



REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

**DEPARTMENT OF STATE FOR BASIC
& SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**SECTOR REPORT
2006**

Introduction

Until recently, the Department of State for Education (DoSE) was responsible for the provision of general education ranging from early childhood development to higher education. However, in 2007 a new Department of State was created for Tertiary & Higher Education, Research and Scientific Technology while the portfolio of Basic and Secondary goes to Department of State Basic & Secondary Education (DoSBSE).

Despite the fact that there is separate mandate between the two Departments of State, this report provides an account of the entire education sector activities from ECD to higher education for the year 2006.

The Structure of the Education System

The structure of the education system in The Gambia provides for the expanded vision of basic education (ECD, Basic Education 1 - 9 and Adult and Non-formal Education) and Secondary Education. The formal system is characterized by nine years of uninterrupted basic education followed by three years of senior secondary education and four years of post-secondary or tertiary and higher education. The first nine years of schooling constitute the basic education cycle and are financed principally by Government while secondary school education, which is three years, is primarily provided by the private sector with grant-aided schools assisted by Government and managed by school boards.

In the provision of post-secondary education, there are at present four main public tertiary institutions in The Gambia that together provide a variety of programmes at the post-secondary level and all of these are governed by either boards or councils but subvented by Government.

Expanded Vision of Basic Education

In consonance with the expanded vision of basic education, which is an important tenet of the Dakar Framework for Action on EFA, the overall basic education Programme is composed of the following sub-sectors:

- Early Childhood Development
- Basic Education (Grades 1-9)
- Adult and Non-Formal Education

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECD)

Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) has become part of the basic education cycle given the importance of the early years of development for children. The Education Policy (2004 – 2015) acknowledges the importance of these early years, and the DOSE has developed linkages with other government departments, NGOS, and local authorities and local committees to promote an integrated approach to ECD. A multi-sectoral working group has been established in conjunction with the local committees, civil society organizations

(CSO) and international agencies to sensitize on ECD issues and to initiate and maintain ECD centers. These partners and providers provide the necessary inputs, including program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation to complement government efforts. The role of Government would continue to be limited to one of co-ordination and supervision of the provision of ECD, which would continue to be provided by the private sector. This role is expected to be co-ordinated by the sector, given that the Department of Community Development will be handing over this responsibility to the DoSBSE.

ECCD Centers and Population by Region, & Enrolment by Region & Gender (2000)

Region	No. of ECCD Centers	As % of All Centers	Enrolment			As % of Total Enrollment	ECCD-age Population	Enrolled as % of Pop.
			Female	Male	Total			
1	78	29.4%	5,136	4,903	10,039	33.6%	37,406	26.8%
2	104	39.2%	5,748	5,822	11,570	38.8%	37,923	30.5%
3	27	10.2%	1,608	1,251	2,859	9.6%	25,390	11.3%
4	15	5.7%	914	854	1,768	5.9%	9,758	18.1%
5	28	10.6%	925	1,140	2,065	6.9%	24,414	8.5%
6	13	4.9%	740	809	1,549	5.2%	25,540	6.1%
Total	265	100.0%	15,071	14,779	29,850	100.0%	160,431	18.6%

Source: DOSE EFA Assessment Report 2000

Since ECD is largely provided by the private sector, affordability becomes an issue and poses a major constraint for poorer households. This problem becomes more pronounced in the rural areas where poverty is more acute and where the traditional practice of leaving children in the care of siblings or grandparents, or having children accompanying their mothers to the farms or other work places, still remains the dominant practice for early childhood care.

The Gambia College has begun to develop a two-year ECD program for preschool teachers to be introduced in 2006-2007. Teacher trainees would pay fees to enroll in the program, as most of which would be sponsored by and would work for their private sector employees. As a long term strategy, ECD training will be mainstreamed in the Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC) training of the Gambia College so that the graduates will become polyvalent enough to handle ECD centres that are currently being attached to existing lower basic schools located in deprived regions. This attachment strategy is being facilitated, in no small measure, by the provision of food to these centres by the World Food Programme through the school feeding programme implemented in deprived regions and communities.

Basic Education (grades 1 – 9)

The Gambia's national education policy (2004 – 2015) provides for a unified basic education system, covering years 1-9, through an automatic transition with no transition examination at the end of the lower basic cycle. Thus there is rapid expansion taking

place at the upper basic level, and a policy of integrating basic education facilities where possible. Also in practice, it is difficult to draw a line between the lower and the upper basic cycles.

This analysis however looks at the different levels of basic education principally for ease of reference and to see the performance of each level during the period. It should therefore not be seen as an attempt to separate basic education as a concept.

Lower Basic Enrolment 2001/2002 – 2005/2006

	2001/02			2005/06		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
LBS	82,461	75,083	157,544	88,616	94,011	182,627

At the level of the lower basic, enrolments for the period 2001/2002 – 2005/2006 increased from **157,544** to **182,627** registering a GER increase from **72% to 76%**. This represents an average annual growth rate of **2%** falling short of the target of **8%**. This, however, does not take into account the enrolment of the madrassa which forms **15%** of total enrolment.

From the Table above, the GER for boys for the same period shows a decrease from **75%** in 2001/2002 to **72%** 2004/2005 but a slight increase to 75% in 2005/2006 while the GER for the girls registered an appreciable increase from **70% to 80%**.

	LBS		
	M	F	T
2001/02	75%	70%	72%
2002/03	76%	77%	76%
2003/04	74%	78%	76%
2004/05	72%	79%	76%
2005/06	75%	80%	77%

It should be noted that a variety of interventions ranging from school feeding to classroom construction have made a significant impact on the enrolment at this level.

Upper Basic

In the area of upper basic education, there has been rapid expansion between 2002 and 2006 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%**. The GER for boys for the same period rose from **49% to 66%** compared to an increase from **37% to 65%** for girls during the same period. Before then (i.e. from 1996/1997 to 2000/2001) overall enrolment rates grew from **31% to 47%**, representing a difference of **6 percentage points**. The difference

between these two periods is due to the unprecedented expansion that took place in the education system following the policy pronouncement of universal basic education.

Upper Basic Enrolment 2001/2002 – 2005/2006

	2001/02			2004/06		
	M	F	T	M	F	T
UBS	24,121	17,975	42,096	33,433	32,592	66,025

	UBS		
	M	F	T
2001/02	49%	37%	43%
2002/03	62%	51%	56%
2003/04	62%	53%	64%
2004/05	66%	65%	65%
2005/06	66%	65%	65%

Transition rates from lower basic to upper basic increased to **88%** in 2005/06, falling short of the national target of **100%**. This difference can be partially explained by repetition (pegged at 4%) and dropout. Further investigation would be conducted to establish the factors behind this. A significant part of the increase in enrolment was due to the phasing out of the Primary School Leaving Certificate Examinations (PSLCE) at grade 6 to allow for uninterrupted nine years of basic education. The challenge in this area is the demand for quality teachers and learning materials to enhance learning achievements and outcomes.

Madrassa Education

The Madrassa (Islamic/Arabic school) is a formal education delivery system with Arabic as a medium of instruction and strong Islamic orientation in content and practice. The system offers instruction at different levels. Many primary school-aged children still attend the Madrassa prior to enrolling in the formal school system; others attend the two concurrently; others attend Madrassa exclusively. Precise data on the number of Madrassa in operation, enrolment, and the number of children who attend have not been routinely collected in the past. However, with the collaboration of the Arab/Islamic Secretariat and the establishment of the Education Management Information System (EMIS) in 2000, data on Madrassa is now collected annually and published as part of the Annual Education Statistics. Hence, the 2006/07 Education Statistics due in April 2007, will provide actual enrolment figures for the Madrassas.

Since 1997, the Government has been implementing guidelines for provision of Government assistance to the Madrassa. Assistance to Madrassa formally recognised by the DOSE included English language textbooks and teachers' guides, technical assistance, and

professional support with curriculum. Based on the current memorandum of understanding between the General Secretariat of Arabic and Islamic Education and the DoSE, the Secretariat currently benefits D70, 000 per month from the DoSE as subvention to facilitate the recruitment and retention of competent English teachers who will implement the harmonised syllabus in the madrassas. In addition, qualified madrassas are also provided with food by WFP through the school feeding programme.

In order to qualify, madrassas should offer English, Mathematics and Science as core subjects, follow the curriculum approved by the DOSE, and have adequate staff and facilities.

Following the revision of the LBS curriculum for grades 1 – 6, the madrassas have now adopted this new curriculum and it is now being delivered in English or Arabic depending on availability of competent teachers of English.

Special Needs Education

To pursue the EFA goals of providing UPE, children with special needs must be catered for by the education system. At present, however, only three centres catering for the needs of the deaf, blind and children with learning difficulties are in operation and all are located in Region One¹. An assessment and evaluation of existing educational services in The Gambia for the physically challenged was conducted in 1998 through the National Disability Survey. The survey aimed at identifying the nature of disability among children, youths and adults in The Gambia, taking into account, in particular, age, gender, geographic distribution and special educational needs. The results of the survey shows that **25.7%** of disabled children in the mainstream schools are partially sighted and children with significant speaking problems account for **12.5%**. It also revealed that children with significant mobility problems constitute **8.9%**, those with hard of hearing **9.7%** and significant manipulation and fits problems **3.7%** each.

The current focus of this programme is on mainstreaming children with mild disabilities, however, those with severe disabilities will continue to be accommodated at the resources centres.

Under the Integrated Education Programme (IEP) supported by Sight Savers International, mainstreaming of blind and children with low vision has successfully been piloted in Region 3 where the lessons learnt are currently guiding the expansion of the programme in regions 1 & 2 in 2007. Support provided under the EFA/FTI is currently facilitating increased access to basic education for this category of children through the provision of mobility for the school for the blind. There are interventions planned to address the issues of quality.

¹ There are six educational regions in the Gambia. These are Region 1 in Banjul and KMC, Region 2 in Western Division, Region 3 in North Bank Division, Region 4 in Lower River Division, Region 5 in Central River Division and Region 6 in Upper River Division.

Adult and Non-Formal Education

The Gambia has a low literacy rate, estimated at 46% overall and only 28% for women²; although it should be noted that the accuracy of the information is in question, there is little doubt that the majority of the population are functionally illiterate. Education For All, as stated in the Dakar Framework for Action, cannot be achieved through the formal education system alone; consequently, the adult and non-formal education sector complements the efforts of formal education to achieve EFA.

In light of the above, the following objectives have been identified:

- achieve a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women; and
- reduce imbalances between regions and between urban and rural areas.

This is being done through:

- the promotion of functional literacy and non-formal basic education through the medium of national languages;
- the use of a decentralized structure for implementation;
- a partnership policy which relies on partners in the field (NGOs and community-based organizations) to implement functional literacy programmes; and
- the co-ordination of interventions among all financial partners so as to focus on the same objectives as articulated in the Government's sector plan.

In support of the above, the Community Skills Improvement Project (CSIP), funded by the African Development Bank (ADB), which aims among other things, at reducing poverty through the provision of functional literacy/numeracy skills, is being implemented in 250 communities, targeting 40,000 illiterate women and out of school youth aged between 15 to 35 for a period of 6 years, however, only 12, 000 have so far been reached.

Basic Functional Literacy Programme is another intervention but implemented in the Greater Banjul Area which uses primary school teachers as facilitators for improved quality service delivery. Currently, the programme is very active in Region 2 where the size of the pilot is 20 lower basic schools.

Secondary Education

Enrolments at the senior secondary level increased from **15,336** to **26,600** between the year 2001/02 and 2005/06 with a resultant effect of an increase in GER from **17% to 26%**. This significant growth in enrolment represents an annual growth rate of **15%**. In terms gender dis-aggregation, the GER for boys during the same period increased from **21% to 24%** while the female GER rose from **13% to 28%**. There are now 49 senior secondary schools, 8 are funded directly through the government budget, and 17 are sub-vented through grant-in aid while the rest are private schools. The transition rate from basic education to senior secondary is **52%**.

² Source: Gambia Draft National Literacy Policy 2005-2015

Senior Secondary Enrolment 2001/2002 – 2005/2006

2001/02			2005/6		
M	F	T	M	F	T
9,433	5,903	15,336	14,883	11,717	26,600

GER	SSS		
	M	F	T
2001/02	21%	13%	17%
2002/03	25%	15%	20%
2003/04	31%	23%	27%
2004/05	24%	28%	26%
2005/06	31%	23%	27%

At this level, in accordance with current practice, new schools are being established as public schools and later converted to grant-aided schools and out-sourced to boards of governors. In addition, computer literacy has been introduced in schools to help familiarise students and teachers alike with basic word processing, spreadsheet operations and procedures to access the Internet and facilitate communication with other students and teachers around the world.

Quality Assurance

By all measures, quality education remains a challenge, with low mastery of both Mathematics and English as observed in the school leaving examinations, in the UNESCO/MLA tests and the Gambian National Assessment Test (NAT). The NAT shows that in all core subjects including Mathematics, English, and Science, a maximum of 10% of Grades 3 and 5 students reached the mastery level of 73%. Results from UNESCO’s Monitoring Learning Achievements (MLA, 2000) demonstrate that 46% of students reached the passing minimum mark (40%) in the core subjects. The Gambian Basic Education Examination which is taken at the end of the 9th grade, yields similar outcomes.

Although there are questions about the validity of some of the instruments used to ascertain the extent of the problem, there is no doubt that quality is disappointingly low in public education. In addition, there are critical issues that have a direct impact on instruction and these include:

- insufficient number of contact hours provided;
- high teacher and student absenteeism;

- high repetition and dropout rates;
- low content knowledge by teacher-trainees entering teacher training;
- many teachers have poor or outdated pedagogical knowledge and skills;
- few or no professional development opportunities exist for teachers both before and during their teaching service;
- limited or nonexistent pedagogic support to teachers at the school level and in the classroom;
- inadequate number of teaching and learning materials and textbooks;
- lack of updated curricula and teaching syllabuses; and
- flawed assessment instruments for measuring student achievement.

However, through the EFA/FTI and guided by the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2006 - 2015, meaningful interventions responsive to the above challenges are being implemented. One significant departure necessary to improve the quality of teaching and learning is the shift from quality control to quality assurance. While it is acknowledged that a complete departure from the former may not be witnessed now, efforts are currently focused on developing sub-systems that will support the implementation of an effective education quality assurance system for the basic and secondary levels. Some of these sub-systems include the cluster-based monitoring, participatory performance monitoring and whole school development.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Beyond basic education provisions, The Gambia has well articulated programmes for continuing education. Based on merit, students can continue on to pursue university level education at the University of The Gambia or other middle level courses at some of the tertiary level institutions.

The programs for Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) in The Gambia aim to prepare and mobilize human resources to meet both manpower needs and provide employment opportunities in the country. The Government has set up a National Training Authority (NTA) in a public/private partnership in order to respond to the need for a highly trained professional workforce, and to expand the provision of TVET in the country.

Today vocational /technical education and training programs are delivered through a number of institutions and skills centers. The key institution is the Gambia Technical Training Institute (GTTI), which provides two-year programs in mechanical, electrical and construction engineering, computer technology and commercial subjects to about 1,200 full-time and part-time students. The Banjul Skills Centre with a capacity of 200 trainees operates as an annex to the Gambia Technical Training Institute and prepares Grade 9 graduates for entry into it, pending conversion into a fully fledged skills centre to serve the Greater Banjul Region. Others such as the Julangel Skills Centre and the Rural Vocational Skills Centre offer similar courses at a lower level. In addition to these publicly funded institutions, there are some 30 private institutions, serving mainly the commercial sector (apart from the Gambia Telecommunications and Multi-media Institute), with a capacity of about 3,500 students.

Higher and Tertiary Education

Teacher Training

The Gambia Teacher Training College significantly enhanced its intake of Primary Teachers' Certificate (PTC) and Higher Teachers' Certificate (HTC) over the past five years, resulting in an increase of 1,024 qualified PTC teachers and 1,034 HTC in the system. However, an area of concern is the poor academic standing of new PTC recruits, many of whom fall in the 30-40 percent achievement range in the entrance exam that tests core subjects (English, mathematics and general knowledge). The teacher training institution attracts primarily low-performing high school graduates with low content knowledge, i.e. those with few or no alternative careers.

Given the urgent need to fill all the vacant teacher trainee places needed to meet the sharp increase in demand, Government has to rely on unqualified teachers to fill in the gaps. Currently, 30 percent of the lower-basic school teachers in the system are unqualified. In order to enhance teacher quality, a mechanism to upgrade their skills (both pedagogic and academic) is needed. The BESPOR project has initiated an upgrading programme for 400 unqualified teachers in Region 5 to accelerate the provision of trained teachers in the system. This pilot programme will be rolled-out in other regions after its evaluation.

University Education

Given the importance of the services sector in the economy, the existence of skilled labor would be critical for future economic growth. Not only would this require strong basic skills, but the availability of professional and higher education programs would be important. Until 1999, The Gambia did not have a university, although post-secondary institutions existed that provided, inter alia, training of teachers, agricultural agents, and medical personnel (Gambia College); technical education (GTTI) and management training (Management Development Institute). As a result, all Gambian students seeking higher education were obliged to leave the country, with few of them returning. In 1999, the University of The Gambia (UTG) was created with a small staff and with a limited range of courses, and has grown very slowly in the past five years³.

In 2005, with the support of IDA via the Norwegian Education Trust Fund, the nascent university put together a strategic plan that identifies areas of expansion with strong links to both labor force needs and research priorities for the country. Unlike other higher education institutions in the sub-region, UTG has two important assets that would enable it to play a key role in the development of the country without encountering the problems faced by others. First, it is committed to linking its future growth to the needs of the private sector and of the economy

³ UTG's first graduating class was in 2004.

as a whole, and has incorporated private sector partners and civil society in the strategic planning process; second, students contribute financially to the cost of their education and appear to be ready to continue to do so.

The strategic planning process at the university, the on-going sector-wide planning process at DOSE, the growing partnership with DfID in the supporting the education sector, and the appointment of a new Vice Chancellor at UTG have catalyzed a new dynamism that is likely to result in major reforms in the sector and in tertiary education in particular. There is now clarity of vision and strategies, and an enhanced team spirit among key players in the sector; and between the Department and its external development partners. Despite the inevitable delay in finalizing the UTG strategic plan, there are encouraging developments at the institution. Therefore, it is important to maintain the momentum and enthusiasm for reform created during the planning process. Policy development in a number of areas is now well advanced:

(a) *Support to the University Integration process.* The discussions regarding the progressive integration of existing tertiary institutions (GC, GTTI and MDI) into the University is well advanced. A number of practical but important steps would need to be taken, including the speeding up of the integration process and the institutional framework. As part of this process, the agriculture programme at both the Gambia College and the University has already been integrated.

(b) *Strategic Planning:* In order to continue the strategic planning work begun during preparation, and to integrate it into the overall strategic planning done for the sector, support would be needed to the University and its institutions.

(c) *Development partnerships:* In order to marshal additional resources in support of the sector, DOSE and UTG (with IDA support) aim to call together a Development Partners meeting, bringing together both national and international partners interested in the development of the sector.

(d) *Capacity building:* In order to address the serious issues with regard to both administrative and academic quality at the University, the DOSE would work closely with UTG management and faculty to identify strategies for staff development; improving quality and relevance of teaching and learning; and upgrading of facilities, particularly for teacher training. Although there is a more detailed plan for the development of a large campus outside Banjul, in the short-term, there is need for a core building that would house the UTG administration, a library and resource center with computer/internet access, and a few classrooms. IDA has agreed to finance the feasibility studies and architectural designs for this core building (to be built on the existing UTG and MDI sites) and other financing sources would be identified for the actual construction.

Meanwhile, the feasibility studies and detailed designs for the Faraba Banta campus of the University is at an advanced stage.

Sector Management

The DOSE structure is a directorate system with headquarters directorates whose role is to monitor and evaluate policy implementation across the system in the regions for quality assurance. The regional directors are responsible for the management of the implementation process at regional level.

One of the biggest challenges in the attainment of the sector's objectives, is the limited financial and human resources available in the education system. The education sector has been affected by staff attrition especially within the teaching cadre due largely to low remuneration. The continued decline in real wages, and the low salaries and benefits offered by the public sector, further limit the attractiveness of the civil service. This, in turn, has resulted in the limited capacity of the education system to identify and keep highly motivated and qualified personnel both in management positions and in the teaching profession at all levels.

Despite successes in data collection and analyses in the early years of the last phase, these functions suffered important setbacks during the first few years of the period under review. However, with the advent of EFA/FTI, up to date data for the formal sector is now made available on a regular basis except for ECD and non-formal.

Monitoring & Evaluation

In providing guidance to the implementation process for sector programmes, the monthly Senior Management Team (SMT) and Co-ordinating Committee Meetings (CCMs) have been maintained and strengthened to focus more on outcomes of interventions.

Institutional Assessment

In the preparation to implement the Performance Management System, the sector through support from BESPOR, has conducted an institutional assessment in two regional and two headquarter directorates. Arrangements are also underway to pilot the system in selected directorates from April 2007 while the institutional assessments are carried out in the remaining directorates.