

Bringing freedom to the rural Gambia

Remote communities in rural Gambia are now benefiting from access to health care, thanks to Riders for Health

With this new year brings fresh hope for communities across the world. In rural areas in the Gambia, Riders for Health is finding that our work is having an impact on some of the most isolated people and allowing them to look forwards to a healthier future.

The Uhuru is a multi-purpose vehicles that can act as community ambulances, water pumps and freight carriers in a region isolated by great distances and harsh terrain. Thanks to the generous support of the Globalgiving donors, Riders for Health have been able to run these community ambulances, and ensure that health emergencies can be dealt with quickly. Riders' operations director, Ngwarati Mashonga, recalls the impact Uhurus can have on rural communities.



Photo: A community ambulance, the Uhuru

"I spoke to a couple recently, Noah and Matilda, who told me how the Uhuru changed their lives for ever. It is wonderful to be reminded of the difference your work can make to people.

A year after they were married, Matildah became pregnant. When she went into labour, the family agreed to refer her to the local traditional midwife because there was no money to take her to the nearest clinic. Unfortunately, Matildah had not even visited the clinic or seen a midwife for ante-natal care. She spent 24 hours with the midwife in excruciating labour pains. According to Noah, he was so upset that he could only cry and did nothing. In the second day of Matildah's labour, the midwife proposed that the expectant mother be taken to the local clinic because she suspected a breach. Noah pushed his wife the whole 10km journey in a wheelbarrow.

Photo: A mother and her children receiving treatment

"All that I remember is that my wife was in great pain and we shared this," Noah recalled.

When they got to the clinic, the nurse advised



them to take Matildah to the hospital because she had a breach. The condition needed the attention of a doctor.

“It was urgent. My wife was tired and could not talk; I had no money, no livestock or relative with a car. It meant both my wife and child were going to die,” said Noah.

It happened so fast. Just when all hope was lost, a local businessman who had also come to the clinic hired the Uhuru for Matildah. She was now unconscious. It took less than an hour for the Uhuru to reach the hospital. The doctor had to carry out an emergency caesarean on Matildah. Fortunately the baby was alive but had a weak foetal heart. Both the baby and the mother spent a week in the hospital before they were finally discharged.

The Gungure Clinic of Maternal and Reproductive Health

It is not just this community vehicle, which is making a difference to rural health. The message of hope and promise of better health certainly shone through when Riders recently visited the Gungure clinic for Reproductive and Child Health (RCH), situated in south west Gambia.



The Gungure clinic is an outreach clinic for pregnant women and children under five run on the first and third Thursday of every month.

It consists of an open-air shelter (pictured left) where preliminary consultations can be run and a main, three-roomed building.

The two key roles of the clinic are to offer ante-natal care to pregnant women and to make sure that all infants receive the necessary vaccinations including BCG, measles, yellow fever, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, hepatitis B and vitamin A supplements. Receiving all of these injections plays an important role in reducing infant mortality in this region.

Before Riders started working in this region, mothers would walk for hours with their children to find that no doctors or nurses had come to the clinic because they had no



transport or had broken down on the way. Now, the mothers of this region know that no matter what, the doctor and nurses will make the clinics. This has meant that there has been an improvement in outreach health care delivery and around 80% of children in the area have now had at least one round of vaccinations.

Photo: A doctor at the Gungure clinic with women and children

Isatou Colley

Isatou Colley is part of the outreach health team that comes to the Gungure Clinic. Isatou is an ante-natal nurse and trained midwife and is responsible for maternal health care for the whole region. She sees 30 to 50 mothers a day.

Photo: Isatou talking to a mother-to-be

“Visits used to be difficult because we don’t have transport and it could take us a long time to get to our patients. We once had an urgent call from the traditional birth attendant in Berending saying that a women was experiencing complications in labour. Unfortunately back then we didn’t have any transport and by the time the ambulance got to Berending, mother and child had died,” reported Isatou.



“Now I have a very good transport. It has been very useful in our national campaign against malaria.”

Thank you

None of Riders’ achievements would have been possible without the generous support we have received through GlobalGiving. On behalf of all the mothers who now have the option to go to hospital when they experience complications during labour, Riders for Health would like to say “thank you”.

For more information

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