



Sibanor Health Centre Newsletter

July 2022

Do all things without murmurings and disputings that you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom you shine as lights in the world. Philippians 2:14-15

Dear friends

This being our first newsletter in 2022, we are grateful to God for what he is doing here at Sibamor Health Centre. We hope that the year has been good so far for you our friends and partners both long term and new partners.

By the grace of God we have been able to provide the full range of services since the beginning of the year. We hold general outpatient clinics every day, plus dedicated chronic care clinics on Mondays and Wednesdays and antenatal clinics on Tuesdays. COVID 19 cases have reduced to a low level but we have remained vigilant in order to protect vulnerable patients, and we have only just relaxed the rule on mask-wearing for patients to enter the Health Centre grounds.

With the relaxation of Covid restrictions we have been able to re-start our weekly Outreach visits to the surrounding villages, with a combined team of nurses and local church pastors. Village people who are identified as 'at risk' are offered a free check at the Health Centre and we are delighted that a high proportion of them do come for follow-up checks on blood pressure and blood glucose level. We are providing an extra dedicated chronic care clinic on Fridays to handle these new patients and to ensure that we do not overload the existing Monday and Wednesday clinics. The role of the church pastors is to engage people in discussion about their lives and their challenges and to offer to pray with them. Please pray with us that key individuals will not just accept our offer of prayer – which many do – but will also be open to further exploration of what we believe and will come to saving faith in the Lord Jesus.



Villagers queue for health screening. Pastoral team (Master, Bacary and Sainey) standing on the left.

Thankfully, the Medical Research Council retiree midwife who we mentioned in our last newsletter has now joined the team, bringing welcome relief to the midwife team after the abrupt resignation of one of our long-standing midwives last year. We hope to train one of our nurses in midwifery so that such a critical problem does not arise again. A newly graduated nurse who was sponsored through the clinic will also soon re-join the team, which means that we will back to sustainable levels of experienced staff.

We have been able to take a step forward in diagnostic services with the ability to monitor renal function and determination of estimated glomerular filtration rate. We are grateful to partners who provided this equipment which enables us to improve prescribing and patient care.

We are so grateful for supporters from WEC Germany who provide us with funding to cover our regular major drug order from IDA in The Netherlands, and a consignment has just arrived which ensures that we will not have drug shortages. Suely (our faithful volunteer storekeeper) keeps updated computer records to guide our purchases and Peter (one of our volunteers from the UK) works closely with her to ensure that we order enough to last between deliveries, but not so much that we would throw unused stocks away at expiry date. Please pray with us that we can find a Gambian pharmacy assistant to train as a back-up for Suely.



Suely and her wonderfully well-organised medical store

Some dear friends from The Netherlands have funded the provision of our New Ward building which is nearly ready for opening – just some plumbing work and mosquito guards to be completed. It was a joy to have a team of them here for two weeks in January and they made great progress building walls on the foundations that our local builder Pastor Habib had laid. We are looking forward to being able to house patients in smaller rooms, to have separate rooms for men and women, and for the new toilet and shower facilities that will be available. We are also making good progress on the new Burns Unit which another set of Dutch friends are sponsoring with the encouragement of our dear friend Dr Koos.



Our Dutch friends with Pastor Habib enjoying a rest from their labours



The new ward – nearly finished!

Our next building projects will be starting soon, with two large buildings for the planned nursing school – one containing a student common room and library, and the other a training room and staff offices. These are being sponsored by friends from the UK. There is a lot of paperwork that we need to complete for the accreditation of the school and of course we need to create the syllabus and teaching materials. We are excited by the prospect of a volunteer Head of Nursing School (Christine) who arrives later this month from Germany and will oversee the completion of the preparations this year ahead of a planned launch of the school in 2023. Please pray with us for the recruitment of Christians to work alongside her: a local administrator, two nursing tutors, and a deputy Head of School who in the longer term would take over headship when Christine leaves.

Finally on the building front we also need to re-build our staff common room which was suffering structural damage from a nearby Neem tree.

As you can see from the picture on the right, the tree had cause subsidence in the foundations and the front wall was becoming unsafe. The recommendation was to take the tree down but.....



....unfortunately the building was further damaged when we took the tree down. We intend to turn a necessity into a virtue and incorporate two new toilets (one of which will have facilities for disabled people) in the re-built building. We don't have a sponsor for this work yet.....

Another donor, Partners International, have been very generous in their support over the past year. They donated USD6000 in 2021 towards the renovation of our Chronic Care buildings, and a further USD600 and USD1200 towards our medical supply costs and Outreach work respectively. We are very grateful for the coordinating efforts of House of Wisdom in Sukuta who have been our good advocate for this funding. May God bless them.

Christ Community Church under the leadership of Pastor Bidwel Mendy regularly host a team from Global Health Outreach – a US-based short term volunteering organization – for medical evangelism visits. We were grateful to receive a donation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as well as some medication to the Health Centre last time they came. We are appreciative of this gesture as an example of Christian unity and love.



Two of the recent volunteers with Sainey, Dr Mariatou and Pastor Mendy



Three appreciative mothers with their bags and babies!

A final mention must be given to those who knit baby clothing and provide baby bags with gifts for our newborn babies. This regular supply means that we can bless the families of newborns and also give babies suitable protection from the cold which (surprisingly to those of you reading this from colder climes!) can be a problem for our newborn babies here. Our particular thanks go to Mama Rashida in the USA who coordinates the production of the gift bags.

In summary – we have so many people to be thankful for! Above all we give thanks to our God and Father for His continued provision for us and for the privilege of continuing the good work that WEC started here over 50 years ago. We are fully convinced that although the ground that we are working on is hard and the fruit from sowing the seeds of the Gospel seem to be limited, our Lord of the harvest will bring in a big harvest in the fulness of time.

Just to close then – here are our major requests for prayer:

- Team members to join the staff of the nursing school
- A pharmacy / storekeeper assistant
- The continuation of the Outreach work with good results on both medical and spiritual fronts
- Funds for the rebuilding of the staff common room, and (as mentioned in our last newsletter) the refurbishment of the maternity rooms
- Our long-standing need for a new ambulance
- That God will be glorified in all that happens here

Thank you and God bless you,

Dr Mariatou Jallow

1John 3: 11 For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning that we should love one another