



# STELLA'S SCHOOL SCHEME



**Fighting poverty through education**



## NEWSLETTER 2017

Greetings to you!

We apologise sincerely for the lack of news this year but it has been a time of big change for the charity. We have continued to be very busy and your donations are really making a difference to many lives. Thirty three individuals are being sponsored in schools and tertiary education and a further 800 children and young people are benefitting as a result of the help we have given them through assisting with equipment, books, teachers salaries or school furniture.

We no longer focus our attention simply in Sambel Kunda and the surrounding areas, but with the two GHDT centres, it is now easier to administer children and students further afield so your help and support is more important than ever.

There is obviously still a long way to go before we can say that all children in The Gambia have access to good education, but times are changing and with The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust's work with the University and indeed with the links we have to the University through the students that we sponsor, it is really rewarding to see and work with such bright, energetic and active young people. I just wish that you, as sponsors could see what your support has achieved and I would like to give you very sincere thanks for making it possible for these young people to have an education. Your generosity is helping to change lives for the better and giving young people in The Gambia opportunities they might not otherwise have had.

I am very lucky to have Langbaba Ceesay and Fatou Jagne to help me in the administration of SSS. They do not tolerate fools gladly and seem to be able to see who the genuine students are. We never give money directly to the students. The institutions that they attend issue an invoice and the money is paid by Fatou straight into the Institution's bank account. Books and Equipment are purchased by our staff and given to the students. In doing it this way we not only obtain receipts immediately, but we also ensure that the money you have donated goes for the purpose it was intended and that is to educate young people.

I hope you will continue to help us in this very important work. Please do share your newsletter with friends and encourage others to participate in supporting us. If you visit The Gambia, please do let us know and I am sure our staff would be happy to introduce you to some of the schools and young people that we sponsor.

If you would prefer to receive your newsletter by email, please notify us and provide your email address. This will help us to money on postage.

With one or two exceptions, we no longer ask you to sponsor individual students as for a small charity such as ours, the administration of such a scheme is immense, but we hope that through this newsletter you will see that a great many children are benefitting from your kindness.

I would like to wish you all a very Happy Christmas season and a healthy and Happy New Year.

With best wishes,

Heather Armstrong (Stella's sister)



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# A SAD FAREWELL TO ROS AND RUSSELL



Ros Harris

Many of you will have heard by now that Ros Harris, who administered Stella's School Scheme decided to retire from her voluntary position earlier in the year after running it for almost 9 years since Stella's death. She had also given all Stella's projects a great deal of time and support prior to Stella's death so she has been an immense support and an integral part of the development of all Stella's charities. She is sadly missed, but juggling a job and family commitments meant it was becoming increasingly difficult for her. She has also recently become a granny so we send the whole family our congratulations!



Russell Harris

Ros is an exceptional lady, she leapt into the breach when we needed her most and has valiantly worked to support not only SSS but also the Sambel Kunda Village Clinic and Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust (GHDT) Her fundraisers were always so much fun and have become the stuff of legends and supporters travelled far and wide to attend them. Above all they were very successful. She worked like a Trojan and did it all in a voluntary capacity for so long, what a lady! We would like to say a very big "thank you" to Ros for all she has done for the charities and for Stella's family, we are very lucky to have had her fantastic help for so long and we shall always be grateful to Ros and Russell for all their support and hard work. They should be proud of the benefits that they have brought to the children in particular, but also the patients at the clinic and the animals that come into the care of The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust and before that, the support that they both gave to the chimpanzees that Stella worked so hard to protect.

It has not been easy and involved much hard work and commitment. Ros continued when many lesser mortals would have long given up, but we do hope that Ros knows that as a result of her work she changed lives and gave children a better chance to achieve more rewarding jobs and more fulfilled lives.

We would also like to give special thanks to Russell, Ros's immensely kind and generous husband, he too has done so much for all the charities, most recently he flew out to install the bathrooms that his company, Kohler Mira, had kindly donated, at the new Makasutu centre. We are so lucky to have friends like Ros and Russell. They are simply the best! **Thank you both so much!**



*If your plan is for a month plant rice*

*If your plan is for ten years plant trees*

*If our plan is for one hundred years, educate children*

# Fatou & Langbaba's new roles at SSS

Fatou Jagne is Housekeeper in Chief of GHDT and Stella's charities. She is also the administrator of the SSS in the Kombos and Western Division (Area around the Capital). She is in charge of the students in tertiary education and she also regularly visits the schools where we support students. Fatou is very much a part of the family as her mother worked with Stella and Heather's parents when the girls were small children and Fatou followed in her mother's footsteps and worked with Eddie Brewer, their father, in his latter years.



*Fatou Jagne*

Fatou has five lovely children, one of whom is also called Stella. Fatou is a great believer in providing as good an education as one can possibly afford and her children are a great reflection of that. Her eldest son is a doctor, one daughter is an IT specialist and helps us with all our IT problems, her third child is studying at University and the two younger ones are doing well at school. They are all a credit to their warm, generous and compassionate mother.



*Langbaba Ceesay*

Langbaba is the General Manager and Public Relations Officer of GHDT and the administrator of SSS in the up country region and has worked with our charities for many years. He worked with Stella at the Chimpanzee Rehabilitation Trust and transferred to The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust and SSS after her death. He has boundless energy, is very hard working and has an ability to make the impossible possible.

He appears to know everyone in The Gambia and is constantly greeting long lost friends! He always gives 150% to any task assigned to him. He cares deeply about providing education to those who would normally not be able to have it and has spent hours of his time organising tailors to sew uniforms or engineers to install bore holes and solar power to the schools we support. He was recently given an honour by his community for the support he gives to the youth in sport and community development, so we are very proud of him.



*Langbaba receiving his award*

The charity is now being administered by **Heather Armstrong**, who is Stella's sister. All three charities are now under her care which is why this newsletter is so late! Going forward there will be some changes to the way we do things. Our presence is felt in a far greater area of the country now as the charities have grown and this has meant we are able to sponsor children from a wider area. Most of the tertiary education takes place down near the coast and as Fatou is in this area, she is responsible for ensuring fees are paid and in giving guidance to the students. Some of the children we are sponsoring have sad stories behind them, one young mother whose husband had died was struggling to educate the children on her own, so we provided sponsorship for three of them. In The Gambia one is duty bound, to take responsibility for the wife and children, of a sibling who has died. I recently met up with a taxi driver that I have known for many years who has been struggling due to the lack of tourists for the last few years. When I spoke to him he was close to tears as he was responsible for feeding and educating 17 people in his compound. When the political problems earlier in the year impacted severely on his income, he had to remove the three youngest children from school as he simply could not afford it. SSS is now helping him to educate the three youngest children.

## ***AN EXCERPT FROM A REPORT FROM ONE OF OUR STUDENTS STUDYING ECONOMICS AND FINANCE AT UNIVERSITY***

Not only do we sponsor Sukai, but she wrote us a very polite letter asking for our support to help her to go on a class trip to Mauritania, to study the fishing methods there. We agreed to as we felt it was an important part of her education.

“ The research has shown that Mauritania is one of the nations in Africa that has the best management sector regarding the fishing industries. They practice two types of culturing one is inland fishing which involves building of lakes and ponds where the fish are being reared. The other type is ocean fishing which involves selecting a particular place in the ocean that has a lot of fish and build protective barriers to protect the fish...

Mauritania is a country that depends mainly on meat as their source of protein. This is why they have abundance of fish and as a result they make it generate a lot of foreign exchange unlike the Gambia where we depend mainly on fish as our major source of protein..

They have a way of handling the fishing sector. The fish that were cultured in the ponds are consumed by the local people, they are not meant for export. While the fish cultured in the ocean are meant for export only and not for local consumption.

They harvest the fish and export it to European countries. They have special kinds of fish that nobody is allowed to fish because they are mainly meant for their exporting partners.. Example: Octopus, Barakuda etc. The Mauritanian Gov't does have a relationship with the Chinese Gov't regarding their fish but their involvement is less because there are other European countries also involved... They have very rigid laws that help them to overcome all the hazards hindering their fishing activity. They talked about (3) legislative laws that they have put in place but the law which was passed in 2006 is the one they are still following which states that in a year people are only allowed to fish for 8 months and the remaining 4 months nobody is allowed to fish. They do this because they are taking heed of what the world development indicator stated, that in the next 30 years the number of fish in the ocean will reduce which is why they put these laws in place to make sure that they have fish in abundance to support their major source of protein, "meat".

Another thing I saw in Mauritania that worried me so much was how badly they treat their animals especially the donkey carts in the market which they use for transportation. The donkeys are so badly whipped that they would even start bleeding. It made me so uncomfortable and sad.”



*Fishing in The Gambia.*

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*Saikou, pictured above*



Saikou demonstrating his writing skills

## News of the young people we

Little Saikou the young lad with profound hearing loss is doing very well. His report suggests that he is a bit of a “character” and perhaps does not give as much attention to learning as he might, but though we confess to be more than a little biased, it is a real joy to see how his confidence has grown and developed and how his writing skills have improved.

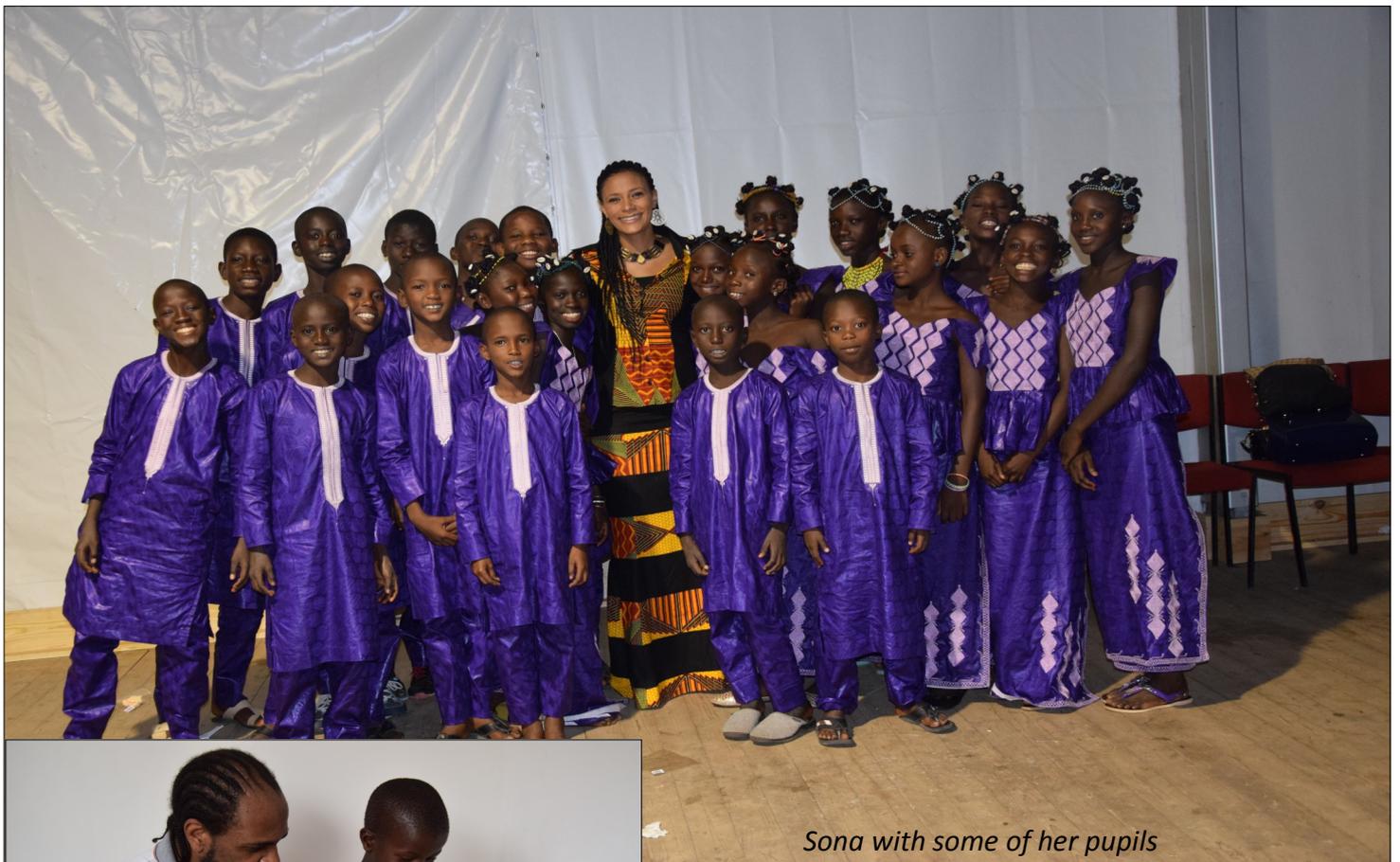
He is still a very affectionate child and is so full of fun. He seems to have a real rapport with animals and he loves to come to The Horse and Donkey Trust where he is fearless with the patients who seem to respond so well to him. If he is still interested in animals by the time he leaves school, he may have found himself a job!

Our help was recently sought to provide assistance to a new school that has been built in Central River region. The children there have no desks or chairs and there isn't even a concrete floor yet. We shall be providing 50 desks chairs and teachers tables to this school. We would love to help this school to develop and admire the initiative of the parents and villagers in building the school. If any of you felt able to contribute towards the development of this school, and to provide uniforms etc. it would be very much appreciated. When we reflect on how lucky our own children are to have a good education, and see the determination of people in different circumstances to do what they can for their children, we feel compelled to assist.

**The one thing you can give a child that no one can ever take away, is an education.**



*The children at the new school who need uniforms, desks, chairs, a teacher's table and a concrete floor.*



*Sona with some of her pupils*

### **The Amadu Bansang Jobarteh School of Music.**

Sona Jobarteh is a very talented musician who sings both in The Gambia and abroad. She comes from a family of Kora players ( this is a traditional Gambian instrument and she is the first female virtuoso) As a young teenager she was admitted into the world renowned institutions of the Royal College of Music and the Purcell School in the UK where she furthered her studies in western classical music. During this time she also excelled in composition and started to compose her first compositions for full orchestra.

Sona has recently set up a school of music for young Gambians, and we were pleased to be able to make a donation to help her with the inevitable costs involved. Her pupils receive tuition in all the normal school subjects but they also receive training in traditional Gambian music. This is a first for The Gambia and we really applaud her efforts and wish her success with her school.

For further information about Sona's school please visit <http://www.abjschool.org/>

To find out more about Sona Jobarteh and to hear some of her music please visit her website <http://www.sonajobarteh.com/>



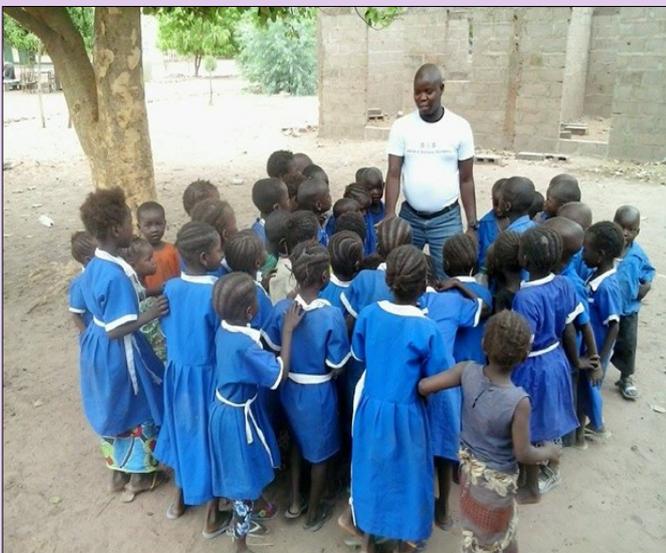
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We are now supporting students at University studying Economics and Finance, Law, Accounting, Political Science, Community Development and Nursing. There are a further five studying various aspects of Computing and a three studying Electrical Engineering. Many of these are students that we have sponsored all the way through school, but some are students who sought our help as they had been offered a place at university but simply did not have the means to attend.

We also have many children at schools, some around Sambel Kunda and some now down around the new centre at Makasutu which is closer to the capital, Banjul. There have been many sad cases brought to our attention and we have two children whose father was a building labourer working on the building of Makasutu. Sadly, his wife died shortly after the birth of their third child and he used to sometimes have to bring the children with him to the building site if he could not find someone to look after them. When I asked why they weren't at school he said he simply could not afford it. He had heavy expenses from the treatment for his wife and he was stretched to the limit financially. He was a hard working man and doing the best he could on his own for his little family so we are supporting his two older children.

From time to time some charities hit a rough spot, either they have funding shortages or as was the case with Lamin Touba school, the founders were no longer able to continue due to age and failing health. We were recently approached by a very successful charity school that has a large number of orphans amongst its pupils as they had a temporary shortfall with teachers salaries. It is a happy and vibrant school and has consistently come top of its cluster with the results that the pupils achieved. It seemed a waste that such a school should have to close due to a temporary shortfall in funding. Where we can, and when we know they are genuine cases, we are very happy to help. We feel we should all work together for the benefit of the children and in this case it meant that the school was able to continue running until its financial situation stabilised. In total we are sponsoring 33 individuals and a further 800 pupils are being helped through our support for their schools by helping with teachers salaries or equipment for their schools. Thanks to you, a great many children are being given a chance for a better life and we are very grateful to you for your generous support.



*A big thank you to our supporters from N'Jie Kunda School and all the students who benefit from your kindness.*



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A regular donation by Standing order really helps by creating a greater stability for the future of this vital charity. In return we will send you our newsletter to ensure you are kept up to date with our activities

To pay a regular amount by Standing Order, please complete this form in **BLOCK CAPITALS AND POST TO:**  
**SSS, Brewery Arms, Stane Street, Ockley, RH5 5TH**

**To Manager of:**

**Bank name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Bank address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Post code:** \_\_\_\_\_

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Please pay the following amount to:

**Stella's School Scheme**

**Sort Code: 30-92-70**

**Account number: 0102304**

I agree to pay the sum of £  monthly  yearly  One off donation

Please write amount in words here \_\_\_\_\_

Starting on (date) / /

(until cancelled with my bank)

Please debit my account:

Account No. \_\_\_\_\_ Sort code: / / \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Post code: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: / / \_\_\_\_\_

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### *Gift Aid Declaration*

The chancellor allows us to claim tax back you have already paid on the value of your donation – but only if you sign the form.

Please treat this donation and future donations (until I notify you otherwise) as a Gift Aid donation. I confirm I am a UK tax payer

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: / / \_\_\_\_\_

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Supporting education, fighting poverty in The Gambia West Africa  
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