

Gambian Children  
First



# ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021

FOUNDATION  
THE GAMBIAN CHILDREN FIRST

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# Gambian Children First

Dear Donor,

In October, we were finally able to go back to Gambia to visit our schools and students. This had not been possible since the lockdowns. The virus itself has not ravaged the country, but the economic consequences did. There was no tourism in this country while it almost completely depends on it. Therefore, all our visits and conversations were very emotional. You will read it in this annual report.

It follows from the financial statements covering the period running from August 2020 to July 2021 that we again had to face a steep decrease in revenues. We received € 18,000 in donations for the previous school year, which was already much less than the year before. This school year, we only received € 12,160. Indeed, due to Covid-19, it was again not possible to realise several plans, which means that we received much less than in previous years. This is understandable: we have to make do. We are still proud that our projects are and remain concrete, small-scale and focused on individuals. However, as a consequence, we had to decrease the number of students (mainly girls) in the school year 2020-2021 from 103 to 64 for the school year 2021-2022.

The average costs per student for the school year 2021-2022 are a little higher than last year, i.e. € 160 per student. It doesn't matter how much you want to donate. Each contribution is more than welcome; without them, we cannot do anything. Many thanks for your ongoing confidence.

Best regards,

On behalf of the board of the Foundation The Gambian Children First,  
Caroline Schaap  
Chairwoman

The members of the board pay the costs for the flights, transport and accommodation during the annual trip themselves.

The foundation (in Dutch: "stichting") is recognised by the tax authorities as a "Public Benefit Organisation" (in Dutch: "*Algemeen Nut Beogende Instelling (ANBI)*"), which means that your gift (in compliance with the applicable rules) is tax deductible (see our website).

# Gambian Children First

## We went back to Gambia!!

Last year, we went in October, not in May, as we used to. Vaccinations, PCR tests, dPLF forms...none of this was able to stop us from returning to Gambia. We were unsure about what we would find and we were so happy that we would finally be able to get together with all the people in our network who have become so dear to us.



It was also a bit strange to travel without 'the big man' Ernst Faber. People often asked about him. Without the pandemic, Ernst would definitely have wanted to shake the hands of all these people, whom we know so well by now.

The two weeks we spent in Gambia were heart-warming and harrowing at the same time. The country is suffering a lot from the consequences of Covid-19. Not because the virus has made many victims or because of the number of people that tested positive on Covid-19 every day, but because the country was hit hard by the complete disappearance of the revenues from tourism.

We have spoken with women who sell souvenirs on the beach. They do not sell a thing. No money means no food. Being able to feed your family with six children only once every three days is really, really painful. A man who used to put cushions on the beds on the beach for tourists is evicted and can no longer buy food. He does not have the money to pay the rent and was emaciated, just sitting there, early in the morning, looking in front of him with a desperate look in his eyes. An elderly man who goes to hotels every day, hoping to sell some flip-flops and carved woodwork, almost left dancing thanks to our purchase of little giraffes. He finally had enough money to buy some rice for his children.

This was an important lesson in humility. What a difference between two worlds - we have so much and they have so little. It is amazing that we may create a spark of hope for the optimistic, inventive and friendly people we have met in the small country of Gambia!



# Gambian Children First

## Where we are active



## Visiting NAQAA (National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority)



NAQAA was the first official body we visited. We had a very pleasant conversation with Dr Jaw in which we received an update on the situation in the schools with which we cooperate.

NAQAA has a good overview of the situation in the schools. To eliminate the learning backlog the

schools have received extra time (6 months) to fulfil the requirements. No concessions are made to the quality of the education. It is particularly difficult for the schools to carry out practical tasks. School fees are hardly paid. As a consequence, it is impossible to purchase the necessary material for the 'practicals'.

It is obvious that the skill centres face great difficulties. Most students' parents hardly have enough money to feed their family, pay the rent, etc. The payment of school fees is often the first thing that falls off their list of priorities. NAQAA wants to take this into consideration as much as possible. Let us hope that the schools can quickly stop worrying.



Washing hands entering the NAQAA office

# Gambian Children First

## Mile 2 Prison - Insight Training Centre



A prison remains a special environment for a visit and meeting the inmates will always be special too. We met a great number of officials, including General Director Mr Manneh.

The project, launched by Mr Ismaily Ceesay of the Insight Training Centre is a great success. In total, our foundation has now sponsored 25 students. The four men who completed their training and meanwhile left the prison all have a job now. It is important to make sure that the students receive a good and complete toolbox when they leave the prison. We were asked to make a contribution. We had to disappoint them: we are not able to do so right now.

The other 20 students carry out maintenance work for the prison in the framework of their training. Therefore the sword is double-edged. The work in the prison can be done by the students and they know they do something useful at the same time.

After the official part we brought a visit to the classrooms at the premises of the prison. It was very touching to hear one of the students thanking us for this chance to receive an education. *"I am not forgotten. Thank you for believing in me."* We were deeply moved. This is what makes our work so incredibly worthwhile!

The ceilings of the classrooms looked horrible. Extremely heavy rain and wind have caused a big leakage. The panels of the ceiling are loose and/or full of mould. With each new shower of rain it is leaking everywhere. We have written to a foundation that does not make donations in the form of school fees, but carries out special projects. We hope they will be able to finance a new roof.



For the current school year, we have had to inform the prison authorities that we could only sponsor 5 students. The main thing is to continue our help. There will certainly come better times.

# Gambian Children First

## Taku Leggaye



This school is really important to us. The loss of Director Mr Jagne has left a big empty space. Just when they were back on track, Covid arrived. Due to arrears of payment of school fees, paying the salaries of the teachers has become a very difficult enterprise each month. To make sure that the students do not leave school, it was agreed that they will pay their school fees little by little after obtaining their diploma. And as if Covid were not enough,

the school has had to deal with a burglary. Hardly any loot - there was little to get - but much damage to the building and structure and also to the inventory and equipment. Thanks to a generous gift from the *Protestant Church in Wormer*, a new printer and copying machine could immediately be purchased and now the school is better protected against forced entries. A blessing!

Our welcome this year was very special! We arrived on Simon's birthday and people in the school had found out about this. What a surprise when the doors were opened: the room had been decorated, the students were singing and there was a huge birthday cake with firework on top! We were deeply touched.



This school year, we can sponsor the 17 students who are in their second year and 10 new students can start the first year. This is still a respectable number.





# Gambian Children First

## President's International Award Bakau (PIA)



It was wonderful to meet again with Director Ousainy Drammeh, electronics teacher Ebrima Jallow and the rest of their team. We sponsored Ebrima Jallow three years ago when he asked us whether it would be possible for us to sponsor further schooling for him as well. We have already written about him before and now, more than two years later, we look in the eyes of a proud teacher. He teaches in the school where

he enjoyed his own education! This is a great man. He is a beautiful example for other students and we are so happy to share this news with you.

PIA is quite a big school and usually they have quite a few sponsors. However, even this school is facing a steep decrease in income. This school has also agreed with the students that they come to school to finish their training and pay the school fees as soon as they receive an income from future work.



## PIA Kerewan



In the soaring heat, we crossed the river from Banjul to Barra on our way to Kerewan. Upon arrival, we found an extremely silent schoolyard. We met the students, all girls, who were absorbed in their sewing lessons and their hair techniques.

This region has been facing difficulties for decades: the youth is leaving the countryside for the big city (Banjul) or gets on a boat to Europe. The skill centre is one of the places where an attempt is made to keep young people in the region. It seemed to make a difference, but then Covid came and a lockdown followed. When the school reopened, not everyone came back. Now, every effort is made in order not to lose the students. We continue to help the school, also because NAQAA has asked us to do so. This region really needs all support it can get.





# Gambian Children First

## To Soma and Jappineh Jarra

During this visit, Musa Sanneh accompanied us for the first time. He is our new local representative. He has had a tough start: our contact persons in the schools did not know him and in 2020 he had to make all visits alone because the board could not come. He has made all visits during Ramadan, fasting during the day, while he also had to respect the lockdown imposed as a consequence of Covid, which made the logistics for his trip very complicated. In spite of all this, he managed to do his work in a highly professional manner and he has given us a clear picture of what is going on in the different schools. We have much respect for his excellent work.

We travelled together. He was even kind enough to introduce us to his family, who received us very generously. The delicious 'chicken domoda' was already prepared when we arrived! We are very grateful to his wife, children and all other inhabitants of the compound for their warm welcome. This was one of the highlights of our visit.



We had also planned to visit the Director General representing the Ministry of Education in this region. In his office, we had an interesting conversation in which other officials also participated. This gave us a good insight into the way in which the inspection of primary and secondary schools is carried out. After a good night's sleep, we drove to the coast. On our way

out, one of Musa's acquaintances asked us whether we would like to visit a skill centre in Soma he directs. Of course we would! The school looked perfect. New sewing machines, hairdryers, furniture, you name it. But where were the pupils?

A German NGO, GIZ, has made substantial donations to schools. Quite a lot of material and equipment has been purchased with it and many pupils have been sponsored. However, after three years, they abruptly ceased their support with the message: now you are able to take care of yourselves. Unfortunately this is not the way it works.

This is what distinguishes our foundation from many others. We are a reliable partner and will continue to follow and advise and support the schools year after year. We see that this skill centre in Soma has a lot of potential and we would love to cooperate. We will only be able to do so once our own financial situation will make this possible.

# Gambian Children First

## Success Stories

A fixed item on our agenda is making visits to a number of students who have been sponsored by the foundation and now have a good job.

*Fatoumatta Sawe* is now a familiar face in Taku Leggaye, also as a teacher. From a poor girl without any prospects she has become a self-confident teacher.

*Mahmoud Njie* (on the right) works for Coco Ocean and is very happy. During the lockdown, this 5-star hotel remained open, which made it possible for him to continue and send 95% of his salary to his family in the countryside, even during this extremely difficult period. With his income of 50 euros a month, he provides a living to 10 people.



*Mariama Sanyang* (on the left) has graduated from Taku Leggaye. We met her at the FonGam Skillcentre in Tujereng. She manages the kitchen and teaches catering. Together with her pupils, she prepared a delicious lunch for us.



Finally, we present *Awa* to you (on the right), a car mechanic. She works, studies, does an internship and travels every day to work from Brikama in 1.5 hours, and every evening she travels back. When she arrives at home in the evening, she helps her parents on the land and in the evening she sells ice bags to finance her studies. We were deeply impressed by this young lady. Perseverance and belief help her with her incredible amount of work.



There are many other success stories, but we cannot visit all the students. Their stories are what makes us tick and gives us the motivation to continue our work. Our trips are huge energy boosts. That is why we consider it of the utmost importance to pursue the work of the foundation: it brings about such fundamental changes in the lives of these young people! And that is why we absolutely need your support!

# Gambian Children First



You can find out what Mariama and Mahmoud themselves: please scan the QR-code and listen to what they have to say.

## Wormerland cares for ...



Our foundation may continue to rejoice in the support of several churches in Wormer. A week after our return in November this year, the Protestant Community in Wormer invited us to give a presentation of our impressions directly after the service. It was not difficult to share our experiences, because we were still full of it. During the entire month of November,

money has been collected for our foundation. The exact amount is not yet clear at the moment of writing, but what we do know is that we can use every penny.



It is from the bottom of our hearts that we thank you for the warm welcome and the space you so generously gave to us. The sale of all the merchandise we brought back from Gambia was a great success and it means that we have a little bit more money for our foundation!

## Decreasing revenues

You have already read it several times: as events and projects fail to materialise we miss an important amount in our budget. As a consequence, we have decided to considerably reduce the number of students.

	2021-2022	2020-2021
	Number of students	Number of students
Taku Leggaye	27	35
PIA Bakau	12	18
PIA Kerewan	20	20
Mile 2 Prison	5	10
Julangel	-	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>103</b>

# Gambian Children First

We already stopped sponsoring the school in Julangel. All students were able to finish their education in the school year 2020-2021. Since this school mainly needed a boost in its start-up period, we supported it then. The school is supervised by the GTTI, a big technical school in Banjul. Our withdrawal still means a financial loss for them, but the school in Julangel has grown and it now has a good reputation in the region. For this reason, we take the view that it is a sound choice to let this school go. We have explained our choice to the regional manager in Banjul during our visit. Our message was received with regret, but also with gratitude.

## Composition of the Board

Each year, we conclude with a call for extra board members. This year, *Jeanne Adams* and *Danny Kol* joined us, two young people with a golden heart. It was lovely to get to know them and they have proved to be a great asset to the foundation. During our first meetings they informed us that they did not want to have a role on the board but that they would very much like to become engaged in the work of the foundation. We call them the “*ambassadors of the foundation*” and we are very happy with their support. Their work has led to immediate results, for example thanks to the sale of Christmas cards, the result of their Christmas initiative: 4 beautiful cards decorated with pictures we made ourselves.

The sale goes well. If you want, please order a set of 4 beautiful cards for 14 euros, including shipping costs!



We keep looking for extra board members. Our foundation is small, but it does big things in Gambia. Already since 2002, our foundation is a reliable partner for the schools we support. More than 700 young girls and boys have followed a vocational training thanks to our help and support. Being able to ‘touch’ a life and give it a positive turn is inspiring and energising.

To be able to continue and do this (voluntary) work, we are looking for new board members. We can certainly use two enthusiastic people. Of course, affinity with Africa and participation in the yearly visit are essential.

Have we raised your interest? Do you have any questions? Please contact one of the members of the board or call us at +31 (0)6 26 84 44 09.



# Gambian Children First

Composition of the board		
Chairwoman	Caroline Schaap	<a href="mailto:Caroline-in-afrika@hotmail.com">Caroline-in-afrika@hotmail.com</a>
Secretary	Mariëlle Bloem	<a href="mailto:info@baborbeautyspawormer.nl">info@baborbeautyspawormer.nl</a>
Treasurer / Contact person schools	Nella van der Laan	<a href="mailto:Tgcf.nellaheijnen@gmail.com">Tgcf.nellaheijnen@gmail.com</a>
Special advisor/ photographer	Simon Heijnen	<a href="mailto:Spm.heijnen@gmail.com">Spm.heijnen@gmail.com</a>
Special advisor	Ernst Faber	
Local manager in Gambia	Musa Sanneh	
Local driver	Lamin Fadera	
Ambassadors for the foundation	Jeanne Adams and Danny Kol	
English translation annual report	Sophie Verschuur	



Above: Nina Schaap (on the left) and a group of students at the PIA Bakau

*Nina Schaap joined us again. This time she was charged with a special task by her secondary school. She has interviewed many students and teachers. The result will lead to a beautiful documentary. We are looking forward to the result!*

# Gambian Children First

## Financial statements

Balance sheet of the Foundation The Gambian Children First until 31 July 2021				
	31 July 2021		31 July 2020	
<b>ASSETS</b>				
Real estate	€ 5,000.00		€ 5,000.00	
Cash	€ 9,607.86		€ 17,370.76	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€ 14,607.86</b>		<b>€ 22,370.76</b>	
<b>LIABILITIES</b>				
Capital	€ 1,463.88		€ 4,562.89	
Short term debts (rest 20% tuition fees '18-'19)	€ 0.00		€ 0.00	
Long term debts (reserved for Mam Tuti Darboe)	€ 3,643.98		€ 3.807,87	
Long term debts (reserve fund decreasing revenues)*	€ 4,500.00		€ 9,000.00	
Reserve for possible negative sales profit real estate	€ 5,000.00		€ 5,000.00	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€ 14,607.86</b>		<b>€ 22,370.76</b>	
Profit and loss account Foundation The Gambian Children First from 1 August 2020 to 31 July 2021				
	2020-2021	2020-2021	2020-2021	2019-2020
	Result '20-'21	Budget '20-'21	Difference	Result '19-'20
<b>RECEIVED</b>				
Received donations**	€ 10,045.25	€ 12,000.00	- € 1,954.75	€ 18,607.68
Special donations (with destination)	€ 2,085.00	€ 0.00	€ 2,085.00	€ 0.00
Other revenues	€ 30.00	€ 0.00	€ 30.00	€ 0.00
Interest	€ 0.00	€ 15.00	- € 15.00	€ 0.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€ 12,160.25</b>	<b>€ 12,015.00</b>	<b>€ 145.25</b>	<b>€ 18,607.68</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
Production costs (mailing and postage)	€ 109.08	€ 100.00	- € 9.08	€ 65.60
Bank costs + currency differences	€ 411.65	€ 450.00	- € 38.35	€ 415.99
Costs in Gambia	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00	€ 0.00
Fee and costs Local Manager	€ 788.35	€ 720.00	€ 68.35	€ 1,191.74
Other costs	€ 235.00	€ 250.00	- € 15.00	€ 1,286.35
Website	€ 159.72	€ 170.00	- € 10.28	€ 167.71
Special projects	€ 2,085.00	€ 0.00	- € 2,085.00	€ 4,714.33
Teaching costs 2018-2019	€ 15,446.36	€ 14,000.00	€ 1,446.36	€ 15,697.14
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>€ 19,235.15</b>	<b>€ 15,690.00</b>	<b>€ 3,545.15</b>	<b>€ 23,538.86</b>
<b>RESULT</b>	<b>- € 7,074.90</b>	<b>- € 3,675.00</b>	<b>- € 3,399.90</b>	<b>- € 4,931.18</b>

### Remarks

\* Reserve fund decreasing revenues went from € 9,000 in 2019-2020 to € 4,500. The duration of the various training programmes is now 1 to 2 years instead of 3 to 4 years, which was the duration in the past.

\*\* The received donations € 10,045 are much lower than those in 2019-2020 (€ 18,600), because the Antwerp-Banjul Challenges did not take place due to Covid. As a consequence we missed the proceeds of the auction of the challenge cars, which amounted to € 5,500 in 2019-2020.

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*Will you continue to support us?*

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