

Gambia: Marie Bennetts Skill training 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 finds 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 compared to regular education and private skill centres because there is a sustainability aspect build in. The products and services out of the training like school uniforms, composed and printed documents like brochures and newsletters will be sold to external customers. At the end of the training students are prepared to have self-employment in high marketable skills. Through support from the micro enterprise development of CCF (micro credits and saving) students will be enabled to establish their own workshop for income and employment generation. The skill centre is also accessible for illiterate youth.

Net4kids' partners for this project are Better Future and 'Sinhu Baliya Program Site'. This project is contracted and monitored by Wilde Ganzen.



Expanding and improving the existing skill centre

Kombo North 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.

In addition to the current courses there are plans for expansion and the inclusion of courses like cookery, metal work and wood works. This expansion is envisaged because of the growing demand of the services offered by the Skill Centre as well as the impact of these courses on the lives of the beneficiaries. For this expansion to take place we need support in the areas of equipment and teachers as well. The theoretical aspect of metal and wood courses also demonstrations of basic techniques will take place in the skill centre. The practical aspect will be done in the community workshops under supervision of the teacher. The skill centre will provide the materials for the practical trainings.

For the typing and microcomputer application there is a need for additional teaching aids like computers and textbooks.

The sewing section will not only target the

drop-out but also those poor girls who were not privileged to attend school and are now married. This will help them to become responsible wives and thereby asserting some degree of influence in making decision in the household. Therefore we need more sewing machines and embroidery materials.

Next to the activities at the skill centre itself the Program Area intends to support graduating students in setting up community tailoring, carpentry or metal workshops as a resettlement package, it will be in a form of revolving loan.

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 to improve on the access and quality of education offered at Marie Bennett's skill Centre.

Our values are

- We believe in the empowerment of the people as a pre- requisite for development.
- Equality of all people and to be poor doesn't make you a lesser person. We seek to provide equal opportunity to all those in needs regardless of their ethnic, social, religious or other background.

By offering about 150 deprived students a skills training, they have the opportunity to generate income for themselves and their family.



How to help

The total amount of funds needed is € 27.517. Check out the various help options by clicking the how to help button.

Project activities

Cookery

- Hire a cookery teacher
- Purchase cookery equipment
- Purchase refrigerator

Number of children that benefit: 20 each year

Metal workshop

- Hire a technical teacher
- Purchase of welding materials
- Contracting community workshops for practical training
- Support of graduated students in setting up their own business

Number of children that benefit: 15 each year

Wood workshop

- Hire a technical teacher
- Purchase of carpentry materials

Net4kids Aid Foundation

100% FOR CHILDREN

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- Contracting community workshops for practical training
- Support of graduated students in setting up their own business

Number of children that benefit: 50 each year

Expansion of Sewing section

- Purchase of sewing machines and broidery materials
- Support of graduated students in setting up their own tailoring shop

Number of children that benefit: 75 each year

In total about 160 children will benefit of the Skill Center each year.

Where do we stand now?

At this moment the centre offers the following courses:

- Typing and Micro Computer Application
- Sewing, Embroidery and Tie and Dye
- English Language and Office Practice
- Book Keeping and Business Studies

The vocational centre has been operational and serving its purpose of addressing the issue of dropouts since 1995. The centre started with two classrooms. The students graduated every two years. The centre has graduated 110 Student so far. In 2004 the center has moved to its permanent location; a building with four classrooms. One of the classrooms is used as a computer lab, one for sewing, one for typing and the other one for lectures. A classroom can accommodate up to 45 students.

At present 55 students are in the morning shift doing secretarial courses, whilst 34 are

in the afternoon shift. 30 students are enrolled in the morning for sewing and 23 in the afternoon. The school has at this moment a total enrolment of 142 students with girls accounting for 95 percent.

Next to the current courses the centre provide training on Sexual and Reproductive Health, Tobacco and HIV/ AIDS in collaboration with other partners.

Postcard from... The story of Fatoumata Touray

I am Fatoumata Touray.

I was born in 1983 at Wellingara. I am a Muslim by religion and a Mandinka by tribe. It was at Sinchu Baliya that I did my primary education with contribution from the family Helper Project of CCF. They were also responsible for my wellbeing by giving support in the areas of health and other childhood needs.

Furthemore, I left Sinchu Baliya Primary School I then joined the Marie Bennetts Skill Centre to pursue a two year Certificate Course in sewing. From the above-mentioned contribution CCF did sharpen my life. It has made me to belief that through their affiliated projects life has been made easier for many children as result of their contribution towards their welfare. It is abundantly clear that this successful journey began from humble beginning and through dedication, hard work and high sense of commitment of the sponsors, staff and the community in which they serve and to the entire Gambian nation.

I am presently working as a sewing teacher at the Marie Bennetts Skill Centre since 2003. Before this appointment I benefited from a resettlement package, which included a sewing machine and other materials from the Sinchu Baliya Family Helper Project. This package has helped me to establish my own business and create

earning for my family and myself. I still offer private services to earn myself few dalasis extra despite my present employment.

About the organisation

The Netherlands

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 a entrepreneurial development vision.

Gambia

Sinhu Baliya Program Site is an emerging civil society organization serving 9 communities and registered as a community-based organization. It currently has an enrolment of 560 of which 415 are sponsored within the CCF Sponsorship Program. The community-based organization has been involved in development work for almost two decade at grassroots level with parents of the enrolled children serving as the Managers of the affairs through parents Management Committee and the assistant of hired and volunteering staff. It is a non-profit, voluntary, and a non-political organization that does not discrimination on the basic of religion, sex or whatsoever.

The Sinhu Baliya program site is affiliated to the Christian Children Fund Inc The Gambia since 1984. It's one of the leading child welfare agencies in the Gambia with their headquarters in Kanifing they are charitable organization that have registered as non-governmental institution and provide services to children through community-based organization like ours. The Program Site is also under the newly established Area Partnership Programming APP where four projects are grouped together to form a Program Area, which is called Kombo North Program Area. Sinhu Baliya Program Site is one of those four projects.

We also work with other development actors as partners through the CCF National Office such as the UNDP, UNICEF, British High Commission, American Embassy, The Government of the Gambia and other local Non-governmental organization in our areas.

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.

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