

KAMBIA APPEAL

www.kambia.org.uk

ISSUE No 16 January 2008

Welcome to the 16th issue of the Kambia Appeal newsletter. It has been another busy and significant year for us, with new projects starting and a permanent head quarters in Kambia!

VISITS TO KAMBIA

During 2007 we had several visits to Kambia – some by medical students doing their medical electives and several by the Appeal committee.

MEDICAL STUDENTS:

Alison Holman in April (6 weeks), Toyin Ajayi, Rob Hughes and Patrick Howlett overlapped during July, August and September (10 weeks). James Dowling and Shona Lockyer in May, James and Richard Kerr-Wilson in June. David Holmes and Mike Till went out for 2 weeks and 6 weeks respectively and have just returned home. Mike kept a very interesting diary from which we will be publishing extracts in our second Newsletter, which we hope to produce around the middle of 2008.

Summary of their visit written by David:

October is an interesting time to travel in Sierra Leone. The ending of the rainy season precedes the start of the road reparation season, so the Land Rover journey from Lungi to Kambia takes over 5 hours of being thrown around the enormous water filled potholes that litter the road.

Mike Till (*a retired Gloucester GP*) and I (*a Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist from Cheltenham*) were welcomed by the sleepy guards at the old Medecins Sans Frontieres base in the early hours of the morning after such a journey.

We both looked pale in the blue head-torch light which was to become a permanent night-time feature of our visit.

Having crawled under our mosquito nets we fell asleep for a brief relief from exhaustion before the 05.00 call to prayer dragged us back to the reality that we really had arrived.

This was my third trip to Kambia, and my role on this occasion was as mentor for Mike at the start of his six week stint as medical factotum.

By that evening it had started to hit home that this was not to be the gentle introduction that we had hoped for. Suffice it to say that the medical horrors of the first few nights will live with us for a very long time.

The benefit was, however, that I was able to guide Mike through virtually all the complications of childbirth in a very short space of time.

Medecins Sans Frontieres had withdrawn their aid team from Kambia some months before our trip and in the intervening time sadly the healthcare in Kambia had deteriorated. The District Medical Officer has little time to devote to maternity healthcare and the Government Hospital Doctor had been conspicuous by his absence.

Thankfully a new theatre nurse (*Sr Conteh*) has come to work in the hospital. She is trained to give anaesthetics and without her expertise and the enthusiasm of the theatre team things might have been even worse. There are now three Community Health Officers (CHOs) dealing with all the Medical problems in the Hospital (except paediatrics and HIV/AIDS who have their own CHOs).

One is interested in maternity and it had been hoped that I would be able to start him doing Caesarean Sections.

These may just look like large 'puddles' – but they are about 2 foot deep underneath the surface, very treacherous!



Sadly he went off to Bo the day after we arrived and I didn't get the chance! Mike and I did, however, start to teach the other two basic surgical techniques, much to the amusement of the passing locals!

The newly acquired base provides a welcome haven from the hospital. Mobile 'phone technology meant that we could be contacted if required and transport and a driver could be summoned quickly in an emergency. Walking to the hospital at night in the torrential monsoon rain was not an appealing option... even if the spectacular lightening did floodlight the path. The accommodation in the base is basic and needs improvement and maintenance. The purchase of a more powerful generator will allow the water tank to be filled by water pumped from the well, and showering from a bucket of rainwater will, hopefully, become a thing of the past!



Transport Kambia Style!

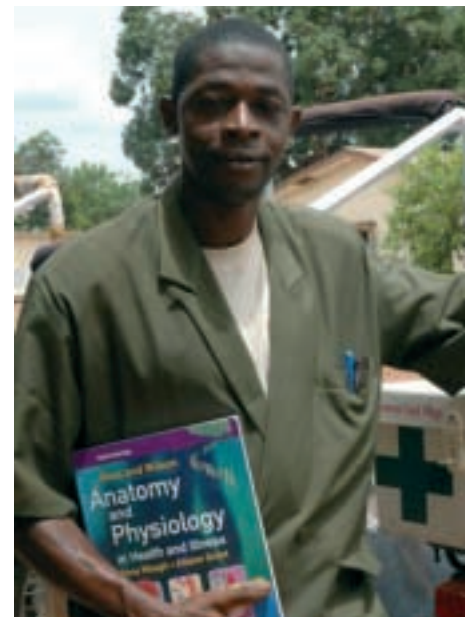
If we are to attract medical aid to visit for any length of time we have to provide a reasonable degree of comfort. The work replacing the roof, toilet block and incinerator at Barmoi is nearing successful completion. Kambia needs a regular complement of visiting health workers to encourage training and good practice in all fields of medicine. Without training we will have an open ended commitment to provide an externally funded health-care package, and without good practice women and children will continue to die unnecessarily.



Mike Till teaching basic surgical procedures – the string is tied round the neck of the bottle – the idea is to tie the knot without moving the bottle, this demonstrates how to tie stitches. You push the knot down to the tissue, rather than pulling the tissues up to the knot.

CHO TRAINING

As you'll have read earlier, we have in place a scholarship programme to train 'CHOs' or Community Health Officers. This qualification is similar to a UK 'paramedic' but with an emphasis on Tropical Medicine and Diseases. Our first candidate is Joseph Kalokoh who worked as a theatre assistant at the Kambia Hospital and was clearly an ideal candidate. With our help Joseph is now studying at Njala University in Bo and has gained excellent results for his first year of study. Joseph is very keen to come back to Kambia and take up a position either at the Hospital or in one of the Peripheral Health Units (PHU's). After we had started this project we were asked by Dr. Kandeh, the District Medical Officer, to support seven more candidates who were already in the first year of the CHO course at Njala. Like Joseph, they are from Kambia and want



Joseph Kaloko, our first 'Cheltenham Scholar

to return once qualified to work in the District. With the generous financial support of The Martin Smith Foundation we have been able to guarantee scholarships to all seven students for the next 2 years, so that Kambia will benefit from eight new CHOs in 2009.



Barmoi PHU - now fully renovated thanks to your support

MSF WITHDRAWAL

In June 2007 Medecins Sans Frontieres finally pulled out of Kambia after 12 years of medical work in the district. As an international organisation, MSF provides health care in areas struck by disasters or in the aftermath of war. As the war in Sierra Leone had been over since 2002, MSF could no longer justify its presence in the country, especially as other major conflicts were erupting in other parts of the world. They leave a huge gap: the hospital still has no full time doctor because Dr. Kandeh has responsibility for public health for the entire district and his role is primarily administrative. As MSF enabled most of the transportation for patients to the hospital, now that they have left, the wards are almost empty. In response, we are working towards providing more medical staff from the UK in an ongoing programme of medium-term visits to Kambia and we are working to increase access to healthcare through transport. We are actively recruiting volunteers and hoping to strengthen the link with Gloucestershire Hospitals NHS Trust. We have taken over the old MSF base as our own Kambia HQ. Moses Kabba has his office there and we can provide accommodation for up to 10 visitors in fairly comfortable surroundings. The rent for house is about £2,000 per year and we cover the cost of providing electricity from a generator.



The old MSF base – now the 'Cheltenham Base'

MATERNITY WAITING HOUSE

One of the projects that MSF used to run (*originally an idea of Richard Kerr-Wilson*), was a Maternity Waiting House, a house where pregnant women who are either 'at risk' or live a long distance from the Hospital can stay during the final weeks of their pregnancy.

Although the house is provided rent free by the local council, we pay for food for the women, maintain the facilities and pay for the caretaker, Abu, who looks after the women during their stay. This costs us around £300 per month.

We are also in the process of setting up a 'maternity bus' – a vehicle that can travel around the district on set days each week to collect any women referred from the PHU's to the Waiting House prior to obstetric treatment at the hospital.

LIFECYCLE AMBULANCES

One of the many problems people in Kambia have is poor access to healthcare, so we're delighted with our Motorbike Ambulances (Lifecycles) that are ideal for use on African mud roads – some no wider than a track. The ambulances are highly durable and cost-effective: each vehicle should cost £700 a year to run. Other charities that use the ambulances report that each vehicle helps save at least one life a week. We are implementing a system where by each village has a pushbike that can be used by a strong and fit young man or woman to ride to the PHU and raise the alarm. At the moment not all the villages have mobile phones signal; there is a very faint signal between the PHU at Barmoi and the Hospital, but you have to stand in a certain spot and keep your fingers crossed! We are working with UK charity Re-Cycle Bikes for Africa to send out a consignment of 50 pushbikes in January to support the ambulance project.

CAESARIAN SECTIONS

MSF provided free emergency obstetrics in Kambia, so we are currently fundraising to take over this cost. Each C-section costs around £38.00, which includes the cost of drugs and fuel for the generator to power the operating theatre. Dr Kandeh estimates 120 c-sections were performed last year, so we are committing to raise about £4,560 each year.



One of our 6 Lifecycles in use – this lady is sitting, but the stretcher can be extended fully if required



Cooking Cassava Leaf in the Hospital Kitchens

FUNDRAISING HIGHLIGHTS

Following the success of last year's event, we held another Christmas Shopping Evening by kind permission of Sally & Bill Lorman, at Wellington Lodge. The event was a huge success and raised £5,000 – FANTASTIC. The next event in the pipeline is a 'family bingo night' at the new Bingo premises in The Brewery. If anyone would like more details, please e-mail Shona (shona.lockyer@spitfireuk.net). At 7.30pm on Friday 14th December, the regulars at the Exmouth Arms in Cheltenham had a change from the usual pub entertainment when Richard Kerr-Wilson and Margaret Barratt had a mutual head shaving in public.



Richard Kerr-Wilson head shaving

have been successful. With the help of The Tropical Health and Education Trust we are working on a concept paper for a major proposal to The Lottery, which could involve linking with partner charities in the UK with similar maternal health projects in Malawi, Somaliland and Ethiopia.

NAME CHANGE

The more eagle-eyed amongst you will have spotted that we are now called The Kambia Appeal, rather than The Kambia Hospital Appeal. This change is a result of our increasing work outside of the Hospital – a growing level of support to the PHUs in the District, our scholarship programme and our focus on improving access to healthcare. We would like to reassure all our supporters however that our commitment and level of support to the Hospital remains unchanged, this just gives us more flexibility when applying for grants and allows us to encompass other projects, should we so wish, at any future date.



Happy Shoppers

Margaret's original reason was to show solidarity with a colleague who is going through chemotherapy, but to make a positive contribution, she decided to use it to raise money for the Kambia Appeal and Cancer Research. She asked Richard to do the shaving, and suggested he should go through it too. He agreed, providing they raised £1,000. Unfortunately for him, the figure was reached, and they are both now wishing they had chosen a warmer time of year!

Since September 2007 our applications to trusts and foundations have generated £12,000 in grants for projects in 2008 and £5,000 in advance for the year after. Further applications have been sent and we await to see if they



PLEASE NOTE:
AS OF 24 DECEMBER 2007
WE ARE UNABLE TO
BANK CHEQUES
MADE OUT TO THE
KAMBIA HOSPITAL APPEAL.
PLEASE MAKE CHEQUES
PAYABLE TO
THE KAMBIA APPEAL

*Thank you all for
your continued interest
and support.*