UNISON
Yorkshire and Humberside

UNISON YORKSHIRE & HUMBERSIDE

GAMBIA PROJECT

Annual Report
2019 / 2020

Bijilo Lower Basic School

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UNISON Yorkshire and Humberside Region
UNISON Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Council
UNISON Harrogate Health
UNISON West Yorks Combined Authority
UNISON Barnsley
UNISON London Ambulance
UNISON Lancashire Police
UNISON North Yorkshire Local Government
UNISON Doncaster
UNISON Isle of Wight
UNISON Sheffield Health
UNISON Sheffield Community Health
UNISON Mid Yorkshire Health
UNISON Burnley
UNISON Royal Hospital
UNISON Natural Resources
UNISON SW Yorkshire Partnership
UNISON Sheffield Local Government
UNISON Hull University
UNISON Bradford Met
UNISON Calderdale

ORGANISATIONS

Furniture for Education Worldwide
Leeds Teaching Hospitals
Leeds City Council
Sheffield Teaching Hospitals
Gambia Trade Union Bureau
ILO West Africa

UK INDIVIDUALS

Keith and Sheila Bolam
John Ingleson
Dave Simms
Pat Hilley
John Campbell
Mick Binks
Julie Sugden
Damian Tuxworth
Richard Walton
Pam Sian
John Cafferty
Wendy Nichols
Tracy Shearon
Kath Ruth
Laraine Senior
Samantha Bent
Collette Senior

GAMBIA INDIVIDUALS

Assan Faal
Landing Bah
Maty Sow
Baye Sowe
Kebba Ceesay
Sea Harve
Sainabou Sanneh

Thank you!

INTRODUCTION – JIM BELL

Dear friends of Gambia,

Welcome to the fifth annual report of the Yorkshire and Humberside UNISON Gambia Project (formerly The Gambia Bijilo School Project)

First of all apologies for the delay in producing this report which was compounded by a number of factors including the collapse of Thomas Cook and my forced early repatriation from the country due to the global pandemic.

Our Region continues to punch above our weight in both humanitarian aid provision and trade union development. We have confirmed and solidified our position as the most significant British trade union currently contributing to the development of trade union organisation in Gambia.

Over the last 12 months we have sent three full or half containers of medical and educational supplies donated from local authorities or NHS Trusts that were either obsolete, time limited or surplus to requirements.

One of our objectives in the last report was to build an urgently needed borehole at Bijilo Lower Basic School. Thanks to the efforts of Regional Convenor Wendy Nichols and others too numerous to name check we achieved that objective. We also facilitated the clearing of the overgrown areas of the school grounds to enable us to double the size of the school kitchen garden. The new water provision means the entire garden and school has a reliable water supply.

We also delivered medical supplies to Kanifing hospital and Sukuta Health centre. Items that were not appropriate to these medical facilities were delivered to and gratefully received at the Ministry of Health.

The major contribution to the development of Gambia trade unions was our participation as a platform speaker in a three day trade union leaders workshop organised by the ILO West Africa. I spoke on sector mapping and organising sectoral unions. The platform was chaired by Gambia Trade Union Bureau and shared with the ILO West Africa, the IMF West Africa, The Gambia Commissioner for Labour and The Gambia National Chair of Industrial Tribunals.

Wendy and John have spoken about our plans for the next twelve months. The country is at a critical development point. Please continue your support and thank you in international solidarity.

Jim Bell
Project Organiser

Jim pictured with Ruby Randall the International Monetary Fund representative in West Africa

WENDY NICHOLS

Hello All

As you know our region along with a number of branches outside of the region have been involved in our Gambia Project.

Our latest fundraising has resulted in a borehole in the Bijilo Lower Basic School grounds.

I travelled out to Gambia on the 9th of March, a little later than planned as I had originally booked through Thomas Cook .

I had many visits planned throughout my weeks stay including the school, the new Deputy Prime minister, 2 hospitals and meetings with GAMTUB.

I also visited a nursery School who were also experiencing a shortage of water, our next President Sian Stockham has agreed that her fundraising throughout her year in office will be for this project, to build another borehole.

It never ceases to amaze me at the welcome we receive in Gambia. I again took UNISON promotional materials from the North Yorkshire Branch, this time I felt it was appropriate to take water bottles as the school now had a water supply during the day.

So as always we had an official opening ceremony to which all pupils attended along with their teachers, but also the village elders and community along with the media.

The Iman said prayers the ceremonies started they couldn't thank us enough.

I felt overwhelmed by what we had achieved, water is a precious commodity and we had spent 10k on the borehole for both the school and community.

We then went into the Garden and what a difference the borehole has made. I had not realised that we had also provided an outside tap for

the community to use. The teachers and children grow the vegetables and use them at the school or sell them in the community to raise money.

On Friday we paid our final visit to the school and joined the children in Mr Landing Bah's class where we joined in their dance session.

This is a remarkable project to be involved in and we are part of supporting the kids and hospitals in the area, some of the donations from branches including baby clothes were distributed when we went to the maternity clinic, all well received.

When we left the UK it was the beginning of the Covid Pandemic.

We arrived at Banjul Airport to have our temperature tested when we got off the plane, hand gel everywhere, when we left not one case had been recorded, landing in Manchester nothing in place for temperature tests, we have a lot to learn from other countries.

Our next fund raising is to build another 3 classrooms for Bijilo Lower Basic School and also for containers to send equipment collected by branches in the region, they are 6k each.

So please give to the fund as we have not been able to do the normal fundraising events because of the Pandemic and I know that you would not want this project to fail.

Wendy Nichols

Wendy Nichols
UNISON Yorkshire & Humberside Convenor

JOHN CAFFERTY

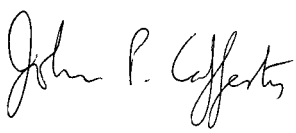
As I am sure you will all recall, in previous years' Gambia Reports we informed you that we were improving our working arrangements with the Gambia Trade Unions to try and build links and assist them improve their situation to assist their members.

I am pleased to tell you that over the last 12-18 months we have continued to support the fledgling GAMTUB. As you will be aware GAMTUB is the formation of a single Trade Union Body which now represents the vast majority of Gambian Trade Unions; there were previously four Trade Union Bodies, each representing different Trade Unions and Employee Associations.

We have assisted GAMTUB with funding for their office lease, as well as with the furniture and equipment for their office and continue to do so with a delivery of additional office equipment, which arrived in Gambia just as the situation became extremely difficult with Covid-19 and our supplies remain in a secure lock up awaiting transfer to the GAMTUB Offices.

We have also been working with international partners to try and get them involved both on the national but also the international stage. To this end discussions have been held with Owen Tudor, the Deputy Gen Secretary of the ITUC, who are keen to assist GAMTUB develop as an organisation and have them affiliate to the ITUC. Discussions regarding this are taking place and Jim Bell, as our Project Co-ordinator, is having more detailed discussions with ITUC with a view to them supporting GAMTUB grow and develop.

It is important to us as an organisation, that as well as the humanitarian aspects of our work in the Gambia, which Wendy eloquently covered in her piece, but we also remember our roots and assisting our brothers and sisters in the Gambian Trade Union Movement to develop and represent their members so that they too can grow and ensure that justice and equity flourishes in Gambia.



John Cafferty
UNISON Yorkshire & Humberside
Regional Secretary

Collecting supplies

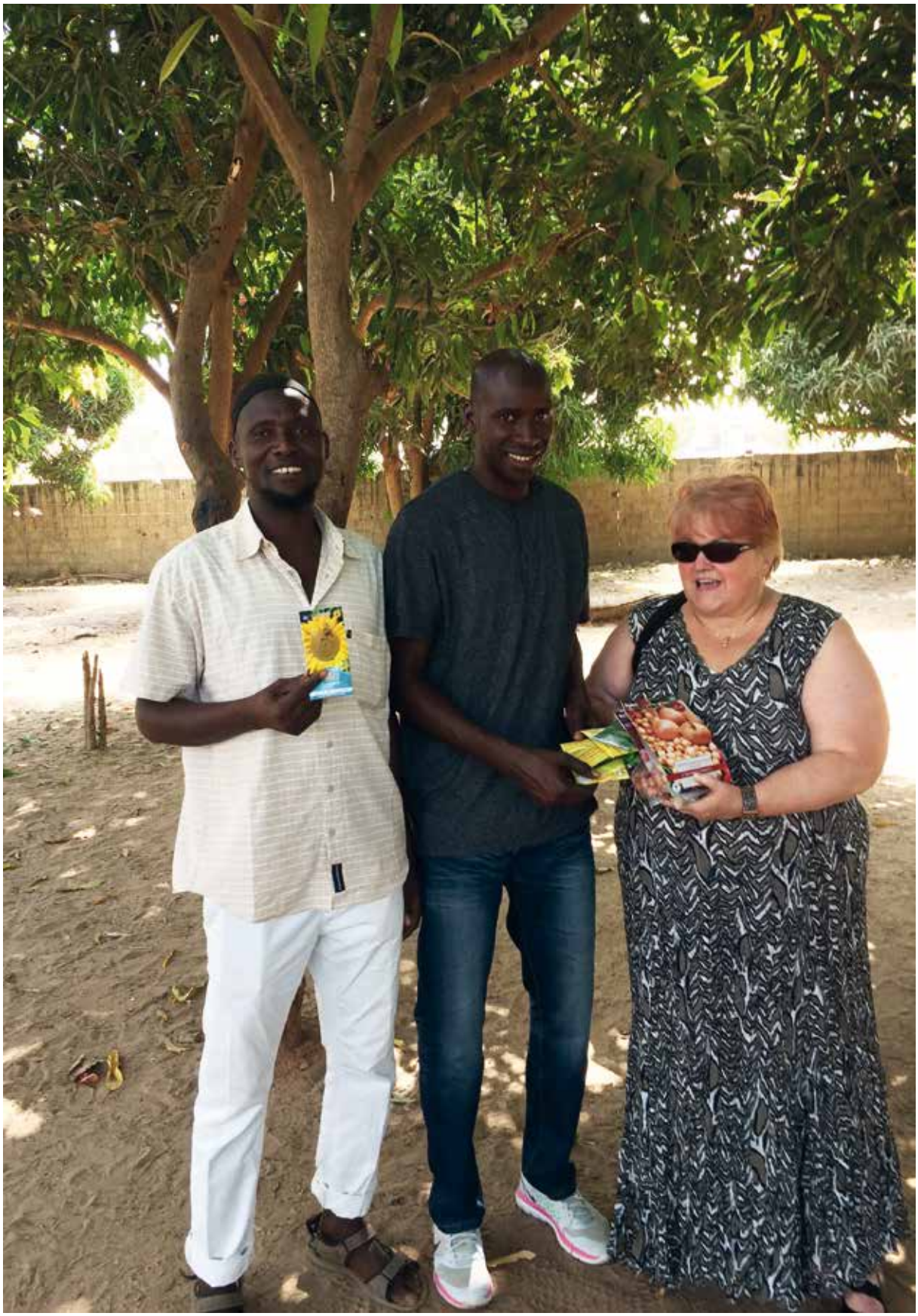
Borehole machinery ready to roll

Drilling in action – the first sight of water from the borehole

There she blows!

Building the tower which holds the water tank.

In Memory Of
BRIAN GOWRIE
R.I.P



Delivering seeds for the Bijilo Lower Basic School garden

Vegetable garden with the new water tower (top right)

Vegetables thrive in the garden

School pupils at the base of the new water tower

Having fun during the dance session

Trade union leaders workshop held in July 2019

Sharing ideas and experiences

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Your contribution to this project will make a huge difference.

Cheques should be made payable to the ***'Gambia Bijilo Project'*** *and sent to:*

Jim Bell,
C/O UNISON Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Centre
Quayside House
Canal Wharf
Leeds LS11 5PS

Or by BACS payment:
Account No. 65476051 Sort code 089299

Thank you!