

Genieri Collections - Newsletter No.29 – November 2022

Health in the Village



Some bad news

You may have noticed some very disturbing news during October regarding the death of 69 children between the ages of 2 and 5 in The Gambia, including within the Lower River Region where



Genieri lies. This is currently being attributed to consumption of substandard Paracetamol Syrup, which is very commonly used in the Gambia, leading to acute kidney disease. There is growing certainty that these syrups were contaminated with Ethylene Glycol (used as anti-freeze), and Di-Ethylene Glycol which in addition to being an antifreeze also has uses in the synthesis of some medicines. Additionally there are rumours of e.coli contamination. The jury is still out on the details and results, but it's a world-wide investigation co-ordinated by WHO.

There does seem to be a deadly serious regulatory lapse, outlined in [Maiden pharma, under WHO scanner for Gambia kids' deaths, flouted norms in 4 states - India Today](#).

Surely the Government of India will take robust action here, if for no other reason that India produces approximately 30% of the world's medicines and is a very big earner for them. Also on this front western donors are discussing provision of sufficient funding to provide The Gambia with in-country medicine testing facilities, and we'll keep an eye on this for information.

The good news

The wee pharmacy and Primary Healthcare Centre we support in the village does dispense a lot of such syrups, but definitely none from the questionable manufacturer, and none of the Genieri children have been affected. Moreover, the Government has instigated a door-to-door collection of ALL paracetamol syrups, and banned use of them throughout the country.

Some Progress



We now have a shiny new floor over the entire premises, which is so much easier to clean than the dirt version that was in place previously. So, it's fair to say that development of the wee Health Centre is more or less complete, it's now fully weather, theft and animal proof, it's so much better stocked, it's almost entirely self sustaining, and it's hygienic.



The Malaria Season is also over, and we've been notified of no deaths in the village, we suspect that's at least due in part to our supply of Coartem, which is delivered free of charge to the villagers.



Breaking News.

We've been told just yesterday (20/11/22) that Alimamey Susso (Health Centre Lead) has been re-deployed up-country, and therefore will no longer be able to manage the centre. We now have a well formed and equipped centre, but without any medically qualified staff. We've been aware this was a possibility for some time, and Alimamey has been pushing back on the decision over several weeks, but sadly has failed.

It must be said that Alimamey has been the key-stone of our efforts in helping develop the Centre. He's been persistent and effective in bringing real health benefits to the villagers, and driving the Centre towards sustainability. All that is under management to re-staff the PHC.

Feeding - The Hungry Season is over.



All has gone well over the summer, with you providing the standard lunch to about 80 children over the whole period, and topping it up with food money for breakfasts during the months of July, August and September when little or no crops are available. They do report periodically that they have crops of watermelon, very thirst-quenching but hardly highly nutritious or satisfying, but they have so little else, perhaps just a few peanuts.



We do note however that foodstuff prices continue to rise inexorable, and at rate so much higher than in the developed world. It has been about 15% **annually** since March 2020, so it's been hurting them for much longer than in the developed world. We've covered the inflation risk thus far, but will need to make hard choices as we get into 2023. Essentially "children feeding" (as they call it) takes absolute priority, but our assistance with health initiatives may well become a casualty.

On a happier note we've been told that the rice harvest is very good indeed, so for the next few months at least they'll be in what they consider a "period of plenty". Surely it's all relative, and the food

we provide for lunch is still fundamental to the health and welfare of the children in these early years.

Foday the headmaster has said in the past that the children do learn so much faster when they are fed, and it's so much more difficult for the children when they're hungry.

But for the news about the redeployment of Alimamey it would have been a quiet and rather uneventful year, and particularly so following the real difficulties the villagers had with Covid.

Of Pasts and Futures.

Pasts

It seems such a long time ago, but we started the charity in June 2016 with a bank balance of just £79.27, and since then you've made it possible to deliver about 250,000 simple meals. To that must be added significant agricultural, irrigation and health assistance.

It's all been made so very much easier than it could have been by the amazing resilience and regularity with which almost all of your donations arrive. It's our strongly held view that without that reliability we simply couldn't have continued with perpetual fundraising, and the venture would have stalled.

One particular benefit of that reliability is the relative ease with which we can forecast income, to plan expenditure beyond simple feeding without compromising that "prime objective" and help make the village both healthier and more self-sufficient. This has been a real contributor to the charity's success.

Futures

The short version is that feeding costs go up and the charity's income remains (remarkably) static, but this isn't a problem in the short term as we hold a reserve against financial shocks and general inflation.

We've persistently examined ways of finding other sources of income to better provide for the children, particularly in the areas of health and education, but equally persistently ideas evade us.

However, it's recently occurred to us that our existing donors may indeed be the best source of assistance as each and every one of you is part of a family/friendship group, just as we are. Might you know of someone in your own group who would like to join us in helping these serious disenfranchised children?

A single new donor brings so much more benefit than further stretching the generosity of your current donation, and to bring on a new donor is perhaps the biggest extra contribution that you could make.

This has happened a very few times in the past and each time we really noticed the difference.

We well recognise that you may not be comfortable approaching your friends or family, and that's as it should be, we ask only that you consider this as another way you could help raise funds for the children.

Perhaps you could give it some thought and we'd be delighted to hear your views.

Our contact details are at <http://geniercollections.co.uk/contact/default.html> and you can feel free to share them with anyone you're discussing the matter with.

Jim, Sophie and Bob