

Blog December 2025

Firstly Jim and I hope you had a very happy Christmas and wish you a peaceful, health and prosperous New Year.

Well, as usual we have been very, very busy monitoring and keeping up with the hard work put in by the team in The Gambia. Also working out how to get the most from the wonderful funding provided by **you, our loyal supporters**.

In particular, dealing with some of the complexities that arose as a result of us deciding to support some of the young cataract patients identified in the two large eye health screenings at the beginning of this year, who we were told, probably would not arrive at the SZRECC largely **because of the financial constraints they experience**.

We decided that if the person was young, and if their problem was a cataract, **we would try to help** (finances allowing). We set a budget for this, which we have monitored very closely

It should be remembered that the surgeons who do the surgery locally are well **qualified nurses (mostly in the health outposts around the country) - NOT eye surgeons!** They have been well trained to carry out cataract surgery,

however, they are **not permitted** to operate on anyone under 45 years in case of complications, hence these and some of the other referrals.

Part your donations have gone to pay for the eye surgery and ancillary costs to help eight year old Maimuna, detailed below. You might remember, I wrote about the successful treatment of another young girl, Araba, in my last blog.

Maimuna's case proved to be quite a long old journey though!

Let me introduce Maimunia

She is an eight-year-old from one of the outlying villages near to Basse which is about 230 miles from Kanifing. She was diagnosed with a 'traumatic' cataract.



Getting her to the SZRECC proved quite complex. She visited the main hospital in mid-May with a parent. She was examined and it was agreed that the surgery would be carried out; a date was set.

She failed to turn up for that appointment because of poor health. She actually came on 15th July but sadly (and frustratingly) "due to a lack of vitrectomy tube", she was sent home.



The photograph is of her in the children's play area of the hospital whilst she waited.....



Her parents were contacted for her to return on 16th of September. This she did with her family; this is a photo of her waiting in line.

Because of a minor complication during surgery, Maimuna's discharge was delayed.



She was discharged with 'good vision' on 24th September.

She came back on 2nd October, for her follow up check. Just look at her smile and the look on her and her mum's face.



Back at the beginning of October for the final discharge.

Phew..... Just imagine the travelling that this young child has undertaken..... and all by bush taxi. We found ourselves actually paying for the fragile instrument required for her operation..... We had promised this child (and her parents) that we would help repair her eye! And thankfully we did.

We are still mulling over the pros and cons of supporting cataract patients in this way.

The Urban camps continue, very successfully, enabling the very, very poorest Gambians (and sometime other African nationals) to get a quick and easy fix to enable them to get back to a normal(ish) life. Back to petty trading, manual working, fishing, tending gardens or even begging. All means to an end.

We know that they appreciate this opportunity for such a quick and easy remedy for such a debilitating problem. We thank you on their behalf.

We have had some exciting, if sad news from The Gambia. Our 'main man', Alasana Touray is due to retire from his position at the SZRECC in January. We understand that he will take on a new challenge, so as not to waste his undoubted talents by opening up an opticians in Lamin. It seems he and an optician friend are joining forces to develop a 'professional eye care shop', we are thrilled for him, and that he will continue to serve the wonderful people of his country. WE WISH HIM WELL.

When Alasana retires, we will liaise with the very able and personable Bakary Dibba. We anticipation a smooth and trouble free handover, and welcome him to our CAC team.

NOW: OUR LATEST STATS

WE HAVE: 11th Dec 25

Completed 17 eye health screenings across The Gambia

We have now

Performed 1849 cataract operations

THANK YOU ALL