

## MBG May 23 update



### Dear friends,

Welcome, in this update:

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- Leeds school visit

### MBG update

Chair, Alex Davies has just returned from Gunjur and provides a report of visiting project sites and Gunjur. The Thriving Through Venture youth group had an excellent trip to Gunjur staying at Gunjur Project and a group from a school in Leeds has just returned from Gunjur staying in the community centre and included a young volunteer who uses a wheel chair. The MBG summer group 2023 from St. Johns will soon be in Gunjur during August for three weeks, made up of 20 students, 2 teachers and 2 leaders from Venture Force.

You can follow the Gunjur Community Link here on facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/GunjurLink> where they have updates on what groups are up to.

### Chair's report from Gunjur

Following the travel restrictions of covid this is the first time since 2019 that one of the MBG trustees has been to Gunjur to talk with our friends and fellow volunteers face to face. I (Alex Davies – Chair) spent a week staying with my hosts Lamin Yai Touray, Sebou and Maryama. Some of you may remember Lamin Yai who has been to the UK and supported linking for many years.

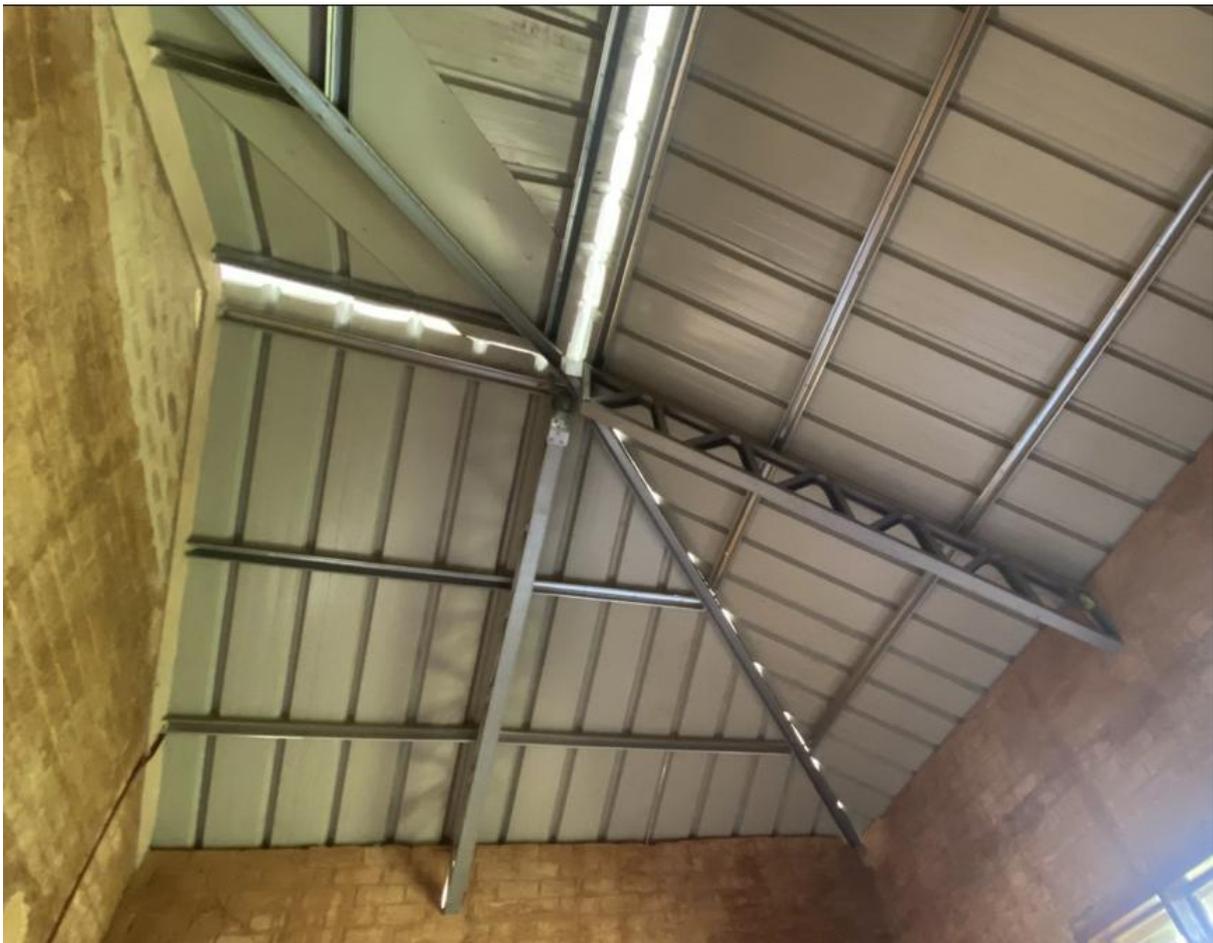


At the end of the trip I met with the Vice-President of The Gambia, Muhammad Jallow in the presidential compound in Banjul. We were able to highlight both the long standing 42 years of work of MBG with Gunjur and our ongoing long term support. I highlighted the importance of TARUD as a key and proven operating partner, the long standing Women's lively hood gardens and our support for Pre-school education. There was some discussion about

potential match funding for this work and MBG will be talking with his Deputy Permanent Secretary about how to progress this.

During the week there were courtesy calls to complete with the new Imam, Alkalo, Nyansimba and Chief. All were glad to see groups back again and for the ongoing support of MBG both directly into the community and through the other organisations we support. There remains disappointment that home stays are not possible anymore for young people and also remain difficult for adult groups. However there is understanding as to why and we all recognise using the Community Centre best alternative, it being in the heart of the town so the visitors can immediately be part of the community. We are keen to ensure home visits and understanding the work of TARUD and other charities in Gunjur remains part of the trip.

While there I was able to visit the Disability Africa Inclusion Centre building and see the impressive new roof and ceilings now in place allowing young people to again use the centre. Director Lamin Touray and his team talked about how they are now working with young people in the centre three days a week as well as maintaining the home visits developed during covid. They have now supported 243 young people with around 140 active now (some outgrow the support they offer or no longer need their direct support). Find out more here: <https://www.disability-africa.org/>





There is also progress at the Marlborough Mango farm with water and solar panels installed. This will be operational next year will mangos able to be collected, washed and sold, as well as other crops grown at the site.



Significant development has been made at Gunjur Project where their new Community Training Hub is in place with further development planned. It now includes library, training kitchen and sewing / crafts area as well as storage and training rooms. This is used by BeReel and the micro-finance project we have been supporting in Partnership with St. James's Place.



While there I also met with TARUD for an update on the health and health education programme, that is back on track after we redirected the funds and focus to help fight Covid 19 in 2020 – 2022.

I also met with the women from the Funyunku garden which several MBG groups have supported with fencing projects over recent years. We are in discussion to see if we can support new water reservoirs to replace drawing well water.

### **Reflections:**

As always there is a powerful sense of development in the town. Considerable compound development continues around the village. Two story buildings are increasingly common as are glass windowed and tiled buildings. In the main village running water is common into homes, as well as on the street and electricity is now consistent enough to run fridges and freezers. Smart phones are completely standard now, providing access both to the internet and online banking.

The increased access to cars has meant that the active centre of the town now feels much more like the garage and sides of the cost road which is the focus for new shops and some restaurants. New two story schools buildings have been put into the lower and upper basic schools and an active and well used community library is also in operation. Road construction and new buildings are going in at a staggering rate in and around Serrekunda which is largely unrecognisable compared to my first trip in 2004.

## **Thriving Through Venture May 2023 trip**

The TTV group of year 12 students from schools in Wiltshire and Swindon travelled to Gunjur on 28<sup>th</sup> May. You can find out all about their trip here.

<https://ttventure.org/thegambia-2023/>



## School visit from Leeds

A group of students from Prince Henry Grammar School, Leeds, with 19 students, 3 teachers and 2 leaders from Venture Force were in Gunjur with the Gunjur Community Link in July. If you are not already, follow the Gunjur Community Link here on facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GunjurLink>

You can also see updates on trips here from Venture Force: <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=venture%20force>



It's great to see young people from other communities also connecting to Gunjur through our long established link and the volunteers in Gunjur.

Thank you for your continued support for MBG and as always, you can reach us at [info@mbg.org](mailto:info@mbg.org)

*MBG Trustees*

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