

Friends of Si-Kunda

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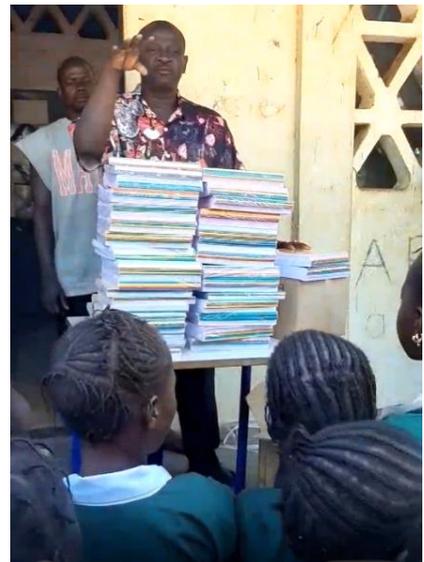
Jabisa Lower Basic School

Chairs Report

The rainy season in The Gambia has started so they are busy in the fields at the moment. Hopefully they will have a much better rice harvest this year, imported rice has become so very expensive to buy that Sankung says they are trying to grow more than usual this year.

It has been a busy few months, with two big projects to do along with the usual smaller assignments that come along and of course keeping up with the students and their needs.

Sankung keeps us informed about all developments and alerts us promptly when decisions or discussions are needed. Here are some exercise books being distributed to one of the schools. Sankung keeps close contact with the schools and villages we go to, so he is aware of how they are doing ... just one of his many tasks as project manager! He is highly respected and trusted in Gambia.



Giving back.... Two of our sponsored students who went on to further their studies in the USA Lamin and Paseedy, are now starting up a new project. The aim is to provide advice and mentoring for students in The Gambia who are in grades 9 -12 and university students, having got the permissions to do so with the support of the schools and educational establishments. This is all being done through the Parachute charity (www.parachutecharity.org) a non-profit organisation, which Lamin set up in 2017 to sponsor students in The Gambia. It has been hugely successful, and this new ambitious project aims to benefit so many, the business plan has had so much thought and work put into it, so it will I am sure be successful. There is huge enthusiasm for it in The Gambia as it will not just benefit the students but aims to help the schools they attend. Lamin has a lot of backing from contacts he has made both in the USA and Gambia, Paseedy has joined him in this exciting development and now plays a major role in the charity.



Through Parachute they aim to provide free computer classes for the entire school of Bakau Lower Basic and the community of Bakau at large, with a free mentorship program. Lamin and Paseedy were both born and raised in Bakau a town in the coastal area. Lamin alongside his “day job” in Madison, Wisconsin, joined the National Guard. After just one year he was promoted to Sergeant, apparently it has never been known for someone to be promoted so soon after joining, he really has great leadership qualities and so much energy! His motto seems to be “I don’t get tired!”. Lamin will complete his service early 2027. The picture on the left is of Paseedy, he will be graduating later this year, his current results showed his GPA as 3.93/400 with straight A’s placing him as one of the top students, he has one semester to complete.

This is what it is all about, providing the means to give an education to those that perhaps would have had none, and then for this knowledge to go on to help others in the future generations. This is more than we could ever have envisaged all those years ago.

We have received great results from current sponsored students, more of that later in the newsletter. We are so proud of them all! Our next visit is planned for the beginning of January, so our next newsletter will be the end of that month.

Meanwhile we hope you enjoy the rest of the summer, thank you all so much for all your support! **Sue**

Jabisa School Dining Room Project

This project was started earlier in the year to create a dining room for the children to have their lunch, and it has now been completed!!

Before this was built, children had to eat sitting on the ground outside, which was especially difficult in bad weather. To say they are happy with the new accommodation is an understatement!

This is all because of a donation given by Alan Taylor who bequeathed it to our charity, we are immensely grateful to him and his family. We first met Alan through being invited to the Rotary Club of Bletchley to talk about Si-Kunda and all that we do as a charity, we have been invited regularly and supported by them for many years. Alan has always shown interest and been a great support to us, and for this he will always be remembered by us and the people of Jabisa, the whole village feels gratitude, and they asked to put Alan's name on the building to honour him, as you can see from the front page.



We were originally going to convert a part of the school that was rather derelict for this purpose, but after much discussion by all those involved the decision was made to start afresh and build a new room added onto the back of the school kitchen. It has a tiled floor and has been decorated inside and out, they are so happy as it is all just as they wanted it . The children started to use it a couple of weeks ago, just in time as the rainy season has now started!! There are some funds remaining so we will put this towards the new Water project shown on the next page.



Si-Kunda School



The new school building is progressing, we are told it may be next year before the pupils can move into it from the existing building, so we all look forward to that day. This here is showing just a part of it.

Meanwhile on July 11th there was a graduation ceremony for children moving from the top nursery class to

Grade 1. We provided exercise books for prizes, and it turned out to be quite an event, with lots of speeches and celebration. On the right is a picture of Ceesay giving a speech, he was the first caretaker and gardener we employed many years ago for the school and quite a character, he is now one of the elders of the village and serves on the Village Development Committee.



Another Water Project!



There will be a bigger report on this in the next newsletter, but just to let you know initially we were asked if it were possible for us to dig a borehole with a pump and the provision of standpipes.

As on our previous water project reported last time, the people are desperate for accessible water and the pump they currently have is used by so many that there just isn't enough.

This is something so worthwhile and necessary that we agreed and as we have received a sizeable amount of money given as donations in memory of Marje, we thought this a fitting way to use it, Marje would definitely have approved!

Here are a couple of photographs of progress with more to come in the next newsletter...



Some more news of sponsored students....

Ousman Ceesay, otherwise known as Opi



Opi graduated from The Gambia College of Agriculture on 10th May 2025 gaining a credit in General Agriculture and was awarded the Higher Diploma in Agriculture. The course included various field trips and courses in Leadership, Public Speaking, Entrepreneurship and Peace and Conflict Resolution.

On completion he was presented with a Certificate of Honour and another for Appreciation by the principal for his outstanding contribution to The Gambia College Student's Union and for serving as the students' leader in the college, he was given a wonderful warm reception from staff and his fellow students.

Opi now wishes to go on to do his BsC and hopes to get on this year's intake, he has passed the preliminaries and now just has one more interview to hopefully secure his place.



Sulaman Jowla - is still enjoying Football in the second division but knew that he probably wasn't going to make a good living from this, so he has been to the Sterling Technical Training Centre on a year's course for Solar and Electrical installation to qualify as a technician. After a year in the classroom he was assigned to a large company based mainly in Gambia who specialise in solar energy solutions to do his 3 month practical. Sulayman was recently involved in installing 40 solar panels at the Gambian Embassy, he sent many videos via WhatsApp and it's obvious he has been enjoying the work! That placement has been completed, and he has now been taken on as a permanent employee. In his own words he says,

"I am just loving it!"



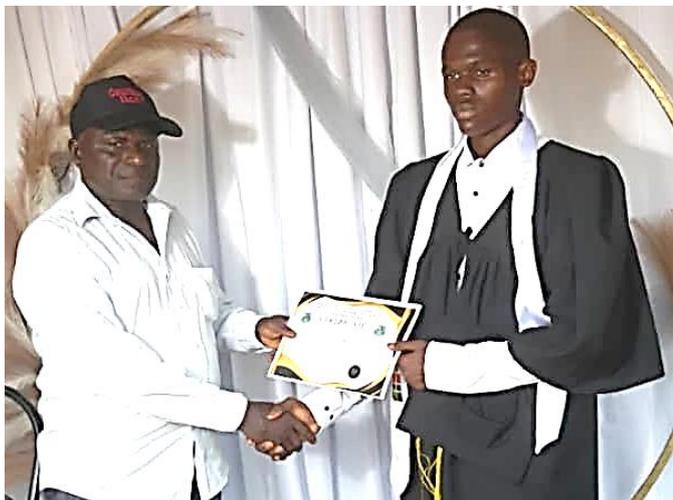
Omar - Graduated from Year 12, and has now been accepted at the Management Development Institute in the Department of Banking & Finance. The course will last for two years, leading to a Diploma in Banking & Finance. He will be starting 30th July, we wish him all the very best and know he will work very hard!

Suwado - Suwado is in Grade 10 and has worked so hard over the last year to improve her exam results, and it has paid off as she gained passes and quite a few credits. So hopefully she can keep the momentum going and achieve her dream to be a nurse one day!



Toniataba School

Sankung was invited to the Graduation ceremony at Toniataba School to present the certificates, and this is one he presented to the most accomplished student.



Fonkoi Kunda School

The water reservoir in the school garden has now been repaired to stop the leaks and a new tap has been fitted and the blackboards in all the classrooms have been repainted

Our Weekly Bonus Ball continues to bring up weekly winners and benefits the projects, schools and students we support

We still have a few numbers spare! For just £1 a week you will have the chance to win £25!

Please email for more information sjones@friendsofsikunda.org or telephone 07717 821604



As always, we need all the support we can get to be able to continue, thank you so much to all of you have supported us in the past, and everyone that continues to do so - your contributions make such a difference!

Gambian style rice – recipe from Oumie: pound together finely chopped onion, white pepper, red pepper, garlic, tomatoes, vinegar, mustard (like a Dijon type mustard), jumbo or maggi cube (can get in most supermarkets), ginger, salt and oil. Fry and mix into the rice. Comes recommended by all of us who have looked forward to it on every visit!

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