

BANSANG HOSPITAL APPEAL

NEWSLETTER

November, 2008

<http://www.bansanghospitalappeal.com>

Charity No. 1064469

MITIE HOUSE STAFF ACCOMMODATION

Our final dedicated team of plumbers and electricians were out in Bansang during April. The conditions for them were extreme, the heat so intense it was like working in front of an open oven door. The hi-light of my trip was to come back one night to find Jim Wadda (our amazing Rotarian contact in The Gambia) had arranged to turn the lights on, and for the first time in decades the Colonial House disappeared and the MITIE house emerged in all its glory. I feel that I would like to share with you the tribute Jim paid to the MITIE team; I have had to edit it slightly.

“Firstly, a standing ovation for the continued and successful partnership of the Bansang Hospital Appeal and MITIE Engineering Services, in saving lives, by their extensive, unprecedented and visionary contribution to the improvement, welfare and moral of the nursing staff of Bansang Hospital, in providing a modern comfortable residence, which enables them to perform their roles to a higher degree. They also installed solar power to the Paediatric Ward thereby ensuring continued and reliable electricity saving the lives of very sick children and premature babies, under adverse conditions. The input of everyone associated with the Mitie Project is highly treasured and commendable. We cannot over emphasize the sheer immensity of the task carried out by the MITIE Team under adverse conditions, intense heat and deprivation. BRAVO MITIE TEAM. To Colin Acheson...We will always remember you... in all our daily prayers...for your personal conviction and foresight.....in not only championing this worthy cause, but to prod it to the success it turns out to be....may you have a long enjoyable and healthy retirement”.

May I take this opportunity to personally thank all the incredible people in England who fundraised and organised this monumental project. They are unknown in Bansang but they are loved, as the

people recognise that their time and expertise will indeed change lives for the better.

To Phil Sinkinson, the British High Commissioner, and his wife Clare. Thank you for all your loving support and for attending Colin's Testimonial, and giving such a supportive and inspiring speech.

Finally, an action which touched my heart because of its spontaneity and selflessness. Before they left Bansang the four plumbers and electricians donated their own blood, which was immediately transfused; one recipient was a tiny baby whose life was saved by this generous act.

The Accident

In July, to our horror, Jim Wadda, Nicholas Allen our student doctor from Newcastle University who was on his 4 week elective placement in Bansang, and Paco a friend and colleague, were travelling up-country at night when a tyre blew out sending the vehicle into a roll. Paco was seriously injured, Jim sustained various injuries, and Nicholas escaped with light injuries.

Because of the remoteness of the area, and no mobile signal it was many hours before they received help. This resulted in all ongoing project work coming to a complete halt; the labour force had to be laid off, until Jim was fully recovered. Work recommenced in mid October; therefore the MITIE House, Female Ward, and Maternity are not yet completed but I have high hopes that the Female ward will be completed during my visit in November. Paco is recovering and we wish him all the best and look forward to seeing him back at work.

Demba and Cherno

These two lovely guys came over in April to attend the Northampton Prosthetic Limb centre, who had again kindly volunteered their services and the Bansang Appeal funded all the components.

The excitement and joy of these two young men was simply contagious and began at the airport, as they had never even seen an aeroplane. Once airborne they were amazed at the comfort,

in economy!! The 'waitress' providing them with 'delicious' free food led them to compose a song of praise to the pilot and crew, which they then sang to the delight of the passengers. This beginning gave me an inkling as to what to expect for the rest of their stay. They were here for two months, and in that time they charmed everyone. They each had a beautiful new leg fitted with brown stockings and brown feet which absolutely amazed them. They attended all my talks and they were taken out by the friends they made to do the tourist scene. Anglia TV came and filmed them and again they could not be serious, all smiles and laughter. We have to remember that these young men were experiencing a culture they had absolutely no knowledge of at all. Thanks to the generosity of the many friends they made Cherno now has a tap in his compound and is building his hut in firebricks, so that it does not collapse every rainy season. Demba has now purchased a piece of land to secure his future, and his plans are under way to build his home. They both now have girlfriends, something which would have been impossible with the stigma of disability. My special thanks to the wonderful team at the limb centre, who also had a song composed and sung to them. To the many friends who cared for them and entertained them, and especially my cousin Christine, whose help and support was absolutely invaluable. I do believe that Demba and Cherno touched the hearts of everyone they met and will never be forgotten.

Mariama has now finished Grade 12, but her dream of becoming a nurse is not possible due to her mobility. She is however happy as she has been accepted into business school on a computer course and at present is top in her class. She will then be sponsored through a business course by her 'adopted' Mum & Dad, Meg and John. This school is on the coast and our thanks to Kettering Boys Brigade who are sponsoring her living expenses.

The Rotary Club of Norwich

They are sponsoring the first specialist Burns Unit in The Gambia. So far two consignments of special dressings have been shipped from Hartmann and we thank them for their support in this project. The project is being co-ordinated by Dr Bill Askew who first went to Bansang in 1997. He has been out twice this year with another trip planned for December. He has been training staff in the correct protocols for the dressings and

pain relief. He has also recognised that the facilities in the laboratory need to be upgraded. Norwich Rotary is applying for an international matching grant and if successful we will be able to purchase high cost items such as a sterilizing unit called an Auto-clave. After a year of fundraising the magnificent sum of £18,000 was declared and the cheque was presented by President Nick Brighthouse and his wife Kim at a special dinner in Norwich. Thank you to one and all for your incredible hard work and generosity.

Special thanks to Dr Bill and Tom Burns who recently cycled coast to coast to raise funds for the specialist burns dressings. Thanks also to all their friends and Abington Medical Centre who sponsored them.

Malnutrition

Due to the economy a sack of rice can be out of reach of many people and malnutrition is rising. Dr Bill has re-established the programme for severely malnourished children. This is a very difficult and specialised area especially as these children are also suffering other physical problems and require long term intensive care which is not always possible given the family circumstances.

One Can Make A Difference

Ingrid Newkirk, founder and president of PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) the largest animal rights organisation in the world, decided to compile a book about individuals and 'How simple actions can change the world'. To my utter delight she approached me to make a contribution. Little did I realise that I would be in such prestigious company as Sir Paul McCartney, The Dalai Lama, and Oliver Stone. This inspiring book is entitled One Can Make a Difference and would make a wonderful Christmas present. Can be ordered through bookshops and Amazon.

Sponsorship

We presently sponsor 21 staff, including disabled, in a cross section of jobs including Orderlies, security, nurse attendants, play therapist, records officer, interpreter, gardener, and many others. I am always looking for more staff sponsorship. It costs approx £15/20 per month to employ a person who will then have the chance to support not only themselves but their extended family. We are also sponsoring 18 SEN students through their two-year course, they are then contracted to work at Bansang Hospital for a minimum of 2 years. We therefore try to take

local men and women who have family ties in the area and are likely to remain with us beyond the initial 2 years.

Anaesthetic Machine

In May Bansang was faced with a critical situation when the anaesthetic machine died. Operations immediately ceased. The nearest referral hospital was 200 miles, 3 ferry crossings, and a minimum of 8 hours to reach. It was imperative we replace our machine, but at a cost of £12,000, plus £1,000 airfreight BHA was not in a position to fully fund it. I contacted the Gambian Minister of Health who responded immediately by setting the wheels in motion for obtaining funding. To my utter amazement and pleasure he steamrolled this through and £6,000 was transferred to BHA account. I then had to make a priority decision and move the funds earmarked for the refurbishment of the Maternity Unit to purchasing this life saving machine. With the invaluable help from Dr David Southall of CAI (Child Advocacy International) we were able to order, manufacture, ship and have in use by the end of July.

A huge thank you to Dr Malick Njie and Dr David for their quick and helpful response to this emergency.

Barclaycard Servo – Saving Lives

They have generously donated two UPS's (uninterruptable power supply) which are now redundant. These machines store electricity off the grid and one will enable the operating theatre to be used immediately an emergency arrives, without the old scenario of fetching the generator man from home to start it. On many occasions there has been no fuel to run it. Barclaycard Servo has generously donated the second UPS to the Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital in Banjul where it will be put to excellent use in the operating theatre during power cuts. They also again, have given us their redundant computer equipment, which they use to upgrade the hospital system, and then those old PCs go all over the place, including schools, police force, Divisional Health Team, Red Cross etc. The two UPS's are huge each weighing over a tonne and will take up half of a 20ft container. The BHA will fund the shipping, but we are in need of funds to get our two experts out there and support them while they set the systems up.

Midwifery and Special Care Baby Unit

When I fly out in November coming with me will be Chris Rospoppa, Community Midwife, Mawsley Surgery, Kettering, and Jeanette Payne, Sister in Charge of SCBU at Kettering General Hospital. Their remit is to update the skills of the Maternity and SCBU units. They will also lecture at the SEN School. They wish to establish good communication so that when they return to the UK, Bansang staff can email them at any time with concerns.

The Gong

In the middle of May I received a letter which left me astounded, shocked and utterly delighted. It came from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office informing me that I had been awarded an MBE. Although I am the one receiving this award, in reality, it belongs to every single person and organisation that has supported the Bansang Hospital Appeal in so many different ways over the years. Without all of you Bansang Hospital would not be the place of hope and healing that it is today and for that I thank you all from the bottom of my heart. So think of me on December 10th, I will be very nervous but immensely proud of all that we have managed to achieve together.

Ongoing.....

Even for completed projects the maintenance is ongoing. For instance termites continue to plague the Children's ward. This is endemic to the environment and lessons have been learned for future projects. We now know we must only use aluminium window frames, and hardwood door frames which have to be imported from Senegal. This considerably increases costs which we have to absorb over and above the cost of keeping the drugs and medical items flowing.

The Newsletter

If in the future you would like the newsletter to be e-mailed to you rather than posted could you please send us your e-mail address. We are hoping to start including colour photographs but the cost of printing will increase so it would help us if as many of you as possible opted to receive the newsletter as an e-mail.

Anita Smith MBE, 4 The Leys, Orlingbury, Kettering, Northants. Tel: 01933-679001
email: anitasmith@bansanghospitalappeal.com