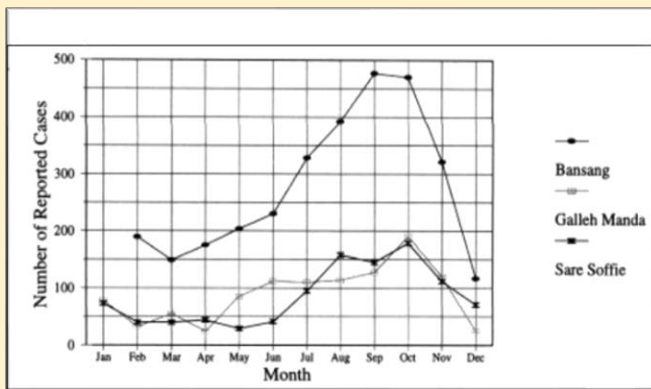
As reported earlier malaria did strike the Village, as it does every year without fail. Tragically this year it claimed the life of the 18-year-old Baboucarr Sanneh our friend's son and a lad we were very familiar with. There is so little we can do here, as prophylaxis is fundamentally beyond their means. Bed nets are in use within the Village, and this is robustly managed by another charity on an ongoing basis. But still they suffer, and the disease is described as stable endemic. Whilst there is still a single individual suffering from malaria in the district, mosquitos can transfer the disease to other individuals. Malaria is so rife in the Gambia that the disease persists in a most pernicious and tenuous manner. All we can do is to provide some medication to help when the disease is diagnosed.



During the 2018 epidemic we provided £100 for a supply of Coartem, enough to cure 10 adults or 20 children if the disease is diagnosed in enough time, but even visiting the Doctor costs money. It seemed the right thing to do with some of the reserves we hold for the Villagers.

## Futures

### Annual progression of malaria in some neighbouring villages.



Given the well-established synergy between malnutrition and malaria there's clear benefit to be had from ensuring the children are better fed during the lean times which occur every year without fail. Even in years of good harvest a long hunger gap exists till crops ripen, and entire families are hungry. By being better fed the child's immune system will be more resistant to infection, and the child becomes more tolerant of Malaria if infection does occur.

The situation worsens as the year progresses, with about a fourfold peak in late summer. Crops are not ready in an essentially subsistence cropping environment, and school hasn't started to provide a decent lunch for the children. Over this period the number of infected individuals is very high, and the mosquitoes have more and more opportunity to acquire and transmit the parasite, just when resistances are lowest.

During school holidays we provide, (or at least you do) foodstuffs for a meagre breakfast of rice porridge, and this helps a bit. The major issue is that entire families are largely bereft of food during the "Hungry Season" - so the porridge breakfast is in many cases the most meaningful meal the children have on any day, indeed it may be the only one.

Everyone is hungry. We know that in a lot of cases the children go to bed hungry and are crying when they get to school for breakfast. That might well be the bulk of their food for the day.



We think we'll be able to afford to provide an additional meal for the children at lunchtime over this difficult period.



We hold a small cash reserve for the Villagers (particularly with historic Gift Aid contributions being reclaimed), and this seems perhaps the best thing to do with some of it, but it's so much more complex than would at first appear, as communication is a **very big issue**.

**What are we doing about it?**



We can't fix malaria, but surely we can help in a meaningful way.

A young couple from another charity is visiting the Village, and they've undertaken some investigative tasks for us. We need to establish what's the best time for any additional assistance to be delivered to the school (in view of our limited resources), and exactly how the food would be prepared and delivered.

Fortunately foodstuff prices are remarkably stable in The Gambia, so it still costs just about £3.00 per month to provide a single child with a reasonable cooked meal **every** day.



But even given this it's difficult. Certainly we'd prefer to support them during all the lean times, but at an extra cost of about £250 per month we would simply run out of money, and quite quickly.

We'll keep you up to speed when we get the data and see what might be possible.



Perhaps these two photographs say it all about the children's own attitude despite the deprivation and difficulties they suffer. They seem genuinely grateful and happy with what they have, rather than pining for the things they don't have. 7 children and 2 pairs of shoes says it all.



It's categorised as a beaming smile,

indomitability and touchingly warm and explicit comments, such as "Thank you for helping us". "It's nice when people help". "Thanks for helping with my homework".

That's what we've managed to do with your money this year and we know it means such a lot to them.

In the meantime Sophie, Bob and I are investigating Text Giving, to try to get our plea to a much larger audience. Our thinking's in the very early stages, and we'll let you know how it's progressing in the next month or so.

In the meantime - please keep donating - it really matters to these children.

**BETWEEN US WE'RE MAKING A DIFFERENCE.**

**PLEASE KEEP HELPING US.**

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