

The Gambia Education Sector Medium Term Plan 2008 – 2011

Local Donor Appraisal Report

Background

As part of the preparation of the Medium Term Plan, 2008-2011 by the Department of State for Basic and Secondary Education (DOSBSE), an initial draft copy was circulated via the Lead in-country Donor, UNICEF, to all the in-country donors and development partners including the Non Governmental Organisation (NGO) community in The Gambia for their review and comments. A technical meeting was convened on July 30th 2008 by the Lead In-country donor to incorporate comments provided by the partners and to clarify concerns (list of participants in Annex 1). The outcome of this technical review was, therefore, a revised draft document that captured all the comments and concerns of the partners. During the meeting, which, was co-chaired by the UNICEF Country Representative, Ms. Min-Whee Kang and the Permanent Secretary (DOSBSE), Mr. Baboucarr Bouy, the partners were highly impressed with the level of openness and frankness of the discussions, and the good leadership demonstrated by the sector. The partners also noted the high level of consultation and participation as well as the commitment to the entire process beginning from the grassroots level.

In order to refresh the memories of participants on the FTI endorsement process, a presentation on the 'FTI Compact' was done by DOSBSE. This presentation outlined the key guidelines and responsibilities of the various stakeholders (development partners and government) in the process. In the ensuing discussions, partners noted compliance to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and Coordination regarding the level of ownership and mutual accountability demonstrated by government and the commitments for increasing the budgetary allocations to the Education sector from 14.4% in 2008 to 19.5% in the 2009 estimates. In recognition of this commitment and adherence to the Paris Declaration, the participants at the technical meeting endorsed in principle the draft Medium Term Plan (MTP) and encouraged the sector to circulate a final version to all partners before the formal endorsement ceremony to be held later. The revision of the document to incorporate all the comments and observations made during the technical meeting was done by the DoSBSE in a five-day retreat.

The revised document was subsequently circulated to all partners in advance of the formal endorsement and signing ceremony which was held on the 21st August 2008 and witness not only by the in-country donors and development partners but also by other government sectors and a special guest, Mrs. Joy Phumaphi, Vice President Human Development Network, World Bank (participants list Annex 2).

The basis for this appraisal report is, therefore, not only the Medium Term Plan 2008-2011 but also the participation of the in-country donors in the education sector joint donor supervision missions institutionalised by the sector following the promulgation of its new Education Policy 2004-2015 and the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), 2006-2015.

The availability of an external consultant assessment of the ESSP (attached to this appraisal) greatly facilitated the work of the in-country donor team.

Consultation Process

The DoSBSE undertook an intensive consultative process with all stakeholders in the preparation of its new policy and strategic plan. As part of the sector-wide approach (SWAp), the participatory process started in July 2005 and resulted in the development of the Education Strategic Plan 2006-2015 (ESP) which took cues from the old Master Plan 1998 - 2003 and the new Education Policy 2004-2015. The process involved a high level of in-country donor participation and other relevant stakeholders leading to the development of the Medium Term Plan 2008-2011.

Prior to the start of the consultation process for the development of the ESP, five senior officials of the DoSBSE, including the Director of Planning, were trained on 'Goal Oriented Project Planning' in Brussels, Belgium. The knowledge and skills acquired from this training guided the facilitation of the consultative process and the development of the document. Specific thematic working groups were established to develop the various programme components of the ESP detailing the strategic result areas and the logical framework thereof, and identified the capacities necessary to implement the plan.

Various donors and development partners supported the development of the ESP. Specifically the Department for International Development (DfID) funded Basic Education Support for Poverty Reduction (BESPOR) project and the FTI Catalytic Fund, provided funding for the SWAp process. Other important development partners including UNICEF, WFP, WHO, French Corporation and the World Bank provided additional technical support. In addition, the World Bank provided technical assistance to develop an education simulation model and costing of the sector programme.

Key observations and comments made by the donor partners on the Medium Term Plan were as follows:

Early Childhood Development: Noting the concentration of ECD centres in urban areas, partners encouraged the DoSBSE to formulate strategies to reach out to children in rural communities who are disadvantaged. Other observations for ECD included the provision of facilitators and the provision of instructional materials. They also observed that the MTP should also address the constraint that inadequate physical infrastructure poses for learning.

Monitoring & Evaluation and pedagogic support: The partners noted and welcomed the bold initiatives taken by the sector to establish the Cluster Monitoring System. However, partners expressed the need for this system to be strengthened and ensure that the capacities exist at the level of the Directorate of Quality Assurance to sustain the initiative. The partners recommended that cluster monitors' work be more closely aligned with pedagogic rather than administrative concerns, and that the reporting back to the central directorates and to the senior management by the cluster monitors be conducted more systematically with a

consistent reporting format. The partners note with satisfaction the decision made to roll-out a revised Cluster Monitor Handbook to make these necessary changes.

Madrassa education: Recognising the important contribution of Madrassa education to the overall increase in the enrolment rates (an average of 15% at Lower Basic level), partners observed the quality of teachers and teaching in these Madrassas as an issue. The quality of English teaching, in particular, varied considerably across regions and the materials used often varied too. The books for core subjects such as math and social sciences needed to be standardised, to ensure easy movement between school systems, and seamless access to higher levels of education for Madrassas graduates. In addition, the partners urged Government to pay greater attention to the level of teacher training offered, and applaud the move by some Madrassas to enrol their teachers into the qualification programs at Gambia College. Finally, to ensure a more consistent measurement of learning achievements in the Madrassas, the partners urge Government to move quickly to translate assessment instruments (such as the Early Grade Reading Assessment and the National Assessment Test) and end-of-cycle examinations into Arabic as soon as possible.

Indicators: Partners observed that, while the MTP includes some high level outcome and impact indicators, it falls short of providing a sufficient number of measurable indicators/targets on input, output and outcome levels, which can guide the implementation of the strategies and, subsequently, the development of annual work plans.

Adult & Non-Formal Education: It was observed that the approach to use Mothers Clubs as a strategy to boost literacy, whilst commendable, is insufficient. To address this problem, a much greater mobilisation of communities; religious bodies and private sector will be required. Greater attention needs to be paid to monitoring and evaluation at this level.

Teacher Training: The Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC) Extension Programme initiated by the DoSBSE to improve the quality of basic education teachers and increase the number of qualified teachers was not mentioned in the draft MTP. Partners acknowledged this initiative as one of the good approaches to improving quality and as such should be reflected in the MTP as major strategy in the overall improvement of the quality of teachers and teaching.

In conclusion, the partners emphasized the need for donors to consult their Headquarters for clearance on the proposed documentation (MTP, appraisal document) before the formal endorsement ceremony. The DoSBSE also responded to the observations and comments made and gave full assurance that these will be addressed in the document at a retreat scheduled to take place immediately and to circulate a revised version of the document prior to the endorsement ceremony. With these, the meeting provided provisional endorsement to the draft MTP and committed themselves to appending their signatures to the final document at the endorsement ceremony.

Based on the above observations the document was updated with the following as key features:

Universal Completion of Quality Basic Education

The Gambia remains highly committed to developing its human resource base with priority given to free basic education for all. It is for this reason that this MTP will be used as a roadmap for the attainment of policy targets set within the period. Hence, by 2015, access to lower basic education of good quality (Grades 1-6) will be universalized, whilst there will be increased access and equitable resource allocation to upper basic education, early childhood development and literacy programmes with specific emphasis on under-served regions, gender and other disadvantaged groups of the population.

In keeping with the above, the expanded vision of basic education being implemented in The Gambia comprises the following sub-programmes:

- Early childhood development
- Basic education (Grades 1-9)
- Adult and non-formal education

The table given below provides the key indicators for the base year and their targets by the end of the MTP in 2011.

Key Sector Indicators (Baseline Vs Targets)

Indicators	Baseline (Female)	2006	Target (Female)	2011
Access & Completion				
1. Intake Rates				
ECD	39.4 %		45 %	
LBS	101 % <i>(51%)</i>		125 % <i>(51%)</i>	
UBS	88 % <i>(51%)</i>		90 % <i>(55%)</i>	
2. Gross Enrolment Ratio				
ECD	26%		42%	
LBS	91.4% <i>(93%)</i>		101.9% <i>(103%)</i>	
UBS	60% <i>(58%)</i>		69% <i>(71%)</i>	
3. Net Enrolment Ratio				
ECD				
LBS	75% <i>(77%)</i>		85% <i>(87%)</i>	
UBS	38% <i>(37%)</i>		48% <i>(47%)</i>	
4. Gender Parity				
ECD				
LBS	1.03		1.03	
UBS	0.91		1.0	
5. Completion Rate				
LBS	65% <i>(67%)</i>		80% <i>(80%)</i>	
UBS	56% <i>(52%)</i>		63% <i>(63%)</i>	
6. Literacy Rate				
	42.55% <i>(30.6%)</i>		50% <i>(43%)</i>	
Education Quality and Efficiency				
1. Pupil-Teacher Ratio				
LBS	1:39		1:45	
UBS	1:22		1:45	
2. % Qualified Teachers (LBS)				
	70% <i>(27%)</i>		80% <i>(37%)</i>	
3. Annual Instruction Hours				
	866 hrs		880 hrs	
4. Pupil: Textbooks/Instructional				
	1:4		1:1	

materials Ratio		
LBS	1:1	1:1
UBS	3:1	1:1

Source: DOSBSE EMIS

ECD: In the medium term, the strategy for providing ECD service will continue to be anchored on two approaches; the participation of the private sector in the provision of such service in the urban and peri-urban areas, and the attachment of ECD centres to existing lower basic schools in the rural communities. Both approaches are expected to focus on the integrated model of ECD, which underscores the need for complementarities of other social services such as nutrition, health care, water and sanitation, protection and early stimulation for learning.

Partners appreciated the above initiatives by government in ECD against the background that service delivery at this level is private-sector led.

Lower Basic Education: At the lower basic level, enrolments for the period 2001/2002 – 2006/2007 increased from **157,544** to **220,423** registering a GER increase from **82%** to **92%**, taking into account the *madrassa* enrolment¹ which formed **10%** and **16%** of the total enrolment in 2001/2002 and 2006/2007, respectively. During the same period, the GER for boys showed a decrease from **85%** in 2001/2002 to **82%** in 2004/2005 but a rebound to **92%** in 2006/2007, while the GER for girls registered an appreciable increase from **80%** to **95%**. The partners have been impressed with the gains made in increasing access, particularly for girls. The sector was, however, cautioned to be on the alert to avoid a decline in the enrolment of boys and to further strengthen its strategies to reach the last 10% of school-aged children still out of school. The partners have been highly satisfied with the gains in the sector, especially with regard to the high progression and low repetition rates (with 96% of an entering cohort reaching grade 5).

Enrolments in lower basic, though showing consistent increases, have not been able to do more than keep pace with the high population growth rate. The partners are especially concerned with the relatively large number of 7 year-olds who are not yet in school, as noted in the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS). Because the reasons are related to several issues, including the tradition of sending only 8 year-olds to school, the lack of classrooms and teachers, the partners urge DOSBSE to mount a multi-pronged strategy for getting these children into school, including but not limited to the search for additional financial resources from both their traditional and new development partners.

The *madrassa* support consists of providing English teachers, instructional materials and participation in the school feeding programme to registered *madrassas* that synchronize their programmes with the national curriculum. This programme has been highly successful. About 149 registered *madrassas* participate in the programme, double the number initially planned. Between 2004 and 2006/07, *madrassas* accounted for 65% of the enrolment increase in lower basic schools, and the *madrassas* now account for an estimated 16% of lower basic school enrolment, up from 10% a decade earlier, and the majority of this increase is in *madrassas* that have synchronized with the national curriculum. The concerns raised by the partners on *madrassa* were adequately responded to with assurances that consideration would be given to providing books and the materials for the core subjects excluding English, will be

¹ This includes only the officially recognized *madrassa*.

translated into Arabic. As noted earlier, assessments and examinations will also need to be translated into Arabic.

Efficiency Measures: In an attempt to attain the access goals within resource constraints, the sector targeted an increase in the pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) from 30:1 to 45:1 through the expansion of double-shifting and multi-grade teaching. The results of these interventions have indicated success in raising the PTR to 38:1 as a result of expanding the double-shift coverage in a number of schools and increasing multi-grade teaching as a strategy in more than 50 schools, particularly in the rural areas. Partners noted the initiatives by the sector to improve the quality and distribution of qualified teachers through the hardship allowances and the PTC extension programme. The incentives provided through the FTI Catalytic fund need to be sustained to attract more qualified teachers and maintain them in deprived communities to ensure equity.

School construction constitutes a major investment on the part of Government and its development partners. To prolong the lives of the buildings and furniture/equipment, a solid maintenance plan needs to be put into place. The model offered by one of the NGO partners, Future in Our Hands, could be a good starting point.

Upper Basic Education: At the upper basic level, there has been rapid expansion between 2001/2002 and 2006/2007 with enrolments increasing from **42,094** to **66,025**, translating into a GER growing from **43%** to **65%**. This growth in enrolment represents an average annual growth rate of **15%**, which exceeds the target of **12.7%**. However, the period 2005/2006 – 2006/2007 witnessed a drop in GER for boys from **62%** to **60%** whilst that of girls slightly increased from **56%** to **57%**.

The following targets have been set under the MTP:

- Increase UBS GER (including official *madrassa*) from 60% to 69%
- Reduce the repetition rate in UBS from 4.7% to 3.0%
- Maintain the dropout rate in UBS at 2.0%

Financial Commitment and Implementation Capacity

The local donor appraisal assessed the financial plan of the MTP to determine its credibility and sustainability, taking into account the available resource sources and the financing gap thereof.

The partners have observed that the financial plan is based on the country's macro economic framework of 5% GDP growth rate over the period. The resources envelop to education as a share of GDP in the financial plan increases from 2.1% in 2007 to 6.1% by 2011. The partners noted that, given the significant increase in budget allocation to the sector in 2009, from 14.4% to 19.5%, there is a good possibility that Government commitment to the sector will continue to be translated into increased budget allocations.

Basic education remains the sectors priority in its resource allocation with an average 44% and 27% being allocated to lower and upper basic levels respectively over the medium term period. This is in line with global commitments and partners felt encouraged by this trend.

The donor partners noted with great sympathy the fact the sector is increasingly becoming a donor orphan. Yet it has demonstrated over the years that with limited resources under good

leadership and effective financial management mechanisms, solid results have been achieved by the sector. With an overall financing gap of 41.1%, the Government's intention to request additional FTI Catalytic Fund support is realistic in the views of the in-country development partners. Partners are satisfied with the fiduciary capacity of the sector and its capacity to absorb significantly higher resources for its activities under the current MTP. The partners further noted that the Government disbursed each year's allocation from the Catalytic Fund over the period 2005-2007 well within the disbursement period provided, and had submitted voluntary audits of its FTI CF accounts even before it was a requirement to do so. The procurement and financial management teams were assessed by the World Bank and have been found to perform satisfactorily.

Implementation Capacity

The education sector has devoted significant resources over the years to capacity building through both short and long term training. Partners have been briefed on the current efforts in the sector on conducting a functional analysis to further sharpen the mandates and job descriptions of various directorates and positions both at headquarters and the decentralised structures. All these would feed into a Performance Management System that allows for reward and sanction of directorates and staff within an agreed Service Level Agreement (SLA). This performance management system is the first of its kind in The Gambia and is likely to serve as a reference for the other Departments of State.

Given its track record in the first phase of FTI Catalytic Fund implementation, the partners are convinced of the readiness of the sector to implement the Medium Term Plan. Its current performance in the implementation of the IDA funded Third Education Project Phase II and the co-financing Japanese PHRD grant, demonstrates its capacity to implement the programme.

Strength of the Medium Term Plan

The partners noted firstly, with satisfaction, the level of frankness and the analytical basis of the document and its presentation. The acknowledgement of its key challenges in the areas of teacher training, student assessment and data management will help Management to focus on addressing the constraints. The main strength of the MTP is its focus and emphasis on quality and its targeting of resources to ensure equity.

The theme of the education policy consultations was 'Rethinking Education for Poverty Reduction' and is guided by the Mission Statement: "A Provision of Responsive, Relevant and Quality Education for All Gambians for Poverty Reduction". Against this background, the sector is pursuing a variety of strategies that are focused on improving the quality of service delivery while deliberately targeting the poor and deprived communities for equity purposes. The partners emphasised and encouraged the sector to continue its strategic engagement of its stakeholders through constant dialogue through forums such as the weekly televised Education Forum and its joint donor supervision missions. The MTP describes several strategies to address quality issues in the education system and has devoted significant amount of resources in this direction. Result areas such as 'Increasing learning

opportunities in Basic Education’ and ‘Adequate quality and quantity of teaching & learning materials’ to name a few, attract 37.93% and 11.66% of programme cost over the medium term; a clear demonstration of the priority to quality. The high-level senior management commitment to improving reading, as evidenced by the recent presentation of the Early Grade Reading Assessment and subsequent steps by the Permanent Secretary and his team, is further proof that quality is already getting a great deal of attention in the ongoing programs.

The strategic targeting of resources to activities that target deprived communities is equally matched with guiding development partners to concentrate in such regions for greater impact. Partners noted with satisfaction the programmes of partners such as UNICEF in the most deprived region, Upper River Region, and WFP across the rural regions and pockets of deprived communities in other regions. The child-friendly school initiative supported by UNICEF and FTI, and the ‘Food For Education’ initiative funded by WFP provides school lunches to children in deprived communities.









Conclusion

The in-country donors/development partners hereby endorse the Government of The Gambia’s Education Sector Medium Term Plan (2008-2011). Given the significant achievements registered by the sector over the past years with the support of the ongoing donor programs and the FTI Catalytic Fund, The Gambia presents solid proof that the sector can transform relatively few resources into concrete results. However, the goal of maintaining and sustaining these gains while addressing the attendant constraints cannot be attained without the continued support from the development partners and of the greater donor community, consistent with the international commitments made to the education sector. The demand for school places and the quest for quality educational service delivery from the Gambian populace, and the demonstrated commitment of Government to education should be complemented with continued donor support.

List of Participants for the Review of the Medium Term Plan for Education 2008-2011 Meeting at UN Library, on 30 July 2008

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Visiting World Bank Vice President
 Endorsement/Signing Ceremony on Thursday 21st August 2008 at the
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