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# Gambia Education and Teaching Support NEWSLETTER

Issue 17 August 2012

[www.getsuk.org.uk](http://www.getsuk.org.uk)

## The first full year of GETS helping in the Sunrise Centre - Reviewing 2011/12

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**Obituary - Peter Bingham**

It is with great regret that we have to announce the sudden death of Peter Bingham (Step-father to Francis Glynn). Peter has been a GETS supporter for some time now. He came to live in The Gambia with Francis more than 2 years ago and moved to stay with Adam (Francis' son) and his wife, Mymoona, after Francis died last Christmas.

The Charity has now been working within the Sunrise centre for nearly 18 months. This means that we have just completed our first full academic year and we've been able to see and learn about the highs (and some lows) of running an African school. I think that all those involved have enjoyed the experience though it has also been very hard work, with long (and hot) days but mostly rewarding! **THANKS TO ALL OUR HELPERS.**

A key element of GETS support role is to run an efficient and effective administration facility to make sure that the charity's funds (your donations) go where they were intended. Helen Touray (Centre Director), with help from Sendeng Suso (Administrator) both work full time in the Sunrise office. A brief summary of what we do to make sponsorships work follows later.



*Playing statues in the surf - teachers and Nursery pupils*

Whilst we do charge school fees for students and pupils coming to the Centre (about the same as in a subsidised state school), we have found that to achieve all that GETS does, the fees only cover about 20% of our costs, the charity funds the balance. Whilst this should reduce as the school size grows, it is placing an increasing load on our reserve funds and we are trying to do much more to find extra income,

during a time when people are all finding times hard. We hope to increase income by making applications to the many Trust Funds set up to support charity work. If successful, this should allow us to keep fees at a modest level to parents. Paying some fees does seem to encourage parents to be more involved in their child's education.

Our focus thus far has mostly been on providing improved teaching, with extra resources and training with the support of many visiting volunteers and one or two longer stay helpers (eg Daniel English who taught English and Maths most Mondays for a whole year). We also have a full time volunteer working as a skills classroom assistant; Amie Williams is sponsored by the generous donations from Angela Longoni-Sarr and Johnnie Walker. Amie is proving a really useful member of the team, mainly helping with cooking and serving the daily mid-morning snack for all students and staff at the centre.

We have also managed to put some fun into the school, organising activities both within and outside the school day. Examples of these are the Nursery trip to beach and the Monkey Park in Bijilo.



*Sports day - Tug of War*

We also enjoyed a sports day when London Corner, the nursery school that GETS

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Cover story... administrators on behalf of a Scottish charity, came to the centre to make a very competitive day for all.



*Sunrise and local Albreda Students and Teachers near Slavery Museum*

Mr Saihou Darboe (our new Tie & Dye and Batik skills teacher) organised a trip that is often made by tourists to see the sights and museum associated with West African slavery, including the prison area now known as Kunta Kinteh Island (formally James Island), near Albreda and Juffereh villages, North Bank.

Mr Ali Bah (English and Maths Teacher) went along to support things since the trip ran for 3 days in all. They all stayed in the local school where good friends were made.

## Skills Training - Graduation 2011/12

Words by Nurudeen Mbye, Education Director

Well the graduation was done successfully, 25 of them got graduated and all passed the final exam, some have failed some few areas but by average they have passed the final exam.

Among the guests includes; Mr Ebrima Mbowe, an educationist consultant and presently a volunteer in United Nations Organisation, he was the guest speaker for this occasion. There was Mr Sohna, a principal at Nemasu Senior Secondary School, a representative from the Alkalo of Bakoteh, Mrs Chow a retired head teacher, Sulayman Saidy the principle teacher of London Corner Nursery School (GETS administer this school for a Scottish Charity based in Dumbarton).

However, about seventy percent of the this students are promised with a job. Presently about ten of them are already working. Their places of works include in the restaurants, hotels and sewing factories/workshop.

The graduation programme started with prayers, then a welcome song by the students of the centre, the Education Director's remarks, followed by remarks of the Centre Director, Helen Touray. A drama play about the importance of skill was performed by the students with another play, title "Teenage Pregnancy". This was followed by the speech of the guest speaker who talked about the role of skill in nation building. The programme was closed with a vote of thank by Caroline Jatta. In the night, students had their own programme, dance and fun.



*Graduation Day for Students and Staff at Sunrise*

## Lower Basic School Progress



*Sunrise Lower Basic School - Waterproofing being completed "just in time"*

In our Term 3 newsletter it is very important to give an update on our plans to complete the Lower Basic School (LBS) first classroom and Toilets in time for a September 2012 opening. Well, we are still "on plan" to do this.

The building, pictured here, contains 2 new classrooms, 6 toilets and 2 new rooms (one for a large administration office

and one for a library/staff room). The tiling and electrics are underway now as the building is waterproof from the rains that have now started.

We have had the normal unexpected challenges along the way as you do with completing things in Africa and one or two that we did expect. The latest of these is that the local water pressure is now so low during the daytime that we are planning to store water, that has been supplied by the water company overnight when the pressure is much higher, in the loft space, to flush toilets etc. This fall off in pressure has been much worse than last year at this time for reasons that aren't clear. We considered our own bore-hole at one time but the payback on all the components was considered too long at that time. We may look again at this.

We have filled one of the new rooms with a container full of 100 desks and chairs plus cupboards and other goodies that the school badly needs.



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*Our Container finally being unloaded by staff at Sunrise*

Also transferring to support Kaddy by taking up the new LBS Classroom Assistant role is Mama Nabaneh (featured later in this newsletter).

We are delighted to have now filled Mama's position in Nursery by recruiting a graduate from our Skills Training programme, Mbacho Jallow, pictured here.



*Mbach Jallow – New Nursery Classroom Assistant*

One of the things that that we have learnt recently from the education department is their requirement to teach religious studies (Muslim and Christian) during the first year of the LBS. We will need to recruit suitable teachers to do these classes, both about 2 hours each week.

## Tools with a Mission

- Electric sewing machines for Skills classes (by Erica Wren)

We were lucky enough to hear about TWAM (Tools with a Mission) a charity based in Ipswich, whose volunteers collect, repair and refurbish unused tools of all sorts. The volunteers then assemble them into kits, which the charity sends to church and education groups in Third World countries, where they are given to people who can make good use of them.

As we had some tools to donate we visited their amazing warehouse and workshops, where pallets of completed carpentry kits, tailoring kits, computers and much more await despatch. We asked about electric sewing machines..... and came away with an overlocker and two zig-zag machines for embroidery - the things which Bubacarr Diallo had requested when we were at Sunrise in March! They reached Dawn and Paul's house in time to be fitted into the container and are now stored safely at Sunrise, ready for the next academic year.

We want to record our thanks to TWAM here but one good turn deserves another. So we would ask all GETS supporters to see if they have tools they no longer use! If you find some, a visit to <http://twam.co.uk> will give you details of how to contact your nearest collector - there are about 200 around the UK. Eventually your donations will end up refurbished and gratefully received in another centre like Sunrise.

## Improving Security at Sunrise

One of the things that we have been striving to do at Sunrise is to improve local security for the children attending school and for all of the charity's investments. Since we share a community walled compound with another group this has been quite difficult. In the spring GETS met with the Bakoteh village leaders to agree that we could divide the compound with a wall to meet our needs. The funds to build the wall were given by the Trust "Association Femme d'Europe" who accepted an application from GETS as a registered charity, for funds for this project, as part of its mission to improve facilities in the Gambia by improving safety and security within the school area. GETS is very grateful for this support.



*The new wall and gateway "under construction"*



**TOOLS WITH A MISSION**  
*Sending tools across the world*

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## Nursery - By Mama Nabaneh (Classroom Assistant)

My name is Mama Nabaneh and I was a former skills student at Sunrise Centre. I am now a teaching assistant in the Nursery section and have been doing this job for one academic year.

I work under the instruction of the ECD teachers directly, that is I call the register while the teachers are busy preparing to start lessons. I also engage the children with group work while the teacher is busy with the other group.

I make sure that children are busy on something rather than talking when the teacher is either sick or on other engagements. I help them to fetch water for drink and pack up the materials taken out everyday for lessons. I also help in cleaning up children that messed up themselves. Most importantly, I take part in the teaching and the learning process by engaging children and giving them educative stories and songs.



*Mama working with children in Nursery 1*

Furthermore, during the year, through interaction with teachers I have now built up the confidence in myself and have learned new skills that I have never known. I also enjoy working with other people especially on occasions like Commonwealth Day and the Sports day where I was able to make friends. The Sports Day was a great day indeed, it was both sportive and educative.

Finally, Sunrise Centre recreated me to a new person in term of human potentials and within a year I have learned a lot and can now give out a lot in terms of teaching children. I only hope in the nearest future I can join the Gambia College, School of Education because I want to make teaching my profession.

## Sponsorships

Sometimes it might seem like GETS is just focusing on running the Sunrise school but this is far from true. We still help more than 55 students by administering their sponsor's money to pay for their education. Generally, the sponsored students come to the Sunrise office each term to collect cheques to take to school for all the expenses involved; for fees (when appropriate), books, uniforms, bus fares and sometimes fees for extra tuition.

We are continuing to collect a list of students/children who need financial help to continue their education. We list these youngsters on our web site in order that people who want to help might look at the backgrounds and decide who looks most in need. **It is vital that these children do get some help with school fees and we need new sponsors to do this.** This needs to happen before the start of the new school year in September 2012 or they won't attend school next year at all.

See [www.gets-sunrise.org/Need\\_Sponsors.htm](http://www.gets-sunrise.org/Need_Sponsors.htm)

## AGM Reminder

A note for your diaries - **the AGM this year will be held on 1st September 2012 in Letchworth Garden City.** The meeting will be held in the Wilbury Hall, Bedford Road, which is attached to and owned by St Thomas of Canterbury church: the post code for Sat Nav (and Google Earth) users is SG6 4DU. The plan is for the meeting to start at 2pm but members attending are invited to arrive at 12.30pm, the intention being to have the usual light lunch at 1pm. (Please let Ian know - [ian@gets-sunrise.org](mailto:ian@gets-sunrise.org) for the caterers) The Agenda for the meeting and associated documents has now been sent to all GETS members,

Thanks go to John and Kay Skingsley for proposing their home town as the location and also for arranging the venue on behalf of the Trustees. We hope that this more accessible location, although it's still 'down south', will encourage greater attendance than in recent years.



*Mum, Bubacarr Jallow and Amie Jammeh at Sunrise to collect cheques*

At this time of year Dawn calculates the money each individual student needs for the following academic year, subtracts the money left in his or her account, then lets their sponsor know how much they need to pay to cover the cost of sponsoring for a further year.

Without Helen's care and attention managing funds and issuing cheques, it would be unlikely that all the cash would arrive correctly at each school and we often see this happening when people send cash directly via families to fund children.



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<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Gambia-Education-and-Teaching-Support/130145797115686>