



UK Registered Charity 1110998

Gambian Registered Charity

Gambia Education and Teaching Support NEWSLETTER

Issue 15 December 2011

Exciting new Lower Basic School planned at Sunrise

An act of faith

GETS has been talking about building a new school for children aged 6 to 13 for some time now but it is beginning to look like this maybe a reality quite soon. In fact, if we begin immediately, even though we don't quite have enough money, we only just have enough time to complete all that is required to begin schooling in 2012. So to start Phase 1 at this time, an act of faith is required . .

Phase 1 (See Artists Impression below)

We plan to build a new block attached to our existing facilities at the Sunrise Centre. Over 2 floors we will have:- 2 classrooms (for Lower Basic years 1 and 2) , 3 boys' and 3 girls' toilets, 2 rooms (a new office plus staffroom/library/sick room), Foundations for 4 future classrooms

Our Outline plan:

Now - Keep on raising the cash required (we have £32,000 and need £40,000 for Phase 1)

Jan 2012 - Begin building Phase 1 (We have a good builder with whom we have previously worked)

Jan/June 2012 - Develop Lower Basic School Curriculum and lesson structures (We will need some people to help here)

May/July 2012 - Interview and appoint first Lower Basic Teacher (We will need some help here as well)

June 2012 - Equip at least one classroom with desks, chairs and resources needed

September 2012 - Open the new Lower Basic School and promote our current Nursery children into it.



Phase 1

Future plans (Phase 2 - See right)

To finish the Lower Basic School we need 4 further classrooms to be built on the foundations that were completed as part of Phase 1. The total cost to complete the building work is £20,000 but we will also need to equip the whole school with teaching resources. We need the cash to start building before December 2013 so that we can complete the school in 2014.

Paying the Teachers and Maintaining the School

The other part of our act of faith is that we **do not** currently have enough cash coming into the charity to fund the Lower Basic School Teachers salaries or to maintain the fabric and resources of the new school.

We only need to find the funding to pay one extra teacher and provide resources for one extra classroom each year, we estimate this as about £2,100 each year, per teacher, so this is not such a massive task.

We expect about half of this to come from school fees and the remainder from new sponsors.

Asking the children to pay fees ensures that parents invest in their children and gives them much more interest in their progress and success. The fees per child work out around £50 per year (£2,250) for high quality education in very small classes (only 25 students per year). This kind of standard is usually only matched in exclusive private schools costing much, much more.

We need to find people who want to support us in our aim to provide a good quality school in an area of The Gambia that will welcome this.

Website Developments

We have been working hard on our website to keep our supporters in touch with GETS's various activities, so if you haven't looked at it recently log on to www.getsuk.org to see all the changes and updates!

You will find information about sponsoring and details of the GETS sponsored students.

Our new blog brings you pictures and news each week, keeping you informed about GETS activities in The Gambia.

You can read the minutes of our September AGM, reporting upon the events in the past year, including a link to our 5 year vision and strategy plan.

We hope that you find it useful to understand our thinking and proposals for the future of the charity in The Gambia. If you have any questions or comments please contact secretary@gets-sunrise.org

There are many pages to explore on our two linked websites— www.getsuk.org and www.gets-sunrise.org. At the moment these pages display best on Internet Explorer, but future plans will hopefully improve the experience for regular Firefox, Chrome and other browser users!



Phase 2

'Thanks' from the sponsored children

"Thank you. I am attending St. Thereses Primary school
September 2011

I am 8 years old and I have 1 brother and 1 sister.

I thank you very much for paying school fees which my
parents cannot.

I am praying to god for you to have much money "



From a child who has left school now:

"I really appreciate what you have done for me and
what you are still doing for my younger sister. Being from a
poor family and you sponsoring us, it is only God that will pay
you your reward. May God give you long life, good heart and
prosperity. Once again thank you very much.

May God bless you abundantly"



I'm delighted to say that we've had a massive and spectacular set of letters or drawings (for the younger children) following Helen's request to children and parents to say thank you a bit more formally to the people who generously provide money, to allow GETS children to attend school and further their education.

Those extracts included here are only a fraction of the letters and drawings that have gone back to sponsors.

"Hello Dear friend! With great pleasure I wait to thank you with all of my heart.

Me and my family are so grateful for your kindness. It is you who keeps me going to school. My school re-opens Monday September 26 and I will be in grade 6.

I hope to work very hard to improve.

Best of regards to you. Our hearts and prayers for your well being."

Another Generous Donation (more than £1,100!)

We have received a generous donation to purchase 32 Adult Numeracy textbooks to use as the Skills course book, as well as teaching packs to support the most basic areas (learning tables, for example...) in an entertaining and grown-up way. These are already on their way to "Timbooktoo" - which is a Gambian shop that takes deliveries of Amazon products. In the meantime Ali Bah, in true Gambian style, is "making do" with his single copy.

The donation also covers the initial printing costs for worksheets - ink cartridges are even more expensive in The Gambia than they are here! - and a basic laptop, which will allow the Sunrise teachers to talk to their advisors, even when they are a 6-hour flight apart, thanks to Skype and the wi-fi system installed last December.

We are extremely grateful to the trust which has donated and supported us. We are keeping its trustees informed of progress, with "The Blog", a great tool - thank you to all those who are making it happen!

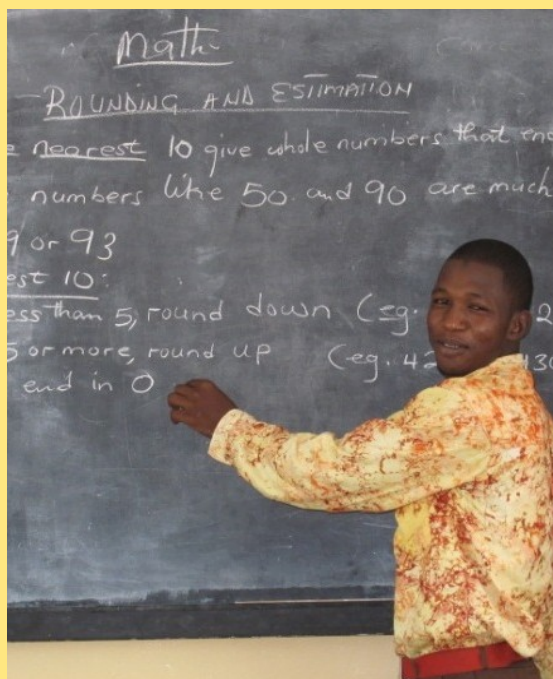
Erica Wren

Surviving the Rains...

The centre survived a rainy season pretty well. The rains were quite light this year. The biggest impact is to roads in the area. The sand roads usually are eroded in some places to form large lakes of unknown depth. Driving into these can be hazardous because the local people also add rocks to fill in the holes or just for pedestrians to use as "stepping stones". Some of the tarmac roads have also suffered from poor maintenance and are potholed now.

We started the year by interviewing for a new Tie & Dye and Batik teacher and found Jainaba Sanneh Faal. Jainaba has all the skills we were looking for and more that we plan to broaden her course into a Handycrafts course. Previously Jainaba taught Nursery children so she is very well equipped to help us.

We have all the normal maintenance required in any school to do, including completing some items from our recent building projects. We also have a big list of improvements yet to do. We also have a new cleaner, Marie Korea, who has helped tremendously, to improve our working environment.



Ali Bah with some of the test questions

New Skills Students 2011/12

When Helen returned for the start of the new school year at Sunrise, there were 58 applications from young people who hoped to enrol as Skills students. Since we can only accommodate 32 some were going to be disappointed!

After discussions with the Trustees and Skills teachers, it was agreed that all the applicants should complete an assessment paper, so that we had an idea of the level they had already achieved in English and Maths.

Here are a few examples of the questions:

- I have brothers and sisters
- The three colours I like best are , and
- I left my last school after Grade
- Guess the height of this classroom.

Ali Bah administered and marked the papers; the questions which gave most trouble were the long division sum.

I've already learned that Maths is the bugbear of the majority of adult Gambians - not just the students at Sunrise!

We are also making encouraging progress as we start to create and record a Skills curriculum, for English, Maths and the practical subjects. We will need to have these fully documented when we apply for registration with the Gambian National Training Authority.

Erica Wren

Term Dates 2011-2012

TERM	DURATION
1 st Term	1st October 2011 - 23 rd December 2011
2 nd Term	9th January 2012 - 4th April 2012
3 rd Term	16 th April 2012 - 20 th July 2012

GETS Office

The office at Sunrise usually opens before the formal school start date. This enables Helen, who also manages 50+ individual sponsorships and the St Augustines, Dumbarton sponsored 90 place nursery school at London Corner to be ready for the coming term.

www.getsuk.org —Don't forget the latest news from The Gambia Blog!



Thoughts from our Sunrise Nursery Teachers

"I started my teaching career as an unqualified teacher. A few years later the school where I was teaching was taken over by GETS. Before the takeover of the school, the school was facing late payment of salaries to staff and unqualified teaching staff, just to mention a few problems.

GETS saw the need to train unqualified teaching staff, so I was asked to sit the Gambia College entrance exam, which I did successfully and was admitted into the college with full sponsorship from GETS.

GETS are not only motivating their staff but also they are concerned about their students, especially the younger ones, they ask their teachers to find out how their ex-students are doing in the Lower Basic School, for example their performance and any problem with paying fees.

I am so grateful and thankful to GETS, for they have made me who I am today by supporting me in all areas of educational development."

Fatou Sanneh, Nursery Teacher

"GETS funds my studies at the Gambia Teacher Training College, giving me the opportunity to meet teachers from other schools to share skills and dreams. I strive hard to come up with the best result in exams due to the caring advice, help and support of our lovely administrator, Helen Touray and other GETS members. They give me the courage to show my skills and talents in my class and to work with other teachers as a team.

At the Sunrise nursery I can educate children in an attractive manner in the conducive environment set by the management of Sunrise. Our classrooms are secure and the children are always happy to be there. The classrooms are provided with teaching aids to make learning and teaching easier for the children and the teacher. According to the teachers at the Lower Basic schools we visited when following up students who left Sunrise this summer, our ex-students' performance and discipline is very good because they come from a wonderful nursery school.

I have been working in GETS schools for the past six years and have had lots of encouragement and motivation from all the GETS management and supporters. After I am qualified I want to stay with Sunrise and help GETS achieve their goals. I am so grateful and thankful to GETS and shall continue to be loyal to them."

Fatou Cham, Nursery Teacher

One of our Volunteers, Daniel English, helping with English in our Skills Classes

"Although it's been almost two months now since I arrived in the Gambia from a chilly and damp Ireland I have still not managed to get accustomed to the wave of heat which greets me every morning when I leave my compound. I continue to find myself remarking about how hot and sticky it is or pointing out how heat is stifling, as if it's a source of surprise. Fortunately, the rainy season seems to be behind us and the weather is getting a little cooler, I even used a blanket for a while in bed last night!

I have been continuing to volunteer one day a week at the Sunrise Centre and I'm finding it really enjoyable and fun. It is hard work though; standing in front of a class from 8am to 2pm really takes its out of you. You always have to be paying attention and remain alert when there are twenty pairs of eyes focused on you. There are no opportunities to stare aimlessly out the window or mess with your mobile phone. I will never claim that a teacher's lot in life is an easy one again!

Last week was an interesting one at Sunrise. I was very curious to find out from the students their preparations for the upcoming Tobaski festival. I learnt lots about the rituals surrounding this feast. The students knowledgeably informed me about how their families would slaughter a ram, that their relations would travel long distances to be together and how they would dress up in their finery for the occasion. One of the benefits of working with young people is the vivid descriptions they give and the sense of excitement they portray regarding events such as Tobaski.

Last week I also introduced the students to the joys of Coldplay. We did a little exercise whereby I wrote the lyrics to a couple of Coldplay songs on the blackboard leaving out some of the words. The song was then played aloud and the students had to listen out for the missing words. Once the song was completed they had to give a rendition—they seemed to enjoy it and hopefully it will improve their aural skills and diction. It was quite something to hear a rendition of "Trouble" and "Yellow" drifting across the Sunrise campus."

Obituary

Jen Hamilton died on October 10th after a long battle with cancer. She was a supporter of GETS from the early days and an enthusiastic member of the group working on ways to help the Sunrise teachers deliver an effective nursery curriculum. In January 2011 she was helping with the induction course for the nursery teachers before Sunrise opened, despite knowing that there was no more treatment available for her cancer as she was determined to live to the full the time she had left. Instead of flowers at her funeral her family organised a collection for GETS which raised almost £1,000 - we know she would have been delighted with this.

Very sad news...

Just as we were "going to press" we have had this very sad news.

Francis Glynn (the founding chairman of GETS) has suddenly died. He will be greatly missed by all his friends in The Gambia and the UK.

Our thoughts are with his family.