



# The Gambia Partnership

*Supporting the work of the Gospel in the Gambia*

<http://www.thegambiapartnership.co.uk>

[info@thegambiapartnership.co.uk](mailto:info@thegambiapartnership.co.uk)

*Scottish Charity Number: SCO36818*

## **Trip Report 2015**

A group of 19 visited The Gambia as part of the ongoing charitable work from the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of November this year. We were the first cohort and expected a similar group to come out the following week. Our aim was to progress the building of a school in a small village near the Senegalese border called Kabekel. Aside from this, we had been fundraising to install water filters in every house, clinic and school in the area which has a population of some 600.

We had been directed to the village first of all in 2013 by an evangelist from our committee. Since then we had established a good working relationship with the Village Development Council and Timothy the village chief. We had experienced considerable difficulty in starting our build last year which will accommodate 120 pupils aged 4-10. A week before we were to leave this year we were encouraged to see God's hand in opening the door for a friend (Bill Hebner) who had initially designed the build, to join us and led on the next construction phase. This was such a blessing and a great encouragement as he has led teams and built all over the world. In fact he had built 3 schools from start to finish in 3 countries in the last 2 months.

It was a great blessing to meet several families and children whom we knew from last year. A particular joy was to meet the wee boy who had been excluded by his step father

The group worked tirelessly mixing concrete, building walls, and grinding metal and smashing blocks - all in 40 degree heat. It was done in an amazing spirit, with love and interest in the villagers who worked with us. It allowed us to get alongside them, to show love for them whilst having fun. The building came on leaps and bounds due to the hard work of everyone working together, we collapsed into our beds each night, filthy, exhausted but happy.

One of the girls told me that in one week she had learned how to build a wall, how to cut and clean metal, how to mix concrete, how to drill holes and screed concrete. All from a 17 year old who had never done anything like that before. Amazing but it wasn't our driving force, as Bill reminded us on the first day; "we're not here to build a school but to build character". The team was the key, we had a duty to serve them and to help them move forward in faith and grow as people – everyone stepped up the mark. It is so important for people to get the opportunity to serve in this way, stretching themselves and operating well outside their comfort zones.

We started each morning with a morning thought and ended each night with a time of reflection. I was blown away by the manner in which the team gelled, we are now like a large family and it allowed us to discuss things which you would normally earn the right to discuss over a long period of time.

Aside from the build and the group, another focus we have is to fundraise for 90 water filters at a cost of £40 per filter. Along with the need for the school, the village had identified clean water and student fee payments as the main necessities. We had raised funds for 25 filters by the time we went out and Dr Davis spent a full morning educating 6 villagers who have been tasked with teaching everyone how to use the

filters effectively. The filters we use are made by a company called Sawyer and kill 100% of water borne diseases in The Gambia. This will reduce sickness, increase productivity and have many other far reaching benefits. We expected the second group to take out a further 30 filters and reinforce the training.

We were donated a lot of medical supplies for the local clinic from several people and received a lot of support from Carolyn at Back pharmacy in this. These were handed over by Dr Davis to Marie Jatta, the village nurse who gratefully received them. We also undertook some visitation with some committee members to get to know the villagers better. This also proved to be fruitful with times of prayer along with opportunities to minister to people practically meeting basic needs and even facilitating one man to access hospital for some much needed treatment.

The younger members of the team had been tasked with running an activities morning with the children in the village which they did on the Tuesday. I believe it was chaotic, loud and energetic – most importantly the kids loved it and followed and hung off our lot for the rest of the week.

35 children we sponsor across other schools in the Gambia. We were encouraged to see the kids getting on well for the most part and were especially humbled in Model International Primary. In this school the pupils were lined up and told that had it not been for the Partnership the school would not exist and they would not have the opportunities they have at present. With around 150 pupils benefitting from our previous building and support programme, it is overwhelming. The amazing thing was to find out that the school placed 1<sup>st</sup> for academic achievement in its age in the whole of The Gambia!

We handed over resources and materials to the nursery school to equip them in their educational work and encourage them that others are thinking of them. This included the banner from the Sunday school and many colourful posters and colouring equipment.

The final main input for the week was a meeting with the Pastors Fellowship. We currently run a theology class for youths in Kabekel which about 15 teenagers (Muslims, Catholics and Christians) attend and they are discussing 'Who is this Jesus' at present, led by our Mission worker Philip Senessie. We also run a theology class in the town are of Serrekunda, the pastors fellowship grew out of that and we have on average 30 pastors a week who get together from different churches for theological training. We wanted to hear from them what their thoughts were on a coordinated outreach regionally or nationally and how that might work. The pastors shared many ideas and stories, heart breaking stories detailing the cost of following Christ in a Muslim nation. We are greatly encouraged by their passion and hunger to share Christ, we learned a lot from them.

That's our week in a nutshell. It was a phenomenal experience where we could see God moving in all that happened. There were highs and lows but we all pulled together and we pray that it is to God's glory. If you want to find out more please see the website or call us on 07415847869 / 07900302041.

**Jonathan Maciver**