

# THE GAMBIA TEACHERS' UNION

## MID-TERM REVIEW DELEGATES CONGRESS AUGUST 2012

### GENERAL SECRETARY'S ACTIVITY REPORT

Observe normal protocol

Mr. Chairperson, invited guests, representatives of partner organizations, congress delegates, ladies and gentlemen. I am pleased to present to you, the activity report of the Gambia Teachers' Union for the period August 2009 to July 2012.

Mr. Chairperson, In our bid to realizing our goals and ambitions in respect of the need "to associate, unite and secure complete organization of all teachers and education workers of The Gambia regardless of grade, qualification, race, sex, color, religion, creed or nationality within a national union of teachers", the GTU committed itself to initiating and implementing programmes and activities that are meant to increase the lot of its members.

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

#### GTU/INTO Summer Extra Mural Class

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.

Consequently, the union in August 2000 launched the GTU Summer Extra Mural Classes aimed at:

- Upgrading the academic and professional standing of teachers;
- Improving the quality of education delivery;
- Creating sustainable opportunities for teachers to access higher education;
- Exposing participants on GTU and current affairs.

Sequel to the closure of the Extra Mural Centre in Soma, two years ago, the two remaining centres continued to attract teachers

intending to upgrade themselves academically and seek further professional training.

However in 2011, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education initiated an e-learning programme to upgrade teachers, in the Lower Basic Sector, to attain credit passes in Mathematics and English. This affected the smooth operation of our extra murals centres as the ministry targeted the same group of teachers as we do in the extra mural programme. The Union had to run the Extra Mural Classes parallel to the e-learning classes using the same centres.

Consequently, due to the misunderstanding created in this process, participants in the Kanifing Centre thought the e-learning classes would replace our extra mural classes and thus there was a delay in the registration of participants. As a result, only Brikama Centre operated in two sessions last year. However, the union has been able to address all those constraints and the Extra Mural Classes are now running unhindered in Kanifing and Brikama.

In 2009, **130 participants** successfully completed their third years and were certificated. 13 candidates graduated in Soma Centre, 66 in Brikama Centre and 51 in Kanifing Centre. In 2010 however, due to the closure of Soma Centre, only **72 candidates** graduated, 43 candidates in Brikama and 29 in Kanifing Centre. Last year **42 candidates** graduated in Brikama Centre as Kanifing Centre did not operate due to the constraints highlighted above regarding the introduction of the e-learning by MoBSE.

Mr. Chairperson, during the period under review, a total of **244 candidates** successfully completed their third years and graduated from our Extra Mural Centres. I am happy to report that some of these candidates are now in Taiwan pursuing Bachelor's Degrees in various disciplines.

Mr. Chairperson, in spite of the great successes associated with the Extra Mural Classes, the withdrawal of the Irish National Teachers Organization (INTO) from the programme remains a cause for great concern. We must strategize and devise local measures of sustaining this all important programme for the continued benefit of our members.

## **World Teachers Day Celebrations**

This day is marked 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. The GTU continued to join the global teacher community in commemorating this very important day. On 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009, under the global theme, ***“Build the future: Invest in teachers NOW”***, the GTU celebrated the day with a symposium, as the highlight event at the Supreme Islamic Council Hall.

The 2010 event was held at the Gambia College Main hall under the theme, ***“Recovery begins with teachers”*** while in 2011, the highlight event was held at the Paradise Suites Hotel under the theme, ***“Teachers for gender equality”***.

The union is grateful to all its partners, especially the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), the National Commission for UNESCO, management of Paradise Suites Hotel, DBC, Unique Graphics and QCELL GSM Company who have always stood with us to ensure we continue to celebrate the teacher and strengthen our advocacy for the improvement of both their living and working conditions.

## **Meet-The-Teachers Tour**

Mr. Chairperson, congress delegates, ladies and gentlemen, the leadership of The Gambia Teachers Union embarked on a two weeks Meet-The-Teacher Tour (MTT), in fulfillment of a presidential mandate to meet teachers in their workplaces and discuss with them issues pertaining to their welfare and living conditions. The President, accompanied by senior National Executive Committee members and staff of the GTU Secretariat and the GTU Cooperative Credit Union toured the country extensively to meet teachers to hear their concerns and assess their working and living conditions.

The objectives of the Meet-The-Teacher Tour were:

- To assess the working and living conditions of teachers;

- To assess members' knowledge of their representatives and their functions,
- To provide empirical evidence on the nature of staffing in terms of qualifications, gender, status and placement and
- To tease out topical issues for discussion and advocacy

Schools were selected at random except for Region 2 where 4 schools were visited. Three schools were visited in each of the other regions with emphasis on those located in hard-to-reach areas. During the Tour, the President and his entourage visited schools in all educational regions of the country.

In each school visited statistics were collected from the office of the head teacher, followed by discussions using a study circle or "bantaba" format centered around three main themes:

- Teacher welfare and development issues
- Knowledge of education policies
- Knowledge of GTU matters

The findings of the tour, among other things, require 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.

### **Education Financing**

Mr. Chairperson, In October 2009 Education International (EI) and Action Aid International (AAI) organized a 2-day training workshop in Ghana for their affiliates and country officers respectively from Anglophone Africa. The forum was meant to review the Parktonian Recommendations and as well build the capacity of the participants on Education Financing.

Progress on the Parktonian Agreements reached between EI and AAI in Johannesburg in April 2006 were reviewed. The way forward for deepening partnership between EI, Teacher Unions, AAI, other NGOs and coalitions was planned and capacity of participants was

collectively built on education financing issues using the new tool kit produced by AAI and EI.

A major highlight of the workshop was a session on country briefings and commitments leading to the signing of a contract agreement between the GTU and AATG to conduct a step down training on the use of the tool kit.

### **Promoting Rights in Schools**

Mr. Chairperson, the Gambia Teachers Union in collaboration with Action Aid International-The Gambia embarked on a scheme to roll out the Promoting Rights in Schools (PRS) Package. The PRS is a resource pack produced by the Right to Education Project with Action Aid's International Education Team. It is aimed at actively engaging parents, children, teacher unions communities and local civil society organizations in collectively monitoring and improving the quality of public education.

The activity started with a training of trainers workshop that attracted participants from other local partners and terminated with a field trip to Latrikunda Upper Basic School, Muslim Senior Secondary School, Latrikunda Yiringanya Lower Basic School, Bakau and Greater Banjul upper Basic Schools where the PRS was tested.

### **Strengthening of Regional Structures**

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 quarterly subvention of D42, 000.00 continues to be given to the seven Regional Executive Committees to facilitate their regional programmes.

### **Meetings**

The National Executive Committee and its statutory Committees continued to meet regularly during the period under review. However,

there is need for some of the statutory committees to come up as the need for improved services continues to increase.

### **International Travels**

Mr. Chairperson, three members of staff participated in six (6) international conferences and workshops across the globe. The General Secretary attended the Education International's First World Conference on Women in Bangkok Thailand. Theme: "*on the move to equality*". Was aimed at according opportunity to inform, stimulate and move forward the collective means of achieving gender equality, particularly through education unions, schools and society. She also attended the World Congress in Cape Town South Africa.

Similarly, the Deputy General Secretary was part of a Government delegation that attended a workshop for strategic education choices held in Washington DC organized by the World Bank Institute. He also participated in the International Conference on Teachers for Education for All in Africa which was a collaborative action to address the teacher gap in Africa. He was part of a group comprising VSO-Gambia office and EFA network as the Gambian delegation.

Furthermore, the Programmes Officer was also part of a country team that comprised the Child Protection Alliance (CPA) and the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education to attend a Regional Workshop on the Prohibition of Corporal Punishment in all Settings of Children's Lives through Legal Reforms in Burkina Faso. He also attended a sub-regional workshop on the development of codes of conduct for teachers. The workshop, which was organized by Education International was hosted in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

### **The Teacher: Newsletter**

The First Volume of the revived GTU Newsletter was published. It serves as a vehicle to share major programmes and activities of the Union. The general membership is hereby encouraged to contribute articles for the continued regular publication of the newsletter.

## **74<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

The 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Union was celebrated in the furthest Region (Region 6 – URR) in the Gambia, on the 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2011. It accorded the membership opportunity to reflect on conditions surrounding their wellbeing and as well renew their commitment and support to the spirit and deals of the Union.

## **Staff Training**

As a form of staff motivation, the Secretary was sponsored to undergo an accounting programme. This move is in a bid to strengthen the existing pool in the Finance Unit. In the same vein, the Programmes Officer is currently undergoing a Diploma in Management Studies at the Management Development Institute (MDI)

## **Training of Trainers on Violence against Women and Girls**

The Women's Wing (GTUWW), in collaboration with the Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia (FLAG), organized a training of trainers workshop for 50 of its members, with the aim of empowering the participants on the provisions of the Women's Act 2010 and other international instruments on the rights of women and children. This activity was funded by FLAG.

## **HIV/AIDS Sensitization for Teachers and Students**

The Gambia Teachers Union under the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS secured funding from UNAIDS through NASO to sensitize teachers and school going girls on HIV/AIDS aimed at reducing vulnerability.

A two days 'bantaba' was conducted in Region 4. Thirty (30) participants, comprising teachers and Regional Education Staff were sensitized. 300 copies of the HIV/AIDS Brochure and 150 copies of the HIV/AIDS manual were also printed.

## **Member Education/Recruitment Campaigns**

Mr. Chairperson, considering the importance of an increased membership in Trade Union Organizations, Membership Recruitment Drive was integrated for the sustenance of the Union. With support from Laraforbundet, The Union resumed its traditional member recruitment campaigns; the exercise was designed to target teachers in the In-Service Teacher Training Programme in Region 5, the Islamic Arabic Teachers at Gambia College and school heads and principals during their management meetings in their various regions.

The objectives were to educate teacher trainees on GTU matters and encourage them to register as members upon graduation; to educate school heads and principals on the GTU structures particularly on the role of school representatives and the “first aid” services they can offer. 652 teachers were sensitized.

GamCopSSS.....

## **WEC Seminar**

A one day seminar was conducted for members of the Women’s Executive Committee (WEC). During the seminar, the women leaders were trained on the following topics: The Role of Teacher Unions in the Prevention of Violence against Female Teachers and Other Education Staff and Advancing Gender Equality in Teacher Unions

## **Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Exploitation in Schools**

Mr. Chairperson the Leadership of the Gambia Teachers Union is cognizant of the effect of sexual harassment and its associated vices, which may hinder the socialization process of girls (particularly those in school), to the extent that they lack confidence, self-assertiveness and esteem, which invariably affect their opportunity to access, remain in school, participate and perform at all levels.

The GTU embarked upon a national campaign with support from UNESCO/NATCOM. This is also in fulfillment of the guiding principles (Principles I and II) of its Constitution and Bye Laws. Sessions were held in each of the six (6) educational regions in which one hundred



and eighty-one (181) participants took part. It is hoped that the campaign in the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in schools will enhance equitable access to quality public education for all by ensuring safe school environments.

To enhance understanding and as well provide reference for participants and the targeted group, brochures, stickers, posters and t-shirts were produced. Basically, the brochure served as the main reference material and it contains matters on the prevention of sexual harassment.

### **Development and Hosting of a Website**

A Website was initiated and under construction. The domain name is: [www.gtu.gm](http://www.gtu.gm)

### **Calenders**

Calendars were printed regularly and distributed to schools and partner organizations during the period under review.

Members are encouraged.....

### **Development of a Code of Conduct for Teachers**

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 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.

## **Representation**

Mr. Chairperson the GTU committed itself in the Bye-laws '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,  
MoHERST Working Group on Quality Assurance  
National Library Board,  
West African Examinations Council.

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.

## **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 the Gambia
- ✓ UNAIDS, EFANet, FAWE-GAM
- ✓ Pro-POOR Advocacy Group
- ✓ Voluntary Services Overseas – The Gambia

### ***International***

- ✓ The Swedish Union of Teachers, Lararforbundet
- ✓ The Irish National Teachers Organization/Mary Immaculate College students, Dublin
- ✓ Education International
- ✓ North Yorkshire Teachers

Mary Immaculate College Students are sponsoring 44 needy students in 8 different schools and the North Yorkshire teachers 10 students they also built a Kitchen for Lower Basic School.

## **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:

- ✓ Funding (Inability to Raise Funds) –sustaining the financial obligations
- ✓ Capacity building of Staff/ Study Tours/Internships
- ✓ Infrastructure – Flooding of premises during the Rains
- ✓ Awareness Creation/ Intensifying Membership Education
- ✓ Managing teachers (often the largest number of public servants)
- ✓ Integration and Decentralization Process – maintenance of functional Regional Committees and Study Circle Clusters
- ✓ The Plight of Unqualified Teachers
- ✓ Strengthening the Women’s Wing

I thank you for your kind attention and I wish you very fruitful deliberations.