



“to develop a collaborative and supportive partnership between working Gambian teachers, retired teachers, teachers on career break 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 Report

2021

Registered Charity Number (RCN) 20079581

Company Registration Number 499076

Executive Summary

This report provides details of projects in The Gambia, supported by GIVE, during the period March 2020 to June 2021.

While the impact of COVID-19 dashed the hopes of GIVE volunteers returning to their work in 2021, GIVE continued to further its role of supporting its partners in The Gambia in strengthening its Education service and in responding to the crisis which COVID-19 brought to those in that service. The report is laid out under the following headings:

- Introduction
- GIVE responds to the COVID crisis in The Gambia
- GIVE assistance to other projects in The Gambia
- Teacher Professional Development Workshops in The Gambia
- Compliance with Comhlámh Code of Good Practice
- Compliance with the Charities Regulator standards

Introduction

Because of the COVID restrictions, volunteering agencies, especially those which send volunteers to developing countries in furtherance of their individual mission statements found themselves abruptly cut off from their customary engagement with their host partners in the communities with which they traditionally worked.

GIVE volunteers returned from The Gambia in February, 2020, satisfied in the belief that they had accomplished solid achievements and progress in the professional development of teachers and of workshop facilitators in the Early Childhood and Lower Basic Education sectors, in compensatory education programmes with young adults in three skill centres and in furthering the programme of professional development of Principal Teachers. Many of these volunteers looked forward to returning to The Gambia in 2021 to continue this GIVE programme of work.

The COVID pandemic struck Ireland in March, 2020, and in a matter of weeks we learned to our dismay that our friends in The Gambia and communities throughout the world were also struggling to cope with the virus. Governments in many countries introduced measures to protect the health and livelihoods of their citizens and the disparity between the resources available to Governments to implement these measures became apparent quite quickly. “Virtual” education whatever its merits was advanced by some departments of education to compensate for the absence of interpersonal engagement with teachers and colleague pupils and students in classrooms. No such substitute education service was available in The Gambia. Parents especially and society at large found a new appreciation of the role of the

teacher in the lives of young people and of the importance of education in their development.

International travel may well have led to the worldwide transmission of the virus in a matter of weeks; the restrictions on international travel devastated those economies like that of The Gambia which was heavily reliant on the tourism industry. While the world marvelled at the speed with which the scientists and the pharmaceutical industry developed the vaccines to counteract the virus many communities in the developing world have again been placed down the queue in the delivery of their quota of vaccine.

While COVID-related restrictions dashed the hopes of GIVE volunteers of returning to The Gambia in 2021, GIVE continued to further its role of supporting its partners in The Gambia in strengthening its education service and in responding to the crisis which COVID brought to those in that service.

Three workshops on the Professional Development of Gambian Teachers were delivered solely by GIVE trained Gambian facilitators in February and March, 2021, and made possible with financial support from GIVE.

This report tries to capture the main elements of the GIVE activities since April, 2020.

Michael Griffin

June, 2021.

GIVE responds to the COVID crisis in The Gambia

The first confirmed case of COVID in the Gambia was reported on 17th March, 2020 and on 18th March President Adama Barrow ordered all schools to close. The closing of schools, particularly those in the Early Childhood Education sector impacted severely on those schools which were reliant on fee income to meet the payment of teachers' wages and those of other workers in this sector. Teachers in the Lower Basic Education Sector who were not yet fully qualified suffered a stringent cut to their income. Conscious of its mission to provide financial support and resources for the benefit of education in The Gambia, GIVE requested that the CES would identify the most urgent needs and forward a list of its priorities of need as soon as possible. Mr. Emil Kujabi, Interim Education Secretary, identified 381 teachers and some ancillary staff in Early Childhood schools and in Lower Basic schools who were the most vulnerable and least paid. He also requested assistance in meeting the sanitation requirements in 48 Early Childhood schools and 22 Lower Basic Schools.



2020.

The total amount which was requested to meet these needs amounted to D 882,600 Dalasi (approx.€ 16,140). The generous assistance of the Retired Teachers Association of Ireland and the magnificent response of GIVE volunteers enabled GIVE to make a payment of D833,000 to the Catholic Education Secretariat in June, 2020.

Bags of Rice, ready for distribution. July,



A truck was also hired and loaded with food items, mainly rice, sugar and cooking oil, for distribution among those teachers and ancillary staff in schools within the Foni Districts of the West Coast Region, North Bank Region, Central River Region and Upper River Regions of the Gambia.

Schools remained closed from March until late October, 2020, and in order to provide for social distancing between pupils in their classrooms when school resumed in October, many schools, particularly the larger urban schools operated dual teaching days – half the class

group attending the morning session and the other half attending the afternoon class. To address the exhaustion of teachers, who had very long teaching days, some schools have adapted a variation of this model allowing half of the pupils in school for half of the week and the other half for the remainder of the week.

To date, (end of May, 2021) the Ministry of Health has reported approximately 6,000 COVID cases and has attributed approximately 175 deaths to COVID.

GIVE Board of Directors and GIVE volunteers are very conscious of the plight of their many friends who worked in the BB Hotel, in the nearby restaurants, in the taxi business and in other establishments whose livelihoods were severely impacted by the collapse of the tourism industry.

GIVE assistance to other projects in The Gambia

For some years GIVE volunteers have worked in three Skills Centres which offer training in skills that empower their graduating students, all female, to become active participants in society and less marginalised. The GIVE volunteers have offered programmes of literacy, computer skills and life skills to these young adults, some of whom had got “left behind” or lost out in vital years of Primary and Post Primary education. While COVID prevented the Irish volunteers visiting and working in these three centres in 2021 as they have done over many years, GIVE offered assistance to all three centres to meet priorities as identified by them.

St. Martha’s Skill Centre

Sr. Bernadette of St. Martha’s Skill Centre applied to GIVE for the continuation of the financial support to the centre which enables it to retain on its staff a qualified teacher of English and a Home Economics tutor. GIVE is satisfied that both of these have added significantly to the quality of the education service being delivered to meet the needs of the students in this centre over recent years and have agreed to the request and to continuing this assistance for the remainder of 2021. GIVE has also assisted the centre in improving the security of its premises and to guard against the loss of much-needed sewing machines and some lap-tops.

Presentation Girls’ Vocational School

This Skills Centre has just completed the building of an additional four classrooms and has increased the annual intake of students. This is a most welcome development. The year has been a difficult one because the COVID pandemic prevented the Skills Centre undertaking its annual fundraising. GIVE has contributed D116,000 towards fitting out its Hairdressing Section and its Kitchen/Home Management Section.

St. Peter's Skill Centre



Ceiling damage, St. Peter's Skill Centre, Feb. 2020



New Roof St. Peter's S.C. 2021.

GIVE commends Sr. Elizabeth, Principal, and Ciarán Black, long-term GIVE volunteer and co-ordinator of the GIVE programme in St. Peter's Skill Centre for the speedy and successful replacement of the roof. Had this roof not been replaced the building would not have survived another rainy season with consequent impact upon the skills tuition programme. GIVE has donated D190,000 towards this project.

St. Peter's Skill Centre is extending the duration of its sewing skills courses and the number of students participating in these courses. Consequently, the centre has embarked on the acquisition of additional sewing machines to cater for the needs of the increased numbers of students. The purchase, in 2021, of 25 sewing machines with some cooling fans at a cost of D200,000 is being funded by GIVE.

Teacher Professional Development Workshops, 2021

Having access to quality education is central to realising the right to inclusive and equitable education for all. Teachers are central to quality education and the professional development of teachers who work in Early Childhood Education and in Lower Basic schools has become a very important part of the GIVE programme over the past decade.

While the GIVE volunteers were unable to travel to The Gambia in 2021 their Gambian colleagues delivered three workshops to a total of almost 70 teachers. Those who facilitated these workshops were the Gambian teachers with whom the GIVE team has worked closely

in recent years. These facilitators are a precious resource in the delivery of professional development to Gambian teachers and in order to enable the Secretariat to retain these facilitators in the system GIVE transferred D145,000 to the CES in 2021 for this purpose. GIVE, in collaboration with CES, commenced a course of training of selected teachers in 2020 in order to expand the team of facilitators and hopes to continue this training when the team next visits The Gambia.

The GIVE team, “locked down” at home in Ireland, would have dearly wished to be better positioned to support these Gambian facilitators as they prepared the delivery of the workshops. GIVE attempted to ZOOM their partners in The Gambia on 4th November, 2020 and again on 2nd December but unreliable WiFi rendered it impossible.

The Catholic Education Secretariat (C.E.S.) in collaboration with the GIVE -trained facilitators successfully carried out three cluster workshops, one for teachers of Grade One, Lower Basic, in all six regions and two for teachers in Early Childhood Education, one a Foni cluster in Bwiam and another in Soma to cater for regions 4,5 & 6.

Early Childhood Development:

The Foni cluster was a three-day workshop on 15th, 16th and 17th February, 2021. The facilitators, Philomen Mendy, Marie A. Bass, Elizabeth Sylva, Kaddy Gomez and Edward Gibba delivered on Phonics, on Language and Rhyme, on Classroom Management, on Songs, on Number, on Handwriting and on Leadership.

The Soma cluster for ECD teachers, Region 4,5 & 6 was held on 15th, 16th and 17th March, 2021 and followed a similar format and content as in the Foni cluster workshop.

Starting Time	9:20-10:00	10:00-11:00	11:00-11:30	11:30-12:30	12:30-1:30	1:30-2:00	2:00-3:00	3:00-4:30	
Monday	Prayer	Phonics	Numbers	Management	Oral English	Phonics	Lunch	Material production	
Tuesday	Prayer	Numbers	Phonics	Breakfast	Management	Hand writing	Oral English	Lunch	Material production
Wednesday	Prayer	management	Oral English	Breakfast	Phonics	Numbers	Leadership	Lunch	material production

Workshop Time-table

Lower Basic Education, Grade One teachers

The Workshop for the teachers of Grade One was held in the CES Hall on 1st, 2nd and 3rd March, 2021. The facilitators of this workshop were Louis Jatta, Margaret Gomez, Josephine Gomez, Nancy Gibba, Dawda A. Faye and Edward Gibba. The topics covered during the three days were Integrated Studies, English Language, Mathematics, Phonics and Classroom Management.

The costs associated with running these three workshops were met by the financial support which GIVE extended to the CES. This support of D170,250 covered the transport costs of the participants and the accommodation costs of those teachers who had travelled long distances from home to attend the Foni cluster and Soma cluster, provision of food, hall rent, facilitators' allowances, and other costs.

Participants' evaluation of the workshops is an integral part of the GIVE workshops and is gradually becoming a feature of the facilitator run workshops. A sample of the workshop evaluations gives us much reason to be satisfied that a lot is gained by the participants from the course and that the facilitators are doing a good job.



(Above) Facilitators & participants Foni Cluster, Early Childhood Education Workshop, which was held on 15th, 16th & 17th February, 2021.



(Above) Participants in Soma Cluster, Early Childhood Education, at the close of the 3-day workshop on 17th March, 2021.

Teachers' Evaluations

- The workshop was very educative and timely
- The duration of the workshop was too short
- The workshop builds teacher's confidence and patience in handling children
- Teachers learn how to avoid corporal punishment and resort to alternative methods of punishment
- The coordination of the facilitators during the workshop was good
- The content of the workshop was very helpful
- The presentation on the use of teaching aids was very good; when teachers see them (displayed) they will remember what was discussed
- The workshop was very interactive – all of the teachers were involved in all of the activities
- The materials prepared will help us in our schools
- Satisfied with the facilitators and with their confidence during the presentations.

Some practical issues raised by teachers

- the payment of the transport refund as well as a special allowance
- teachers at the Foni and Soma cluster workshops requested an evening meal
- the meeting room needs to be sprayed to free it of mosquitoes
- more time should be given for the production of materials and for the group presentation.

Should the GIVE team be able to visit The Gambia and resume the workshops in early 2022 and in light of the experience of workshop delivery by Gambian facilitators in 2021 GIVE recommends an enhanced role for these facilitators in the planning and implementation of the programme of Professional Development in 2022.

Compliance with Comhlámh Code of Good Practice

In February, 2021, GIVE was awarded the Advanced Certificate of the Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies. GIVE Management Team and Board of Directors are proud to have achieved this level of achievement as it marks deserved recognition for GIVE's adherence to the Code and to the implementation of the standards and principles in the Code.

The Code is based on a vision of volunteers working in solidarity for a just, equitable and sustainable world and it promotes responsible and responsive volunteering to ensure a positive impact for the overseas project and community, the volunteer and the sending agency.

Compliance with the Charities Regulator standards

The GIVE Foundation is a Registered Charity, Registration No. 20079581. GIVE has, in accordance with the Charities Governance Code, completed the Governance Code Compliance Record form and has notified the Charities Regulator to this effect. This is an annual requirement on all registered charities.

Recommendations

- GIVE recommends an enhanced role for the Gambian facilitators in the planning and implementation of the programme of Professional Development in 2022;
- GIVE, in consultation with its partners in The Gambia, should formulate a five-year plan of Teacher Professional Development and explore potential sources of multi-annual funding to support the implementation of the plan;
- Recruit additional volunteers, ideally teachers who have retired in recent years;
- Continue to strengthen the cohort of facilitators in the Early Childhood Education sector and in the Lower Basic Education sector.

Financial support received

The year which is the subject of this report has been the most extraordinary in the lives of many people, communities and organisations. While the focus of GIVE remained the strengthening of its partnership with the education community in The Gambia the onset of

COVID and the resultant restrictions called on GIVE to adapt its programme in light of the circumstances pertaining in The Gambia. GIVE responded to calls for emergency food aid, enabled the continuation of the programme of Professional Development of Gambian teachers at Early Childhood and at Lower Basic level and assisted in providing for essential improvements to the infrastructure of three Skills Centres.

All of this was made possible by the generous financial assistance of The Irish National Teachers Organisation and of the Retired Teachers Association of Ireland. Their support has been magnificent, and we commend both organisations and their membership for their vision and for their contribution to the people of the developing world as expressed by the management of their Solidarity Funds.

The contribution of GIVE volunteers to the GIVE programme has been generous and selfless over the past decade. Their response to the calls from The Gambia for emergency food aid in May 2021, was immediate and truly generous and GIVE is deeply indebted to them and to their families and friends for their contribution to the relief of hardship in a time of crisis for Gambian families.

Thank you

We thank Bishop Gabriel Mendy, CSSP for his support for the GIVE programmes and the staff in the Catholic Education Secretariat, particularly Mr. Edward Gibba, Mr. Emil Kujabi and Mr. Dawda Faye for their endeavours to meet the many challenges posed for the CES schools and for the courtesy and friendship which they invariably extend to GIVE.

We commend the personnel in the three Skills Centres for their invaluable work with young Gambian people in the face of the many challenges that face them and thank them for their courtesy to GIVE at all times and their continued engagement with the GIVE mission.

We are indebted to the Gambian Teachers Union Cooperative Credit Union and to Mr. Babacur Joof for facilitating the payment of GIVE donations to the various beneficiaries and for his advice and guidance to us.

The past year has presented enormous challenges to the education communities in The Gambia, to pupils, parents and especially teachers. We thank especially the facilitators who continued the workshop programme with their colleagues and we look forward to working with them again in 2022.