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November 6, 2017

Alice Albright
Chief Education Officer
Global Partnership for Education
900 19th Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20006
USA

Subject: Endorsement of The Gambia: Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016-2030

Dear Ms. Albright:

Based on our technical appraisal of the Gambia's Education Sector Strategic Plan 2016-2030 (ESSP) and the Education Sector Medium Term Plan 2018-2020 (MTP) and building on consultations held around these documents, the members of the Local Education Group (LEG) in the Gambia are pleased to present the following summary statement to the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE).

We commend the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) and the Ministry of Higher Education Research Science and Technology (MoHERST) as well as partners in The Gambia for their significant efforts in articulating key policy priorities, activities, and indicators, and believe it reflects our shared goals of advancing access, equity, learning and efficiency in the education sector in The Gambia.

The plan covers all education sub-sectors from early-childhood to higher education, and it includes specific strategies on equity, efficiency and learning outcomes. The ESSP is aligned with the national development poverty reduction strategy and the medium-term expenditure framework, and it is operationalized through a 4-year implementation plan.

In our assessment, the Gambia has met the requirements to access GPE funding. It has specified its sector priorities in the ESSP. Domestic financing of the sector reflects The Gambia's continued commitment to education. The government spending on education as a share of the total public spending meets the recommended benchmark of 20 percent. The Gambia also meets the data requirement. The Ministry led the Education Sector Analysis (ESA) process in the Gambia, demonstrating institutional capacity for producing critical data.

An appraisal of the ESSP was conducted in August 2017. The Ministry responded to recommendations of the Appraisal and revised the ESSP accordingly. The appraisal memo prepared by the Ministry reflects all changes made based on these recommendations. We confirm that improvements were made in the following areas:

- Medium-Term Plan revised to include quantified targets, year 2020 targets and baselines for each prioritized intervention, the annual drafting of the action plan, and greater clarity in the responsibilities of each ministry.
- Full ESSP costing, as well as updated financial tables.

- Additions and increased coherence of the narrative of the ESSP, including the investigation of the practice of pamphlets being sold to students.
- Results framework developed that provides targets by priority area and prioritized activities, articulating the policy objective by key focus area, baselines, targets, and core input/output indicators.
- Updated documents to ensure that the ESA, ESSP, and MTP are now complementary and share the same data sets.
- Monitoring and evaluation actions and indicators elaborated with details included in Chapter 4 of the MTP.
- The objective and purpose of the communication strategy provided in the MTP, outlining the core approaches, interventions, both for internal stakeholders and external stakeholders.

We understand that the ESSP and its Mid-Term Plan are living documents that will be adapted as implementation proceeds, based on monitoring and evaluation data and annual Joint Reviews of the Education Sector (JRES), of which the Gambia holds two per year, with updates to the MTP brought annually.

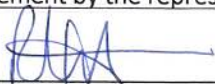
Despite the overall positive environment for reform, the education donor partners in the Gambia would like to emphasize the following reflections for the Ministry:

1. *Operational Plan.* The operational plan remains incomplete, and the Ministry has committed to resubmitting a complete and detailed plan by mid-December.
2. *Teacher Allocation.* A review of the remuneration of ECD teachers and the allocation of primary teachers is currently underway, led by the MoBSE. Further, the overall teacher deployment policy under the upcoming program will carefully review projections of teachers to ensure that newly constructed schools and ECD centers are appropriately staffed. As part of the upcoming project a revised community based ECD program is being proposed, and included as a key intermediate indicator. This will include a detailed review of ECD facilitator/teacher practices and policies.
3. *Monitoring and Evaluation.* At the tertiary education level, the MoHERST plans to strengthen the planning and research directorate to carry out the M&E functions, including the development of a framework for carrying out these activities. The current quarterly meetings will be expanded to include major stakeholders such as STEM and Research institutions, as well as higher and tertiary education institutions. The duration of the meetings will also be expanded to three days to allow reviews of all relevant issues of the sector. Also, the proposed Higher Education Act will also establish monitoring requirements as well as the overall responsibility and the mandate of the Ministry over the tertiary and higher education institutions. Finally, under the upcoming project, stronger links between M&E, particularly through the education management information system (EMIS), and Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS) will be established.

We are encouraged by the collaborative process in developing the ESSP and we look forward to a positive decision from the GPE Board to support the Gambia to implement the ESP.

Please accept this letter as our official endorsement of the Gambia's ESSP and our commitment to align our financial support with the objectives of the ESSP.

Endorsement by the representatives of the Local Education Group (LEG):

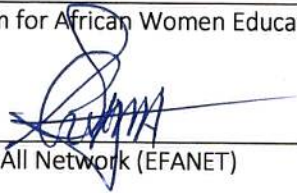


Mr. Rupert Leighton, UNICEF (Coordinating Agency)
Representative (a.i) and LEG Chair

Ms. Angela Cespedes, WFP
Country Director



Ms Yadicone Njie Eribo, Forum for African Women Educationalist (FAWE)
National Coordinator



Mr. Siyat Gaye, Education For All Network (EFANET)
National Coordinator



Ms. Antoinette Corr-Jack, Gambia Teachers' Union (GTU)
General Secretary



Attachments Links:

1. Education Sector Analysis - Final Version
 - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/ydu8tlad0q2ept6/ESA%20May%2015%202017%20-%20Final.docx?dl=1>
2. ESSP Final version
 - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/trxvo9xrh7bmqcf/ESSP%20Final%20version%201.5%20with%20Cover%20Page%20-31-10-17.docx?dl=1>
3. MTP 2018-2020
 - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/trxvo9xrh7bmqcf/ESSP%202017%20version%201.5%20with%20Cover%20Page%20-31-10-17.docx?dl=1>
4. Education Sector Policy, 2016-2030
 - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/8svyqq0pjr8qwom/Education%20Policy%202016-2030%20web%20version.docx?dl=1>
5. Public Expenditure Review on Education
 - <https://www.dropbox.com/s/3460ngk8rm6rsjg/Draft%20Gambia%20PER%20June%202019.DOCX?dl=1>

