

## Genieri Collections - Newsletter No.4 - Easter 2017

### 2017, The Gambia settles down.

Yes, The Gambia has settled down with what gives all the appearance of a democratic government in place, and world bodies such as the World Bank and the IMF weighing in to help this little country get back on its feet despite 22 years of plundering by its erstwhile leader. For example, some 80% of the whole governmental income was historically allocated to the President's Office, and no-one else had anything.

We looked at the political situation surrounding our rough timescales for a visit and decided that it was simply not worth the risk. Other people did go out during the elections and report that they went off really quite peacefully.



The immediate sequel was a bloodless invasion by ECOWAS (Economic Co-operation of West African States), to persuade the incumbent that the election was binding and that it would really be a good idea if he were to leave, which he eventually did taking with him a significant portion of the treasury's contents. This period saw very fast repatriation of Europeans by travel companies, and no lives were lost or indeed a single shot fire. Perhaps we made a mistake, but it might have been awkward if the repatriation

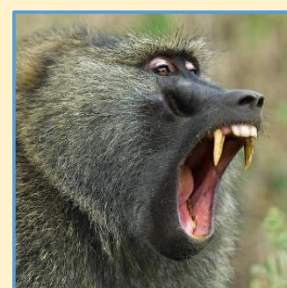
exercise happened when we were 180Km. up country and out of reach of meaningful communications.

On the other side of that coin – the Chief of the General Staff did say on record “we will not fight ECOWAS - we will welcome them with flowers and make them a cup of tea”. Bizarre to say the least, and it may indeed have been true. Who's to know?

More locally - the village is doing well, with another hectare of ground being prepared for cultivation, and almost certainly based on two crops per year, as some charity work coupled with the help of the local authority is creating an all year irrigation system for them. It's a way off yet and information is sketchy to say the least, but we'll keep you informed as we find out ourselves. This ground is much closer to the safety of the village, and will involve about 80 minutes less walking every day, all the while exposed to a significant animal risk.



The animal risk is no joke, absolutely no joke at all, and we can't imagine it just 6 hours from Gatwick, with baboons (they just love Mangoes) and hyenas making an appearance as the sun goes down. With more, safer working time and less gruelling effort lifting and carrying water



things may well look up for the villagers.

It's our hope that with significantly more food in the Village they'll be able to improve the diet of the children, which is currently quite dismal, and with the Day Care Centre feeding 100% funded by us via yourselves, and they are eternally grateful. As one chap said “It's almost as if I'm eating the food myself – there's just that little more to go around”. The money you send is a life line to so many whole

families in the Village. The kids look good, as the parents will go with less to ensure the children eat. Another benefit is that 100% of children of the appropriate age continue to attend the school.

The headmaster firmly believes that this is largely based on the fact that they get fed – so you’re providing education at the same time!

Surprisingly, within the Village population growth appears not to be a problem, with 5 new children aged two and a half starting immediately after Easter, and a similar number departing to primary school at the end of the summer term. This seems to be the way of things in Genieri, relieving our earlier worries about burgeoning populations creating massive food shortfall.

Commodity	Quantity	Dalasis converted to GBP	UK
Potatoes	Kg	£0.82	£1.00
Rice	Kg	£0.45	£1.00
Onions	Kg	£0.82	£0.75
Eggs	Dozen	£1.75	£1.75
Milk	Litre	£1.00	£0.50
Cooking Oil	20 litres	£23.64	£19.00

But just eating remains very, very expensive for these people. Consider the list opposite

and you’ll see exactly what we mean, based on the headmaster’s monthly salary of about £48

and the school cook’s monthly salary of £12. It’s easy to see that just living is an immense struggle with basic commodity prices being almost exactly the same as in the UK, but with us enjoying perhaps 40 or 50 times the income they do. Additionally, with the current level of food commodity inflation of about 6% out there they’ve had to stop purchasing potatoes - it’s just far too expensive.



I’m sure you can also imagine what your own contributions mean to them, and they are not slow to say so. They are grateful to say the least, and we think the picture says it all.

So - please keep the contributions coming - they really do need them.

And perhaps it doesn’t need to be said - but if you know of anyone who would like to join the group and help us make it even better for the children we would be delighted to discuss it with them and bring them aboard. Please just let us know.

Our achievement record is particularly good, in that approximately **95% of the total money donated** actually arrives in the Village to buy foodstuffs and feeding essentials, with the only expenses being financial transfer charges. We have no administration costs or collection overheads whatsoever, and we would hope to continue in the rigorous manner.

Easter Greetings, Sophie & Jimmy – our website is at [www.GenieriCollections.Co.Uk](http://www.GenieriCollections.Co.Uk)