

Gambia: Jamisa Skill Centre

Every year hundreds of children in the Gambia either drop out of school due to pregnancy, lack of funds or leave school without any form of employment. In the rural areas and suburbs there are virtually no affordable skill training centres either for youths or women to learn skills in order to earn a living for themselves and their families.

Literacy rate is now on the increase especially among the youthful population. During the past year, Government introduced free education for girls, so as to encourage parents to send their girl child to school. This has been very successful because in a way it addresses the problem of early marriage, teenage pregnancy and other related problems. However unemployment remains a major problem in The Gambia, especially with regards the most productive population the youths of whose unemployment rate stands at 70%.

Most of the school dropouts find it difficult to acquire skills because the vocational centres are either too expensive or too far away so one has to meet the cost of transportation daily which, is not affordable to many. The skill centre in this project will charge lower fees for the computer and secretarial classes compared to regular education and private skill centres. The students to be enrolled for carpentry, metalwork, sewing and auto mechanics will not be paying any tuition fees but instead will be given an allowance each month. This small amount of money will enable them to save for a starting capital to establish a workshop or other kind of self employment after qualifying. The lower fees and allowance are possible because there is sustainability aspects build in. The products and services out of the training like school furniture, steel doors, school uniforms, composed and printed documents like brochures and newsletters, repaired vehicles will be sold to external

customers. At the end of the training students are being prepared to have self-employment in high marketable skills. The skill centre is also accessible for illiterate youth.

Net4kids' partners for this project are Better Future and Saamasang Program Area . This project is contracted and monitored by Wilde Ganzen.



Expanding the existing skill centre

Saama Sang Program Area, affiliated to Christian Children's Fund the Gambia, planned to expand the existing skill centre with new courses and more classes so that even more youth can benefit from the centre. Also the infrastructure of the centre will be improved so that the sustainability, quality and continuity of the centre is ensured.

In concrete the program of the centre will expand from only computing and secretarial practice to include carpentry, metalwork, sewing and auto mechanics. The Program Area has already set up a building for these disciplines but at the moment both the sewing, the carpentry and the metal workshops classrooms are not yet fully prepared and equipped for teaching purposes..

To make the skill centre successful and sustainable as training centre and as business centre there will be a focus on professional skills training with a curriculum

responsive on the needs in the labour market as well as focused on marketable products and services. Because of this entrepreneurship will be one of the important themes for all students.

Objective

The aim of this skills centre is "Educate youths to become useful citizens with different professions" and thereby "Improving the Socio-economic status of children and their families with a view to enhancing self reliance and empowerment thereby alleviating child poverty". To achieve this goal the project on expanding the centre is started. The goal of this project is: "Alleviating poverty by ensuring that youths are equipped with gainful skills through the acquisition of the right teaching materials & equipment and enhancing good infrastructure (furniture, buildings, ground etc) in the Jamisa Skills Centre.

How to help

The total amount of funds needed is Euro € 35.652. Check out the various help options here.

1. The purchase of teaching materials & equipment:

- 24 Sewing Machines (broiery, pedal ordinary and hand driven) and sewing materials
- timber and metal supply to start the production of (school) furniture and other products for first business assignments
- Auto mechanic tools boxes and equipment

2. Realise good infrastructures:

- Rehabilitation of the three existing buildings
- Furnishing of secretarial classrooms

- Construction of toilet facilities for both the students and tutors
- 3. Provision of qualified Teachers:
- Employment of qualified teachers based on the criteria established
- Paying attractive and competitive salaries to enhance a well motivated staff
- Good management and code of conduct established
- Keeping the quality of the tools and the environment

4. Curriculum and recruitment

- Development of curriculum for all course within the centre
- Registration of the centre with other external examining bodies for recognition and chamber of commerce for business registration
- Recruitment of students through: - Advertising over the media, sensitization meetings with clusters consideration of the poor and less privileged

Where do we stand now?

In 2005 78 students were enrolled for the secretarial course, 44 part-time and 14 fulltime students for the IT section and 15 students for the metal workshop. As staff of the skill centre there are now a Teacher for business and administration, IT and secretarial skills. Next to them there is a watchman and cleaner.

The metal workshop just started. By a loan from a Dutch friend together with a grant from Saama Sang and a contribution of the skill centre itself equipment is. Also the electrification of the metal and wood

workshops is done out of this money.

The wood workshop has not yet started. Currently there are 15 students interested in joining this workshop. When there are 20 students enrolled, the skills training for carpentry will start.

The sewing workshop has also not yet started. Currently there are 10 students interested in joining this workshop. When there are 20 students enrolled, a teacher is appointed and the sewing machines are there the skills training for sewing can start.

Advertisement through the community radio is done. This needs periodical repetition especially at the start of terms and courses. Also all clusters are informed about the opportunities for youth offered by the skill centre. This needs also update every year.

Postcard from... The story of one of our students

Here is a copy of a letter from the Administrator of the Skills centre which was sent to the Program Area Manager on an issue affecting a student of the centre:

**Jamisa Skills Center
Brikama Town**

27th September 2004
To the Program Area Manager
Saama Sang Program Area

Dear Sir,
Bearer is one of the students who passed the external examinations in Typing and English at the end of this academic year.
During the vacations she was sent to Sibanor Upper Basic School on attachment. She was found to be very capable of the jobs assigned to her and now they want to offer her the position. To this effect, she will be leaving for Sibanor today. I am therefore asking you kindly sign the attached testimonial and certificate of attendance for her to enable her get this job.
Thanks for your usual cooperation.
Yours sincerely
Ramau . M. Sesay

This was an opportunity that this girl was able to get due to the training she got from the Center. This also clearly testifies the possibilities that students can get if they are trained on skills/professions.

Therefore the Skills centre can be expected of the ability to improve the life of youths who are ready to be trained on marketable skills.

About the organisation

The Netherlands - Better Future

Better Future is a Dutch company, focusing on leadership programs, on social entrepreneurship within Dutch companies and on sustainable development from an economic perspective within local (African) communities. Within the framework of this project, Better Future will be the linking pin between Net4kids and the local development professionals, other organisations involved and the target group of the project. The starting point for Better Future is always that the local needs and initiatives are leading and that solutions are sustainable and developed and implemented in cooperation with the local communities. For Better Future it is important to enable others to help themselves. The objective is the expansion of local initiatives and investing in business skills from an entrepreneurial development vision.

Better Future has cooperated in the past at many moments and ways with CCF The Gambia (Christian Children's Fund. Project managers of CCF The Gambia have participated in leadership programmes. Better Future has evaluated the strategic planning process of the program areas of CCF The Gambia. For the skill centre Better future will support the local organisation on building a sustainable skill centre and will monitor the project for the donors and Net4Kids.



Gambia

Saamasang which is affiliated to CCF (Christian Children's Fund) – The Gambia supports 1140 families with direct services to over 2229 enrolled children of which 1542 are sponsored. These services reach out to a population of 11,472 inhabitants out of a district population of 84,315 people (2003 census).

The basic development strategy focuses on the well being of children and their families. All programs revolve around addressing the vital needs of the child. Basic services in health, education, nutrition, early childhood development, income earning opportunities and emergencies form the main programming areas for the development assistance to the children. As a viable entity/ community base organization on the road towards graduation and sustainability of programs at field level, the Program Area embraces changes that promote quality programs while focusing more on needy children, their parents and communities at large for sustained intervention within those communities and the rest of the civil society.

Updated Jan 2006

Net4kids Aid Foundation

100% FOR CHILDREN

Amsteldijk Zuid 79b | 1184 VE Amstelveen | The Netherlands | Tel.: +31 (0)20 472 48 75 | Fax: +31 (0)20 472 48 76
Chamber of Commerce Amsterdam: 341 19285 | www.net4kids.org