



GETS News!

Winter 2014/15

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Trustees report on the first term – Dawn and Paul Webster

The new academic year started at Sunrise on 29th September, the date chosen by the Ministry of Education. This is later than in the UK in order to avoid any problems due to the rainy season.

Paul and Dawn were in the Sunrise office from 15th September to deal with students sponsored at schools other than Sunrise who needed cheques for their school fees, as these fees are payable before the start of term or the students are not allowed to be in school.

The week beginning 22nd September saw parents of current students bringing in receipts for term 1 payments as all Sunrise fees are now paid directly into our bank account in Gambia. GETS has chosen to be one of the many schools which receive their fees this way, both for security reasons and because of the time involved in counting all the dalasi notes as the number of students grows as we add a new class each year.

Some staff were also present each day during the week before school began, to assist with registration, handing out material for uniforms or preparing their classrooms for the new term, as that week was a very busy time for all!

Potential Sunrise students were coming in that week to register their applications for places at Sunrise. The demand was high and Sunrise was not able to offer places to all who applied, however GETS were pleased to realise that Sunrise Centre is getting such a good reputation locally.



How has the Sunrise Centre School changed?

By Fatou Sanneh (Nursery 2 Teacher)

I think that the Sunrise Center has become a great school since it was taken over by GETS(UK). Four years ago the infrastructure of the school was very poor compared to now, where every area is furnished with all the necessary materials.

The standard and quality of education is going positively, which is the main aim and objective of any learning institute. Teachers have been helped to upgrade their skills by going to Gambia College. GETS have trained two ECD (for Nursery Teachers) and now one is on PTC (for Primary teachers), which I believe is a great achievement.

Note Fatou used to work in the original school that GETS took over in Jan 2011.

Remember Elizabeth Lopy?

In the last issue we mentioned how incredibly proud we all are that Elizabeth Lopy, a former Sunrise Skills student, has found a contact in London fashion house, Riyka. She was commissioned to create a set of drawstring bags to be sold on the main website as part of their ethical range. Well if you'd like to have a look for yourselves, or indeed buy one of Elizabeth's bags, you can do so here: <http://shop.riyka.com/collections/aw-14-15/products/duster-bag>

If you can think of any items that could be made by our skills students and sold to tourists or supporters please let us know!



Fatou in her classroom



To all of our supporters - we hope you had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



We hope you all enjoyed receiving your animated version of our Christmas card. This is the result of an annual competition for Sunrise students to design the picture we use. Momodou Lamin Bojang (aged 8) produced the winning card this year. We thought you might like to see all the entries in our shortlist – don't they draw well!



First Impressions – by John Birkin

As a supporter and sponsor at Sunrise, the invitation by my daughter and son-in-law Sue and Tony Nelson to spend a fortnight with them in The Gambia was irresistible, especially as it coincided with a cold wet spell in an English November.

Sue and I flew out with Thomas Cook Airlines and some six hours later exchanged the damp mists of Gatwick for the heat and brilliant sunshine of Banjul International Airport, where we were made to sanitise our hands and had our temperatures taken (an Ebola precaution. It is not in The Gambia!) We were met by Tony and whisked away in a little green Kia along a smooth tarmac road, which rapidly gave way to the sand, bumps and potholes of the minor roads leading to the area around Bakoteh and the Sunrise Centre.

Apart from the heat, my first impressions were of many smiling faces and the number of people everywhere who greeted Tony as a familiar friend. I admitted, rather shamefacedly, that I had forgotten to bring my sunglasses. No problem – Tony stopped a wayside seller on the way from the airport and bought some at a very reasonable price – not something that would happen in the UK. Sue had been to The Gambia several times, but it was all new to me, although I had experienced other parts of Africa many years ago.

The following morning we drove straight to the school, where I noted that every visitor, staff member and pupil was made to wash their hands at the gate (another Ebola precaution). I was introduced to the secretary and some of the teachers and walked around taking in the scene. What a wonderful display of colour! The lovely school uniforms of both children and staff struck me immediately. Then it was assembly time for Nursery 1 and 2 – very well structured and engaging for all the children. I loved the clapping for each child's contributions.

I had a lightning tour of all the classrooms and how the plans for the future would fit in and then attended Mr Bah's maths class for the Skills students, which took me back many years to the number of degrees in a circle and the formula for simple interest. Thank you Mr Bah.

Sewing is another subject that plays an important part of the Skills curriculum and the sight of so many sewing machines in action was a reminder of the practical skills so valuable in the economy of the Gambia and the possibility of a decent future for the students. Well done the Sunrise Centre – long may you flourish!



John meets his sponsored student – Florian Gomez

Our month at The Sunrise Centre –

by Ruth McMeechan and Rita Granger

We are both retired Maths teachers and long term friends. We spent a month volunteering at The Sunrise Centre in January and have just completed our second month.

When we arrived on our second visit it was like returning to old friends, such a welcome from both staff and students. One difference is that this time the staff knew us and so we were asked to do specific things almost as soon as we got there. They were not arduous tasks, just things like help with writing lesson plans, photocopying, preparing equipment etc. I helped with the teaching of some lessons for a few days...it was exhausting!

We decided we would like to get the library up and running - quite a task. The room was full of donated equipment, classroom furniture and building materials. At the end of the month there was a functioning library. It looked fabulous and inviting and remarkably well equipped. We were very proud of ourselves! We really felt appreciated and thoroughly enjoyed our time at the school



A colourful visitor from West Africa – by Erica Wren



It isn't only unusual birds from Africa who are sometimes found in East Suffolk – on 2nd October Snape Primary School welcomed a retired head teacher from The Gambia. Mrs Fatoumata Chow was visiting volunteers Tony Bound and Erica Wren, who first met her in November 2010, shortly after she had completed 11 years managing 3,000 pupils and 110 teachers at the state junior school in Bakoteh.

At that time GETS was preparing to assume responsibility for Sunrise and Tony and Erica's request for the support of an experienced Gambian during their interviewing prospective teachers produced Mrs Chow, a long-standing friend of Helen Touray. The three greatly enjoyed working together and after the interview days were over she declared herself "the first Gambian volunteer for Sunrise".

Since then she has been greatly impressed by the results of the "child-centred" teaching methods which the teachers are pioneering at Sunrise, under the guidance of Dawn Webster, and wished to see them in a well established and successful British school. At Snape Primary she found just that - happy, confident children and committed teachers, all working hard. Both teachers and children seemed glad to talk to her about what they are doing, reinforcing Mrs Chow's positive view of these methods.

Plans are afoot for Snape Primary to join the Sponsor a Class programme and have regular contact with their fellow pupils at Sunrise.

Sponsor needed:



Kaddijatou Ceesay

D.O.B. 02.12.2007

Kaddijatou is in Lower Basic Grade 1 at Sunrise. She lives in Bakoteh near to the school. Her father is retired so her mother sells bread in a local school to support her 6 children.

http://www.gets-sunrise.org/Need_Sponsors.htm

What did our Skills Students tell us about their experiences at Sunrise?



As part of our work towards improving the management of quality standards in Sunrise we have asked our Skills Training Students a number of feedback questions about the course, the teachers, the standards, equipment and assessments. The score based on this sample was around 90% positive and some free-form comments have been attached here from the anonymous survey.

Please feel free to comment here on any aspect, positive or negative, of your learning experience within Skills Training

The positive thing that i experience in the school is. The first time that i came in the school, i did not know how to make tye and dye, but now ^(I'M) really proud of my self during the course of my three years training in the school. And about life skill as it is to learn and teach others

Please feel free to comment here on any aspect, positive or negative, of your learning experience within Skills Training

It was very good and interesting to be in Sunrise centre, I see many changes in me, and my spoken English is improved and i was able to learn many things like. Life skills, tye and dye, cookery, sewing, English and maths. and i thank all the teachers who were always there for us when we needed them... It's very interesting to be in Sunrise centre. I love it !!

To Hull and Back – by Helen Touray

I had the opportunity to catch up with one of our fundraisers, Angela Longoni Sarr who lives in Yorkshire. Angela has long been a supporter of GETS and works tirelessly for us – I know I had first hand experience with her during my stay!



Angela and her partner Johnnie along with the rest of the family Anne Marie, Faye, Lola and Tam make regular visits to their second home in The Gambia and I reckon they are the only returning passengers taking more luggage back to UK than what they arrive with!! Why you ask yourself, well during their visits Angela and Johnnie trek along to the local craft markets and make numerous arts and crafts purchases which they bring back to UK. Throughout the course of the year, Angela with the help of her son Tam set up tables at craft fairs, car boot sales and shopping centres to sell the arts and crafts they have purchased.



A very special thank you to Angela, Johnnie and the rest of the family – keeeeeeeep fundraising.



We're building again...



Thanks to the wonderful gifts raised by the Winchester based Catholic Church charity Covenant with The Poor (CWP) from congregations and individuals in the Diocese, we have been able to start work on our planned Nursery Reception Classroom extension. CWP publicised GETS and our plans for Sunrise in September 2014 during their regular fundraising appeals and our needs obviously "struck a chord" with many of their supporters. Following the appeal we had hoped to at least build the foundations this year and enlarge our smallest Nursery 2 classroom but we received enough money to complete all our building plans.

Not only that, but we have received additional funding to add a further Skills Training classroom and to extend our smallest Skills Classroom (Mr Darboe's). This work has also already been started (see below)

Operating in a school, it is important to minimise the disruption to classes so work extending the operating classrooms was done mostly during the Christmas school holiday.

Our plans for the Playground are still underway too. Some of the metalwork is at Sunrise now and we are hoping to "plant" it over the next few months.

More updates as work progresses but this extra cash is a great reward for everyone's hard work to make Sunrise a success story and help the youngsters and the community in Bakoteh.



Artist's impression of the changes at Sunrise

Classroom extensions

Fatou Sanneh's Nursery 2 classroom has been stretched onto the original corridor. This gives new dimensions that are almost the size of our biggest LB classrooms. Fatou was delighted with the prospect. She has been asking us for extra space for her 5/6 year olds for some time now but we couldn't see an easy way to do this until someone came up with this simple but brilliant idea. I think it was Eric, our Builder!

Completing the walk way and the painting was essential during the Christmas break to avoid little fingers and feet making a big impression.



At the other end of the building Mr Darboe's Skills Training classroom was also getting a similar upgrade. The width of the extension is clear here from the grey concrete filler wall. Windows were re-site to save cash.

This allowed us to build the Skills Training extension classroom onto the side of Mr Darboe's room. The view through the new low maintenance steel door shows some of the extra space we gain.



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