

## **Bansang Hospital Appeal - Christmas Newsletter**

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The Children's Ward is now fully reopened and structurally secure after a massive refurbishment

### **A MESSAGE FROM ANITA:**

It has been another complex, challenging, yet overwhelmingly positive year in Bansang. Our legion of supporters have really come together to help push forward on various projects. At the same time, the management team at the hospital is going from strength to strength. The whole hospital is working wonderfully well, with each and every member of staff overwhelmingly enthusiastic and positive about the future (highlighted by our 100% staff retention rate over the last 12 months!)

Be under no illusions though - what has been achieved in Bansang is (to the best of our knowledge) unparalleled in any other public hospital in Sub-Saharan Africa, and could only have been achieved with **your** collective help. We are certainly facing some big challenges over the next year, but wanted this Christmas newsletter to be a positive reflection of all that has been achieved to date. (Our 'Christmas Appeal' at the end of this newsletter gives you an idea of just a few of the big challenges we expect to confront during 2014. Overcoming these obstacles is our priority)

Thank you so much for being there for the people of Bansang - you may never meet the people you have helped, but you can rest assured that your contributions continue to make a dramatic and long lasting difference to hundreds of thousands of people.

## LATEST NEWS:



### **Anita wins the British Plumbing Employees Council Life Award, 2013**

Set up in memory of its founder, the late Raymond Brooks, the BPEC Life Award offers up to £15,000 to projects that use plumbing skills to enhance life. It isn't open to all; to be able to apply, one needs to know someone in the plumbing industry. Thankfully, the BHA has two wonderful men working in the trade; long time supporter, Rae Davies, and a new addition to the BHA family, Nick Foley. The opportunity to take part in the award came not a day too soon. The hospitals sanitation has been in a serious state of disrepair for much of its history, and is a constant cross contamination risk (particularly during the annual rains).

Having been shortlisted for the award, Nick, Rae and I were invited to present our application at a prestigious BPEC event held at Derby Football Club. After a nerve wracking wait, the BPEC committee ultimately awarded us the full £15,006.02. We are thrilled that they embraced our vision for the hospital, and so excited at being able to turn this dream into reality. *(Full story & pictures; <http://wp.me/p3P85x-u4>)*



### **The 2013 Scooters team have successfully made it to Bansang**

It is that time of the year when we welcome home yet another team of intrepid scooter

adventurers. The team of 9 took 3 weeks to complete the 4,000 mile journey - taking in 1 landmine area, 1 warzone, 1 desert (the Sahara!) and countless dirt roads! They were welcomed into Bansang by hundreds of school children, thousands of locals, GRTS national television and a scouts marching band! These scooters will augment the 35 or so that have been donated previously. They are collectively helping the hospital to deliver healthcare and education initiatives to communities that would otherwise be too remote to access. These humble pizza delivery scooters are truly redefining the quality and scope of healthcare in Africa! *(To learn more about the scooter project or to donate, please visit [www.scootersinthesahara.co.uk](http://www.scootersinthesahara.co.uk))*

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### **The BHA and hospital management elect to have a new 'living wage' for all staff**

Commodity pressures in the Gambia have been affecting living costs for a number of years now. Hospital workers are particularly hard hit by these rises because they are less able to supplement their income by growing their own food. As such, many of our 'grade 2' workers have fallen into a situation where their monthly wages (£18) do not even cover the cost of a bag of rice (£23). It is therefore a great privilege to be able to confirm that all 'grade 2' workers (orderlies, admin staff, nurse attendants, maintenance team members) will now benefit from a doubling of their wages to £39.50 per month. Following discussions with the CEO, it has also been decided that the BHA will now sponsor all grade 2 staff at the hospital, with the government funding all those at grade 3 and above. Sponsoring grade 2 staff means the BHA will be supporting a range of people who for many reasons were unable to complete their schooling, yet are bright, intelligent and hard working. They are vital to the day to day running of the hospital - and we are so very pleased to be able to offer them the dignity and security of a living wage.

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### **Bansang Hospital welcomes a new Chief Exec**

As some of you will already know, Baba Jeng has taken the position of permanent CEO at Bansang. Having met him back in March, I am absolutely reassured that he is the man for the job. He has forged a forward looking, energetic management team; one that is full of bright ideas for the future, and fully committed to pursuing initiatives that promote staff retention and motivation. His appointment is wonderful news for the staff and patients of Bansang.





### **Record harvest for farming project**

The staff [charity farming project](#) has gone from strength to strength this year. A good proportion of the 100 hectares of donated land are now being tilled by the 8 oxen funded by friends of the BHA. The huge amount of harvested cous cous is helping to provide patients with nutritious food, as well as dramatically reducing the hospital's food expenditure! The latest scooter team are hoping to raise the funds to purchase a tractor & trailer to allow staff to cultivate the remaining land. *(To help them reach their target, visit [www.scootersinthesahara.co.uk](http://www.scootersinthesahara.co.uk))*



### **Charity patron visits Bansang**

Former High Commissioner to the Gambia, Phil Sinkinson OBE, has once again taken time to visit Bansang. He is an absolute shining example of humanity; caring and open to all, and a steadfast rock that is always on hand to offer advice when the path isn't quite clear for me to see. We look forward to welcoming him back to his extended Bansang family in the near future!



### **Rotary answers our call for help**

The Rotary Club of Brentwood-a-Becket & Seaford have continued their wonderful support by funding the building of 3 furnished flats, all of which were built within existing wasted space in the MITIE House. The flats have so far been used by volunteers from the Mercy Ships and Smile Train (all of whom were most impressed with the cleanliness and the running water!). The flats are soon to be occupied by senior staff from the hospital. Having such housing will undoubtedly help us in our efforts to retain and motivate staff.



### **Stewart Robinson returns!**

A project that has made a huge difference over the years is the hospital wide telephone/IT system. It allows members of staff to communicate quickly - both with local staff and with experts around the world. 2014 will see Stewart's 13th visit to Bansang, where he will be maintaining and upgrading the various systems he has installed over the years. Fantastic effort Stew!



### **Veteran scoots team member helps upgrade the dental department!**

Another scooter related story! Dr Michael White first arrived in Bansang with the Scooter mob in 2012. He was so enthused by his time in Bansang that he decided to come back and upgrade the dental unit. To this end Michael sourced a second hand chair and light in the UK. Along with his technician, Mark, he then set about converting it for use in the Gambia. His low tech/sustainable approach sees the expensive bulb replaced with a generic car headlight! We are extremely grateful for their help.



### **Blood 'harvesting' project**

It's not a photo of two guys having a rest - they are actually donating blood! They are part of a project to sensitise people into understanding the importance of donating blood (chronic shortages have been a constant crisis point for the hospital). Bansang Hospital is now at the forefront of this cultural shift, using scooters as a low cost way of getting into the bush and delivering these important health messages. We hope to expand these health education initiatives as part of our [overriding goal](#) to reduce preventable mortality.





## CHRISTMAS FUNDRAISING APPEAL:



Although the content of this newsletter is overwhelmingly positive, the hospital and the charity continue to face **huge** ongoing pressures. We are therefore releasing a Christmas Appeal along with a dedicated fundraising page on Virgin Money Giving. Any donations you make will go primarily to alleviating the following crisis points;

### **Easing of the drugs shortage:**

The hospitals subvention fund is severely stretched, with drug shortages being particularly acute (this is why we are doing all we can to reduce avoidable ongoing costs - such as farming our own food for the patients). This shortage was at its worst in August this year, when the hospital ran out of funds for drugs, with remaining stocks falling dangerously low. The charity itself was quite low on funds owing to the emergency rebuilding work on the Children's Ward and the various other infrastructure projects undertaken over the last 2 years.

We were incredibly fortunate to have the support of pharmaceutical charity 'International Health Partners' during this difficult time. They answered my desperate call, and immediately shipped 15 pallets of pain relieving drugs, antibiotics and much more. Their drugs are genuine (unlike so many suppliers), and their operations are cost-effective and fast. Given the economic situation in West Africa, there is a *strong chance* that we will need to send further shipments of drugs and are therefore actively seeking funds to support these future needs.

### **New blood bank:**

We have had tremendous success with our community outreach projects aimed at promoting blood donation. However, our capacity for storing the blood is severely restricted at the moment. As such, we are hoping to gather funding for a new blood bank (having blood in reserve helps us avoid the desperate situation of searching for blood donor matches to meet the needs of patients that are already in surgery)

### **Family feeding fund:**

One of our most innovative projects of the last couple of years is our family feeding fund. This

innovative project allows family members to stay at the hospital whilst their relatives recover. This helps to avoid the revolving door situation where patients with serious conditions would be checked out of the hospital solely because their family couldn't afford to feed themselves, only to then be brought back a few days later (often in far worse condition). This project is crucial if we are to continue reducing preventable mortality rates at Bansang.

**Staff wages:**

Offering a living wage to all Grade 2 members of staff was an absolutely vital part of our staff retention and motivation efforts. It has of course increased the charities wage bill - as such, we are looking for some wonderful new supporters that can help meet a part or all of the monthly cost of each member of staff (£38). We already have a wonderful group of supporters that pay monthly standing orders.

Could you help support the wages of a member of staff? If you could, please do get in touch (I'll be happy to tell you about the worker you'll be supporting - all our standing order donors also receive regular updates direct from the person they support).

**To donate, please contact Anita (contact details below)**

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**FESTIVE GIFT IDEAS:**

If you are anything like me, you are probably going through the process of trying to buy gifts for loved ones who often have everything they need anyway! Rather than spend money on things that are all too soon forgotten, my son has offered to make PDF gift certificates for anyone that donates to the Appeal this Christmas (these will be highly individual, addressed to the person whom you are gifting to, and will include a picture of the person/project that will benefit). Laurence did a similar thing a couple of years ago and had a fantastic response (you can see the Hardship Fund he set up on Facebook by visiting the following link; <http://on.fb.me/1dWOP4M>). *If you would like to give a gift of this kind, please get in touch using the contact details at the bottom of this letter.*

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**HOW TO GET IN TOUCH:**

If you would like more information about the charity, have a suggestion for future newsletters, or would like to support our projects by donating, please get in touch;

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