

Chair's 6 month Report: March 2020 – December 2020

Since my last Chair's report, we have all been in the midst of the world-wide Covid-19 pandemic. It has not been possible to visit The Gambia because of lockdown and travel restrictions. It has been a challenging time for the Trustees who have had to conduct business remotely and face to face in smaller group outside spaces. Equally, our friends in The Gambia have been restricted in the activities they are allowed to pursue but we are pleased that both our Clinical Advisors (CATs), Chernor and Lamin, have taken very active roles in the national response to Covid-19 with Chernor playing a strategic role in the public health track and trace activities as well as promoting the work of aidgambia. Nevertheless, despite everything, the Trustees are happy to confirm that a money transfer to The Gambia was successfully completed in late October to underpin projects and bursaries.

Despite the current challenges, the Trustees have kept in regular contact with existing Bendon Bursary holders, new 2020/21 applicants and project groups with the help of Chernor and Lamin out in The Gambia. In my report to a Trustees' meeting in September 2020, I referred to a proposal just received from the Eye Care For All (ECFA) charity with whom we have established close links. We are delighted to confirm that the proposal was approved and funds have now been successfully transferred. Because of travel restrictions.

ECFA have had to put their eye care field trips up country on hold and so their project was much closer to home. Their project was to extend their health care remit to supply protective face masks to inmates of a very crowded Banjul Prison. This work it is hoped may well lead to further eye care ECFA initiatives with the prison service.

In addition to the above, the Bendon Bursary goes from strength to strength. Both of our existing recipients have received their results. Lamin now progresses into his third year. He still manages to balance the demands of work and study and often in the most difficult circumstances – frequent power and internet failures (and at times this has been quite acute with studies switching to remote mode due to Covid!). Well done Lamin and keep going!

Chernor has completed his studies although the end date was delayed due to Covid; now his big fear is that he will be deprived of a graduation ceremony because of Covid rules. He deserves high praise because his final year results were truly outstanding. The Trustees are really proud of both of our first two Bendon Bursary recipients.

With the help of our CATs, the Trustees have received and approved two new bursaries. The Charity is now supporting three full-time students in their degree studies; Lamin continues and in addition, Karafa MARONG and Ebrima K JALLOW. Karafa is currently in the 3rd semester of his second year of BSc Nursing. Karafa also volunteers his time and expertise to ECFA charity where he is the Communications Officer. Ebrima is studying BSc

Public & Environmental Health Sciences. The Trustees would like to congratulate all Bendon Bursary holders and wish them well in their studies this academic year. There are also new applicants in waiting for 2021/22 bursaries to support health-related administration. The Trustees will delay the 2020 AGM – due in December - until early in 2021 in the hope we may be able to meet up in person. We also wish to convey all our thanks to TCHC

friends and supporters. We are really grateful to those intrepid on-line shoppers who use Easyfundraising and so raise significant amounts of money to provide reconditioned hardware that in turn transforms the studies of our Bendon Bursary students. Also, those who have donated using VirginGiving via our website. We also must thank TK of Revive My Device – formerly of Ladywell but now of Brockley for his generous assistance in reconditioning hardware that revolutionises the studies of our bursary holders, AND, as always, a big thank you to the parishioners of Chris Bendon's old church, St John the Baptist, Ilford for their generosity.

Marilyn McMenemy

Chair - [aidgambia](https://www.aidgambia.org) TCHC