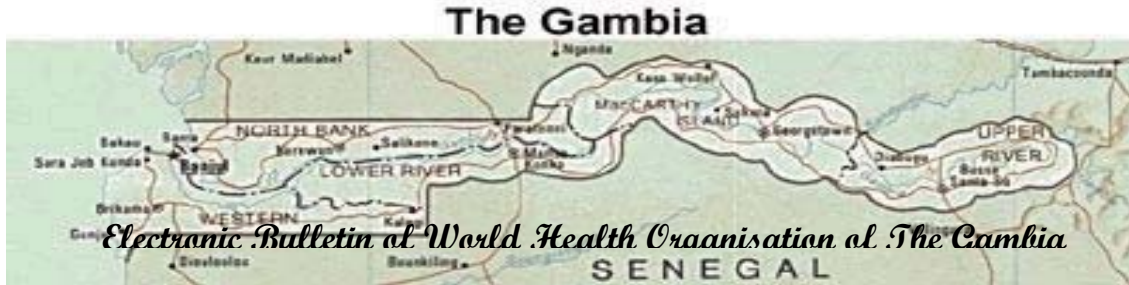




# HEALTH MATTERS

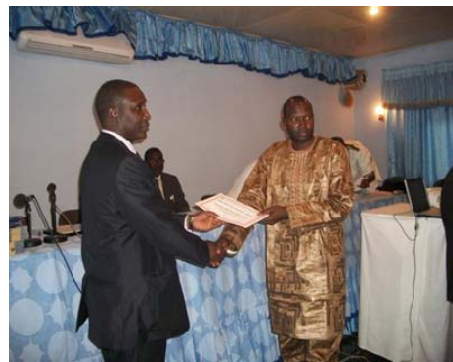


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## Education Authorities reiterate commitment to the implementation of the WHO Health Academy Project in The Gambia

**Banjul, 17 January 2012:** “We in the education sector believe that the learner needs to be given room for self-exploration and application of what is learnt rather than being a passive recipient. This is exactly what the WHO Health Academy Project is trying to achieve”. These were the words of the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Mr Baboucarr Bouy, at a recent ceremony marking the end of a countrywide inter-secondary school competition on the WHO Health Academy Project (HAP).

HAP is an IT-based health promotion tool initiated by the World Health Organization (WHO-HQ), which is being implemented jointly by the WHO Country Office and the Ministries of Health and Social Welfare and Basic and Secondary Education in a number of senior secondary (high) schools across the country. Currently, some Thirty-eight (38) senior secondary schools, with an estimated population of over **20,000** students, are taking part in this project which covers rural, urban, and public and private schools.



*WHO Rep. Dr. T. Sukwa and the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Bouy presenting certificates to Mentors and to each of the participating schools.*

The Permanent Secretary, in welcoming principals of the 24 senior secondary that took part in this particular phase of the inter-school competition, reiterated his Ministry’s fullest commitment to implementing HAP in the Gambia, and he therefore urged them to take the project seriously.

In conclusion, Permanent Secretary Bouy thanked WHO for providing the paraphernalia – computers, CD ROMS and training- in support of the project. He therefore assured and thanked the WHO Representative, Dr Thomas Sukwa, who has personally been very supportive to this project, that his Ministry would study all possibilities of incorporating HAP into the school curriculum within the frame of the broader school health being actively pursued by his Ministry.

For his part, the WHO Representative, Dr Thomas Sukwa, assured the education and health authorities that the WHO would continue to work collaboratively with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education in exploring all it takes within its mandate to promote the health and well being of Gambian children through the HAP and other appropriate health promotion initiatives.

Dr Sukwa said, because there was no loser in this competition, WHO was making a handsome donation of Desktop Computers, UPS Back-up and CD ROMS, backed by training of some one hundred teachers, to all the participating schools to sustain the gains already made. In addition to the computers, the WHO also provided certificates to all the participating schools and the teachers trained as mentors for the implementation of the project.

Meanwhile, Dr Sukwa also thanked the proprietors of **TIMBOOKTOO BOOKSHOP**, who have partnered with the WHO Country Office in this initiative, for donating core science text books (physics, chemistry, mathematics and biology) to all the participating schools.

Representative of the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare also thanked WHO for this initiative, and reiterated his Ministry's commitment to promoting health in schools through active collaboration with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, the World Health Organization, TIMBOOKTOO BOOKSHOP and other partners.



*Dr. Sukwa handing over computers and some Health Academy Modules to the Permanent Secretary (Education)*



*Proprietress of Timbooktoo Bookshop awarding donated core science books to School Principals*

Presenting the books on behalf of TIMBOOKTOO BOOKSHOP, Katie Pane thanked WHO for this brilliant initiative, and assured the WHO of her institution's support to this project and other health promotion initiatives in schools. She said that it was part of their corporate responsibility to support schools in this laudable initiative, and to partner with the WHO in fulfilling this mandate.



*Group photo of partners of the Health Academy Project*



*A cross section of students in one of the Health Academy Quiz Competitions*

Jubilant principal, Mrs Janet Kilanko of the Methodist Mission Agricultural Senior Secondary School, whose school emerged first winner in the competition, reechoed similar sentiments, and thanked WHO and the Ministries of Basic and Secondary Education and Health and Social Welfare for launching this rewarding project in the schools.

Meanwhile, it will be worth mentioning that the WHO Health Academy Project has indeed proven to be a useful health promotion tool in the country:

1. It has broadened and indeed strengthened partnership among WHO and the two critical Ministries –Health and Education – in pursuing health in schools;



2. It has set the agenda for discussing health and some of its critical determinants (as contained in the health academy modules) on the national/public media. In this regard, WHO Country Office has launched and it is supporting this initiative through an innovative health promotion forum “**WHO HEALTH ACADEMY FORUM**” on the national television. During this programme experts from the health and other sectors discuss pertinent health issues of national interest;



*Community rally organized by one of the health academy beneficiaries*

3. One of the participating schools (Farafenni Senior Secondary School) has started discussing some of the critical health issues addressed by the project with their local communities. WHO Country Office participated in a local community rally the school organized recently in collaboration with the local food vendors to discuss the food safety module/course of the health academy project.



*Each participating school benefitted from computers and UPS backups*



*jubilant principal giving the vote of thanks at the end of the ceremony*