

MBG News – August 2020



Dear friends,

As these unprecedented and unpredictable times continue here is an update from Gunjur and MBG on our activities and continued response to Covid-19.

Unfortunately, we must begin this update with some sad news.

It is with heart felt sadness that close friend of Marlborough and link founder, Mankamang Touray, passed away this morning.

Mankamang pioneer of international linking supporting the creation of the Gunjur – Marlborough link as well as inspirational activist for development issues in Gunjur. Many of those travelling to Gunjur or Marlborough through the link will have met and talked with Mankamang, or Manky as he was often know as, and those who did not have the privilege to meet him were able to undertake their linking experience as a result of his activities with the other link founders. Manky was the first host in Gunjur for Sally and a member of the first group to Marlborough in 1986. He spent time training in TH White in Marlborough, was a long time Chair of the Gunjur Link Committee and instrumental in the establishment of the much respected Gunjur development organisation TARUD.

A more complete reflection on his contribution will be sent out soon. [Gunjur online has a news report here.](#)

Photo: From Right to Left (Dr Nick Maurice, Mankamang Touray, President Barrow, Madi Jatta and Nabani Darboe)



Gunjur and TARUD Covid-19 update from TAURD Director Baai Jabbang

Thank you Baai for his updates which have been compiled below.

The TARUD office has closed temporarily due to increased cases of Covid-19 in The Gambia. The coastal areas of the country remain very porous with little restriction on fishing and the resulting people movement. Many people have travelled home to or within The Gambia to observe Tobaski (Eid Al Adha) without being tested.

The COVID-19 situation in the country especially in the Greater Banjul Area, which include Gunjur, is becoming more serious. The health system is struggling with nurses and doctors increasingly becoming infected. Some medical workers are being stigmatised by their families and are pressurising them to quite the medical profession for their own safety. Gambian Red Cross workers are also coming under pressure due to their presence around cases of Covid-19.

In Gunjur new cases have been recorded bringing the total to four with nearly 2,000 cases now recoded in The Gambia, 1,408 active cases, though reporting is thought to be about 10 days behind the current situation. Banjul has now recorded some 185 cases and Brikama 82. Increased testing is showing up more cases, but it is feared there is a larger number of infections in the country.

Social distancing and PPE are increasingly important in The Gambia and MBG and St. James's Place has agreed with TARUD to free up project funds for Gunjur Health Promotion

to be used to help fund a radio and information campaign to help inform people of safety precautions of hand washing, face mask wearing, social distancing and not shaking hands.

Fifteen hours of radio programme time has been committed and will be utilized by the Regional COVID-19 emergency response team to intensify message delivery for better understanding of myths and misconceptions of Covid-19 and around national responsibilities of various actors to facilitate compliance. We hope that these steps will slow the spread of the virus and help save lives.

The support given to Gunjur in the MBG appeal at the start of this crisis was highly effective for providing food to the very poor, vulnerable and needy families of the community at a time of need when food prices were spiralling. With prices now stabilised the next challenge is any potential lockdowns are talked about in country and it may be that further help will be needed for these most vulnerable families.

You can find more regular updates about Gunjur from GunjurOnline here. [gunjuronline.com]

Link update

Trips: Sadly we have had to delay the three November St. James's Place community trips to Gunjur until April 2021. While we waited as long as we would to see if they would be possible, the UK is still some way off ending social distancing and it is hard to read the situation in Gunjur. Venture Force remain committed to the trips and have been excellent and providing advice and continued management support.

I am pleased to say that St. James's Place has agreed to fund all of the Gunjur workers, cooks, chaperones and drivers that make the trip and community projects possible so they will not miss out on their planned wages. We have also provided some funds to the reptile farm that we would have visited and made voluntary payments to the two lodges that would have been used for some of the trips – NemaKunta and Footsteps Eco Lodge. It is part of the commitment from the company to return to Gunjur and continue to look for their support in making the community trips possible.

Additionally the company is also looking to still fund a community project despite employees not being there on the ground to work in partnership with Gunjur. In this way we hope that the impact of the delay will be as minimal as possible to the people of Gunjur.

Black Lives Matter: since its inception the link has been an excellent case study of equal partnership to foster mutual understanding and respect between the people of Gunjur and Marlborough. Dr Nick has worked with six Gunjurians, now based around the world, to write an article for the October edition of Marlborough *Tower and Town* publication. They give an account of how the link has supported them and the impact it has had on Gunjur. Please do look out for it.

Until next time, stay safe and our best wishes to you all

As always, you can reach us at info@mbg.org.

MBG Trustees

If you'd like us to stop emailing you, or you'd like to get in touch, please contact: info@mbg.org