

## GAMBIA

COUNTRY PAPER OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA AT THE FORTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION, GENEVA, 30TH SEPTEMBER - 5TH OCTOBER 1996 THEME: Strengthening THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN A CHANGING WORLD.

### 1.0. INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL OVERVIEW

#### 1.0.1 Size and Population: The population growth rate is accelerating.

The annual growth rate of 3.4% during the period 1973 - 1983 has increased to 4.1% during the last decade. The acceleration is mainly due to a very young age pyramid combined with a large scale influx of immigrants from other West African countries.

The Gambia, about 10,689 sq. km. in area (on the West Coast of Africa), has a projected population of 1.13 million for 1995. The population is young since 44% of the total is under 15 years. Besides noting that 40.9% of the population is literate (1993 census), and 67 % is rural, the population growth rate of 4.1 % accounted for by 0.6% is indeed high. The infant mortality rate is 132 per 1000.

About half of the population is under 15 years old, thus a burden on the government and the families for the provision of education and health services to an increasingly larger percentage of unproductive population. Unemployment and underemployment rates are higher particularly among urban youth- and pose- a potential threat to security and social stability.

**1.0.2 The Economy:** The Gambian economy is agrarian with groundnut production forming the backbone. Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Sectors employing 80 - 90% of the active work force contributes 2599 to GDP. With D2792.00 equivalent to US \$27.92 per capita, and the urban income is 4 - 5 times higher than the rural income.

**1.0.3 Poverty Situation:** About 40% of the population live below the food poverty line, of whom approximately 22.656 of urban households are food poor, and 69.8% food deficient. The Gambia is among the poorest and least developed nations of the world. According to the Human Development Report 1995, it ranks 161 on the Human Development Indicators.

Its economy began to decline in the mid-1970s and in 1985/86 Government embarked on an Economic Recovery Programme (ERP) to address the imbalance in the economy. The implementation of the ERP has generally succeeded. To consolidate the achievement of ERP, Government launched the Programme for Sustainable Development (PSD) in 1990 which also resulted to significant improvement in the economic performance. The Government is now putting in place a comprehensive programme towards poverty alleviation.

**1.0.4 Food Security:** The Gambia has a food security problem and is still food poor. Women and children are the most vulnerable groups in terms of protein-energy malnutrition and other nutritional deficiency diseases. These indicate negative impacts on her human resources development.

Based on the FAO norm. 40 % of the population cannot earn enough to buy or acquire the minimum food basket, which requires 2700 kilo calories of energy per day, per male adult equivalent. The food poverty line is D138 per month/AEU for urban households and D100 for rural household.

Over 70% of the population live in the rural areas and are mostly poor. During the hungry season (July-September), over 75% of rural dwellers do not consume enough food to meet the minimum calorie requirements. Among urban dwellers, 22% are food poor while about 70% spend below the minimum amount required to buy the food basket.

In addition, The Gambia's agricultural production is affected by the Sahelian drought, the lack of adequate farming inputs, acute shortages of marketing facilities and the land tenure system. The absence of a diversified agricultural system continues to be the main bottleneck to diversified food self-sufficiency. The land tenure system is still traditional and male dominated despite in recent times where women do inherit land.

The growing population exerts increasing pressure on land leading to more intensive cultivation, resulting in soil erosion, loss of soil fertility and lower crop yields. The increasing gap between food demand and supply is threatening food security at household level and is contributing to growing malnutrition. Imports are also increasing dramatically - which is causing too much of a drain on the economy.

## **1.2 SITUATION ANALYSIS OF THE EDUCATION SECTOR**

**1.2.1 Literacy:** The low literacy rates particularly of women and girls is of great concern to government. The Gambia's overall literacy level is estimated at 41% in 1993 for both sexes. While male literate represent 36% female representation is as low as 15%.

**1.2.2 The System:** The Gambia now operates a 6-3-3 education structure. The general objectives of which are to increase access and improve quality; relevance and efficiency of education in a sustainable and cost-effective manner. The school entry age is being lowered from 7 to 6 years and basic education shall be made free, compulsory and available with implications on enrolment and the provision of resources.

The current expansion in the Junior Senior Secondary Schools and the creation of a University Extension indicates Government's intentions in making education more accessible to all.

### **1.2.3 Teaching Force**

1995/96 Primary Schools: 418 teachers;- 58% QT 3(Qualified Teacher)

1995/96 Junior Secondary School: 967 Teachers - 74% QT

1995/96 Senior Secondary School: 580 Teachers- 94% QT

**1.2.4 Enrolment, Coverage and Targets:** In 1994/95, there were total enrolments of 113,419 pupils in 258 primary schools, 21,050 students in 24 Junior Secondary Schools and 10,517 students in 12 Senior Secondary Schools. Of whom 46.6%, 37.8% and 31%, respectively were female enrolment. It is targeted that by the year 2003, the education system shall achieve 85% Gross enrolment Ratio (GER). At least a 75 % transition rate from Grade 6 to Grade 7, and 80% rate from Grade 9 to Grade 10 will be expected. By the end of the planned period, most Gambian children will achieve 9 years of basic education.

Due to the limited primary school networks, and various social, cultural and economic reasons, approximately 40% of the Gambian children eligible for schooling are out of the conventional school system. A summary of findings from the UNICEF/World Bank study (August, 1995) on factors affecting girls' participation in education, are thus:

Male child preference;

Distance from school;  
Threatened extended family structure;  
Early marriage practices;  
Fear of promiscuity and teenage pregnancy;  
Cost of education especially at the secondary level;  
Limited short and long term economic/employment opportunities;

Some of the various socio-economic and cultural reasons of low participation in school system and the steps being taken are as follow

- i. wrong perception or non-awareness of the role of education, particularly the notion, education for ,`white collar job'. In this regard, series of sensitisation and consultative meetings were conducted from the regional to national levels, the resultant of which was the recent Second National Conference on Education that stressed the need to focus on education rather than schooling.
- ii. limited post primary places has prompted government to open Eleven new Junior Secondary and three Senior Secondary Schools in five regions. This move is to increase access to post primary education.
- iii high cost (direct and indirect) to poor parents of sending children especially girls to school. A programme of support to the Day Care Centres is a useful means of reducing the indirect cost of girls education. Without day care centres most of the girls are needed to look after the siblings. In addition school fees has now been reduced and a flexible payment system introduced; sponsorship programmes such as the UNICEF sponsored Girls' education project providing free books and constructing basic sanitary facilities are means of reducing direct cost of education. The new SFF\* will also contribute significantly towards these efforts.
- iv the preferences for "Madrasah" (Arabic/Islamic) system of education.

The Madrasah has recently been proven to be an indispensable delivery system for ensuring Basic Education to all Gambians. It is a formal system which has Arabic as a medium of instruction with Islamic Religious orientation and therefore accepted by many muslim parents who constitute over 80 percent Gambian population. The structure of Madrasah system is similar to the "Western" conventional system. It operates Nursery, 6 years of Primary, 3 years of Junior Secondary and 3 years of Senior Secondary education . Students graduating from the system are accepted in many Arab speaking countries but yet the system has not benefited from state planning, resource mobilisation and allocation.

The resent findings from many studies shows the systems greater potential in reaching many children for basic education. The UNICEF assisted Survey of Madrasah has collected data from 283 Primary level Madrasah institutions all over the country. It reveals that many children (especially girls) out of the conventional system are in the Madrasah. There are 31,861 pupils in the system of which females constitute 12,963 (or 41%).

The Government initiated discussions with the Madrasah proprietors and the curriculum is being produced which will enable all the key subjects taught in the conventional schools be taught in the Madrasah system and the management system is being planned which will bring all such institutions under one umbrella.

## **2.0 THE OVERALL EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

The Gambia has now finalised a mid-term review of its 15-year Education Policy (1988-2003) with a view to formulating programmes towards the renewal of integrated human resources development, emphasising multi-sectoral approaches. The new educational objectives outline in the Revised Policy framework include:

- i increased access, relevance, and improved quality of basic education and life skills;
- ii increased efficiency and sustainability, promoting local empowerment and awareness of scientific and technical culture of the Gambian people;
- iii Enhancing an integrated approach to the Development of the Education System and promotion of an entrepreneurial spirit.

The Educational Development Goal has stressed the need for increased community participation in education. The strategies adopted in pursuit of these objectives include:

- (a) Use of all channels of communication;
- (b) Inclusion of basic education components in all development projects;
- (c) Linking formal and Non-formal and enhancing internal and external interaction;
- (d) Mass functional literacy programmes especially for women and girls;
- (e) Promotion of Girls Education;
- (f) Providing life skills to the literate youths;
- (g) Decentralised educational management through institutional capacity building;
- (h) Training of trainers;
- (i) Identification and diversification of productive areas to broaden the resource base of schools and communities;
- (j) Strengthening partnership with the private sector.

### **3.0 OVERVIEW OF MINISTRY OF EDUCATION STRUCTURE (SEE ORGANIGRAM AT APPENDIX 1)/SOME POLICY GUIDELINES AND ACTIONS TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION**

The planning and management capacity of the Ministry of Education will be strengthened by the newly revitalised Curriculum Research, Personnel and Professional Development Division. Government will continue ongoing efforts to increase the number of qualified teachers, trained or retrained through pre-service teacher training or in-service training programmes. The target of 100% qualified teachers will be reached by the year 2003. The strengthening of the regional offices will help provide the guidance and supervision of teachers - to improve their performance' and encourage the effective participation of the Divisional Education committees in the management of education at the level.

The enrolment of girls is extremely low when compared to boys. In order to redress this imbalance, government accords a high priority to the expansion of education of females. Measures have been taken to increase the percentage of female teachers. The entry age into primary school was lower/seven, now to six, to give girls more years of schooling. Day care centres will be revitalised and a standard curricula is envisaged to be developed in order to relieve girls from their work obligations and enhance a smooth transition from Early childhood care and education to the Basic Education cycle.

The enrolment and training of female teachers is deliberately encouraged so as to make them serve as role models for girls. Some International agencies such as UNICEF are supporting the education sector through the promotion of Girls Education; School Farms and Gardens;

Early Child Care and Education; Special Needs Education; Non-Formal Education; Curriculum Research and Development and Guidance and Counseling for schools.

#### **4.0 PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING**

4.0.1 The school of Education of The Gambia College continues to be the leading institution in teacher training both at the pre-service and in-service levels. It works with the Ministry of Education in the provision of integrated programmes in teacher education and training. In this light, The Gambia College is the key agency in the provision of Middle level manpower requirements for the Ministry of Education through these programmes. The school currently trains teachers for the formal school system through three main modes:

- i a 2-year full-time Primary Teacher's certificate (PTC) course for Primary School (grades 1 - 6) teachers and
- ii a 2-year full-time Higher Teachers' Certificate (HTC) course for Junior Secondary School (grade 7 - 9) teachers'
- iii a 3-year In-service course leading to the award of the PTC.

4.0.2 The mid-term review of the Education Policy (1988-2003) concluded that we are on course in the attainment of much of the goals set out in the policy. A number of recommendations were also made which it is hoped, would enhance the contribution of education in national development. In this submission the college put forward four projects which it is expected, would play a central role in the renewal of education:

- i To provide in-serving training for uncertified Primary Teachers' Certificate (PTC) programmes.
- ii To increase the output from the Higher Teachers' Certificate (HTC) and the Primary Teachers' Certificate (PTC) programmes.
- iii To increase the proportion of women on the pre-service (HTC and PTC) programmes.
- iv To introduce a Higher Teachers' Certificate Programme for primary teachers - HTC (Primary).

#### **4.1 THE PROPOSALS**

4.1.1 When the current World Bank assisted project ends in April 1996 a total of 1235 teachers would have been upgraded through the in-service programmes. This is in line with the project requirement to train 1200 teachers between 1990 and 1996.

4.1.2 At the same time pre-service primary teacher output was double from an average of 40 per year. This was done without any provision of additional staff or facilities except for a yet to be furnished three classroom block. The HTC programme which was introduced in 1986 was drastically reorganised to cater for all the core subject areas while at the same time increasing intake from an average of about 15 students per year to 50.

#### **5.0 THE GAMBIA TEACHERS UNION (GTIJ)**

##### **5.1 ACHIEVEMENTS**

Established on the 9th February 1937, the union to date has contributed tremendously to the academic/professional upliftment of Gambian Teachers as well as their economic well-being.

Namely:

P.T.O

## **ACHIEVEMENTS**

- I. The in - service training of teachers through workshop, seminars etc The GTU conducted the upgrading course for Unqualified Teachers resulting in the certification of over 1,500 teachers. This meant a substantial increase in the emoluments of these teachers ie ~ big leap forward in remuneration from grade 6, a salary differential of D709.00 (at a rate of ten Dalasi to one U.S Dollar)
- II. Representation on the National Advisory Council on Education, the premier body charged with the responsibility of advising the Hon. Minister of Education on all matters relating to education in The Gambia.
- III. Improved the lot of teachers e.g the upward revision of teachers salaries on a parity with the rest of servants in others sectors of the Civil Service through the Integrated Pay Scale.
- IV. Local and international recognition. GTU's membership of the NCC and its impending involvement with the Civic Education in collaboration with,. National Democratic Institute (USA) and the USAID. GTU is recognised by and has links with DLF, AATO, EI etc.
- V. GTU has seat on the Short Listing Committee of the Ministry of Education
- VI. The GTU was one of the initiators of the First National Conference on Education, in which it participated effectively, held in 1989. It should be noted that the idea of holding the conference was mooted when the former- executive of the GTU paid a courtesy call on the former Minister of Education Mr B B Dabo.
- VII. GTU initiated the enactment of the Unified Teaching Service Act (1972) which protects, amongst other things, the conditions of service of teachers in Mission and Private Schools.
- VIII. The GTU was instrumental in the setting, up a Teacher Training College in George Town in 1949 which later moved to Yundum and now to Brikama.
- IX. Unlike other Unions, GTU has never been banned. It enjoys the recognition of former regimes. the present AFPRC Government and non - Governmental Organisations.
- X. GTU has been able to positively sensitize teachers across the country by way of workshops and Seminars with a view to forming GTU Credit Union
- XI. GTU has now established a Women's Wing to encourage our Women folk to participate effectively in national development shoulder - to - shoulder with their male counter parts.

XII. GTU has now submitted a proposal to Government through the National Advisory Council on Education for the establishment of a Teaching Service Commission (note: teachers in Government Schools or Government grant - aided schools as Civil Servants).

## **5.2 . CHALLENGES**

I. There is still a high percentage of UQ teachers in the system, especially in the Primary Sector. The total number of Unqualified teachers stands at 1,416 while the Qualified teachers are 4,284. Over thirty - three (33 %) of our teaching force is Unqualified. There is a high percentage of Unqualified teachers yet to be trained; and in view of the New Education Policy (1988 - 2003), it has become even more urgent to do so, especially against the background of the Policy objective of a 100% qualified teaching service by the year 1996.

II. Shortage of qualified Gambian teachers.

III. Poor standards of teachers.

IV. How to improve the image of the teacher and the teaching profession.

VI. Mobility: inadequate transport facilities at Headquarters as well as the Regional Offices

## **FUTURE PLANS OF THE GTU FOR TEACHERS**

I. GTU contemplates running GCE "O and "A" Level courses for teachers with a view to improving on academic standards.

II. GTU register as a full - fledged union.

## **6.0. THE ISSUE ITSELF**

Teaching is an occupation which requires the ability to live with, and handle constructively, a multitude of dilemmas, tensions, contradictions, uncertainties and It also call for moving positively with current trends. Paradoxes claims from various sectors of Society; Parents, Employers, Civil Servants, Pressure groups and so on to the right of involvement in Education, the Curriculum, its nature and change all contribute to the disequilibrium affecting the perceived role of the teacher.

If the process of teaching is concerned with making space for children to expand their understanding it should follow that a significant aspect of the teachers role is to encourage questioning and inquiring / discovery approaches to learning - question of fact "What" as well as reason, "why"

This would seem to imply the importance of greater degree of trust in the teacher and his role and the overt recognition of that importance by society.

In the meantime, teachers appeal to have the difficult task holding tensions and competing values in balance, while transcending them in order to focus upon the child and his learning. Identifying which ideas seem of constant value and which are rather more representative our own time and society my help in both prescribing and proscribing the role of the teacher. Teachers evidently make our schools what they are and the quality of our children's education depends upon their competence. Effective teachers perform a large and demanding role, but there is much that impinges upon all teachers' work which lies outside their control. Given

these demands of the role, is it appropriate to expect teachers to keep taking on more and further responsibilities without first asking ourselves the question; whose responsibilities should these really be?'

## **6.1 INVOLVEMENT/PARTICIPATION / DECISION MAKING AND POLICY FORMULATION**

Nevertheless, what ever acceptable roles are assigned to teachers they must be strengthened by effectively involving them in policy formulation; establishment of Personnel/Teaching Service Commission offices to look into appointments and initial postings, based on a postings policy. Schemes/conditions of service should also be formulated by the employer and teacher representatives.

## **6.2 CODE OF CONDUCT**

To make teachers and the teaching profession more respectable certain vocational codes of conduct that are ethically high and noble, would have to be prescribed so that teachers are more responsive to the profession, the child, the community, the employer and their colleagues.

## **6.3 REMUNERATION**

Remuneration and incentives to teachers is essential to cut down on attrition rates and to give value for work done and prevent frustration.

## **6.4 MANAGEMENT STYLE**

Management also has a paramount role to play in strengthening the role teachers by:

- I promoting participation of staff in an education service that is flexible to dynamic change(s)
- II encouraging delegation and efficiency
- III allowing a good communication and participation system at all levels
- IV Maximum and effective utilisation of human, financial, and material resources (time inclusive)
- V Monitoring and Evaluation of performance in an objective manner

## **6.5 THE IMPACT OF NEW INFORMATION AND TECHNOLOGIES IN THE TEACHING OF TEACHERS**

Teacher must be made to be confident in the implementation of their expected and accepted role in society amidst a fastly - changing world. They must be exposed to new thoughts trends, and technologies of the 'trade' through comprehensive staff development programmes e.g upgrading courses, workshops, refreshers, study tours and conferences.

## **6.6 POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE ATTITUDINAL CHANGES IN SOCIETY**

The phenomena of intolerance, violence, racism, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism, the denial of Human Rights and Exclusion resulted in the adoption of educational strategies to

confront these occurrences, despite the complexity and difficulty of the task at the October 1994 ICE.

The outcomes of this forum:

**Action on Education For Peace, Human Rights and Democracy** is evident food for thought in strengthening the role of teachers in a rapidly-changing world.

Teachers and management must endeavour to deliberately and intensively perpetuate 'coherent set of meanings, feelings and incentives for action to successfully ' - Educate for a civil society' globally.

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