



# Kambia Hospital Appeal

Newsletter No. 13

[www.kambiahospital.org.uk](http://www.kambiahospital.org.uk)

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## Hospital open again !

The Kambia district hospital opened its doors to patients again earlier this year after five years lying in ruins. Funds for the rehabilitation project came from the European Union after the Kambia Hospital Appeal successfully lobbied for international aid. At the official opening of the hospital on 3 June, the Sierra Leone President, Dr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, thanked the Cheltenham Appeal for supporting the health sector in Kambia over the years and hoped that such support would continue. Members of the Kambia Appeal visited Sierra Leone last October and found that the hospital is once again a thriving hub of the community, full of patients from across the district, but is still in need of support in many areas.



### The New Hospital

Many improvements have been made to the original 1950s hospital, including the addition of a paediatrics ward, an on-site Under 5s clinic, a sturdy perimeter wall and eight staff houses. The wards are now adequately furnished and equipped and the pharmacy store is well stocked with medicines and supplies. Further development of the hospital is to take place in the coming year with the construction of a much needed maternity ward funded by the EU.

There are, however, problems at the hospital, the most severe being staff shortages because the Sierra Leone government cannot afford to recruit new medical personnel. The hospital currently relies on the co-operation of unpaid volunteers, including 20 nursing aids. The water supply for the hospital site is also inadequate. Despite voicing our concern about the capacity of the wells at meetings with the European Union delegation and the building contractor last year, and despite sending them a copy of our hydrological report, there is currently no running water in the operating theatre, the wards or the staff houses. However, we have been assured that the EU contractor will rectify the problem by digging deeper wells during the forthcoming dry season. In the mean time, water is manually pumped and carried from the well.

### Help from MSF

The hospital and four peripheral health units in the district continue to be supported by the emergency health organisation MSF-Holland, which arrived in Kambia in 1998 during the civil war and will maintain its presence in the district until at least the end of 2005. MSF provides medical personnel and resources, including a team of health and logistics professionals, vehicles and medical supplies. Most significantly, MSF provides free, or substantially subsidised, healthcare to the local community. Communication between Cheltenham and Kambia is currently facilitated by MSF who kindly forward emails to the hospital staff. Thanks to MSF for assisting us on our recent visit.

### Kambia doctor in UK

Dr Santigie Sesay, the Kambia District Medical Officer who we met last year, is now studying in the UK. He follows in the footsteps of Dr Foday Dafee by embarking upon an MA in Public Health at Leeds. We wish Santigie all the best for his qualification in England and look forward to welcoming him to Cheltenham during the coming year.

### Amazon.co.uk



If you are buying books, CDs or a camera, why not do it via the Kambia Hospital Appeal website and help Kambia at the same time? Amazon donates 5% of the value of your transaction to the Appeal at no extra cost to you. Look for the Amazon link on our home page at [www.kambiahospital.org.uk](http://www.kambiahospital.org.uk) and get shopping!

## Fund Raising Update

Since April this year, we have raised over £20,000 towards our work in Kambia through grants from UK trusts and foundations, cash donations and local fundraising events. **Caroline parachuting** Notable highlights include a recent single grant of £5,000 towards medical equipment for the hospital from the Constance Green Foundation and £1,800 for HIV testing kits from the Strathspey Charitable Trust; £2,000 from Rotary towards a medical vehicle for the district; £939 from Anne and Sean Elyan's Summer Breakfast and £915 from Caroline Gardiner's (very brave) parachute jump. Thank you every one for your enthusiastic support!



## New Vehicles for Kambia



**Antony Sesay and Richard Kerr-Wilson with the new vehicle**

The hospital has recently purchased two new Honda motorbikes and a 4x4 vehicle with money sent by the Kambia Hospital Appeal. The bikes are used by the pharmacy store manager, who takes medical supplies out to the surrounding medical clinics, and the Water and Sanitation Officer, who ensures safe drinking water across the district. The 4x4 vehicle (pictured above) is used by the Acting District Medical Officer, Dr Wilson (not RKW), and as an emergency ambulance when it is in Kambia.

## New leaflet

Enclosed with this newsletter you will find a copy our new publicity leaflet, which outlines our aims for the next few years. We are very grateful to Print By Design in Cheltenham for helping us with the production and to Kevin McPhillips Travel, a UK Sierra Leone travel agent that is sending our leaflet to all its clients who buy airline tickets to Freetown. If you would like a supply of leaflets to give to friends or to distribute at work, please contact James Dowling or John Kloer.

## New Faces

We are delighted to welcome Alan Dick as a new trustee as well as Jackie Monaghan and Malcolm Garrett who have become committee members to the Kambia Hospital Appeal.

## Kambia on Film

As an effective way to encourage pregnant women in Kambia to visit their local medical clinic for antenatal treatment, we are funding the making of a public health film, which will be screened in the rural villages. Alice Kerr-Wilson and Peter Krause are currently in Kambia for two and a half months working on the project. They will be working with local people from women's groups and the youth council of the district to help create an effective educational tool. Follow Alice and Peter's progress via their on-line weblog, which you can access from the Kambia website. [www.kambiahospital.org.uk](http://www.kambiahospital.org.uk)

## Radios and Training

Our current aims for improving maternal health in Kambia include installing a radio link between the district hospital and the surrounding medical clinics and providing training for midwives and traditional birthing attendants. A team of Cheltenham midwives will be visiting Kambia for a week in February to make a start with the training programme. We hope to have more news about the radios in the next few months.

## 2004 Visit to Sierra Leone by James Dowling

When I was in Kambia last year, the hospital was a building site of half-constructed walls and unfinished roofs; the drains were open trenches and goats roamed freely amongst the piles of sand and cement. Now, one year on, there is a bustling hospital. The wards are full of patients and the covered walkway that runs the length of the buildings is crowded with their relatives sitting out of the sun or with people waiting to attend out-patient clinics or collect prescriptions from the pharmacy. Along the far edge of the site, there is a row of neat staff bungalows, each with a veranda and a television aerial, a line of washing or two and the beginnings of gardens. The goats are still there, but now they are tethered in the shade under the vast cotton tree that dominates the hospital grounds and in the branches of which the noisy weaver birds thread their nests. After the years of violence, anticipation and hope, it's a very satisfying scene.

I arrived in Kambia with Paula Froggatt and Richard and Joey Kerr-Wilson. We all had our own aims and intentions for our week-long stay, but all of us wanted to gain a clear understanding of how the hospital was working



**Patients' relatives outside the female ward**

and the ways in which we could best direct our continued support from Cheltenham.



**The theatre team - Margaret Dumbuya, Joseph, AnneMarie from MSF and Richard**

Richard's arrival, especially, had been keenly anticipated. Thirty-seven women suffering incontinence caused by obstetric fistulas had gathered from across the district in the hope of receiving the life-transforming operation which Richard was to perform. Working every day of the visit in sweltering temperatures in an operating theatre with no air conditioning or running water, Richard performed sixteen fistula operations. Recent reports indicate that all the women are doing well. It is clear that there are still many more women in Kambia who have this condition and who suffer untold social deprivation because of it. As there is no local solution to the problem, we would like to be able to continue to help such women by establishing an ongoing programme of visits by qualified UK surgeons to operate in Kambia and to train a local medical worker to perform the procedure.

Paula spent much of her time at the antenatal and Under 5s clinics at the hospital. She helped Sister Veronica Jarboe and her staff with their daily work, including testing children for malaria. As malaria is one of the major causes of infant mortality in the district (33% of all recorded infant deaths in Kambia last year were attributed to the disease) a new test, which takes only 15 minutes to indicate whether a child is positive, is vitally important in ensuring that children receive treatment as early as possible.

Joey Kerr-Wilson had the opportunity to visit many schools in Kambia, including all the Primary schools in Kambia Town and the Kolenten Secondary School. Her aim is to forge educational links between schools in Kambia and Cheltenham and Gloucester to foster cultural exchange. Joey was able to meet with senior education officials and teachers in the district, as well as to participate in and lead English lessons. This included an animated telling of the story of the Three Billy Goats Gruff, complete with troll.

I particularly wanted to get a picture of the broader health system in Kambia, to see how the hospital worked in relation to the surrounding primary health care units.

There are currently thirty-two functioning clinics in the district, all of which, in theory, can refer patients to the district hospital for emergency treatment. In practice this is very difficult given that there is no means of communication or organised transportation between facilities. As we would like to increase access to treatment at the hospital, especially emergency obstetrics, I was eager to see how clinics are encouraging patients in the rural villages to seek professional healthcare.

I visited three clinics in the district: Sella Kafta, which is about 20 miles outside Kambia Town; the main clinic in Medina, which is a two hour drive north from Kambia; and the medical unit at Tomba Wollah, which is a three hour drive south to Kychon and then a one and a half hour boat trip down the Great Scarcies River and up the Little Scarcies River. I am very grateful to MSF for allowing me to join them on these trips.

We were very pleased to see old Kambia friends who have returned to the hospital to work. Anthony Sesay, who visited Cheltenham to attend an administrative course, is now the hospital registrar and administrative secretary for the district. Alice Batty, a midwife who has also spent time in Cheltenham, has now returned from Guinea and lives on the hospital site with her son John. We are particularly grateful to Alice for cooking us some wonderful food during our stay. Theatre nurse, Margaret Dumbuya, who trained at Cheltenham General, helped Richard with the fistula operations, and Dr Foday Dafee, one time District Medical Officer of Kambia and long-term friend of the Appeal, now lives in Freetown and is in charge of the Ministry of Health's TB and leprosy programme.



**Paula Froggatt and Alice Batty**

At the end of our week in Sierra Leone, we spent the last day in Freetown and met with the new Minister of Health, Mrs Abator Thomas. The Minister, who was previously Director of the British Council in Sierra Leone, and a gender specialist, was very interested to hear of our plans for Kambia as they are in line with her own understanding of how best to improve maternal healthcare across the country. We agreed that communication, transportation, staff training and community education are key ways for making a positive difference in a country that is, again, bottom of the UN poverty index.

See more photographs from our recent trip and keep up-to-date with local events and news from Kambia on our website - [www.kambiahospital.org.uk](http://www.kambiahospital.org.uk).

## Messages from the Kambia Hospital Staff

### Anthony Sesay - Kambia Hospital Registrar

On behalf of the entire medical staff we thank the European Union and the Cheltenham Kambia Hospital Appeal for rehabilitating the hospital. We appreciate the good work of the team in Cheltenham and MSF Holland in Kambia, especially Richard Kerr-Wilson for providing treatment for the women with fistulas. Such operations would normally cost millions of leones in this country.

The hospital relies on 59 unpaid volunteers, including 30 nursing aids, 10 labourers, 10 porters, 4 laundry workers, 1 cook and 4 security guards. Please help us pay for their valuable work.

### Margaret Dumbuya - Theatre Nurse

The new hospital is an improvement but it is under staffed and we do not yet have all the necessary facilities, such as air conditioning in the operating theatre where the temperature can reach 40oC. We have been busy in the theatre this week with the visit of Richard Kerr-Wilson. All the fistula operations have gone well. I have now been trained to do spinal blocks, which are very useful for caesarean sections.

### Makalay Mansaray - District Health Sister at Magbutaka Hospital,

Until 2002, I was Sister of the Under 5s clinic and antenatal clinic here in Kambia. I am now the District Health Sister at Magbutaka Hospital, which is 250 miles away. This is my first visit back to Kambia since the hospital's rehabilitation and it is so good to revisit Kambia. When I was re-posted, Kambia hospital lay in ruins. Now with its new and additional buildings it is very impressive. The entire hospital complex is now enclosed by a secure wall. The staff houses are comfortable. This is the only hospital in Sierra Leone with this quality of staff accommodation. I have enjoyed meeting my old colleagues from the hospital and also my dear friends from Cheltenham.

### Veronia Jarboe - Sister of the Under 5s and Antenatal clinics

The Under 5s clinic and the antenatal clinic now benefit from being on site within the hospital grounds. The mothers and babies can go straight to the pharmacy or to the laboratory for blood tests if they need them, and pregnant women who attend the antenatal clinic can be admitted to the labour ward if necessary. There is a wonderful new malarial test now available for children at the hospital which takes only fifteen minutes to confirm positive cases. This means that treatment can begin immediately and saves a lot of time.

### Margaret Conteh - Kambia Hospital Nurse

For me, the hospital still needs equipment and is still under staffed. The visit from Richard Kerr-Wilson is a big relief to the community and the hospital as a whole. We have so many incontinent women needing fistula operations in Kambia so his time has been well spent. All the patients operated on are doing well. They appreciate it, and they receive good nursing care. There is a good team spirit in the hospital, and the local community values this very much. Those who were unfortunate not to have the operation wish Richard a good life, good luck and please come again soon. The nurses love him on the female ward and we hope he will visit again soon. God bless.



### Abdul T Dean - Water and Sanitation Officer for Kambia District

For my job I work across the whole of the Kambia District, often staying over night if necessary. I teach people how to rehydrate themselves when they have had sickness and diarrhoea by drinking boiled water with salt and sugar added. We have a problem with diseases from water, such as cholera. There is one cholera patient at the hospital right now.

Luckily very small children are protected from the disease as they are breast fed for up to two years. Cholera is spread by water during the rainy season. Chlorinating village wells is an important part of my job as it makes the water safe to drink.

The motorbike donated to the district by the Cheltenham Appeal is a great help to my job because it allows me to travel easily from village to village so more people are helped.

### Frances Pearce - Hospital Matron

I have been working here in Kambia for four months since the new hospital opened. Although the hospital is now very good, there are only 20 qualified nurses on the payroll so we have to employ another 20 volunteers. In the wards, there is only one set of linen for each bed, we have no spare sets, and we are short of sterilising units. We provide three meals per day for the patients - tea in the morning, rice in the afternoon and millet in the evening. The water shortages at the hospital now during the wet season means that there will be big problems when the dry season commences.



### Dr Wilson - Acting Medical Officer for Kambia District

The district hospital draws patients not only from the seven chiefdoms of Kambia but also from Guinea, the neighbouring country. In terms of projects for the future, in a district the size of Kambia communication is vital. More radio links between rural medical clinics and the hospital are necessary. We are hoping that the situation will soon be improved with the installation of a mobile phone mast in Kambia. Transport remains a problem because many people need to travel many miles to reach the hospital.



Abdul on his new KHA motorbike

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