

## MBG News – July 2017



### Welcome

A loud Salaam Alaikum to all MBG members and friends. We would like to give everyone an update on all that has been going on since our AGM two months ago.

First of all a huge thank you to Theresa, Anita and Steph who all put in a immense number of hours and untold effort to help us in this transition time for MBG. Their effort ranged from cleaning the office to pulling together endless handover documents. Thank you!

The MBG office closed at the end of April and several of us met there for a final clean and say goodbye to our home for the past 10 years. We should also say a thank you to James Parry whose consistent support of MBG over those years as landlord has been quite exceptional. We would like to thank him and his office staff for their help in this transition period. Most of the office resources were passed on to schools and ARK.

There are still a few administrative areas we need to complete for the handover, but this should be complete by the end of June. The new trustees have met three times to keep things ticking along. Both Lilli Loveday and Alex Davies have been out to Gunjur separately to talk to our friends there and maintain the great work MBG has underway.

### The AGM

The minutes of the AGM can be found on the MBG website along with Nick's report to the AGM and the Annual accounts ( [www.mbg.org/about-mbg/mbg-policies](http://www.mbg.org/about-mbg/mbg-policies) ). At the AGM, the existing trustees stood down and three new trustees Alex Davies, Lilli Loveday and Janneke Blokland were elected. Both Lilli and Alex have been summer group leaders and trustees of MBG while being professionals in the charity and corporate responsibility sectors; Lilli has also lived in The Gambia for several years. Janneke is Chaplain at Marlborough College and one of the previous MBG trustees. Some more information can be found here: [www.mbg.org/about-mbg/people](http://www.mbg.org/about-mbg/people).

The AGM included some open debate about the direction of MBG and Global Education. The questions and answers are listed in the AGM minutes and a general outline of direction is in the MBG annual report, also online. We would like to reiterate that MBG has not changed its articles and as such is looking to maintain activities like the Lent lecture, science education trip and Janneke is in conversation with Christina Bennett to find ways to consolidate the work of WGEC and looking at ways to make a good transition towards the future.

In answer to a question that has been raised, we would like to take the opportunity to stress that while MBG had £191,036 on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2016, as shown in the accounts, over £60K was spent on WGEC projects until April as well as wages, office costs and downsizing

costs. This means that the actual balance of MBG will be significantly below this number. The actual amount will be far closer to the legacy left to us and we hope to use this money maintain and ideally expand the work of MBG in The Gambia sustainably for years to come.

### **Upcoming events**

Brilliant Young Musicians: The last concert of the 2016-2017 season will be this Sunday 4 June 2017, 7.30pm - Ben Schoeman as usual at St Peter's Church in Marlborough.

Harvest Lecture: Instead of our annual Lent Lecture, this year there will be a Harvest Lecture in the autumn. We will let you know as soon as time and venue have been confirmed.

### **Linking Trips**

Alex Davies travelled out to Gunjur in May with Tom Tuckwood, Director at Venture Force. St. James's Place, who are interested in sending local staff out to Gunjur in a similar way to our Lloyds trips between 2011 and 2015, supplied a Pinkertons man to accompany us and complete a comprehensive risk assessment for SJP, MBG and Venture Force.

Tom was with us for five very full days where we met several times with The Gunjur Community Link and the young people involved in the link in Gunjur. We visited past projects, Disability Africa, TARUD, Kartong, Sifoe, Serrekunda, Brikama and all of the lodges and activities a group would get through in a full trip. Meanwhile our risk specialist visited the security and medical infrastructure of Western Division.

Unfortunately, as we already know, home stays for students are simply not possible any more in this context; but working with the Gunjur Community Link we hope to be able to host students in the community building opposite the medical clinic. We have worked here before putting in a milling machine in 2011. The building is in the centre of the village and large enough to accommodate students and leaders in one location. Students will cook their meals with local people and clean and maintain the building while there. Venture Force are a small provider and are projects led. Other than this change of accommodation all other traditional aspects and activities of our wonderful student trips are unchanged. We still intend to link students with families so they can spend time in compounds and be as part of the community as possible.

We are in the process of reaching out to St John's Academy to begin the process of a student trip for 2018.

### **St John's Science Trip**

Following the fantastic success of Steve Atyeo's science education trip taking St John's students to work with students in and around Gunjur, we have been working hard with Steve to secure a trip for 2018. Discussions are ongoing at the moment with an enlarged science group and the trip being supported by Venture Force.

### **Gunjur Youth Development Project and TARUD update**

This project to support local business with start-up and expansion loans is half way through its third year of funding. Supported by a Business Committee of business people from across

the village and TARUD, we have been looking at securing the long term future of this excellent programme as MBG can no longer remotely manage it from the UK.

TARUD also has a new Director, Baai Jaabang, who brings with him extensive NGO experience. TARUD has secured two multi-year funding programmes from United Purpose (formally Concern Universal) and this is giving a new lease of life to this long standing MBG partner.

In her visit in March, Lilli helped to bring together United Purpose, TARUD and the Business Committee to think about how the GYD Project can be maintained for another three years funding from St. James's Place. In his trip, Alex met with United Purpose and we hope that this can become a third programme TARUD can co-ordinate in the village, with the oversight and support of the Business Committee. We hope to see a new three year funding request be sent to St. James's Place later in the year based on positive impacts achieved so far.

### **Grants from MBG**

As set out in our Annual Report, MBG will look to support the programmes and charities active in Gunjur, many of them there thanks to the path laid by MBG over our 35 years. At present the new trustees have been focused on supporting and securing our existing activities and transferring responsibility and day to day management as discussed above. Once these are complete we will focus on how we make grants to Gunjur to continue our work of changing lives and fostering international understanding.

### **Until next time**

We will be in touch shortly with Harvest Lecture date and we would love to hear from you with any news. You can reach us at [info@mbg.org](mailto:info@mbg.org).

Alex, Lilli and Janneke.

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