

Riders for Health the Gambia update report – April 2009

Bringing freedom to the rural Gambia

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

Thanks to the support of the donors of GlobalGiving, Riders for Health have been ensuring that communities living in rural Gambia can be reached with health care and helped in emergency situations. This has been done by providing them with an *Uhuru*.



The *Uhuru* is a multi-purpose vehicle that can act as community ambulance, water pump and freight carrier 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.

Photo: A community ambulance, the Uhuru

Feedback from Kankurang

You may remember that in September Riders reported that, thanks to the support of GlobalGiving, we had been able to provide the village of Kankurang with an Uhuru. This small village in the Foni Bondali District, in the south west of the Gambia, had previously been extremely isolated due to the terrible roads which become almost impassable during the rainy season. Four-wheeled vehicles are scarce in this region and struggle to get over this terrain.

Photo: The main road into Kankurang

Riders' Deputy Programme Director in the Gambia, Ali Ceesay, returned to visit the community in Kankurang to see the impact that having an *Uhuru* had made, six months on.

He was delighted to report that the *Uhuru* in Kankurang has made a real difference to the lives of villagers. The majority of the families of Kankurang are subsistence farmers and have very little disposable income. Hiring a vehicle in a health



emergency, assuming there were any to hand, would therefore be impossible. The cost of a trip using the *Uhuru* was decided by the whole village in advance and set at a level that every one could afford. This makes it accessible to all and an asset for the entire community.

Photo: Villagers from Kankurang around the Uhuru, including Chief, Dembo Badie in the centre.

When Ali visited Kankurang last week, he was told that the *Uhuru* had been used for health emergencies four times in the last month alone. This rural ambulance has become an integral part of health care in the community.



“Having an *Uhuru* has changed everything,” reported Ali. “People suffering can now be referred to the nearest health centre in Bansang immediately in an emergency.”

Frankey Colley, who claims to be the oldest man in the village at 110-years-old, had to use the *Uhuru* two weeks ago. He reported that the *Uhuru* was: “comfortable, quick and reliable.”

“Our roads to Bansang Hospital are very bad but if you are on the *Uhuru*, it is much better than on a horse cart,” said Frankey.

Splashing out for the Gambia

We would like to thank the donors of GlobalGiving who recently demonstrated their further support by raising additional funds in aid of Riders for Health in the Gambia through the ‘Fill the Glass’ campaign. The campaign, run by GlobalGiving, aimed to provide clean water to even more people across developing countries. Millions of people around the world do not have access to clean water for drinking, bathing or growing food.

Photo: In a dry country like the Gambia, access to water is crucial for the people’s health and livelihood.

In the Gambia, *Uhurus* are used as water pumps for domestic use and field irrigation, which is crucial in a community of predominantly subsistence farmers. The *Uhuru* can pump 130 litres of water per hour.

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