Annual Report – 2010/11

Busumbala village school children
WHO WE ARE

IN THE UK:

Chairman
Alan Turner

Founder Director
Stephanie Turner

Trustees
Alan Turner
Stephanie Turner
Prabha Sharma
John Lilburn

Fundraising Coordinator
John Lilburn

IN THE GAMBIA:

Directors
Pa Louis Gomez
Louis F Mendy

Vice-Chairman/Accountant
Joseph Mendy

Fundraising Coordinators
Joseph Mendy
Landing Colley

Researcher
Landing Colley

Committee Members
Pa Louis Gomez; Louis F Mendy; Joseph Mendy; Lamin Njie; Landing Colley; Kebba lang; Awa Janneh; Jenny Adams; Bakary Touray; Paul Koroma; Lamin Jarju; Buba Marong

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Mission Statement

We believe that the earth has sufficient resources for all if managed sustainably but the way that these resources are shared is inequitable and damaging to human welfare and life in general. We therefore see it as our responsibility to match resources and need by working with rural communities in The Gambia to overcome poverty and suffering. Our longer term goal is to safeguard the future self sufficiency and sustainability of the localities in which we work.
Editor’s introduction

I’d like to say first of all that it is a great privilege for me to produce this first Karmic Angels Annual Report. Founded by husband and wife team Stephanie and Alan Turner, Karmic Angels first gained charitable status in The Gambia in 2008, followed by UK charitable status in 2009. From these beginnings Karmic Angels has increased its workload and horizons with substantial success, mainly due to the concerted efforts of our small but dedicated teams in the UK and The Gambia. Now, with 2010 behind us, we are seeing some great inroads being made. Of course, this has not been without its challenges. Attracting sufficient funding to implement our aims and objectives has been and remains the major of these, particularly in the face of the current economic climate. Along with this goes the sheer logistical challenges faced, given the physical distance between our two countries. To contend with this we have weekly Skype internet conferences with our Gambian team whilst we are in the UK, as well as regular phone, text and email communications. The unwavering dedication and focus shown by our teams, along with the important backing of our supporters, has ensured that our efforts are truly worthwhile. I hope that in the following pages three things will emerge: 1/ the fruits so far of the aforementioned efforts. 2/ the proof of this success as reflected both by our Gambian workers and project users. 3/ the importance of Karmic Angels continuing growth as we strive to redress the poverty, disease and lack of resources that is the reality for so many living in rural Gambia today. Finally, I just wish to convey my thanks to all who give their support, time and money, ensuring that the work of Karmic Angels makes a difference.

John Lilburn

Hello from our Chairman Alan Turner

Hello and welcome. Starting and running a small charity plus doing a full time job at the same time is such a time consuming effort but, with determination and a goal to improve things in The Gambia over the forthcoming years, there is nothing more rewarding. Helping people in such need, through no fault of their own, means that it has become our duty to provide support and resources for bush village life so that it is not just about survival anymore but a belief that life can have much more to offer.

Our aims include giving orphan children the chance of education. This includes building schools where they are either non-existent or are in such a state they are not fit for purpose. Furthermore, we have pledged that within the bush village communities where we operate there will be proper water supplies, clean sanitation and community involvement (such as adult craft making classes and increased farming opportunities), that will help villagers pay for their children to go to school and put at least one meal a day on the table. This is seen by villagers from these communities as some of the best things they could have imagined happening.

We also intend to gradually introduce structured community activities such as football and other sports, plus a music project (funds allowing within the next 2/3 years), so that village life is not so mundane and everyone can have the chance of shared, broadening interests. His Excellency Dr. A.J.J. Jammeh, President of The Gambia, knows much about our work and, since 2010, we have had a number of top level governmental meetings at the State House in Banjul to discuss future projects and development. We feel highly honoured that His Excellency has taken such a positive interest into what we are trying to achieve.

I believe that the work my wife Stephanie and I are doing in The Gambia, only made possible by the amazing commitment and effort provided by both our UK and Gambian teams, is and will be of far reaching benefit to those we support. I would like to reiterate that support, whether financial, practical or otherwise, is always needed so I’d like to thank here, over and above our wonderful teams, all who support us in so many ways.

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John Lilburn
Hello from our Founding Director
Stephanie Turner

It is my honour and pleasure to share with you my African journey and how Karmic Angels all began.

From wanting to go to The Gambia as a young girl of thirteen, having read ‘Drum’ and ‘Mandingo’ by Kyle Onstott about tribes people taken from their homeland and sold into slavery, then ‘Roots’ by Alex Hayley about Kunta Kinte, a young man taken from his home in Juffereh, The Gambia, West Africa, I knew in my heart and soul that The Gambia was a place I was meant to visit and come to know. My dream has since turned into reality and I am now, along with my wonderful husband Alan and our Karmic Angels family, living this long held wish to contribute something good to the beautiful and deserving people of The Gambia.

In just three short years we have had nothing short of miracles happen: installing a water pump system in a villages region of over 20,000 people; four school builds; helping to get young orphans into full time education; bringing over an amazing Carl Zeiss Biopsy Operating Microscope, worth tens of thousands of pounds, donated by the Fazakerley Hospital in Liverpool - and much more.

At present, with regards to the microscope, we are seeking funds to pay for a micro-surgeon to travel from the UK to the Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital (RVTH), in the capital, Banjul. This will enable Gambian doctors to be taught how to use this amazing microscope, a vital, lifesaving piece of research and disease detecting equipment. Thank you to everyone who has supported our work and the Gambian people. Long may it continue!

Fundraising initiatives and activities 2010/11

With the current economic climate, 2010 was a difficult period financially and at the beginning of the year our available funds stood at just £800. Since then, Trust funding was thin on the ground with just one grant received (£1,500 from The Dorfred Charitable Trust). As a result, hard graft raising funds and donations by our own methods was the main way forward. Following our return from The Gambia in March, the activities we took part in during the next nine months were many. To begin with we booked numerous market stalls. In fact, at one point, we were doing six markets a month, each time making a reasonable amount of money for our charity. Every time we did a market we would be up before 7.00am, sometimes with help from our volunteers Diane, Marilyn, Jan and Mal. Come rain or shine, sleet or snow we would be there.

So, to put it in a nut shell, these were our main UK initiatives and activities for the year:

Regular markets where we sold locally crafted jewellery from The Gambia. The benefits here are twofold. Firstly, by buying the items from village crafts workers, this helps a Gambian to feed his or her family. Secondly, we are able to use the profits made in the UK to help finance our Gambian projects. We also sell crystals, cards and raffle tickets for major prizes such as the following: an England World Cup Shirt signed by the squad; a Liverpool Champions League 2005 Winners signed shirt; an Everton signed shirt; various other prizes also donated to us. The markets were all held in the Liverpool area at: Wavertree; Woolton; Lark Lane; Prescot
Road; University Square; Hope Street. We also ran a car draw with tickets sold in England and Scotland from April to September in conjunction with The Foundation for Social Improvement (FSI). In addition to these we attended a number of festivals where we had stalls, namely: Knowsley Flower Show; Africa Oye (a 2 day show); Hope Street Festival. These three shows alone raised nearly £1,500.

In October John, our Fundraising Coordinator, arranged our first African Music Night in Edinburgh at the Leith Dockers Club, which Stephanie and Alan travelled to from Liverpool. John got support from local radio station Leith FM, who gave us on air interviews (one with Alan on his mobile, stuck outside Liverpool in his car!), and provided the two dj’s Momo and Gaoussou. John also found a professional belly dancer (beautiful), table magician (not so beautiful but he still amazed everyone!), and a top hair salon, ‘Emma Hall Hair Design’, who supplied the girls to do the sponsored head shaves. John’s good friend, Reg McQueen, who did a brilliant job managing the door at the venue also needs to be mentioned and thanked. All provided their services for free. Sound equipment was provided at a good discount by local hire company Banana Row. It was a brilliant night, not only making over £500, but also promoting Karmic Angels in an area where we were relatively unknown.

One week later we opened up a permanent indoor stall in St John’s Precinct, Liverpool, which, again, was set up to raise more awareness and to sell our jewellery, crystals, etc. Throughout the year we also held general raffles and had a sponsored walk in June at Thornbridge Hall, kindly set up by the FSI. By the time we left for The Gambia on December 9th we had raised the grand sum of nearly £7,000, enough for our next project, a new school build in Farato village.

Karmic Angels is growing daily but we always need more support as there are not enough hours in the day to do everything we want to achieve. Any volunteers out there who can help us on a regular basis will be more than welcome. In the Wolof language of The Gambia, Jerejef (thank you).
Update on current projects 2010/11

Our work in The Gambia continues at a fair old pace and now we are close to starting our fourth school project in less than 17 months.

At Busumbala Medina Nursery School, which was our first school build completed in January 2010, we now have a two classroom block for 90 children of which 12 are orphans. On the inauguration day in March, all the school desks and chairs were delivered to complete everything for the school. A special celebration was had where 150 village men, women and children enjoyed a day of singing and good Gambian food. New materials were provided for the classrooms including writing books, reading books, puzzles, toys, pens, pencils, rubbers and plenty of stationary to last them for at least 6 months. When we returned in December 2010 we gave out UK national curriculum books, writing books, pens, pencils, felt pens, rubbers, rulers, whiteboard and clothes for the orphans. We’d ensured sponsorship for the orphans to pay for their education for 12 months, starting from March 2010.

At the Abubacarr–As–Siddiq Institute in Bakau we renovated a three classroom block. This was between November 2009 and March 2010. The classrooms here had been out of use since 2004. We completely rendered the outside walls and also plastered the inside walls and rebuilt the concrete veranda. The block was painted inside and out. Now 130 extra children can be educated in a safe and workable environment. Whilst there, books, pens and pencils were handed out to the children between the ages of 5 and 12 – the joy on their faces just in receiving a pen or pencil was a sight to behold!

At Brikama Medina Nursery School the children attended a very poorly constructed building that we wouldn’t use here for our cattle. In March, after deliberation, we agreed that we would start a new build of the school and firstly there would be two classrooms along with a teacher’s office (the land at this time was limited for building more). December 2010 came and we had the school build completed. Whilst we were there in December the school desks and chairs were made and then delivered on our inauguration day. A wonderful build and there were nearly 1,000 men, women and children there to greet us. It was also attended by Ebrima O. Camara, the Secretary to the Cabinet at Banjul State House, accompanied by the Paramount Chief, Demba Sanyang (Head of all Gambian Alkalos - village chiefs), and the area Seifo (overseer of local regional Alkalos).

In March 2010, we gave scores of impregnated mosquito nets to mothers with babies and children, and to pregnant women. The nets were donated to us by ‘Olyset Nets’ of London. With a population of less than 1,500, a huge number of Brikama Medina children under the age of 5 had died from malaria in 2009 alone. It should never happen but the simple fact of there being no mosquito nets for this village before we intervened was a major problem.
The introduction of the nets meant the infant death rate over the next few months was reduced by 50%. A vast improvement but it’s still too many - one is too many!

In December 2010, at Buya Bah's Nursery School in Farato, we were given the go ahead for our new school project - to build a new two classroom school with a teacher’s office. Materials given out during this visit included national curriculum books, writing books, pens, pencils, felt pens, rubbers, rulers, stationary, soft toys and clothes for the orphans. We have a clear plan for Farato and things will start to happen from the spring of 2011. The villagers agreed to mould the blocks and construct the concrete foundations at no cost to Karmic Angels except for feeding the workers.

Projects in the pipeline:

Football is one of the general areas for us to particularly focus on during 2011/2012. The sport is so popular and the children are just so inspired by the premiership teams in the UK that there are many football academies in The Gambia, teaching and training children. It has now taken over from wrestling as their No. 1 sport. The skills of some of these boys and girls – yes, there are girls teams - is something that has to be seen to be believed! Often teams train at least three times a week so they are really committed and, of course, it helps them socially as well as keeping them active, healthy and with purpose.

So far this year, in total, we’ve been able to transport 11 complete football kits (kindly donated by Rob Lowe of Woolston Rovers Youth FC in Warrington), and 22 footballs. This is as well as a full kit donated by Liverpool FC. Now it’s about building facilities etc. The Farato Nursery School build is expected to commence in spring 2011, again subject to the completion of the land documents by the Village District Council (VDC), and proper verification from our Gambian lawyer. We’ve proposed here a 1st stage school build to begin with, which will be for two classrooms and a teacher’s office.

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As far as the next of the school builds are concerned, subject to proper legal documentation, the nursery school at Farakunku Redemption Nursery School will commence late 2011 to early 2012. The current school is constructed of mud blocks and is only one year old but is badly infested with termites. So that is a priority. We also have plans to further help the RVTH (Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital), by sourcing and funding a retired UK neurosurgeon to teach Gambian doctors how to use the Carl Zeiss Biopsy Operating Microscope that we brought in February 2010 (thanks to Thomas Cook Airlines for free transportation). We also supplied a tabletop autoclave and two blood monitors worth over £750. More equipment in the long term is being researched.

The International Business College (IBC), in Bakau, where we were given three free scholarships to bestow, has asked if we can help over the next few years with bringing writing materials, computers and laptops as they are so short in all these departments. We intend to create a link between ourselves and the IBC to help each other and it is hoped that the IBC will set up a marathon run during 2011. Each individual that takes part and can get sponsorship will provide 50% to IBC and 50% to Karmic Angels.

The Point Newspaper in Bakau is in real need of flat printing paper and newer printing machinery as well as computers. The Point, through their Chief Reporter, Sainey Marenah, has been so helpful to us, covering nine stories on our December 2010 trip alone. In December we received the first full page article about our work and we’ll continue to supply information for articles as and when the opportunities arise.

We now have 5 football academies to support. Initially we’ve provided football kits and footballs. The academies are:

- Gunjur Football Academy, Gunjur
- Boyz Utd Football Academy, Serrekunda
- Young Arsenal Football Academy, Lamin
- Future Life Football Academy, Kotu
- Fara Banta Football Academy, Fara Banta
2011 should see the proper launch of our Harmony Youth Music Project, now that our MOU (Memorandum of Understanding), has been signed by both Karmic Angels and our partners for this project, the Gambian Arts, Education and Culture Trust (AECT). Further talks to develop this music project will take place before our next visit to The Gambia in late spring 2011.

Karmic Angels and AECT during HYMP discussions

The first task for our HYMP steering group is to be the setting up of a local management committee comprising of: existing Gambian KA and AECT members; able Gambian musicians and artists; community workers; representative/s from our youth target group (we also particularly want female members for this committee.). Aimed at a 13 – 25 aged user group this project, as well as being for young people in general, will also actively seek to integrate street and orphan youngsters. We have been having productive talks with an established UK youth music charity organisation about creating a twinning agreement between our two projects when HYMP is up and running.

It is hoped that we will complete the development of premises for this music project over the next two years. We would ultimately like to organise a music and arts festival in The Gambia by 2014 and for this to become a yearly event.

14 key balafone

Another general aim for 2011, which covers all our existing and proposed projects, is to get funding for two vehicles, one people carrier and one 4X4 (often roads are not much more than rough sandy or muddy potholed dirt tracks). This will enable us to provide transport for goods, materials and the different project groups we work with.

Editor’s progress report

John Lilburn

It’s been more than two years now since I was appointed by Karmic Angels as Trustee and Fundraising Coordinator. The journey involved has been challenging, enlightening, serious and fun in equal measure. One thing in particular that has emerged for me is the amazing desire, focus and commitment shown by Stephanie, Alan and the teams in the UK and The Gambia. The wish to achieve the Karmic Angels’ goal of providing aid, relief and development to rural communities in serious need is central for all involved. Threaded throughout all of this has been the wonderful humanity exhibited. I hope, as the Annual Report editor, I’ve been able to convey some of this.
What I feel I've personally been able to bring to the Karmic Angels table is knowledge and experience gained from a career working over many years within the UK voluntary sector, in posts including project development, fundraising and management committees. Based on this experience one of the first conclusions I came to when I arrived at Karmic Angels was that it had reached a point familiar to many young charities (whatever area of work they are involved in). As a small charity's capacity grows and the size and nature of the tasks in hand becomes clearer, so does the need to face the often bewildering procedures, protocols and legal complexities that go with the evolving territory. When it comes to fundraising, this means being prepared to meet and match the stiff levels of competition that exist by making sure we 'stand out from the crowd'. Approaches and applications made to corporate sponsors, grant giving trusts, major Donors etc need to include clear evidence that the charity can meet the exacting standards expected. Fulfilling these requirements is the stage we are now at. I’d now like to state some of the actions and initiatives we’ve undertaken over the past couple of years to get us there:

- **Project timescales and financial figures** – we have formulated realistic phases and/or 3 year plans for our projects where incremental targets have been stated, with the required financial figures calculated and available.

- **NGO (Non Governmental Organisation)** – at the time of writing we are close to gaining NGO status. More information to follow soon.

- **Partner agreements** – as well as being a very effective way of attaining specific project success for a charity, this is seen as an area of important value by many funders and influential supporters. To this end I have produced a ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ (MOU), partner agreement template. We have now entered into such a partnership with the Gambian Arts, Education and Culture Trust (AECT), founded by well known Gambian artist and writer Momodou Ceesay. Our respective organisations’ trustees and committee members have agreed and signed the MOU, which has been tailored to fit the purposes of the Harmony Youth Music Project (HYMP). Momodou and I are the designated appointees for overseeing development (MOU available on request). The future for this project, its users and the communities we work with as a whole, provides an exciting prospect with potentially far reaching benefits. Further useful partner agreements with suitable organisations on specific projects to help realise aims and objectives in the future can, as and when appropriate, also be expected. Twinning agreements too, such as the imminent success for us re official twinning between a Liverpool primary school and one of our established Gambian schools is expected to be official in 2011. Already mentioned earlier are the twinning discussions that we’ve had with an established UK youth music project regarding HYMP’s future when it’s up and running.

- **Database** – We now have a comprehensive and working database of potential funders and of charities in similar fields of work. This, along with other areas, will continue to grow as we progress.

- **Annual Report** – Producing this first Annual Report is essential as a tool and as documental proof of Karmic Angels’ progress. It’s a window through which funders can (and often expect to), look when deciding on the value and merits of offering financial support. It’s also the means of showing our teams, supporters and project users, as well as the general public, the inroads that we’ve made over the previous year.

- **Website** – Our site has been gradually enhanced and upgraded over the last year or so. This will be a continual and ongoing process.

That only leaves me to say that I feel very honoured to be a part of the Karmic Angels family. I hope I’ve been able to help show something of how far we’ve come as a result of the work done by our teams and how much good we can achieve in the future through optimism, structured teamwork and direction – making a difference!

**Summary of financial figures 2010**

2010 has proved challenging for fundraising. Given the state of the UK recession we knew it was going to be a difficult year. We knew, for instance, that we needed to raise over £5,000
to meet existing commitments as well as build the school at Farato, with another £1,500 needed for its desks, chairs and school equipment (thankfully provided by The Dorfred Charitable Trust). Our expenses have therefore been kept to a minimum, resulting in 92% of all income 2010/2011 going directly to project work in The Gambia. We mainly paid out only for necessary expenses such as administration, market stalls rent and buying more goods for sale at the stalls. We maintained our regular market stalls to continue promoting our work and raising awareness about The Gambia and, of course, to continue attracting funds. So, just as a summary, here is where the main income came from between March 2010 and December 2010 before we left for our December trip:

Income from market stalls £4,744 (which included £1,362 from raffles for our signed football shirts and general raffles, giving a net profit of £1,286); the sale of Gambian Zodiac birthday cards supplied to us by Momodou Ceexay of the AECT totalled £250, giving KA a net profit share of £144; the sale of jewellery and various other items made £1,228 giving a net profit of £887. Further income was as follows: the sale of the car draw tickets in conjunction with the London FSI made a net profit of £1,804; The Dorfred Charitable Trust grant of £1,500 for furniture and school equipment; £870 income from the two day Africa Oye Show in Liverpool, giving a net profit of £605; £520 income from our first African Music Night held in Edinburgh, giving a net profit of £390.

By the end of the year we had approx. £7,000 to take to the Gambia, which was enough to include the payment for receipted expenses to our Gambian KA members. It also ensured we could buy the school furniture for Brikama Medina Nursery School, which amounted to just over £1,300. The remainder will go towards the build of two classrooms and teacher’s office plus the making and supplying of the furniture for the school at Farato. All monies were paid into our Gambian bank account except for around 50,000 dalasi (approx £1,100), held by our Gambian director, Pa Louis Gomez, to pay for the sand, cement and tools for the Farato build and to continue paying work/travel expenses to our KA Gambian members whilst we are in the UK.

Full audited accounts as legally required by the UK Charities Commission available on request.

GAMBIA DIARY WED. DEC. 8TH 2009 - WED. JAN. 5TH 2010. KARMIC ANGELS UK TEAM VISIT
(An example of our regular visits throughout the year)

**Wed 8th** Arrived at Banjul airport with 34 cases, bags and packages at 2.45pm. Bedlam at the airport but we were given priority so no wait for check in. We met our Gambian director Pa Louis Gomez and AECT’s Samba Kanteh, who helped arrange for all our bags etc to be taken to a waiting truck for delivery to our hotel. Monarch coach went without us so had to find our own way to hotel. By 5.00pm we were there and had all bags in our room piled 4 high around every wall! Arranged KA meeting for 11.15am on Sat. at John Raymond’s hotel facility.

**Thurs. 9th** Spoke to Ebrima Camara, Secretary to the Cabinet at State House re audience with the President. Spoke to Pa Louis re the problems encountered at Brikama Medina school (fixed). Ebrima Camara met us at our hotel this evening. He had a message from the President to say he knows we are here and is very pleased and glad about what KA has been doing. Ebrima stated that our audience letter was on the President’s desk.

*Our audience with the Vice President of The Gambia at State House*

*Busumbala school. Now 90 children have education including 12 orphans*
**Fri. 10th** Made an unplanned visit to see the completed school build in Brikama Medina - what a fabulous build. Confirmed manufacture of the school furniture for Brikama Medina with KA committee member Lamin Njie. Arranged and planned the inauguration of the school for Sat. 18th Dec.

**Sat. 11th** KA meeting at John Raymond’s, Kotu. Committee member Kawsu Juwara voted in as new Fundraising Coordinator in The Gambia and committee member Landing Colley voted in as Researcher. Allen Manneh and Yah Ya Ceesay voted off the committee for repeated non-attendance and failure to help. Kebba Lang was voted in as a new committee member. Noted contact with Customs and their supplied tax waiver letter on exporting craft products etc to the UK. Kawsu and Landing to take care of inspecting the Busumbala school project and also to go to Senegal to buy goods/materials exempt from tax for KA projects. Secretary Ebrima Camara to be asked to do letter for customs re-exemption for all import taxes on UK donated goods. To ask for KA use of NGO vehicle from The Jammeh Foundation – maybe a vehicle left over from the Plymouth to Banjul Rally? Kawsu recorded video footage of the meeting.

**Sun. 12th** Met Kawsu who had contact from Senegal re buying materials to make craft items for sale in UK – thus saving money!

**Mon. 13th** Had photos and details taken at the Dunes Resort Complex for new Karmic Angels ID Cards with new titles. Travelled to Busumbala Medina Nursery School for meeting with head teacher Kebba Ceesay to discuss orphans support and the proposed toilets build. It was decided to start with immediate effect. Two loads of sand/materials were ordered at a cost of 5,000 dalasi (just under £120), delivery today and tomorrow. Wrote letter to the Gambian Radio and Television Service (GRTS), for supply of a film crew at Medina.

**Tues. 14th** Letter to GRTS delivered by hand for film crew for Sat. 18th Dec at Medina. Short Skype conference during the evening between the UK (John, AECT’s Momodou), and here with AECT’s Mahtarr and Samba Kanteh plus KA’s Kawsu, re items for president’s audience and re obtaining Mahtarr and Samba’s signatures to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for our partnered Harmony Youth Music Project (HYMP).

**Wed. 15th** Visited Farato village to see plot of land for the new school build and discuss with village members and head teacher Buya Bah the progress so far towards the start of the school. KA require copy of land document to confirm that land is legally signed over for permanent school use and we agreed that Buya Bah, as long as she wished to, would remain as head teacher. Later, discussions took place to implement the making of a road sign for Brikama Medina Nursery School.

**Thurs. 16th** Rest day, Steph not well. Met welder Justice on the beach to ask him his pricing on making a signpost for Brikama Medina. Agreed price and Justice will make structure tomorrow.
at a cost of 2,500 dalasi for a sign incl. Posts - height 2.5m by 1.5m wide and sign - 1m high by
1.5m wide. Yerro agreed to write the sign for KA free of charge and all to be ready for Saturday
inauguration. Arranged visit to Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital (RVTH) on Monday 20th
December re official letter for John in the UK so he can proceed with procuring funding for a UK
doctor/trainer to travel to The Gambia and provide RVTH doctors with training for the clinical
microscope.

Fri. 17th Contacted Justice, he had started sign. Yerro said sign would not be dry until the
evening and, in fact, he didn’t leave Brikama until 3am the next day so as to get it finished -
Star man! Making up all bags to take to Brikama Medina tomorrow - books, pens, clothes (for
all the boys who helped to build the school), clothes for the children, whiteboards etc etc).

Sat. 18th Met up with committee members, attended by Pa Louis, Louis, Joe, Sharon and by
Bekai N’jie (our Daily Observer reporter). Hired mini bus and picked up the GRTS film crew.
Met up again with Pa Louis and Lamin N’jie in Brikama (they had stayed with the school
furniture being completed that morning). All loaded by 11.30am for transport to Brikama. Met
Government Secretary Ebrima Camara at Brikama and travelled in convoy to Brikama Medina.
Greeted by 100’s of singing children lining each side of the sandy road. Speeches etc from
many including: the Chairman; village district councillors (VDC); Ebrima Camara; Paramount
Chief Demba Sanyang; the Area Seifo and, of course, ourselves before officially opening
Brikama Medina Nursery School. What a fabulous day, all on film and reported by The Daily
Observer.

Sun. 19th Day off so got all the stuff together for visit to RVTH tomorrow at 12.00 - all to be
filmed by GRTS and reported by the newspapers.

Mon. 20th Attended RVTH with Dr. Cham at 12.00pm – discussion with him about the
donations we had brought for RVTH including: table top autoclave; 2 blood pressure monitors;
2 sets of crutches; various medicines and, of course, about a letter to John in the UK for the
clinical microscope teaching situation. Found out that full size autoclave used by RVTH on
behalf of themselves and surrounding clinics for sterilising equipment had been broken for 11
days and all vital operations had been stopped. Got details of autoclave then phoned UK
company ‘Priorclave’ and spoke to Will Ferrell (yes, that’s his name it’s not the film star!). Told
him who we were and the problem. Within two hours we had promise that all spares and more
will be packaged and sent to The Gambia on the next available flight from UK at their cost -
everything free of charge! GRTS filmed presentations and speeches including from Mr Ngum of
the RVTH, plus discussion re continuing problems with autoclave.

Tues. 21st Called off Busumbala school visit as no Gambian KA committee members available.
Re-scheduled for Thursday 30th Dec. Spoke to Priorclave UK and Will Ferrell confirmed all
packaged and ready to be sent to Dr. Cham at RVTH. Spoke to Dr. Cham and informed him
that items will be leaving UK within 48 hours. Arranged with Sulayman Sanyang of Young
Arsenal Football Academy at Lamin village to visit them on Sunday 26th Dec. when we would
donate a full football team kit of shirts, shorts and footballs.

Wed. 22nd An actual day off except putting together all the items we have to take to Farato
tomorrow.

Thurs. 23rd Hired minibus - day to Farato (attended by Pa Louis, Joe and Lamin – GRTS failed
to show). Arrived early at 11.30am. Singing, dancing and school children singing two songs that
had been worded and prepared for Karmic Angels – super! Many speeches and thanks for KA’s
involvement in helping them. School build will start as soon as documents completed for land
are signed by Village Head (Alkalo), the Paramount Chief and the Land Office. Materials –
sand, cement, wheelbarrows, spades etc - to be delivered ready for start of two classroom build
and teachers office. Presentation of national curriculum books, books, posters, pens, felt pens,
crayons, pencils, rubbers and stationary etc. Also gave clothes out to babies, young children
and, for start of new football team, a full kit of 10 shirts and goalkeepers shirt with 11 shorts, all
donated by Woolston Rovers FC in Warrington, UK, plus football and pump for the under 9’s –
so hot today!
Fri. 24th Arranged visits to Busumbala school, Farakunku Nursery School, Seaview Football Academy in Gunjur and Boyz Utd, Football Academy in New Jeshwang. Xmas eve our day out and an evening of merriment at our Xmas eve gala dinner.

Sat. 25th Xmas day watched film Forrest Gump with Pa Louis (he is Forrest Gump!), and gave out presents to boys and families as well as to the beach sellers, our juice friend (Ali Baba), and fruit Lady Janaiba.

Sun 26th Went to Young Arsenal Football Academy in Lamin village to present a complete team strip of shirts and shorts, donated by Woolston Rovers, together with two footballs and a pump, to the team managed by Sulayman Sanyang and coached by Bakary Demba. Presented Sulayman with his own shirt for coaching. Did our own video of speeches and pics of presentation, attended by Pa Louis and Lamin N'jie. Promised that further sponsorship will be forthcoming when we are able. Watched 30 minutes of football with the squad playing in their new kit.

Mon. 27th Two hour relax in morning then bagged up general stuff for Farakunku Nursery School and football kits, balls and pump for Seaview Football Academy. Met Samba, one of the workers at Sunset Beach Hotel who said he had a football academy in Kotu called Future Life – would see if we had a spare kit and arranged a visit this week.

Tues 28th Went to Farakunku Nursery School and met head teacher Augustine Mendy, who had built the mud block school himself on his own land. As it was school holiday, met around 30 children who sang for us and did their presentations – wonderful. It was attended by KA’s Louis and a teacher called Kelly from Nantwich, Cheshire, UK, plus Sainey Marenah, our head reporter friend from The Point newspaper. Presented national curriculum books, general books, writing books and paper, pens, felt pens, pencils, crayons, rulers and rubbers (also two large holdalls of school study material). Took video footage and pictures. We were shown that the building suffered badly from termite infestation. We are therefore looking at doing a new school build here and supporting development once we have more funds. Kelly promised to sponsor the five orphans at this school. Went on to Gunjur to visit Seaview (now Gunjur) Football Academy and met Hatab Jobe, their coach, and travelled with him. This is where four boys came from who played for The Gambia National Team in the Under 17 world cup in 2010 and won! We presented the under 14, under 15 and under 17 teams with 3 complete football kits of shirts and shorts, kindly donated again by Woolston Rovers FC, along with 3 footballs and a pump. Presented Hatab with his own coaching top and track suit bottoms from Everton FC. Sainey Marenah again was the journalist. Video and pictures taken by us. Hatab stated that we could place our sponsorship banner on the walls of the ground. They need changing rooms, toilets and dug outs to begin with. We promised further help for the academy when funds allow.
Wed 29th Went with Pa Louis to his step-brother Andrew Gomez’s Graduation Day at Paradise Suites in Kololi, where Andrew wore his cap and gown and, along with over 100 students, was presented with his certificate for HND in IT. Hundreds of family, friends and guests at the presentation. Stephanie was given a free scholarship and Pa Louis two free scholarships, to be given by KA on behalf of The International Business College (IBC), to the most deserving people we are working with. Went to the IBC as guests of Andrew in the afternoon and were invited to see the Principal, Mike, who gave us his office for our own use while we were there. We also met Modou Ceesay, the CEO of the college, who donated the three scholarships. Treated to lunch and soft drinks. Back to our hotel room to sort out stuff for Busumbala and football kits etc for Boyz Utd tomorrow.

Thurs 30th To Busumbala to make presentations of school books, whiteboard and clock, pens, felt pens, writing books, writing paper, rulers, clips, tennis balls, football goal posts and ball etc to Head teacher Kebba Ceesay for the exclusive use of the school. Presented toys and clothes to the six orphans who were there and gave Kebba the remainder to hand out to the other orphans when they returned to school. Very disappointed with poor general turn out. Kebba said that many people had travelled for Xmas. Presented clothes to Kebba and his family and to the mums and children. Gave Lamin Njie’s football team a football and some football shirts (various team shirts from UK). Gave Kebba Ceesay a mobile phone for all his hard work re building roof plus school furniture for Busumbala Medina. Lamin Njie also given a mobile phone by us (Lamin spent six days in the furniture shop as security). Sainey again was the journalist. Went on to Boyz Utd Football Academy in New Jeshwang. Stagnant water lying in the street and all around the ground - such a poor, poor area – yet there were lovely boys and one girl in academy. Presented four football teams with over 50 shirts and shorts kits. Presented Coach Paul Gomez with an Everton FC trainer’s hooded top and track suit bottoms. Did video, pics and story for The Point Newspaper. Again, further help to be looked at in the future. Decided to put that night on hold due to some news coming forward re the toilets at Busumbala. Things we are not happy with are emerging – further KA talks, here and with John in the UK on Skype about this. Discussions ongoing.

Fri. 31st Went to present a complete kit in sky blue donated by Sue Ennis on behalf of Liverpool FC - 11 shirts, shorts and socks to Future Life Football Academy in Kotu, another very poor area less than 1 mile from our hotel. You can’t imagine the difference in a mile. Mud houses collapsed all around but very beautiful kids and boys of the academy. Presented an Everton FC Shirt and track suit bottoms to Future Life’s coach. With our reporter, Sainey, saw small amount of football match between the squad playing in their new kit. Afterwards, went with him to The Point newspaper to meet the editor. He wants us to do a story about KA’s beginnings through to the present re our charity work. In return we would get the front page – wow! Also saw the antiquated printing machinery and we said that we would see what we could do in the future to help them with computers, paper for printing and possible machinery. The evening was our Gala Dinner to see in the New Year.
Sat 1st Jan. 2011 A New Year of new beginnings! A proper day off at last, walked the beach and had a very relaxing day - except for phone calls! Arranged to visit IBC on Monday at 2.00pm re official presentation of the free scholarships from Modou Ceesay.

Sun 2nd Arranged to go to Standard Chartered Bank to reset account and transfer funds for Farato school build. Arranged with Kebba Lang, our new committee member, to meet Yankuba Sonko, the Inspector General of Gambia Police at 11.00am Monday for general discussion about support and advice re KA work. Pa Louis decided that he would give one scholarship to his partner, Matty, who had to stop her college course due to having their baby (named Stephanie, what an honour!). He gave the other scholarship away too (what a man), to Landing Colley who could never afford to go to college otherwise and dropped out of schooling when he was 15. Stephanie decided to give her scholarship to Kebba Lang, our new committee member, such a humble man who is already showing his worth. Again he is so poor. These scholarships should ultimately benefit KA’s work immensely.

Mon. 3rd Went to Banjul. Eventually had an audience at 12.45pm. But, before this, outside Gambia Police Headquarters we met UK Chief Constable of West Mercia, Paul West, along with the Gambian Inspector General of Police (IGP), Yankuba Sonko. Had pics taken with them and the armoured police – awesome! Invited to dinner by Paul West. After this invite we then had our audience with IGP for 45 mins and we have been assured of freedom of movement in the Gambia – just call him! (found out Gambian Police Force need police ambulances as there are only two, and also walkie-talkies – they use often unreliable mobile phones for contact!). Then we sat for two hours in bank waiting to do our business (it should be remembered that temperatures of 40 degrees can occur here!). After this to The Point newspaper to tell of our day – they wanted story of our meeting today but we declined as it involved the police. Too late for college visit - arranged for tomorrow at 1.00pm instead. Met up with Paul West as arranged. In spite of tiredness, we had a wonderful time discussing points of interest. Swapped details to keep in touch.

Tues 4th Meeting with Modou Ceesay at IBC with Pa Louis and Landing – Kebba Lang was working and Matty was away so collected letters of scholarships to be given later to Kebba and Matty. We promised to try and help the college for their kindness with computers and college books. Modou Ceesay – such a lovely man – we feel we could become KA and IBC partners (just in from John in the UK – 'this will happen!'). The scholarships are worth UK £2,700 over two years. Went to Dunes Resort, met Pa Louis and Lamin Njie and had talks about Busumbala school issues. Serious business where there are problems to be sorted. Left there at 6.30pm then had to sort out luggage – finished at 10.50pm instead of enjoying our last night.
Wed 5th Back to UK. Goodbye’s to everyone. Off to airport with Pa Louis in taxi. Had hoped to meet Ebrima Camara at the airport but he couldn’t get there as he was in a meeting. Still, only had 5 cases on the plane this time - better than 34!

Thomas Cook In flight magazine - spring edition 2011

KARMIC ANGELS IN THE GAMBIA

The Gambia is a beautiful destination, especially in winter when it’s sunny and warm there while it’s still chilly here. It’s only six hours from the UK, plus there’s no jetlag, making it an unbeatable getaway. Despite its tourism, The Gambia is still a poor country with many people struggling to make a living and bring up their children. Karmic Angels has been working there for almost three years and has now become a fully registered charity in the UK. There are seven projects currently underway including building schools and centres for university students who can’t afford the fees. Karmic Angels carries vital equipment to the Gambia such as impregnated mosquito nets, which save hundreds of lives each year and medical equipment donated by UK hospitals to The Royal Victoria hospital in Banjul. They also transport clothes and stationery for children. None of this would have been possible without the support of Thomas Cook Airlines who have helped with the free transport. Karmic Angels is run by UK couple Stephanie and Alan Turner along with their small team.

www.karmicangels.org.uk

Comments from the founder of Gambia’s AE&C Trust (AECT)

The Art, Educational and Cultural Trust (AECT), has been a registered charity in The Gambia for four years. Formally the Art Educational Group (AEG), established in 2003, its principal aim is to promote and foster these areas of endeavour for as many people of The Gambia as can be reached. My credentials for being the founder and Chairman of the Trust come from my long career as an internationally recognised artist and writer.

In 2003 we collaborated with a charitable organisation called ‘The Lend-A-Hand Society’, and organised a summer art program. This was incorporated within the society’s established summer school remedial project and was funded by UNICEF.

In the same year the AEG launched the ‘Art & Children’s Television Hour’, a one hour regular program on Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS), devoted to using art and education with children of The Gambia to explore the issues affecting them. It ran for one year under the sponsorship of CDC Gambia Ltd, Standard Chartered Bank, Total Fina Elf, Sam Sarr, and GRTS. In 2003 we collaborated with The National Environmental Agency and the Embassy of
the Federal Republic of Germany to create and implement an environmental art program, which saw the preparation of art booklets and initiated clean-up campaigns by four urban Gambian schools. More recently, since becoming a Trust, we refurbished a model classroom at the Bakau New Town Lower Basic School, with funding from The J. Simon Kirby Trust, of the U.S. Embassy in The Gambia. The AECT is currently working on extensive project proposals for 2011 and beyond.

The work that Karmic Angels has been doing in The Gambia is exemplary. They are led from the UK by the exuberant team of founders Stephanie and Alan Turner in England, ably assisted by John Lilburn in Scotland. Projects in the Gambia are well managed on the ground by the dedicated local Karmic Angels Committee team and their volunteers. Members of the UK team visit The Gambia on a quarterly basis. Within the three years they have been operating in The Gambia, this charity has become a great influence for good and has succeeded in building a number of schools in rural areas of the country where they are most needed. They have also contributed immensely to aiding the health of the villagers where they operate, such as in the development of sports initiatives. As well as this they have provided excellent support to the main hospital in The Gambia, the Royal Victoria Teaching Hospital and, most recently in Dec.2010, they donated an autoclave, a much needed piece of sterilising equipment that was lacking, gratefully appreciated by staff at the hospital and surrounding clinics.

Their commendable work in The Gambia has been a major factor in my decision to enter into an MOU with Karmic Angels for the establishment of the youth music project, to be called the Harmony Youth Music Project (HYMP). With John and myself the appointees for overseeing this project, I look forward to its successful implementation, which will go a long way towards filling an existing void in the teaching and development of music in The Gambia. This is an area where real inroads can be made in enhancing the well being and self esteem of our Gambian youth.

**Vision for the Future**

This article aims to raise some of the issues that face and will face the work undertaken by Karmic Angels. Since its inception in 2008, Karmic Angels has achieved an incredible amount on behalf of rural communities most at need in The Gambia. As a result, Karmic Angels is now at a point where a cusp has been reached, meaning it is poised to move onto an altogether higher level of action. New challenges are therefore inevitable in terms of growth and success.

It’s a sad but true fact that the recent major global economic downturn has seriously affected and will continue to affect all sectors in the UK: private; public; voluntary, for at least the foreseeable future. This means that organisations from our voluntary non-statutory sector now face increasingly stiff competition in terms of attracting funding and support. In order to face this challenge it follows that we need to be aware of the nature of such competition, how it can affect our own position and how we should respond to this. A quick bit of research will show that there are a number of UK and international charities already working in The Gambia today, whose aim is to provide similar types of aid, relief and development as we do at Karmic Angels. Some focus on school builds/education, some focus on health, some have projects to do with sport and the arts – and more! In order not to risk being sidelined and losing out to the inevitable competition of funding applications that arise from other charities we need to ensure we have a profile that meets expectations.

Competition exists in all fields, whether we like it or not. ‘Treading water’ is never an option so the only way forward is through growth - not just physical growth but the ability to adapt to ever changing institutional, cultural and financial protocols. By not doing this we risk failing to achieve our own potential as a charity and failing the very communities and individuals we wish to support. Fortunately, Karmic Angels is not at such a point today but, to prevent this happening in the future and to achieve our goals, we need to look at what mutual support we can utilise. This involves sources separate from Karmic Angels but that still have a common interest - it brings us to the subject of partnerships. Partner initiatives between likeminded and similarly placed organisations are a tried and tested means of maximising the respective organisations’ ability to thrive and develop in their own spheres. Such partner agreements can
either involve all of an organisation’s remit or be solely for specific projects. This is where Karmic Angels can benefit, such as with our proposed sport and music projects. Partnerships can make the deciding difference when it comes to promoting the whole organisation and attracting major funding. In fact, many grant giving trusts actively look for (if not require), such agreements when making their decision to offer funds. It should be stressed that a partnership poses no risk to the integrity, independence and autonomy of any given charity and is not something legally binding. All this said it’s obviously up to us to decide on how these things are to be of benefit to us. I want to see the raw potential we have turn into something real, solid and far reaching. Partnerships are an important and beneficial option, one that our Karmic Angels teams should certainly keep in mind, consider and discuss with a view to the future.

Thanks to all involved with Karmic Angels for your time in considering this article. Hopefully, it can generate useful and productive ideas and actions.

**Why we continue to be needed:**

There is as great a need as ever for us to continue our work in The Gambia. We know that townships will get some support from the Gambian Government but where we work in the bush there is very little support. Funds from government will not stretch to small bush villages. Water pipe lines have been installed under some main roads but water does not get to reach the rural villages unless they pay themselves for it to be piped in. They don’t, however, have the finances to do such work due to the incredibly high poverty level in rural Gambia.

The lack of water and sanitation is a major problem, so we will continue to work with villages and schools to implement our aim of supplying good drinking water sources and proper sanitation. As time goes on we will also, as resources allow, continue to build classrooms where the schools are either non-existent or are in such a poor state that education is not viable. This may take some time to achieve but our sorely needed objectives are in place. The need is so great, if only to make local village life that little bit more bearable. Security for the schools is also important so each school that we build needs to have a compound wall built so that the children within them are protected from negative outside influences. We want them to have some gladness and fun in their lives.

We want to see fitness, sport, music and social skills. To see these boys and girls improve and develop their self esteem and their belief in the future is our challenge. Helping football academies, though not necessary for human life per se, is important. These children, with new football kits and footballs, are given an opportunity to have a dream – something that everyone should want for all the world’s children! The music project is like the football projects. It is for developing the skills of those that could not otherwise afford to do so. This is not just linked to the basics but to improving the 13 – 25 year olds lives over and above the musical skills gained. It can involve many a young rural Gambian. Who knows where the next music star will come from? Our work embraces meeting the basic physical needs of communities, right through to instilling hope and ambition towards achieving a better, more satisfying life. Facilitating hope, self determination and autonomy is the essence of our work.

Our aims were to do more by now but, as the recession bites deep and affects all charities, these things will take longer than foreseen. Rest assured, though, we will continue to be there and do what we have planned for the benefit of the communities with which we work.

2011/2012 will be the toughest year yet but, to make sure that all our funds are used sparingly and in the right direction, we will have to be equally tough in making sure that everything is 100% used properly with every project that we are dealing with and that all materials are looked after. There is no room for wastage.
Rural Poverty in the Gambia: The Gambia is one of Africa’s smallest and poorest countries. The 2009 Human Development Report of the United Nations Development Programme ranked the country 168th of a total of 182 low-income countries. Poverty is widespread, pervasive and predominantly rural. More than 60 per cent of the rural population is classified as poor. Factors such as ethnicity or village size seem to be irrelevant to poverty, which is substantially uniform throughout the country. Pockets of deep poverty still exist and these areas are inhabited by one third of Gambia’s poor rural population.

More than 90 per cent of extremely poor people in the country and more than 70 per cent of other poor people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Every year, poor people in rural areas face the ‘hungry season’, a two-to-four-month period at the peak of the rainy season, between July and September, when household food stocks are low or depleted. To cover household needs, poor households depend on income generated by groundnuts and other cash crops or on remittances. Falling market prices mean that households have less money to meet basic needs. The recent global crises (the financial crisis, and soaring food and fuel prices) have meant considerable hardship for poor rural households in particular. These crises have impacted the country’s economy tremendously, and have pushed many more people into extreme poverty. For example, in 2008, the price of a bag of rice - a staple food - skyrocketed to a 50 per cent increase over its normal price in six months, making it extremely difficult for many poor households to sustain their normal intake of food, in terms of both quantity and quality.

Groundnut farmers in upland areas are among the poorest people in the country. At least half the country’s poor people include farmers and agricultural workers. The incidence of poverty is highest in rural groundnut-producing areas. In the North Bank, Upper River and Lower River regions, about 65 per cent of the population is poor. However, pockets of poverty can be found throughout the country. Compared with men, women have a higher incidence and severity of poverty. This relationship between gender and poverty is known as the feminisation of poverty. Rice farming in both upland and lowland areas is largely the work of women. Productivity is low because of the rudimentary technologies and practises used.

Almost 88 per cent of women farmers are also engaged in horticultural activities (growing vegetables and fruits), and most women keep small ruminants as well to supplement household food security. Traditionally women do not own or control any land but they still bear a disproportionately heavy burden of labour. They often lack access to credit for income-generating activities and they generally play a limited part in the decision-making that affects their lives. Poverty in the Gambia has its roots in slow economic growth and uneven income distribution. Rural poverty, in particular, is the result of a poor natural resource base and farmers’ dependence on groundnuts as their principal source of income. The primary causes of rural poverty in The Gambia include:

- Low and decreasing soil fertility
- Low agricultural and labour productivity
- Poor access to productive assets such as land and water
- Poorly functioning input and output markets
- Low prices on world markets for products such as groundnuts and certain types of rice
- Poorly functioning rural institutions, including credit institutions, and lack of basic social services
- Irregular rains that frequently cause crop losses, and yields that fluctuate as much as 40 per cent from one harvest to the next.

Poor rural people generally produce for home consumption and sell any surpluses at disappointing prices. Poor farmers are caught in a vicious circle of risk aversion, limited use of inputs, low productivity and low income.

IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development)
In present day Gambia there is still a general mortality rate of approx 1 in 9 children under the age of five (WHO - World Health Org 2010). This rises to as much as 1 in 5 in some rural areas. A significant number of deaths also occur in childbirth, often for mother and child: ‘Levels of maternal mortality in The Gambia is one of the highest in Africa, estimated at 1,050 per 100,000 live births, higher in the rural areas than in urban settlements’. www.collegeofmidwives.org

Malaria, HIV/AIDS and malnutrition are all still major killers, particularly in the general rural population. All can and should be tackled with the right resources, financial input and support. This is why our work continues to be needed!

Two of our newly built classrooms

The old school building 2008

Our Busumbala Medina Nursery School build

The new school building 2009
Hello from two members of our Gambian team

Pa Louis Gomez
Gambian Director

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Pa Louis Gomez and I’ve worked with Karmic Angels since its establishment in 2008, when we first got a sponsor to install a water pump, pipes and taps for the bush clinic in Kubuneh. This clinic serves a total of 25,000 people from surrounding villages. I am 32 years old and live in Penyem village, located in the western region around Brikama, which is 5km away from my village. I was brought up by my Uncle from the age of 10 in an extended family. This gave experience gained from not living with parents and how different it is from living with your natural parents. It helped me learn about other people’s needs. This made me be who I am today because it helped make me realise how to reach my ambition of achieving good things for those in need. My extra activities apart from KA (always in my thoughts), to give me a good wage for my family, is in culinary arts, which I love doing. I am a Chef by profession now, working in a hotel, which is really amazing work to do. I love cooking for people as food is a basic need of life. I just became father of a sweet baby girl call Stephanie Gomez (named after wonderful Stephanie, our co-founder of Karmic Angels).

I first got to know Karmic Angels founders Stephanie and Alan while I was involved in building the installation mentioned and we became good friends. Once Karmic Angels got its charity status I was appointed as a Director. To get to the subject of my commitment to our charity, working with Karmic Angels has opened my eyes and heart to the good impact on humanity that can be achieved with a committed team of people. Through good leadership and a winning strategy that has vision, I look forward to seeing our successes grow. Attracting the right people here to help us with our work is a priority for me, creating a local team of high calibre that can share knowledge, develop together, replicate successful formulas and, where necessary, learn from mistakes. I believe that it is a duty to help God’s people and I have no doubts that by working to achieve the aims and objectives of Karmic Angels this duty will be fulfilled. It’s a joy to be a part of noble Karmic Angels, helping make the vision of support become real.

THANKS FOR ALL THE HELP FROM SUPPORTERS AND DONORS, EITHER IN CASH OR KIND. GOD BLESS YOU ALL

PA LOUIS GOMEZ
Hello, this is a brief introduction of myself.

My name is Landing Colley. I am 31 years of age and I live with my extended family here in The Gambia, where I was first brought up by my parents. Since then I lived with my extended family, helping me learn a lot, which has given a strong feeling in me about the value of helping others. This was behind my decision to join Karmic Angels after meeting Stephanie and Alan while I was with my friends. That was in 2009 and I was greatly impressed by their philanthropic activities in our country. Thus, when I was asked some time later if I would like to get involved and be a part of the great activities geared towards helping the needy, I said yes. Yes, "KARMIC ANGELS" is the name they mentioned at the start and I have since then got so addicted to this great organisation's activities. The love of humanity and serving the needy has been something of importance to me since I was young. My commitment and involvement with KA has grown since those beginnings. To build and create good things provides a great impact in the service of humanity.

I am currently Researcher and Committee Member for KARMIC ANGELS here in The Gambia, which involves researching and relaying information to and from relevant parties. I am so very pleased and proud to have a stake in this philanthropic group. I think helping to facilitate its operations here is a very worthwhile thing to do. I am so honoured to be part of KARMIC ANGELS and, having been presented by them with my scholarship to the International Business College, I will put this to good use by studying hard. I hope it helps me give a good contribution now and in the future to the work done by Karmic Angels. My involvement with Karmic Angels is something I love doing and has also helped create more social education for me, my friends and colleagues, as well as taking this to the people I now meet in other communities.

Thank You.

Landing Colley.
Round Up

That brings us nearly to the end of this first Annual Report. Hopefully, we’ve been able to give a good picture of the work we do in The Gambia and conveyed to the reader the crucial need for support. One area in particular that we are promoting in 2011 is the sponsorship of orphan children. We will be updating our website soon, providing more detailed information about how to sponsor through Karmic Angels (options are available on our website now but being developed further). By donating a minimum of £3 per month per child, either by Standing Order or Direct Debit, the cost of school fees and basic schooling materials for one orphan can be met. For many orphans this will be the only opportunity they have of receiving an education. In return we are in the process of agreeing with the Gambian school heads of the schools we have helped build and continue to support that quarterly letters and photos will be sent to the sponsor by the orphan child, along with a covering quarterly report from the teacher. Two way postal communications between sponsor and child are encouraged (though remember it really can be ‘snail mail’!)

Let’s touch one last time on the particular circumstances of The Gambia and why it’s fully deserving of support. Unlike many of the trouble spots in Africa, there is an irony regarding the plight of the Gambian people. Whilst it has had its challenges politically in the past it has not, in recent times, been subject to the wholesale war, political upheaval, bloodshed and so on that can be found in other African countries today. In fact, it’s perhaps for this very reason that it has tended to ‘slip under the radar’ when it comes to international acknowledgment for need of aid. With regards to the Gambian economy itself, in percentage terms the beach tourist trade provides a big contribution from an area that is a tiny, coastal sliver. It is, however, a fraction of what the country needs as a whole in GDP to support its people and provide financial stability with generated growth. The reality is that once out of the coastal tourist region, The Gambia still suffers seriously from abject poverty, disease and lack of resources.

We at Karmic Angels are fortunate in the growing recognition of our work by the Gambian government and the Gambian media. Recently we have had a very useful meeting with the Vice President at State House in the capital Banjul, as well as with other top level government representatives. Also, whilst he was in the UK, we were visited by the Gambian Minister for Land at one of our fundraising fetes in Liverpool. In early summer 2010, Gambia TV aired a documentary about our work. Articles reporting our work have also appeared regularly in the Gambian Daily Observer and The Point Newspapers.

Putting these facts to one side, having being in existence for less than three years, we are still a relatively new charity. Funding and understanding remain constant priorities. Anyone that would like to contact us to find out more about us and The Gambia and how they can contribute to our work can do so by email, on our website or by phone. More detailed information about our existing and future projects can be found on our website. The latest piece of good news, April 2011, is that we have just gained a permanent and equipped office in The Gambia. It is an office that is situated in one of the best business areas near the capital, Banjul, donated to us by the IBC (International Business College). The address is 55 Kairaba Avenue, Bakau (Kairaba means blessed).

Stop Press: We have just had a Karmic Angels Gambian Committee re-shuffle April 2011 so we have some Gambian Committee personnel changes just prior to this A.R. print. It means that I have had to update our ‘Who We Are’ page. As a result, some people referred to in the ‘Gambian Diary’ pages are no longer in the official posts mentioned there. I’ve kept the diary pages as they were but the ‘Who We Are’ page has been updated to reflect the current status quo. We welcome the incoming and wish the outgoing members all the best for the future.

That just leaves me to say we are grateful to all who have taken the time to read this Annual Report. We hope it has been of use in informing the reader about what we do plus the need and value of providing aid, relief and development in The Gambia. Jerejef
Acknowledgements

UK

Thomas Cook Airlines, Manchester
The Dorfred Charitable Trust
Fazakerley Hospital, Liverpool
Priorclave (medical equipment) UK
Olyset (mosquito) Nets, London
Zappit Mosquito Repellents
Christadelphian Samaritan Foundation
FSI (Foundation for Social Improvement)
Liverpool FC
Everton FC
Woolston Rovers FC, Warrington
Leith FM Radio, Edinburgh
Leith Dockers Club, Edinburgh
Gwladys Primary School, Everton, Liverpool
Cardinal Heenan Catholic School, West Derby, Liverpool
St. Lawrences Catholic School, Kirkby, Liverpool

The Gambia

Jammeh Foundation for Peace
The Gambian Government, State House, Banjul
AECT, Banjul
The Gambian Police Force
GRTS
The Dunes Resort Hotel
International Business College, Kairaba Avenue (HQ), K.S.M.D.
The Daily Observer Newspaper, Banjul
The Point Newspaper, Bakau
The Voice Newspaper, Serrekunda
Gambian organisations that have supported us
The Gambian people

The Karmic Angels journey so far has been an interesting, varied and challenging one. Along the way we have met some of the most amazing kind, caring and compassionate people who have all had their part to play.

To all the people who have donated and offered their help, never asking for anything in return, we offer our heartfelt thanks. One thanks in particular goes to Thomas Cook Airlines, who allow us to take over hundreds of kilos of items for free on each of our visits over the year.

We are overwhelmed and so grateful for all the kindness and generosity that has been shown. It’s amazing! Genuine, good people who wish to help Karmic Angels in some way or other often just seem to appear on our path. Thank you all.
GAMBIAN SMILE

There is a smile
I saw it the other day
It took a while
But it had something it wanted to say
It was about what is here today
About the road on the way
About the hard games life plays
But it smiled
And it was such a beautiful smile