

Chair's Report November 2024

2024 has been a very successful year for *Aidgambia The Community Health Charity (TCHC)*.

As well as celebrating the continued success of Bendon bursarians, we have welcomed three new applicants; we sponsored another very successful Youth Health Cup event organised by Lamin and Bas the lead figures in the respective academies that we support in The Gambia; and significantly there has been progress in the Widening Participation area led by Lamin one of our two Clinical Advisers to the Trustees (CATs). As in past years' reports, I have summarised and highlighted some of our key areas of activity under a range of headings to aid trustees and inform discussion at our meetings but crucially, to update and inform our supporters.

Bendon Bursary

The Bendon Bursary supports students pursuing health-related studies or professional development. It is now five years that the Bendon Bursary has been up and running. In the summer of 2024 we saw Alieu, Naffisatou and Maimuna complete their course successfully -congrats to them. When we launched the Bursary scheme, all our applicants were male. Thanks to the efforts and encouragement of our two CATs we now can say 50% of bursarians are female.

We are delighted to have awarded bursaries to three new applicants in the autumn of 2024 - Amie, Badjie and Ousman (two of whom are women). That brings the total of Gambian students to have benefited from the Bendon Bursary to 14. The majority has received successive yearly donations and to date over six thousand pounds has been passed over to support our students in their health-related studies. We have also managed so far to give every bursarian (who previously would have been relying on their mobile phones) reconditioned hardware to transform their studies to a total of over five thousand pounds.

It is heartening to see the high level of success and the supportive group they have become. Not only do we have well attended meetings when trustees visit The Gambia but ongoing communication is facilitated on-line by our two CATs who keep in regular contact with all Bursarians through WhatsApp which provides a vital ongoing link on the ground. Both Lamin and Chernor (the CATs) keep trustees informed and of any personal issues or problems that individuals may face.

The Excel spreadsheet initiated by Chernor is a constant record regularly circulated and updated. In this way, everyone is kept up-to-date on progress - the number of applicants, registrations and exam results for example.

Clinical Advisers to the Trustees

Chernor J Jallow, our first Bursarian is now proceeding into his second year on masters in China. Trustees agreed to provide a further bursary to Chernor for his two year course. His masters is funded by the Gambian government with support from China no doubt but the bursary we supply helps him with travel costs and food. This has been a challenge for him - especially the expense. Chernor maintains regular contact and only this week he has informed us that out of 42 international students at Southern Medical University in

Guangzhan City, China he is one of five to be selected for a week long training organised by the School's Global Health Department Dec1-7. This is an advanced course on Comprehensive Strategies to end STI spread.

Our other CAT, Lamin Njies, as we reported previously, secured a post in a select team of five nurses at the Cardiology Unit at Banjul Hospital. What is remarkable about this achievement is that there were 160 applicants! In 2024 we learnt that he has since been promoted to a significant managing role within the Unit. The demands of his new role has meant he has delayed sitting the IELTS exam but he still carries on his invaluable work as CAT for the Charity. He offers support to the bursarians ,is organising the Youth Health Cup on December 22nd and laying the foundation for a Widening Participation agenda which will be reported on later in this report.

Hardware donations and EasyFundRaising

Thanks to contributions of individuals and the ongoing expert help of TK of *Revive My Device*, Brockley who continues to assess and upgrade hardware. To date, all bursarians have received laptops or i-pads and in addition we have been able to allocate donated phones to relevant individuals involved in our activities.

Easyfundraising supporters continue to raise valuable finance via their on-line shopping. Trustees are extremely grateful and we are pleased to announce that the total raised thus far is a fantastic £1664.90. **Thank you all for making the extra effort to on-line shop via this platform!!**

Youth Health Football

On December 22 the third Youth Health Cup will take place. It will not be at the FIFA Gambian HQ ground where the previous two Cups have been played but will be played on the AVEC Academy ground in a local area. This, we hope, will have the advantage of attracting more spectators and so raise the profile of the HEALTHY LIVING FOR YOUNG GAMBIANS message. It will also save money which can be channelled directly to support the work of the two academies involved. The staff of both do a fantastic job offering their own time to develop the young footballers and encouraging them to pursue a healthy lifestyle befitting their footballing aspirations.

Widening Participation (WP)

Last year I informed trustees of the success of our first new WP initiative, the Health Fair matched-funding project held in Yundum organised by Lamin Njie in his capacity of trustee of the Japalleh Foundation. It aimed to bring health workers into the community; it was well attended and supported.

Lamin is now working on further funding proposals. He plans to embed them within the context of an *Aidgambia TCHC* Widening Participation strategy. The aims and objectives are to meet people in vulnerable communities and give them an extensive understanding of certain communicable and non-communicable diseases, inform them of risk factors and ways of prevention and possibly start medications. He provides a data plan, records the number of participants and follows up in subsequent feedback visits.

In contrast to the first Health Fair, Lamin intends to involve bursary beneficiaries. Trustees hope that the participation of our bursarians will continue and increase. This will go a long way to meet the future need for SUSTAINABILITY where it is Gambians taking the initiative and progressing development.

Booklet - Our Stories

This booklet has been discussed since 2022 and so we are delighted to confirm that this project has now been completed and will be made available on the website; some leaflets will be taken out to The Gambia at Christmas 2024. A big thank you to all involved:

- all the bursarians for contributing their own stories
- Jane Gay for pursuing production channels
- Hilary for producing the draft booklet
- Bev for all the final prep and presentation and sorting the web version

A lot of hard work but we are sure that these interesting stories will further support outreach activity and provide a source of information for our supporters

The Website <https://www.aidgambia.org.uk>

The last Chair's Report acknowledged the invaluable work of Nel Ta and Dan Simpson. The revamp of the website that they did has certainly been a massive step in the right direction.

The Treasurer and Secretary have combined to take the model forward. The Treasurer in particular has put in a lot of hard work but it can be said her expertise means that the website is current, navigable and attractive. So, finally after a number of years when the website has been a weakness we can now be proud of our website which is a lot more fit for purpose.

2024 has been an excellent year for *Aidgambia TCHC*. The goal of achieving SUSTAINABILITY is much nearer thanks to the leadership of our two CATs out there in The Gambia where it really matters and also the increasing involvement of bursarians. It is Gambians who will achieve the goal of SUSTAINABILITY.

Needless to say they welcome any help and so last but far from least, a BIG thank you to all our supporters

The trustees at the meeting on December 4th will agree priorities for 2025 which will feature in the Chair's report for the 2024 AGM to be held in the new year