

# Reason2Hope

*Education is hope. Education is power. Education changes lives.*



## *Promoting Progress Through Relationships*

After a visit to the remote, primitive village of Burong, Gambia, Mary Van Kampen had no doubt that she would return to America and do something to help educate children in Gambia. She began by personally providing school uniforms to



the 65 students enrolled at Burong Lower Basic School. To her surprise, enrollment increased quickly and Mary knew she could no longer do this on her own. Reason2Hope became a registered US 501(c)(3) nonprofit in late 2012. It is managed by a small board of directors in the US, all volunteers, and a Gambian director, Sheriffo Tamba.

In the early years she had two goals for Reason2Hope: to be a consistent presence while doing no harm and to increase the number of girls attending school. She knew that it would take time to earn the trust of school officials and parents. She researched other non-profits and their successes/failures, spent time with elders and leaders, spoke with parents and made an effort to build relationships. It wasn't always a smooth road. "I learned a lot through trial and error. Mistakes are truly my best teachers. And I had quite a few excellent teachers," she laughed.

First R2H provided school uniforms to any student wanting to attend BLBS. Enrollment doubled. Then R2H started providing rice for school lunches. Enrollment more than doubled. R2H now serves approximately 325 students providing school uniforms, school supplies and a daily lunch.

Other special projects include arranging and funding medical help for a student needing corrective surgery, a school garden, purchasing a desktop computer and

printer and buying wheelchairs for 3 family members in the village, one of whom was a little boy who wanted to attend school.

R2H is funded solely by individual donations. All material for uniforms, school supplies and rice are purchased within The Gambia providing income to merchants, tailors, and delivery truck drivers. “ We would not be able to provide any of this without the generosity of our supporters,” Mary said. “ Our commitment to the students is now well known in the region. We have met our intention of doing no harm while serving the students and community. We have provided families with the opportunity for both their sons and daughters to be educated. My greatest joy is seeing all those girls in school!” Mary said.

What’s next for R2H?

Reason2Hope would like to expand their program into another rural district in The Gambia. “These areas are most often overlooked and lack the opportunities that are available in more urban areas. We believe that education is for all children. Impoverished families often have no hope of offering education to their children. We can and we do. That’s why we are called Reason2Hope.”