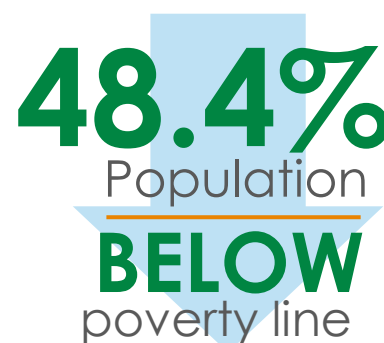




OVERVIEW OF

The Gambia

Overview of The Gambia



Languages

African, Mandinka, Fula, Wolof, Jola, Serahuli

Under-five Mortality Rate: 98 per 1,000 live births. The Gambia ranks 28 in the world.

Human Development Index (HDI) for 2011: 0.420 (ranked 168 out of 187, indicating low human development).

Brief History of ChildFund in The Gambia

ChildFund came to The Gambia: 1984

Number of enrolled children (FY12): 19,109

Number of states/provinces etc.: 5 divisions and 1 city

Number of beneficiaries (FY12): 223,223

ChildFund The Gambia presently works in 32 communities in the Western Region, supporting six affiliated program areas. With a presence in all nine districts in the region, ChildFund The Gambia provides direct services to over 19,000 enrolled children, of which 67% are sponsored.

Brief History of ChildFund in The Gambia (continued)

The Local Partners are being supported to become local community based organizations (CBOs) in their own right, with operational capacity to link up with the already existing Government Extension Services through programs in Health, Education, Early Childhood Development, Youth and Nutrition, among others.

ChildFund The Gambia attempts to support communities to meet the needs of children and their families in two ways: through self-sustaining programs and the provision of development assistance. Using sponsorship as a main funding source, the organization pursues other types of funding, e.g., grants from both bi-lateral and multi-lateral sources, through partnership arrangements.

ChildFund The Gambia program activities involve participation of all stakeholders/partners including grassroots community groups. These CBOs spearhead the projects with guidance from Federation Management Boards and staff, in close collaboration with ChildFund Area Offices and the National Office.

ChildFund The Gambia's Early Childhood Development program targets children from 0 – 6 years old in specific communities of the CBOs otherwise known as Federations/Local Partners: "Kaira Nyining" in the Kombo East District, "Ding Ding Bantaba" in the Foni Bintang Karanai, Berefet and Kansala Districts, "Eastern Foni" in the Foni Jarrol and Bondali Districts, "Kombo North" in the Kombo North District, "Kaira Suu" in the Kombo South District and "Saamasang" in the Kombo Central District, all situated in the Western Region of The Gambia with a total population of 392,987 people.

Brief Program Overview



ChildFund The Gambia's program has been evolving overtime. Interventions started in 1984 as a school base program providing a comprehensive support to children's education at the time. Later on, due to the need to fight poverty, the agency shifted to supporting individual community projects in addition to offering basic education support and early childhood development centres (ECDs). In early 2005, the various individual projects were merged into an area programming model. These were later amalgamated to form stronger community based organizations within districts in the West Coast Region (WCR). This move was focused on supporting the development of structures, staffing, expansion of program coverage into Federative child focus community based organizations and registration.

2012 Program Achievements

Infants ChildFund supported infrastructural development, providing teaching and learning materials, payment of fees for children, health care through the provision of first aid treatment and referrals, nutrition support for children in the schools in partnership with the World Food Program (WFP), funding for extra classes for children, in-house teachers' training workshops, etc. These interventions at the time uplifted the status of these schools to acceptable levels, and they were later graded higher by the Ministry of Education. The organization also invested and championed the establishment of Early Childhood Development (ECD) Centers and about 25 ECD centers were being supported, serving as models in the country. The organization also influenced the formulation of a national ECCD policy which has been successfully completed.



Children ChildFund's The Gambia education programs engage students' families and communities in the educational system, increasing support and accountability. Community members, including parents, community leaders, teachers and students, support their schools through participatory school governance committees. ChildFund works closely with these groups to develop school improvement plans with quality teaching and learning elements. Community support enables school staff to understand the conditions in which children and their families live so they can facilitate child and family participation. The committees also help identify risks and threats to children's education and develop strategies to minimize those risks. Community networks allow for advocacy, policy change and social awareness of quality education.



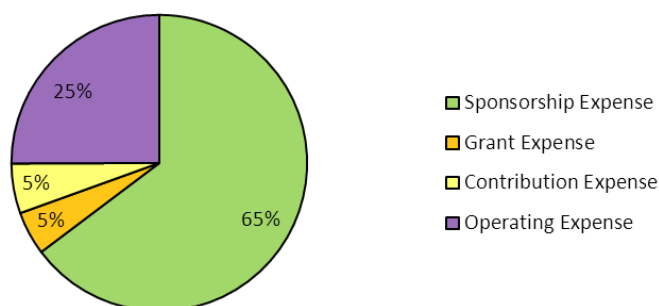
Youth ChildFund The Gambia, in partnership with its local partners and other groups, strives to enable youth to have the capacity to improve their lives so they may become successful young adults, parents and leaders. We provide youth with access to resources, knowledge and opportunities for community engagement, helping them to become self-confident, strong, productive and secure individuals. ChildFund youth programs give youth the skills they need to successfully transition into the workplace. Market assessments are conducted to identify business opportunities with strong potential. Youth are then given related skills training, which in turn leads to employment in a field with decent wages and in a non-exploitative environment. ChildFund The Gambia youth projects target youth and school dropouts from different communities and the training programs are geared towards enhancing the entrepreneurial spirit and skills in youth. Training sessions are funded by the federations through subsidy.



Societies In a bid to strengthen the communities to respond to their own needs, the community groups were grouped within the Districts in the West Coast Region to complement the decentralised structures of Government. These groups have become registered community based organizations. Going further, they have become stronger and evolved into federations. ChildFund The Gambia's role is the facilitation of community based development initiatives consonant with National objectives for a vibrant civil society, especially in the rural areas. This capacity development and support empowers these organizations to take up their own development by implementing programs specific to their own development.

Financial Report

**The Gambia Total FY12 Expenses:
\$4,171,452**



The Gambia FY12

Sponsorship Expense	2,700,299	65%
Grant Expense	198,760	5%
Contribution Expense	226,888	5%
Operating Expense	1,045,505	25%
Total Expense	4,171,452	100%

Challenges

Over the last four years, while there have been gains in The Gambia's economic growth, poverty remains prevalent across the country and the government has prepared a new poverty-reduction strategy, the Programme for Accelerated Growth and Employment 2012-15. (PAGE).

Youth unemployment is a major challenge in The Gambia and is estimated at over 40%. Several programmes such as The Gambia Priority Employment Programme (GAMJOBS) 2007-11 and the National Employment Policy 2010-14 have been implemented to promote the creation of employment opportunities for youth. PAGE (implemented in 2012-15) also aims to reduce poverty and unemployment.

Capacity is a real systemic constraint in The Gambia. The skills shortage is being compounded by a steady flow of qualified emigrants to other African countries, Europe and the USA. Rectifying this requires capacity building and the good news is that The Gambia Local Fund increased between 2009 and 2011 from 33.4% to 35.4% and 39.4%, respectively (i.e., over the next three years). This includes expenditures on health and education, which improve the odds of success in building and maintaining human resources.

The Gambia's social indicators remain low. The maternal mortality ratio (MMR) is as high as 400 deaths per 100,000 live births because of the distance of health facilities and poor road infrastructure. The death rate from malaria is 97 per 100,000 and the risk of infectious disease is very high despite The Gambia's 90% immunization coverage.

Child labor exists and there have been reports of trafficking in women and children. The government is generally supportive of development initiatives by NGOs and local communities. The emergence of the Pro-Poor Advocacy Group (Pro-PAG), an NGO involved in advocacy, has been an important development in this regard.

Other challenges for ChildFund The Gambia include:

- High dependence on a single source of funding (subsidy).
- Low grants acquisition.
- Low literacy level of CBO board members.
- Low community participation in Federations.
- Raising ChildFund's brand and visibility, i.e., inadequate effort to make organization better known nationally.

African Economic Outlook 2012, The Gambia, <http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org>.

Why Sponsorship is Important

Sponsorship gives us the opportunity to work directly with communities. It enables us to work with children as they thrive from infancy through childhood to adulthood. Great successes have been registered in transforming the lives of children. Here are quotes from two success stories on sponsorship.



Isatou, a former sponsored child and now a Marketing Agent

"I was in the sponsorship program since my childhood up to my college level. My impressions are that the program made a lot of positive changes in my life and I thank ChildFund for that," says Isatou.

"ChildFund The Gambia has transformed me from being a disadvantaged, excluded and vulnerable child into a bold, ambitious, responsible, confident, and educated young woman with a high self-esteem and a sense of direction," states Penda.



Penda as a university undergraduate