

## Genieri Collections - Newsletter No.27 – March 2022

**FOOD INFLATION** has become a bit of a problem lately in The Gambia, presumably as a result

Commodity	Jan.2021 Price	Jan.2022 Price	Cost Inflation
Rice	1,300	1,600	23%
Cooking Oil	1,200	1,900	58%
Onion	750	850	20%
Aggregate inflation to monthly feeding bill, about			23%

of the pandemic and disturbed worldwide supply chains. While we complain about a few percentage point increase, the little table identifies what they've suffered in the last 12 months. It shows the fortitude of these people that they never ask for more food money. We spotted this was happening when we saw that they were buying smaller quantities for the children as time went on, and we sent more money to help.



More recently we noticed they had not been buying potato for the children. Who gets excited about potato you may well ask? The obvious answer is they do. They absolutely crave potato, as its generally far too expensive for them, being almost exactly the same price as in a UK supermarket. In terms of up-country earning capacity, 1Kg. of potato (about £0.75) needs about 4 hours of income. Just follow the eyes in the

photograph. Needless to say we're now sending "potato money".

**Hens vs. Cockerels** may seem a peculiar subject for a newsletter about The Gambia, but sadly it's all too appropriate.

Some months ago their government instigated a great plan to improve dietary quality, on a renewable basis. The simple model was "**Grow what you eat and eat what you grow**". In this case a hen house was provided, and several of the ladies were trained in how to manage hens to maximise their supply of eggs, a particularly desirable item out there. All looked good and all that was required was a supply of birds, and all should be well into the future. As the livestock was included in the government's generous plan they waited with high anticipation.

The birds did arrive, and it was then discovered that they were all cockerels. These birds were promptly introduced to the pot or the market. It seems that the ladies were not taught how to sex the birds, or forgot to do it. It surely looks like their supplier took advantage of this. It's just truly amazing what some people will do to those less fortunate. Absolutely beyond unforgivable.



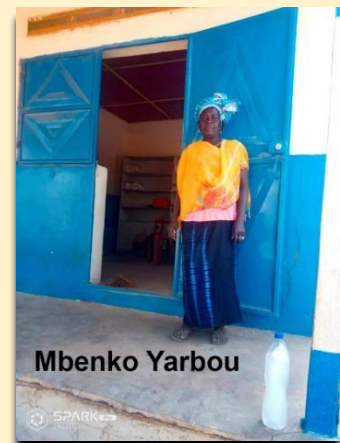
We'll have a look at what we might be able to do.

## The Primary Health Care Centre.



In the smallest but very meaningful of ways this little project has demonstrated that it really is bearing fruit.

Some time ago we declared that the venture was self-sustaining if only just, but there was as always more work to do.



Things have moved on in the best possible way, in that the Centre has recently been able to put Mbenko Yarbou, an elderly cleaning lady onto staff and pay her a small but proportionate wage.

Mbenko had been cleaning on a wholly voluntary basis, but sufficient cash is now available from sales of medicines that she can receive a small compensation. Whilst the sum of money is smaller than microscopic in our terms it represents a major leap forward. Not only does she have “something to take home”, but it is funded in significant part from outside the village, and this is something quite new. A tiny, tiny fraction of new money has been brought to the village, and that is heartening indeed.

We’re trying to develop this type of process, but finding it exceptionally difficult, as there is very little money indeed in the entire district. Rest assured we’ll keep trying.

Beyond that we believe that it’s a meaningful break with local/rural tradition, where a lady is actually paid a wage for a “menial” task, such as reducing the infection risk in a health setting. It’s all a bit of a grey area, but we do suspect it’s quite prevalent, and certain tasks are simply NOT undertaken by men under any circumstances. While we find such a situation absurd, it’s normal out there.

Our next attempt is to progress how we might get just a little bit more money from outside the village to reduce the cost of medication for the village infants, hence leaving more money in family coffers to help with their feeding costs. Medicines are hideously expensive for them, and consumption is high during the months August to October, when infant illness is persistently high. This seriously drains already impoverished budgets. In a great number of cases the cases it’s a matter choosing between food or medicine.

This is in its very early stages, and it will take time, and surely we’ll keep you informed.

**Jim, Sophie and Bob**