

# Gambia School Support (GSS)

Report for Term 3 2024-25

at 31 July 2025

GSS assists 13 community owned  
pre-primary schools with 1,837 pupils  
(age 2-7) with 75 teachers

The highlight of last term was the celebration of the  
relaunch of the Madina Talokoto Nursery (see opposite)

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*Ceremony to relaunch the Medina Talokoto Nursery – held on 28 April 2025*



*In Jan the school was dilapidated and run down with 41 pupils. Today the classrooms are restored with 115 pupils enrolled. The school is thriving and next term we expect near full enrolment i.e. 140*

*From left: Kemo Bah (GSS project leader), Liz Bailey (a good friend of Kira Dalton, whose wonderful donation paid for a solar water borehole, teaching materials, playground equipment and the food program), Olimatou Colley the Alkalo (the 'mayor') and Fanding Manjang who runs all GSS's construction projects*



*All the local stakeholders came to this joyous celebration which included much singing and dancing and the usual lengthy speechmaking 😊*

*The 'haystack' is the Kumpo. A Jola protective spirit who leaps around energetically scaring the kids and casting a message of discipline and community 😊*



# Project to expand the Santo Su Community School

The school has been a success story. Three years ago it was bankrupt, practically derelict with only 30 pupils and no qualified teachers.

Today it has 180 pupils and 7 qualified teachers. Its dynamic Head Teacher, Adel Gomez, is rated 'excellent' and is working well with our project leader (Kemo Bah) and the local community leaders.

Enrolment has grown rapidly alongside the improved reputation of the school.

- May 22 - 30 (before GSS started assisting the school)
- Oct 2022 – 111
- Oct 2023 – 147
- Oct 2024 – 180

## targets

- Oct 2025 – 220
- Oct 2026 – 280 (max capacity)

## Expansion plan

- today Santo Su operates 6 classes:
  - Level 1, 2, 3, 4 with 124 pupils
  - Level 1, 2 with 56 pupils
- by Oct 2025 the school will have 8 classes with 35 pupils per class, offering 280 places
- This requires the restoration of an unused classroom and building a new classroom
- Also 2 qualified teachers will be recruited and the classrooms equipped with furniture and teaching materials.

### Cost of the expansion program

- construction of a new classroom £5,800
- restoration of disused classroom £1,000
- equipping both £3,000
- a qualified teacher's salary is £1,000 p.a.



Adel Gomez is one of our youngest Head Teachers and has turned around the failing school which is now thriving (she's not as fearsome as she looks here!)

GSS assists 3 schools in Brufut providing 560 places  
Brufut ECD, Santo Su and First Steps

Soon we will have c.140 pupils leaving each year to go the  
Brufut Lower Basic (age 7-13).

termites eat wood so our roof trusses are iron  
(here our local iron guy is making them to our spec)



- 8mx8.5m classroom with verandah  
-work started 25 July, finished when rains end mid Sept  
- as it's the rainy season work will be paused when the roof is on, then finishing plaster and painting done next month  
- believe it or not the mangled Mango tree will grow back at a rate of knots and provide good shade!

# Head Teacher ratings have improved, Qualified Teacher ratings have slipped

- Head Teachers (13)**

A good head teacher is crucial to a school’s success and 4 of the 13 heads have improved their rating during Term 3.

However, 2 teachers are rated ‘Below-average’ and we will be focussing on helping them to improve. One is at Madina Talokoto so early days, the other has been falling short for some while. Though we assist schools not run them, we can influence their choice of staff. For example, last year at Mariama Mae (Gunjur), Kemo Bah persuaded the school to demote the Head and replace her. This has transformed the school.

- Qualified Teachers (42)**

Their average rating has slipped during the term after 7 terms of continuous improvement. There are several reasons for this. Three teachers returned from maternity leave or sick leave and they have ‘become a bit rusty’.

Overall, 8 teachers have improved their rating, though 10 have ‘slipped’.

Talking to Kemo Bah about this, in general he is well pleased with how the qualified teachers are developing and suspects that he may be guilty of marking more harshly than in previous assessments.

- Teacher Training & Development Program**

We started the program in 2019 and it now costs £9k a year. It is recognised as one of the best at pre-primary level in The Gambia.

Comprises one x 2-day workshops for ‘All Teachers’ and two x 1-day workshops for ‘Head Teachers’ each term.

These are followed up with regular on-the-job coaching by our team of 3 coach/inspectors.

We also fund promising trainees to qualify at Gambia College.

Head Teacher ratings – 13 HT’s	Mar 23	Jul 23	Dec 23	Mar 24	Jul 24	Dec 24	Mar 25	Jul 25
Excellent	3	3	3	4	7	7	6	7
Above-average	1	5	8	6	4	4	5	4
Below-average	5	2	0	1	0	1	2	2
Poor	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
average score ‘8’ excel, ‘6’ above av, ‘4’ below av, ‘2’ poor	4.9	5.5	6.5	6.5	7.3	7.0	6.6	6.8

Qualified Teacher ratings - 42 QT’s	Mar 23	July 23	Dec 23	Mar 24	July 24	Dec 24	Mar 25	Jul 25
Excellent	3	4	7	9	8	8	10	7
Above-av	6	18	17	14	16	18	18	21
Below-av	22	13	9	6	7	5	9	13
Poor	4	0	1	2	0	0	1	1
average score	4.5	5.4	5.7	5.9	6.1	6.2	6.5	5.8

these boards have been a great success and are now being introduced at all the schools



## UNICEF ECDI2030 assessments - update

### ECDI2030 (Early Child Development Index)

*- launched in Nov 2020 by UNICEF this is designed to collect data on children's development between 24 to 59 months*

*- it uses a straightforward 20 question assessment carried out by their teacher (see opposite)*

### Assessment program

1. *Each term cohorts of children will be assessed by their teachers and repeated at 6-12 month intervals.*
2. *Future reports will show how each cohort of assessed children at GSS's assisted schools compares to the UNICEF 'norm'*

	number of pupils assessed	date assessments carried out
pilot	25	Oct 24
cohort 1	139	Mar 25
cohort 2	109	Jun 25
cohort 3	about 500	planned for Oct 25
cohort 1 repeated	139	planned for Nov/Dec 25

### Results

*At this stage we are setting baseline's for the pupils when they start at a GSS assisted school.*

*In our Jan 2026 report we will give you a preliminary idea on how cohort 1 is progressing and then, term by term, the depth and significance of our assessments will increase over time.*

### ECDI2030 20 question assessment:

#### Learning

1. say at least ten words
2. speak using sentences of three words e.g. "I want water"
3. speak using sentences of five words
4. name an object he/she knows well
5. correctly use any of the words 'I,' 'you' e.g. "I go to the store"
6. recognise at least five letters of the alphabet
7. give you three objects e.g. three stones
8. count 10 objects
9. know all numbers from 1 to 5
10. write his/her own name
11. do an activity such as colouring without giving up too quickly

#### Psychosocial well-being

1. get along well with other children
2. ask about familiar people other than parents e.g. "Where is Grandma?"
3. offer to help someone who seems to need help
4. seem to be very sad or depressed
5. compared with children of the same age, how much does the child kick, bite or hit other children or adults

#### Health

1. dress him/herself, that is, put on pants and shirt without help
2. fasten and unfasten buttons without help
3. jump up with both feet leaving the ground
4. walk on an uneven surface e.g. a bumpy path without falling



GSS’s income rose by 55% last year

year end 31 July	income	expenditure	cash held at end of year	comment
			£65,620 at 31/7/2020	
2020-21	76,219	68,610	73,229	
2021-22	121,555	76,970	117,814	boosted by a one off donation of £65k from a Charitable Trust that was closing
2022-23	114,214	117,551	114,477	boosted by a £48k one off donation from AOT when we took on their 4 schools
2023-24	101,324	94,716	121,085	income diversified, £10k was our largest donation
2024-25	156,514 (£166,514 see the third point opposite)	131,053	146,546	several new donors, largest donation £20k

*GSS’s income is strong and well diversified*

- 3 foundations/charitable trust’s have made multi year funding awards which total £50k - £55k a year
- We have good relationships with 5 other charitable trusts who make regular awards to GSS
- GSS has close ties with the African Oyster Trust whose Chair, Lady Kira Dalton, lives in The Gambia and is consultant to the local team. AOT awarded us £10k last year and one of their supporters donated £10k in February (also via AOT) towards the restoration and support for the Madina Talokoto Nursery
- We have a long standing relationship with German charity Help in Progress based in Stuttgart who are funding the construction of a new classroom at the Santo Su Nursery in Brufut (£5,800)
- Rising Brook Community Church (Stafford) contribute £4k to the food program each year
- 41 monthly donors provide £23k a year, several of whom have increased their donations over time
- GSS currently has 418 names on its mailing list, most have been donors

Finances for the coming year (ending 31 July 2026)

Today GSS holds £146k cash. This provides the project with a surplus of £46k. GSS’s ‘Reserve’ is set, currently, at £100k

Expected cost of funding the existing 13 school project for the coming year = £122k  
(supporting the GSP (our implementing partner = £14k, assisting the 13 schools = £108k)

On 16 September 4 GSS trustees, Kemo Bah (local project leader), Kira Dalton (local consultant) and Yulin Chen (founder of the Be Global Foundation one of GSS’s multi year funders) are meeting in London to set the strategy for the project for the next few years. Kemo will call in via Zoom

Our conclusions will be reported to you in our Term 1 2025-26 report (sent Jan 26).

## Snapshot of pre-primary education in The Gambia

The Gambia's population 2.75m is still rising rapidly (1.5m in 2000)

Today about 270,000 children are 3-7 years old. The age structure is becoming more balanced - 45% of the population was under 15 in 2000, 38% today. Almost certainly due to improved healthcare and wider female education.

About 42% of these children (113,000) are enrolled in a pre-primary school, a big improvement from around 17% in 2000. There are 5 types of pre-primary school:  
25% are at State ECD (Early Child Development) nurseries. These are usually within a State Primary (Lower Basic). Class sizes and the teaching tends to leave a lot to be desired  
2% at Mission schools  
15% Madrassa - focus is on the Quran and Islamic studies  
58% Private (for profit) and Community (non-profit) schools - there are a few excellent private schools though most are poor quality. Community schools are mostly under-funded and struggle. GSS assists community schools only.

A 2022 study by IIEP/UNESCO found that only 4% of pre-primary school leavers were 'ready' for primary level i.e. about 4,520 pupils. This was a small study and the 'social' benefits of going to school were probably not included. However, it is now widely accepted that missing out on early years education is a setback "starting behind in the early years, means staying behind" UNICEF quote.

The sector is regulated by Ministry of Basic & Secondary Education (MoBSE). MoBSE are responsible for both Early Child Development (ECD) and Primary (7-13). GSS works with MoBSE with JV's in Brufut and Pirang. Recently MoBSE has issued a press release requiring all pre-primary schools to register with them. A school not complying with MoBSE's many requirements will be closed they say. A great many schools will struggle to comply. GSS is helping the schools it assist to respond. We expect many schools will struggle with this.

ECD is at four Levels:

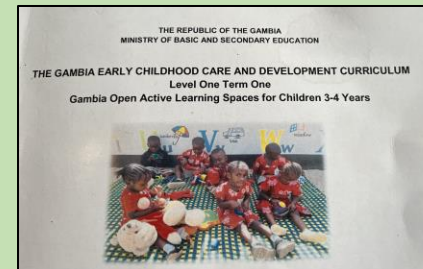
Level 1 age 3-4, Level 2 age 4-5, Level 3 age 5-6, Level 4 age 6-7

MoBSE published the excellent Level 1 & 2 curriculum in 2019, we await their Levels 3.

Confusingly their Level 1 is the equivalent to our Level 2 for reasons we won't trouble you with!

Gambia College run a 3-year course to gain an ECD teaching qualification. The trainees attend the course during the school holidays. This is a rudimentary training and considerable follow up coaching is needed. It costs GSS about £350 a year to fund a candidate i.e. £1,050 to qualify. We now have 5 in our program.

English is the official language and until recently MoBSE required it to be used to teach at ECD. Now the use of local languages are encouraged alongside English – the main ones being: Mandinka, Wolof and Fula. It is encouraging that tribal groups are integrated though the different languages are a difficulty to overcome - as you might imagine!



the MoBSE curriculum booklet we supply to every class and coach the teachers to follow



photo taken at the MoBSE Region 2 offices - from left: Josh Dale-Harris, Kemo Bah, Paul Mendy (MoBSE Director of Region 2), Nick Stevenson and Buba Manneh (MoBSE Assistant Director) We meet the Director each visit - 11 of the 13 schools are in Region 2. Kira Dalton took the photo.

## Gambia School Support (GSS)

UK registered charity 1176136



**Josh Dale-Harris** Oct 14  
Chair of Trustees & Executive  
former Senior Director  
at CBRE Global Investors

Role: day-to-day operations,  
including 'investor' relations  
and co-ordination with the GSP



**Tim Lodge** Jan 19  
former CFO Tate & Lyle,  
ran their operation in  
Zambia

Role: Oversight of GSS  
and it's strategic  
development



**Nick Stevenson** Jun 17  
Trustee & Secretary  
former Head of Equity  
Research at SG Warburg,  
Mirabaud

Role: Governance &  
compliance, assessing GSS's  
impact



**Robert Whitcombe**  
Oct 14  
Trustee & Treasurer  
farmer & former  
agricultural project  
operator in Ghana

Role: banking and financial  
arrangements



**Nicola Kelly** Oct 24  
Trustee  
Client Manager Ley &  
Wheeler

Role: promotion, use of  
social media and  
communication



**Ed Dale-Harris** Oct 14  
Trustee  
built schools Senegal, Sierra  
Leone in West Africa

Role: school construction,  
sustainable horticulture  
and permaculture



**Lady Kira Dalton**  
*GSS/GSP consultant*  
- lives in The Gambia since 2002  
- extensive local experience and  
connections  
- Chair of UK charity African  
Oyster Trust

## The Team

## Good Schools Project (GSP)

Incorporated Gambian Companies Act 2013

### Kemo Bah MSc

#### *GSP General Secretary*

- One of the foremost ECD educators in The Gambia
- MA's in Education & Public Administration
- 25 year teaching experience (8 as Headmaster)
- GSS project leader since 2019



### GSP coach/inspector team



Adama Camara



Alhassan Jarju



Alex Gomez

### Fanding Manjang

*consultant heading  
maintenance & construction*



**Mrs Ada Bright**  
Independent Examiner  
of GSP's accounts



**Fatoumatta Bah**  
assistant

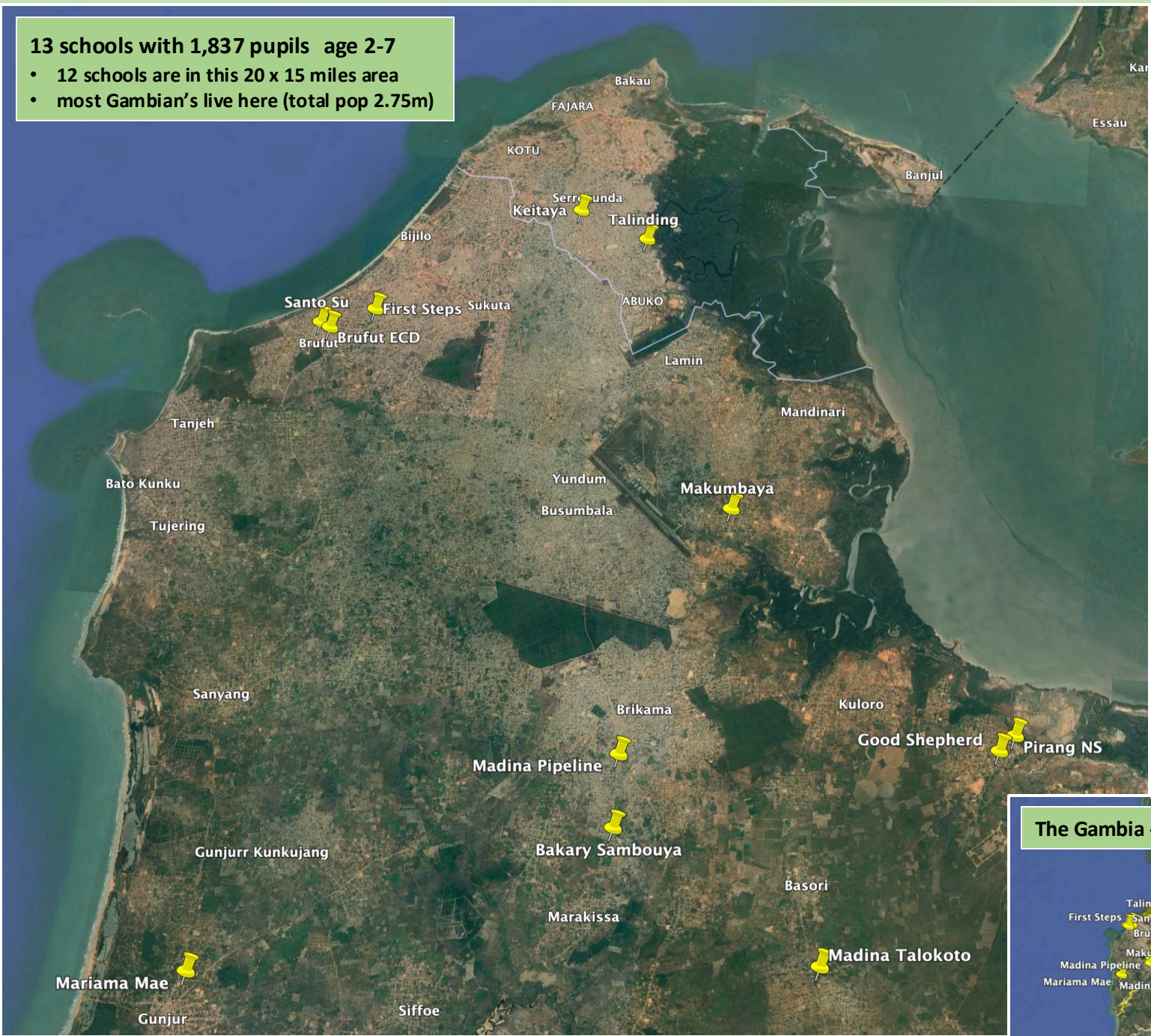


**Pa Gibbs**  
assistant



**13 schools with 1,837 pupils age 2-7**

- 12 schools are in this 20 x 15 miles area
- most Gambian's live here (total pop 2.75m)



School locations	pupils	Qualified teachers	Trainees
Brufut schools			
First Steps	149	5	0
Brufut ECD	139	6	1
Santo Su	180	6	0
Pirang schools			
Pirang NS	227	5	1
Good Shepherd	105	4	0
other schools			
Bakary Sambouya NS	230	7	2
Madina Pipeline Nursery	84	1	3
Madina Talokoto Nursery	115	2	2
Mariama Mae - Gunjur	140	4	3
HENS - Talinding	93	4	0
Stepping Stones - Keitaya	145	4	2
Makumbaya NS	120	4	1
Jappineh NS	110	3	1
Total	1,837	55	16

**The Gambia - 28 miles at its widest and 203m long**





## GSS's Trustees give our heartfelt thanks to all our donors

235 private individuals and the following organisations:

African Oyster Trust  
Allan & Nesta Charitable Trust  
All Saints Church (Fulham)  
Ashworth Charitable Trust  
Austin Bailey Foundation  
Arcadya Charitable Foundation  
Be Global Foundation  
BPL Global Charity Committee  
CBRE Charitable Trust  
CBRE Investment Management  
De La Rue Charitable Trust  
Frost & Willan  
Gambia Schools Project  
Greatham Nursery School  
Help in Progress (Stuttgart)  
Highclere International Investors  
Kambeng Trust  
Mad Hatters Nursery School  
Marie Helen Luen Charitable Trust  
Nakupenda Sana (Malaga)  
Palca Stevenson Giving  
Pat Newman Memorial Trust  
Philip King Charitable Trust  
Review Hairdressers  
Rising Brook Community Church  
Sage Publishing  
St AVI Foundation (Holland)  
St Mark's Overseas Aid (SMOAT)  
The Mercers' Company  
The Peter Cundill Foundation  
XPS Pensions Group

and brilliant Mike Willan of Frost & Willan who examine GSS's accounts  
and

Steve Watson who manages and pays for the GSS website



refuse collection outside  
Kira Dalton's house in Brufut

Gambia School Support UK Register [caharity1176136](#) - report prepared by Josh Dale-Harris on 6 August 2025

GSS does not hold any assets or are party to any contracts in The Gambia. GSS works through a trusted implementing partner, the Good Schools Project Charity 2024/C23843