

BANSANG HOSPITAL APPEAL

NEWSLETTER

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<http://www.bansanghospitalappeal.com>
Charity No. 1064469

MITIE

Mark Lowrey and Adam Knott from MITIE Engineering Services have completed the solar power system for the Children's Unit. This project was entirely organised and funded by MITIE and their suppliers, so we have pleasure in thanking Edmundsons Electrical, Newey & Eyre, Rexel Senate, and Brandon Hire; to anyone else we have missed out, we also extend our thanks. It was a mammoth task logistically to arrange but thanks to MITIE's efforts the Unit now has 24 hour electricity, which is a first for any hospital in The Gambia. No more lives will be lost because of the lack of electricity. A freezer was donated and adapted to run from the solar power system, so that now all the heat sensitive drugs for the entire hospital are protected. Bearing in mind in March it was 40°C at 6pm at night and still rising; this has been a vital addition to the hospital. MITIE's next project for Bansang is to refurbish the dilapidated former colonial house to provide accommodation for medical staff.

ACCOMMODATION

The Colonial House conversion is underway at a cost of approx £53,000. Jim Wadda has cleared the site of termite mounds and the roof had to come off dislodging thousands of bats. The site had to be cleared back to remove the danger of snakes, all this before remodelling could begin. At present, the house is a skeleton but will be reborn as The MITIE House, which will accommodate 16 staff members. The project is not only funded by MITIE, but they will also be sending out skilled personnel who will train the local workforce under the foremanship of Jim'll-Fix-It, Jim Wadda. To give you some idea of the restraints we work under Jim is unable to source any building supplies in The Gambia. He takes 2 days to go to Dakar in Senegal to purchase the materials from roofing to cement. Scaffolding/ladders etc do not exist and because westerners will be involved health and safety codes have to be met therefore MITIE have to send donated material out from Kettering before building can even begin.

Town Close House Prep School, Norwich, is funding an accommodation block, which will house 3 families, and the children have already raised £3500. My link with this school is the Headmaster Graeme Lowe, who was my son's headmaster in Wellingborough.

Duty Room. Jim Wadda has gutted and rebuilt a dilapidated shell to a modern room including a shower for staff use. Wandifa Samteh our Principal Nursing Officer is a 'man on a mission'; his enthusiasm is spreading throughout the hospital. His vision of a duty room is place where the nurse's welfare is

attended to, and the overseeing of standards and practices, plus ongoing training to maintain these high standards.

Principal Nursing Officer's Room – Another grotty room converted by Jim and his gang into a modern working office for Wandifa. I have mentioned before that to keep our staff morale up we must provide them with the necessary equipment to do their jobs, and the basic essentials such as decent accommodation.

Staff Accommodation Units. 21 are now complete, housing senior staff, including pathologists, midwives, microbiologists, as well as state registered nurses.

THE TRUCK

I didn't know I could wax lyrical and fall in love with a Truck – but I did!! Lloyd Barret, of Home Guard Supplies in Thrapston, who 10 years ago built the temporary extension to the children's ward and has been a hands on supporter ever since, decided we needed a truck! So on a cold and wet October day I was dragged off to find a truck. Not really my scene! HOWEVER, on arrival I was completely diverted; there were tanks and pontoons to play with, field kitchens and fire engines! We found 'The Truck', a green one. Being female I only go by colour! NOW it's a 'shade' of white with red lettering and accessories, including a tilt cover in red, which was sponsored by a loyal supporter. Lloyd did the boys bit and ensured it had an engine! 'The Truck' arrived in January and has been in continual use throughout the building work and for transporting essential medical supplies to the hospital. The Truck will continue to generate income for the hospital by being hired out in The Gambia under the supervision of the Rotary Club of Fajara.

BBC – Inside Out

Their follow up trip out in November 2006 to the Children's Unit produced a very moving film under very difficult circumstances. All of the film was unscripted, the staff were oblivious to the cameras, you see them as they are, and hear their views without editing. I cannot thank the presenter David Whitley, Paul Baker the producer and Mark Dodds the cameraman, enough for their support and enthusiasm. I must take this opportunity of thanking Richard Harvey who acted as a 'goffer'. Richard has been a Trustee and Treasurer for BHA since its inauguration 15 years ago and has somehow managed to turn my scraps of paper into Accounts fit for the Charity Commission. We have had a marvellous response from the public following the broadcast and I am always amazed at how generous people are.

UKGS'rs

These were the maniacs who rode scooters to Bansang via the Sahara! The scooters are now in daily use, particularly in collecting donated blood from outlying villages, not an easy task. While on site they saw the need for the perimeter wall which has now been completed and keeps the hospital clear of free ranging and feral animals. The funds for the wall were raised by selling the book 'Scooters in the Sahara' written and produced by Dennis Robinson. This has been so successful that £11,000 has been raised so far. Further funding will go towards maintaining the scooters. The coffee table version is £25, and the soft back is £14.95, available from Dennis Robinson, 01267-222877, or online at <http://www.scootersinthesahara.co.uk>.

BOB PARFITT

Since October 2006 two 40ft containers have been sent. The first container was funded by the Education Dept of the Gambian Government with Bob sourcing the tables, chairs and other educational requirements. Thank you to the Government for this assistance. To Bob and his team our thanks for all their hard work. His Aladdin's Cave of goodies sourced from all over the country never ceases to amaze me. Plus he never forgets the hardworking staff at Bansang and supplies the little 'extras' for them such as shower gel, clothes for themselves and their families, small items to show our appreciation of their hard work in a very hostile environment.

RAF COSFORD

Thank you to Tony Stevens a pilot for the Cosford Air Ambulance, and the paramedics Ian Jones and Tim Jones. They researched and sourced a Landrover Ambulance that would be suitable for Bansang. They then joined the 4,000 mile rally from Plymouth to Banjul. The ambulance, Edith, named after Nurse Edith Cavell heroine of the First World War, is a fantastic benefit for the hospital. She at last allows us to take patients to Banjul, and be used anywhere else that she is needed. The Cosford team will continue supporting the 'Old Girl' with spare parts.

STAFF

We are now sponsoring 29 members of staff ranging from an Incinerator Man, an Interpreter, to Nursing Staff. Three are amputees. The stigma attached to amputees means they would have no option but to beg on the streets in order to survive. Demba Bah was a well-educated boy, bitten by a mosquito and subsequently developed Elephantiasis, which is incurable. When I met him he had locked himself away in shame for 3 years tended to by his blind grandmother. The turning point for him came when I gave him a blanket knitted by a Kettering lady. He had never received a gift before and it helped him to realise that people cared about him and wanted to help. He decided to have his leg amputated and being sponsored on an accountancy course gave him a sense of purpose and dignity. He is now doing an excellent job in the hospital records dept. Another success is Cherno Jallow, who had reached a point where he felt so valueless that he saw no reason to live. He is employed as an interpreter because he speaks five of the seven different languages spoken in The Gambia. Both these men have been fitted with new 'legs', and they are an inspiration to all who come into contact with them. Alhagie Bah, an amputee who came to the UK to be fitted with a prosthetic limb, is now the proud father of a little boy; making me a 'Grandmother'!! And yes, he is a lovely little boy; Saidou and his mother are doing very well.

We are now sponsoring the training of 22 State Enrolled Nurses. Two qualified in October 2006, nine are due to qualify in June, with another 11 still training. All have signed a bond to work in Bansang Hospital.

BARCLAYCARD AND SERVO COMPUTERS

Stewart Robinson and Steve Clist arrived in Bansang in February. They installed computers in the Children's Unit, Duty Room, and Principal Nursing Officer's room. They also upgraded the computers in the SEN school, and donated laptops to key personnel at the Hospital. Before he left the UK Stewart was trained in the use and installation of a camera, which is linked to a computer, which is then linked to 200 specialists worldwide. The camera can also be used for taking photographs of X-rays that can be forwarded on to these specialists. This allows the Bansang Doctors to better diagnose and treat the patients. The guys were at Bansang for 3 weeks working 12 hour days and I really cannot thank them, Barclaycard and Servo Computers enough for what they have, and are doing.

THINGS TO COME

A new Medical and Surgical Female ward with an isolation room will be constructed from the old Paediatric ward. This is a major project; it will have to be gutted to a shell and reconstructed. The present Female Ward is on the first floor up a long stone staircase, patients are stretchered up from Theatre, and sometimes slip off. Very sick women have to climb up and staff have needed to resuscitate patients on the stairs. We are waiting for the final plans and expect the cost to be around £25,000. This is being made possible by the incredible generosity of a local Northamptonshire couple and another lady, who wish to remain anonymous.

THANK YOU

I would just like to thank **The Rotary Club of Kettering** for the incredible administrative effort that has been undertaken to raise funds to furnish the Children's Unit, through the Rotarian links with Rotary Club of Fajara in Banjul and Rotary in America. I know that behind the scenes hours of work has taken place, and I am truly grateful.

Finally here is the news that I am sure you will greet with cheers and applause. The Children's Unit as a new building with modern plumbing and solar power, being furnished with new fittings and equipment has seen the mortality rate drop by a staggering 73%. This is more than anyone could have hoped for and has been made possible by the wonderful generosity of you all. Inch by inch I hope to achieve the same results throughout the hospital.

Thank you

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