

# Lloyds Banking Group Gambia Trip 2014

## Summary



In three groups, over three weeks, 15 Lloyds apprentices with three MBG leaders renovated a collapsing 1940's classroom in the Village of Gunjur in The Gambia, West Africa. The group raised £5,750 over six months to support the project and a further £7,000 to fund their travel

to deliver the project on the ground in Africa. Each person lived with a different local family, sharing their food and managing without running water or sanitation, but electricity had reached the village earlier in the year.

## The project

Built in the 1940's as a medical centre, the building the group went to renovate was the original primary school class room used by 80 children in the 1952. Today the school has 1,400 pupils, so many for the school that there is a morning and afternoon shift to fit everyone in. Dark, dilapidated and leaking, this building is still loved by the village as most of the elder's and tribal chiefs of the village were educated in it. Renovating this building to support the children of Gunjur represented a doubling of the size of Lloyds projects from the last three years, but also a much more high profile project in the eyes of the village.



Group one cleared the site, removed the old roof and stripped away the poor masonry. They also purchased all of the materials needed for the build, buying as locally as possible to support the village. Group two hand mixed and made over 200 concrete blocks for the new construction as well as fitting half of the new windows and the new roof. Group three prepared the building for painting, helped brick up the end walls, fitted remaining new windows, construct the new supporting pillars and laid the new veranda around the building. The group worked alongside trained local builders and carpenters, as well as volunteers from the village.



## Fundraising

Each group member needed to raise around £850 over six months to fund the development project, trip costs, local accommodation and flights. All worked hard in their offices and branches to get the support of their work colleagues. From summer BBQ summer parties, casino nights and dance events to World Cup sweepstakes, quizzes and treasure hunts, the events were both successful and high profile. The total raised was over £12,500 and this allowed the whole project to go ahead. When back in the UK all volunteers complete and report and present it to their sponsors and work colleagues to show the amazing impact of their work.

## Ebola

Although there is **no** Ebola in The Gambia, and extensive work was completed by MBG in conjunction with the British Embassy and other NGOs, 20 participants decided not to go on the trip. However all allowed MBG to keep the money they had raised (several moving their flights to 2015) which ensured the project could go ahead. Tourism, which makes up 20% of The Gambia's GDP, is down 80% as a result of the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, despite it posing as little risk to The Gambia as to the UK. The village was deeply moved by the commitment of the volunteers who came on the Lloyds trip. We are delighted that many of those who didn't come on the 2014 trip have already signed up for a 2015 trip.

## Accommodation

All MBG volunteers stay with a local host family living in their compound. This feature of MBG trips is very unique and creates the kind of positive cultural experience that really is a once in a lifetime opportunity. For this year's group, just like all the ones before, living with a local family and being part of the community in this way is the best part of their trip.

The accommodation is basic as Gunjur has no running water or sanitation system, but electricity arrived this year which has allowed many compounds to have lights and fans and some to even have fridges. Sharing your food in a collective bowl with a family of often up to 14 is a memory people never forget.

Just like in the UK some families are better off than others, so some people had fish and rice (the freshest fish you'll ever have) for every meal, while some would also have chicken, beef and spicy 'chips'. Eating what the family eat is always a talking point when volunteers get home as the local food is so good and due to the open fires and cooking oils, impossible to replicate in the UK.



## Activities

As the trip is only a week long the project always comes first. Depending on the heat of the day it might be 9-5 or 9-1. Group one had daily temperatures of 36 degrees. In their free time groups get to experience the local culture like the fishing village, naming ceremonies and weddings. There was also some time to visit some tourist attractions like a snake and reptile farm, monkey reserve, dawn river trip, the crocodile pool and the deserted Gunjur tropical beach.



## What the 2014 group thought:

### **Thomas Fawcett**, Service Desk Operations

*'A great experience that I would recommend to anyone. The best thing about the trip is how welcoming everyone is in The Gambia. Not just your host who you stay with, but the whole village in Gunjur open their arms for you.'*

### **Naseem, Omar**, Reconciliations Glasgow, Operations

*'An opportunity not to be missed. The best thing for me was spending the time with the local people and working on the project site, knowing you are making a real difference.'*

### **Marissa McKee**, Fife

*'I realised I'm a stronger person than I thought I was. I can live without my home comforts and I'm now more confident to try new things by myself! I would recommend the trip to everyone who had the opportunity to go! It's a great chance for anyone to have a life changing experience.'*

### **Tyronne Fletcher**, AD and Citrix Services, DCS, Group IT, Halifax

*'An amazing experience not to be missed if the opportunity is given! Growing as a person and discovering skills that you didn't realise you had.'*

### **Returning volunteer: Steven Lindsay**, BRT Team Manager, Leeds

*It will be an experience of a lifetime. The leaders from GCL & MBG will do all they can to make it as enjoyable as possible.*

### **Returning volunteer: Dave Johnson**, Birmingham

*'An amazing experience that I'd like to repeat again and again! Be prepared to rough it slightly, but you'll have one of the best experiences of your life.'*