

# NATIONAL NEWS

## Project Aid, Lions Club Give medical items Worth D250, 000 to MoHSW

By: Lamin B. Darboe

Project Aid The Gambia, an International NGO based in Manjai Kunda and Banjul Kairo Lions Club recently donated medical items worth D250, 000 to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. The presentation took place at the Central medical store under the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Bertil Harding highway in Kotu. The occasion was graced by, Adama Dampha President of Leos youth Club, an affiliated youth club to Lions Club and Ebrahima Jobarteh (project manager, Project Aid, The Gambia. Handing over the items, the chairman Project Aid, The Gambia who doubles as the Goodwill Ambassador-At Large, Matthias Ketteler said the medical items were offered to Project Aid, The Gambia by a local pharmacy in Germany. "This is the first time we are rendering our support to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and we will continue to do more be-



cause we want to support the new dispensation under President Barrow in their drive to push the country forward," Ketteler promised. According to Mr. Ketteler, Project Aid, The Gambia is having closer partnership with the Lions Club Banjul Kairo adding that this was why they were able to make this wonderful presentation. He urged the Health Ministry officials to make good use of the items in order for the items to serve their purpose thus hoping that if the items are properly taken care of, it

will be of good to the country. Over the years, project Aid has carried out successful projects in the Health, Agriculture and Education sectors. Since its inauguration in 1981 Project Aid's Jahally Pacharr health centre has provided efficient and effective modern health care to over 400,000 patients. In 2009 it also carried out an extensive renovation of the health centre in Njaba Kunda turning it into a model health facility. It has also through massive campaign in Germany contributed to a high

standard of early childhood education in Jahally with the construction and operational cost of a kindergarten school serving the communities of Jahally and Madina. In the area of Agriculture and Women empowerment Project Aid is presently operating four fertile garden farms with the women of Jahally and Madina. Over 1000 local women have been allocated garden plots to grow cash crop items as well as subsistence for their families. This recent presentation to the Ministry of health comes at an opportune time when the Ministry is faced with maximising its efforts in securing adequate and quality drugs. In receiving the items, the Director, National Pharmaceutical Service, Ministry of Health, Babanding Sabally described the donation as laudable and that it will be beneficial to his ministry. Sabally assured the donors that the items will be properly utilized. He used the opportunity to call on others to emulate Project Aid and Lions

Club for their kind gesture. "We count on your full support because these items you just donate to us will go a long way in solving drug problems within the Health Ministry," Sabally assured donors. The Local Chairman of Project Aid, Mr. Abdoulie Charles M'bye said Government alone cannot do it all, this was why their NGO is contributing quota to the health sector by donating medicaments to the Health Ministry. The donation, according to Mr. Charles, was meant to ease drug problems in the government's health facilities through-out the country while calling on the health personnel to take good care of the donated items. The President of Lions Club of Banjul Kairo, Luc A. Verschelden said Project Aid and Lions Club are all about serving humanity thus promising that they would continue to give a helping hand to the Government.

## Gambian irregular migrants in Europe distressed by EU's deportation plan

Many Gambian irregular migrants in Europe are feeling uneasy after news broke out in July that they may soon be deported. The announcement was made by the European Union (EU) Ambassador to The Gambia, Attila Lajos. He said talks are ongoing between the EU and Gambian authorities to repatriate migrants whose asylum claims have been rejected. According to the EU Ambassador, migrants who have exhausted all the legal ways to obtain asylum are now residing illegally in the EU. Therefore, a court order has been issued to send them home. Reacting to the news with dismay, several migrants criticised the decision. Speaking to The Migrant Project on the condition of anonymity for safety reasons, one of the affected migrants said he was rejected three times by authorities in his host country and



stated that deporting them back to the Gambia will end their dreams of earning a decent living in Europe. "We are shocked by this decision, it is going to be a massive blow to us, considering the amount of money we spent, not to mention the difficulties we encountered during our risky attempt to come here," he said. Another migrant living in Italy, who also wished to remain anonymous, said he has had sleepless nights since the announcement was made. The young man who said he lived

in Libya for a year before crossing to Italy added that the decision to deport them will cause many migrants serious mental suffering. "We have sacrificed a lot to come here, going through hardships under hostile Libyan smugglers and kidnapers... we could have lost our lives just like some of our friends." "When we arrived here, we thought that we had found a home," he added. "Unfortunately for me and many others, we have been living in camps, we submitted asylum requests and they have been rejected by the Italian authorities citing security reasons." Commenting on the same issue, Kabiro, a Gambian residing in the Netherlands said he had been a victim of political persecution under the Jammeh regime and recalled going to jail five times due to his political activism. He then managed to escape to the Netherlands where

he later applied for asylum. His requests were denied because he said authorities were not convinced with the authenticity of his case. "They said my case is fictitious and that I was trying to secure documents. I was later issued a deportation order after the change of government in Gambia, now it appears certain that the deportation will be effected," he said. The families of these migrants back home are feeling the same distress. Aja Fanta Ceesay, Mariana Colley and 70 year-old Fabakary Jadama, parents of the migrants interviewed, condemned the decision saying the EU should integrate their sons and daughters instead of banishing them. According to Fabakary, his son in Germany is his only source of help; he is very worried about his survival if his son is deported. The septuagenarian called on the government to dialogue with

the EU and look for an alternative to the deportation plan. However, the EU Ambassador made clear in his statement that people cannot stay in EU illegally, "One of the basic principles in EU countries is the respect for rule of law... no country will allow illegal migrants in their country," he said. Ambassador Lajos added that the EU is in negotiation with the Gambian government on how to manage the returns to avoid a huge number of migrants return to The Gambia when the country is not ready to absorb and reintegrate them. The ambassador also announced that the EU was planning to launch a package of efforts aimed at addressing the root causes of migration with the theme, 'build a future, make it in Gambia' which would invest roughly €23 million from the EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa in different projects in the country.