



Welcome

Salaam Alaikum to all MBG members and friends. A quick update to you all and seasons greetings.

Upcoming event – Annual MBG Quiz – March 15th at St. John's, Marlborough.

The 11th MBG quiz is booked for March 15th. Save the date, details to follow.

As usual, a chance to be both bamboozled and delighted at solving the questions. The glorious trophy and a bottle of Champaign to the winning team. Get your teams together now.

Summer trip 2018

We are delighted to say that 16 young people from St John's Academy have put their names forward for the 2018 Summer Trip to Gunjur. As usual the group of young people will be working on a community building project to be selected by the community of Gunjur and facilitated by our friends in The Gunjur Community Link. Two returning volunteers from the 2016 group, Anna Gent and Ben Scott will be acting as leaders and they will be working alongside two professionals from Venture Force.

As you probably know this year's trip will, most likely be using the Community Centre (old pre-school building near the health centre) as accommodation. As Venture Force get to know Gunjur all the young people will staying together in the one compound, but we have worked with GCL and The Village Development Committee to find a location that is right at the heart of the village. Another change is that the group will be doing all the cooking, cleaning and clothes washing themselves with some women from the village acting as head chefs. The funds raised from this year's MBG Annual Quiz will be going towards the summer groups project.

Raise Gambia - Science Trip 2018

Working with Steve Atyeo and his charity Raise Gambia, we are giving funding support to the second Science Trip planned for autumn 2018. 14 students studying science from St. John's Academy has signed up to this one week trip. We are delighted to be able to support this initiative. The group stay at Halahin lodge between Gunjur and Kartong and work with science students from Gunjur and Sifoe upper basic school. This trip, by being only a week long and using a basic lodge has helped us to reach out to students who might not have been attracted to our longer and village based building summer trip. Once again, this unique trip will give more young people the chance to expand their horizons, experience another way of life and feel the life changing impact of visiting our friends in Gunjur.

St. James's Place pilot trip - November 2017

In mid November five members of staff from St. James's Place, funders of our Employment and Micro-finance project delivered by TARUD and United Purpose, spent a week working in Gunjur on the Community Centre. This was the first Venture Force led trip so a chance for their leaders to get to know the village. The group was working to improve the Community Centre as a resource for the village and make it acceptable to host the summer group. A second larger St. James's Place trip is

likely to happen in April to finish off the improvement works. St. James's Place is a FTSE 100 finance company based in Cirencester with staff from around Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. We are giving their staff the opportunity to see the impact their fundraising through MBG is having in Gunjur and to gain the same life changing experience as our young people from St. John's. We hope to develop skills based volunteering as part of this relationship and meet Gunjur's request for a broader range of groups.

The mood in Gunjur

I am pleased to say that there is an upbeat feeling of optimism and opportunity in Gunjur. Leaders and friends we spoke to talked of increased interest in establishing small enterprises and a confidence in business. There is a much more open approach to conversation and the future. However there is also continued flow of people taking the back way to Europe looking for another future. Of course there remain profound challenges for the country, but I have rarely seen it so optimistic for the future.

Until next time

We'd like to wish you a very Happy Christmas and very best wishes for the New Year.

You can reach us at info@mbg.org.

Alex, Lilli and Janneke.

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