



STELLA'S SCHOOL SCHEME



Fighting poverty through education

Charity no 1130256



NEWSLETTER 2019

Greetings!

I must first apologise for the fact that there is now only one newsletter per year. Sadly, I have been unable to find a replacement since Ros left and as the charities continue to flourish, the work they generate means there just are not enough hours in the day to do things as well as Ros did them.

Many of you will know that SSS and The Sambel Kunda Village Trust were established by my sister, Stella Brewer Marsden. The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust was jointly founded by Stella and I. Following Stella's death in 2008 her husband David continued Stella's work until he left the country later that year. The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust has grown beyond any of our expectations which left even less time for SSS and the Sambel Kunda Village Clinic but our Gambian management team are a huge help and together we are ensuring that it all runs as smoothly as possible.

We have broadened our remit with SSS and no longer just sponsor individuals at Sambel Kunda School. Since opening the new Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust centre closer to the capital, we have been able to sponsor children and young people from different areas and at different levels. We have 125 children sponsored at nursery level, 17 at primary and high school and 20 students in tertiary education spread between the Technical Training Institute, the Nursing College, the Agricultural College and the University. Tertiary education fees are comparatively expensive at almost £600 per year per student so our overall numbers of students sponsored are dropping. We continue to help students in other schools where we can by providing equipment and books and we still provide salaries for the staff at Lamin Touba nursery School. We will sometimes subsidize educational trips or help in any way we can to promote learning for children who would otherwise not have that opportunity.

Thank you for your sponsorship, which is making such a difference to so many young lives. I feel very privileged to be the person who meets our beneficiaries. I am sure that if you heard the stories I hear and see the relief and joy on the faces of the people to whom we give help, and see the results, it would give you the same joy that it gives to me.

My very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year and sincere thanks to you all.

With best wishes,

Heather Armstrong



Stella Isha Mbye

A young lady of 12 who was named after Stella and who has been sponsored by SSS has really excelled herself. She loves poetry and has a strong interest in women's empowerment. She is a delightful, caring and compassionate person but at the same time she is a strong and determined. She has really made the most of her education and everyone who has ever contributed to SSS should be very proud that you have given her this opportunity. This year she has participated in poetry recitals and readings and has won a number of awards for her work! I saw her reciting a poem called "I am who I am" and she read it with such feeling and expression that it made me feel quite emotional. I think this child will go far. It is so rewarding to meet and speak with some of the beneficiaries of SSS, and see the difference we have made, and it is rewarding that we are able to help young people to make the most of their lives.

A tribute to SSS By Stella Isha Mbye



"If thanks is supposed to be given, it should be given to you.

You saved so many lives, especially the girls in The Gambia

People who were falling behind, they are now in front, leading the way

You pushed them to their passion

You say day by day, step by step you will change the world.

Education is your priority, see, you make us independent,

No longer suffering from financial problems

You turn the victims into survivors

Your humble soul is an inspiration to us

You are a motivation to us, and also an aspiration

We love you, thank you and we appreciate your help and we acknowledge you.

Thank you once again SSS."

Ebraima Bah the carpenter

Recently whilst in The Gambia during the rainy season, I was desperately trying to find a carpenter who could help me to build a shelter for some camels who needed protection from the very heavy rain and flies. It seemed everyone else was looking for a carpenter too because I could not get one in a hurry. One of my staff said they knew of a man who could do it but he was not a professional carpenter. I was desperate so I took chance on someone who was not qualified but offered his assistance. I was surprised when a very well-spoken young man appeared. We agreed a price and he worked very hard to get it done quickly for the camels. He did a superb job and worked by torchlight to finish it. When I was speaking to him afterwards it turned out that he had a dream to go to University to study Agriculture. He had been offered a place, but sadly he did not have the funding so he said he was doing any jobs to save up money so that maybe next year he could go. He then rushed off into the night to his next job after telling me he would be very happy with any odd jobs that I could send his way. He met me in my Horse and Donkey role so he had no idea I might be able to help him. His predicament played on my mind, here was a good hardworking lad who wanted to better himself and was willing to go to great lengths to do so and I thought he deserved some assistance. I arranged to meet him the following day and informed him that we would sponsor him and if he was quick he could enrol and begin University the following week. I just wish that all our supporters could have seen his face as he processed the information, his expression went from surprise to bewilderment then joy, it was lovely to see. I so wish that you could all see the difference that you make to the lives of the young people that you sponsor.

Abdulai

Many of you who have been to Sambel Kunda will remember a young man called Abdulai who is a very bad asthmatic. On my previous trip to Sambel I had rushed him to hospital as he was having a bad attack which was not responding to the treatment he had been given by the nurse at the clinic. Over the years, many of our volunteers have rushed him to hospital and I am sure this has saved his life. Abdulai is now eighteen years old but he looks like a lot younger. His severe illness means that he has missed a lot of school and after year 6 he left school altogether. It must be hard trying to study when you are constantly struggling to breathe. One evening as I was working in the house at Sambel, there was a tap on the door and it was Abdulai. He had come to thank me again for taking him to the hospital when he was so poorly. We chatted for a while and then I asked him what he would like to do in life. At first he didn't understand because in the very poor rural areas there is no choice, you help on the farm to grow subsistence crops.

I asked him, if he had a choice of absolutely anything, doctor, dentist, policeman what would he like to do? He gave it some thought and then said he would like to go back to school and learn, but he didn't want to go to Sambel School where everyone knew his age.

The following day I spoke to his father who was worried about him going away to school because of his asthma. After giving it some thought, we came up with a plan. If Abdulai came to Makasutu, he could attend the local school there, many of our staff are from Sambel Kunda and could take good care of him. He would be with people he is familiar with, he would be close to hospitals and more experienced doctors and maybe able to get better help with his asthma. Within days the staff at Makasutu had secured him a place at a school close by and Abdulai has started his education and is so far is doing well. He lives with us at Makasutu and cycles to school each day. Thanks to your help he is being given a chance, despite his poor health.



The joys and worries of parenthood.

Parents all over the world go through the same traumas with their children. On a recent visit to Sambel Kunda, I was approached by a lady who asked me if I could please speak to her daughter. The girl was really unhappy at the school she was attending and was threatening to leave school altogether. I was very impressed that this traditional mother from a very rural area was so keen for her daughter to finish her education, she told me that she had been desperate to go to school but never had the opportunity.

She came to the house that evening with her daughter who looked as if she was a very stressed teenager and had the weight of the world on her shoulders. We established the fact that she did want to finish her education, but not at the school she was presently attending. She knew the school she wanted to go to which was much closer to home and which meant she could get home to help her mother more often. There may have been other reasons but I didn't want to pry too deeply. I was able to phone the headmaster of the school that she wanted to attend and he confirmed that he had a place for her. The relief on her face was good to see. A couple of months later I returned to Sambel, a smiling happy teenager approached as we waited in the vehicle, she came over to thank me for arranging it and said she was very happy at Kudang school. The difference in her demeanour was incredible. Later that day her mother came bearing a gift of a home grown watermelon. I hope she will continue to thrive at Kudang school it is good to be able to help a fellow parent out!

News of past pupils.

Musa Jallow

He became a doctor and first worked at the main Government hospital in the capital, Banjul. He was then employed by the Medical Research Council to work with them at the centre that they have a few miles from the capital. Musa married another doctor and then he was lucky enough to be awarded a medical scholarship to do a masters degree in UK but had to leave his pregnant wife behind. The baby will be nine months old by the time his father returns. Gambians sometimes have to seize their chances for education at great personal cost to themselves.



Muhamed Baldeh

Many of you will remember Mo who used to come to our house in Sambel for extra maths tuition with our volunteer Anna. He is now attending college and working with The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust at weekends. It is hard to equate the young man in the picture with the little boy who used to help us.



Sukai Jallow

She graduated from the University of The Gambia with a degree in Economics and Finance and has won a scholarship to go and study for her masters in Italy.

Congratulations Sukai and we wish you happy and successful studies.

Dear Heather and SSS supporters

I am indeed overwhelmed to once again humbly express my sincere appreciation for funding my university fees for the third year. I remain grateful to you for helping me to reach another level in the fulfilment of my dream.

By far you have positively affected my life through this scholarship and I must say that without it my dreams would not come true.

As words cannot express how delighted I am, I therefore in conclusion pray that the good Lord bestows blessings, good health, guidance, protection and prosperity in your lives Amen

Ebrima Ndow. Kololi, The Gambia

Jerreh Keita

Sadly this year we had another tragedy. Jerreh Keita, who we had sponsored for three years at college where he studied computer technology, drowned shortly after his graduation whilst celebrating with friends on the beach.

Our deepest sympathies go to his grieving family. SSS sponsors two of his brothers in school. His father, who is a baggage handler at the airport, had been so proud of his achievements and so desperately wants his children to have professional careers.

Fundraising

We would like to thank everyone who supports us, you are really having an impact on so many young lives. We could help many more young people to achieve their potential if we could raise more funds. We know there are many demands on people's finances but perhaps you could think of a novel way to raise funds. Stella's niece, Rachel Armstrong, recently raised over £1000 when people sponsored her to cut off her waist length hair. She donated her hair to a company who makes wigs using real hair for people undergoing chemotherapy and by getting a lot of people to sponsor her she has raised sufficient to pay for two years of University fees. Thank you Rachel. I know Stella would be very proud of you, we certainly are. Any support you are able to give us would really help to give the young people of The Gambia opportunities they may not otherwise have had. Please consider entering a marathon, baking some cakes, having a coffee morning or giving gifts of a Christmas donation in our name. We would be happy to provide the gift certificate.



Lamin Toubu Nursery School

We continue to pay the salaries for the children of Lamin Toubu Nursery School. We also provide them with books and equipment that are donated to us. Our thanks to Mr. and Mrs Xavier Lam who drove down from Newmarket with their car loaded to the gunnels with children's books that were being discarded by a school in their area. It was so kind of them to not only save the books but also go the extra mile to get them to us. We are lucky to be given the surplus bags from the British Equine Veterinary Association Congress each year. They make perfect bags for schoolchildren and students and are very popular in The Gambia. We would like to give our heartfelt thanks to them for their generosity.





Sambel Kunda Clinic Trust

Community Healthcare in the heart of The Gambia

Charity no 1148681



The clinic was originally built by Stella and David Marsden with funding provided by Rachel Edwards and family in memory of their son Alexander who tragically died at a very young age whilst playing cricket. Sambel Kunda and the surrounding area was very remote and access roads were very poor so it was very difficult for villagers to get medical assistance when they needed it. It was built as a primary care clinic and emergencies were taken to hospital using the Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust (GHDT) vehicle as this was the only vehicle around at the time. The clinic funds would reimburse GHDT for fuel and driver overtime.

Over the years things have improved. In 2010 The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust (GHDT) rebuilt Calum's road making access to the nearest clinic across the river much easier. Following intense lobbying by the community which GHDT co-ordinated, a new road from Kudang to Sambel Kunda is now being built.

The clinic still performs a valuable service and sees patients daily. We have a Memorandum of Understanding with the Ministry of Health and they provide us with free malaria testing kits and malaria treatment. In return they use our facilities for pre natal and ante natal clinics as well as vaccination clinics so it is fulfilling a valuable function.



Clinic Nurse with a patient



Clinic Nurse with patients

The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust is always happy to loan its vehicle to take people to the closest clinic when there is an emergency, but sometimes our vehicle is out on an emergency of its own or has gone down to the capital for maintenance.

We were delighted to hear that the local population had come up with their own solution to the problem and had purchased themselves a motor bike ambulance.



Brewery Arms Cottage, Stane Street, Ockley, Surrey RH5 5TH

Tel: 01306 627568 email: info@sssgambia.co.uk

Our aim is to make the clinic as sustainable as possible. We now have a village committee who help maintain the grounds and decide on treatment prices and broadly speaking the revenue from patients is covering the cost of medicines each month. However, we still need to pay the nurse practitioner, cleaner and watchman. We also need to raise funds for maintenance. One of the perimeter walls fell down during the rainy season, the tiling needs to be repaired as you will see from the pictures and we had to invest in a new water pump and solar panels recently.

Climate change is affecting the subsistence farmers.

Climate change is affecting Sambel Kunda badly. The people are mainly subsistence farmers and this year due to very late rains, the crops failed. There is going to be hunger and the clinic and nurse will be very much involved in food aid. We have quite a lot of land with the clinic and we thought we could help to offset climate change by starting a tree nursery in the grounds and we embarked on this during the rains, however it is now vital that we repair the wall and fencing in order to protect the trees from livestock. If anyone would like to make a contribution towards we would love to hear from you. The villagers are facing tough times ahead and hunger is going to be a very real issue this year so we need all the help that we can get.



There are just two regular donors at the moment keeping the clinic open and we give them our heartfelt thanks. We desperately need more help. The few reserves we have are running desperately short. A couple of pounds per month from a lot of people could enable us to make a very big difference in renovating the building and perimeter fencing. The community are willing to do the work, but we need funds to buy tiles, cement and fencing wire and posts. If anyone wanted to do some fundraising for the clinic or even if you could pass this newsletter on to someone who may have an interest in helping, such as a Rotary Club or Women's Institute or Church Group It would make a very big difference. Perhaps, instead of giving a Christmas gift give a gift certificate of a roll of wire or some bags of cement, or cleaning equipment for the clinic? The costs of the required items are set out below.

To the two people who donate monthly we send you our very sincere and heartfelt thanks.

Please let's keep Stella's dream and Alexander's memorial alive and help the people of this very poor rural community who really are struggling at the moment.

1 bag of cement £6

1 Roll of fencing wire 50 metres £60

1 large drum of paint £20

Fence posts £3 each

White tiles £14 per pack

Basket of cleaning goods. Bleach, Disinfectant, floor cleaner, soap etc. £10

Donations to the clinic can be made either by BACS to Sambel Kunda Village Clinic. Sort code 30-95-72 A/c number 27965268 or by cheque or via <https://www.justgiving.com/sambelkundaclinic>



STELLA'S SCHOOL SCHEME

Brewery Arms Cottage, Stane Street, Ockley, Surrey RH5 5TH

phone: 01306 627568

email: sssgambia@gmail.com

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: _____

Please pay the following amount to:

Stella's School Scheme

Sort Code: 30-92-70

Account number: 00102304

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: / /

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: / /

Supporting education, fighting poverty in The Gambia West Africa

Reg. Charity No 1130256



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Community Healthcare in the heart of The

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Tel: 01306 627568 Email: info@sssgambia.co.uk