

Genieri Collections - Newsletter No.26 - December 2021

News from a land where life is hard, hungry and short

Health Care



The Genieri Primary Health Care Centre



Progress on this project has been very good, and very rewarding indeed. Sustainability has been achieved, with slowly but steadily growing numbers of treatments being delivered as the months progress. Stock holdings of drugs improve, and as these improve a growing number of complaints can be treated. As the service has improved the catchment area has extended further beyond the Village, and with every treatment turning just a small profit this represents a useful measure of new money coming into the Village. Additionally the burden on the charity has been removed. We'll shortly be looking at this in more detail to try to find ways of reducing treatments cost to the Villagers, and particularly for the children.

It all seems so very primitive to the western eye, but is well ahead of what they had just a few months ago, and we're told that the villagers are truly delighted with what we've provided.

Malaria



This disease has been managed so that there were no deaths in the village this year, and that may well be a result of our provision of Coartem, totalling about 65 adult applications, or 125 doses to children. We'll never know of course, but we can be sure that we did help prevent a great deal of misery whilst reducing the general risk of infection. It's now December when the general incidence rate has fallen very sharply, not rising again until about the end of May or early June, unless the summer rains come early. Let's hope the disease follows the general trend in The Gambia where aggressive management of

Malaria has reduced levels year on year, and The Gambia is now hailed as one the world's leaders in this field. It hasn't gone away by any means, and they will surely need some Malaria support next summer, and for many years to come.

Harvests.

The rice harvest is now finishing locally, and the ladies will be able to devote their time to cultivation of their gardens just outside the main village, where they get crops of capsicums, cabbage, onions, and a variety of other garden greens.

All's well from an irrigation point of view as the water from the borehole seems of adequate quality and there are no current volume/supply issues. There are sadly longer-term considerations, as decreasing water supplies and increasing salinisation are becoming a problem for the whole country.



The river is truly the lifeblood of the whole country; indeed it defines the very shape of the land and almost all that happens on it, and that's the problem – the dependence is near total in this subsistence farming economy. Climate change is beginning to make its presence well felt along the river's length.

The river collects almost all its water from the highlands of Guinea about 1200km upstream, and the whole catchment area is itself drying out with some speed. Add to that the extraordinarily flat nature of Gambia, with just ½ metre of drop in the last 500km of the river's flow. Nett outflow becomes almost entirely dependent on the freshwater supply raising the head of water, and that is fast reducing. Even on top of this are longer and hotter dry seasons, with higher evaporation rates and the rice growing seasons are becoming shorter and with significant loss of crop-able area.

This is bringing a secondary (and rather nasty) influence into play. The outgoing water is gradually failing to hold back the rising Atlantic tides, and saline water is invading many of the flood rice fields well into the heartland as far as about 120km inland. Local annual rainfall is also diminishing, with less washing out of the salt, and significant areas for the cultivation of "river rice" are now being denied to the farmers. This salt front is moving east at a fair speed. They're suffering it from both ends, and there are well documented signs of this effect not so far from the people whom we support. Whole areas that were productive just a few years ago are now abandoned, and already impoverished people are having to find money to buy rice.

Things look bleak for Genieri, and this may not be so very far into the future with the vicious cascade of events they are confronting against their uncompromising topography.



Jim, Sophie and Bob