



# The Don McMath Foundation

The Don McMath Foundation News March 2017

Charity number: 1100164

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Hi All

This is a short news update for the school.

As most of you are aware The Gambia held a presidential election on 1st December 2016. The result was that the president Yaya Jammeh was voted out and Adama Barrow was elected as the new president. After initially accepting the result on December 9th Jammeh contested it and refused to step down. After the intervention of ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) Jammeh finally left the country on 21st January and Adama Barrow was inaugurated the following week.

Several of our sponsors have been asking if we had any problems during the change of leadership in the Gambia. Overall everything went smoothly, we closed the school in the week leading up to the new president's inauguration as a lot of the children were kept at home by their parents

On 12th January Anne wrote "Re. the situation in the Gambia, things are so confusing a the moment. Attendance is drastically going down because parents are taking their children out of the country or travelling with them to the province for safety.

We had a management meeting on Tuesday and we agreed that we will close the school from tomorrow until the 23rd of January to see how things will end up this is because children are not coming and parents are concerned for the safety of their children."

Anne returned to the UK and travelled out again on 2nd February and wrote "What a difference there is here. Apart for a flight that was over 7 hours as they had to refuel in Los Palmas, I arrived very tired. The plane was full, with about half tourist and half returning Gambians. Even at the airport the atmosphere was different. I got pulled over about the cartridges, but showed a man in a suit (not uniform) the charity letter and told him it was a free school, he said "God bless you" and let me go on my way".

On 11th February Anne wrote: "Well things are certainly moving at a pace here. The EU are donating 11 million Euros for projects to train the youth. Also Japan are talking about investing here. There is now a free press and training programmes to train the army and police about Human Rights. There are no blocks on internet sites, Female circumcision is now a criminal offence. However the downside is that Gambia only has 2 months of reserves, so near bankruptcy. We still have electricity cuts but the real problem is water.

We don't have any water during the day only at night. This maybe because water has to be pumped up, using electricity."

Judy and Mick travelled out on 27th February and found the atmosphere in the country had changed enormously. "We found that everyone we met were happy to talk about the political situation quite openly, bearing in mind that the previous regime was very repressive. There is a feeling of great optimism in the country now in spite of the major financial hurdles they will have to clear in the future."

**Now is the time to support the country by going on holiday to The Gambia.**

While Judy and Mick were out there they had a school inspection and made a list of items needed at the school, thanks to a large donation received last week we are in a position to buy a years supply of exercise books, ink cartridges and some new classroom furniture however there are a few other things we need that you might be abler to help with. Large (24 inch or more) flat screen monitors for Anne and the computer room, new or newish black and white laser printer (must run on affordable cartridges) also the normal pencils, rubbers, pencil sharpeners and plastic scissors etc.

Finally, rather a long shot but as we will have a consignment going out anyway, we would rather like a set of goal posts for the football pitch next to the school!



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Thank you all for your support.

Anne, Judy and Mick McMath –March 2017