

On Tuesday November 6 2012, the Government of Gambia launched its Capacity Development School Feeding Programme at the Regional Education Directorate in Kanifing, the country's largest city.

The programme has been launched in collaboration with the European Union, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and the World Food Programme.

The programme was initially assisted through the provision of 2.64 million euros provided to WFP with the aim of increasing the number of schools and children targeted by school feeding.

EU business head, Mme Agnes Guillaud said that from the experience of recent projects, it is clear that an interlinked programme which improves agriculture and nutrition at the same time is more likely to have a sustainable impact on food security, this calls for the design of the new project in the Gambia.

The 7.6 million euros programme, titled, *Improving food security through crop production intensification and school feeding programme* is part of the MDG initiative funded by the EU to accelerate efforts made towards reaching the Millennium Development Goal Targets.

In her statement, the Country Director of World Food Programme Vitoria Ginja highlighted how WFP has been providing assistance to the Gambia in the area of school feeding for the past 40 years, and the difference between then and now is that significant strides have been made towards establishing the foundation for a nationally-owned sustainable school feeding programme.

To achieve this, she said that during the life time of the project, WFP will share know-how and assist the Gambian Government to identify the most appropriate way to establish and manage the Home Grown School Feeding programme.

School feeding greatly contributes to increased school enrolment and completion rates, and therefore contributes to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goal Number 2, that of achieving universal primary education.

Ms Ginja explained that during the recent school feeding evaluation, the majority of parents attested that the availability of school meals is one of the major reasons why they send their children to school.

On behalf of the Minister of Agriculture, Solomon Owens, the Minister of Basic and Secondary Education, Fatou Lamin Faye, noted that WFP aims to handover full responsibility for school feeding to the Government by 2020, in line with Vision 2020 and this is a clear manifestation of the political will and commitment necessary to champion the cause.

She said since this transition would require a strong foundation with the right institutional framework for its successful implementation, an inter-ministerial coordinating arrangement with clear roles and responsibilities of key government ministries such as Agriculture, Health, Education and Local Government supported by the participation of development partners will have to be put in place.

It is for this reason, she explained, that this capacity building project about to be launched is essentially meant to establish the foundation for transition to a nationally-owned and managed sustainable home-grown school feeding programme.

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