

EFANet Conducts a sensitization campaign on the School Improvement Grant for Upper Basic and Senior Secondary Schools

The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) introduced the school improvement Grant (SIG) by abolishing all school levies (user fees) in public and grant aided schools in order to create free access to quality basic education at all levels. The SIG was introduced in 2013 at Lower Basic Schools (LBS) in 2014 and 2015; it was extended to Upper Basic School (UBS) and Senior Secondary Schools (SSS) respectively. In 2013 EFANet successfully launched and conducted the sensitization campaign on the SIG for LBS. Subsequently EFANet has again launched another sensitization advocacy for UBS and SSS so as to popularized the SIG and create awareness on the policy and its implementation process. In this regard, EFANet organized a two-day capacity building training from 24th - 25th November 2015, for the twenty-five members of the Task Team constituted to conduct the campaign on the grant.



Sang Gomez, Director of SQAD, Siyat Gaye-National Coordinator, Al. Mbemba Jawara NSMC, and Momodou Sanneh -SMC at the opening ceremony

To emphasize, the main objectives of the training was to equip the Task Team members on advocacy and communication strategies, share knowledge and discuss the content of the SIG and its implementation processes, and to develop key communication materials such as posters, flyers, stickers and banners with messages that will be used during the sensitization process. Additionally, the training also aimed at outlining the functions of the Task Team and to determine the composition of the participants for the cluster and community sensitization workshops. The team trained was drawn from representatives of different organizations and EFANet's members and partners. These included teachers, principals and representatives from

the MoBSE.

Furthermore, the Task Team members were divided into sub-teams of six (6), each of which was responsible for the sensitization of a region. Two other teams were formed to handle the media (radio and television) component of the campaign. The dates and venues for the cluster and community workshops were also identified at the training.



Task team members attends the Capacity building Workshop

Moreover, the teams were trained on communication and capacity building strategies such as participatory approach in order to engage participants in meetings.

During the workshops, there were open dialogues, presentations, question and answer sessions, performances by griots, singing and dancing by traditional communicators. The questions raised by participants were crosscutting. They ranged from supplementary books to the lifespan of the SIGs. In all the regions, participants were concerned with the SIGs covering only core textbooks and not others such as dictionaries, chemistry, practical and literature books.

As part of the sensitization campaign on the SIG, school ‘Bantabas’ were also held on the 1st and 8th of October, 2015 at The Gambia Senior Secondary and Nusrat Senior Secondary Schools respectively. A school “Bantaba” was also held at Farafenni Senior Secondary School. The objective of the ‘bantabas’ were to sensitize all stakeholders particularly principals, teachers, parents, students and the public on the SIG as well as to create an environment for dialogue between MoBSE, education stakeholders and the direct beneficiaries of the grant. Student participants and teachers from different schools attended the ‘Bantabas’ sessions which were further aired on the Gambia

national TV for more sensitization to the public on the SIG.

The 'bantabas' were divided into two sessions. There were general discussions on the SIG by the panelists and the audience also had interactive sessions with the panelists by raising concerns and questions to clear misconceptions. The 'Bantaba' also provides the opportunity for students as direct beneficiaries to seek information on the use of the SIG and how it impact on their access to quality education.

The community and cluster sensitization workshops were held from the 26th - 31st October, 2015. The sub-teams of the Task Team held workshops and radio talk shows in all the six educational regions in The Gambia. In each region, three different meeting were held at different venues. The objective of the workshops was to raise awareness on the SIG policies for education stakeholders especially parents, teachers, mothers clubs, SMCs and students. However, the campaign was also meant to sensitize people on girls' education with emphasis on retention, completion and performance of girls in schools. The discussion mainly focused on content of SIG policy Overall, 18 workshops and 18 radio talk shows were held with very interactive phone-in sessions in some quarters. In addition, at least 900 people were reached through the workshops and the coverage of the radio talk shows was country wide.

As part of the activity, the Task Team also called attention to the right of the child and Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) to education with reference to the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia. The teams also discussed issues of teenage pregnancies, child marriages and child labor with reference to the Children's Act of 2005 and Labor Act of 2007. In addition, they underscored how the SIG have eased access to education for the children particularly girls by abolishing all forms of levies.