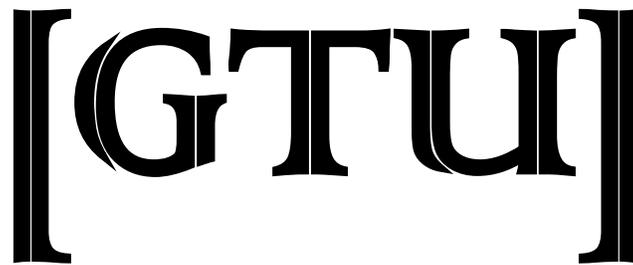


THE GAMBIA TEACHERS UNION



NATIONAL DELEGATES CONGRESS
(2004 – 2009)

GENERAL SECRETARY'S REPORT
By: Marie-Antoinette Corr

Paradise Suites Hotel
7th – 8th August 2009

1. INTRODUCTION

a. Protocol

- * Mr. President and Chairman of the occasion;
- * Members of the National Executive Committee of the GTU;
- * Board of Directors and Executive members of the Credit Union and Women's Wing respectively;
- * The Staff;
- * Distinguished Guests and our valued partners;
- * Honorable Delegates
- * The Press and all other protocols respectfully observed.

I must confess that it's an honour to witness yet another momentous occasion and a resound experience in my overall work career both as an education officer and teacher representative. Presiding over the business of the cream of the nation builders of this great country at such a high forum, is indeed an ideal privilege much more with a record as the First Female General Secretary after over 7 decades of existence as an organization.

Mr. Chairman, as you already know, the conduct of the 19th Delegates Congress is mandatory and I must commend the leadership for fulfilling yet another important constitutional requirement which is often very difficult to attain. Not because people do not just want to do so but given the associated demands and challenges relative to business. You will all agree with me that Trade Union Domain is a whole world of its own.

I thank God for giving us the strength, courage and the fortitude to reach this far. You are all welcome to participate in your own business as we take stock of the developments during the period under review – 2004/2009 during the proceedings in order to map the way forward as a family. Solidarity forever.

b. Vision and Mission

For a productive movement, Mr. Chairman, it is imperative for us to continuously remind ourselves more frequently than ever on what our purpose of existence is. As architects of our own destiny we need to be focused and firm. Our strategic vision demands that the teaching fraternity creates "a national teacher organization that embraces all other education workers; seeks to ensure a highly trained, skilled, qualified, protected and well motivated membership through dialogue and other advocacy strategies with democratic values".

The road to achieving our vision as captured above is certainly by “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. As an organization, we will endeavour to enhance the status and working conditions of our members through collective bargaining and the provision of social and other relevant services”.

Mr. Chairman, given the above pronouncements it is important for us as a union to renew our commitments to the following objects as enshrined in our constitution:

c. Strategic, Corporate Objectives

- * to associate, unite and secure complete organization of all the teachers of The Gambia regardless of grade, qualification, race, sex, colour, religion, creed, nationality;
- * to bring about closer cooperation and promote better mutual understanding among teachers;
- * to strive to bring about the unification of the teaching service, enhance the status of teachers and the teaching profession and to secure better terms and conditions of employment for all teachers;
- * to establish, promote and maintain a high standard of professional qualification, loyalty to established principles and unswerving devotion to the proper education of children;
- * to cooperate and participate in all matters calculated to lead to the improvement of the teaching profession and to strive to secure for teachers the highest posts in the education service of The Gambia;
- * to give constructive aid in promoting the cause, improvement and development of a common system, universal and free primary and secondary education for all Gambian children, eradication of illiteracy, and the achievement of equal opportunity for all through education;
- * to secure effective representation on all executive and advisory bodies having powers to make decisions that may affect the teaching profession;
- * to provide means whereby the collective views, opinions and decisions of members affecting the interest of education in general and those of the teaching profession in particular can be expressed;

- * to settle disputes between members of the Union or between its members and their employers, and regulate the relations between them by collective constitutional means;
- * to offer to members advice and assistance in educational and professional matters and also to assist them in legal proceedings of a trade union nature;
- * to protect and strengthen our democratic institutions, to preserve and develop the cherished traditions of democracy and to secure full recognition and enjoyment of rights and liberties, concessions and grants to which all teachers are entitled;
- * to maintain the democratic character of the Union and to protect it from both internal and external hostile forces and infiltration by subversive and reactionary elements opposed to democratic and free unionism and also to safeguard the autonomy of the Union;
- * to preserve the independence of the organization from outside control and to encourage teachers to exercise their full rights and responsibilities of citizenship, to secure the ratification of the relevant ILO Conventions and to secure the enactment of legislation for the defense and protection and promotion of the rights of teachers and the interest of children and the objectives laid down in this article of the constitution and to oppose through constitutional means legislation and policies contrary to the interest of teachers, children and the aims and objectives of the Union.
- * To struggle for world peace and to strive and encourage African Unity and economic integration;
- * In pursuance of the above, the Union may do or authorizes to be done all such acts as it considers necessary for the furtherance of these aims and objectives.

d. Support and Goodwill

Mr. Chairman, the theme for this year's congress – **'QUALITY TEACHERS FOR QUALITY EDUCATION: -Teachers Unite To Fight HIV/AIDS'** - has attracted some interest from management as the looming threat on the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS on the provision of quality education cannot be over-emphasized. Skeptics may believe that the subject may not merit the attention we are giving it in the face of the global economic meltdown but despite such criticisms we are determined to add our voice as a profession to the plethora of voices that are seeking mitigating factors to contain the negative impact of HIV/AIDS on teachers. The UNAIDS

supported us through the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS by funding the development of a module and a brochure on HIV/AIDS Education for the Extra Mural Classes and will be supporting a series of Bantabas that the Women's Wing will be conducting in Regions 2, 5 and 6. Without a healthy teaching force there is no guarantee for the attainment of quality education by 2015.

Mr. Chairman, fellow delegates, the AIDS pandemic is fast becoming one of the most severe societal challenges facing education systems. The lives of millions of children and teachers have been permanently changed by the pandemic in ways that constrain their ability to go to school, to stay in school and to learn or to teach (Hyde et al 2002).

Finding ways to meet these needs, to keep children in school and teachers teaching, is a pressing issue for the education community. However, it is also a matter of urgent concern for society as a whole, even in The Gambia where the prevalence rate is still low-because education is a necessary part of any HIV/AIDS-prevention campaign and pivotal in stemming the spread of the epidemic. Therefore, HIV/AIDS must be recognized to constitute a real threat to the abilities of nations to achieve long-term sustainable development, and for this reason, highlighting it as a sub-theme to this Congress is indeed a very smart and laudable choice. We must not rest on our laurels neither should we be complacent.

Once again, I wish to thank our valued partners, UNAIDS/UNDP for funding the newly contracted project we recently signed with them.

As a Union and a professional body for that matter, our view of quality education is informed by the principle that education must be relevant to the needs of the individual and of society. Education must be available to all at any age and more importantly, it is a right whatever one's economic position is.

Mr. Chairman, it will be necessary, and indeed it is, to mention few names without whom, this Congress would have ended up in obscure history books. The Irish National Teachers Organization (INTO), UNAIDS/UNDP, the GTUCCU, Education International (EI) ,the Staff of the Secretariat and indeed the general membership.

2. RATIONALE: Why NDC

Mr. Chairman, it is important that we remind ourselves once again of our purpose of gathering here. Looking at the number of delegates as relative to the registered membership, we are about 3% of the total membership and as such, we are all morally obliged to represent the image and interest of the people we represent. You are the chosen few and as a result, you are expected to adjust yourselves to

meet the demands of the Congress in order to fulfil the expectations of those that you represent.

By our discipline, Mr. Chairman, I urge all and sundry not to relent in their engagements in championing the course of teachers and the profession in keeping alive the Quality Education agenda before Government, the media and other stakeholders. The Constitution and Bye-laws of this great organisation requires that:

- 1 *“In the interpretation of this Constitution and in the determination of the programme and policy of the Union the supreme authority shall be the National Delegates CongressThe Congress shall be the controlling and ultimate authority of The Gambia Teachers Union and shall run its affairs according to the provisions of this Constitution.”*
- 2 *“There shall be a Congress of the Union every five (5) years and Mid Term Conference to review the activities of the Union”*

Mr. Chairman, this forum is an avenue which the NEC and Delegates can use to promote the image of our Union which, no doubt is crucial in sustaining the growth and development of this noble movement.

In view of the above, it is hope that the NDC would provide the opportunity for members to:

- * Critically examine the activities of the organisation since the current National Executive Committee came to power in August 2004;
- * Receive feed back from NEC on its operations and programmes on issues affecting teachers and education workers in general;
- * Receive recommendations from members with regards to improving the services being provided for members;
- * Set adequate agenda;
- * Adopt resolutions;
- * Propose amendments to the Constitution and Bye-laws and
- * Democratically elect leaders among other businesses.

In the execution of your civic and democratic rights and responsibilities, I would like to urge all to be focussed on the issues that will be presented to you either in the form of reports or manifestoes so that you can make an informed choice. With your support, co-operation and increased commitment and resolve, there is no limit to what we can achieve together.

Mr. Chairman, it is high time to heighten the call for accelerated switch from rhetoric to practice. Demands from the regions require that we intensify our

member sensitization campaigns and there is still a reasonable number of the membership who have not yet received the 'gospel'. This is really disheartening if one considers the amount of energy and resources devoted to the SR/SCs project. The need for more functional local structures is more eminent today than ever given the complexity of the business of education. As you are gathered here today, you have been mandated by virtue of your nomination by your various regions as determined by the legal frameworks of the Union to preside over the business of this august gathering and speak out. I urge you to thoroughly reflect on the realities ranging from the global economic crisis to the basic domestic facts on the ground. We will be debating on a series of resolutions but it is critical that you note the cost implications therein and be bold enough to take appropriate decisions on the means of implementing the resolutions. The propositions must be both genuine and realistic and we must not lose sight of the fact that the Union had over leaved its status.

Mr. Chairman, the Secretariat has compiled closed to 40 proposals out of which over 75% of them have serious cost implications. It is imperative to note that the programmes and activities of the Union have since surpassed the financial standing of the Organization. As indicated in the later part of this report, finance has been and continues to be the greatest obstacle to the growth and development of the GTU while at the same time; it is the engine of development. It has been a routine practice for the Leadership to scale down some major programmes for more prominent ones, thanks to inadequate funding.

As you will be taking major decisions by adopting some or all the proposals, you are being cautioned to seek for technical advice or clarifications on each of the draft resolutions so as to be informed of the implications of your actions.

3. MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Mr. Chairman, formulating a vision of the desired development of the profession and the education system in general, a system that improves the economic and democratic development in society necessitates a closer collaboration between all arms of the Union and by extension, with Government. This calls for creating a kind of quality alliance between Government, the Private Sector and the GTU by ensuring mutual commitments. The same is also true between the Secretariat and the GTUCCU like wise between the Secretariat and the NEC.

My dear delegates, the leadership of the Union has a moral responsibility, as delegated by you, to promote the interest among teachers, other education workers, employees and staff of the Secretariat in improving their working conditions; it must also ensure that teachers are not found wanting by being

present in the classroom. In the same vein, we must promote professional standards and ethics and as well attract projects that will improve quality.

4. ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMMES

It is roughly 60 months ago that the current leadership was mandated to direct the affairs of this great Union of ours. As we reflect on the gains and constraints of this noble Organization for the period under review, I wish to emphasize that the thrust of this Union is basically to represent the image and interest/concerns of the membership. In light of this responsibility, I would like to present to you the Report of the National Executive Committee for the period, 2004 to 2009. You will be accorded the opportunity to express your collective views, opinions and as well make sound decisions. As delegates, you stand for the corporate goals of the Union and with sincerity of purpose, I am quite positive that justice will be done to the course of our gathering.

a. Inauguration of the NEC

Mr. Chairman, in our bid to ensuring a proper management of the transition, it would be necessary for us to stipulate a manner and way of handing over power from one Committee to the other when the need arises.

Given the circumstances in 2004, I believe there was a serious oversight on the side of Congress for not coming up with provisions to indicate as to how power could be shifted. This year, a principle was developed to ensure a smooth transition within 30 days of the Congress.

Mr. Chairman, the current President was first elected as the head of this organization in 1999 and Congress renewed his mandate in 2004 together with the following people:

- * Rohie A Silla - 1st Vice President;
- * Cherno Cham - 2nd Vice President
- * Saja WD Sanneh - Treasurer
- * Bakary Badjie - Organising Secretary
- * Lamin Darboe - Member
- * Ruth Jawla - Member
- * Alhagi Sidik Darboe- Member
- * Ngui Secka - Member
- * Saja AK Sanyang - Member
- * Lamin K Marong - Mendy
- * Alamuta Badjie - Regional Secretary 1
- * Yahya M Jallow - Regional Secretary 2

- * Faburama Solo Kinteh Regional Secretary 3
- * Lamin A Danso - Regional Secretary 4
- * Anthony J Mendy - Regional Secretary 5
- * Demba Tamba - Regional Secretary 6

With the officers below as Ex-officio members:

- * Baboucarr Jeng - General Secretary
- * Amadou Jallow - Chairman, ALBASH
- * Adama Faal - Chairman, GamCop UBS
- * Martin Gomez - Chairman, GamCop SSS
- * Amadou L Kambi - Chairman, GTUCCU
- * Kumba Maane-Sanneh Chairperson, GTUWW
- * Omar J Ndure remains the Immediate Past President for the 2004/09 Term-of-Office

However, for certain reasons, a number of the initial members had to leave and they were replaced by the following:

- * Following his appointment as an Education Officer, Mr. Cherno Cham was replaced by Lamin K Marong as Acting Vice President;
- * Saja AK Sanyang resigned his position having appointed Regional Officer for Regions 5 and 6;
- * Faburama Solo Kinteh was replaced by Lamin S Jawara and Omar B Sonko respectively after his appointment as an Education Officer in RED 4;
- * Amadou Jallow retired from active service but no formal correspondence is yet to be received leading to no action yet. Meanwhile, communications are being channeled through the Secretary to the Association, Ms. Rohie A. Silla;
- * Mr. Amadou L Kambi traveled to the UK and was replaced by Numo TF Saidykhani and subsequently by Edrissa Bojang, the Current Chairman;
- * Kumba Maane-Sanneh resigned her position as Chairperson and was since replaced by Zono Jammeh as Acting Chairperson;

Mr. Chairman, soon after the elections, the Newly-elected National Executive Committee was inaugurated on 30th September 2004 at the Regional Education Directorate 1. The programme took the form of an induction course where papers were presented on the role of the NEC, proposal writing and budgeting. It was indeed very apt as the new committee comprised of new comers and 'old hands' but the latter were given new mandates.

b. Election of GTUWW Regional Secretaries

Mr. Chairman, following the adoption of the resolution requiring Regional Secretaries of the Women's Wing to be elected by their various regions as an element of the integration process of the Union, a complement of the said category of officials was elected. With support from the Fast Track Initiative lodged with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Behavioural Change and Communication (BCC) advocacy materials were developed and almost 350 female teachers' skills were enhanced. The programme took the form of a training and election of regional secretaries.

c. Establishment of District Executive Committees

Regions were requested to ensure that District Committees are established across their regions. I am pleased to report that a total of 50 District structures were established across the country. These committees were expected to, among other functions; conduct Study Circle meetings and present resolutions on burning matters of concern to the Secretariat. However, it is discouraging to note that very few of them are functional thus mounting pressure on the Secretariat.

Mr. Chairman, the regions are the engine of growth of the Union. With less than 25% functional regional committees, one may wonder how much could be achieved. May I hasten to add that, I am by no means shunning the efforts of our volunteers, but the fact remains that very trivial matters reach the Secretariat which could have been resolved at even school level. In some worst instances, it's a matter of confidence. For those exerting relentless efforts, I say bravo to you and they should serve as inspiration to the weaker ones.

d. Quarterly and Ad hoc NEC Meetings

Mr. Chairman, the NEC was not only able to meet as required of them, but presided over very crucial matters that affect the membership and the profession. Given their location and the frequency of meetings, the Secretariat is always faced with serious challenges in maintaining them in the context of scarce resources. Since they are mandated to direct the affairs of the Union, means and strategies must be devised to sustain them. In as much as they are volunteers, the rigour of long distance travels and time take must always be adequately compensated for.

I am pleased to inform this august gathering that the overall attendance rate of the Executive was very good. Perhaps we need to improve on punctuality and meeting procedures. Technically speaking, as a political structure, the underlining function of the NEC is

e. Mid Term Review Conference

Mr. Chairman, Delegates at the 18th National Delegates Congress met at the Gambia College Auditorium and resolved at amending the GTU Constitution as thus: *"There shall be a Congress of the Union every five (5) years and a Mid Term Conference to review the activities of the Union"*. I am pleased to report that a Mid-Term Review Conference was held at the Gambia College School of Public Health Auditorium from the 6th – 7th July 2007.

My Predecessor gave a brief report of the activities of the Union since 2004 and seized the opportunity to inform the Conference of his resignation as General Secretary of the GTU.

f. Staff Welfare and Development

In execution of one of the decisions of the 2004 Delegates Congress that requested for the consolidation of the Staff of the Secretariat, the NEC established the offices of the Deputy General Secretary and Desk Officer for the GTU Women's Wing. The necessary recruitment procedures were applied and Mr. Essa Sowe the then Project Officer and Ms. Janet Mansal emerged as succeeding candidates for the positions of Deputy General Secretary and Desk Officer respectively.

Following the creation of the vacuum at the Projects Unit due to Mr. Sowe's elevation, Mr. Sheriff Bah was appointed Project Officer who incidentally left after two years in office leading to the appointment of Mr. Pa Daniel Mendy. Mr Mendy was since re-designated as Programmes Officer to be more responsive to the operations of the Union as a whole.

Mr. Chairman, fellow Delegates, the NEC did not loose sight of the fact that it has a moral responsibility to look into the welfare of the staff as employers. In that vein, I am pleased to report that the following staff have enjoyed one form of capacity building or the other:

- * Janet Mansal Desk Officer, together with the Treasurer of the Wing, Ms Nyima A Jallow were sponsored to do a Diploma in Gender Studies at the MDI through the PWE Bursaries in 2006;
- * Alhagie Sallah, the Records Clerk attended two capacity building programmes: he pursued the Certificate in Management Studies (MDI) in 2006 and an in-house training in record keeping and filing with the Gambia National Library, Banjul;
- * Fatou Njie-Sosseh the Finance and Administrative Officer successfully completed her Level 4 NVQ in Accounting of the Association of Accounting Technicians in February 2008 by the MDI;

- * Baboucarr Jeng, ex-General Secretary was sponsored to a Post Graduate Diploma in Management with the West Africa International School;
- * Essa Sowe, the Deputy General Secretary is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Economics and Management at the UTG.

Mr. Chairman, there are further recommendations to build the capacities of the officers at the Programmes Unit on IT and Research but this remains a nightmare owing to inadequate funding. The importance of Research and Documentation in our advocacy work cannot be over-emphasized particularly at a time when we intend to establish a research unit and host a web.

In a related development, Mr. Chairman, I regret to inform Congress that we loss two members of staff in the persons of the Late Lamin A Darboe and Malang Badjie a Security Guard and Night Watchman respectively.

The period under review also witnessed the appointments of:

- * Mr. Massaneh Ceesay – Driver/Mechanic;
- * Janet Mansal Desk Officer;
- * Karamo Sanneh, Faburama Saidy-Jeng, Alassana Jaiteh and Ebrima Darboe Security Guards;
- * Sheriff Bah Ex-Project Officer;
- * Pa Daniel Mendy Programmes Officer;
- * Saja AK Sanyang Regional Officer and
- * Marie Antoinette Corr General Secretary.

The Office of the Deputy General Secretary was also established during this period leading to the appointment of Essa Sowe.

However, Sheriff Bah, Saja AK Sanyang and Baboucarr Jeng also left within the same period for various reasons.

Mr. Chairman, though 5 years is relatively short, cataloguing the number of activities undertaken during this period is certainly a difficult task. The Administrative Structure of the Secretariat was restructured with the view to motivating the staff. This was necessary as it is very difficult to recruit people in the Trade Union domain given the complications and relatively 'slim' benefits. The tasks on each of the officers are in all cases overwhelmingly high. A good example was when the vacancies for the positions of Desk Officer, Deputy General Secretary and the Office of the General Secretary were being advertised. In all cases, the positions were advertised more than twice. In fact it took us almost a whole year to fill the vacancy when the General Secretary departed.

g. Congress Resolutions

Mr. Chairman, considering the numerous complains that the Secretariat and NEC receive on members' failure to receive vital information about their own union from their representatives, management took it upon itself in conjunction with Regional Secretaries to trek the length and breadth of the country to sensitize the membership on some of the major decisions particularly the one on increase of Union Dues. In the same vein, the Director of Treasury, Permanent Secretary Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, the Missions and Principals of Senior Secondary Schools were all written to the effect.

It is important to note that 14 out of 17 Resolutions from the NEC adopted during the 2004 Congress were implemented. The Resolutions requesting the establishment of Consumer Co-operative under the auspices of the GTUCCU with an autonomous unit and management, the encouragement of other philanthropic organizations and the GTUCCU to contribute to the Trust Fund could not be fulfilled.

There were 38 other resolutions adopted from the regions of which only 21 of them could be implemented. Looking at the problems associated with our inability to implement all the resolutions, it is important for Delegates to be mindful of the impending consequences and implications of the type of decisions to be taken later in the day.

We must try as much as possible not to be prescriptive, and most importantly avoid our emotions and sentiments conflicting with our conscience. Conscientious efforts must be made to ensure sound and realistic resolutions. We must endeavour to preserve our identity without compromising our integrity.

h. Best Teacher Award Scheme

The Best Teacher Award (BTA) continues to be one of the most important programmes initiated by the GTU National Executive Committee. Two awards were hosted during the period under review: 13th May 2006 at the Friendship Hotel and 25th February 2009 at Paradise Suites Hotel. The main purpose of this programme is to reward excellence, professionalism, patriotism and dedication to the teaching profession all geared towards ensuring productivity and commitment to duty.

Mr. Chairman, the 4th Award Ceremony was organized in an unprecedented approach. Owing to a seemingly unending cry for funds, the programme had to be deferred and lowered in terms of scale. The number of awardees was dropped from the initial number of 60 to 12 representing a 500% reduction. This associated effect of such a decision was an insurmountable pressure on the Secretariat as all other programmes and activities had to be frustrated, including the popular World Teachers Day and GTU Week Celebrations.

Fortunately, with dedication and resolve, we managed to host one without necessarily compromising the principles and ideals of the scheme. As part of its mandate, the National Task Force for the Best Teacher Award 2008, embarked on a tour of regions from Sunday 13th July to Thursday 17th July to assess Progress of the Regional Nominating Committees; verify the Process with the view to ensuring consistency and clarify Issues as well as provide support to the various Regional Nominating Committees wherever they were found necessary. A sister committee charged with raising funds wrote and followed up over 200 letters to all major institutions and agencies in country. It is frustrating to note that the response the Fund-raising Committee received was indeed appalling.

Basically, the basis of the requirements for nomination centred on the following:

- ✓ Professional conduct and remarkable achievement(s);
- ✓ Whole school performance;
- ✓ Community participation

Mr. Chairman, it is pleasing to note that the 2008 Award Ceremony, even though it was unwillingly held in 2009, was referred to as the most resounding programme of its nature. The quality of the inputs, coupled with the quality of attendance was really consoling. The representation of the Head of State of The Gambia, Sheikh Professor, Alhagi Yahya Jammeh by the then Secretary to Cabinet was indicative of the level of recognition the Government and the President in particular gave to the Union. Most significantly, was the donation of D230, 000.00 by the President as supplementary award to the winners.

During a brief assessment of the scheme by the Secretariat, it was agreed that more responsive and realistic approaches must be ensured in the net phase. It is gratifying that some major parastatal has pledged to commit themselves to supporting the scheme next time.

i. Summer Extra Mural Classes

Mr. Chairman, in response to the growing demand for access to the tutorial classes, two new centres were opened during the period under review: Brikama and Soma Centres. The Extra Mural Classes is being expanded. A total of over 500 participants took part last year alone. With support from the Irish National Teachers Organisation, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, development partners and the membership, we will endeavour to maintain these three centres. However, the sustainability of the Scheme seems to be a nightmare as the demand for the services is overwhelming.

Mr Chairman, Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I am happy to report that many of the beneficiaries of these classes gained admission at the Gambia College or the University of Gambia to pursue higher education. Some have even completed their courses at university and are now serving in various schools in the Gambia. The beneficiaries also include the Unqualified Teachers and the Arabic/Islamic Teachers.

j. World Teachers Day Celebrations

Mr. Chairman, World Teachers Day is in recognition of the ILO/UNESCO 1966 Recommendations on the Status of Teachers. It gives us the opportunity to highlight issues that affect teachers and as well develop strategies to confront the challenges for better improvement. We are aware that teacher recruitment and retention programmes are most times eroded by eminent factors and obstacles which are manifested:

- * When teachers feel that their efforts have not adequately been provided for leading them to resign to frustration and work apathy. As a result, we will continue advocating for the extension of the Hard-to-Reach Allowance and its associated incentives to more schools and our members operating in the upper sectors of the Basic Cycle Sector;
- * There is little hope for progression or future prospects. The recent promotions exercise must be expedited to avoid the unnecessary delays encountered during the last exercise;
- * There is limited or little administration support. This inevitably leads to job dissatisfaction;
- * When teachers face poor student discipline and heavy work loads (double shift).

Fellow Delegates, World Teachers' Day requires everyone including parents, Governments, the private sector and all stakeholders in education to make renewed and serious commitments to supporting the most precious resource in education delivery, **the teacher**. Teachers can make a difference and can make miracles happen if given the chance because **'teachers can change lives with just the right mix of chalk and challenges'**.

Recognizing the importance of the Day, I hope Congress will intensify efforts to device the means for more sustained celebrations.

k. Membership

Membership of the Union has grown by 14% during the period under review. This is far below the projected figures given the expansion of the membership base of the organization. It is a concern that a good number of teachers in Private schools, Madarassas, Nursery schools and kindergartens and skills centers are still left behind.

It is alarming to note that we continue to lose members on an average of 30 members per annum with an unprecedented figure of 70 registered deaths in 2007 alone.

It is imperative that we consolidate our recruitment efforts and reach out to convince those yet to join to come on board. Let each on, reach and teach one.

I. HIV/AIDS Education and Programmes

Mr. Chairman, the Union conducted a research on 'Knowledge of HIV/AIDS and Practices of Health Seeking Behaviours among Basic Education School Teachers in The Gambia' with support from the Pan African Teachers Centre (PATC). A similar exercise was conducted in Senegal while a joint validation exercise was held in Banjul. Our gratitude goes to Mr. Nuha Jatta, Education Programme Manager, and VSO who was contracted to do the research.

This research aimed at assessing the level of knowledge of Primary and Secondary School teachers about HIV/AIDS likewise finding out what health seeking behaviours they adopt and how they could put them at risk of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections. The research also was interested in knowing what attitudes and beliefs teachers held about HIV/AIDS. Finally, the outcomes of the research are to assist the respective teacher organizations in the development of strategic plans in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The research revealed the following major findings:

1. Respondents were exposed to a variety of sources of HIV/AIDS information but the two most popular were radio and television;
2. That nearly a quarter of the respondents (22.5%) did not know the types of HIV in the Gambia which was quite interesting;
3. Between 4% and 15% of the sample had one form of misconception or the other about HIV/AIDS;
4. Almost all the respondents knew one method of preventing HIV infection. However teacher trainees seem to be leading in the acquisition of knowledge of prevention of HIV infection;
5. Over 70% of respondents knew about the ABC method of preventing HIV infection;
6. Most respondents (97.5%) regarded sexual intercourse as the main way of HIV transmission;
7. Nationally, 60% of the respondents benefited from some form of training, workshop or seminar on HIV/AIDS. However training activities were more in Region 6 than the rest of the country;
8. There was overwhelming support for HIV/AIDS to be included in the teacher training curriculum;
9. Generally, respondents' knowledge of STI was low in either knowing the names or symptoms;

Mr. Chairman, the Union was informed by the revelations above thus warranting the new partnership with UNAIDS/UNDP as indicated in the preamble.

m. Study on Posting of Female Teachers on Rural Gambia

This Research project was conducted by the GTUWW and was funded by the Promotion of Women in Education. The objective was to find out the factors that militate against the rural posting of female teachers. The findings of the research included the following:

- Poor living and working conditions which include, poor housing, unavailability or poor quality of food, difficulty in communication.
- Sexual harassment and interference by communities, colleagues and education officers;
- Slow academic and professional development while on rural posting
- Lack of good health care facilities
- Lack of motivation

n. Valuing Teacher Research with the VSO-Gambia

The research was conducted in 24 schools across the country where teachers shared views by raising a number of issues that affect their motivation levels and morale. The issues looked at ranged from school-level management to living conditions which were analyzed under six thematic areas:

- * Terms and conditions of service;
- * Training and professional development;
- * Teachers distribution;
- * Teachers' voice and professional relationships;
- * School facilities and
- * Status and value

Recommendations were made for the improvement and strengthening of the education system. I am pleased to report that the GTU worked closely with the VSO-Gambia throughout the planning and analysis of the research.

o. Meet-the-Teacher Tour

Mr. Chairman, one of the strategic objectives of the Union is to establish, promote and maintain a high standard of professional qualification, loyalty to established principles and unswerving devotion to the proper education of children. With daunting challenges in ensuring equity in teacher supply and development as well as the need to guarantee greater budgetary allocation to education service delivery management embarked a second leg of the Meet-the-teacher Tour.

Basically, the main objectives of the Tour were:

- * To establish the pattern of teacher supply and deployment by regions;
- * To provide empirical evidences on the nature of staffing in terms of qualifications, gender and status;
- * To identify the basis for the topical issues and matters to be debated at the 2007 World Teachers Day symposium.

Mr. Chairman, findings of the Tour will help the GTU and her partners to stand on very firm grounds in their quest to effecting policy changes. However, the following recommendations were arrived at and there is need for the incoming executive to review them and continue the struggle:

- * More staff quarters for teachers to be built;
- * Adequate teaching and learning materials, other than textbooks and vanguards, to be provided for, particularly in rural schools;
- * The FTI Catalytic Fund Eligibility Criteria for the Hard-to-reach Allowance to be reviewed to include more teachers in the disadvantaged areas;
- * Training opportunities for teachers to be increased and strengthened and the Bed Programme at the UTG be reviewed to address the needs of the Sector;
- * The Certificate in management course at the UTG to be expanded and a Diploma programme to be considered;
- * The Double Shifting of teachers to be abolished or teachers affected to be adequately remunerated (100%);
- * Where Multi-grade teaching exists, teachers should be adequately trained on the skills required and a reasonable allowance to be paid;
- * The usual grade composition of the staffing at the Lower and Upper Basic levels to be reviewed and revised accordingly;
- * The Posting Policy to be reviewed and enforced;
- * The Scheme of Service for Teachers to be totally reviewed;
- * Mode of promotion and appointment of teachers to be reviewed and the establishment of the Teaching Service Commission to be expedited;
- * Incentives such as health and 'free' education for teachers' sons and daughters to be considered;
- * Government increases its budget allocation for education. That the amount allocated to MoBSE is relatively small compared to the needs of the Sector;
- * The material and human resources of the Gambia College and schools, particularly the Upper, Basic Cycle and Multi-grade schools to be improved to provide adequate initial training for teachers;
- * A continuous in0-service training programme and regular refresher courses to be provided for to enable teachers upgrade themselves;
- * To introduce HTC Primary and to recruit sufficient number of teachers to ensure quality public schools;

- * Strengthen the capacities of Cluster Monitors to ensure proper monitoring of quality teaching and learning and support to teachers;
- * To enhance the social functions of teachers by providing adequate salary that commensurate with the economic realities of the day;
- * To establish a motivating career scheme to retain the 'willing' teachers. This will reduce the attrition rate hence, enhancing better education service delivery;
- * That the GTU re-examine its structures in order to maintain and improve their performance;
- * The Union to develop strategies and mechanisms for the monitoring and assessment of teachers, pupils and students with the view to improving upon the programme content and educational delivery;
- * The GTU to develop a Professional Code of Conduct for Teachers based on ethics, morality and sense of duty;
- * The Union to organize mass campaigns and sensitization meetings to mobilize public opinion in defense of Quality Public Education;
- * The GTU to enhance and institutionalize union training notably on issues highlighted in the GTU Handbook;
- * The GTU to assist the Conferences of Upper Basic, Senior Secondary, the Association of Retired Teachers and the Association of Early Childhood Development Teachers to enhance the capacities of their members through pedagogical, economic, scientific and technological training;
- * The GTU to assist teacher-associations in organizing programmes and conferences to foster the exchange of experiences on Quality Public Education and
- * NGOs (in education) to be involving the GTU in the design, formulation and implementation of their policy measures and support in the education sector.

p. Familiarization Tour

Soon after the appointment of the General Secretary on 1st April 2008, she embarked on a familiarization tour in the regions.

Mr. Chairman, the main objectives of the mission were to meet all GTU Regional Executive Committee members and Regional Education Directors and their staff to renew our committee and resolve for the course of the organization as well as re-assuring them the fullest support of the Secretariat and the Leadership.

q. Strategic Planning Workshop

A One-day Strategic Planning Workshop was conducted at the Baobab Lodge in Kerr Serign on Tuesday 14th October 2008. The aim of this working session was to develop a framework that will factor the development aspirations of the Union. At

the moment the Secretariat is still working on it and it is hoped that the document will be finalized and fully operationalised in January 2010.

r. EI Survey on Teacher Issues in Anglophone Africa – The Gambia

Mr. Chairman, 'two principal aims of Education International (EI) are to advocate for the right to quality education for all people and to fight for the improvement of the welfare and status of teachers and other education employees through the effective application of their human and trade union rights'.

It was in view of the above, a survey was commissioned in December 2007 to investigate teacher supply, teacher attrition, teacher remuneration and motivation, teacher absenteeism and union involvement in policy development in six Anglophone African countries. These were: The Gambia; Kenya; Lesotho; Tanzania; Uganda and Zambia.

Mr. Chairman, the survey raised a number of teacher issues and came up with a considerable set of recommendations. Teacher-unions are being urged to devise follow-up strategies in order to translate the recommendations into policies and programmatic actions. We are required to debate the issues raised in the survey, prioritize the survey's findings and make them part of the union's agenda, including collective bargaining.

s. Outreach Programmes –Recruitment and Member Education

Mr. Chairman, as mentioned above, there is need for strategies to be devised to intensify our recruitment drive. There are still a good number of teachers who are yet to join the union and I want to challenge the Regional Committees to further engage their School and District Representatives to reach out to those teachers so that they can join the band wagon.

The important of communication and information sharing cannot be over-emphasized. We owe it to the membership to inform them about issues affecting them and their union and in the same vein, engage them to discuss pertinent issues affecting their professional wellbeing.

Mr. Chairman, we have been participating in the annual Face-to-Face programme at the Gambia College. This programmes gives us the opportunity to sensitize the final year students on the expectations and matters related to their profession and Organization. It has been very interesting and successful.

t. The Newsletter, Membership Cards and Annual Calendars

Mr. Chairman, one of the challenges areas of our operations is the issue of the Newsletter. Seemingly, the culture of reading and more so, writing, is dying. The number and quality of articles being received from some of the writers cannot sustain the business. Teachers must develop the culture of presenting their cases and sharing experiences so that we can learn from one another.

There is continuous request for an improvement on the Membership Card. Management will continue to observe the necessary protocols with the view to working out the modalities that may be required fulfill your demands.

It has been noted with deep concern that more members and partners do request for more copies of the Annual Calendar. It is sad that due to limited funding we could not meet your demands. I hope some of these concerns will be thoroughly looked at and resolutions adopted to meet the financial requirements of such demands.

u. Training of School Managers and Female Leaders

I am happy to note that ----- Headmasters and ---- female leaders were trained between 2007 and 2009. With support from Lararforbundet, we were able to secure funding to build the capacities of these cohorts of our membership and the feedbacks are so positive on the project.

v. Development of a Code of Conduct for Teachers

Mr. Chairman, the Code of Professional Conduct for Teachers is hoped at addressing issues of morality and ethics, thus establishing, promoting and maintaining a high standard of professionalism. In principle, the purpose of the Code is to promote the highest standards of care for young people and to protect teachers and others from the potentially devastating consequences of false allegations. All teachers are urged to consider how they can safeguard their own positions by making conscientious effort to exemplify the highest ethical standards.

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 this Code of Conduct. The regulations in the code are not meant to curtail or restraint teachers' freedom or to merely catalogue offences and penalties. It is intended to help teachers reduce further risks of any vulnerability to false or malicious allegations of misconduct or abuse towards students. All teachers will understand and appreciate that a code of conduct cannot cover all eventualities and will not totally remove the risk of false or malicious allegations.

It is on the basis of the above that we entered into a co-operation with Action Aid The Gambia to address the issue.

w. Refurbishment of the Secretariat

Mr. Chairman, we must all be proud that we do not only have a home but three in the mean time. The need to maintain the existing infrastructure cannot be over-emphasized as the home is synonymous to our identity.

All offices within the Secretariat were furnished with modern office equipment and furniture thus boosting the morale of the staff. The new development will go a long way to enhance the work of the staff thereby producing the desired results we all yearn for. We have also managed to repaint the entire premises to give it a facelift.

In a related development, I am pleased to inform this august gathering, indeed the gathering is being held in August, that the GTU Secretariat is now housing the Forum for African Women Educationalists, The Gambia Chapter (FAWE-Gam) and the Education For All National Coalition of The Gambia (EFANet). Not only are we generating some kind of revenue from them but also, strengthening our partnership and as well getting the necessary publicity since both offices are using our home as their addresses.

May I hasten to add that they are genuine partners and I want to reassure them of our unflinching collaboration.

x. Promotions

Mr. Chairman, the period under review seems to be overwhelmingly favourable as it witnessed a series of transformations within the Education Sector. It witnessed the creation of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology, the introduction of the Whole School Development Approach, review of the general conduct of the CCM, improved mode of payment of the one by six allowance, the creation of the cluster monitoring scheme, an unprecedented number of schools built, the construction of Staff Quarters and most importantly, two major promotion exercises.

The 2008 promotion exercise was a resounding success and I am pleased to inform this gathering that you were properly represented in the process of short listing. The Union registered 32 petitions which were mainly omissions and 30 of the cases were treated accordingly. Two other two's applications could not be traced neither could the petitioners tell us to whom they gave their papers to.

A total of 100 vacancies have been announced and the list is being compiled. We will be invited again and hopefully, your interests will be represented.

y. Enrolment of Teachers at the Gambia College

Mr. Chairman, we been and will continue to collaborate with the Gambia College in the enrolment of teachers for the HTC and PTC programmes. Our participation is appreciated by the College Authorities.

z. CCM

We have attend and participated in all the 5 major CCMs since the unprecedented approach began. We will continue to represent you and defend your interest and the System in general.

aa. Staff profiling

There is an exercise on profiling the core positions within the Sector. We have been invited and had since participated in most of the sittings.

5. ADVOCACY

a. The Teaching Service Commission

We have participated in the drafting of the necessary framework for the service commission. The committee has completed its task and had since submitted its report to the relevant authorities pending the development of a Cabinet Paper. It is imperative that Government is very much interested in the whole concept and it's just a matter of time that the issue will rest.

b. Special Incentive Allowance

Since the release of the information on the Special Incentive Allowance, the leadership continued to engage Government on the matter. It has been raised twice at CCM and a special committee of the NEC also met the Permanent Secretary to express our concerns. We are hopeful that we will be adequately factored in the second tranche.

c. Working Conditions of Teachers

Mr. Chairman, the leadership has been and continues to follow up the pronouncement in the National Education Policy on matters affecting the welfare of the membership. We have attended the forum were decision was taken on the final model of the teachers' quarters and MoBSE has since commenced the projects. At least for the first time, some teachers in remote settings are dwelling in decent accommodations.

d. Double Shifting of Teachers

The issue of Double Shifting of Teachers and Multi-Grade Teaching continues to be a major challenge to management. We must redouble our efforts by assuming our responsibility as teachers and deliver the goods as required. We high standard products, we will be assured of enrolling better materials at the Gambia College and the University, thus, ensuring quantity and quality teachers.

6. THE WINGS

a. The Women's Wing

The Women's Wing conducted a series of activities and programmes. Despite the gains they registered, lack of support from their male counterparts continues to linger in our dealings with them. There is need for the Wing to intensify its campaigns and equally open up to be more inclusive.

I want to ask for your indulgence to come up with more supporting policies for a more vibrant Wing. The Wing had already held its caucus and decided on their leaders for the next 5 years. We must ensure that history does not repeat itself where we will get to a point of demanding for a restructuring because things are not working as they are supposed to be.

They need the whole world and time to represent the interest of our women folk.

b. The Co-operative Credit Union

Mr. Chairman, fellow delegates, the socio-economic wing is doing well in providing the necessary services to teachers. I commend the Management of the CCU for their innovations and urged them to continue thinking as that is the only way we can live up to expectations.

Given the fact that not all the staff at this office have ever taught before, I want to appeal that we continue to exercise restraint and be more patient with our customers. All those visiting the Teacher House are in need of one thing or the other and with a good mix of care and concern, we can gain a lot.

7. AFFILIATION

The current dispensation of business is such that organizations and institutions are required to consolidate their relationship with partners. Management did not lose sight of this fact and committed itself in its development policy to affiliate with the following bodies:

- a. Education International: this is the global union federation representing 30 million teachers, professors and education workers from pre-school to university in 171 countries and territories around the globe;
- b. Pan-African Teachers Centre: this centre provides institutional support to member organizations. The Centre supported the GTUWW in developing and printing two sets of supplementary readers for schools. Proceeds from the books were used by the Wing to support its programmes;
- c. EFA National Campaign Network: this is a consortium of over 25 organizations and institutions. Its remit include advocating for the implementation of the Dakar Framework of Actions;
- d. Conferences of Principals and Heads of Lower, Upper, Basic Cycle and Senior Secondary Schools (ECDs and Madarassas)

8. REPRESENTATION AND RECOGNITION

Mr. Chairman, we committed ourselves in our Bye-laws that we were '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:

- a. EIRAF
- b. *EI ECD ???? Check with GS*
- c. MoBSE CCM
- d. MoBSE Core Profiling Committee
- e. MoHERST Working Group on Quality Assurance
- f. National Library Board
- g. Pro-PAG Board of Directors
- h. PRAG
- i. WAEC

Mr. Chairman, we are grateful to Government and Head of State for not only recognizing our efforts and contributions in national development but as well appreciating and accepting us as genuine partners in development.

9. PARTNERSHIP/NETWORKING, AND DEVELOPMENT CO-OPERATION

We are partnering with the following institutions and associations:

- a. National**
 - i. Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education -REDS
 - ii. Action Aid The Gambia
 - iii. UNAIDS/UNDP
 - iv. Commonwealth Education Fund

- v. National AIDS Secretariat
- vi. Subject Associations
- vii. Directorate of Treasury
- viii. EFANet
- ix. FAWE-GAM
- x. Pro-POOR Advocacy Group
- xi. Voluntary Services Overseas – The Gambia

b. International

- i. The Swedish Union of Teachers, Lararforbundet
- ii. The Danish Teachers Union, DLF
- iii. The Irish National Teachers Organization
- iv. Pan-African Teachers Centre
- v. Education International
- vi. SUDES – Sene-Gambia Brotherhood Day, Dakar, Banjul and Sokone

10. CHALLENGES

Mr. Chairman, 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:

- a. Funding (Inability to Raise Funds) –sustaining the financial obligations
- b. Capacity building of Staff/ Study Tours/Internships
- c. Adequate Remuneration for Teachers – Double Shift, Special Incentive Allowance
- d. Infrastructure – Flooding of premises during the Rains
- e. Development and Hosting of a Web Site
- f. Awareness Creation/ Intensifying Membership Education
- g. The Provision of Quality Education For All by 2015
- h. Adequate number of qualified teachers and education officers
- i. Ensuring adequate number of teachers
- j. Providing appropriate training and preparation
- k. Getting teachers in the right places
- l. Managing teachers (often the largest number of public servants)
- m. Financing teachers
- n. Integration and Decentralization Process – maintenance of functional Regional Committees and Study Circle Clusters
- o. Enforcing the Spirit of Volunteerism
- p. The Plight of Unqualified Teachers
- q. Strengthening the Women’s Wing

- r. Rising cost for maintenance of aging vehicle – GTU 1 (need for a reasonable/maintenance effective official car for the office of the General Secretary)
- s. Utility - Lack of a Standby Generator and Reserve Tank

11. OPPORTUNITIES

Not all hope is loss. With the following considerations, I think we can easily overcome the huddles:

- a. Potential to grow – ECDs, Private Schools and Madarassas
- b. Holding of the NDC – Adoption of sound Resolutions to enhance progress
- c. Support and co-operation received from partners
- d. Recognition

12. CONCLUSION

a. Elections

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, we will be electing the President and 4 other Ordinary Members of the National Executive Committee. I advice that we exercise the highest degree of maturity in our dealings. Let us remember that none of us, including the staff of the Secretariat, is here at your own accord. The results of our conduct would live with us now against posterity.

With much restrain, commitment to duty and focus, there is no limit to what we can achieve.

b. Resolutions and amendment of the Bye-laws

As I mentioned earlier, there are a number of resolutions proposed by the NEC and the Regions. It is important that we study the bills thoroughly before passing them. You have moral duty to ensure that the interest and concerns of the people you are representing here today are protected.

Currently, the global song the Economic Meltdown and the fact remains that it has and will continue to have a ripple effect on the country and the Union wound not be exempted. Consequently, all resolutions that have cost implications must be weighed against the income capacity of the Union. The Membership Dues cannot sustain the operational needs of the organization any longer and we could not raise funds either. As I speak to you our liabilities are alarming and it is not healthy as the tendency of loosing our credibility is eminent.

c. Support from the membership and retiring executives

For the retiring executive members, we will continue to consult you to share your wealth of wisdom. If it were not for the legal provisions, there was no way that we could have allowed some of you to go. It's healthy that we observe the very rules that we made but it's not a law court and we are not sentencing one another thus the need to continue the collaboration.

We all have a moral duty to defend the agenda of this organization either as custodians or retired officials.

d. Sharing of information received at NDC - resolutions and amendments

Finally, Each One must Reach One and Teach One. This culture of sharing must be nurtured well. We have a duty and a responsibility to go back and educate the membership and defend the decisions taken here. It does not matter who proposed a resolution if we all agreed with the ideals enshrined in the respective clauses. I urge all and sundry to go back home and spread the 'gospel'. In fact the priority for the incoming Regional Executive Committees should consider Study Circle Meetings on top of your agenda. Soon after you settle down in September, I expect each District to conduct a meeting and share the adopted resolutions from the beginning.

As we deliberate on the business of Congress, let us strengthen our resolve and solidarity and continue to support each other hence a viable and progressive Union.

Once again, I wish to congratulate the entire teaching fraternity and the Delegates in particular, for yet another worthy meeting.

God Bless Us All.