

### USEFUL INFORMATION:

Friends of the Gambia Association  
A Registered UK Charity No. 1051745  
(Charity No. 1171620 from 23.6.18)  
NGO in The Gambia No. A92

### HOW TO CONTACT US:

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[info@fotga.org.uk](mailto:info@fotga.org.uk)

[membership@fotga.org.uk](mailto:membership@fotga.org.uk)

[sponsorship@fotga.org.uk](mailto:sponsorship@fotga.org.uk)

Telephone 08454 968078

### CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:

[www.fotga.org.uk](http://www.fotga.org.uk)

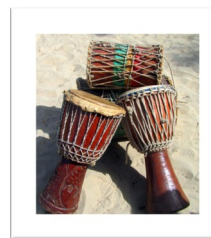
### GO TO OUR FACEBOOK PAGE



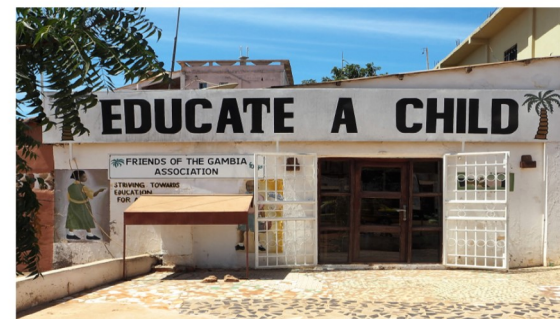
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# FOTGA

# DRUMBEAT



The Newsletter of The Friends of the Gambia Association

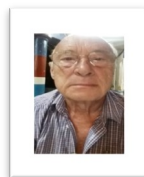


Fotga's Gambia Office

### African Proverb

If you want to go fast, go alone,  
If you want to go far, go together.

## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



Dear Members and Sponsors,

We were in The Gambia for the 2017 Presidential elections and there was much celebration with cars driving up and down with excited Gambians hanging out of the windows and horns blaring.

Our members continue to support many students and the Charity has also been able to cover the education of a number of students without sponsors following a generous donation.

There have been some changes in our Gambian staff. Fatoumatta left in June after her baby was born and Hoyan left in February. We welcomed a new Office Manager/ Gambia representative - Momodou Camara who comes to us from a bank. Sulayman is now Bookkeeper & Administrator and Jariatou is the office assistant.

Our 2018 AGM is scheduled for June 23<sup>rd</sup> again in Banbury. At this AGM we will be closing the existing Charity and transferring everything to the new Charitable Incorporated Organisation which will be Charity Registration number 1171620. The Charity Commission recommends this move.

My term of office ends at the AGM and I look forward to welcoming a new Chairman.

I would like to thank all our Committee members, sponsors, members and donors for their continued support. FoTGA cannot function without you all and it would be wonderful if we could support more students.

Please also consider sharing some of the committee jobs.

Jeff Phillips

### Committee Members and Posts 2017/2018

Jeff Phillips	Chairman
Richard Hughes	Vice Chairman and Acting Treasurer
Violet Phillips	Sponsorship/Membership
Jim Phillips	Sponsorship/Membership
Jackie Morley	Secretary
Maggie Johnson	Fundraising
Alhaji Camara	Twinning
Lynda and Mike Redfern	Drumbeat
Emily Cardinal	Website and Facebook



Should you be thinking of visiting The Gambia for the first time then you may find the following advice helpful.

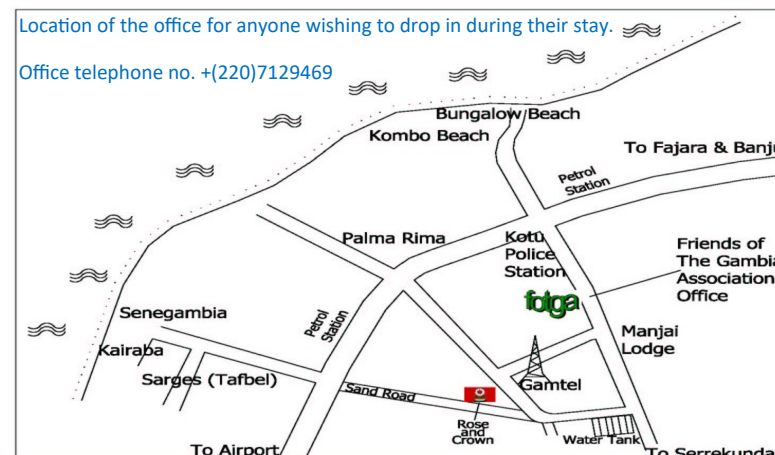
For sightseeing trips use the official tourist guides as they are knowledgeable and honest. Negotiate a price before you commit to a trip.

Contact our Gambia office if you are a sponsor and wish to visit a child if it is possible, and to visit Govi school for the blind.

We would suggest taking cash only and if you wish to donate to a school find out what they would like and ask a Gambian to buy it for you (when you are nowhere to be seen!).



There is no proper postal service in The Gambia but everyone has a mobile phone and we suggest you buy a pay-as-you-go sim card when you arrive. You will need to show your passport. Calls are cheap, even calls to the UK.



## THE GAMBIA OFFICE in KOTU

You are welcome to visit our office in The Gambia. (See photo on the front page) If you ask a taxi driver to take you to Manjai Lodge you will see the office on the opposite side of the road. You may wish to telephone before, calling on +(220)7129469.

Photographs and profiles of our staff are shown here and they would be pleased to welcome you.



Momodou Camara—Office Manager

I attended High School then gained a Diploma in Tourism and Travel followed by an Advance Diploma in Marketing. I have just sat my final exams in Banking and Finance to qualify me in becoming a Chartered Banker. My job experiences have been in agriculture and business development and for the last 9 years in banking as a Relationship Manager. It has always been my dream to work with charities as I believe there are many who are in need of assistance and working with a charity like Fotga can assist you in contributing your own quota based on the principles and concepts of the organisation.



Sulayman Manneh Responsible for Sponsorships

I am 26 years old and from the age of 7 was sponsored by Fotga, graduating 2009. I then studied Management and am currently doing graduate level with a dream to proceed for my Masters in the near future. I began working for FoTGA in 2013 and now I am the financial controller, co-ordinating projects and the welfare of students. My motive is to strive to bring changes in the lives of needy people through education, and support with sustainable projects for communities. **This is me; I simply love what I do.**



Jariatou Jarreh—General Assistant

I am 22 years old and have been supported by FoTGA since 2015, having completed my Grade 12 Examinations in 2014. I am now studying for my Advance Diploma at Quantum Net Institution of Technologies. Part of my job is to ensure our student's reports are satisfactory or if not to understand why they are not doing well in school. I then report back to FotGA's Sponsorship Secretary. I sometimes visit schools or homes to try to understand the student's circumstances. **I love my role.**

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Children at Brikama Nursery School

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

You are warmly invited to attend the AGM at  
 Banbury Town Hall, Town Hall Buildings, 1 Bridge Street, Banbury OX16 5QB  
 On Saturday 23rd June 2018  
 To start at 11:00am

#####

Cash prizes to be won in this year's **Raffle** to be drawn on 23rd June 2018

Tickets are £1. each

Please return cash and counterfoils by 2nd June 2018 to  
 8 Essex Close, Morden, Surrey, SM4 4NP or hand in at the AGM



### Transcript of a letter from Mariama to her Sponsor on 21.3.18

**A letter full of enthusiasm for her favourite subject, but not for the dreaded maths!**

Dear (Sponsor),

How are you and the rest of your family. Hope they are all fine. It is a great pleasure indeed for me to be writing this letter to tell you some great things about my school and some difficulties am facing with.

The great things about my school is that our teachers are very generous and they don't have problem at all, the only thing that they hate is when is misbehaving in class or inside the school campus but apart from that they don't have problem with any student especially my agricultural teacher. He is my favourite teacher in our school. He is a very kind and hardworking teacher. He always tells me any practical work in agriculture you don't understand come to me and I will explain it clearly to you. He even organise an agricultural club and the great thing is that I was chosen as a leader of that club so every Saturday we go for meeting in our school and as for now I am coordinating with all the teachers.

And also I have amazing friends in school. These are some great things about my school. The difficulties I face in school is all about maths calculations. I always try to come out with good marks in maths but I couldn't every time. I try I come out with F9 on it so this time I wanted to join a maths class to see whether I will make a good performance on it.

Thank you once more for everything and also my greeting to your husband and your daughter and your little dog Nicol. Thank you for always being there for me.

Bye,

Your Sponsor Child Mariama

### LEGACY OF FoTGA'S SPONSORSHIP SCHEME



Edrisa Jawo, pictured here, was one of FoTGA's sponsored students many years ago. He is now a successful Lecturer at the University of The Gambia and has built and opened a nursery school in his village. He is seen receiving goods donated by Lynne Hadley (see pg 11) and knitted toys given by a knitting group in Corfe Mullen, Dorset.

### FUNDRAISING

**A simple way for you and your family to help us!**

FoTGA has signed as a Charity with Amazon via: [www.smile.amazon.co.uk](http://www.smile.amazon.co.uk)

FoTGA will receive .5% of the net purchases made by **anyone who signs up**

Next time you go to Amazon to buy something, simply go to

[www.smile.amazon.co.uk](http://www.smile.amazon.co.uk)

Type in Friends of the Gambia Association and bingo you are done.

After that every time you shop by going to Amazon.uk a pop up (see right) will appear to remind you to go through

[www.smile.amazon.co.uk](http://www.smile.amazon.co.uk) The screen and everything else is the same! Easy!

You're at [www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk).  
Go to [smile.amazon.co.uk](http://smile.amazon.co.uk) instead if you want to support  
The Friends Of The Gambia Association.

We'll show you this reminder periodically.  
☐ Don't show me this again

[Go to this page at smile.amazon.co.uk](http://www.smile.amazon.co.uk)

[Stay at www.amazon.co.uk](http://www.amazon.co.uk)

### To become a member:

Go to the FoTGA website <http://www.fotga.org.uk> Click on Support Us. Scroll down to Members Page and 'Become a Member' where you will find a Membership Form for completion.

For donations cheques should be made payable to FoTGA and sent to 1 Royston Drive, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 1HL.

To donate via internet banking use sort code 20-35-84, account number 80892866 but also send us your information so that we can contact you to: [info@fotga.org.uk](mailto:info@fotga.org.uk)

If the donation is for cataracts please ensure that the word CATARACT is included in the message.

By completing the GIFT AID declaration you are ensuring that 25% is added to each donation.

**THANK YOU**

**If you are new to FoTGA the following information will be useful:**

We are a UK Registered Charity (since 1995) spending most time and money to advance education in The Gambia. After that we try, through projects, to alleviate pain and suffering, and finally we try, through direct help, to relieve poverty.

Our committee work voluntarily in the UK but we have an office in The Gambia where the staff run the day to day activities, helped by committee members when they visit The Gambia for a holiday.

We operate independently as a Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) in The Gambia.

There are various ways to help and of course you only need to contact us by phone or email to find out more information, or visit our new website:

[www.fotga.org.uk](http://www.fotga.org.uk)

- Become a member for £20. a year or £25. for a joint membership
- Sponsor a child or teacher—[sponsorship@fotga.org.uk](mailto:sponsorship@fotga.org.uk)
- Donate to buy a gift for a child such as a bicycle for the long commute to schools when living in rural areas.
- Humanitarian donation for the purchase of bags of rice for a family to give them a staple diet for a few weeks, or for malaria nets which can be a lifeline in the rainy season.
- Legacy Giving. A Pecuniary Gift is a set sum of money to a charity. It must include the name of the charity and its registered number (currently 1051745 but changing to 1171620 on the 23rd June 2018)
- Donations for cataract operations (see page10) [cataracts@fotga.org.uk](mailto:cataracts@fotga.org.uk)

Fotga can of course claim Gift Aid of 25% on any donation if you are a tax payer. This has been a very useful source of income over the years.

See also page 17 for Ways to Give.

[If you are new to the work of Friends of the Gambia Association then thank you for taking the time to read our articles.](#)



**Emily Cardinal**

**Role—Website and Facebook**

**Photographed with Adam and their beautiful daughter Aubrey**

I recently became a trustee of FoTGA although the charity and its work is not new to me as I became a member in 2002 whilst I was at University. I was looking for a charity which offered child sponsorship and I was really drawn to FoTGA's more personal, individual approach. I liked that I knew where my money was going, and to see what a difference my small monthly donation could actually make to a child.

As a new trustee I did wonder what on earth I could bring to the charity, but after attending my first AGM and committee meeting it became clear that I could definitely make use of coming from a generation who comfortably uses social media and technology on a daily basis. So, roping in my husband Adam, I volunteered to design and build a new website, and also to take over the Facebook page and hopefully give FoTGA a good social media presence.

Outside of FoTGA I'm a full time Mum to our beautiful 3 year girl, and she certainly keeps me busy and entertained!

**IF YOU HAVEN'T SEEN IT ALREADY, AND WANT TO SEE WHAT WE'VE BEEN DOING, PLEASE HEAD TO: [www.fotga.org.uk](http://www.fotga.org.uk)**

## DRUMBEAT



When you have finished with your copy of Drumbeat, why not pass it on to friends or family who may be looking to sponsor a child?



If you change your address it would be really helpful if you notify us in writing or by phone on 01202 885671 or email [sponsorship@fotga.org.uk](mailto:sponsorship@fotga.org.uk)

Below is a sample of the Sponsorship Contract between FoTGA and the sponsored child's parent/guardian, which sets out what is required by FoTGA in order to ensure that the sponsor's donations are being properly used.

When sponsorship for a new child is found, then the staff in the Gambian office will settle the parent or guardian down and explain exactly what they are signing up to.

### **SPONSORSHIP CONTRACT**

Between

Friends of the Gambia Association's representative.....

and

Guardian's Name..... Tel no.....

Date of Contract..... Child Named.....

FST00..... D. o. b.....

Relationship of Guardian to Child.....

#### **Parents/Guardian promise to:**

Send the student to school each day, suitably dressed and with the required school material and something to eat.

Ensure that the child gets to school regularly and on time.

Inform FoTGA if the student has to be absent for more than one week in any term: this will be noted on the student file.

Bring school reports to the FoTGA office, discuss the contents with the office team and take any actions advised by the school. AT LEAST ONE report a year is required. If the school does not issue a report every term a letter will do.

Inform FoTGA of changes of school and/or grade in the term that it happens. The Charity has the right to withhold funding for extra years tuition that have not been agreed.

Ensure that the students themselves write at least ONE letter a year to the sponsor. If the child is too young to write, a drawing with the child's name on is acceptable. This letter must be addressed to the named sponsor and dated. As the child grows up the letters should contain information that helps the sponsor understand the child's life in The Gambia. For example, facts about the weather, new family members or details of festivals or religious occasions.

Pick up the student grants regularly; grants are issued every academic term. Cheques will be ready ten days after presentation of the report or thank you letter.

Grants not picked up at the end of the academic year will be forfeited.

Guardian signature..... For FoTGA.....

### **CIO Formation**

FoTGA has being reconstituted as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation(CIO). In effect a new charity has been formed with a different name and constitution. The name of the charity has changed from The Friends of The Gambia Association (FoTGA) to The Friends of The Gambia CIO. It is believed that FoTGA can still be used as an abbreviation for the name. The constitution has been rewritten in accordance with the template supplied by the Charity Commission. In doing so a number of changes have been incorporated mainly concerning the trustees and officers of the charity; for example: the number of trustees and their length of tenure. The basic aims of the charity are unchanged.

Currently FoTGA is run as a simple association. There is an executive committee, all of whose members are registered as trustee. In this type of arrangement, the charity has no separate identity; it is not a corporate body. All of the trustees are jointly and severally liable for any debts incurred by the charity. If the trustees can prove that they have acted in all respects in an appropriate way, it would be proper for the assets of the charity to be used to pay any debts incurred. If the charity's assets are not sufficient to cover the compensation, then the plaintive can pursue the trustees. There is no limit to the liability of the trustees in such a situation.

A CIO is a fairly new arrangement devised for small charities. It is similar to a limited company and does provide some protection to the trustees from liability. If a CIO becomes liable to pay the costs of someone who has suffered a loss and the trustees can prove that they have acted in all respects in an appropriate way, it is proper for the assets of the charity to be used to pay the compensation required. If the charity's assets are not sufficient to cover the compensation, then the plaintive cannot pursue the trustees. But if the trustees have acted in an inappropriate way, then they are liable. They do not have to have been dishonest. They could, for instance, have undertaken to carry out work for a third party for which our staff in The Gambia were not properly trained. The advantages of reconstituting FoTGA as a CIO are thus:

Some protection for the Trustees from liabilities incurred by the charity. FoTGA becomes a separate legal entity and can enter into contracts. This benefits both parties to a contract, making it clear that the contract is with the charity and not the individual that signs the contract.

Above all, reconstituting the charity has provided an opportunity to form an organisation with a better defined structure which conforms with the Charity Commission's recommendations for best practice.

Jim Phillips

## Violet's Blog

I have recently returned from my second visit to The Gambia this year.

The committee had decided last year after Fatoumatta our office manager left our employ, to recruit an experienced and professional office manager to drive the Charity from The Gambia. An ad was placed in one of the Premier papers in The Gambia in early August. Nearly 80 individuals applied for the position. Screening these and collecting the necessary paperwork for the shortlisted candidates took most of the rest of the year.

I went with Jeff and Kate Phillips and my husband Jim in early January to interview the five candidates who included our acting manager Sulayman Manneh. To complete our interview panel we were fortunate to engage the services and expertise of Madi Jobarteh a Gambian National and the manager of the TANGO office in Fajara. The process included a telephone interview of eight individuals over the telephone, conducted by Alhagi Camara, one of our committee. This was followed by a request to each of the candidates to write an essay about Charities in The Gambia and how FoTGA might do better. These strategies ensured that our new manager would have the excellent written and spoken skills the position required. The interviews lasted over the day.

Our decision was unanimous. We are thrilled to offer the job to Modou Camara. He has wide experience working within farming communities involved in maximising the money paid to them for their produce. He then went on to work in the Banking industry as a successful account manager. He knew all about FoTGAs work in The Gambia and offered us the very best type of office manager. He has excellent written and spoken skills, he knows about the education system, he understands the financial restraints of Charities and has the diplomacy required to deal with disappointed parents, hard nosed head teachers and our visiting committee members.

During this first stay we met up with a senior ophthalmic nurse from Kent called Lynn Hadley who takes a real interest in our cataract camp initiative. She and her husband had just completed the London to Dakar rally with eight friends. Lynn and her husband are wonderful people. Not only did they donate their little work horse, gem of a car to the Eye hospital in Kanifiing, but they also donated the loads of miscellaneous items left over from their adventures to FoTGA. This did give us a headache! It was bought to our hotel on the Monday afternoon when we were leaving on Tuesday lunchtime..... ugh! Fortunately, we have many supporters in The Gambia and after some rather nimble footwork we were able to entrust the goods to be sold for the best price to two of these supporters.

I returned to The Gambia at the same time as Jeff and Kate to ensure that Modou was given the induction to FoTGA that he deserved. I have to say he has hit the ground running. He is firm but fair. He has so many amazing ideas and dreams for the future of FoTGA. His calm presence will ensure that our staff and our sponsored youngsters are developed and mentored to ensure their future success.

When I visited the second time, alone, I was very disappointed not to stay where Jim and I are well known. I needed to be near the office and chose to stay at Badala Park - cheap and cheerful! Having Jeff and Kate and many, many friends in Kotu was very comforting but I did feel quite awkward as an apparently single woman of a certain age alone and apparently 'on holiday'. I am sure you will be pleased to note that I came home alone, but I seriously did not understand how gorgeous I am..... apparently.

During this time I visited the people I left our miscellaneous items with, and was thrilled to be given 3000D for FoTGA funds. There are still six metal Jerry cans that have yet to be sold. Apparently the price at market was derisory. They are being stored safely, and will be sold as and when. I am confident the proceeds will be given to our office funds and I will watch carefully to ensure that this happens.

One of the highlights of my second visit was distributing trainers and running shirts donated by The Bad Boy runners, to youngsters I was introduced to by one of FoTGAs sponsored teachers Yahya Darboe. See picture on page 12.

I love The Gambia and look forward to my next visit.

## THE ROLE OF THE SPONSORSHIP SECRETARIES AND THE RE-ORGANISATION OF THE GAMBIA OFFICE

You may think that the job of collecting money in the UK and handing it out to deserving Gambian students for their education is straightforward—if only it were so!

At the heart of our scheme is the fostering of a one-to-one relationship between the sponsor and the sponsored child and their family. It is a complicated and time consuming job and the Sponsorship Contract form on the opposite page may help you to understand the commitments on both sides.

We support approximately 182 students, of which 43 have no sponsors, and also some teachers. We therefore receive 182 school reports each term which are scrutinised and passed on to the sponsors with a comment. If a child's academic performance is good this is highlighted, but if it has fallen away then the cause is investigated, possible remedial action is proposed and put into action. This might include the involvement of the sponsor.

### FOR OUR SCHEME TO WORK EFFICIENTLY WE NEED WELL TRAINED STAFF IN OUR GAMBIAN OFFICE AND KNOWLEDGEABLE VOLUNTEER WORKERS IN THE UK.

In the past we have struggled to recruit staff in The Gambia with the right qualifications and skills, resulting in more work for the UK volunteers and the decision was made to recruit a new Office Manager with the skills required. However carrying out the normal recruitment procedure at a distance of 3,000 miles was no easy task! It took more time and money but following an advertisement in the local press in July 2017, CV's were received and the shortlisted candidates were asked to submit a paper on the problems facing charities in The Gambia. Five candidates were interviewed in January, and Modou Camara was offered the job. Modou has been in place since February and, although it is early days, he seems to be settling in well, with Sulayman and Jariatou making up the Gambian team. (see pg 18). This is a photograph of Vi and Modou a few days after he took over.



Jim Phillips  
Sponsorship Secretary  
March 2018



## Sponsorship Finances

At the beginning of 2017 it was realised that FoTGA was spending more money than its income and our reserves were shrinking at an unsustainable rate. This situation had not occurred before and was the result of a number of factors.

At first glance it wasn't obvious that there was a financial problem because FoTGA's reserves were over £47,000. No single event had occurred in 2016 which would have rung alarm bells but when income and expenditure of the sponsorship scheme were compared, the problem became apparent. Unlike money for building projects and cataract camps which is raised before FoTGA is committed to expenditure, sponsorship is reliant on future income.

In 2013 sponsorship was creating a large surplus but student grants had not risen to take account of the increased cost of sending a child to school. Also the ratio of students in senior secondary schools to those in the basic schools was low. The surplus generated from sponsorship of children in the basic schools was more than enough to subsidise those in the senior secondary schools. Then in 2014 we were fortunate to receive a large donation from John Jones, a previous Chairman of FoTGA.

By the end of 2016 all this had changed because student grants had been increased significantly, especially for those children in senior secondary schools. All sponsored children were older and more expensive to support, therefore the surplus generated from children in basic schools was reduced. In addition, a number of very promising, unsponsored children had been taken into the scheme, enabling them to finish their education, and in the main were older children who are more expensive to support.

The cost of operating the office in Kotu had previously been paid for by the recovery of Gift Aid, but with increasing running costs this was no longer the case. A large part of the money left by John Jones had been spent, and sponsorship expenditure was exceeding income by £12,000.

This deficit has been reduced significantly. At the end of 2016 a high proportion of senior secondary school students had finished their education, and no new students have been taken into the scheme without first finding a sponsor. Also, several unsponsored students have been taken on by existing sponsors when their student has finished his or her education and new sponsors are often happy to take on one of our unsponsored children. The proportion of unsponsored children has now reduced from 33.3% (75 in December 2016) to 24.7% (45 in March 2018). Improved financial management in The Gambia has resulted in a reduction in the cost of running the office.

It is, however, too early to give a sigh of relief. Although the draft accounts for 2017 still indicate a deficit of £6,127, it is currently predicted that this will be reduced to zero in 2018. The committee has resolved to raise money from a variety of sources, the target being £10,000 in 2018 which will enable us to increase our reserves and to recruit unsponsored students from up country.

Continued.....

## SCHOOL TWINNING PROGRAMME



FoTGA's twinning initiative aims to create school-based projects to develop and extend learning opportunities by building partnerships between UK schools and the communities in which they operate, with ones in The Gambia. This would benefit a generation of young people by:

Communicating at a global level to create a better understanding between cultures, religion, art and technology.

To begin the process the UK school contacts FoTGA's twinning co-ordinator, Alhaji Camara, to request twinning with a school in The Gambia. Alhaji will then send a short list of schools that match the request and tests the viability of the process in conjunction with each of the schools and the FoTGA's Gambian staff. A formal declaration is signed by both schools and the twinning proceeds with Alhaji supporting both sides.

If you, or you know of anyone who may be interested in this worthwhile exercise please contact Alhaji by email [alcamara@live.co.uk](mailto:alcamara@live.co.uk) or telephone him on

## SPONSORSHIP AND SCHOOL GRADES

The Sponsorship Scheme is intended to support students in state schools up to Grade 12 by providing money to the student's family for school fees, uniforms, a satchel and stationery, and lunches. Some sponsors continue to support their students if they go on to further education.

Grades	Approx. Age	School
1—3	4—6	Nursery
1—6	7—12	Lower Basic (Primary)
7—9	13—15	Upper Basic (Middle School)
10—12	16—18	Senior Secondary (High School)

There is a wealth of information on education and all aspects of Gambian life on the following website [www.accessgambia.com](http://www.accessgambia.com)



## CHICKEN YASSA—A Marinaded Dish from The Gambia

### Ingredients to Serve 2:

#### For the marinade:

1 tablespoon mustard, 4 tablespoons lemon juice, 1-2 garlic cloves, salt and pepper, 1 chilli pepper chopped, OR 1 teaspoon chilli flakes (optional)

2 onions sliced and 2 chicken pieces (breasts or thighs) ADD TO MARINADE and leave for 2 hours or overnight if you've time.

Heat 1 tablespoon oil (any will do but groundnut oil is most authentic) and brown the chicken. Remove the chicken and in the same pan, gently sauté the onions for about 5 minutes until soft and just going brown.

Add the chicken back into the pan, cover and cook gently for 45 minutes. It's ready when the onions are caramelised but not yet mushy.

Serve hot with rice. ENJOY!



## DONATIONS OF SPORTS SHIRTS AND TRAINERS

These are the happy faces of the recipients of kind hearted and generous runner's donations following an appeal by Vi Phillip's daughter Allie who is an ultra runner. The response was overwhelming and delighted the coach, Yahya Darboe, at Brufut Football Academy. The shirts worn at the 2017 London Marathon were particularly prized!



Mr Darboe would welcome second hand boots especially for children, and kit for the young children.

Who knows—we may be looking at future international players and runners representing The Gambia!

We feel it will be far better to have many people doing the leg work to raise smallish sums throughout the year, rather than tasking a single person with this responsibility.

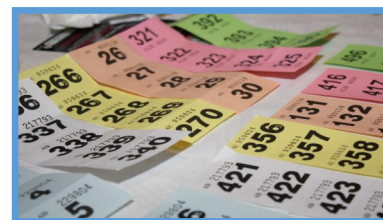
See our suggestions below for ways you can help!

Jim and Vi Phillips

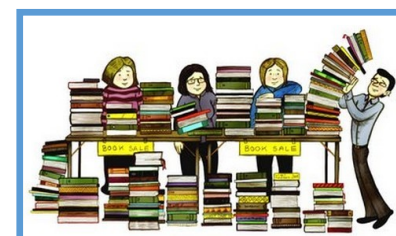
Sponsorship Secretaries

31<sup>st</sup> March 2018

**PLEASE WILL YOU HELP US TO RAISE FUNDS—MAYBE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING SUGGESTIONS WILL HELP GET YOU STARTED ALTHOUGH THERE WILL BE MANY OTHER WAYS TOO!**



Run your own Raffle



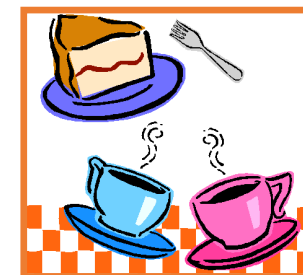
Run a Book Stall at a local event



Sell unwanted items at a Car Boot

**Sponsor me here!**

Take part in a sponsored event



Host a Coffee and Cakes morning



Cook a Gambian dish for friends and ask for a donation



Knit or sew cute toys to sell

## CATARACT CAMPS—an Update from Jim Phillips March 2018

Following on from my report in the 2016 edition of Drumbeat, 450 cataract operations have now been funded by FoTGA. To the best of our knowledge we are by far the largest contributor of funds in this field, and many, many thanks to all who have donated large and small amounts of money to make this possible.

We intend to continue to fund these operations for as long as there is evidence of an extreme need. Our aim is to raise £8,000. each year so that some 200 of the poorest people will have their sight restored.

Much of the equipment used by the ophthalmic surgeons was donated by Sightsavers. They supplied the vehicles, the instruments and trained the surgeons and technicians. In 2013 they moved their focus of attention to other African countries where the need was greater, leaving behind a well equipped scheme for the provision of eye care in The Gambia. However, the Gambia Health Service was starved of funds by the previous Government which resulted in money not being available to repair equipment which had broken down. Currently there is only one technician in The Gambia who is qualified to maintain ophthalmic equipment.

There is a new Government in power and there are many demands on the large sums of money which have been raised internationally, including major road and power generation projects. Unfortunately it is taking a long time for new money to filter through to the Health Service. It is FoTGA's intention to supply equipment which is needed for the cataract camps to continue. This will include two slit lamp microscopes and an operating microscope plus spares. One supplier has said he will donate a refurbished table mounted slit lamp microscope and assist us in obtaining the best possible price for a new portable instrument, hopefully under £2,000.

Please see page 17 for ways to donate, or contact me personally by email on

cataracts@fotga.org.uk or telephone 01202 885671

Please ensure that the word CATARACT is included in your



Alasana Touray, Jim Phillips and Lynne Hadley

## A Chance Meeting on a Ferry on the River Gambia.....by Lynne Hadley

Like most nurses, when I started my nurse education, I had quite fixed ideas regarding my future. I was going to work in medicine and not surgery and I was going to save the world. I had watched Emergency Ward 10 as a kid, superseded by Casualty, and I knew what it was all about! That was twenty-eight years ago and needless to say, I didn't take up a post in medicine, Emergency Ward 10 and nor did I save the world...

On receiving my registration, I took up a post on a surgical ward and like so many nurses that work in my specialty did not seek to work in ophthalmology, rather ophthalmology found me. The only thing that never changed from my early dream was that I had vowed that if I survived the journey I would try to make a difference somewhere with my privileged qualification.

I am fortunate enough to have been able to combine a love of travel with my nursing and have volunteered in Cambodia, Nepal, India and Bolivia doing what I love. I became a member of the International Ophthalmic Nurses Association (IONA) and later took up the position of membership secretary and later as President. In this position, it became apparent that the membership fees for nurses in developing countries were not affordable. Rather than increase the subscription fees, we agreed to offer a reduced rate for these members and offer a sponsorship system for UK members, thereby enabling nurses from across the world to share news and information.

Volunteering has taught me to live within the local communities and embrace the differing cultures. The down side of this is that I no longer enjoy simple beach holidays, but have developed a taste for something different, be it trekking or driving to places most would consider to be off the beaten track. In December 2014 my husband and I left the family on Boxing Day in favour of a three-week drive to Banjul. It was far from an easy journey, we split our radiator in Mauritania and experienced corruption at its best, but we made it!

So, there we were on the ferry heading towards a final relaxing week when I had a chance meeting with Kate Phillips. Polite conversation led to an exchange of reasons to be on the very lively and chaotic ferry. I recalled FoTGA from a holiday with my son some 20 years previously and duly took the opportunity to ask Kate whether she could find me a nurse or two to expand my own IONA family. I was delighted when this in turn led Kate and Jeff to invite me to The Sheikh Zayed Regional Eye Care Centre (SZRECC) a couple of days later. My visit has resulted in what I hope was the beginning of life-long friendships and recruitment of ten Gambian Nurse Members to IONA.

In The Gambia, Ophthalmic Nurses carry out the majority of cataract surgery, sight saving surgery that enables people to continue to live independently and continue to contribute to their communities. As much of this work is funded or supported by FoTGA, the Nurses regularly report on their activity with a full cost analysis for the Friends.

When the opportunity arose to make a return drive back to The Gambia in January this year, we seized the chance to make the drive and saw it as an opportunity to visit old friends, meet members and catch up with FoTGA news. I met with Jim and Violet and a meeting was arranged back at SZRECC to discuss the ophthalmology spending. Spending in ophthalmology has made significant global growth in recent years due to advances in surgery and treatment. As with all things there must be a limit on expenditure meaning that a balance between want and need has to be created. The impact of the simple act of changing a light bulb on a piece of equipment is a huge and costly exercise, coupled with issues of transportation and manpower. With such inconveniences beginning to impact on patient care, it was therefore an easy decision for us to donate our car to the cause, safe in the knowledge that it will be used for the good of the people and hopefully improve the working conditions of my fellow nurses. After all, 'Gertie' our trusty Suzuki Vitara had made the 4,356 Mile journey without a single hiccup and I know she won't let them down!