

Bansang Hospital Appeal

Transforming healthcare delivery in The Gambia since 1992



25th Anniversary Newsletter: December, 2017



Pictured: CEO Baba Jeng, former British High Commissioner Phil Sinkinson OBE, and former British Ambassador Colin Crokrin MBE Standing by the commemorative plaque to Governor Sir Thomas Southorn KCMC KBE, who opened Bansang Hospital in 1938

A message from Anita on our 25th Anniversary

I've never forgotten the horrors that I witnessed during my first fateful visit to Bansang in 1992. Those visceral feelings of horror, despondency, sadness, helplessness; they have been the things that have haunted me, depressed me and ultimately galvanised me into 25 years of trying to make a difference.

So often in those early years, it felt like the task at hand was insurmountable. I remember going to fundraising talks where I felt paralysed by the scale of the challenge that I was asking people to support. The idea that we could collectively achieve the things seen before us today would have seemed so fanciful in 1992.

Yet here we are; looking onwards at a proud hospital, filled with workers that literally don't want to leave. A hospital that isn't defined by the scarcity of resources offered to it, but instead defined by the creativity and resourcefulness of the staff that work within its walls.

This has become a place where the usual rules of health delivery no longer apply. Our burns programme, scaled back in recent years due to funding constraints, has

helped saved people that would likely have otherwise perished. Our malnutrition programme has achieved similarly unprecedented levels of success. Every single department is pushing the boundaries of what the world assumes is deliverable in chronically poor areas.

In this troubled and confusing world, Bansang Hospital has endured dictatorship, acute financial difficulties, massive staff shortages and the privations inflicted by an incredibly hostile climate. It's come out the other side with a resilience that gives me such confidence for the future. It's a transformation that I marvel at and reflect upon every day. In this anniversary year, I hope it's something you will reflect on too. Because it is your collective goodwill that has allowed all this to happen.

You have been the difference. Please don't stop.

Anita Smith MBE MRG

Founder & Director, Bansang Hospital Appeal

Patrons: Mr Phil Sinkinson OBE, former British High Commissioner to The Gambia & Mr Simon Scarrow, international bestselling author

ANNIVERSARY APPEAL: Senior Staff Accommodation

£22,000 to completely renovate accommodation quarters for our senior members of staff



The Need:

In this anniversary year, I often find myself reflecting on the hospital I first witnessed back in 1992. I only spent a week in Bansang during that first fateful visit. It was almost my last. The horrors I saw were so traumatic and so overwhelming that I simply didn't know if I had the strength to overcome them.

I was of course fortunate. Although I couldn't leave the mental privations behind, I could at least escape the physical trauma. By contrast, the hospital staff never had the same privilege. They couldn't fly to the peace and tranquillity of the English Home Counties. They instead had to endure the constant stream of human misery that so nearly destroyed me.

And when their shifts were over? They had to return to staff accommodation that was completely unfit for human habitation; overrun with rats, cockroaches, snakes and all manner of other things. Their lives were a constant barrage of misery; one that caused a massive haemorrhage of staff to other parts of The Gambia, and in turn to the world beyond.

The Project:

The constant loss of staff in the early years had one positive effect; it helped this charity recognise the importance of strategies that promote staff retention and motivation. Those strategies have underpinned 25 years of development. They've helped us achieve something remarkable; near 100% staff retention.

But we are still a long way from where we would like to be. As we look to a brighter and more democratic future in The Gambia, we must redouble our efforts to overcome our long-term inability to retain sufficient numbers of senior staff and doctors. They are critical in delivering the care that we aspire to give. But they will not endure the near 50 Celsius temperatures and geographic isolation of Bansang if we do not give them the kind of accommodation that their expertise merit.

We are therefore seeking £22,000 to completely renovate a dilapidated block into a senior staff accommodation block for two families. This will be in addition to the 61 accommodation blocks that we have already provided since 1992 – and which continue to have such a positive impact on staff retention.

Project Breakdown

- Felling trees & making exterior safe
- Reinforcing building foundations
- Installation of a brand-new roof
- Installation of a new cesspit
- Full interior renovation including doors, windows, tiling & electrics
- Interior and exterior painting

Project cost: £22,000

How You Can Help

To donate online; www.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/SeniorStaffAccom

To donate by cheque; Anita Smith MBE, 4 The Leys, Orlingbury, Northamptonshire, NN14 1JE

(ETHICAL GIFTS: As ever with our Christmas Appeals, if you would like your donation to be made into an ethical gift, please email me once you have donated. My son is more than happy to make a PDF gift certificate detailing the project and dedicated to a person of your choosing)

PROJECT NEWS: Audiology Department is now open



This August saw the long-awaited opening of Bansang Hospital's new Audiology Department. This ambitious project, funded jointly by the Rotary Club of Rushden, Sound Seekers and the Bansang Hospital Appeal, is bringing permanent audiology services for the first time to 600,000 people in the Bansang catchment.

All the equipment in the department has been subjected to a thorough assessment by our Project Director, James Robinson, as well as by our project partners, Sound Seekers, to ensure it is suitable to the limitations of the environment. We are also pleased to confirm that Amadou Bah, a committed member of the hospital staff, has passed his 'Hearing Instrument Specialist' course in Zambia with a course grade of 'outstanding'. His great interest and desire to help patients in this specific area is clearly matched with great ability. We can't wait to see what the future holds



Given the importance of providing this brand-new service, I made the decision to borrow additional funds in order to get the department opened promptly. I am therefore incredibly grateful to Rick Nunley, International Officer for the Rotary Club of Rushden, for planning numerous events to help cover the outstanding amount for the audiology equipment. You can support them at the following events:

26th Dec – Shaking buckets @ Rushden and Diamonds

20th Jan – Tribute band "Jam" @ Rushden Athletic Club

10th Mar – Jonathan Reynolds Sings "American Song book" @ Bede House

'16 CHRISTMAS PROJECT UPDATE: Tractor and Trailer



We've had many fundraising campaigns over the years. Few have been funded as quickly or as enthusiastically as the tractor, trailer, harrow and sun canopy from our 2016 Christmas appeal. Your incredible support helped ensure that the container arrived at the beginning of May; the very start of the farming season. The result? Our wonderfully dedicated staff used the new equipment to massively increase the area of land under cultivation. Their efforts, combined with very favourable rains, have given the hospital a huge crop yield. It means patients will continue to get nutritious food at no expense to the hospital. With luck on our side, it will also mean that we'll be able to start reinvesting the profits into patient care. This kind of approach to developing world healthcare offers so much promise. *You* made that possible. Thank you

DONOR NEWS: New tech will save children's lives



Nearly half of under five deaths globally are from pneumonia, malaria, sepsis and premature births. Many of these deaths can be averted using Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP) machines. Thanks to my cousin Chrissie, her husband Stuart, and the friends of the BHA that supported their fundraiser, we are pleased to confirm that Bansang Hospital will soon have its very own CPAP machine. The oxygen therapy that it provides will be used on acutely vulnerable children on the neonatal and paediatric wards. The £2,000 raised will cover the airfreight, insurance and transport to Bansang of the Diamedica designed machine. Long term volunteer Jeannette Payne will be joining me in January to help train staff in its use.

ADVENTURE NEWS: The "Across Scotland Swim"



(Kez & Graham looking out towards the forbidding Loch Ness)

We've had many amazing fundraising efforts over the years. But few have been as daunting or gruelling as that undertaken by Kez Traynor and Graham Donald. Their "Across Scotland Swim" saw them traverse 120km of open water in just over 10 days; passing through some of Scotland's most bleak yet beautiful lands. Their efforts helped raise £3,750 for Bansang as well as for Marie Curie Cancer Care. The proceeds from their challenge will, rather fittingly, be going towards the renovation of the Physiotherapy Department.

For those of you that recognise Kez's name – he joined my son, Laurence, on a European tandem bicycle fundraising tour back in 2011, and on a length of the UK cycle tour in 2008. His efforts, and now Graham's, are making a tangible difference to the lives of some of the most vulnerable people on earth. We hope they'll continue to be inspired to push themselves, and to continue helping the community of Bansang.

Learn more; <https://www.acrossscotlandswim.com/>

VOLUNTEER NEWS: Dr Jo Loughton to visit Bansang

Over the last 25 years, I've been lucky enough to see the immense contribution made to Bansang Hospital by so many medical professionals from all around the world. Their selfless dedication of time and expertise has helped the hospital through some of its darkest days. They've also helped create new and more effective ways of delivering care, whilst also acting as inspirational role models for the hospital staff.

It's therefore my pleasure in this anniversary year to confirm that Dr Jo Loughton, a recently retired GP and long-term Bansang supporter, will be heading to the hospital for the first time. She will be joining myself and Jeannette Payne for 1 month in early 2018. As well as working on the wards, she will also be researching the best ways she can transfer her skills and expertise in the future. Having someone as fearless and dedicated as Dr Loughton is hugely positive for Bansang. We can't wait to see what new ideas she brings to the hospital.

PROJECT NEWS: New play therapy & office equipment



If you read our 2016 newsletter, you may recall that my son, Grant, secured a large quantity of redundant office equipment from the UK's Community Development Foundation. By January of this year, all that equipment had safely arrived in Bansang aboard a 40-foot container (along with a myriad of other essentials from Bob Parfitt's charity 'Refugee Relief').

Given the huge jigsaw puzzle of furniture pieces needing to be reconstructed, Grant kindly offered his time to help coordinate the build. His efforts, along with Sulayman Baldeh and the maintenance team, saw all the furniture rebuilt and installed into every hospital department in the space of just 2 weeks.

But that wasn't all that was achieved. During their time working in the various hospital departments, Grant took the opportunity to consult with as many members of staff as possible to find out whether there were any projects we could support that may improve staff morale and inter-department interaction. As a result of this, and with the support of Wicksteed Leisure UK (who provided equipment at a significantly reduced rate), we are proud to announce that Bansang Hospital now has its first (outdoor) gym. A place where staff can meet other colleagues, share ideas and keep fit; exactly the kind of initiative that helps strengthen morale.

PROJECT NEWS: OXYGEN, OXYGEN, OXYGEN

A steady supply of oxygen for critical care patients is something that we take for granted in the west. Yet in places like Bansang, with limited power supplies, providing 24/7 oxygen has been all but impossible. That is all changing, thanks to developing world medical equipment supplier, Diamedica, and the applied expertise of our Project Director, James Robinson. Thanks to their efforts, we now have equipment in place that will allow us to support 6 high dependency beds on the paediatric ward with bespoke flow meter controlled oxygen concentrators. The reservoir tanks for these concentrators will be refilled whenever the hospital has electricity – giving our patients perpetual supplies of oxygen.

PROJECT NEWS: Bansang Hospital has the power



Although we've been longing for the situation to change for many years, Bansang has yet to enjoy something the rest of us take for granted; regular electricity from the grid. This lack of power renders much of our electrical equipment useless; meaning that for many patients, survival hinges on nothing more than the chance availability of power. It's an agonising situation – and a capability gap to which I've devoted so much time and fundraising effort over the years.

That is why I am thrilled to announce the arrival of a brand-new Perkins 100KVa generator – provided by the incredible generosity of the Livingstone Family. Their gift ensures that the whole hospital has access to power during an emergency. The generator has already saved many lives. Its true legacy will be borne out as the years pass by, with communities around Bansang saved from the agonising pain of needless mortality – and instead able to welcome home their loved ones. We still need to secure long-term funding for the fuel to power the generator. But for the time being, the costs are covered by income from the farming project.

PROJECT NEWS: Physiotherapy refurbishment begins



Renovation work has commenced on the dilapidated physiotherapy department. Its current condition necessitates that we replace almost everything (to include the roof, ceilings, doors/windows and tiling). When complete, the department will include a treatment room, reception, gymnasium and general store rooms. The building is being configured so that all patients and those with mobility problems can access the department via a new covered pathway that connects to all the other hospital departments.

DONOR NEWS: International Health Partners



One of our most positive connections over the years has undoubtedly been with International Health Partners (IHP). Their high quality, affordable drugs, have helped Bansang Hospital endure through the very worst of times. When we've had critical shortages, IHP have always delivered. They've often been our very last hope in providing the drugs that are so critical to the delivery of care. Without them, so many vulnerable people would not be here today.

We therefore want to thank IHP for our most recent consignment of drugs that arrived in May. This 18-pallet load included a broad spectrum of antibiotics, anti-fungal agents, analgesics, anti-hypertensives, anti-helminthic, oral hypoglycemic agents, and diuretics (amongst many others). According to Bansang Hospital CEO, Baba Jeng, the drugs will go a long way in improving the quality of care offered at the hospital. The same sentiments were shared by head of the medical team, Dr Nyassi – who also wanted to stress that when essential drugs are out of stock, patients' roads to recovery are significantly delayed, which often adds secondary complications that make the jobs of care givers so unnecessarily complex and challenging.

DONOR NEWS: Form Nutrition to support the FFF

We've been very lucky over the last 25 years to have the support of so many different businesses; many of whom help us to this day. It's therefore a pleasure in this anniversary year to welcome Damian Soong and his business, 'Form Nutrition', to the Bansang family. His newly opened online business sells plant based natural health supplements. Their pledge to Bansang is that for every product sold, Form Nutrition will donate £0.30 to the hospital's Family Feeding Fund (FFF). This fund helps provide special dietary support for children and escorts who have no money to feed themselves, as well as a funding stream to allow them to purchase life-saving drugs from the town's pharmacy. During periods of lower demand, we intend to use this fund to purchase bananas and eggs to share between the adult patients to help aid a faster recover.

VOLUNTEER NEWS: Dr Qamar Hussain



We have had many extraordinary volunteers over the years, spanning every conceivable profession. Almost without exception, they leave Bansang humbled by the experience – and often galvanised to do more to help.

Dr Qamar is certainly one of those extraordinary volunteers. She stayed in Bansang for 7 weeks from the beginning of April; a time of the year when the living conditions are fierce, with temperatures frequently exceeding 50 Celsius. Her stay was made doubly challenging by electric and water outages at her accommodation. When this happens, it feels like there is no sanctuary at all from the oppressive heat. Despite the difficulties, Dr Qamar made a very positive contribution to the hospitals neo-natal and paediatric care programmes. She also provided a very useful tool kit for neonatal sepsis; a problem that afflicts both developing and developed countries. I'm thrilled to report Dr Qamar will be returning to Bansang.

OUR THANKS TO: Linda and Terry Nicholson



I'm pleased to report that our sister charity in France have had yet another fantastic year. Run by my dear friends Linda and Terry Nicholson, and supported by the wonderful community of the Dordogne region, they have managed to raise a brilliant 6,390 euros. They have done this through a constant stream of fundraisers, including car boot sales, Halloween disco, the annual Marche de Noel, carol singing and plant sales. Their support over these last 25 years has been unwavering, and I'm so very grateful to have friends that are so generous with their time, and so determined to make a contribution.

ADVENTURE NEWS: Septuagenarians cross the Sahara



Most people that visit Bansang do so the conventional way; arriving in The Gambia by plane, then travelling inland in a 4-wheeled machine. But as I'm sure many of you know, we've had our fair share of supporters that have decided to take the road less travelled; across the Sahara. Most of those journeys have been under the wise stewardship of Dennis Robinson and his "Scooters Across the Sahara" project (which has helped deliver 25+ Honda C90 scooters to Bansang that have now formed the basis of our community outreach team).

Our latest adventurers are a bit different. Travelling as a duo with no support crew, septuagenarians Lutz Eiser and Fred Buckingham traded in the comfort of Cornwall for their 4,111-mile trans-Sahara roadtrip. Their Honda Innovo scooters successfully carried them through Spain, Morocco, the Atlas Mountains, Western Sahara, Mauritania and Senegal; finally crossing over the border to The Gambia at the end of October. Like Dennis Robinson's trips before them, Fred & Lutz's £3,000 trip was entirely self-funded, with their scooters ultimately being donated to the Audiology Department to help give our colleagues the ability to deliver audiology services to remote villages.

VOLUNTEER NEWS: Ex-volunteer receives UN medal



Ex-volunteer Dr Chris Bonham (pictured; right) has been awarded a medal alongside 106 other UK troops in recognition of their outstanding service to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

SENIOR STAFF ACCOMODATION ANNIVERSARY FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

~ HOW YOU CAN HELP ~



In this 25th anniversary year, we are seeking your help to address one of our biggest critical needs; creating a living environment that will help us retain more senior members of staff. It's a need that we've been trying to overcome for many years. It's an ambition that promises to dramatically improve the life chances of every patient that seeks our help.

We already have so many life enriching initiatives in place for our staff. Please help us put the final piece into the jigsaw for 2 senior staff families. Please help us as we seek to raise £22,000 to completely renovate a dilapidated accommodation block into a quality living environment that senior staff members can call home.

To donate, **please** visit our dedicated donation page;

www.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/SeniorStaffAccom

Donate monthly:

We desperately need ongoing monthly donations. To find out why they are so important, please contact Anita or visit; <http://bansanghospitalappeal.org/urgent-appeal/>

Fundraise for us:

Running a marathon? Sponsored silence? Swimming across Scotland? Scootering across the Sahara? Whatever the fundraising idea, we'd love to support you! We have pamphlets that you can share. We also work with Virgin Money Giving – a fundraising page is just a few clicks away. Whatever your idea, we'll support you

Contact us:

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anitasmith@bansanghospitalappeal.org
07783 551945

Like us on Facebook:

Liking us on Facebook helps spread the Bansang story to all your friends. It doesn't cost you anything, but it helps us no end! So please go and click the like button on our [Facebook page](#)

Raise awareness:

If you work or socialise in a place that would be happy to highlight this charity, please get in touch. We have lots of information leaflets and fundraising boxes that you can take with you. They may just help us reach someone that becomes the difference in future years.



25 years of achievements, all thanks to you

- 61 homes for staff renovated & extended
- 55 containers of medical aid delivered since 1992
- Brand new 80 bed children's ward, with dedicated malnutrition and intensive care wards.
- Brand new audiology department
- Rewiring of the entire hospital (including LED lighting)
- Continued employment for 47 members of staff
- Hospital wide computer network and comms system
- Building/equipping of two new operating theatres, with a further two fully refurbished
- Redevelopment & extension of pharmacy department
- 45 Honda scooters delivered for community outreach
- Replacement of all sanitary ware across the hospital
- Brand new obstetric theatre & administration offices
- Sustainable care systems fitted in many departments
- Brand new conference & training hall
- 2 Massey Ferguson tractors & associated equipment for the innovative Staff Farming Project
- Extensive staff training at Gambian Technical Institute
- PNO and duty room renovated
- Hospital wide pest eradication strategy
- Brand new hospital wide sewage system upgrade
- 25 years of supporting local communities in crisis (such as during fires) – often filling the gap left by the inflexible larger charities that work in this area
- Complete redevelopment of clinics & waiting areas
- Support for individuals throughout the Bansang community via the 'community hardship fund'
- Support for many other local institutions, including schools, the fire service, police, community centres...
- Funding and delivery of multiple outreach vehicles (4x4's, ambulances), as well as a big Bedford army truck that was vital before the roads were improved.
- (This list could span many more pages...)



Patrons: Mr Phil Sinkinson OBE, former British High Commissioner to The Gambia & Mr Simon Scarrow, international bestselling author