

MBG News – May 2021



Dear friends,

Now over a year into lock down MBG remains active in supporting the charities working in Gunjur as they begin to look at delivery and programmes post covid if all goes to plan.

This email covers some of the work that has been going on, an update on MBG and some sad news about people linked to the charity and Gunjur.

Charity Commission Audit

MBG was selected for an in depth Charity Commission Audit in May where the Trustees were joined by Dr Nick to talk about the work we do, our risk processes and financial controls.

The report will come back in about three weeks and we will share it with the membership along with any recommendations the auditors make. During the audit we were complimented on our transparency and good risk processes that prevented a fraud attack against a partner charity.

During the preparation and audit itself we reflected back to the strategy discussions with the membership and key stakeholders in 2014-2016 around the future of MBG, both to appoint a Director and then to close the office. At the time we set out to maintain MBG as distributing funds slowly would have a greater impact in Gunjur, we would continue to bring in more funds to support linking and people in Gunjur and to be able provide emergency support if needed.

Five years on I feel that we are delivering this well.

- We have supported a wide range of charities in Gunjur and generated significant additional funds for them through match funding and corporate grants.
- We have seen TARUD revitalised through the dedication and leadership of Director Baai Jaabang which MBG is activity supporting with project and core funding.
- Lastly we have been able act as emergency support during the Covid crisis and we hope ensure that all the charities that were working in Gunjur in 2019 will still be able to do so in 2021.

Thank you to everyone who supports MBG, that gave to the emergency fund we set up to secure food supplies at the start of the crisis and the MBG members for their emails of support and continued donations to fund our important work.

Dr Nick nominated for Nobel Peace Prize

The founder of the Gunjur - Marlborough link, Dr. Nick Maurice, has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of his sustained efforts in promoting international development and partnerships between communities in the North and South over a period spanning more than 40 years.

I'm sure you'll join me in a virtual congratulations to Nick on this well deserved nomination. Nick said that there's quite a bit of competition given the year 2020 has been, but he has our vote!

Listen to Gunjur digital Radio



Have you heard of the mobile phone app 'Radio Garden'? Radio 4 did a feature on it earlier in the year. The free app allows you to listen to digital radio stations from across the world.

You can tune into stations from Argentina to Japan, and, more importantly *Empire Radio 1* from Gunjur, The Gambia.

Bring the sounds of Gunjur to you this summer, even if you cannot be there in person.

The app logo looks this. You'll find it in your mobile phone app store.

Update from Disability Africa



During 2020 we were proud to support Disability Africa with a total of £30,000 in a three way split between MBG, St. James's Place Charitable Foundation and The Think Charitable Foundation.

Ric Law, Director for Disability Africa writes in May 2021:

"Your support ensured that we could provide essential, life-supporting services while keeping our teams together so that when it was safe, we could open and operate at full capacity."

"We are delighted to say that we have made a great start to the year! 5,064 attendances recorded in the first four months of the year.

"In The Gambia, our Gunjur Inclusion Project is providing services throughout Kombo South to

disabled young people and their families.

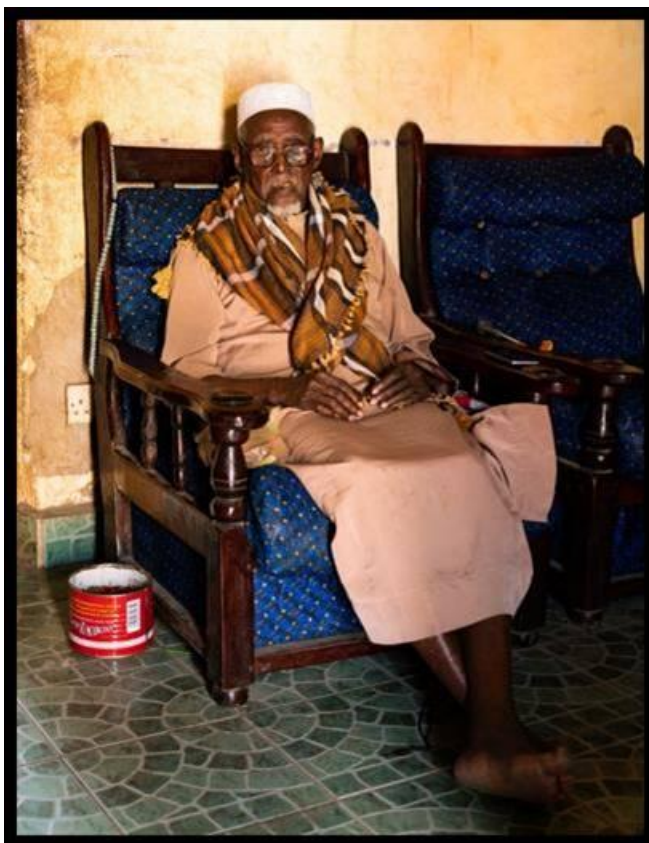
“Our playschemes are back up-and-running and our team has also been focusing on supporting disabled children in the classroom. School can be a challenging environment for any child. Teachers have limited resources and no classroom assistants, while class sizes can be very large (in some low and middle income countries we have heard of classes of 130 children). It is even harder for a child with an impairment who is subject to stigma – schools can be quite intimidating places!

“Ensuring that a disabled child has a meaningful educational experience at school is a major challenge and sometimes seems impossible. There are very few dedicated schools available for disabled young people in The Gambia, so we frequently find that the most appropriate, and often the only available educational setting for some disabled children, is the playscheme.

There is also good progress being made in replacing the roof of the disability centre in Gunjur to restore that to full working order.

Find out more about Disability Africa here. [disability-africa.org]

Gunjur Imam, Imam Kawsu Touray



I am very saddened to report the death of the Imam of Gunjur on the 14th April 2021. Imam Kawsu Touray held one of the most senior Islamic positions in The Gambia and his death is mourned by the whole country. He became Imam in 1997/1998 and has been Iman for 24 years.

I am told he was born in 1920 and is the 6th generation of direct Imams in Gunjur from She-Ma Touray Touray who migrated from the Mali empire and settled in Gunjur and was an Islamic scholar. This is the start of Islam in Gunjur. His mother was from the Fulas – a Sadie who is a family with a legacy of Islamic teaching and education.

He was taught by his father and then travelled to a learning centre in Guinea-Bissau and later returned to The

Gambia to continue his training. He spent a long time in Sifoe and returned to Gunjur to support his brother who was Imam, leading prayers and many other duties. He became Imam when his brother died.

The Imam had one wife and six children, one male and five female. He also supported several other wives whose partners in the family have died.

For me as MBG Chair, like many of you who travelled to Gunjur, we had the privilege of meeting him on every trip to Gunjur. He was always insightful and ready to give education on Gunjur and Islam and his views of the social changes and challenges in Gunjur. He was very giving with his time to MBG and personally opened the refurbished school block in the Islamic School in Gunjur for the Summer Trip I led in 2006. At that time he said that that community project showed the true value of the link that Christians and Muslims would work together on an Islamic school. We talked about it in many subsequent trips.

He will be missed by all in The Gambia.

Frank Judd



From Dr Nick. You may have heard on BBC news of the death on 17 April of Lord Judd, longstanding patron of MBG and a very close friend from the days when he was Director of VSO and in 1982 was invited by Bill Spray, Chair of MBG at the time to be our first MBG lecturer. In 1993 he accompanied a group of us to Gunjur for two weeks during which time we met with the then President Sir Dawda Jawara.

As a result of that visit he became immersed in our link and very positive about the role that such partnerships as ours could bring to encourage peace, prosperity and justice in the world,

He was a keen supporter of the UK One World Linking Association (UKOWLA) and Building Understanding through International Links for Development (BUILD) and always attended our meetings with the All Party Parliamentary Group "Connecting Communities" speaking passionately about the importance of global partnerships between schools, hospitals, towns, local authorities, etc in the UK with counterparts in Africa, Asia, Latin America etc.

I particularly got to know Frank when he was Director of Oxfam and I was a trustee And subsequently with Chris his wife and my wife Kate we would holiday together in France and Italy and in our respective homes in Marlborough and Cumbria.

Should anyone wish to know more about the role that Frank Judd played in encouraging MBG and global partnerships do let me know and I will send them a copy of my book "Never Doubt..." which contains many references to his work

He will be sadly missed by very many people around the world.

Gunjur Alkalo, Alhagie Ba Giki Darbo



Gunjur and the diaspora are mourning the loss of the Alkalo who died on the 24th April 2021 after a short illness.

Giki Darboe was a successful businessman who lived and worked in Brikama where he ran a successful business for decades before finally returning to Gunjur to become the Alkalo as the next in line.

Every group and volunteer travelling to Gunjur through MBG will meet the Alkalo to discuss the shared programmes being undertaken, be welcomed to the village and to learn from him about Gunjur. To me he was always very engaged in our shared work and the priorities of the community of Gunjur.

Ba Giki Darboe is survived by three wives, several children, grandchildren and great grandchildren in The Gambia, Senegal, and the United Kingdom.

A more detailed obituary is available on Gunjur Online News [Gunjur Alkalo Dies: Gunjur mourns the fall of a community pillar \(gunjuronline.com\)](https://gunjuronline.com)

Odette Chandler



From Caroline Harmer, former manager of Wiltshire Global Education Centre: We have learnt recently of the sad death of Odette Chandler. Odette was a great friend of both MBG and WGEC and visited Gunjur annually on teachers' visits from 2009 to 2017. Odette's daughter, Lara, had set up a very successful school link between Sherston school and Sifoe school but due to the birth of triplets, was unable to travel for a few years so Odette took it upon herself to keep the school link alive. She fell in love with the Gambia on that first visit and there were few times over the next 10 years that I went to Gunjur without Odette.

Odette supported many in the village with education, one of them Lamin Ba, had this to say: ' I am very very sorry to hear of the sudden death of my dearest friend Odette. I have always admired the goodness and the support Odette has been rendering to the children in the Gambia and particularly in Gunjur which I myself am part of..... I believe Allah has great places in paradise for clean hearted people and

those who help others and Odette was exceptional. The people of Gunjur will also not forget you in their prayers.’

Odette had supported Lamin financially to go to university and would have been thrilled to know that as a result of that education, he has recently secured a good job with a British NGO working in Gunjur. Odette made many friends in her trips to the Gambia and will be missed there.

As always, you can reach us at 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