

Genieri Collections - Newsletter No.20 – October 2020

A COVID 19 update from the Gambia.



Perhaps the smiles are a wee bit premature, but recent signs may well be good for The Gambia on the COVID front. Daily case rates are falling, as are death rates. They do seem to be holding the line on infection rates and deaths.

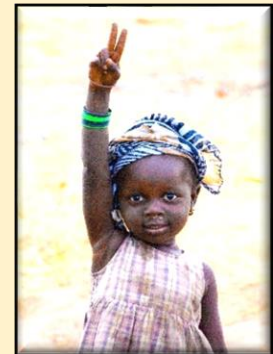
It's good to note that their graphs show persistently decelerating trends.



The infection and fatality numbers in The Gambia are very small compared to the rest of the world, but so is the population at just about 2.4 million, so a very great deal of caution must be applied to interpretation of their results.

Their infection rate is slowing down as they continue with their current deep lock-down. Results on 03/10/20 show 47 deaths per million, against the UK figure of 622 per million. It's a brutal fact that you're

15 times more likely to die of Coronavirus in the UK than you are in The Gambia.



The whole country is still under a night-time curfew which is being robustly enforced. It seems unlikely that the Police ask nicely if you would like to comply.

There are no COVID cases in the Village and no deaths even close to Genieri.

Confidence in the Gambia is rising, and they've opened their airspace a little, but under quarantine restrictions which are so severe that exceptionally few people will see it as an opportunity. They've also relaxed the length of their night-time curfew somewhat, and this doesn't appear to have provoked any resurgence of the virus, but this must be considered an active space, and may change quickly.



On a more positive note we've delivered foodstuffs for about 49,000 simple meals since 1st.January, and the total will be of the order of 60,000 by the end of the year.

At the moment you're enabling delivery of approximately 6,000 of these simple meals per month, and this, together with the provision by our sister charity of 2,300 meals is really useful and deeply welcomed by the Villagers.

".....we must still thank you for always rescuing us every month"

Whilst a total of 8,300 meals a month may seem a prodigious number, when spread over the entire village it yields just 11 small meals per person PER MONTH provided by the two charities, and it must be grim for them. However, we do have enough money to continue this for a meaningful length of time, although we have absolutely no idea how long they may be locked down for.

There is an upside. Land-based rice starts to become available in November, with flood rice about a month later, and it'll look a great deal better for them if the harvest is good.

They had a hard time in 2019 with delayed/poor rains and a measure of germination failure in their groundnut crop, with the result that household incomes crumbled as groundnut is a very substantial part of the up-country economy.

Fortunately this year is looking quite different, with uncharacteristically high levels of rainfall, indeed their capital city Banjul recently suffered a lot of flooding. They're also growing watermelons in the ladies' gardens.

"This raining season has been ok lots of rain and crops doing ok at moment we are eating corns and rice is promising hopefully their will be a good harvest"

We also understand that up-country schools have re-started.

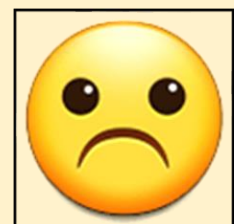


On a minor note the price of rice has risen, but just a little, coming up from 625 Dalasis per 25Kg bag to 650 Dalasis, just 4%. There does seem to be some form of intervention by the Government, as the price of basic commodities is remarkably stable.

It's humbling to note that 1Kg of rice, costing about £0.40, takes 4 - 5 hours to earn at up-country wages.



On the downside The Gambia has suffered great financial losses in 2020, totalling some 2.3 billion Dalasis, about £400m. against a GDP of around £1.44b, or 36% of their GDP, and with tourism such a large portion of their GDP and no meaningful restart in sight, they're in a lot of longer term bother.



We'll keep you up to speed on this as it evolves, but here's hoping for the best for them.

Jim, Sophie and Bob