

Friends of Si-Kunda

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Newsletter no.46

July 2026



Pa Seedy

Graduated in May 2026

Masters in Public Health specialising in Environmental Health

Chairs Report

As I write this, it feels almost as hot as The Gambia! At least here we have reliable electricity and water on tap, unlike many parts of The Gambia. This is why our water projects are so important in rural areas, where people often rely on wells far from their homes.

It has been a busy few months since the last newsletter. We have been organising the construction of a toilet block for Soma Hospital (Soma Medical Centre), a dining room for Fonkoi Kunda School, a bantaba (meeting place) in Si-Kunda, and, of course, continuing to support our current students. Sankung, our project manager, has had plenty to do!

A few weeks ago, Sankung told us he had received a Youth Empowerment Award, including a framed certificate and trophy. The award recognised his work “empowering youth through sports and education, for students locally and beyond, fostering hope and progress”. Sankung is currently President of the Si-Kunda Youth Committee. He brings passion to everything he does, and this recognition is thoroughly deserved.

In May, Gwyn and I were lucky enough to travel to Springfield, Illinois, for Pa Seedy’s graduation ceremony — more on that later. We combined the trip with a holiday so we could spend time with Paseedy and Lamin Njie. Paseedy is a remarkable young man, following in the footsteps of Lamin, who graduated from the same university a few years ago. Although they are both very busy, we still enjoyed some quality time together and visited several places, including the Abraham Lincoln Museum in Springfield and St. Louis on a day trip.

After the graduation, we stayed in Madison, Wisconsin, where they both now live. We also visited Milwaukee to attend the graduation of Alhagie, a young Gambian we have known for many years. Before his ceremony, we were invited to the university’s Kente Ceremony, which celebrates graduates of African descent. It was a moving and lively occasion, with African drums played on stage as each student was introduced and their achievements announced. Each graduate invited someone of their choice on stage to explain how that person had supported them. Alhagie chose Paseedy, a lifelong friend, to join him. All three are inspirational and are doing so much to help people back in The Gambia.

Many thanks once again to all of you for your continued support. With regards, Sue

Jabisa School

On our last visit, the teachers at Jabisa School asked whether it might be possible to have a television. As they all live at the school because their homes are too far away for daily travel, there is little for them to do in their spare time. Now that electricity has recently reached the village, we have been able to buy one for them.



By good fortune, it was installed the day before Independence Day, so the children benefited too. For the first time, they were able to watch the Independence Day celebrations televised from Banjul, the capital of The Gambia.

We have also repaired the caretaker’s motorbike and completed the pipework needed to provide two additional taps in the school gardens.



These improvements make a real difference and are greatly appreciated.

Updates of some of our Students...



Fatou graduated in May with a Higher National Teachers Diploma. This qualification will allow her to apply for head teacher posts, which is her long-term ambition. Fatou lives with her husband and three children and currently teaches at Busura Basic Cycle School, which serves pupils in Grades 1–9. She is also involved in various community and education projects, often working with NGOs.

Fatou has always been extremely hardworking and determined to succeed from a young age — and she has certainly achieved that.

Sulayman - in the last newsletter I wrote that Sulayman had been invited on a 6-month contract to a 1st division under-21's team with a 'right to buy'. He has just returned to Gambia for a holiday - more later...



Aminatah We just have to mention Aime's latest school report for the second term. She is such a bright little girl — full of fun, but also very serious about her schoolwork. At just nine years old, she achieved Grade A marks of 100% in all nine subjects. Her teacher and head teacher wrote, “An outstanding result, well done” and “Excellent term performance”.

Mariama Jarjussey – Aminatah's mother, is studying for a Bachelor's degree in English Language through a four-year Open University course. We are sponsoring her studies and provided her with a laptop when she began. She has just completed her first year with very good results.

Afanseedy – Although we no longer sponsor Afanseedy as his brother now pays his university fees, we provided him with a laptop earlier this year because he had been having to share one with another student.

Opi is continuing his studies for a degree in Agricultural Economics. On 17 May, he was sworn in as Deputy Agriculture and Environmental Minister in the University of The Gambia Students' Union 24th Executive Council. Opi is currently on a field trip to Guinea-Bissau as part of his coursework: an International Research Tour themed “Connecting Agriculture and Environmental Sustainability between Banjul and Bissau”. He is thoroughly enjoying the course and is due to graduate in 2029.

How proud we are of all our students!!

Soma Hospital

On our last visit, we saw for ourselves how urgently the hospital needed more toilets. Since then, we have repaired the two existing toilets, fitted new doors and frames, and built a new toilet block with four additional toilets for the Accident and Emergency unit, triage, and clinic areas.



The official handover took place in May, attended by senior hospital staff and several district dignitaries. Speeches were given expressing great appreciation for the new facilities.

Over the past few months, we have also provided cleaning materials and other urgently needed items, including bedpans, surgical gloves, dressings, hand sanitiser, and biros.

There is always so much more to do, and we are now considering what support we can provide next.



The beautiful little African bird pictured here is a Red Cheeked Cordon-blue, a finch about 5" long. It is common in The Gambia, we see a lot of them in the villages and compounds, a bird native to sub-Saharan Africa

Fonkoi Kunda School



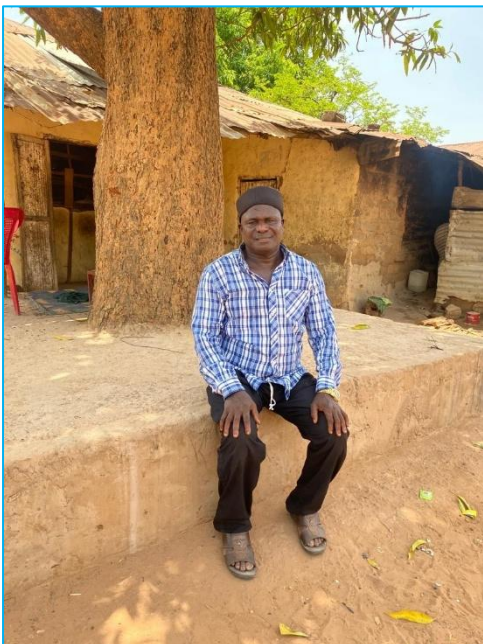
The building work is not quite finished, but completion is expected very soon. This is the new dining room currently under construction for Fonkoi Kunda School.



We had originally planned to build a pavilion, but together we decided on a design more like the one at Jabisa, only larger to suit this school's bigger student population.

It still needs plastering and painting, and a tiled floor will be laid inside. We hope to finish everything before the rainy season begins, which, as I write, may be next week, with thunderstorms forecast.

The school gardens have also been given another tap and hose for the second water reservoir, allowing them to extend their vegetable beds.



Si-Kunda - Bantabah

The original meeting place, known as a “bantabah” in Mandinka, was made from wood and pieces of old corrugated metal. It had fallen apart some time ago, so we have now replaced it with a new seating area.

It stands outside the small shop where people gather, brew Ataya tea, and take time to sit and chat — an important part of village life.

If you would like to see the history of our projects and work in The Gambia since 2003, please go to our website www.friendsofsikunda.org and checkout the Projects section showing 2003 – 2022

Newsletters are on the home page from 2023 until 2026 giving the latest news

Ring/email would like any copies of newsletters from 2003

Pa Seedy Jammeh

It was an honour to attend Pa Seedy's graduation in May. He graduated with a Master's in Public Health, specialising in Environmental Health, and was named the overall top graduating student.



Before graduation, we attended two university events. At one, PaSeedy was chosen as Graduate Speaker for the International Congratulatory Ceremony, representing international students. He spoke brilliantly and was truly inspiring. Everyone we spoke to held him in very high regard, and it was a lovely occasion on the day before graduation. He was also awarded the honour of Programme Marshal for Graduation Day for the Class of 2026, a distinction given only to the very top students in recognition of academic excellence and leadership.

In March, PaSeedy began full-time work as a Health Inspector for the Division of Food and Recreational Safety at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. He loves his job, enjoys the travelling, and brings his usual passion to everything he does. He is also receiving excellent feedback from his employers, though we expected nothing less!

In early June, PaSeedy was invited to become Vice President of the National Society of Leadership and Success (NSLS) at the University of Illinois Springfield and has since been inducted into the role. This is a great honour: the NSLS has 800 chapters across the USA, and only the top 5% of students are eligible to join, following nomination. To be made Vice President is truly the icing on the cake!



This photograph appeared in Newsletter no. 2, January 2005, with the following caption: "PaSeedy is 5 years old and started school in Bakau in September. He had wanted to go to school with his older brother and sister for a long time and is now enjoying it very much. Just after we arrived, he insisted on putting on his school uniform to show us. He is a very bright little boy and is learning very quickly."

It is no small achievement to move to a completely different culture and environment, far from everything familiar, and accomplish so much through sheer hard work and dedication to his studies. PaSeedy is now living in Madison, closer to his workplace, and is lodging with Lamin. Like Lamin, he is always busy and eager to do as much as he can for people back home in The Gambia.

He currently has a three-year work permit to remain in the USA, so watch this space!

Sulayman Jowla

As a reminder, Sulayman did very well at school and graduated from Grade 12. His dream has always been to play professional football, and he represented The Gambia at under-17 level. He went on to sign contracts with third- and then second-division teams. At the same time, he was determined to learn a trade, so he trained at Sterling Technical Training Centre in solar and electrical installation and qualified as a technician. His excellent final exam results led to permanent employment with the college's placement company, Almus Solar Engineering — a job he really enjoyed. Then, earlier this year, he was offered a six-month contract with an under-21 first-division team in Saudi Arabia, and it

has gone very well. Sulayman is currently home in The Gambia on holiday and has now signed a two-year contract with the Saudi team.



Sulayman says he has enjoyed every day of training and playing matches in Saudi Arabia. He admits that adjusting to a professional environment has not been easy, especially as it is his first experience of living that way, with a new language, a very hot climate, and a different training routine from what he was used to. However, he is learning a great deal, adapting day by day, and looking forward to the future.

To add to this, Sulayman has just been invited to join The Gambia under-23 national squad as they prepare for the Olympic Games qualifiers.

It is wonderful to see the photo below of him wearing his national shirt.



Sulayman has been invited to a week-long training camp, which means he is halfway towards selection for the Olympic qualifiers; the final decision will be made by the coaches during that week. Playing for both his club and The Gambia under-23s also gives him the chance to progress to the first team.

So, there is a great deal happening for Sulayman at the moment!

Whatever the future brings, he is clearly enjoying the opportunities and experiences coming his way.

Lamin Njie

Lamin has featured in this newsletter many times, but I am sure you will be pleased to hear more about what he has achieved since graduating with his Master's in Accountancy in 2022. He continues to work as a financial auditor for the Wisconsin State Bureau of Investigation, while also serving as Sergeant Lamin Njie in the National Guard. Lamin has recently received the commendation shown here for outstanding leadership and has another nine months left to serve. He is also CEO of Parachute Charity, which he founded in 2017, and is developing a major education and mentoring project in The Gambia. As he says, he does not get tired! The project is well on its way to completion and will benefit many students in The Gambia.

Meanwhile, Lamin has married Aisha, a lovely lady from The Gambia. We wish them many years of happiness together!



What is next?

Si-Kunda School

Once the dining room at Fonkoi Kunda is complete, we will build walls to connect the new school buildings at Si-Kunda School. This will help protect the school from animals entering and damaging the vegetable plots, while also keeping children safe within the school grounds during school hours.

More storage boxes have been supplied for the classrooms

Soma Hospital

Potential project

Construct a pavilion and waiting area for triage and clinic services.

This is urgently needed due to the current lack of space.

We will investigate this further while continuing to progress the Si-Kunda School project.



Our Weekly Bonus Ball continues to bring up weekly winners at the same time helps to raise valuable funds for our projects

We have a few spare numbers!

For more information please contact daisyj@friendsofsikunda.org or call Sue on 07717 821 604

This is just £1 a week and gives you the chance to win £25 every week!!

For all our printing requirements many thanks go to Quality Ventilation Systems Ltd and to Dave for our Website Admin!

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