

Genieri Collections - Newsletter No.34 – July.2024

It's been a fair time since we put out a Newsletter, mainly because activities have been rather routine, and there was a significant lack of anything of great import to report to yourselves, but a little has changed and this newsletter should bring you up to date.

A New Primary School has been built.



This has been greatly welcomed in the village, as it saves the children walking about a mile to the previously nearest school in Kiaif, and much more importantly it avoids the need to cross the main South Bank Road. We know the road well and can testify that speeds on that road a **FAR** too high, and almost all of the vehicles are well beyond fit for road use. We're aware of no fatalities or injuries, but the risk is very real and the families will be relieved.

The Day Care Centre children that we look after were provided with learning space, but curiously nowhere to eat the lunch we provide them. The whole situation is all quite unclear but it appears that they would require to sit outside in the dust in the dry season, or in the rain at other times. Our sister charity commissioned a "dining hall" at the princely sum of about £1,150, and we contributed £250 to help the project along.

Bricks were made from cement and the building erected by the men of the village, and it certainly looks good from the early photographs we have. This is all very positive indeed, and they only have the roof to put on.





We'll get up to speed on this as time goes on and try to get some photos of their new "dining hall", as it's got to be a wee bit better than the corridor they used previously.

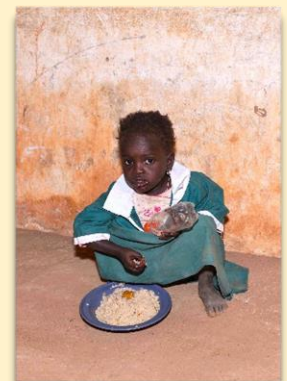
Feeding.

We started the whole venture in early 2016, with really no idea where it would lead, but felt that we could do something based on the old adage that "you can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone". A rough calculation shows that since then we've delivered about 330,000 simple meals to the children under 7 years of age. To this can be added supply of malaria medication, and real improvements to the Primary Health Care Centre and some contributions to the vegetable gardens irrigation system. Additionally we now provide just about enough to provide the infants from birth to 3 years with some food or medicine.

So with feeding and some measure of medical support between us we've got it covered from birth to entry to primary school.



It's interesting to note the very real differences in people's approach to food in this very different culture. For 365 days per year these children eat rice, flavoured with vegetable stock, onion and pepper. There's a single small piece of potato per child, and in more recent years we've provided funding for what they call "canned beef", which is a form of chicken spam eaten with the rice and is very likely their only reliable source of animal protein. A good day's earnings up country will buy about 1Kg of chicken, so it's only used for VERY special events, and in those



cases will be shared between many family members.

With a kilogram of potato costing about 40% of a day's wage up-country it's entirely unsurprising that they crave it. That's it, day after day, really a radical contrast with the awesome food choice that we enjoy and feel entirely entitled to.

Past and Futures for Feeding

Whilst the rest of the world has had a hard time with food cost inflation since Covid, it has hit The Gambia particularly hard to say the least. The numbers are truly horrible, rising to 24.32% pa. in September 2023. Things have eased a little since then, dropping to 19.74% just recently, and 15.26% last month. These inflationary pressures have forced us to stop the supply of adult Coartem (a malaria medication) and restricted this medicine to children under 7. Support for minor infrastructure improvement has also become a casualty, and these actions have permitted us to send just a little bit more feeding money on a regular basis to help keep up with the need to feed the children, and this has only been possible due to the ever strengthening of £GPB against the Dalasi.

Despite all this we're approaching a funding gap as their food inflation rate remains persistently high, and we'll shortly begin to erode the reserve we hold for them despite reducing non-feeding and medication expenditure. The short version is we need to find more money, especially if £GBP growth against the Dalasi weakens, which it might well do. We're all too aware of the reliability and regularity of your generosity, and this has made it so very much easier to budget and keep the charity's funds in good condition. Hence we've been very reluctant indeed to present the begging-bowl, but needs must.

If you're a regular donor a very small increase to your donation will make all the difference in the long run, or if you make periodic donations - might now be the right time? Perhaps you don't yet donate but would like to, and you can make a significant difference to the quality of life for these children. You can help their health as well, because undernutrition and poor health do go hand in hand.

We're also well aware that many in this country are now stressed financially, so if donation is not right for you for any reason we do understand.

If you want to donate there are many ways, and you can find out how by clicking [here](#).

Malaria and the Hungry Season

Yes, it's that time of year again, with food stores being low and next harvest not yet ready. On top of that it's the start of their malaria season, and the months of July, August and September are "truly miserable" for them, their words not ours.



Your contributions make it a little easier for them, especially as the little ones are provided with a small breakfast in addition to the lunch you provide. As one father said – "thank you for feeding my children - it leaves just a little more for the rest of the family".

So that's all for now folks, and thanks so very much from the children for all the support you've provided over the past years.

Jimmy, Sophie and Bob