

THE GAMBIA TEACHERS UNION

MID REVIEW DELEGATES CONGRESS 21ST SEPTEMBER 2017

VENUE: PARADISE SUITES HOTEL

NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE'S PROGRESS REPORT

- Mr. Chairperson
- Members of the National Executive Committee of GTU, Board and SWC
- Congress delegates and observers
- Staff of the Secretariat and Teacher House
- All other protocols respectfully observed

Mr. Chairman,

This report covers the period 2014 August to August 2017. It highlights the activities that have been implemented as per each strategic objective namely:

- To promote good governance, democracy and human rights for a more participatory membership
- To increase membership by 5000;
- To strengthen capacity and enhance operational efficiency and effectiveness of the Secretariat;
- To enhance mutual partnership by strengthening the existing bilateral co-operations between the GTU and its sister organizations and promoting synergies;
- To enhance stability and productivity by promoting equal opportunity and shared understanding of the principles and ideals of the Union

Distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, you will hear in this report the great work that has been undertaken by the Union with the active participation of many thousands of members including you: the mobilizations, the policy development, monitoring and evaluation programs; the sensitizations, the trainings, the interventions, the solidarity actions, the meetings and international travels and the vast range of activities that have been coordinated by a dedicated team, of Executives, Volunteers and Staff.

Mr Chairman, the leadership of the Gambia Teachers Union continues to be committed to providing services and programmes meant to enhance teachers' work and improve their academic and professional status.

Major **Programmes and Activities** conducted during the period under review included the following:

Membership Education and recruitment

One of the core elements of the GTU Mission Statement which is primarily geared towards 'effecting an organization of all teachers and education workers within a national union of teachers which is the ultimate guarantee for the protection and promotion of the rights of its members'.

A major focus of this objective is to attract and retain teachers within the education sector in The Gambia.

Since membership dues are the sole means of income for the Union, this move helped the GTU to review its recruitment strategies and resolved at appointing officers to the effect.

Mr. Chairperson, considering the importance of an increased membership in Trade Union Organizations, Membership Recruitment Drive was integrated for the sustenance of the Union.

The Union continued to utilize its participation at the Gambia College School of Education during the annual intakes and face-to-face sessions. The College, Amana and the Human Resources Directorate of the

Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education have been providing space for the Union to be addressing new teacher-graduates exclusively on Union matters. This programme has yielded abundant fruits.

Membership increased to twelve thousand as opposed to the 7,500 members in the previous years.

Similarly, the Union participated in series of conferences organized by the Conferences of Principals of SSS and UBS and the MoBSE Induction programmes where teachers were sensitized on the services we offer.

Rehabilitation of the Secretariat Buildings and Pavement

Delegates and fellow comrades, at the 2014 Congress a resolution was passed “that each member of the GTU contributes a total sum of D200.00 (Two hundred Dalasi) over a period of 12 Months to reconstruct the GTU Secretariat following the report of the state of the Secretariat during the rainy season”.

This was followed by a portrait of the sample building and a demonstration of 3D pictorial view of its elevations. It is unfortunate to inform you that having thoroughly reviewed the financial implications therein, in terms of cost and maintenance, the National Executive resorted to a much more simplified structure that is currently serving our needs.

I am pleased to inform you that our staff is housed in a modern building by all its ramifications and at least we can all go to bed and sleep without thinking of the purported implications of more or less mortgaging the Secretariat if we had to go by the initial plans.

Those of you keen on social media or opportune to have visited the Secretariat from June, will agree with me that we have the best conference hall in Kanifing and its surroundings. In fact, we are happy to note that we hosted the 2017 Posting Exercise conducted by MoBSE.

WTD 2016

For ownership, sustenance and inclusiveness, nationwide celebrations were held simultaneously on Wednesday 5th October. This was marked with processions with support from Police and in some cases, the Scout Bands. It meant to draw public attention to the day and the plight of teachers.

The National Radio and Television covered the highlight event which was held at the Regional Education Directorate 1. Local radio stations covered both the regional and national celebrations and in some instances live coverage. National Media Houses published a Press Release on the occasion of the Day.

GTUCCU

We salute today GTUCCU's resolve to serve the entire spectrum of the country's teaching population by offering a variety of financial products and solutions. The aim is to ensure economic empowerment.

CCU is vigorously striving to achieve decent living and working conditions for members through the provision of easy access to affordable, productive financial services through partnership, voluntarism and the strict adherence to the philosophy of "people helping people".

The GTUCCU have been able to pull millions of people out poverty and hunger in a short space of time.

The GTUCCU is continually striving to meet the changing needs of our members. The Chairman of the Board of Directors has already alluded to that on his statement.

AMALGAMATION

Many attempts have been made to pursue the possibility of amalgamating the two Credit Unions namely: the Gambia Teachers Union Cooperative Credit Union (GTUCCU) and the Catholic Education Secretariat Credit Union (CESCU). Unfortunately, it did not materialize

but we will not rest on our laurels as the Parent body until we see both children come tighter to form one big family.

Capacity building for Members

On promoting alternative discipline, to corporal punishment, we have facilitated series of workshops as a Union for and on behalf of CPA. The Child Protection Alliance has never relented in involving the GTU to support their endeavor in ensuring duty bearers respect, protect and fulfil their responsibilities to children.

We have also secured copies of the handbook and had since shared with many schools on need basis. We hope that the trainings and the handbook if utilized will help members learn about the various forms of corporal punishment and their undesirable effects on the health and education of students as well as expose participants to alternative disciplinary measures that would positively reinforce the actions and deeds of such students that may be deemed rude, difficult or nuisance.

SR Training

The Secretariat succeeded in conducting very fruitful engagements in terms of building the capacities of SRs on Trade Union Matters and professional Issues. The trainings were conducted in 4 Regions: RI, 2, 3 and 6. Other SR trainings are targeted in 2017. However, due to limited resources, the coverage was limited and participants were urged to utilize the Cluster Training avenues to share with their colleagues.

Staff Training

Continuous Staff development is a necessary ingredient for enhance productivity and service delivery. In this vein, The Deputy General Secretary secured funding from MoBSE to undergo a Course in Management, Alhagie Mamadou Sallah the Records Officer pursued Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Management Studies (D/ADMS) at the Management Development Institute.

In like Manner, Mr Yankuba Kongira Research and Documentation Officer is also pursuing a Diploma programme in Web Management to build his capacity to be able to manage the newly reconstructed website.

Regular internal Staff trainings are also conducted In order to enhance the technical team of the Secretariat with a performance-based approach to programming; we can assure better and more efficient services for our members.

Development of a Professional Guide for Teachers

Mr. Chairperson, a major link between the Union’s Leadership and the general membership at grassroots level is the regional structure. Therefore, to enhance and ensure proper representation, it is prudent to provide the regional, cluster and school representatives with more appropriate leadership and trade union education and training.

This will enable them not only address basic issues at school and regional levels, but also help their colleagues acquire more positive attitudes towards themselves, their culture, schools, community and national development initiatives.

It is towards this objective that the TEACHERS’ PROFESSIONAL GUIDE was been developed. With support from MoBSE, we succeeded in supplying every school and head teacher with a copy for use. However, there are still challenges associated with the utilisation of the books as some head teachers are still yet to share with their staff as expected.

This current edition is a concise and contemporary one reflecting the revised General Orders, PSC Regulations, Code of Professional Conduct for Civil Servants, Unified Teaching Service Act, etc. This Handbook is a collection of sections of the “most relevant” instruments that govern the conduct and work of Teachers and Education Workers as civil and public servants.

Relationship with Conferences and ALBASH

The Association of Lower Basic School Heads (ALBASH) and the Conference of Principals of Upper Basic Schools (COPUBS) and Senior Secondary Schools (Gamcop SSS) are engaged in promoting the dignity and welfare of Head Teachers.

In conjunction with the GTU, they engage in the protection and promotion of the rights, privileges, prestige, and honor and welfare of principals, their respective teaching and ancillary staff and their schools as a whole at all times within the Lower Basic Cadre Over the years they keep on:

- i. Inculcating the spirit of networking and sharing of experiences in a bid to enhancing and exchanging good practices, unity and cooperation for stability and maximizing education service delivery;

We continue to collaborate with them in all our activities and each of their Chairpersons have seats on the National Executive Committee all geared towards consolidating our efforts for the welfare of our members.

Strengthening of Regional Structures (Provision of Motor Bikes)

The Regional and Cluster Executive Committees are the engines of growth of the Union. With the School serving as the basic unit of the organization, the need to enhance and sustain the local governance structures cannot be over-emphasized.

As such motor bikes were presented to all the seven regions to facilitate operations at regional level. Also, a subvention of D10, 000.00 continues to be given to each of the the seven Regional Executive Committees and a Regional Allowance of D17, 500 quarterly to facilitate their regional programmes. Similarly, the President receives D3000, the National Treasurer D1500 and the Chairperson of the Status of Women's Committee D1000 Monthly.

Meetings

The National Executive Committee and its statutory Committees continue to meet during the period under review. However, there is need for some of the statutory committees to be restructured.

Meet-The-Teachers Tour

The Leadership of the Union places a very high premium on the need to reach out to schools in the regions and dialogue with the teachers. This is in response to members' demand for their representatives to create a closer relationship with the grassroots. Among other things, the membership is accorded opportunity to relate with the leadership, who in turn receive first hand information from the led

Mr. Chairperson, comrades, ladies and gentlemen, the leadership of The Gambia Teachers Union embarked on Meet-The-Teacher Tours (MTT), in fulfillment of a presidential commitment to meet teachers in their workplaces and discuss with them issues pertaining to their welfare and living conditions.

The President, accompanied by the Chairperson of the GTUCCU , the Vice Chairperson of the Status of Women's Committee and the Deputy General Secretary toured the country extensively to meet teachers to hear their concerns and assess their working and living conditions.

Schools were selected at random with emphasis on those located in hard-to-reach areas. During the Tours, the President and his entourage visited schools in all educational regions of the country and from all levels – ranging from LBS to SSS.

The findings of the tour, among other things, required the Union to revitalize all its structures particularly the grassroots structures, make technical services more accessible at the grassroots level as well as intensify member education and recruitment campaigns to ensure a

more responsive union. Management is finalizing modalities by redeploying one or two staff across the regions for a start.

Unlike our previous stance, all matters of concern raised during the Tour treated accordingly either at the level of CCM, Directorates or with the Permanent Secretary for action and I can comfortably report that action was taken in most instances, immediately.

Coordinating Committee Meetings and Joint Donor Review And Supervision Mission

The President, General Secretary, Deputy General Secretary, General Manager of the GTU Cooperative Credit Union and Chairpersons of all the Conferences, including ALBASH continue to participate effectively at all CCM and Joint Donor Review and supervision missions representing the teaching fraternity.

The main Objective is to ensure that the entire Education Sector Plans (Strategic, Medium Term and Policy) are successfully implemented, within the framework of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Agenda for better results for the Education Sector

Partnerships

The Union continues to work with and through a lot of both local and international partners. The Programmes Unit is seriously inundated with programmes and activities with partners.

The period under review was characterized by so many events. The Union was critical in the formation and strengthening of a consortium that works on Promoting Rights in Schools (PRS) in schools.

The initiative is a collaborative approach between Action Aid the Gambia the GTU, EFaNET, FAWE-Gam, NOVA-Scotia Gambia, Network on Gender Based Violence (NGBV) and Child Protection Alliance (CPA).

The period under review has witnessed dramatic increase in areas of intervention and programming we managed to extensively circulate the Education Sector Policy 2016/2030 across all regions and in most schools.

A review of the management of the Flexible School Calendar was also done and the report will help REDs greatly in increasing efficiency in terms of maximizing Instructional Hours.

The Status of Women's Committee had participated in the Caravan with **Network on Gender Based Violence** on FGM. The Tour parties went round the country and had fruitful engagements. A seminar was also organized on Leadership skills for the SWC.

Research

The research and documentation Unit has continued to explore areas of concern to enable the union achieve her objectives from an informed position. The Unit and other officials of the Programmes Department embarked on a couple of researches

I. Desk review on existing teacher's cadre.

It is imperative to note that the Education Sector is faced with a challenging scenario as a greater number of applicants, if not all, are usually literary qualified for the highest existing positions resulting to an unprecedented backlog, thus demotivating teachers who end up teaching for decades without any meaningful change of status.

The main purpose of this desk review was to establish a scenario on a more realistic categorization of schools and to generate empirical evidence in terms of data on the possible number of vacancies as may be determined by the new findings.

There are always more candidates who acquire the prescribed qualifications to make them eligible for promotion than there are vacancies available.

This is due mainly to the fact that the current designations applicable to the Teachers Cadre are no longer realistic thus, inevitably compromising key considerations by the Scheme of Service for Teachers where emphasis is laid on officer's work performance and productivity.

Ultimately, it is hoped that professionalism will be promoted in teaching that would ensure that the minimum required conditions of service for teachers are fulfilled hence, teachers will be motivated.

II. Impact of the Salary Scheme on teacher absenteeism

Education International commissioned a Research on Impact of the payment of Salaries by (GTUCCU) on behalf of Central Government and the provision of Motors bikes to teachers to curb teacher absenteeism. The General Manager was the Researcher. It is clear from both the quantitative data and the qualitative one that the decision by GTUCCU to provide them was appreciated by the members and collateral benefits were realized.

III. Gender Audit

Education International commissioned the gender audit in the context of reform, which included a renewed commitment to gender mainstreaming with the creation of Strategic Objectives.

The objectives of the audit were to:

and analyze the strengths, good practices, weaknesses, gaps and challenges in the institutional mechanisms and processes for gender mainstreaming;

Assess GTU'S institutional capacity for the implementation of its mandate and pertaining to gender mainstreaming (Not yet validated, in draft)

Factors Militating against Female Teachers Taking up Rural Postings

The study investigated and reviewed current literature that provided evidence on the factors militating against female teachers taking up rural postings within the Basic and Secondary Education Cadre.

The descriptive design was used for the study; however, the study employed a mixed method of data collection specifically, through the use of questionnaire, guided interviews and focus group discussions as main instruments for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data.

Findings revealed that there are a number of rational reasons why female teachers prefer urban postings. One of the concerns about working in rural areas is that the quality of life may not be good. Teachers have expressed concern about the quality of accommodation, the classroom facilities, the school resources and the access to leisure activities.

Health concerns are a second major issue. Some teachers perceived that living in rural areas involves greater risk of disease and less access to health care. The physical remoteness of the school may encourage absenteeism because medical problems have a greater impact in isolated areas. A visit to a doctor that might take a day in an urban area, can involve an absence for three or four days.

Formation of a Trade Union Bureau

There is a general consensus amongst the trade Union formations and organizations in the Gambia that the Country after its popular 'Gambia has decided 'outcomes that a new chapter has opened in the Political arena that can engender the protection, perseverance and furtherance of civil liberties, better life and shared prosperity for all Gambians the consensus affirmed that the Gambian Trade Unions as they stand need to urgently work on building a bigger, stronger and United organizations.

Mediation, conflict resolution and Counseling

We continue to offer these services to our members on a daily basis and give professional guidance on issues related to their upliftment. Giving the sensitivity of the role we continue to play in this respect, we can only share statistics on the number of cases we handled. It is pleasing to note that we have seen a drastic reduction of cases in terms of job-related cases.

However, domestic cases still continue to show their ugly faces from time to time. Such cases make our job extremely demanding as some teachers still rely on the support of the GTU in resolving such matters.

Visit to Members who are Sick/ hospitalized.

Mr. Chairman, the NEC decided to take a more proactive role on member welfare matters. A principle is adopted by visiting sick and vulnerable members and providing support rather than doing otherwise.

Inspite of the good initiative and gesture, it would have been more effective and sustainable when we institute a regional approach. This will ensure that no one is left out unintentionally, as in some of the cases.

Funerals and Burials

Mr. Chairman, the Treasurer's report has captured the details on the numbers in terms of souls lost and amount of money disbursed.

This scheme requires a consultancy to thoroughly study the scheme and advise management accordingly. We have the conviction that the proposed Insurance Scheme by the GTUCCU should be finalized to take on board this crucial and very important scheme.

International Travels

Mr. Chairperson, members of staff participated in international conferences and workshops across the globe namely, United States of America, Brussels, Uganda, Kenya, Ghana to name but a few all geared towards networking with institutions with similar objectives.

Development and Hosting of a Website

A Website was initiated and is fully functional. The domain name is:

www.gtu.gm

As earlier mentioned in this report, the R&D Officer will soon complete a formal training to better manage the site. He has since undergone in-house training to this effect.

Calendars

Calendars were printed regularly and distributed to schools and partner organizations during the period under review. They are quite visible not only in schools but in other officers and shops. The RECs have continued to reach out to the local communities by projecting the image of the union. Just as in the case of the special number plates of the motor bikes, the calendars are a good vehicle in enhancing recognition and visibility.

Development of a Teachers' Professional Guide

Mr. Chairperson, teachers have long been vulnerable to all kinds of allegations regarding professional misconduct. Changes in patterns of allegations and a heightened concern among teachers and the Gambia Teachers Union have prompted the production of the teacher's professional guide.

We hope that Teachers, Education Officers and Managers will find the Handbook very useful as it is intended to provide that necessary reference on what is expected of a Teacher and an Education Officer or Manager. It specifically introduces them to the Revised General Orders of September 2013, Unified Teaching Service Act of 1972, 2005 Children's Act, UNESCO/ILO Recommendations on the Status of Teachers and Education Workers, the Guiding Principles of the School Improvement Grant among a host of other attendant documents.

Education Policy 2016-2030

Sensitization and awareness creation sessions were held in four education regions: URR, CRR, LRR and WCR with major support from AAITG. Head teachers, Principals, all Regional Education Directorate Officials – PEOs, SEOs and EOs), all Cluster Monitors (with two exceptions) and teachers from the Catholic Education Mission on postings in Foni were met. Participants were taken through the Policy Guiding Principles, Aims, Objectives and key targets.

The main purpose of the exercise was:

- ❖ To provide access to the policy document
- ❖ To ensure currency and meeting the changing needs of the Sector in terms of the new developments, trends and commitments
- ❖ To strengthen the symbolic and complementary nature of the new dispensation of a sector-wide approach
- ❖ To Raise awareness and increase understanding of the guiding principles and key objectives of the Policy
- ❖ To enhance the understanding and effective implementation of the policy

In addition, the regional sensitization and awareness creation sessions were meant to popularize the Education Sector Policy 2016/30 to Head teachers, School Principals, Regional Education Directorate Officials, Cluster Monitors and teachers from the Catholic Education Mission on postings in Foni.

Since the endorsement of the Education Policy in January 2016, major stakeholders such as teachers and regional education officers have little and in most cases, no access to the Policy thus risking the successful implementation of the document due to lapses. The programme reached out to 257 participants including 85 are females.

Representation

Mr. Chairperson the GTU committed itself in the Constitution ‘to secure effective representation on all executive and advisory bodies having powers to make decisions that may affect the teaching profession’. As such, we are represented in the following bodies and committees:

- ✓ MoBSE Coordinating Committee Meetings and Joint Donor Review and Supervision Missions,
- ✓ Gambia National Library Service Agency Board,
- ✓ West African Examinations Council,
- ✓ Committee for the Appointment Promotion and Discipline of Teachers,
- ✓ the National Advisory Council on Education,
- ✓ Education for all Network Board,
- ✓ NSGA Local Management Committee,
- ✓ Executive Committee on the Network on Gender Based Violence.
- ✓ Local Education Group
- ✓ CPA Task Force
- ✓ National PRS Consortium
- ✓ Gambia Trade Union Bureau

The leadership of the Union is grateful to Government through the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education for not only recognizing our efforts and contributions in national development but as well appreciating and accepting us as genuine partners in development.

At the International Level

- ✓ Member, Education International (EI) Sub Committee on Education and Solidarity Network
- ✓ Member Education International Africa Regional Executive Committee
- ✓ Member Education International Africa Standing Committee
- ✓ Member Education International African Women in Education Network
- ✓ Vice Chair person ANCEFA-Civil Society Regional Funding Committee

Partnership/networking and Development Cooperation

Mr. Chairperson, we are partnering with the following institutions and associations:

National

- ✓ Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education -REDS
- ✓ Action Aid International the Gambia
- ✓ EFaNET, FAWE-GAM, FLAG, NSGA, Network on Gender Based Violence, Child Protection Alliance

International

- ✓ Education International(Brussels)
- ✓ Lararforbundet(Sweden)
- ✓ National Union of Teachers(UK)
- ✓ Irish National Union of Teachers(Dublin)
- ✓ Union of Education Norway)
- ✓ ANCEFA

Twining Programme SUDES (Senegal)

Partnership with SUDES is strengthened with one visit made to GTU by the technical committee of SUDES to plan for the forthcoming Caravan slated for the 9th -13th August in Dakar Senegal. I am happy to report that a group had recently visited Dakar on one of the most successful caravan we ever had.

This trip led to the creation of a locate organization of a similar venture which will be hosted by female teachers under the auspices of the GTU SWC.

Challenges

Mr. Chairperson all was not rosy and I must not give an impression that everything was fine. Basically, the list below will be enough to inform congress of the major areas that need urgent attention:

- We have two Vehicles; one on the road and the other grounded. The one on the road is closed to 8 years old while the NISSAN PickUp is 11 years old. One of our biggest logistical nightmares is vehicle to enable us run programmes in the regions.
- Limited resources to carry out all the planned activities for the year.
- Lack of funding to sustain and expand the Summer Extra Mural Classes. This is one of the most successful and popular programs of the union due to its overall impact on teachers and enhanced quality learning outcomes.
- Funding (Inability to Raise Funds) –sustaining the financial obligations
- Capacity building of Staff/ Study Tours/Internships
- Awareness Creation/ Intensifying Membership Education
- Managing teachers (often the largest number of public servants)
- Conflict

Conclusion

Since the creation of The Gambia Teachers Union in 1937 our work programme and activities have grown dramatically.

Our mobilization to build awareness of the need for quality education for all and the recognition that quality education for all is the basis for social justice in our communities has been and continues to be one of our greatest successes.

Our advocacy, our capacity to mobilize and our solidarity have attained levels that would have been hard to imagine back then.

The achievements registered are quite commendable and this was made possible with the support of our development partners. Their support is well appreciated and conscious effort must be made to strengthen the collaborations so as to conduct our planned actions under our Strategic Plan. Giving the limitations highlighted above, a number of activities could not be implemented.

But as this report has shown, the challenges we face today in education and more broadly as a Union for social justice and equity are greater than at any time since the public school was first established as the basis for universal education. Turning successes to awareness into action remains the major challenge before us.

That is the task before congress as you set the mandate for the next phase of our mission to build a better world for the young generation who looks to us for hope in the future we should be proud, that we have been able to build a GTU as strong as a strong united Union.

The achievements registered during the period are quite commendable and this was made possible with the support of our development partners. Their support is well appreciated and conscious effort must be made to strengthen the collaborations so as to conduct our planned actions under our Strategic Plan. Giving the limitations highlighted above, a number of activities could not be implemented.

Finally, you will be presented will a couple of draft amendments from the Constitution which were thoroughly reviewed by the Secretariat, NEC, SWC and the Board and as required by the Constitution, your input and endorsement is crucial. Congress is a rare opportunity and you have the whole world and time to reflect on positive strides we can take to move this great Union of ours.

As Solidarity Forever is our mantra, you are urged to come up with resolutions and very sound decisions for posterity.

I would like to thank the staff, partners, the entire leadership of the Union and Government, and of course the International Community for the support rendered us. Solidarity forever our slogan.

I thank you for your kind attention. I wish you more fruitful deliberations.

Long live the Teaching Fraternity, Long live the GTU