



MyFarm: an educational journey from seed to business

Africa Startup (Gambia) is a charitable foundation based in Norway with the mission to improve livelihoods in The Gambia through education in agricultural innovation, environmental protection and entrepreneurship. It is focused on establishing MyFarm, a one hectare farm which is a education centre for children, young people and farmers, acknowledging the importance of independent food security in an ever-more unpredictable global environment. The aim is for MyFarm to be an educational journey from seed to business (see www.gambiastartup.com/ for more information).

Des Bowden and Pam Copeland (B&C Educational Ltd) arranged for four of the links schools in their informal network of overseas school partnerships to send children to MyFarm on a fact finding mission to become ambassadors for environmental education in their schools. Four schools took part in this the first venture

Bakau Newtown Lower Basic (linked with Belle Vue Primary School and Netherbrook Primary School, Dudley) with teachers Dampha and Saho

Wellingara Lower Basic (linked with Howley Grange Primary School, Halesown) with teachers Kumba and Mori

St John's School for the Deaf (linked with Ashwood Park Primary School, Stourbridge) with teachers Baboucar and Sirian

Tallinding Lower Basic School (linked with Lutley Primary School, Dudley) with teachers Elisabeth and Isatou



Children feeling the heat of the sun under the watchful eyes of Nadine a MyFarm volunteer and Chris James the Lutley school governor.

Each school was able to send six pupils and 2 teachers. Once they gathered in the bantaba (covered meeting place) at MyFarm, the grade 4 and 5 school children were divided into groups from different schools. There were two teachers who were able to sign for the hearing impaired children. They were all welcomed by Kelly Smeets and her team (Nadine, Alhaji and Isatou) and introduced to the carousel of activities for the day. Each child would learn

- to make Soap,
- to use Solar Power for cooking
- to become a Farm Explorer.

Then after lunch the children evaluated and summarised their learning on a large poster, which they could take back to school and share with their peers and their contacts in the UK. At first the children were hesitant, but soon made new friends and enjoyed finding out about the MyFarm project and ways to improve their environment.



One group listening to Isatou explaining the health and safety and chemistry of Soap Making before the children made their own.



Children from Wellingara, Bakau Newtown and St John's in rapt attention.



Children from Wellingara, Bakau Newtown, St John's and Tallinding sharing their benechin lunch



Kelly advising some Farm Explorers.



St John's recording their MyFarm experiences



Chris James and Elizabeth Gomez working with the Tallinding children



The artistic creations as work in progress recalling a fun and educational day at MyFarm.



The all important cakes baking in the solar oven

The children and teachers arrived at MyFarm promptly at 09.30 am and worked hard all day leaving at 4.00 pm.. The children said that they had really enjoyed learning outside the classroom and had learnt about how to become a little greener, they were keen to tell their friends and families about what they had learnt and hoped to be able to come back again to learn more about environmental education and developing from seed to business.