

Wonder Years Centre of Excellence (WYCE)

Trustees' Report (year end 31 December 2017)



WYCE: offering a hand up not just a hand out

This is WYCE's Annual Report for 2017. The charity was established in 2001 with the following purposes:

- the advancement of education
- the relief of poverty
- the protection and preservation of health
- the education of the people of The Gambia.

Our main objectives for the year continued to be enabling, facilitating and supporting the delivery of education, healthcare and livelihoods by WYCE in The Gambia. To meet these objectives, we planned and managed our work under three areas:

1. Raising awareness and understanding in the UK, and overseas of WYCE's work and the volunteering programme
2. Raising funds to support work in The Gambia, and support WYCE in The Gambia to generate income to support their work.
3. Ensuring that WYCE in the UK complies with the law and good practice in its Governance, operations and financial management

This report sets out what has been achieved in The Gambia and the charity's activities and finances in the UK under the three areas as listed above. WYCE in The Gambia is a separate, though very closely linked legal entity, registered by the Gambian Government as a Non- Governmental Organisation (NGO) Number A78 based, in Madina Salam, Kombo South. The long-term aim for WYCE is to enable local people achieve sustainability. The UK Trustee Board works in close partnership with WYCE in The Gambia to achieve this aim.

Impact in The Gambia 2017

(Quotes in italics are taken from WYCE in The Gambia Annual Report for 2017)

WYCE exists to support education, healthcare and livelihoods in The Gambia. In 2017 we were proud to have supported the following achievements by WYCE in The Gambia:

- expansion of the WYCE School, in partnership with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), to provide for more students in the Upper Basic Level. In September, students from Grade 8 became our first Grade 9 and this academic year (2017/18), local children will be able to complete their whole Basic Education (age 4-14) in Madina Salam,

without needing to travel 5 kilometres each way to the Upper Basic School in Gunjur. MoBSE continued to fund qualified teacher salaries

- provision of funding for four trainee teachers as they completed their three year course and qualified
- building and furnishing of a new two classroom block
- in partnership with The Gambian Government, enabling the teaching and learning of 783 pupils (from September 2017) - 410 girls and 273 boys
- enhancing teaching and learning by employing teaching assistants and other school ancillary staff
- provision of additional (after school) examination preparation/revision classes for five classes. These classes continue to improve student performance. *'The initiation of the study classes has significantly improved the performance of the students in various classes.'*
- provision of a hot meal (Monday-Thursday) for 600 students in the school. *'The school feeding programme continued to enhance the development of the school in terms of improving students' attendance and retention.'*
- through partnership with Rotary Sweden, provision of adult literacy classes for women from the village of Madina Salam.
- implementation of a new music programme as an extra curricular activity for students at the school
- refurbishment of the school kitchen
- provision of cycling proficiency sessions for students at the school
- provision of primary healthcare (1,285 outpatients) and hosting of visits by the trekking team from Gunjur Health Clinic each month to support with vaccinations, ante natal/post natal care and provide a mother and toddler clinic
- provision of maternity care and baby packs to new mothers to encourage attendance at the clinic for antenatal, delivery and postnatal care (33 deliveries at the clinic)
- provision of a fridge for the clinic to store vaccinations and medicines
- installation of a reliable solar light system in the clinic
- the provision of health education workshops in the village (on a variety of health topics including HIV and AIDS)
- further development of the Mother and Toddler group
- operation of a bakery within the WYCE compound and build storeroom
- refurbishment of the office in Madina (tiling and installation of wifi)
- buying of a new vehicle to provide more reliable and comfortable transport for visiting volunteers
- the shipment of three containers of bikes from Re~Cycle and with special thanks to the Journey of a Lifetime from Halfords (JOAL) team
- development of new opportunities for sales of bikes at Wassu
- further development of the bike workshop in Madina Salam and skills of mechanics so they can deliver training to mechanics from other communities. In partnership with Re~Cycle, held the first training workshop and trained five mechanics from five different communities in The Gambia

- establishment of an 'Adopt a bike' scheme for senior school students in Madina Salam (for travelling to local secondary schools)
 - establishment of a pilot project funded by Re~Cycle at a senior secondary school in Tujering. Bikes were donated to twenty students and a mechanic trained in repairs and maintenance
 - provision of secure employment for 27 Gambians
 - provision of training opportunities for members of the WYCE Gambia team
 - provision of food and supplies for the poorest families in Madina Salam during Ramadan
- and - Bobby the guard dog has settled in his role.

Raising awareness and understanding of WYCE's work and the volunteering programme

Working in partnership with WYCE in The Gambia we continued to make use of social media for communication and promoting awareness. The WYCE Facebook page continued to be our main channel for sharing up to date news and activities - news and photographs were regularly posted including those of the school and the clinic, income generation initiatives, progress of sponsored projects, activities of visiting volunteers as well as news and events in the UK. We believe that news and photos from The Gambia are particularly important as they allow our supporters to see what their funds are being used for, and what a difference their support makes.

We continued production of the WYCE newsletter (accessed through the website with the link emailed to supporters) to provide a summary of news and photos.

The website continues to provide links to partners and supporter groups, and advertisements for 'WYCE Gifts' (for example funding school dinners for a day and sale of T-shirts to publicise our volunteer programme).

We greatly appreciate the actions of our partners and supporters as they shared news and raised awareness of WYCE's work on their own websites, Facebook pages and in local newspapers.

We are very grateful to supporters who gave presentations about WYCE during the year, and who took the time to speak to others informally about WYCE's work and their experience as volunteers in The Gambia. Word of mouth remains our most effective method of raising awareness, and has led to volunteer recruitment and many donations.

Positive links have been developed with members of the Gambian community based in the Birmingham area through GRAB Gambia (Gambian Resource and Advisory Bureau). During the year Trustees were warmly welcomed at a GRAB Gambia Conference and a Culture day and members of GRAB supported WYCE fundraising events. We were delighted to receive an award from GRAB Gambia in acknowledgment of our work in The Gambia -it is proudly displayed in our office in Madina Salam.

Promoting the visiting volunteer programme

Since 2004, volunteers have been welcomed to stay at the WYCE Working Lodge in order to work alongside WYCE Gambia's staff, developing and sharing skills in activities and projects that benefit the local community. Such visits give supporters the opportunity to see, at first hand, how funds are put to good use.

In addition to donating skills and energy, the lodge fees paid by volunteers provide vital funds for WYCE's core programmes - providing education, healthcare and livelihood projects in Madina Salam. In 2017, visiting volunteers generously donated resources and funds for the school, clinic and the wider project. These donations are always greatly appreciated.

We recognise the importance of continually investing in the Lodge and in 2017, we constructed a concrete stone circle for campfire gatherings, refurbished the office and purchased a more reliable, comfortable vehicle. As we are always considering ways of making the volunteering experience positive and meaningful for both the volunteers and for our beneficiaries, we appreciate the value of feedback.

The Lodge welcomed back familiar faces as well as new visitors and group visits, such as that as made by the Wonderland crew and the Journey of a Lifetime/JOAL team (from Halfords, Ireland) - all making such a big difference. In 2017 we had 52 volunteers staying at the lodge, between them staying a total of 72 weeks.

Helen Cleaver continued to be the primary point of contact in the UK for the administration of the volunteer programme. Close liaison between Helen and Gail Nwokeoma (WYCE Gambia Office Manager) involved the careful planning of visits in advance and collation of valuable feedback. Wherever possible, meetings take place with new volunteers prior to their visits. These face to face meetings are considered most valuable in helping visitors and WYCE plan and prepare for visits. We believe that it is important visitors understand what to expect, and have realistic expectations about what they can achieve.

Raising Funds and supporting income generation in The Gambia

We continue to make progress in managing the charity's finances and our focus has remained on managing costs and increasing income.

Managing costs

We keep our running costs in the UK to a minimum so that we can maximise the funds that we spend in The Gambia. In 2017, more than 80% of our expenditure was in The Gambia, supporting the delivery of education, healthcare and livelihoods. In the UK we employ one part-time staff member and our Trustees all work in a voluntary capacity and do not receive any payments from the charity. The rest of our UK expenditure is on insurance, accountant's fees, and office supplies.

Increasing income

We have tried to ensure a diversity of income sources during the year so that we are not over reliant on any one source. The UK's 2017 income has come from lodge volunteers (30%), regular donations via Direct Debit (14%), ad hoc donations, sales of charity goods and fundraising events (50%), and Gift Aid (6%)

The charity is always indebted to its supporters without whose donations of time, money and resources we would find it hard to operate. For example, donors supported the school feeding programme, construction of new classrooms, provision of classroom furniture, continued construction of a perimeter wall around the school, further development of the bee farm, building of a bakery storeroom, building of a new waiting area at the clinic, and the shipping of containers of bikes.

Of particular note, is the group of London based supporters Wonderland, who organise and run events throughout the year, donating all profits to WYCE. Since they became involved with WYCE in 2011, they have donated more than £27,000 which has funded the construction of classrooms, part-funded a container of bikes and the solar power system and much more. Their visits to The Gambia to work with the community, and the funds they have raised have made a huge difference to the lives of the people of Madina Salam. During their visit in February 2017, members of the Wonderland crew were present at the inauguration ceremony of the new classrooms and playground area. WYCE presented Wonderland with a certificate of appreciation in recognition of their staunch support to the charity in September 2017, when we attended their open air festival.

The visit in February 2017, by members of The Journey of a Lifetime team (a group of Halfords staff from the Republic of Ireland) was a particular highlight for WYCE. Considerable funds were raised (over £11,000) in addition to the payment of lodge fees and they were welcomed as volunteers in Madina Salam, where they supported our first training programme for five mechanics from other areas of The Gambia, delivered training sessions for children at the school and set up an 'Adopt a Bike' scheme for school students in Madina (travelling to other schools to continue their education). In addition, sponsorship from Halfords supported the shipping of containers of bikes and the training of further mechanics.

WYCE continued to work with groups and membership organisations in the UK to help us do more to help our beneficiaries. Links were further developed with Inner Wheel, Rotary, Schools and Scout Groups and others to raise funds via sponsorship of projects and programmes in The Gambia.

In 2017, income generation initiatives continued to be a high priority - the key to building sustainability. Income generation initiatives within The Gambia have seen significant success during the year, thus moving away from being heavily reliant on WYCE in the UK as their primary funder - clear evidence of WYCE in The Gambia beginning to stand on its own two feet. Income generation initiatives are carefully planned to support and complement other local businesses. In 2017, WYCE in The Gambia generated over 66% of its income itself, which in turn funds the delivery of education, healthcare and livelihoods, as well as capital projects. 83% of this was from the sale of bikes and repairs, the remainder from other enterprises including the bee farm, shop and bakery.

Central to success in this income generation is our strong partnership with Re~Cycle. WYCE in The Gambia is now successfully earning income through the refurbishment, repair and sales of bikes – in 2017 we shipped 4 containers of used bikes to The Gambia. This development is key in enabling us to work closer to our goal of sustainability. People in The Gambia have access to good quality, affordable, sustainable transport and to a growing network of trained bike mechanics in locations across the country. The Re~Cycle team also provided training for five bike mechanics from nearby villages, sponsored by Halfords UK in partnership with WYCE. In addition to the bike workshop in Madina Salam and the shop in Brikama, a new outlet for bike sales and repairs was further developed in Wassu - at the eastern end of the country, bringing affordable transport to an area where it is desperately needed.

The support of Re~Cycle, and particularly Jason Finch, Jakob Mamczak and David (Spadge) Hopkins has been invaluable in helping develop this aspect of our work. In addition, Re~Cycle worked with us to establish a pilot 'Cycle to School' scheme at Tujereng Senior Secondary School – 20 bikes were donated to students to make their journey to school much easier, and each student attended a training workshop to learn simple maintenance skills. We began work to expand this scheme to other schools in The Gambia, alongside training a bike mechanic from that local community.

Governance

WYCE in the UK, is both a charity and a company, governed by its Memorandum of Understanding and Articles of Association dated 2001. The duties of the Trustees are to:

1. Ensure the charity is carrying out its purposes for the public benefit
2. Comply with the charity's governing document and the law
3. Act in the charity's best interests
4. Manage the charity's resources responsibly
5. Act with reasonable care and skill
6. Ensure the charity is accountable

In our reporting, Trustees make every effort to give a very clear message of how WYCE carries out its purposes for the public benefit.

The Trustees continued their review of governance arrangements to ensure that we are fulfilling all of our duties by complying with legal requirements and good practice. In 2017 this included:

- the undertaking of a trustee skills audit to identify areas from which we should aim to recruit new trustees
- the recruitment of new trustees

WYCE takes Child Protection/Safeguarding seriously, and we believe that children in The Gambia deserve the same level of protection as children in the UK. Therefore, we require that all volunteers visiting WYCE in The Gambia hold a current Enhanced DBS Certificate (Disclosure and Barring Services), or equivalent.

Trustees usually meet on a monthly basis and keep in regular contact. Decisions are made collectively, with Lesley Dunlop (representing the Board) acting as the main link with WYCE Gambia. In 2017, the Trustees agreed an annual plan and associated budget, under three areas of activity. With a mid-year and end of year review this proved to be a very helpful working document and has provided the template for planning of work in 2018.

The Trustees are listed at the beginning of this report. Helen Cleaver, in her role of Office Manager, acts as Secretary to The Board, but is not a Trustee.

Lettie Harris, who has supported the charity from its very early days, retired as a Trustee. She has held this position on numerous occasions over the years. Lettie was present when the land in Madina Salam was marked out for WYCE in 2003 and has visited as a volunteer for many times since then, working in partnership with the team in the village. She has worked tirelessly, her knowledge and experience in the field of health has been invaluable and she has been a part of the growth of the charity to what it is today – working towards sustainability. Her contribution to the charity is immeasurable and whilst her presence as a Trustee will be sorely missed, her commitment to the ongoing development of the charity remains in her heart and mind.

Ivor Sperring and Steve Evans joined the Board of Trustees. Our skills audit has helped us identify areas where we feel we need to increase our skills and capacity within the Board, and we intend to act upon this in 2018.

Ivor visited Madina Salam towards the end of the year, to work alongside the WYCE Gambia team. These visits enable the continuing development of understanding and partnership between WYCE in The Gambia and the UK.

Votes of Thanks

Thank you to all the supporters of WYCE, here in the UK and around the world. Thank you for donating your time to raise awareness and much needed funds, and for visiting the working lodge in Madina Salam as volunteers. All your efforts are greatly appreciated, and we are indebted to your generous support that makes such a difference to the lives of the children and their families in Madina Salam. It enables us to continue and develop our work, provide better support for education, health and skill development projects, and helps us towards the long-term aim of the charity – sustainability.

Thank you to our partners, Re~Cycle for working with us to make a difference. Not only does WYCE benefit from bikes (and parts) that are shipped to The Gambia but, in 2017, the charity also gained from practical support given by staff and a volunteer from Re~Cycle as they visited Madina Salam to work alongside the team on the development of our Bike Project.

Thank you to 1st Crystal Palace Scout Troop and Crystal Palace Explorer Unit for donating resources including twenty tents and resources for the school scout group to use for their camping activities. They also generously donated funds for the school lunch programme.

We express our thanks to the Volunteer Forum, a group of supporters who meet regularly, raise awareness, organise fundraising events and visit Madina Salam as volunteers for WYCE. Their staunch support with education (including cycle safety), health and income generation (in particular the Bee Farm) is greatly appreciated.

We recognise the huge contribution that Lamin Kijera makes as WYCE Gambia Director, leading WYCE in The Gambia and working in a spirit of partnership with WYCE in the UK. We send our deep appreciation to all in the WYCE Gambia team as we work together to achieve our common purposes. We send particular thanks for the efforts of the team during the period of political uncertainty in the country at the beginning of the year.

Gail Nwokeoma continues to provide direct support to the WYCE Gambia team as a highly valued long-term volunteer. Gail provides administrative support, manages finances and plays a vital role in the delivery of the volunteer programme. Her loyal commitment is invaluable.

We recognise the contribution of the WYCE Gambia Board, led by the Acting Chair Mr Bakary Touray (previously Vice Chair) and thank him for his commitment.

We send our greetings and thanks to the community of Madina Salam. During 2017, further positive links were made with members of the community – ensuring that WYCE’s work is led by their needs, and leading to a further deepening understanding of what WYCE can do to support them. It is good to see the practical support given by people from the village during the year.

Helen Cleaver who, as Office Manager, manages the day to day operations of WYCE UK and is considered a real asset to the charity

WYCE UK: priorities and plans for 2018

Our three objectives are to:

1. Raise awareness and understanding in the UK and overseas of WYCE’s work and the volunteering programme
2. Raise funds to support work in The Gambia, and support Gambia to generate income to support their work
3. Ensure that WYCE UK complies with the law and good practice in its governance, management and financial management

Priorities include:

- promotion of the volunteer programme and working lodge
- continuing the governance review (to include revision of governing documents/Constitution)
- ensuring that WYCE UK complies with new laws regarding General Data Protection Regulation
- bidding for funding of a series of specific major infrastructure projects identified by the WYCE Gambia team and local community, including extension of the solar water system and school buildings

- review of Trustee roles and recruitment of new Trustees to fill identified skill gaps.

The Gambia: priorities and plans for 2018

The primary focus will remain on education, healthcare and livelihoods.

There will be a continued focus on sustainable livelihoods by exploring opportunities for training/further development of staff to see what more we can do in the area of education and training, to enable Gambians establish sustainable livelihoods for themselves.

'As envisaged in the long-term plan, the centre will become a place where many Gambians will learn and graduate with requisite skills to build their own future.' (reference to the bike workshop)

Priority major projects for 2018 include:

- construction of a classroom block for the Upper Basic school
- completion of the school perimeter fence
- continuing school feeding programme
- completion of the clinic fence
- shipping of containers of bikes for sustainable projects and other proposed activities
- provision of a reliable water supply to the part of the village on the other side of the road.

Sustainability – focus for the future of WYCE

In 2018, WYCE will continue to do what it can to help Gambians build their own future. WYCE in the UK is primarily an enabling organisation and our purpose is to support and enable the delivery of services in The Gambia and the achievement of sustainability. Income generation within The Gambia will continue to be the main focus so that future funds, raised in the UK, can further support enterprise, and improve the services and facilities WYCE provides. This is considered as an investment in the future and the best way to lend a hand up not just give a hand out.