



GIVE Report
Following the Volunteer Programme
in
The Gambia
2022

Registered Charity Number (RCN) 20079581

Company Registration Number 499076

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1: INTRODUCTION-Executive Summary

Following the major disruption to the GIVE project in 2021 caused by the COVID pandemic it was crucially important that GIVE resumed its partnership programme with Gambian teachers as soon as it was safe and feasible to do so. A GIVE team of ten volunteers visited The Gambia in March, 2022, and, though the programme was condensed into a three-week schedule, the volunteers succeeded in restoring the momentum that had guided the project up to February, 2020. The work of 2022 has recovered some lost ground in the professional development programme and has laid the basis for a consolidation of that programme into the future.

This year's GIVE team of 10 Irish volunteers was joined in the delivery of its programme by a strong cohort of Gambian teachers – a true partnership which we hope will sustain the professional development of Gambian teachers long into the future.

GIVE programme 2022 covered four different areas in education:

- Professional Development of teachers in Early Childhood
- Professional Development of teachers in Lower Basic Education (Grades One, Two and Three)
- Compensatory Education for students in two Skills Centres and
- Professional Development Seminar with Principal Teachers.

In addition to these four areas GIVE facilitated an open discussion over two hours with the Education Secretary of CES and others in the education sector on Child Protection policy formation.

In advance of the GIVE visit to The Gambia the CES (Catholic Education Secretariat) had arranged for the attendance of the teachers and facilitators at their respective training modules. GIVE is conscious of the challenges posed for the teachers in travelling to the courses and for their schools in releasing them to attend when there is no substitute teacher to take their classes.

Prior to the Principals seminar, GIVE Management Team met with a sub-group of the Principals to design a programme which would reflect the needs of their colleagues. GIVE values enormously the engagement of the Principals in this professional development programme and their support for the GIVE programme with their staffs.

GIVE is very conscious of the challenges faced by school communities in The Gambia. We commend the Principals and the teachers in their schools and the staff in the Catholic Education Secretariat in their endeavours to overcome these many challenges. We are especially grateful to Mr. Emil Kujabi, Education Secretary, Mr Edward Gibba, Mr. Dawda Faye and Mr. Andrew Jassey from the CES for making the GIVE volunteers welcome, for their guidance and advice and for their support for the GIVE programme, 2022.

Thanks to Marie Antoinette Corr, General Secretary of the Gambia Teachers Union for welcoming us to The Gambia and for filling us in on some of the praiseworthy initiatives the GTU has taken in support of teachers and of the education community.

GIVE is proud of its achievements since 2011, none of which would have been possible without the dedication and commitment of the volunteers. Thank you to each and every volunteer for your dedication, for your commitment, your wonderful camaraderie and to your families and friends for their support. In the face of the risks posed for you and for your families by COVID you chose to volunteer with GIVE and join in its Gambian project. Your contribution to GIVE project, 2022, has been outstanding.

Our sincere thanks to the Irish National Teachers Organisation and to the Retired Teachers Association of Ireland – their financial support has been critical to the success of GIVE’s project and we are deeply indebted to both organisations for that support. We commend their vision and their solidarity with teachers and education communities in the developing world.

Our sincere thanks to Comhar Linn Credit Union and to the Gambian Teachers Union Co-operative Credit Union for facilitating the administration of the GIVE project and to Michael McHugh and Mr Babacur Joof who have been constant in their guidance and support for the work of GIVE.

We value the input and advice from Comhlámh and especially their supportive role in preparing volunteers for the important work which they undertake in The Gambia.

Michael Griffin, Chairperson, GIVE

April, 2022.

2: RISK ANALYSIS OF GIVE TEAM VISIT TO THE GAMBIA

During 2021 GIVE hosted a number of meetings (ZOOM) of volunteers who had worked in The Gambia in February, 2020, in order to keep the group updated on events in The Gambia, to maintain the cohesion of the group and to garner their views on their likely participation in a Spring 2022 programme in the Gambia, should such a programme take place. All members in the group had experience of working in The Gambia (some over a number of years) and many were keen to return as volunteers whenever conditions permitted. For much of 2021 COVID restrictions on travel and the nature of the Corona virus illness, especially among the older adult population, impacted severely on the prospects of such a return visit. It was only when most of the adult population in Ireland had been fully vaccinated and some easing of restrictions were sanctioned that GIVE could look towards organising a 2022 visit to The Gambia.

GIVE Management Team had frequent updates from reliable contacts in The Gambia regarding the prevalence of COVID in that community, the provision of medical assistance, vaccination rates, mask wearing, tourism and accommodation provision, measures being taken in schools to cope with the virus, transportation (taxi) services etc.

In light of all of these circumstances, the Board of Directors compiled a risk analysis which would pertain to a potential visit by GIVE volunteers. At its meeting on 7th January 2022, the Board agreed that a GIVE team would visit the Gambia in March and that all volunteers would be provided with the risk analysis; the Board urged that volunteers would weigh up all the factors in arriving at their decision.

A team of 10 volunteers was formed, seven of whom had previous experience with GIVE in The Gambia and three of whom, recently retired teachers, were first time volunteers with GIVE.



The GIVE team, 2022

L.to R. Michael Griffin, Imelda Traynor, Eibhlín MacNamara, Mary Hayes, Pauline Moran, Angela Griffin, Anna Gibbons, Brendan O’Boyle, Eilís Fagan Shiels and Siobhán Brennan.

3: PREPARATION FOR VISIT

The team held a preparatory meeting (in person) in Club na Múinteoirí, Parnell Square, to familiarise all volunteers with life in The Gambia, with working as a volunteer on the GIVE team in The Gambia, with GIVE policies especially on Child Protection, with caring for one self while in The Gambia and with the nature of the work that would be undertaken by the volunteers. Because of the time constraints and cautious of the Ormicon variant of Covid which was then prevalent in Ireland it was decided that there would be no follow-up preparatory meetings in person of the whole team and much of the preparation for delivery of the programme would happen upon our arrival in The Gambia. In the meantime volunteers within each sector of the programme would liaise and make whatever preparation they deemed essential before departure.

In preparation for the 2022 programme GIVE’s Management team liaised with Mr. Gibba of the Catholic Education Secretariat in The Gambia. Together they agreed on the outlines of the programme to be delivered over 4 weeks in March - a course, during week one, for the experienced facilitators (ToTs) at Early Childhood Level and at Lower Basic Schools level followed by courses jointly delivered by Give volunteers and Gambian facilitators to teachers in the Early Childhood Education sector and to teachers of Grades 1, 2 and 3 of Lower Basic Schools. If possible, a visit would be arranged of some Irish volunteers to Early Childhood schools and to Lower Basic Sector schools.

It was also agreed that CES and GIVE would jointly host a two-day seminar for Principal Teachers and that the number of participants would be limited to 20; there would be a meeting of some GIVE volunteers with a core group of Principal teachers during week one to agree on the topics that would be addressed in the Seminar; it was agreed that, when designing the format of the seminar, there would be an emphasis on the engagement and interaction of the participants with the topics being considered.

Arising from the review of the 2020 programme with CES (in February, 2020), GIVE offered to assist in furthering consideration of Child Protection measures in The Gambia and in reviewing policy in that regard. It was agreed that there would be a meeting of the Diocesan Commission on Child Protection with GIVE representatives in Week One with a follow-up meeting in Week 3 or 4.

Because of the reduced size of the GIVE team in 2022 only four volunteers could be allocated to the programme in the Skill Centres, two to St. Peter's SC and two to St. Martha's S.C.. Regrettably GIVE could not allocate any volunteer to Presentation GVS in 2022 and we thank Sr. Rosene, the Principal, for her understanding in that regard. All of the three Skill Centres offer a skills training programme for their female students enabling them to take part in the world of work, e.g. in tailoring, hairdressing, catering, beauty treatments and in establishing business in these areas; the GIVE volunteers liaised with teachers / tutors in the centres in offering literacy, numeracy and computer skills programmes to the students.

The GIVE team of ten volunteers was scheduled to depart Dublin for the Gambia on 1st March but unfortunately the airline rescheduled our flights at short notice to 4th March with our return a day earlier than we had planned. This forced us to condense our programme into three weeks.

4: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

March 7th – March 24th, 2022

Team: Angela Griffin, Siobhán Brennan, Marie Bass, Philomen Mendy, Ellen Gomez, Ida Mendy, Francis Mendy, Therése Gibba, Celestine Sambou, Kaddy Mendy, Josephine Mandy and Louise Mendy.



In order to familiarise ourselves with the classroom experience of teachers in the Early Childhood Education schools the GIVE volunteers, Angela and Siobhán, visited Holy Cross Early Childhood school and St. Peter's Early Childhood school on day one and two. These are two well-run schools, Holy Cross is a stand-alone school with no Lower Basic school close by while St. Peter's has a very large Lower Basic school attached.

Holy Cross Early Childhood Development School Playground March, 2022.

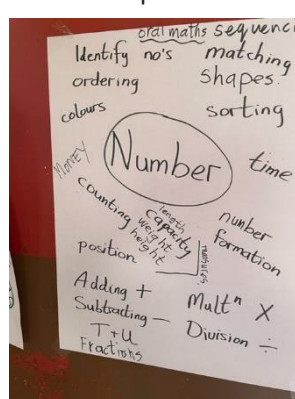
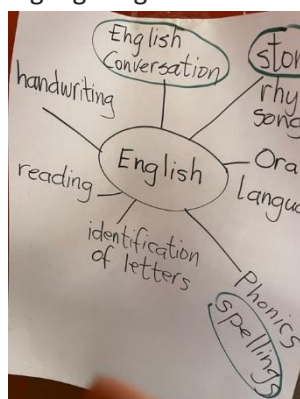
One of the major successes of GIVE/CES co-operation over several years has been the upskilling of teachers to the position of facilitators, known locally as ToTs (Trainers of Teachers) who are now taking responsibility for sharing their knowledge with colleagues in Workshop settings.

During 2021, three workshops, in Soma (Bwiam), Foni and Brikama in The Gambia, were organised by CES and funded by GIVE. Two of these workshops catered for Early Childhood Teachers and one workshop was held for teachers of Grade 1, at Lower Basic Schools. (See Appendix Three)

The two ECD (Early Childhood Development) workshops were delivered by our Gambian colleagues. These facilitators, 10 in total, have had many years of training from GIVE trainers. We began our work

in CES with a whole team meeting of the Irish volunteers and Gambian colleagues; the meeting enabled the facilitators to address the challenges which they meet in their delivery of the workshop programme and their own professional development needs. The meeting also explored with them their co-delivery of the workshops to the Gambian teachers during weeks two and three.

During our discussions they admitted that, initially, they had found it so difficult to stand up in front of colleagues to deliver a workshop but they gained in confidence with practice. But more than anything we were impressed in their understanding of the new ideas they were trying to pass on to other teachers, their belief in them.... they just got it! It is our opinion that they are a real success story of what consistent training of facilitators over the years can achieve. We discussed the workshops they had given over the past two years, one in Brikama and one in Bwiam. They covered the following topics, phonics, number, oral language, classroom management, PE and handwriting. They agreed that there were many positive outcomes including the involvement of teachers, the achievement of aims, the enjoyment and sense of fulfilment as everyone learned from each other, the fantastic accommodation. We listened to the challenges that arose and the considerable sacrifices to themselves and their families which they make to travel to a two-day workshop. These issues can best be resolved locally. Eventually we moved along to discuss another challenge which was the acknowledged need to vary and develop the programme. This has been a concern of previous Irish tutors who, whilst acknowledging the terrific work they are doing, found that there is a tendency to do the same workshop each time. So we addressed this by reviewing the maths and English curriculum and highlighting areas that they could incorporate into the workshops.



Areas such as storytelling in English and time and measures in maths were covered revealing that many of them could not tell the time though there would be a clock in their homes. We modelled maths games as part of a daily oral maths lesson and they in turn modelled lessons on reading and story for us with their usual good humour and fun. We really encouraged them to try some new things in their upcoming workshops.

Week 2: A group of fifteen teachers arrived on week 2 who had no previous training from GIVE, plus two adorable but noisy babies. All except one had been trained in the Gambian University. They taught Nursery levels 1,2,3 and were all teaching in small 3/4 teacher schools with class numbers ranging from 14 to 58. We covered areas of English maths and classroom management, first referring to the curriculum and areas that they perhaps never teach. Three facilitators, Francis, Philomen and Therese modelled a lesson each. What was wonderful was the way they made contributions to the day's work with their own observations ...Josephine said "I would encourage you to try this idea of teaching



phonics following the Jolly Phonics method as it changed my teaching" After one of the participants modelled a lesson where she was clearly nervous Philomen said "I applaud Serena for her courage; I assure you it is not easy to stand up in front of your colleagues and teach". The participants listened to these experienced teachers, their words bringing weight to what we were saying.

Workshop Group Week Two with Irish volunteers, Angela and Siobhán and Mr. Edward Gibba.

Week 3: Fifteen teachers arrived for week 3 and this time just one adorable QUIET baby who joined in whenever we did an active part to a lesson! One teacher had received no teacher training. The teachers came from small nursery schools with class numbers from 13 to 50. We were joined by three of our experienced Gambian facilitators, all of whom modelled a lesson and also contributed to the work that Siobhan and I did. During a session on Positive Reinforcement the issue of corporal punishment arose...the teachers were adamant that beating is in their culture, they believe that it is what parents expect and they can see no reason to stop it. One can only hope that a small seed might be planted through the discussion. when I asked the gorgeous young mother of the adorable baby Jessica if this is what she wanted for her child in Nursery she gave a fervent NO in response ...it will take time.

At the end of the three weeks the usual dilemmas are there .The visit to the two nursery school during the first week showed us some of the challenges faced by the Gambian teachers with poor quality building and few resources and often very big classes. We would have liked to spend some one-to-one time with the two untrained teachers as they were young and very keen. But seeing the impressive facilitators who have truly benefited from many workshops from GIVE makes you believe that something is being done right. Though all teachers will benefit from training there is merit in the same group returning for three years to practice the skills needed to give workshops and reach out to other teachers.



Early Childhood Development: Week 3 Workshop Group

The participants each completed an evaluation of the programme. In summary (1) they found the workshop very useful (2) they liked the new ideas and appreciated the resources which they would bring back to their schools (3) they would like it to be longer (4) they value the opportunity given to them to learn from each other, especially in classroom management.

Venue: The space allocated for our three-week programme was St. Therese's Parish Hall, at the rear of the CES premises. Its proximity to the CES hall facilitated a joint meeting of attendees at both ECD and Lower Basic Workshops first thing every day and enabled the CES kitchen staff to provide lunches for both groups.

Purchase of resources:

Having established the final number of attendees each week, resources were purchased that would provide them with the necessary "tools" for the workshop and each was provided with a basic pack to bring back to their schools.

Cluster Workshops:

Two workshops for teachers in the Early Childhood Development sector have been scheduled for delivery by Gambian facilitators; the Soma cluster will be held on 5th, 6th and 7th May, 2022 and the Bwiam cluster on 12th, 13th and 14th May, 2022.

Report on Early Childhood Development provided by Angela Griffin and Siobhán Brennan.

5: LOWER BASIC SCHOOL WORKSHOPS 2022

7th March – 24th March, 2022

Team; Eibhlín MacNamara, Brendan O'Boyle, Pauline Moran, Louise Jatta, Alice Badjan, Margaret Gomez, Anna Mendy, Therese Mendy, Ida Koite, Balla Krubally, Susan Mendy.

Setting out from Dublin to The Gambia this year, our aim was to meet and work with experienced Gambian ToTs, (Trainers of teachers/facilitators) and continue to work with them as leaders in delivering two subsequent workshops to Grade 3 teachers and to a mixed group of Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers. Our time, as volunteers in The Gambia, was limited to just three weeks, due to the disruptions of Covid.

We planned three workshops.

1. A three-day workshop for Experienced ToT's (already known to us)
2. A five-day workshop for Grade 3 teachers
3. A four-day workshop for a mixed group of Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers.

On Monday we met with Mr. Gibba, the Gambian Co Ordinator of the project, and sorted out the two halls, furniture etc to be used by both the Lower Basic and Early Childhood Development groups. The GIVE LBS team visited St. Theresa's Lower Basic school next to the CES Headquarters. The school has 4,000 pupils, 88 teachers and 11 classes of each level with up to 60 students per class. Mrs. Marie Kujabi, the Principal, presented us to some of the grade 1 and 2 classes. With few resources and overcrowded classrooms, we could see evidence of effective teaching, and the creation of a literate environment in some of the classrooms. On the Tuesday we visited a rural school in Ghana Town where the newly appointed Principal introduced us to the Teachers of Grade 1,2,3 and Nursery 1,2,3. Great work was being done at Nursery level but they were finding it difficult to obtain and retain fully qualified teachers for the Lower Basic. A building project for a new classroom and 3 accommodation units to entice teachers to stay is community driven. However more funding was needed to finish this project.

Workshop 1 Week 1 Wednesday to Friday

GIVE first began to work with teachers from Lower Basic schools in 2016. Since then, we have worked with Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers from many Gambian schools. Some of these teachers co-delivered our workshops in 2020 and we were delighted to learn that they had delivered a three-day workshop to their colleagues at the CES hall in Brikama during 2021.

We would like to thank CES, and Mr. Edward Gibba, who were central to organising this workshop and the responsibility of organising the timetable and the sessions in Maths, English and Integrated Studies. The workshop was a great success and a report on this work, together with the ECD workshops was compiled, by M. Gibba. (See Appendix Three)

Our Three-day workshop for facilitators was attended by eight Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers. We were delighted to welcome these teachers as we had come to know them over the past few years. However, due to family circumstances, there was some change of personnel; some of those attending had strong experience of delivering sessions to colleagues while others had attended only one GIVE course previously. For all teachers, working with peers and colleagues can be challenging; detailed planning and good communication skills are needed and working as facilitators requires a different skill set to that required of the teacher teaching a Grade 1 or 2 class. The emphasis during this workshop was on planning, as it applies to the preparation of classroom lessons. English and Maths lessons, based on Grade 1 and Grade 2 pupil textbooks and Teacher's manuals, were demonstrated by our Irish volunteers and by the more experienced ToT's. This allowed those who were new to the group to observe and to become involved in the work. Classroom Management was an important element of the course. Brendan and Eibhlín worked on the use of the Teacher's Manual to support

the teaching of Maths, English and also lesson-planning with this group of ToT's and invited them back to demonstrate a lesson of their choice to their peers in Weeks 2 and 3.

We hope to continue working together with this group next year to ensure quality workshops can be locally run for the benefit of schools. We were delighted to have the help of these eight teachers during the following two courses. We are grateful for the time and energy they brought to their work.



Early Childhood and Lower basic Facilitators 2022

Workshop 2



Following the requests over the past few years, of the CES and of our ToTs, to extend our workshops to the next Grade, this was GIVE's first time working with Grade 3 teachers. Fifteen teachers attended the course. Using local Grade 3 textbooks in English, Maths and Integrated Studies sample lessons were demonstrated to the teachers. The accompanying Teacher Guidelines for these textbooks highlight active learning and child-centred methodologies. These methodologies have been adopted, to some extent, but the teachers appreciated the practical examples that were given on the course. (see below, Grade 1 and Grade 2 course for some detail of methods and strategies).

Classroom Management formed an important element of this course also. The emphasis was on encouraging positive behaviour through praise and simple reward. Time was spent on outlining a system of fairness in awarding points to pupils who complete their homework, who work quietly and whose efforts result in progress. One teacher at Grade 3 level said *"I learnt how to manage the classroom very well, I learnt how to manage the class without using force.* Our Gambian colleagues use clapping and singing as rewards for good work. We learnt several great chants and claps in admiration of work well done! The feedback from the participants shows that Classroom Management sessions were very much appreciated.

Workshop 3



Having worked with Grade 1 and Grade 2 teachers in the past, and because of the shortage of time, we combined these two Grades for a short course. Again, the course was based fully on the Gambian Grade 1 and Grade 2 pupil textbooks and Teacher Guidelines. Practical sessions included planning and preparation of lessons in English, Maths and Integrated Studies. Tips and strategies for teaching Phonics were highlighted by Pauline and also by Louise Jatta, our local facilitator. The use of simple stories to identify sounds, songs and rhymes, spelling strategies were demonstrated. Detailed attention was given to active-learning and pupil involvement in their own learning. Class sizes in The Gambia are very large, so involving the pupils in pair-work for oral language development, for Maths work and also for classroom routines, such as correcting homework, were all explored with the teachers. By the end of the course, each teacher had made classroom resources, including a 100 Square chart, a classroom number line from 1-20, several wall charts to support lessons in their English textbooks, along with sets of flash cards and letters/sounds cards. All in all, 22 teachers attended this course.

The teachers on all three courses were supplied with copy books for notetaking, pens, markers, and all of the necessary supplies for making materials for their classrooms. GIVE provided the funding for these items and also for food and transport costs for each teacher attending.

We are very grateful to the school Principals and to the Gambian Catholic Education Secretariat for organising the release of teachers from their classrooms. The eight Gambian teachers (ToT's/facilitators) provided us with much useful advice and encouragement during our three courses and we look forward to continuing our work with them and with Lower Basic teachers in the future.

A workshop for teachers in the LBS sector will be held in Brikama on 19th, 20th and 21st May, 2022.

The report on the LBS programme was compiled by Pauline Moran, Eibhlín MacNamara and Brendan O'Boyle.

6: SKILLS CENTRES

GIVE team: Mary Hayes, Anna Gibbons, Eilís Fagan Shiels and Imelda Traynor

Since 2011, GIVE volunteers have worked in three Skills Centres, St. Peter's SC, Lamin, St. Martha's SC, Fajikunda and Presentation GVS, Banjul. All three centres cater for the skill needs of females aged from 16 to 24 years whose educational standards cross a wide spectrum and whose literacy (English language) and numeracy needs vary greatly. Training is provided in sewing, craft work, cooking, home management skills, hairdressing, beauticianship, computer skills and business studies. The GIVE programme in the three centres concentrates on (English Language) literacy, acquiring competence and confidence in communicating through English, Numeracy, on Life Skills and on Computer skills. Some of the students in the skills' centres were placed on Work Experience during the month of March and GIVE is trying to respond to the expressed wish of the centres to prepare the students to establish their own business.

6:1 St. Peter's Skill Centre, Lamin

Ciarán Black has a long association with GIVE since its very early days and has contributed much to the positive developments in St. Peter's Skill Centre. Over recent years a new roof has replaced the old

leaking structure; new sewing machines have been acquired, lap top computers have been secured and a computer room has been provided. Ciarán has been instrumental in many of these improvements and Sr. Elizabeth, appointed Principal in 2020, is strongly committed to promoting the Skills development of the students and of their role in Gambian society.



St. Peter's SC Anna's group



Computer Class St. Peter's S.C

In the short time available to them the GIVE volunteers, Anna Gibbons and Mary Hayes, helped the students (in groups of 5 or 6) to focus on their future entry into employment, as well as broadening their knowledge of the world outside their home country. Among other inputs in the literacy and numeracy area, Anna helped them to recognise their own capabilities, experience and achievements and to draw up a C.V. and a job application letter. Among other activities she introduced them to the use of calculators and to the notion of % profit and loss.

Mary Hayes consulted with the computer tutor, Emily Colley, during the delivery of a three-week programme. Mary took the students in groups of 6 and did keyboard training and computer skills development with them, explanation and demonstration of various commands and procedures, preparation of documents to an acceptable standard and printing them; the students were very proud of their work especially in presenting their C.V.s on the laptops and printing them.

Had more time been available to them Mary and Anna would have prepared the students for interview situations and conducted mock interviews as well as developing some basic knowledge of running a business.

Mary, Anna and Ciarán visited the Year 3 students of St. Peters' Skills Centre who were on work-experience placements in sewing and tailoring workshops in Brikama.

6:2 St. Martha's Skill Centre, Fajikunda:



St. Martha's Skill Centre prioritises the development of the Sewing and Catering skills among its students. It now has a well-equipped kitchen (thanks in part to Arenda Lyttle, St. Angela's College, Sligo) and a sewing room and the programme prepares the students for employment in the tailoring and hospitality business. The students follow a three-year skills development programme and places its third-year students in work experience situations. In year three students tend to specialise in either the sewing or cookery courses. Sr. Antoinette, the Principal is very satisfied with the success of the work experience placements – a mark of its success is the number of students who gain employment directly from their placements.

Pictured on the left is Pa John Gomez, Eilís Fagan Shiels, Sr. Antoinette and Imelda Traynor.

Imelda Traynor and Eilís Fagan Shiels worked in liaison with Sr. Antoinette and with Pa John Gomez, a qualified teacher of English and Maths. While Eilís worked mainly in developing their reading and comprehension skills in English, as requested by Pa John, Imelda worked on their command of grammar. Pa John was following the programme set out in "The Gambian Basic and Secondary Education Course" book. Imelda also taught the students some Maths – again at Pa John's suggestion – simple linear equations, Ratio and Proportion and Plane shapes.



Imelda Traynor teaching in St. Martha's S.C.



Eilís Fagan Shiels in St. Martha's SC

Volunteer comment: Both Eilís and Imelda would recommend a longer period, (4 to 6 weeks) working with the students in order to have greater impact upon the learning of the students.

"The concept of solving equations, of inequality, $<$ and $>$, of Ratio, seemed to be fairly new to the students. Seeing how some of them "got it" gave me great satisfaction". Imelda

Both volunteers remarked on the development of the garden, (flower and vegetable) and the very pleasant working environment provided by the centre.

Recommendation: GIVE to consider teaching a basic Maths programme to the students, some of whom have ambitions to set up a sewing business.

7: MEETING OF PRINCIPAL TEACHERS

Wednesday, 15th and Thursday 16th March, 2022.

Prior to the two-day seminar held in the Gambia Pastoral Institute (GPI) Hall, the GIVE team met with some head teachers to prepare the agenda for the event. It was agreed that the seminar would consider four main topics and that a GIVE volunteer would brief those in attendance on the content of the GIVE workshops with ECD teachers and Lower Basic School teachers. The four topics to form the business of the seminar were (1) Developing Positive Behaviour in our schools (2) Time Management in schools (3) Leadership and Change / Innovation and (4) Mentoring, Networking and Communication.



Principals divided into small groups – and collaborated to arrive at solutions to key issues.

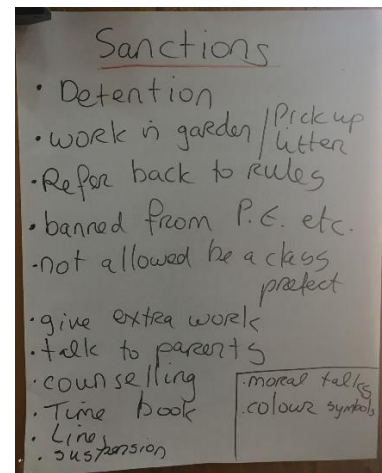
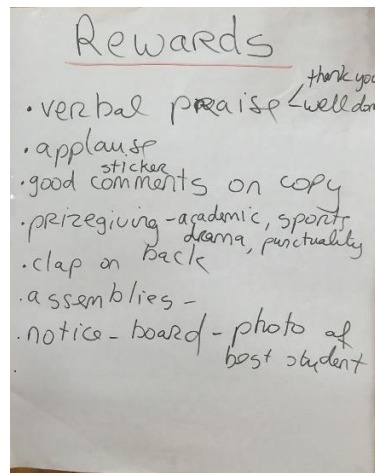
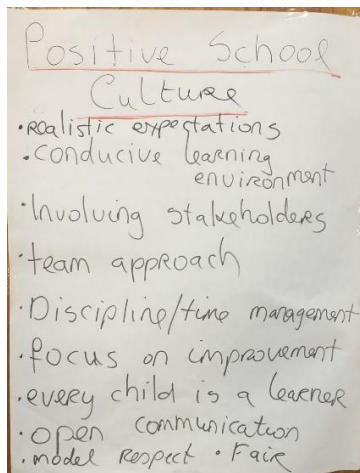
Day 1 Wednesday, 15th March

Mr. Dawda Faye opened the meeting by inviting the head teachers to interact with the GIVE team during the course of the two days and at the outset to introduce themselves and the school of which they are the head. Twenty-two teachers had signed their attendance – Principals of large schools and of smaller schools. In order to facilitate all of those in attendance to participate and contribute to the debate on the topics the 22 principals were divided into 4 groups – of 5 /6 in each group.

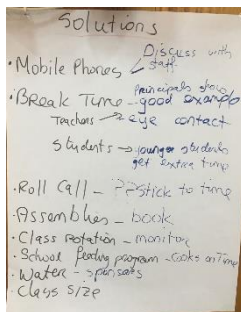
Developing Positive Behaviour in our schools

Michael Griffin and Anna Gibbons, in a Power Point presentation, developed the theme “Encouraging positive behaviour in our schools” from its foundation in the values, especially respect, which underpins the mission statement of our schools to the importance of a team approach in developing a positive school culture. A positive school culture engenders a positive classroom culture which in turn yields positive behaviour from pupils. The presentation explored the management of difficult behaviour in schools as well as the measures of positive reinforcement of behaviour.

The four working groups considered a number of questions that were posed and arrived at many practical and workable measures.



Time Management



Andrew Jassey moderated this session. He urged the head teachers to identify the factors that lead to time wastage in their schools. Many examples were given and the single biggest issue was the usage of mobile phones. The working groups were asked to consider possible solutions to some of the time-wasting factors that had been identified.

Day 2 Thursday, 16th March.

Leadership, Change and Innovation.

Michael and Anna (GIVE) presented a short synopsis of the multi-faceted nature of the school leadership role in school and referred to (1) Personal Leadership powered by the personal values, attributes and convictions of school leaders (2) Transformational Leadership which is necessary for schools to change and adapt to new circumstances (3) Instructional Leadership which manages the quality of teaching and learning and (4) Organisational Leadership which is necessary for schools to be led and managed as effective organisations.

The four groups of Principals were asked to discuss changes which they, as school leaders, brought about in their individual schools asking themselves the Why, How and Who – Why the change, How it was brought about and Who was involved in bringing that change about. It led to great discussion and contributions from all groups. Andrew Jassey reported that “it could be discerned from the group discussion that the heads were happy with the topic as it was part of their mandates and that the topic was apt for purpose.”

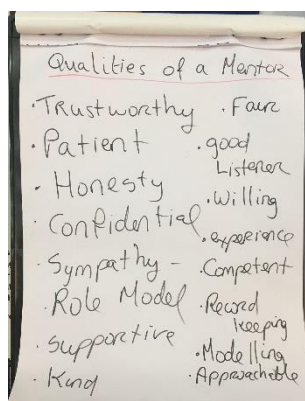


Smaller discussion groups enabled meaningful participation by all of the principals

GIVE Workshops

Eibhlín MacNamara (GIVE) set out the main elements of the workshop programme which GIVE is facilitating with the teachers from the schools at ECD and Lower Basic level; on behalf of GIVE she acknowledged the support of the principal teachers for the GIVE programme and thanked them for facilitating the attendance of the teachers from their schools at the workshops. She emphasised the importance of each teacher using the Teacher's Manual in preparing their lesson plans (English, Maths, and Integrated Studies); among many other issues she pointed out the value of providing a stimulating print-rich environment for the pupils and she emphasised the use of concrete materials as central to all Mathematics teaching. Good lesson plans and good teaching are modelled at the workshops and time is set for the teachers to prepare teaching resources which they are encouraged to use in their classrooms.

Mentoring, Networking and Communication



This was the final module of the 2-day seminar and there was a very good engagement by the principals with the various strands of this topic. It was apparent that there is a good network of communication among the principals and that principals find it very supportive. In that context, it was emphasised on many occasions over the two days that there was a great resource of knowledge and of experience within this group of principals which should be exploited to find solutions to many of the challenges which they faced in their professional lives.

Many of the principals acknowledged the benefits of a good mentoring system, peer to peer as principals, and also for newly appointed teachers.

The principals discussed the role of staff meetings in engendering a positive open communication atmosphere in the school. They suggested many positive ideas on how to organise effective staff meetings - effective chairing, agenda formation, participation by all staff, arriving at a decision, implementation of decisions of the meeting, timing of meetings, starting and finishing on time, how to handle "any other business".

Finally, all those in attendance were invited to evaluate the proceedings of the two days – for a summary of these evaluations see Appendix Two

8. CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION

Travel through several airports and many hours spent on flights, did unfortunately lead to a brush with Covid for one of our team. This meant that our discussion with Gambian colleagues on this important topic was reduced to only one meeting. The meeting provided an opportunity to look at the Gambian Child Protection Policy and also at the GIVE Child and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy. The GIVE policy has been updated recently and the steps involved in the update were outlined. Some of the issues and challenges which have faced the Irish education system in moving away from punitive discipline and towards a model of supporting positive behaviour in schools formed part of the discussion. It was noted that issues and challenges within the education system vary widely depending on the age of the students involved. Some suggestions were made which GIVE may be able to consider as part of our planning for next year's projects. We are grateful to the team of seven representatives who met with us and would like to continue with this topic in the future.

9: THE VOICE OF THE VOLUNTEER

A selection of the feedback from volunteers on the 2022 GIVE project

"It has made me even more conscious of how blessed we are to live in Ireland despite its many issues and to have had such wonderful working conditions throughout our careers. I hope I'm less concerned with the superficial things in life and have less attachment to things than I had some years ago."

"I find it difficult to understand how people who have so little materially and financially can be so spotlessly clean, dignified and resourceful"

"We know very little about their culture, especially the lack of power women have".

"Finding the level of the teachers' ability and knowledge took a little while. It taught me not to assume anything and to simplify lessons and instructions as much as possible".

"I stand in awe of the women teachers who have a day's work done in their compounds before setting out for the workshop"

"Be ready to adapt your strategy and plans at any given moment".

"The ease with which we all worked as a team and support each other during the presentations".

"Obviously I would prefer it to be longer and to spend more time with each group of teachers"

"What we are doing as a group of volunteers is only a small gesture but I am glad that we were able to come this year".

"More school visits and maybe a day or two where an Irish teacher could partner with a Gambian colleague in the classroom would be a help".

"This is very much an oral culture, reading is very much associated with the classroom".

"Greatest satisfaction – the response we got from the participants. It was great to get their opinions, to have a chat about something and to be challenged".

In issues of discipline etc after listening to the teachers' "truthful" comments, we need to think about how we address the issue".

“I know that there are usually more planning meetings (in advance) and this is the only thing I feel we missed out on. Now I have been here I can prepare for future trips with more purpose”.

“The actual day-to-day role of the volunteer should be clearly outlined”.

“You need to have a broad plan of the work that you will undertake but you will have to go with the flow”

Be flexible, expect the unexpected, be patient – give time to listening to participants”.

10: CONCLUSION

The Board of Directors has considered this report and congratulates all concerned who have progressed the GIVE project in the face of the many challenges posed by COVID 19 and by the restrictions that attended the epidemic during 2021 and 2022. Though the delivery of the programme on this occasion was condensed into a shorter period than was desirable, the GIVE team and their Gambian colleagues restored the partnership to where it stood in February, 2020. The Board looks forward to the continuation of the GIVE volunteering programme in 2023 and commends the energy, dedication and commitment which many people bring to furthering its success.

The Board endorses the following recommendation:

1. The minimum duration of the GIVE team visit to The Gambia in 2023 be four working weeks with some days pre and post that four week block for travel, preparation and review.
2. Where possible, GIVE volunteers and Gambian ToTs should together dedicate more time to planning for the delivery of sessions of the workshops.
3. GIVE volunteers in the ECD and LBS workshop programme continue, with the ToTs, to develop strategies and practical classroom management suggestions which will work in large classes.
4. Explore the possibility that Irish volunteer(s) would work with a teacher, ideally a ToT, in their classroom to gain a better insight into the successes and challenges.
5. There should be greater discussion on aspects of classroom management with ToTs and the CES at the planning stage of the 2023 programme.
6. Skill Centres: GIVE volunteers to consider teaching a basic Maths / Business Studies programme to students, some of whom have ambitions to set up a sewing business and a continuation of the programme of preparing students for employment in the sewing, hospitality and catering business.
7. The recruitment of new volunteers to the GIVE programme.

Appendix One



C.E.S/ GIVE / Lower Basic Teachers' Workshops

March 14th to March 24th 2022

Thank you for participating in this workshop. We value your comments and would appreciate it if you would complete this questionnaire.

Subject areas covered during the workshop included: English, Phonics, Mathematics, Integrated Studies, Songs.

Below you will find a sample of the answers we received from Grade 3 teachers and also from Grade 1 and 2 teachers. It was a great pleasure to work with these teachers.

1. Did you find the workshop useful?

I found the workshop really useful.

The workshop is very educative and lively.

I found the workshop very useful because it has improved my teaching strategies.

We learnt so many things which we will take back to our schools.

Yes. Because I was able to learn a lot about reading strategies, and it will help me at school, also about reading out sounds.

... all replies were positive.

2. What ideas will you find most useful in the classroom?

The most useful ideas in the classroom is how to help the children on how to read and spell.

Involving the student more than teacher-centred method. Student takes the lead.

The pair work, which is (pupil in) A or B group. The phonics, how to blend sounds to make words, and spelling easy for the pupils.

The strategies we should use during lessons for pupils to understand more.

The ideas I find useful is how I will present my lesson in class, use the resources to present the lesson and make the class interesting.

It helps to have to control a class and make the pupils know what the teacher wants to tell them.

Strategies to get pupils' attention to the topic about to be taught.

... several teachers made similar comments to these.

3. What did you learn about Classroom Management?

Keep to the schedule you have set and engage with pupils.

Setting positive rules for the classroom. Allowing pupils to read and understand.

Ground rules, how to handle stubborn students by giving them responsibility. A good manager should have clear objectives.

The sitting arrangement so that both children and teacher move around during lesson.

By drawing pupils attention involving them in the topic.

Teacher makes the children busy so that they will not disturb the class. Sing a song for them.

Praising the children, do not discourage them.

4. What advice would you like to give for future workshops?

The advice is to bring more teachers on board so as to help the children to higher heights. Example from Grades 1 – 6 for workshops.

Group work for teachers to prepare a lesson and also teach as they are taught during the workshop.

My advice is in future workshops if we can get more materials and to help in other areas like Verbal and Quantative. (Verbal Reasoning and Quantative Studies are text books within the school system that GIVE has not yet used as part of or workshops).

I have few advice because you have met almost all keys to learning outcomes. Maybe next when you come you will help on materials, keep the momentum.

I would like to advise you to bring along a Maths facilitator next time.

.... Very helpful advice from our Gambian colleagues as we plan towards next project.

Please add any other comments:

The materials given are very important to us, I will like if you help us with text books.

They let you know things can be done the easy way. Songs sung nicely which makes the kids happy and active.

I would like to thank the donors and our able bosses for organising such, and am praying for long life, good health and prosperity.

We really appreciate the workshop and it will be helpful in our various classes if implemented.

Thanks to everyone for making the workshop a successful one.

Appendix Two

Catholic Education Secretariat



Evaluation

Principal,

Thank you for your attendance at the Principals' Seminar on 15th and 16th March. You had certain expectations of the course when you decided to attend. We would now like to find out how you feel the course met some of those expectations and how you think we could improve the course.

GENERAL:

- (1) Are you happy with the arrangements made for this seminar of Principal Teachers?
Yes, all participants expressed their satisfaction with the arrangements. One participant asked that newly appointed principals should be selected to attend the course.
- (2) Are you happy with the GPI Hall as a venue for meetings like this?
Yes, all participants were happy with the venue – *no disturbance. A very good venue. An ideal venue.*

TIME MANAGEMENT:

- (1) What were the most important points you learned from this presentation?

*I learned the ways to manage lost time and to protect the interests of the students.
Having assemblies only once a week
Time consciousness – when planning things.
Punctuality, regularity with regard to pupils' attendance
Class rotation
Time should be well organised with good planning
Time management is a major issue in our schools and we need to work on it.*
- (2) Did you learn something in this module that will be useful to you in your work? Specify what it is.

*I learned how to manage time during assembly, after lunch break. Early for school
Yes, I did because it has reminded me to brace up and work with my teachers to sort the problem.
Self preparation before work and be a role model for those you lead.*

(3) Did you get sufficient opportunity to participate in the meeting?

Yes.

The whole meeting was conducted in a participatory form.

I definitely did, especially in the discussions.

(4) If we were to run a Time Management course again what changes (if any) would you suggest we make?

This one is all right.

Participants should be allowed to showcase their opinions (cases) instead of group discussion.

To deal with newly introduced ways

More time should be given to this topic on the agenda.

That we have the core points on slides projected on to the screen

That there would be a handout for participants on this topic

POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR:

(1) What did you learn from this part of the course that you would like to implement in your school?

Rewarding students in various school activities during the course of the academic year.

Show good leadership by allowing students feel that they are important in the school or in the class

Rewarding pupils who always behave well in class.

We should always be positive.

Teachers reward good behaviour in the classroom – words of praise, clapping,

To encourage all staff members to implement positive behaviour in the school.

Classroom rules and sanctions

The way class rules are designed

Keeping patient

Team approach – work as a group.

Greater involvement in decision making by the staff, students, parents, stakeholders.

Counselling for students and to help teachers.

(2) What changes, if any, would you suggest we make to this part of the meeting? (Positive Behaviour) Changes in the presentation? Format? Opportunity for Principals to discuss and exchange ideas, more emphasis or less emphasis on some issues? Additional issues?

I would like the heads to be given an opportunity to share their ideas individually. If more time is possible it would be good to give an opportunity for principals to discuss and exchange ideas on positive behaviour in their respective schools.

The issues addressed in this workshop are well spelled out.

More emphasis to be placed on measures to counteract some behaviour such as drug taking and truancy.

*The topic was well handled and though it took a good chunk of the day it was well presented.
Identify pertinent negative behaviour in schools*

- (3) Overall, how satisfied were you with this section (Positive Behaviour) of the meeting?

Very satisfied 17

Satisfied 6

Dis-satisfied

Very Dis-satisfied

MENTORING, NETWORKING and COMMUNICATION:

- (1) Do you feel, as a result of this presentation, that you would try to implement mentoring, at some level, in your school? (Peer mentoring – Principal level, Senior teacher level, Teacher with teacher)

Yes, mentoring is very important and I will take on this good practice in my school.

It equips me to use the techniques and strategies to mentor novice teachers in my school.

Principal, Senior Teachers and teachers need to be mentored

Overwhelmingly Yes response.

- (2) Was sufficient time (opportunity) given to you to discuss and exchange ideas with colleagues during the meeting?

Most agreed that sufficient time was given though 3 people felt that more time was needed.

- (3) Do you think that a Principals' network would be of help to you in your work?

All participants agree that networking would be of help to them.

It would be of immense help.

Yes, it helps us to share information with one another.

Networking helps us to overcome some of our challenges.

LEADERSHIP, CHANGE AND INNOVATION:

- (1) Did you find this part of the course helpful to you as Principal of your school?

All are agreed that this is helpful to them as principal teachers.

Yes, very helpful. More is expected from you.

Yes, it enhances leadership output.

It was one of the most helpful topics.

- (2) Following this course, would you be more confident about introducing some changes in your school?

Yes from all participants.

I have learned a lot from it and definitely change would occur in my school.

I will try my best to make some changes.

GIVE WORKSHOPS:

- (1) Has one (or more) of your teachers attended the GIVE workshop (Early Childhood level, Grade 1 or Grade 2) in the past 4 years?

Yes 16

No 7

- (2) Is there an opportunity for a teacher who has attended the GIVE workshop to share her/ his learning with other teachers in your school or in a cluster of schools?

13 of 16 say YES

- (3) What changes or additions, if any, would you suggest for the GIVE workshop?

If time will allow it, I would be grateful if the facilitators could reach out to our schools.

Extend it to other grades and to Upper Basic Schools

To provide more materials for individual schools

Please feel free to comment on the overall meeting (2 days) and to offer any suggestions for future meetings of Principal teachers.

I want it to be expanded to one week.

To be run at cluster / regional level so as to involve some of the smaller schools. Where possible during the weekends.

I suggest that you make it a five-day course.

We have never got this type of course before.

Planning a school-based workshop.

Financial issues in schools

Monitoring, assessing, awarding teachers, students, parents.

Mobilising resources for schools

A similar workshop to be conducted annually, preferably at the beginning of the academic year.

APPENDIX Three

REPORT ON WORKSHOP PROGRAMME, FEBRUARY & MARCH, 2021 compiled by Mr. Gibba

SUCCESS STORY

Catholic Education Secretariat in collaboration with GIVE local trained facilitators have successfully carried out three cluster workshops. One for the grade one teachers in all the Regions and two for the Nursery School teachers, Foni Cluster in Bwiam and Region 4,5 & 6 Cluster in Soma. Foni ECD Cluster was three days i.e 15th, 16th and 17th February 2021. The facilitators for the workshop were Philomen Mendy, Marie A. Bass, Elizabeth Sylva, Kaddy Gomez and Edward Gibba.

- ❖ Philomen treated -Jolly Phonics
- ❖ Marie A. Bass - Language / Rhymes
- ❖ Kaddy Gomez - Management / Songs
- ❖ Elizabeth Sylva - Numbers
- ❖ Edward Gibba - Handwriting & Leadership

The second Cluster was for the grade one teachers and was conducted at Catholic Education Secretariat Hall instead of the initial venue GPI whose hall was not free on our proposed dates. The workshop was held on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd March 2021.

The facilitators were:

- Louis Jatta - Integrated studies
- Margaret Gomez - English Language
- Josephine Gomez - Mathematics
- Nancy Gibba - Jolly Phonics
- Dawda A. Faye - Classroom Management
- Edward Gibba - Leadership

TEACHERS' EVALUATION REPORT:

During the evaluation, both the grade one and the nursery teachers have highlighted the following points:

- The workshop was very educative and timely
- It build their confidence and patience in handling children
- It expose the teachers characters in resulting to alternative punishment and avoid corporal punishment
- The coordination of the facilitators during the workshop was good.
- Teachers claim that their goals were met
- The content of the workshop was very helpful
- Food was satisfactory and well balance
- The presentation on the use of teaching aids was very good for when seen by the children they will remember what was discussed
- The workshop was interactive for all the teachers were involved in the activities
- The materials prepared will help us in our schools
- The workshop fulfills all our basic need in the school
- Satisfied with the facilitators for their confidence during presentation
- The workshop will add value on their professionalism as teachers

- It will help us to network at cluster level in order to empower each other for the good of the children
- Introducing us to no cost material to prepare teaching aids was very good
- Class rules developed by the participants in day one were respected to the end
- Learning oral language will help me and the children to be more fluent in English
- Oral language will help the children to learn by listening, by watching and by doing
- The use of concrete materials helps the teacher and enhances understanding for the children
- I am made to understand that engaging the children in much exercise will arouse the children interest during session

Teachers Complain

- Increment of their transport refund as well as a special allowance
- Foni/Soma teachers requested to be having meals in the evening
- One of the teaching aids on *Jolly Phonic* was not very visible.
- Need to spray the room to be free from mosquitoes every day
- Requested more time for the production *of materials* and the group presentation.
- Nursing mothers complained of being distracted during session by their babies and baby tenders
- Shortage of scheme books in some of our school is a concern
- The duration of the workshop was too short

FACILITATORS' RECOMMENDATIONS:

- To have more days so that topics address can justly be treated for our good and the teachers
- Facilitators workshop allowance to be increased if possible to three thousand
- Facilitators be provided with personal teacher's guide and ECD scheme books
- A refresher course on English language, Practical Science, Art and craft, Number, Jolly Phonics, and Preparation of teaching aids.
- Identify a few grade three teachers and train them to be responsible facilitators for their level.



Classroom in St. Charles' LBS, Fajikunda, March, 2022