

MBG News – December 2020



Dear friends,

As 2020 draws to a close with both the risks of new variants of Covid-19 and the hopes and expectations of vaccines, we are continuing our efforts at MBG to work with the people of Gunjur and charities that operate there.

AGM minutes

Thank you to all those who were able to make our Zoom AGM. The minutes are attached and you can find them on our [website \[mbg.org\]](http://mbg.org).

We would very much like to thank all the work of Dr Janneke Blokland who has been a trustee through the changes at MBG four years ago and helped steer us to our current place of stability and indeed high impact during 2020. Janneke stepped down at the AGM as she has taken up a new role as Chaplin at Hurstpierpoint College. If you or anyone you know would like to find out about becoming a trustee of MBG we would love to hear from you, especially if you are based in Marlborough.

My main reflection on the year for the link is the great value there has been in MBG as a grant making charity supporting all those fantastic charities that now operate in Gunjur. We have been able to provide direct funding, and help secure matched funding, to ensure the continued viability and sustainability of these charities through this most testing of times. The donations you have given have directly helped support them and, through our emergency appeal and TARUD, helped the poorest and most vulnerable people in Gunjur at a time of world crisis. **Thank you.**

2020 update



We are delighted to say that MBG has provided match funding to help continue the plastic recycling centre project delivered by WasteAid and TARUD. This highly innovative project looks to tackle waste plastic and prevent it entering the oceans in this coastal country. Based on an idea by students from Pewsey Vale school, through an MBG 2015 entrepreneurs project with VIBE, the team melt plastic, add sand and create durable but lightweight floor and roof tiles. WasteAid secured DFID and UKAid funding to run a two year pilot in Gunjur to the end of 2020.

Successes of the UKAID funded project to date:

- 90 unemployed youths, illiterate older women and people with disabilities in Gunjur trained in collecting, sorting and processing LDPE plastic to make paving tiles
- Contributions from third party donors and corporate staff volunteers to construct a larger workshop in Gunjur
- A reasonable amount of paving tile sales to local residents and small businesses, and a proven ability to make good quality products and provide tile-laying services
- Prevention of plastic pollution, which can have particularly harmful impacts on childhood health: it is estimated that to date, the project has diverted some **4 million** plastic bags from the ocean / open burning / informal dumpsites
- Supporting livelihoods – the income generating activities have supported not just our direct beneficiaries but their families too

Three groups from St. James’s Place Wealth Management helped build a new production facility in November 2019 and now the company has provided funding, with MBG matching, to support the project for a further two years. The money will help grow the business model and provide business training to allow the Gambian team to run the business and make it sustainable.

SJP and MBG’s funding would support the following key activities:

- Our initial focus within this project would be to scope more specifically the training needs and identify suitable Gambia-based resources to offer business mentoring and training. This could provide the added benefit of local / regional market knowledge, potentially allowing introductions to prospective new customers.
- The identification of new sources of LDPE plastics close to Gunjur (e.g. in Kartong and Sifoe), with the provision of a regular collection service and analysis of transport options with costs built into the scaling business plan.
- Development of a marketing and communications strategy to drive sales.
- Train a dedicated sales manager with the skills to bring in a sustainable stream of customers.
- Develop a viable and sustainable growth plan with agreed responsibilities and protocols.

The Gunjur team with their products:



Project Gambia

We are also supporting Project Gambia where the toilets for the preschools at TARUD preschool's and Lanwarr preschool have been destroyed in the heavy summer rains. MBG is providing funding to Project Gambia with Anita Bew (MBG founder) and Neil Griffiths (Preschool specialist and long time MBG supporter) co-ordinating the effort. We are pleased to be able to provide this additional support to the work we fund in professional training for pre-school teachers.

Update from Disability Africa



Here is how Disability Africa has spent the very generous £10,000 grant awarded by The MBG in May this year.

Before we received this grant, things were very uncertain. We were unsure on how we would be able to sustain our services let alone adapt to a challenging environment brought on by the pandemic. Inevitably, disabled children in low-income communities are at significant risk in crises. The United Nations has stated that the worldwide increase in domestic abuse is a 'shadow pandemic' having increased by as much as 20% during 'lockdown'. We know disabled children are most at risk; even in normal circumstances disabled children face isolation and abuse while infanticide is common. In our August 2020 survey:

- 94% of families across our projects said that things had become difficult, or very difficult, since the onset of the pandemic;
- 93.6% reported a loss of both income and food security;
- A majority reported that their children had to go without regular meals, toys, social interaction and sanitary products;
- And several parents described it as being the hardest time in their lives.

Thanks to the grant from the MBG and key support from a small number of other trusts, Disability Africa has been able to assist an ever increasing number of disabled young people in these difficult times. Your support guaranteed that no-one on our register was left behind - anyone who needed urgent attention (medical or safeguarding concerns), got the help that they needed.

As we reported to you in September, your previous grant of £2,500 for our Kunkujang playscheme was also a real success. Lamin, the director of Disability Africa - The Gambia, described the benefits of this, *"taking play to the door steps of very remote communities gave us unique opportunities to gain the trust of the communities and broke into their backyards which served as the "hiding corners" for the disabled young people."* Your support meant that disabled children in the rural community of Kunkujang, some of the most isolated people in The Gambia, were able to thrive in a stimulating, caring and

educational environment.

We were also able to harness the backing of the local community, with local mums volunteering as our cooks and a local dad providing his donkey cart as a mode of transport when our vehicle was being repaired. [You can watch this short video \[disability-africa.org\]](#) to see the kids arriving on donkey cart at the playscheme; it's a powerful example of how attitudes are changing in the community and how communities are taking local ownership of the project. It also demonstrates that parents are recognising the value of their disabled children and noticing the power of play. It will take more than a broken vehicle to stop children attending our playschemes!

We are very grateful for your pledge of £2,500 p/a for the next three years. We hope to be able to build on our successes. Right now, schools have just re-opened and many are operating Monday - Saturday. This now limits when we can use school spaces to one day a week. While our aim is to continue as we were in 2019 and early 2020, it may be that we have to adjust our services. At the moment, we are allowing schools to settle before we approach them with our plans; we do not want to damage our strong relationships at what is a challenging time for them. While we will make sure every child is seen, it may be that we have to increase the reach of our Outreach Play Programme or transport children in remote areas like Kunkujang to more central locations. As such, if future grants were restricted to our Gunjur Inclusion Project but not a specific playscheme, it would allow us to be flexible and responsive - meeting the needs of disabled children in Kombo South as best we can. We would, of course, prioritise MBG grants to fund our Kunkujang playscheme.

Mike Carr - Project Development Officer

See you in 2021....

We wish you a very happy Christmas and joyous festive time.



As always, you can reach us at info@mbg.org.

MBG Trustees

2019 MBG Annual Report: [\[mbg.org\]](http://mbg.org)



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If you'd like us to stop emailing you, or you'd like to get in touch, please contact: info@mbg.org