

Community, youth and school projects, Gambia

Katherine Eastaugh, *Geography*

I used the funding award to pay towards a trip to Gambia, West Africa in April 2019 with the organisation Project Gambia partnered with The Box Youth Project (Contact details can be found below). The trip ran from 10th April till the 20th April.

Whilst in Gambia many small projects were carried out to help the communities of Gunjur and Kajabang. These projects were:

- Painting a School – One of the main projects of the trip was to paint a newly built school called the “Immaculate Conception Lower Basic School”. This included doing a base layer of paint inside the new classrooms and also painting the gate into the school blue. We also painted the logo at the front of the school. This project was overseen across the 10 days and was completed.
- Litter Picking for the plastic recycling project – This project was where myself and other members of the group went litter picking with some of the local community and learnt what they do with single use plastics. Once we had picked up a few bin bags of plastic we were taken to the plastic “factory” (more just a sheltered area they used) where it was explained what they do with single use plastics. They burn them down and melt them, mixing them with sand and create concrete blocks used to build houses and pavements in the village. Being a Geography Student this fascinated me as I am very interested in conservation and recycling to help combat global warming.
- Decorating a classroom – This was the main project I participated in. We went to a local primary school and drew/painted educational images on the walls to make it a nicer learning environment. I was in charge of painting the alphabet across one of the walls of the room.
- Playing games with local schoolchildren – As a reward for their hard work at school some local primary school children were chosen to come and have a fun day with myself and other volunteers at the local primary school. Myself and another volunteer lead a game of duck duck goose with four individual groups of school children. At the end of the session the children were all given toothbrushes, toothpaste, pens, pencils and stickers to reward them for their hard work.
- Helping to water plants in the local women’s garden – The Kajabang women’s garden is one of the most important places in the village. This is where many women grow their own food to eat and sell. On one of the days we were invited to go and help the women in the garden. I pulled water from the well and then helped to water their crops so that they wouldn’t dry out in the heat. We then gave clothes and other donated items to the women in the garden as a thank you for letting us help them.
- Cleaning the local health post – since the old doctor moved away the health post in the village was left abandoned. A new doctor had been found so we went and cleared everything inside. This included sweeping, sorting through medication and checking use by dates and also making sure the area surrounding the health post was neat due to the area being quite overgrown.

Although there was a lot of work on the trip we also had some activities that were more cultural, helping us to learn and appreciate the culture in Gambia as it is very different to in England. We went

to the marketplace which is where many Gambians buy and sell food and clothes, we went out into the village and talked to local people learning about life in Gambia and we also had the opportunity to see the biggest Mosque in Gambia.

This trip has helped me with my personal development as it has made me extremely thankful that I have the opportunity to be studying towards a degree. In Gambia not many people can afford to go to primary and secondary school never mind have the chance to go to the one University in the country. Having the opportunity to have a full education has definitely changed my outlook on life as many people in Kajabang would just like the opportunity to learn how to read and write. The trip has also given me a lot of confidence leading activities and even just talking to people. As someone who wants to train to become a teacher after obtaining my degree, this trip gave me the opportunity to expand my skills leading activities and has also given me more experience working with primary aged children. From this trip I have also gained more cultural awareness because of how different the culture is in Gambia. Please find some photos below of the trip – as you may be able to tell I am very passionate about helping the community of Kajabang and will hopefully continue to support the charity in future.



After we had finished painting at the Immaculate Conception school (I'm the one with the grey cap and pink sunglasses on the left of the photo)



Watering plants in the Women's Garden
Decorating a classroom



and



Some of the cement blocks made from melted down plastic and sand



One of my favourite photos of the trip – these twins (Howa and Isatou) would recognise me and come and see me whenever I was around the school painting. They were so happy when I gave them their toothbrushes, toothpaste, and pencils. They also loved looking at the photos when I would take them.

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