

# St. James's Place: Purpose and Value of The Gambia Charity Trips

## Summary

To offer SJP employees, Partners and advisers a cultural engagement opportunity which delivers meaningful hands on project support to people in need in The Gambia, as well as exceptional personal development opportunities. Working with Charitable Foundation supported programmes and using an external professional provider in partnership with on-ground, long-standing, charities. An external commercial provider [Venture Force] is used, with years of professional experience to ensure excellent standards of safety and delivery.

## Purpose

To provide exceptional personal development and recognition opportunities through volunteering for Foundation supported charities which helps tie together the SJP community of Partners and employees.

## Aims

To deliver an overseas responsible alternative to the Overseas Partners Conferences which provide exceptional development and recognition for SJP employees and Partners. The trips should safe, make a difference and connect people to each other, to SJP and to the Foundation. It has five goals:

1. To offer SJP Partners and Employees a chance to work hands on with a Foundation supported activity to develop them mentally, support company buy-in and sustain high levels of motivation.
2. To set an aspirational recognition experience for SJP people to apply or be nominated for that reflects the cultural heritage and ambitions of the company.
3. A way for the company to recognise and thank those
  - a. who deliver year in year out to SJP but may not be highflyers or likely of promotion,
  - b. in whom we see potential and want to push forward and connect to the business
  - c. who have gone the extra mile e.g. for the Foundation or business, for example length of service.
4. To give staff the opportunity to see the Foundation they support in action and strengthen their connection to the Foundation by delivering a meaningful, sustainable and locally led development project which is requested by the village elders and results in sustainable impacts that change lives.
5. A way to experience international development in a safe and controlled environment delivered by leading professionals and charities, while still allowing Participants a fully genuine cultural learning experience.

We go to The Gambia as it is safe and stable, English is the main language, it is only 6 hours away with not time difference, it is a low cost destination and we are able to build on the 38 years of linking and trips of The Marlborough Brandt Group and their professional trip providers Venture Force. This means participants get a very 'real Africa' experience but in a safe and controlled way. The five Venture Force leaders we use, who have all been to over 50-150 trip destinations all said this trip is in their top three – it is a genuinely exceptional experience. This charity connection also provides best practice in terms of international development into black communities.

## Delivery to date

### Number of groups of: 7 over four trips

Scoping pilot of six in Nov 17, full pilot of 10 in Apr 18, two groups of 10 in Nov 18 and three groups of 10 in Nov 19.

### Number of different people: 61 (49 employees, 12 Partners/advisers)

Each trip has a returning mentor who has been before – this is a L&D opportunity for levels 4 and below.

Since the first trip in November 2017:

**98% retention rate of employees. 50% of employees have been promoted since their trip.**

## 2021 plans

The success of the seven groups, the excellent feedback from participants, relative low cost (£2400pp all in for the eight days) and high demand meant that the trips were agreed to be extended to four groups of 10 in 2020 and eight groups of 10 in 2021. The November 2020 trips have been cancelled due to Covid-19 in the UK (Gambia is relatively unaffected (young population, hot weather, outdoors culture and high poverty leading to greater exposure to past covid viruses) and the April 2021 trips are probably 50/50 at this time (November 2020).

## Gambia trips Impact findings from Dr Sarah Ruggins companywide research spring 2020.

% impact	Area of impact
100%	Developed at least one type of skill
87%	Experienced improvements in self-confidence
100%	Increased their sense of happiness & wellbeing
100%	Had a greater sense of pride in SJP
87%	Experienced increase in job satisfaction
87%	Had increased motivation at work
100%	More likely to talk about SJP positively
92%	Believe that their experiences helped them do their jobs better

Dr Ruggin's impact research also showed that The Gambia trips are by far the highest impact volunteering activity SJP offers (as we'd expect), however they also inspire people to other volunteering which we know further develops the skills, motivation, connection to SJP and improving their own lives. See research charts at end of document.

### Quotes from Partner and employee volunteers

*This was probably the most important week of my life.*

*This was a big challenge for me, and I have realised I can do anything I put my mind to!*

*For the first time in my life I felt like I was doing something worthwhile to make the world a better place, really adding value.*

*I really do feel like a new person since coming back and long may it last.*

*A life-changing experience*

*I feel totally privileged to have been chosen to support this trip and cannot thank you enough for the opportunity.*

*Can't stop telling people about such a positive experience in my life and would love to go back*

*Come with an open mind and prepare to be taken out of your comfort zone. The work is harder than you can imagine but so very rewarding to see what you all achieve.*

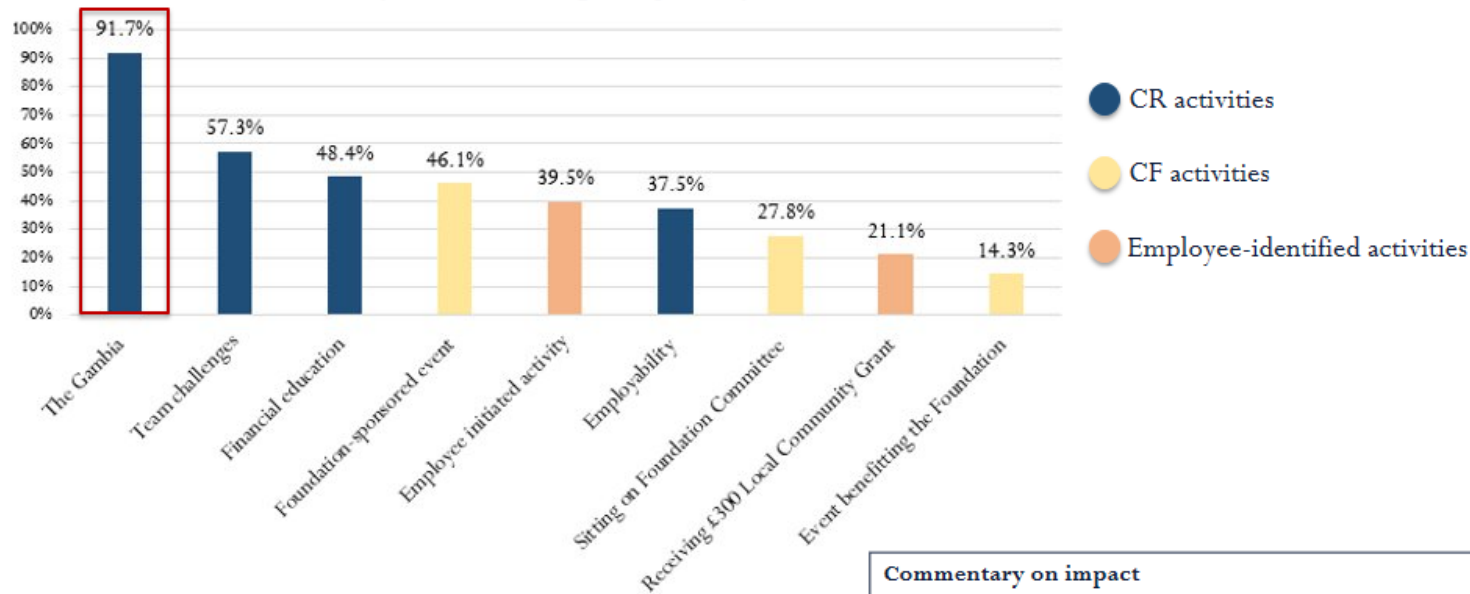
*Just want to thank everyone that has been involved in making this trip happen - you are changing lives and have certainly changed mine.*

*I simply cannot put it into words and nothing I say even scratches the surface. You just need to expect the unexpected, embrace the experience and culture, lose your inhibitions and try as many firsts as you can. To be immersed in such a different way of life and culture is truly life changing and given the opportunity I would go back in a heartbeat. I have made lifelong friends and memories that I will always hold on to.*

## Comparative impact of volunteering activities



“If you have participated in 2 or more volunteering activities at any point in time, which activity has made the largest impact on you?”



**Commentary on impact**  
 There are high degrees of impact achieved from The Gambia, Team Challenges, Financial Education, and Foundation-Sponsored Events. With the exception of Financial Education, all of these activities require a joint effort between both CR and CF teams (red, above).  
 Activities where the CR and the CF teams work together tend to generate the highest degrees of impact for employees. There is a good opportunity here to achieve greater impact by working more closely together to create new opportunities for employee participation.

## Of the 2019 Gambia volunteers...

87% volunteered for 2 or more days throughout the year  
 93% volunteered for at least 2 additional CR or Foundation activities.

### Why is this significant?

The more time employees spend volunteering, the greater the depth of impact they experience.

	1 day or less of volunteering	2 or more days of volunteering	
Made an improvement in my life	34.1%	49.2%	<b>+15.1%</b>
Transformed my life	1.1%	4.7%	<b>+3.6%</b>

Once an employee volunteers (no matter how frequently), they are more likely to continue volunteering AND recommend it to colleagues.

	1 day or less of volunteering	2 or more days of volunteering	
I recommended volunteering to a colleague	93%	96%	<b>+1%</b>
I am inclined to volunteer more myself	89%	89%	<b>0%</b>

The more time employees spend volunteering, the more likely they are to work harder and better.

	1 day or less of volunteering	2 or more days of volunteering	
Volunteering has helped me do my job better	58.4%	64.4%	<b>+6.0%</b>
Volunteering has increased my motivation at work	75.2%	78.7%	<b>+3.5%</b>