

BACSECT News - August 2020

For readers who are not familiar with the acronym BACSECT and what it stands for, it is a small charitable trust set up by Revd John Baxter and his wife, Dorothy, earlier this year. Baxter's African Children's School Education Charitable Trust came into being as more and more people and local groups wished to be involved with and help support their school in The Gambia.

Fuller information about the school can be found on the school website:
www.africanschoolgambia.com

Just as it happened to schools in the UK during the Covid 19, Richard, our Headmaster has had to close his school and still awaits government permission to reopen. For the people of The Gambia the financial implications are extreme because if you can't work then you do not get paid and there is no equivalent to our social security. The charity has taken the decision to pay the teachers up to the end of this year by which time we hope the school will be up and running again.

The rate of Covid 19 infection in The Gambia had been quite low up until a month ago but in the last three weeks the new cases have risen rapidly with reports of over one hundred a day and rising which is a great deal in a small country. The government took lockdown measures early closing the boarder with Senegal which has many cases but sadly people are entering by sea and by unofficial land crossings and are bring the virus with them. Ships continue to be able to enter the docks but the airport has been closed to everything except medical supplies until recently. Incoming people are taken to a place for isolation for two weeks on arrival in the country. We are still booked to go out there in November but it is looking very unlikely that we will be able to do so as there are currently no flights from the UK.

We had the excitement of having our first Zoom meeting with Richard a few days ago. The technology in the school is a little basic and, more importantly, the electrical supply is very intermittent so to be able to get 30 minutes with him "face to face" was very positive and enabled us to build up his confidence that the support is there for the school when it is able to re-open. We are shipping out some basic PPE as it is not readily available locally, and very expensive, but it does take 8 to 10 weeks for our boxes to get there. Five litres of hand sanitizer, touch free thermometers, face shields and disposable masks are all on the way along with soap bars and towels.

Please remember the school and The Gambia in your prayers.