



**GIVE Report**  
**Following the Volunteer Programme**  
**in**  
**The Gambia**  
**2023**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1: INTRODUCTION-Executive Summary .....	2
2: PREPARATION FOR VISIT .....	3
3: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION .....	4
4: LOWER BASIC SCHOOL WORKSHOPS 2023.....	7
5: SKILLS CENTRES .....	11
5:1 St. Peter’s Skill Centre, Lamin .....	11
5:2 St. Martha’s Skill Centre, Fajikunda: .....	12
5.3 Presentation Girls’ Vocational School.....	13
6: MEETING OF PRINCIPAL TEACHERS .....	15
7. CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION.....	18
8. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	19
9: THE VOICE OF THE VOLUNTEER .....	20
10: CONCLUSION.....	22
Appendix One.....	23

## 1: INTRODUCTION-Executive Summary

The visit by the GIVE team of 10 volunteers to The Gambia in March 2022 succeeded in recovering the Professional Development project that was disrupted by the COVID pandemic during 2020 and 2021. Following the 2022 visit, GIVE undertook with its volunteers a thorough review of its programme across all areas of the project, identifying its strengths and areas of success over the previous decade and also aspects of the programme that merited a fresh approach. The key strength of the GIVE programme is the enormous commitment of its volunteers to developing the partnership with their colleague teachers from the classrooms of The Gambia and to offering a vibrant programme of compensatory education to young adult students in skill centres.

The GIVE team of 2023 comprised 14 Irish volunteers, some of whom were return volunteers and three of whom were new to the team. All fourteen brought an energy and a wonderful “can do” attitude to their work and over five weeks in February / March contributed significantly to the pursuit of GIVE’s mission “to develop a collaborative and supportive partnership between working Gambian teachers and retired Irish teachers, and others with an involvement in education , for the benefit of education in The Gambia; to provide financial support and resources for the benefit of education in The Gambia”.

GIVE programme 2023 covered five different areas in education:

- Professional Development of workshop facilitators in Early Childhood and Lower Basic 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 three Skills Centres and
- Professional Development Seminar with Principal Teachers.

In addition to the February / March programme GIVE also supports the holding of 5 Professional Development workshops which will be facilitated by the Gambian facilitators in May and June 2023

GIVE Management Team participated in a discussion with the Education Secretary of CES and others in the education sector on furthering Child Protection policy formation and procedures in The Gambia and commends all involved in the recent establishment of the Child Protection Office. This represents a significant advance in child protection measures and deserves the support of all stakeholders.

In advance of the GIVE visit, our hosts and partners in 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 these teachers in travelling to the courses and for their schools in releasing them to attend when there are no substitute teachers to take their classes.

CES facilitated a meeting of GIVE volunteers and a sub-group of the Principal Teachers to design a programme which would address the professional needs of their colleagues. GIVE values enormously the engagement of the Principals in this professional development programme and will continue to engage with them and their staffs in furthering teaching and learning in their schools.

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, 2023.

We are grateful for the welcome and hospitality offered by the Principals and staffs in the three Skill Centres and wish them and their students every success in their future endeavours.

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. Your contribution to GIVE project, 2023, has been outstanding.

Our sincere thanks to the Irish National Teachers Organisation and to the Retired Teachers Association of Ireland – their financial support over the past decade 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 who has been constant in his 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, 2023.

## 2: PREPARATION FOR VISIT

Although the GIVE programme of 2022 was seriously condensed into three weeks we learned much from the exercise. Among the recommendations made arising from that visit were that:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- There should be greater discussion on aspects of classroom management with ToTs and the CES at the planning stage of the 2023 programme.
- 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.

The recommendations (above) were considered and discussed by volunteers in detail during pre-departure training, which took place over four days, September 12<sup>th</sup>, November 14<sup>th</sup>, January 9<sup>th</sup> and January 30<sup>th</sup>. In addition to the input from volunteers there were valuable contributions as to the formation of a programme in the three skill centres from Ciarán Black who has many years of experience in St. Peter's Skill Centre and from Sr. Bernadette McManus who was director of St.

Martha's Skill Centre for a number of years. There was consensus that the emphasis would be on developing the confidence of students in using oral English and some themes were put forward which would form the basis of an Oral English programme.

At the meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> January Sive Bresnihan, Comhlámh Training and Education Officer, raised broader issues related to volunteering and the developing world and the personal development of the volunteer herself / himself. GIVE also invited Kevin Murphy of Nurture Africa, an NGO involved in Community Development projects in Uganda, to speak to the volunteers on that NGO's involvement in addressing Child Protection issues. Volunteers found his contribution stimulating and thought provoking, particularly the similarities between his experience and that of GIVE volunteers as regards access to education and child rights. In this context, it was noted that Mr. Gibba, CES, had presented a module on the UN Convention on The Rights of the Child at three workshops for teachers in May / June 2022 and that GIVE volunteers have addressed and continue to address, the role of the teacher and of the school in offering a safe and secure learning environment, based on fairness, respect and positive behaviour management.

Volunteers were assigned to the various teams, 3 to ECD, 4 to Lower Basic Schools, 2 to St. Peter's Skills Centre, 2 to St. Martha's Skills Centre and 3 to Presentation GVS. Some time was devoted at both of the meetings in January to planning, in smaller groups, for the programme implementation to teachers in ECD and in Lower Basic schools and to students in the Skill Centres.

Following liaison with CES a timetable was agreed and it was accepted that it may be subject to change. (See Appendix One - Timetable). This timetable includes details of the planning meeting to be held with a core group of Principal teachers, GIVE volunteers and CES representatives, and dates for the two-day seminar with school leaders in week four. It also schedules a meeting between GIVE representatives and CES on the subject of Child and Vulnerable Adult safeguarding.

The GIVE team of fourteen volunteers was scheduled to depart Dublin for the Gambia on 18<sup>th</sup> February, flying via Lisbon and return on 26<sup>th</sup> March.

### 3: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Angela Griffin, Eileen Mac Namara and Maire Seoighe were course facilitators.

Venue: St. Therese's Parish Hall, Kanifing

Week 1: We met with 7 Gambian workshop facilitators, who have received training on several occasions from GIVE. During 2022 they facilitated two 3- day workshops for teachers, one in Bwiam (Foni region), from 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> May (26 teachers attending) and one in Soma from 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> June (24 participating teachers). These two workshops covered phonics, English reading, handwriting, classroom management, number and story.



Over the three days with the facilitators, we had a discussion on how these workshops went, what went well and what they needed help with. They are very experienced at this stage but they still appreciate and welcome the input from GIVE and new suggestions. Some of the areas that we covered - Maths (length), phonics, a reading lesson, classroom management. We also made resources with them. They told us that they used all the ideas we gave them last year in their

workshops including “Time” in Maths and making a counting stick .

We also spent time in discussing our plan to visit them in their schools with the intention of team teaching with them. We prepared a lesson with them in maths/phonics/story.



A visit to a school in the Gambia is always a hugely worthwhile learning experience for the Irish team. We see the varied conditions in which the teachers work, ranging from classes of 14 to 67 Nursery children, few resources and poor to pleasant school buildings. We are always in awe of how teachers cope with their circumstances, especially in the heat, which we experienced during our visit. When the ECD team, with their Gambian colleagues, reviewed our visit afterwards we felt that the visit was so necessary for the reason stated above but also because the teachers genuinely love to see us coming to them. However, the team teaching was very much hit-and-miss and we understand why. Proper team-teaching works best when there is a strong, professional relationship between the 2 teachers. Despite our best intentions the teachers may have felt we were examining them. We think that next year we would simply visit them in their classrooms and have a song/game/story ready to share with the children and take our lead from the teacher.

The ECD team also delivered 3 workshops over 3 weeks to 42 teachers covering Maths, English and Classroom Management. Because we were working with Nursery 1, 2 and 3 teachers we stressed the philosophy of playful teaching through games, songs, rhymes and plenty of interaction between the teacher and the child.





Eileen presented a series of phonic lessons, one each day, and reading lessons too. She involved teachers in teaching aspects of each lesson.

Máire and Angela concentrated on early maths; although their curriculum handbooks suggest number to 100, tens and unit, addition, subtraction and even multiplication and division are covered in Nursery, we know that this is simply too much too soon for Nursery children and the Gambian teachers agree with us. We stressed that children are able to recognise and say numbers before they

understand them, and until they understand the conservation of early number, they cannot work with them. We also did shape and length, introduced homemade resources and went outside to do a Shape walk.

We covered Classroom Management, dividing teachers into groups to discuss questions such as *'How do you discipline in a caring and respectful manner?'* *'How do you create an atmosphere in which positive learning can take place?'* Group work encouraged more participation by the teachers and the exchange of ideas and experiences.



We found the teachers to be generally eager to learn new ideas and to make resources every day to bring back to their schools. We stressed the use of materials that we found ourselves locally, both natural.... shells and stones... and manmade.... colourful shopping bags, bottle tops, plastic bottles, cardboard boxes (to make dice), scraps of paper and card.

We, the ECD team, learned the importance of spending time at the beginning of each new workshop getting to know the teachers and letting them get to know us. We learned the importance of pacing ourselves and revising new ideas daily to be certain the teachers understood them. In future workshops we would use the methodology of creating scenarios, especially in classroom management. We would also consider dividing the teachers into groups according to their grade - 1, 2 or 3 - so as to do work which would be more specific to their grade.

Overall we consider the 5 weeks to have been a success, one that we, the ECD team, were privileged to be part of.

### **A snapshot of feedback from the teachers:**

What ideas from this week's workshop will you find useful in your ECD classroom?

*Most important – Oral English with beginners*

*Knowing how to teach phonics and mathematics in Level 1 (Age 2 and 3)*

*Blending of sounds by using cards and hands; making sentences using flash cards*

*Games, songs and rhymes – each sound goes with a song*

*I would like to go back to my class and teach about shapes, counting using flashcards, tell stories, go out to play with them.*

*Counting forwards and backwards with a number stick.*

What advice about Classroom management will be useful to you and your pupils?

*Classroom rules and how to interact with my children; discipline in a caring way for the children;*

*The thinking or happy corner; seating arrangements in my classroom; Moving around the classroom;*

*Entering and going out of the classroom - group by group or line by line*

*Praising children. Teaching aids around the classroom; have a tidy classroom;*

*Planning; be prepared with teaching material; being active; Give chance to children; be kind and gentle to the children;*

*Singing, dancing, games, active learning*

*Bring children to play out-doors*

What advice would you like to give for future workshops?

*Maths – measuring; Telling the time on the clock face;*

*More singing and games; To improve my oral English;*

*Teach about matching, sorting and writing;*

*Creative – e.g. how to make a toy;*

*Teach us more phonics because it helps us in reading a word and pronouncing it correctly*

## **4: LOWER BASIC SCHOOL WORKSHOPS 2023**

GIVE Team: Anne Buckeridge, Music and Song, Classroom Management and Managing Stress

Mary Cunningham, Maths and Classroom Management

Máiréad Ryan, Maths and Discussion Groups

Pauline Moran, English and Integrated Studies

**Venue:** Catholic Education Secretariat Hall, Kanifing, Banjul.

The GIVE Lower Basic team worked with teachers from twenty-two CES Primary schools, which are situated throughout The Gambia. These teachers work with Grade 1, Grade 2, and Grade 3 pupils in



classes with up to 67 children. Each GIVE workshop took place over four or five days. One specialised workshop for Trainers of Teachers was attended by ten teachers with whom we have worked for several years. They will deliver two locally run workshops, in regional areas of The Gambia, during May and June 2023.

The GIVE team of Irish volunteers delivered modules on Maths, English, Music and Song, Classroom Management and Environmental Studies.

### **Purpose of Workshops**

Gambian teachers were consulted at the start of each workshop, as to what areas of the syllabus they would like assistance with. The following requests were made:

- Activities to support children's learning and improve teaching
- Production of resources and materials for classroom use
- "New learning", new methodologies for teachers
- Demonstration lessons in Maths and English
- Mathematical sentences
- Reading and word recognition skills, phonics
- Self-development
- Sharing different methods through conversations with colleagues



**Grade 2 teachers working together**



**Making 10 Frames to support Maths teaching**

Throughout all four workshops, guidance was given on classroom management. Teachers made low-cost materials and charts for their classrooms.

Anne provided an excellent module on 'Minding You' to focus the teachers attention on how to deal with the stresses of their jobs and family commitments, and how to value themselves and the impact their hard work is having on those they work with and for. The teachers attending the courses loved the singing which Anne lead each day she was with us.

There is a standard pupils Maths book and set of teacher Guidelines in Maths, for Grade 1, Grade 2 and Grade 3. However, all Maths textbooks have their limitations and Máiréad's practical Maths demonstrations emphasised the need to develop the children's understanding of Maths through clear explanation and use of materials, drawings and number lines rather than just teaching procedures.

Mary's attention to the language of Maths and strategies for making and managing the resources needed during Maths lessons were very much appreciated by all those attending the courses. Classroom Management modules were also welcomed.



***What ideas will you find most useful in your classroom?***

**In Maths:** The idea of using the 100 square for adding and using bundles (of sticks) for tens and units; addition strategies, such as adding doubles and understanding number bonds; using dot cards for counting, also recognising amounts without having to count; games using the 100 square in addition and multiplication; teaching of long division.

*I learned about the way or method of how to control or manage stress; display positive classroom rules e.g. be kind to each other; I have learned to differentiate the behaviour from the child; involving the pupils when they are done with their work, with games and songs to keep them interested; group work so that pupils can work together.*



### Engaging discussions

There were engaging discussions among the teachers at all of the workshops.

This highlighted the need to sustain a professional dialogue after the workshop.

WhatsApp groups were set up by the teachers for each Grade level. These will be managed by a representative of each group and were created to continue the conversations initiated during the GIVE workshops; to share ideas; and to support each other.

The title of the Grade 3 workshop What's App group is "Developing ones' self with GIVE"

### A note on Workshop 1 with Trainers of teachers (ToT's)

It was a great pleasure to work with this group of ten teachers. They have taken on the task of facilitating 'step-down' training for teachers in their own schools and in school clusters during the school year. In 2022, they delivered two three-day courses to Lower Basic teachers in Brikama and in Soma. In 2023, they will continue this work with two more, three-day residential, courses for their colleagues in Soma and Brikama.

The GIVE workshop with this group included three intensive days of discussion on working with adult learners (their peers and colleagues in teaching); on planning lessons, based on the Grade 1 and Grade 2, English and Maths syllabus and on using the Gambian Teacher Guidelines and pupils text-book, along with modules on positive behaviour and classroom management, music and song.

The teachers agreed to allow our team of volunteers to spend two days in their classrooms, working alongside them, and co-delivering the planned Maths and English lessons.

This was a new and very worthwhile exercise for the Irish team and for our Gambian colleagues. The two days in the classroom were followed by short visits to almost all of the other ToT's in their schools, and one further day was given to a full evaluation of this part of the project with ample time for the Irish team and the Gambian ToT's to share their ideas about the experience. All in all, we spent seven days with the ToT's / facilitators and we are confident that this will lead to successful 'step-down' workshops during the coming months.

## 5: SKILLS CENTRES

GIVE Team: Mary Hayes, Anna Gibbons, Eilís Fagan Shiels, Imelda Traynor, Jackie Hyland, Brendan O’Boyle, Ann Buckeridge, Michael Griffin.

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 tailoring (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 enter the world of work using the skills which they have acquired in the centres and to establish their own business.

### 5:1 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; a ceiling has been erected to help mitigate the heat from the corrugated roof, new sewing machines have been acquired, lap top computers and a printer 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.



Anna and students in St. Peter’s Skill Centre



Emily, Ciarán and Mary, St. Peter’s S.C.

Over five weeks the GIVE volunteers, Anna Gibbons and Mary Hayes, helped the students (in groups of 5 or 6) from years 1 and 2 to focus on their future entry into employment, as well as broadening their knowledge of the world outside their home country. Ciarán Black and Emily Colley had divided the students into groups before the arrival of Mary and Anna. Anna took two 2<sup>nd</sup> year groups every day and four 1<sup>st</sup> year groups on alternate days. One of her aims was to develop the students’ confidence in using English (Oral work) and she chose topics of relevance to the students – themselves,



their family, their home and family life, The Gambia, World outside of The Gambia, African countries, Gambian food and dishes, Women's Day and place of women in Gambian society; calculating the cost of ingredients on a tourist menu, role play as a waitress, describing an outfit using photographs. 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. .

Mary Hayes consulted with the computer tutor, Emily Colley, during the delivery of a five-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. Some students have developed incorrect techniques, but Mary has learned to overlook them, in so far as that is possible, and to concentrate on what is important for these students in their future careers in the tailoring industry. She derives great satisfaction from the standard of work in the centre and the enthusiasm of the second-year students in particular.

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 the Brikama area.

## 5:2 St. Martha's Skill Centre, Fajikunda

GIVE Team: Imelda Traynor and Brendan O'Boyle

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, ex St. Angela's College, Sligo) and a sewing room and the programme prepares the students for employment in the tailoring and hospitality business. An extension to the kitchen is being constructed at present. 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. Innocence, Brendan and students from St. Martha's S.C.



Work Station in St. Martha's S.C.



Imelda Traynor and Brendan O'Boyle worked in liaison with Sr. Innocence and with Pa John Gomez, a qualified teacher of English and Maths who is employed on a part-time basis in the centre.

Both Imelda and Brendan set out to improve the standard of oral English of the students and to develop their confidence in using English. Some of the students who were selected to participate in the programme had very little command of oral English. The groups with whom they worked were small; initially some students were reluctant to engage but following reassurance that they were not being assessed or graded they relaxed and engaged to a much greater extent. With the "weaker" students, Brendan and Imelda concentrated initially on each student being prompted, enabled and encouraged to tell ten facts about themselves. This was foundation level but they were satisfied that they made good progress. Both felt that working with the smaller groups and with the weaker students and seeing improvement was very satisfying.



The more able students engaged in discussion on a much wider range of topics and vocabulary such as life in The Gambia and in the compound, Gambian culture, family life, their work in the skill centre, introduction to the Map of the World, the Globe, using the directional compass, telling the time and reading the analogue clock, using the thermometer. They both did a few sessions on Environmental Concerns in the Gambia with the full year groups ...which worked quite well... They both read or told them stories to try to add enjoyment and played games like Who am I?

They also did some practice on the tenses of verbs, especially the correct usage of irregular verbs. Brendan did some sessions on basic Maths and introduced them

to Magic Squares which they enjoyed. Imelda spent quite a bit of time on fashion/ dress styles and on the students orally presenting the dresses they'd made to an audience, speaking about style, fabric, colour... the Gambian styles...Daggit, Garram buba, roba...and the different patterns in Tie Dye...the folding pattern, envelope pattern, bull eye pattern.

The students were very natural at the modelling - the sway and sashay came naturally!

Both are satisfied that their aim was realistic but that they had to adjust their expectations. They were very satisfied that the students enjoyed the programme and that many of them showed much greater confidence in using English as the programme progressed.

Imelda and Brendan wish to acknowledge the assistance of Valerie who smoothed out some initial difficulties with formulating the groups and setting out a timetable that worked well for all concerned.

### 5:3 Presentation Girls' Vocational School

GIVE Team: Eilís Fagan Shields, Jackie Hyland, Anne Buckeridge, Michael Griffin.

Three GIVE volunteers worked at any one time in Presentation GVS, Michael Griffin and Ann Buckeridge alternating with each other in taking groups from one section – Home Management. The preparation of CVs with Year Three students was delivered on Thursdays and Fridays over five weeks by Eilís, Jacqui and Anne

The team set out

(1) To improve the standard of Oral English among the women

(2) To encourage the students to speak confidently on topics of interest to them, their own education, health, hygiene, the world outside of The Gambia, climate change, care of the environment, status of women, family life and emigration for economic reasons to Europe and USA

(3) To help prepare the students for the world of work / employment / job opportunities; preparing a CV;

Each week the volunteers took 5 groups of between 3 and 6 students over the course of three days, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday from the Hairdressing section, the Tailoring section and the Home Management section . This was a very workable division of the students into groups and was preferable to having groups composed of students from different sections.

The groups were of mixed abilities – some more confident in their command of English than others; some few had very little spoken English and in some cases students translated into local language for the benefit of the “weaker” student. The themes and topics which had been drawn up at the preparation meetings in Dublin formed the basis of the programme in this centre and gradually extended to include topics of greater relevance to the lives of these young women.

In week one the volunteer introduced themselves to the students and encouraged the students to do likewise about themselves, to ask questions of each other. Using maps, the globe and the compass they extended the conversation to knowledge of the wider world and especially cities and countries where relatives found work. One group explored the topic “Care for the Environment” using drawing and art to illustrate their concerns. Some showed great confidence in presenting themselves and in presenting their views while other were more reticent. They role played situations readily and with fun.

Many of the students engaged meaningfully with some of the topics, especially pertaining to women’s health, family situations and the status of females in society.



Work station – in the shade



Jackie and Eilís – Day’s work done.

Though they took the students in groups, Jackie, Éilís and Anne worked on a more individual basis with the Year 3 students in compiling their own C.V.s. The students from the Commercial section needed little assistance with this activity; some from the other sections needed prompting and assistance to capture their educational pathway and their achievements. All of the students

compiled their individual CV in handwritten format – the volunteers would have liked to have each student possess a well-presented typewritten copy at the end of the five weeks.



The volunteers were made feel very welcome to this centre by the Principal, Sr. Rosene and by the staff and students. And the volunteers were very impressed with the standard of the tailoring projects which the students presented for assessment and by the cleanliness of the school grounds and premises.

Sr. Rosene with Mouse attachments for Lap Tops

## 6: MEETING OF PRINCIPAL TEACHERS

Monday 13<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March, 2023

**Venue:** G.P.I. Hall, Kariba Avenue, Banjul.

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 six main topics over the two days. The six topics to form the business of the seminar were (1) Developing a School Improvement Plan (2) Financial Management in Schools (3) Record Keeping in Schools (4) Fundraising Techniques (5) Approach to writing a proposal on Project Development and (6) Rights of the Child.

It was agreed that GIVE volunteers, Michael Griffin, Máire Seoighe and Anna Gibbons would present Topics 1 and 5, Mr. San Pierre Mendy, CESCO, would present on Financial Management, Mr. Dawda Faye, CES would present on Record Keeping in Schools, Mr. Andrew Jassey, Principal, would take Fundraising Techniques and Mr. Edward Gibba, CES, would make a presentation on The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Twenty-two Principal teachers attended on both days, some of whom had recently been appointed to the role of Principal and some of whom had travelled long distances from Basse and from schools north of the river. In order to give every Principal an opportunity to actively participate and engage with their colleagues, the 22 principals were divided into 4 groups.

### **How to develop a School Improvement Plan**

It was pointed out at the sub-group meeting that a School Improvement Plan had a wider scope in The Gambia and included infra-structural improvements as well as focussing on pupil learning in curricular areas including Maths and English. The GIVE presentation would be directed towards developing improvement plans for pupil achievement in Literacy and Numeracy. Lower Basic Schools place great importance on the National Standardised Assessment (NAT) that assesses pupils' achievement in English and in Mathematics in Grade 3 and in Grade 5. Each school analyses its results and its rating vis a vis Regional and National averages. The GIVE presentation focussed on these NAT analyses and other school-based assessment and on their evidential use to the school staff when setting targets for



improvement and in devising Action Plans to deliver those improvements. The GIVE team believe that this topic needs to be revisited and recommend that it be allocated a much longer time slot. GIVE also recommends that Senior Teachers be invited to attend a future meeting dealing with topics related to Teaching and Pupil Learning, such as School Improvement Plans on Pupil Achievement. (See recommendation from GIVE Lower Basic Team)

Some of the responses of the Principals support these recommendations from the GIVE team:

*Time scheduled for this was too short. More time would help us to have a better understanding of the topic;*

*More days required. One day course on SIP would be relevant for the head teachers and would help them to better understand SIP and how to plan it.*

*Involve all of the SMT (Senior Management Team) in all schools.*

*Involve the teachers. Set measurable targets.*

*The steps have to be explained. The headteacher should focus the action plan on the targets.*

### **Financial Management in Schools**

Mr. San Pierre Mendy, CESCO, stressed the need for proper use of all the funds allocated to the school or fundraised in aid of school projects. He emphasised the necessity for maintaining accurate records of all financial transactions and for transparency and accountability. He urged Principals to employ best practice and the requirement for planning before spending, i.e. budgeting in advance of spending. "Write before you spend". He referred to the perceptions that may be held of Principals regarding the lack of transparency in how School Improvement Grants (SIGs) are used or mis-used and suggested that schools should consider employing a school bursar.



Sample of responses of the Principals:

*Give more time for Question and Answer;*

*I learned how to take care of monetary records. We need to employ best practice for things to work.*

*Implement what is planned and monitored.*

*More workshops for school heads countrywide with the CESCO official.*

Participants were satisfied or very satisfied with this module.

## **Record Keeping in Schools**

Mr. Dawda Faye covered this topic comprehensively in the curtailed time available to him. The accuracy and safe storage of all school records was the responsibility of the school heads in their role as administrators of the school. He outlined the statutory and the non-statutory records, the uses of these records, the benefits of maintaining records.

Record keeping in school is not optional. It is a must. It is mandatory and obligatory because without it there cannot be effectiveness in the administration of the school. Records' keeping is for yesterday, today and tomorrow.

'Records' he said 'provide transparency and save you from malpractice'. 'They keep track of what you are doing.' 'Every transaction you conduct as a head should be recorded'. They can be of tremendous assistance to a successor to the principal in the event that the Principal moves to another school or retires. Records have to be retained in safe custody for 7 years or more.

Principals' Responses:

*I learned a lot being a new person in the head-teacher's job. Good record keeping is important because it helps those who will take over;*

*Statutory and non-statutory records (which I am really happy to know) – movement books, requisition book;*

*Records to be referred to as the need arises.*

*Time was insufficient – not enough time for Q&A*

## **Fundraising Techniques**

Mr. Andrew Jassey, himself a Principal Teacher, presented this section. He outlined some of the fundraising ideas that were employed in many schools and invited his audience to suggest some others that they found useful. He emphasised the need for openness about the projects which were being supported by the funds, the need for good advertising and publicity for the fundraising event and suggested that the school community be invited to view the project to which the funds were allocated. 'It was important,' he said 'that donors be thanked.' 'Who are the best fundraisers in your school?' he asked. The teachers are regarded as the best fundraisers by the principals who attended this module.

### **Approach to writing a proposal on Project Development:**

Presented by GIVE: Michael Griffin, Anna Gibbons and Máire Seoighe

The projects for which funds are sought can vary in size and cost and can range from new classrooms to cope with growing enrolments especially in urban schools to the provision of staff quarters in isolated rural communities as inducements for the recruitment of teachers.

Other projects: Luncheon programmes which can lead to improved school attendance;

School transport - Bicycles

Health, hygiene, safety, sanitation. Supply of drinking water – water taps, Latrines.

Pump – Solar powered. Upgrade of water tank. Windows, School Garden requisites

Infrastructural repairs such as roof, floor, painting. School furniture



Teaching and learning resources; Text-books for children - English, Mathematics, Integrated Studies, Science.

Teacher Guidelines English, Mathematics, Integrated Studies, Science

During the presentation Principals were asked to consider the following;

Who makes decision – Ultimate responsibility for the decision? Board? Committee.

Who is accountable to the Institution for delivery of the project?

Establish your bona-fide – trust is important to benefactor.

Does the project fit into a longer-term development plan for the school / institution?

The degree of urgency attached to the project

Consider the likely size of the project (in broad financial terms). Local contribution to the project – if not financially perhaps in the form of voluntary labour. (Community)

And finally: Funding

Who are the potential benefactors? This is the challenge – to identify them and to make contact with them. Follow up on contact. Banks, Foundations, Business, NGOs

Does the benefactor attach conditions to the granting of assistance? Is the institution (School / Community) satisfied to accept those conditions?

Completing a typical application form for Grant Assistance for a project.

### **The Rights of the Child**

In a PowerPoint presentation Mr. Gibba outlined the various rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The presentation was very clear and direct, 'These rights were inherent' he said, 'they were not given nor could they be removed – they belong to every child across all nations and cultures. There is a responsibility on the adult population, on governments, institutions (including schools), to uphold these rights'.

Following the presentation two questions were posed for the Principal Teachers

- (1) How aware are teachers and parents in your school community of the Rights of the Child to education, to health care, to food, to clean water, to a family, to protection from work that harms the child?
- (2) (2) How can the rights of the child be made real in your school.

## **7. CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION**

The safeguarding and protection of children and vulnerable adults has been an issue of concern to GIVE and to our partners, the CES, over recent years. The recognition that policies, structures and procedures need to be developed in this important area has been shared by GIVE and by CES and has been articulated at meetings between the partners during the GIVE team visits to The Gambia since 2018.

GIVE workshops with teachers at ECD and at Lower Basic school level and seminars with Principal teachers have addressed some aspects of child safety and protection since 2019 and Mr. Gibba, CES, addressed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at cluster workshops of teachers in 2022 and at the recent meeting of Principal teachers during the GIVE visit.

We are particularly pleased to report significant advances on the issue in recent weeks. At a meeting between GIVE Management team and representatives of the CES on Thursday, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, the recently announced establishment of a Child Protection Office by the Bishop of the Diocese of Banjul, Dr. Gabriel Mendy, C.S.S.P. was discussed. Present at the meeting were Mr. Emil Kujabi, Education Secretary, Mr. Edward Gibba, Mr. Dawda Faye, Mr. Kebba Sanyang and Mr. Joseph Mendy from the CES and Michael Griffin, Pauline Moran and Eibhlín MacNamara from GIVE.

There has been a growing recognition that the issue has to be taken on and the establishment of the office has followed consultation with MOBSE (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education) and with other state agencies. The police force has set up a Child Protection Unit and the judiciary are undertaking training in Child Protection legislation.

With the establishment of the Child Protection Office, staffed by trained personnel, a Focal person will be appointed in each CES school to oversee the process in the school; three people will be nominated on every school staff to whom children (under 18 year olds) may disclose concerns; induction training will commence for members of school staffs in this school term and there will be consultation with the Akalo, the elders in the community, in order to bring wider communities on board.

This is at the early stages and we await further details of its operation. GIVE is delighted with this important initiative; GIVE wishes the office every success and look forward to a progress report during our next visit.

## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Early Childhood Development**

- To deliver separate workshops for Nursery 1, 2, and 3.
- To develop a specific Pre-Nursery and Nursery 1 Program based on Oral Language, emphasizing learning through play, story, drama, rhymes, songs and actions.
- That teachers in the ECD settings be encouraged to select, from the Nursery Curriculum Program, themes and content appropriate to the needs and capabilities of the children and not be compelled to strictly follow the curriculum as laid down.
- Workshops to discuss classroom behaviour using different behaviour scenarios.
- Volunteers to continue visiting the classes (ECD) after two weeks of workshops, with prepared lessons in Maths, English, Phonics and story.
- To invite the ToTs to co- deliver a module on Maths, English, Phonics or Classroom Management to the Nursery workshops.
- To encourage the teachers to use everyday materials for use in the classroom especially for play, maths, sorting, eg. Story bag, boxes of all shapes and sizes, shells, cardboard, string, pegs, etc.

### **Lower Basic Schools**

- The current model of workshop with teachers at Lower Basic School is working well with active participation of 15 to 20 teachers in each course and should continue.

- Continue with a two-day, in-school, co-teaching with a Gambian partner in LBS with a full team evaluation as a follow-up.
- Invite the ToT's to co-deliver a module on Maths, English or Classroom Management during Grade 1, 2 or 3 courses.
- Continue to encourage teachers to photograph charts and classroom displays for future reference, and to record songs, using today's technologies to assist them in their classroom work.
- Deliver one workshop to Senior Teachers at Grades 1 and 2 or at Grades 2 and 3 level in order to consolidate the methodologies covered during GIVE workshops each year.

#### **Skills Centres:**

(1) That the aim of the volunteers should be:

- to improve the standard of Oral English among the women,
- To encourage the students to speak confidently on topics of interest to them, their own education, health, hygiene, the world outside of The Gambia, climate change, care of the environment, status of women, family life and emigration for economic reasons to Europe and USA, etc.,
- To teach basic Maths, using hands-on practical resources where possible, e.g. weighing scales, measuring tape, metre stick, litre jugs, thermometer, analogue clocks, calculators,
- To continue the computer studies with the students,
- To help prepare the students for the world of work / employment / job opportunities, preparing a C.V.;

(2) At pre-departure training meetings, volunteers who have previously worked in Skill centres to share practical advice with new volunteers who are taking on a role in a Skill centre and to offer advice regarding resources.

#### **Principal Teachers**

- More time to be allocated during Principals' meeting 2024 to "Developing a School Improvement Plan (Pupil achievement)"
- Consider, with CES, the possibility of inviting some Senior teachers to participate in meetings / modules re Teaching and Pupil Learning . (See recommendation from LBS)

#### **General**

- Bring forward the time of the visit to The Gambia in 2024 to January,
- That the visit to The Gambia in 2024 would be for 5 weeks (to include days travelling to and return)

## **9: THE VOICE OF THE VOLUNTEER**

### **A selection of the feedback from volunteers on the 2023 GIVE project:**

*We delivered 4 workshops to ECD teachers and workshop facilitators in English, oral language, phonics, Maths including oral maths, classroom management.*

*I learned to pace myself.*

*I have enormous respect and admiration for the Gambian teachers who work in such difficult circumstances. I have never engaged as much with people who have so little.*

*The Global North needs to be more focussed on supporting sustainable development in the Global South.*

*I stand in awe of Gambian teachers who meet such challenges. One teacher told me that her back is sore every day, probably from carrying water on her head which she continues to do!!!*

*I loved when teachers were eager to trying new ideas. We really tried to use only those materials that were available to them – card from boxes, shells, bottle tops.... They wanted to keep all the plastic bottles that we would discard.*

*(At Lower Basic School level) We emphasised the use of concrete materials and teaching resources in the teaching of Maths.*

*The more I learn of their challenges, the more I admire what they achieve. Despite the challenges, adults and children are always smiling and content.*

*I noticed that the teachers this year were more receptive to the ideas presented to them AND to comment on them.*

*It has been a privilege to work with these facilitators and teachers and to visit many schools to observe first-hand the fruits of their dedicated work.*

*(Skills Centres): I focussed throughout on Oral work – building the students’ confidence in speaking English. All the students were very pleasant and participated – some more enthusiastically than others. I was surprised at their age profile – all 2<sup>nd</sup> years were 20-26.*

*Role play – Lady in the tourist office telling the visitor of local attractions*

*Women’s Day – discussion on how Gambia has changed for women over the past 30 years – since their mothers were young.*

*Describing an outfit using photographs was very successful.*

*Introducing myself to the students and the students introducing themselves – questioning each other.*

*Their knowledge of the world – countries where relatives work – marriage to foreigners. Their achievements – how to capture achievements on CVs. Job application letters.*

*Accommodation: Location is just perfect – I am far happier here than I would be in a five-star hotel; great to be able to return to the BB in the afternoon to rest, particularly in the very hot weather.*

*The rooms are good, they’re clean and the cooking facilities are fine. Fridge is great.*

*I feel secure there.*

*General: Thank you for the opportunity to be part of an interesting, stimulating and fun project.*

*It has been an enriching and rewarding experience; memorable and successful.*

*The vision is always progressing – willing to try new ideas and see where they take us.*

*Great team who made me, as a new-comer, feel very welcome and supported;*

*A lot of good work was done by a professional group of teachers;*

*Trips and meals out were important in forging friendships that will last long after the sun has set on Kotu beach.*

*There were a few ground-hog days – expect delhi-belly.*

*You never feel alone or lonely even when you are a bit homesick.*

*I return home replenished, revived and with gratitude to the Management Team for all you do.*



The GIVE Team 2023

In front: Angela Griffin, Pauline Moran

Standing L. to R. Máiréad Ryan, Brendan O'Boyle, Eibhlín MacNamara, Anna Gibbons, Mary Cunningham, Imelda Traynor, Michael Griffin, Jackie Hyland, Mary Hayes, Éilís Faghan Shiels, Máire Seoighe, Anne Buckeridge..

## 10: CONCLUSION

The Board of Directors has considered this report and congratulates the Management Team, the volunteers and our partners in The Gambia who have progressed the GIVE project so successfully in 2023. We commend their energy, their dedication and their outstanding commitment to furthering its mission of developing a collaborative and supportive partnership between teachers, Irish and Gambian, for the benefit of education in The Gambia.

The Board looks forward to the continuation of the very positive working relationship which GIVE has with its partners in The Gambia, with the CES, with the teachers and workshop facilitators and with the staff and students in the Skill Centres.

The Board endorses the recommendations which have been set out in this report and recommends that they be considered, in consultation with our partners in The Gambia, in the context of the preparation of the 2024 programme.

The Board has agreed (1) that the duration of the GIVE team visit to The Gambia in 2024 be five working weeks in January / February to include the days on travel, preparation and review, and (2) that the process of the recruitment of new volunteers to the GIVE programme commence immediately.



## Appendix One

### Timetable GIVE Programme 2023

	ECD	LB	Skills C	Other
Sat. 18 <sup>th</sup> Feb	<b>Depart Dublin Airport 11.05 Arrive Lisbon 13.55 Dept. Lisbon 20.50</b>			
Sun. 19 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Arrive Banjul Airport 01.10 Arrive at BB Hotel approx. 02.30 18.00 to 18.30 GIVE Volunteers meet.</b>			
Mon. 20 <sup>th</sup>	Volunteer group meet Mr. Gibba Shopping for requisites. Visit St. Therese's School		Meet Principal / Director 9am	GIVE & CES re ToTs
Tues. 21 <sup>st</sup>	Visit St. Peter's Nursery and L.B. Visit St. Patrick's school		St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	Meet Sub group Principals in CES
Wed. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Workshop Facilitators	Workshop Facilitators	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	
Thurs. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Workshop Facilitators	Workshop Facilitators	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	.
Fri. 24 <sup>th</sup>	Workshop Facilitators see shared classroom	Wkshp Facilitators cf shared classroom		.
Sat. 25 <sup>th</sup>				
Sun. 26 <sup>th</sup>				
Mon. 27 <sup>th</sup>	Wkshp Teachers	Wkshp Teachers Grade One	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	Child Protection School Policies Mr. Gibba, Mr. Kujabi
Tues. 28 <sup>th</sup>	Wkshp Teachers	Wkshp Teachers Grade One	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	
Wed. 1 <sup>st</sup> March	Wkshp Teachers	Wkshp Teachers Grade One	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	
Thurs. 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Wkshp Teachers	Wkshp Teachers Grade One	As above Check Work placement visit next week	GIVE Team meeting Evaluate Programme to date
Fri. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Wkshp Teachers	Wkshp Teachers Grade One	St. Martha's Presentation GVS Yr 3	
Sat. 4 <sup>th</sup>				
Sun. 5 <sup>th</sup>				
Mon. 6 <sup>th</sup>	Shared Classroom experience	Shared Classroom experience	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	Check work placement schedule
Tues. 7 <sup>th</sup>	Shared Classroom experience	Shared Classroom experience	Visit students in work placement	

Wed. 8 <sup>th</sup>	Shared Classroom experience	Shared Classroom experience	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	
Thurs. 9 <sup>th</sup>	Shared Classroom <b>evaluation</b> Volunteers + ECD & LB Facilitators		St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	
Fri. 10 <sup>th</sup>	See NOTE at end of document re this Classroom Experience (Project)		St. Martha's Presentation GVS Yr.3	
Sat. 11 <sup>th</sup>				
Sun. 12 <sup>th</sup>				
<b>Date</b>	<b>ECD</b>	<b>L.B.</b>	<b>Skills Centres</b>	<b>Other</b>
Mon. 13 <sup>th</sup>	Workshop Teachers	Teachers Grade 2	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	Meeting of Principals
Tues. 14 <sup>th</sup>	Workshop Teachers	Teachers Grade 2	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	Meeting of Principals
Wed. 15 <sup>th</sup>	Workshop Teachers	Teachers Grade 2	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	
Thurs. 16 <sup>th</sup>	Workshop Teachers	Teachers Grade 2	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS Yr 3	GIVE team meeting Evaluate to date
Fri. 17 <sup>th</sup> <b>St. Patrick's Day</b>	Workshop Teachers + Dance	Teachers Grade 2	St. Martha's Presentation GVS Yr3	
Sat. 18 <sup>th</sup>				
Sun. 19 <sup>th</sup>				
Mon. 20 <sup>th</sup>	Wkshp New Group	Teachers Grade 3	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	
Tues. 21 <sup>st</sup>	Wkshp New Group	Teachers Grade 3	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	Meeting re Child Protection Office
Wed. 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Wkshp New Group	Teachers Grade 3	St. Peter's St. Martha's Presentation GVS	Evening – beginning of Ramadan
Thurs. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Wkshp New Group	Teachers Grade 3	St. Martha's Presentation GVS Yr 3	GIVE Team Meeting Volunteer Experience Evaluation
Fri. 24 <sup>th</sup>	Meet with Mr. Gibba to review GIVE programme 2023			Ramadan
Sat 25 <sup>th</sup>				
Sun. 26 <sup>th</sup>	<b>Depart Banjul 02.10 Arrive Lisbon 07.10</b> <b>Depart Lisbon 16.10 Arrive Dublin 19.00</b>			