REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA
Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education
The Gambia

DRAFT REPORT

CONVENTION & RECOMMENDATION AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN EDUCATION



June 2016

Introduction

The Gambia is one of the smallest countries in mainland Africa with a population of about 1.8 million people of whom more than 60% are below the age of 24[1]. Population growth projections indicate a rate of 2.8 percent per annum. The country has a heterogeneous, multiethnic society wherein about eight main ethnic groups co-exist with cultural and linguistic diversity.

Like the English-speaking West African coastal states of Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone, The Gambia was colonised by the British, whose legacies continue to influence existing formal institutions like the school and political systems and their structures. The Gambia attained full internal self-government from the British in 1963, gained political independence in 1965 and became a Republic in 1970.

The people continue to practice and uphold multiparty democracy, with its various characteristics and procedures, such as elections and the rule of law. The country hosts the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS). Aside from the second republican constitution, which upholds fundamental human rights and freedoms, a number of legal instruments and frameworks provide a basis, and thus create opportunities, to discuss the issue of discrimination in education. Indeed, the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia stipulates that the country shall be a democracy where the rule of law, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms shall be observed (*Constitution of The Republic of The Gambia*, 1997, pp. 18-19). Among other things, it also states, "basic education shall be free and compulsory." This pronouncement not only recognise everybody's right to education but is also particularly crucial in addressing the high illiteracy rates.

The Gambia has ratified the following international conventions: the United Nations Declaration on Human and Peoples' Rights; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) Article 10; the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) Article 29; and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990). The country is obliged by its ratification of international treaties and enactment of domestic laws to ensure respect for and

[1]General Bureau of Statistic – Population census 2013

the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to quality education for all.

The Gambia has two ministries responsible for education. The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) is responsible for primary and secondary education, while the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST) is responsible for post-secondary education. Formal education in The Gambia begins at three years of age with the early childhood development programme followed by nine years of uninterrupted basic education which includes the lower basic (six years of primary education) and upper basic (three years of lower secondary education) levels. Upper basic education is followed by three years of senior secondary education.

The provision of education in The Gambia has necessitated, over the years, a massive construction of schools, enlargement of provisions, and, by implication, increased access countrywide to accommodate the ever-increasing demands at all levels. The increase in enrolment has been enhanced by the timely response and commitment of the government of The Gambia to fulfil its obligations in ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality[2]**.**

I. Information on the legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures taken by the state at the national level

1 Ratification of the Convention

1.1 Even though adequate laws guarantee rights to free, compulsory and non-discriminatory access to education, The Gambia is yet to be a state party to the Convention Against Discrimination in Education and has therefore not ratified it. However, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, in consultation with relevant partners, has plans to initiate the process of acceptance followed by formal ratification of this convention by the National Assembly. The new

[2] EFA Goal, Dakar Framework for Action

education bill which seeks to replace the 1992 Education Act is currently being finalised. The finalisation process will be used as an opportunity to include key elements of the convention and recommendation for enactment. Given that The Gambia has already incorporated free and compulsory basic education as a basic human right in the 1997 National Constitution, there are no legal, institutional, political and practical obstacles envisaged in the process of acceptance and ratification.

1.2 The Instrument on the 1962 Protocol has also not been ratified. However, once the Convention Against Discrimination in Education is accepted and ratified, it will serve as a necessary building block to develop the 1962 instrument for domestication.

In view of the complications that can emanate from legal, political and institutional environment across borders, sub-regional and regional coordination mechanism will be needed to foster cross border dialog among countries ranging from instrument development, institutional arrangements and practical implementation.

2 - Legal framework governing the protection of rights guaranteed in the convention and recommendation in the national legal system

2.1 Although The Gambia is not yet a state party to this convention, it must be observed that there is political will, supported by constitutional provisions, for the delivery of education from early childhood development to university education. Despite the absence of a complete process of acceptance and ratification, the National Constitution 1997 and other regulatory frameworks made the following adequate provisions in support of the convention:

Section 30(a) of the constitution guarantees that, "*all persons shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities and with a view to achieving the full realization of that right- basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all".*

Section 217 (1) of the constitution guarantees that, "t*he state shall endeavour to provide adequate educational objectives opportunities at all levels of study for all citizens. (2) The state shall pursue policies to ensure basic education for all citizens and shall endeavour to*

provide adequate resources so that such tuition for basic education shall be free for all citizens."

Section 18 of the Children Act states, "*Every child has the right to free and compulsory education and it is the duty of government to provide it."*

As explained in Paragraph 1.1, the new education bill will be an opportunity to include prominent features of the recommendation to be enacted as law and this process is expected to be completed before the end of the 2016 legislative year. The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) and the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (MoHERST) have formulated a sector-wide policy aimed at providing universal access to relevant and quality education and training with a guiding principle that aims to eliminate all forms of discrimination against education. Pursuant to this guiding principle, educational provision is being diversified to cater for a variety of parental choices in the form of conventional schooling, madrassah education and majalis education under the conditional cash transfer scheme. In addition, special interventions for ensuring equal opportunities cater for gender differences, as well as students in particular circumstances such as special needs, poverty and other minorities.

In recent times, the government has abolished all forms of levies and fees in all public lower basic (primary), upper basic (lower secondary) and secondary (upper secondary) schools to enable poverty-stricken households to take advantage of the educational provision within their communities. Prior to this initiative, there was overwhelming evidence of the heavy cost burden on households in educating their children from lower basic to tertiary and higher education. Aware of the need to equalise the educational provision across gender, income and disadvantaged groups and communities, the Government of The Gambia demonstrated a rare commitment of removing all forms of levies and fees in the three cycles of education.

II. Information on the implementation of the convention or recommendation (with reference to their provisions)

1 - Non-discrimination in education

1.1 Although The Gambia is not a state party to the convention and recommendation, the government has put in place adequate laws prohibiting discrimination in education, including in:

Section 30 (a) of the constitution states, "*All persons shall have the right to equal educational opportunities and facilities and with a view to achieving the full realisation of that right, basic education shall be free, compulsory and available to all."*

Section 217 (1) of the constitution specifies, "*The state shall endeavour to provide adequate educational objectives opportunities at all levels of study for all citizens. (2) The state shall pursue policies to ensure basic education for all citizens and shall endeavour to provide adequate resources so that such tuition for basic education shall be free for all citizens."*

Section 217 (4) of the constitution says, "*The state shall take measures to create an adult literacy programme, rehabilitative vocational training for the disabled, and continuing education programmes."*

Section 18 of the Children Act 2005 says, "*Every child has the right to free and compulsory education and it is the duty of government to provide it."*

Section 26 of the Women Act, 2010 requires, "*Government to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and guarantee equal opportunity and access to education."*

In addition, implementation of government policies and programmes promotes non-discrimination in education; some of these are linked to access and equity initiatives the primary focusing on disadvantaged populations.

1.2 Measures taken to address elimination and prevention of discrimination in education

Admission of pupils to education institutions is non-discriminatory. The 2016-2030 Education Policy highlights that The Gambia as a nation 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 policy will be used as a means for the attainment of high-level economic growth to alleviate poverty with

emphasis on the critical areas for the realisation of the SDGs and the EFA agenda. Therefore, the guiding principle for education is premised on:

i. non-discriminatory and all-inclusive provision of education underlining in particular, gender equity and targeting of poor and the disadvantaged groups;
ii. respect for the rights of the individual, cultural diversity, indigenous languages and knowledge.

The focus of the following initiatives is testimony of measures taken to support elimination and prevention of discrimination:

- Provision of allowances to attract qualified teachers to-hard-to-reach areas as well as teaching and learning materials to deprived areas
- Non-discriminatory curriculum content
- Provision of special facilities to female students (sanitary packages, separate and adequate toilets for both sexes)
- Flexible calendar
- Re-entry programme for girls
- School feeding programme
- Flexible transportation services to students
    - buses
    - donkey carts
- Provision of education for juvenile offenders
- Conditional cash transfer, etc

The Government of the Islamic Republic of The Gambia, through a strong pronouncement in the 2016-2030 education policy, is committed to providing adequate and appropriate support services at all levels in order to facilitate the inclusion of children with disabilities in the existing system based on non-differential treatment of students. Treatment of foreign nationals resident in the country is also non-discriminatory as the Gambian educational institutions are open to all, irrespective of country of origin. In this vein, Gambians and non-Gambians can establish and

operate educational institutions with the options of teaching national or international curricula in line with the Education Act.

In terms of conventional schooling, there is legal provision for the establishment and operation of public, mission and private schools with clear operational regulations and guidelines that enable the government to monitor the extent to which the students benefit from the services provided by the various operators.

2. Equal opportunities in education

2.1 In spite of the status of The Gambia as a non-state party to the convention and recommendation, there are measures aimed at creating equal opportunities in education across all cycles of education from early childhood development to university education. The constitution made it mandatory for secondary education, including technical and vocational education, to be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular, by the progressive introduction of free education. In a similar vein, section 30 (c) of the constitution made it mandatory for higher education to be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular, by progressive introduction of free education.

In pursuance of the education target of no child walking more than 3 kilometres to the nearest school, the number of regular public schools has been increased, resulting in improving access to education. Small communities are either provided with facilities that enable them attend multi-grade schools ad locum or commute to the nearest schools with means of a customised transport facility (donkey-carts).

The abolition of school fees and other levies in public schools is a significant stride taken by the government to ensure that households from all categories of society take full advantage of the opportunities in education. There is convincing evidence that families that hitherto could not participate in education due to cost as a barrier are coming forward to benefit from this new dispensation. Paragraph 3 of this section of the report will highlight the evidence in greater detail. Another opportunity that has been created to increase access to education with focus on equal

opportunities is the diversification of educational provision aimed at responding to the demand for madrassah and majalis education.

In the area of adult and non-formal education, opportunities have also been created to offer the illiterate adult population the chance of an integrated functional literacy programme that is delivered across the country with priority given to disadvantaged communities and women. At the tertiary and higher education levels, sponsorship and scholarship schemes are provided to improve access to training opportunities based on criteria of need and merit.

2.2 In terms of the strategies being implemented to ensure that there is equality in education in the areas of access, participation and completion, there is a physical facility provision programme that focuses on the provision of new classrooms, sanitary facilities, furniture, water points and customised school transport. Under this programme, equity has been the cornerstone with interventions and initiatives closing the gaps that exist between rich and poor, male and female, rural and urban and also cater for people with special needs.

The special needs education programme is another example of equality in education with special attention paid to inclusiveness in access, participation and completion. The consideration given to the physically challenged to use school buildings with ease through the creation of ramps is a clear testimony to this commitment.

The abolition of school fees with the payment of school improvement grants has not only benefited households through educational cost relief but also provided an opportunity for schools to improve their teaching and learning processes through the judicious use of the grants. Equality in education can also be traced to the equitable distribution of qualified teachers between urban and rural areas through a teacher incentive package that attracts such teachers to willingly serve in deprived communities across the country. This package includes the payment of hardship allowances and the provision of housing facilities in deprived communities.

2.3 The implementation of education policies and programmes is guided by a sector-wide strategic plan that incorporates in detail programme areas, targets, strategies, a results-chain and a monitoring framework. Within some of the programme areas, there are key strategies that support

gender equity and equality in education and educational needs of the poor, economically and socially marginalized, including children with disabilities. Under gender equity and equality in education, a variety of interventions has been implemented to ensure equity in enrolment, retention and performance, resulting in the attainment of gender parity in enrolment across basic and secondary education. Efforts are being intensified to extend this gain to tertiary and higher education levels through the provision of scholarships and sponsorships to female students, particularly in the disciplines of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM).

In addressing gender-based violence, the government has developed a sexual harassment policy which is being implemented using a multi-sectoral approach. One of the key strategies of this policy is designed to curb the incidence of gender-based violence in and around schools.

On the educational needs of the poor, mention has already been made of the abolition of school fees and other levies to enable poor households take advantage of the educational opportunities put at their disposal. The net effect of this intervention is the unprecedented surge in students in grades 1, 7 and 10 (across basic and secondary education), resulting in the increase in both net and gross enrolment in all three levels over the years.

In addressing the needs of children with disabilities, the government has demonstrated a strong commitment that supports their inclusion in educational provision. There is a two-pronged approach that focuses on both mainstreaming of these students in ordinary schools and the use of special schools for children whose needs cannot be met in mainstream schools.

The Government of The Gambia has put in place strategies for gender-responsive schools in which the academic, social and physical environment and the surrounding community take into account the specific needs of both girls and boys. This implies that the teachers, parents, community leaders and members and the boys and girls are all aware of and practice gender equality. Schools are encouraged to develop management systems, policies and practices which recognise and address the gender or sex-based needs of both girls and boys. The students, both girls and boys, are empowered through the curriculum and training programs to promote gender equity and equality and to protect the democratic and human rights of both sexes in the school.

It is therefore evident from the foregoing facts that although The Gambia is not a state party to the convention and recommendation, significant strides have been taken to ensure non-discrimination in education.

3. Progress made with respect to implementing the right to education

3.1 Universal primary education

The Gambian government is committed to upholding the right of every person to basic education, regardless of gender, age, religion or disability. Accordingly, basic education is open to all. Learning at this level is geared towards the holistic development of the individual for the positive realisation of every person's full potential and aspirations.

As stated in the Education Policy 2016-2030, the Government of the Gambia, in a bid to reduce the cost burden on households in educating their children in public schools, has abolished all forms of fees and levies in public basic and secondary education. The government subsequently introduced the school improvement grant (SIG) to support public schools to undertake school improvement initiatives informed by an effective school improvement planning process. The grants are provided to schools on an annual basis using enrolment variables with approved unit costs for each level of education. Early childhood development (ECD) centres, as well as government-assisted ECDs and madrassahs will be included in the SIG during the policy period.

In addition to the different regulatory framework that focuses on the availability of universal free primary education, the education policy was set against the background of the high population growth rate, the cost of education in relation to the poor and the current education share of the government budget. Taking into account these considerations, the following five components were prioritised in the policy, aimed at providing equitable access to high quality education to all Gambians:

1. School and classroom construction and rehabilitation

2. Gender equity initiatives – a more gender-sensitive curriculum and environment will be created and continuous promotion of community awareness on the benefits of both boys' and girls' education will continue. Performance and completion will also be promoted.

3. Special education – training programmes and teaching materials for special education teachers will be developed and special facilities extended into rural areas where mainstreaming does not satisfy the needs of severe cases.

4. Life skills education – HIV/AIDS prevention, the reduction of gender-based violence in and around schools and the promotion of peace-building, tolerance and patriotism will be introduced using life skills education through population and family life education and guidance and counselling

5. The integrated approach of addressing the nutritional needs of the learner through school feeding/canteen schemes will be enhanced and the provision of a school environment that recognises the importance of hygiene, water and sanitation will be promoted.

Lower basic (primary) enrolment increased by 6.3 percent from 2012 to 2015 and secondary enrolment went up by 3.8 percent on average. Not only are more children enrolling in school, but more are graduating. In the same period, the number of children completing school rose to 73.6 percent, an increase of 1.2 percentage points. Despite these significant gains in progress towards universal primary education (UPE), access to education still remains a challenge as fifty-five thousand children (about 19% of the total population) of school-going age were not in school in 2015, and one in four children was still not completing primary education in 2015. The table below highlights the evolution of enrolment over time.

Lower Basic Education (LBE) Indicators

Indicator	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**	**AAGR**
Number of schools	692	789	861	928	10.3%
Total enrolment	244,033	256,912	274,939	293,503	6.3%
% of girls	50.7%	50.7%	50.9%	51.2%	0.3%
Number out of school	68,850	73,080	65,561	55,562	-6.9%
Gross enrolment ratio	90.2%	92.8%	97.1%	101.2%	3.9%
Net enrolment ratio	74.5%	73.6%	76.9%	80.8%	2.7%

Primary completion rate	72.4%	73.4%	73.4%	73.6%	0.6%
Primary completion rate (female)	71.1%	73.4%	73.6%	74.4%	1.5%
Gross intake rate	108.7%	113.4%	123.8%	124.6%	4.7%

The table above shows that the number of children enrolled in lower basic education rose from two hundred and forty-four thousand in 2012 to two hundred and ninety-three thousand in 2015, showing an annual average growth rate of 6.3 percent. Over the same period, the number of children out of school children declined by 6 percentage points, bringing forty-nine thousand more children to school.

In addition, the gross enrolment ratio (GER) in lower basic education was on average 101.2 percent in 2015 compared with 90.2 percent in 2012, indicating that the Gambian education system has the capacity to enrol all lower basic school-going age children.

Analysis of the gross intake ratio (GIR) in the Gambia education system shows that the number of new entrants to the first grade in lower basic education increased from fifty-two thousand to sixty-three thousand between 2012 and 2015, an annual growth rate of 6.8 percent over the period. On average, GIR is above 100 percent. However, there are few regions with GIRs below 100 percent meaning that a significant proportion of children in these regions are not expected to enter school. Efforts are being made to continue to reach out to all segments of the population.

The average primary completion rate (PCR) remained almost unchanged over the same period, moving slightly from 72.4 percent in 2012 to 73.6 percent in 2015, meaning that about one in four children does not complete lower basic education

Gender parity in lower basic education has improved in recent years. There are now more girls than boys in lower basic education, and despite slow growth, completion rates are broadly equal.

3.2 Secondary education

Enrolment at senior secondary school level increased from 40,553 in 2013 to 51,225 in 2015. This is the highest annual average growth rate of 8.1 percent compared with the lower basic (6.3 percent) and upper basic (3.8 percent). The number of senior secondary schools has shown

significant growth (13.2 percent) and senior secondary schools are now somewhat equitably distributed across the length and breadth of the county. There is now a senior secondary school in each district, arguably dispelling the notion that access to senior secondary school is an urban phenomenon. In consequence, more children are able to attend senior secondary school across the country, closer to their homes. Where 36 out of 100 children were attending senior secondary school in 2012, 42 out of 100 children are now participating in secondary education.

Policy interventions such as mothers' clubs, the Scholarship Trust Fund, The President's Empowerment for Girls Education Project (PEGEP) and the re-entry program for girls among others have resulted in the increase of over six thousand girls having access to senior secondary education between 2012 and 2015. The proportion of girls' participation (50 percent) as well as their completion has caught up to that of the boys during the same period. The table below highlights the progression of enrolment over the past 3 years.

Indicator	2012	2013	2014	2015	AAGR
Number of schools	100	120	134	145	13.2%
Total enrolment	40,533	45,041	49,113	51,225	8.1%
Total enrolment male	21,306	23,239	25,107	25,612	6.3%
Total enrolment female	19,227	21,802	24,006	25,613	10.0%
Gross enrolment	36.2%	39.0%	41.2%	41.6%	4.7%
Completion rate	30.3%	30.8%	34.7%	34.9%	4.8%
% enrolment female	47.4%	48.4%	48.9%	50.0%	1.8%

3.3 Higher education

The Gambia has five main tertiary institutions which run certificate and diploma programmes, and the University of The Gambia, established in 1999, a public higher education institution that offers programmes at degree level. Two other private higher education institutions were established in 2012, concentrating on Islamic-related courses, medical programmes and the social sciences. There are four public tertiary and higher education institutions. Students enrolled in these institutions are entitled to apply for scholarships.

A fundamental priority of the Government is that citizens should be well educated and skilled. In pursuit of this, the tertiary and higher education sector is committed to providing, in the long term,

"access and equal opportunities for all capable Gambians to participate to their full potential in knowledge and skills acquisition and application and t*o establish and strengthen the equitable provision of technical and vocational education in the administrative regions"*[3]. Already, technical and vocational education training (TVET) centres are established across the country, at least one in each of the six administrative regions.

In order t*o "increase equitable access to affordable quality tertiary and higher education to the citizenry"*[4], MOHERST, in collaboration with non-government partners, has introduced a non-discriminatory loan scheme for university and technical and vocational education and training in The Gambia. In order to provide affordable tertiary and higher education, government offers scholarships and bursaries based on merit, particularly for female and needy students. A notable intervention is The President's Empowerment for Girls Education Project (PEGEP) under the Office of The President, which sponsored 511 female students in tertiary education institutions between 1999 and 2014.

With regards to gender, the education sector policy intends, *"To promote equal opportunity and gender-responsiveness in all tertiary and higher education programmes"*. However, gender disparities in mathematics and other sciences are still seen in tertiary and higher education. Government is working towards reducing these gaps and also towards promoting access to TVET and higher education to people with physical challenges.

In 2009, public funding allocated to higher education was 12 percent and to TVET only 2.6 percent, including teacher training. Furthermore, TVET and higher education public recurrent unit costs were 169 percent and 84 percent respectively (CSR, 2010).

The share of public recurrent education expenditure allocated to higher education is around 15 percent of total public spending and student scholarships for higher education level representing about 21 percent.

[3] *Education Policy 2015 – 2030*
[4] *Education Policy 2015 – 2030*

3.4 Adult education and lifelong learning

The Government of The Gambia is committed to providing relevant, meaningful and non-discriminatory non-formal and/or continuing education for lifelong learning for adults. The focus is on women, out-of-school youth, differently able people and children in difficult circumstances, who have not received or completed the whole period of the primary education. This is intended to empower them with life and livelihood skills for enhanced productivity and poverty reduction.

Over the years, the government has adopted various policies which provided the main direction for education in general and non-formal education in particular. Most important of these policies are the country's Vision 2020, the Constitution of The Gambia 1997, the National Declaration of Education 1998, the Education for All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals and Action Plans, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP II) and most importantly the National Education Policy (2016-2030). Commitment to the provision of adult and non-formal education has also been highlighted in many other national policies and acts.

To ensure equitable and discrimination-free access to continuing education, the Gambian government over the years has supported the establishment of literacy centres in all regions of the country, increasing access to all intending beneficiaries. Currently, there are 686 literacy centres in the Gambia, providing non-formal education services for about 49,145 illiterate adults and youth, representing about 8.8% of the population aged 15 years and above. The participatory approach adopted in the scheduling of literacy classes to suit participants' convenience is an access strategy to enhance access. The use of government formal education infrastructural facilities for non-formal activities is also a move towards improving access.

In the 2004 – 2015 Education Policy, a target of reducing illiteracy was set at 50% of the non-literate population, indicating that the Government of the Gambia is determined to ensure that illiteracy is eliminated and education is provided for all regardless of gender, location, religion and race.

3.5 Quality education

The structures of the education system are not limited to increasing school enrolment, but also committed to offering services of quality. Quality in education can reflect the level of resource allocation to the sector, but can also be measured by students' learning outcomes. According to the latter approach, quality education would ensure that students acquire defined competencies and skills. However, this objective needs to be combined with the effective use of education resources. Quality education not only produces knowledgeable and capable graduates (reflected in good examination and assessment results); it produces an optimum number (shown in low dropout rates), in the minimum number of years (shown in low repetition rates). Triggered by the 1990 Jomtien declaration, The Gambia initiated a school expansion programme to attain universal primary education by the year 2000. This resulted in an overwhelming increase in the gross enrolment ratio (GER) through government efforts aimed at minimising school dropouts, encouraging demand from families, adapting schooling to this demand and increasing the chances of completing each level.

Although successes were recorded, quality remains an issue at various levels. Over time, this massive expansion of the school system has precipitated what some perceive to be compromises on the quality of education (see MLA 2000 report; World Bank Aide Memoir, 2005). Students' learning outcomes are generally very poor at all levels and deficiencies are apparent from the first primary grades. According to the CSR, post-primary results are scarcely better, and have barely improved since 2002. Seventy-six percent (76%) of candidates failed to obtain a single credit in any of the four core subjects in the Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examination (GABECE) taken at the end of the upper basic level, and only 4% achieved credits in all four. Results are poorest in mathematics, with 7% of candidates obtaining a credit. Boys perform better than girls. Eighty-six percent (86%) of candidates in Regions 3 and 5 obtained no credits, compared with 71% for Region 1.

Although the Grade 12 final examination (West Africa Senior Secondary Certificate Examination) results are improving, they are still far behind other West Africa Examination Council countries. In mathematics, just 3.2% of candidates achieved a credit (compared with 47% for Nigeria) in 2008/09. In addition, half failed to obtain a single credit and only 11% achieved credits in five or more subjects. Grant-aided and mission schools perform better than government and private

schools: 20.2% of candidates got a credit in at least 5 subjects in the former, compared with 5.5% for government school candidates and 9.1% of private school candidates.

In the Gambia, it is observed that the main factors negatively impeding scores are repetition, absenteeism and class size. Those having a positive impact are the availability of textbooks, which have a positive impact on all subjects' success rates and are by far the most cost-effective way to improve results, the electrification of schools, and improved teaching practices. Double shifting interestingly has a positive impact on the Early Grade Reading Assessment scores, while negatively affecting National Assessment Test and GABECE results. The inconsistent impact of double shifting on primary level results calls for further analysis of current shifting practices.

To address the shortcomings highlighted above, the National Education Policy (2004-2015 / 2015 - 2030) and its attendant ten-year national Education Strategic Plan place due emphasis on the quality of education provided.

3.6 Teaching profession

The number of teachers has also increased significantly. At the lower basic level, there was an increase from four thousand teachers in 2012 to seven thousand teachers in 2015 with an annual growth rate of 17 percent.

Indicator	2012	2013	2014	2015	AAGR
Number of teachers	4,940	6,868	7,464	7,902	17.0%
% of female teachers	33.8%	30.0%	30.5%	33.1%	-0.7%
Number of qualified teachers	3,819	5,592	6,278	6,781	21.1%
% female qualified teachers	35.3%	31.9%	31.5%	33.5%	-1.8%

In trying to meet the EFA goals, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education has built more schools to cater for the increasing number of school-going age children. In the 2014/2015 academic year, the total number of schools in the private and public sectors totalled 1434 schools thus requiring the recruitment of more teachers.

The demand for teachers was apparent at all levels of the education sector in The Gambia. The Gambia teaching force is open to all based on qualification. In the senior secondary schools,

teacher shortages in specialised areas triggered the proliferation of a system with not only non-Gambian teachers but with teachers who were neither specialist nor trained in the areas in which they were teaching. Alternative efficient measures and innovative strategies are needed to ensure that teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach their subjects.

In Region 1, the average pupil teacher ratio is 34:1, while in Regions 2, 3 and 6 it is 37:1, and in Regions 4 and 5 it is 30:1 and 36:1 respectively.

Trends in pupil teacher ratio (PTR) for government and grant-aided schools

PTR	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
LBS	44	44	40	38	38	37
BCS	48	41	36	32	33	31
UBS	43	43	40	33	32	30
SSS	43	44	42	33	30	29

Since 2012, The Gambia has steadily been increasing its qualified teacher pupil ratio. The table below is an indication of the improvement registered from 2012 to 2015 on the availability of qualified teachers in various levels of the education system.

Evolution of qualified teachers from 2012- 2015

Evolution of the proportion of qualified teachers (in all schools)				
Type of school	**2012**	**2013**	**2014**	**2015**
Primary	77.3%	85.4%	87.6%	88.5%
Lower secondary	89.8%	92.7%	94.7%	95.2%
Basic cycle (primary and lower secondary)	61.1%	69.8%	74.0%	77.5%
Upper secondary	95.5%	94.1%	93.6%	94.0%
Total	**78.5%**	**84.9%**	**87.2%**	**88.4%**

Like all civil servants, teachers are remunerated using the Government Integrated Pay Scale (IPS). Individual remuneration is based on qualifications and status/responsibility. Civil servants' salaries are determined by the Gambian Government Public Service Commission. All government teachers are considered as civil servants. Private schools determine their own salaries, depending on their level and their financial resources. According to the Country Status Report 2010, "*the average teacher's monthly salary in lower basic is D 3,400, about 2.5 units of annual GDP per*

capita, and lower than the Fast Track Initiative benchmark (World Bank) of 3.5. Qualified teachers are paid 1.5 and 1.7 times more than unqualified contract teachers in primary and lower secondary, who earn D 2,343 per month on average."

In trying to make sure that teachers' working conditions are improved, and to attract teachers to remote areas in Regions 3, 4, 5 and 6, the ministry offers various incentives: a hardship allowance;[5] and teachers' quarters, which have been built in some rural schools. Because of the above, some teachers receive twice their basic salary, which has attracted many qualified open-ended appointed teachers to these areas. Female teachers receive 5% additional allowance if posted in hardship areas.

The introduction of an in-service training package to support teachers in improving their content knowledge is another innovation which has benefited a lot of teachers. The opportunity given to teachers for further training from one stage to the other is another initiative. Teachers can apply for further training, scholarships and study leave with salary. The introduction of a teacher register is another step in professionalising teaching.

3.7 Respect for human rights and fundamental freedom

Education facilitates access to many rights throughout life. The Gambian education policy promotes child rights, human rights, women's rights and social rights. Relative to human rights and discrimination in education, the current education policy seeks, as one of the aims of education, "*to create an awareness of the importance of peace, democracy and human rights and the responsibility of the individual in fostering these qualities*."

The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 constituted a landmark in the history of human rights. It later became the source, inspiration and reference point for a number of human rights treaties, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),

[5] *The main eligibility criterion is that a school must be located at least three kilometres from the main road. Hardship allowances are equivalent to 30 percent of the base salary in Regions 3 and 4, and 35 percent and 40 percent in Regions 5 and 6, respectively. Teachers working in lower and upper basic government and grant-aided schools are entitled to this allowance, regardless of their status.*

women's rights and many others. The Republic of the Gambia ratified the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) on the 3rd August 1990, and is bound by law to adhere to the principles of the declaration. In adhering to the principles, The Gambia gives priority to health, education, child protection, women's rights and justice as dictated and stipulated by the declaration.

Children are entrusted into the care of teachers by their parents and the community. They are responsible for the education and sensitisation of learners, children and adults included, and the teacher-training curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that teachers are comfortable with human rights laws and prepared to fight against any discriminatory act that might take in place in schools and classrooms.

3.8 Private, religious and moral education

Private schools constitute a significant proportion of the educational institutions across all education levels in the Gambia. They are not only prominent for their contribution in terms of providing access but also for the premium they attached to quality educational service delivery. Like public schools, all private institutions are subject to national laws regulating delivery of education service. Various laws, including the Education Acts, do not only prohibit discrimination against access to education but also attach stringent sanctions against the violation of such laws. The establishment or maintenance of private educational institutions is mainly regulated by the Education Act 2002 which is currently being reviewed. Other subsidiary legislation like the Education Regulation and Premise Regulation also establishes detailed guidelines on the opening and operations of both private and public schools.

Whilst the act provides the overall framework for the establishment of all educational Institutions, the Education Regulation provides a detailed outline of the procedure for establishing a private school including the minimum standards required in terms of staffing, finance and basic teaching and learning materials. The Premise Regulation focuses on classroom standards and the environmental condition of the school such as toilet facilities, availability of water supply and lighting.

Despite having one of the highest percentage of Muslim populations in sub-Saharan Africa, The Gambia socio-political set up is highly tolerant towards to people of other religions. Indeed, the promotion of peaceful co-existence between different religions is critically considered in every aspect of the educational development of the country. Religious and moral education form parts of the rights that the education system is nurturing and pursuing. Indeed, as enshrine in the constitution of The Gambia, Section 29, "*Children under the age of sixteen years are entitled to be protected from economic exploitation and shall not be employed in or required to perform work that is likely to be hazardous or to interfere with their education or be harmful to their health of physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development"*. Factors militating against peace, xenophobia, religious intolerance, and ethnicity are quickly identified and adequate strategies put in such as a unified and integrated curriculum for all educational institutions and levels of learning. Periodical curricula content review are conduct to address emerging societal issues that could have a negative impact on the inter-personal relationship at community and national levels.

3.9 Rights of minorities

In the Gambia, basic and secondary education is virtually free as enshrined in the "Juris Corpus" (the 1997 Constitution). The constitution, with other pieces of legislation such as the Education Act, promotes equality in terms of access to education whilst concurrently barring discrimination in all forms and promotes the right of minorities in terms of access to quality education: Section 33 (3) of the constitution states that "*no person shall be treated in a discriminatory manner by any person acting by virtue of any law or in the performance of the functions of any public office or any public authority"*. The constitution further states that *"disabled persons shall be entitled to protection against exploitation and to protection against discrimination, in particular as regards access to health services, education and employment"*.

In the same vein, the current Education Policy promotes the right of minorities to access basic and secondary education based on the principle of non-discrimination and inclusion. The policy underlines equity across gender, socio-economic groups and regions in the provision of education. The Education Policy also seeks to promote the rights of the individual, cultural diversity, indigenous languages and knowledge and respect for ethical norms and values and a culture of peace.

3.10 Awareness raising

Despite the domestication of the convention, the government is yet to launch any specific campaign strategy to promote its contents. However, through the concerted efforts of the government with EFA-NET and non-governmental organisations, the campaign to promote education in all forms has been ongoing, including the raising of public awareness of the principles of non-discrimination and equality of educational opportunities which are enshrined in the convention.