

Press Release NGO 57 / "Project Aid The Gambia"

24/7 Electricity and Water Provision for Njaba Kunda Health Centre

NGO 57/ "Project Aid The Gambia" is to build a new model clinic in Njaba Kunda

In 2011, a new Health Centre is to be built in Njaba Kunda in the district of Central Baddibu / North Bank Region of the Gambia. Matthias Ketteler, chairman of the international NGO 57/ "Project Aid The Gambia" and Good Will Ambassador At-Large of the Republic of The Gambia announced in Njaba Kunda, that work on the model clinic will commence this spring. The project will be financed by own funds as well as by subsidies from the German government. For twenty years, "Project Aid The Gambia" has been running the "Jahaly Health Centre" in Jahaly in the district of Fulladu West (Central River Region). In 2009, the Gambian government designated the clinic a model project.

Njaba Kunda, 2011-01-10. For Mr. Ketteler, the journey to Njaba Kunda is a return to the place, where his commitment for The Gambia once began. In April 1986, he and his friend, Frank Heuer, came to the Njaba Kunda Health Centre as young nursing students and gained first insights into the Gambian health system. „It was right here in Njaba Kunda, where we decided that it was time to stop talking and start acting,” says Ketteler.

They founded the international NGO 57/"Project Aid The Gambia" and built the "Jahaly Health Centre" in Jahaly, which celebrates its 20th anniversary of successful work this year. After an extensive inspection tour, that led him through all state-run health centres in the country, Ketteler returned to Njaba Kunda in 2009 as Good Will Ambassador At-Large of the Republic of The Gambia.

"In recent years, the Gambian government has undergone enormous efforts to improve the standard of health care for the rural population," Ambassador Ketteler emphasized in Njaba Kunda. "People can now attend decent medical care within a distance of not more than 40 kilometres in every part of the country. The Gambian government provides sufficient trained personnel and medicine". However, there is no adequate provision of electricity and water and therefore, all state-run health centres in the country lack of the most basic hygienic preconditions, according the expert team of "Project Aid The Gambia".

"But the structural and hygienic conditions of the health centre Njaba Kunda, which has been funded by subsidies from Germany for many years, was the worst of all state-run health stations by far," Ketteler says. "The station shows grave deficiencies. Water or electricity runs only randomly and not for more than a few hours at a time. At night, staff members have to work in the lights of candles or electric torches". According to the NGO experts' findings, the refurbishment of the buildings would generate unjustifiable costs and efforts.

Thus, "Project Aid The Gambia" decided to demolish the health centre Njaba Kunda and to rebuild it based on the model of the "Jahaly Health Centre". By now, the project's funding is secured and the construction plans are completed. Work is soon to begin. Ambassador At-Large Ketteler recently presented the plans for the reconstruction of the clinic to the villagers in detail.

There will be eight buildings on the premises: a waiting hall, an examination building including three examination rooms, a waiting area and a medical lab, a patients' building with a treatment room, showers, toilets and a separate obstetric department, two staff buildings, a watchman's house, a "Bantaba" round hut and a common kitchen, as well as two public toilets in the entrance area of the clinic premises. All floors in clinic rooms and all walls up to a height of two metres will be tiled, doors are made of synthetics, furniture is made of resistant material: Beds will be build of stone and then tiled. There will be floor drains in every room. "This will help to keep the clinic clean," Mr. Ketteler says. "Our experiences with this method of construction have been very good in Jahaly". A solar system ensures the twenty-four-hour-provision of electricity and the operation of water pumps. A huge water tank supplies the whole clinic premises, providing sufficient potable water for patients and staff members and for watering the green spaces. The primary aim is to design all buildings and furnishings in the clinic as reliable and maintenance-free as possible.

"Aid for self sufficiency is an integral part of our NGO's vision and we will put this principle into practice in the process of rebuilding the model clinic Njaba Kunda," Ambassador Ketteler states. The community of Njaba Kunda is directly involved in the project. They provide free work power and time as well as local building material, such as gravel or sand. There is a written agreement between the NGO 57 "Project Aid The Gambia" and the Gambian government stating that the village community – acting as a committee – will have influence on specific matters after the construction work is finished. The NGO will support the committee by providing training courses with a main focus on clinic management, hygiene and maintenance of the outside facilities. After a period of three years, the committee will take over these tasks into its own responsibility and work directly with the Gambian government.

"It is important to us to give nothing but a first impulse," project chairman Matthias Ketteler says. "We build this new clinic, we organise training courses for staff members, but once it is finished, we will pass over the clinic to the Gambian Health Department".

A German architect, who has been living and working in Gambia for 30 years, will be responsible for the construction supervision. In summer 2011 already, the model clinic Njaba Kunda is to commence operations.

In cooperation with the Gambian Health Department, Ambassador Ketteler is already planning the next project in the development of the country's health care. "The reconstruction in Njaba Kunda is only the beginning," Mr. Ketteler says. The NGO's vision is to modernise all rural health centres in the country within the next years. The role models for all stations will be Njaba Kunda and Jahaly. "If this great and important project succeeds," the Good Will Ambassador At-Large says, "Gambia will be the first African country, where all health centres dispose of a constant provision of electricity and water". And 20 years after Ambassador Ketteler's first visit there, Njaba Kunda could become a role model for the whole African continent.

Background Information NGO 57 / "Project Aid The Gambia"

Since 1985, the private international NGO 57/"Project Aid The Gambia" – based in Hattingen/Germany and Manjai Kunda – has been providing development aid in The Gambia, ensuring that all donations arrive where they are needed. Since 1991, "Project Aid The Gambia" has been running a private health station in the village of Jahaly (district of Fulladu West/Central River Region): the "Jahaly Health Centre". As of 2010, 400.000 patients have been treated there.



„Jahaly Health Centre“ 2010



„Jahaly Health Centre“ 2010



Jahaly/Madina Kindergarten 2010



Gardening projects Jahaly/Madina 2010

In 2004, German journalist and TV host Markus Lanz opened a kindergarten in Jahaly for 240 children at pre-school age in the framework of a televised fund raising campaign for philanthropic purposes ("RTL Spendenmarathon"). Besides these two projects, the NGO supports four agricultural projects for more than 1,000 women in the sister communities of Jahaly and Madina.

In 2009, the Gambian government designated the "Jahaly Health Centre" a model project.

Board members and founders of the NGO 57/"Project Aid The Gambia", Matthias Ketteler, Frank Heuer and Dieter Lieken have been working in the German health sector for many years.

Further Information

Internet: www.buschlinik.de
Facebook: www.facebook.com/pages/Buschlinik/104534172912614
YouTube: www.youtube.com/buschlinik

Rückfragen: Good Will Ambassador At-Large
Mr. Matthias Ketteler
Mobile 9955553

Office NGO 57 / "Project Aid The Gambia"
Mr. Bakary Kinteh (Management)
Address Manjai Kunda
Telephone Manjai Kunda

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