



The  
STEVE  
SINNOTT  
FOUNDATION



TWENTY SIXTH EDITION

This edition shares the thoughts of some of the young people who took part in the Changemakers Speak Out Challenge.  
Inside they share their ideas on the future of education they would like.

# Engage



Changing Lives Through Education

*I'm gonna be everything, just you wait and see!*

- Ngaiam Kanu

# Jerry Glazier

---



## FOREWORD

April 5th 2023 marks 15 years since the untimely passing of Steve Sinnott, General Secretary of the National Union of Teachers in England and Wales.

The Foundation was formed to honour the legacy of Steve. We remain determined to make a positive contribution to the campaign for quality global education. I am confident he would not only approve the ongoing work of the Foundation but especially the content of this special edition.

Steve's passion, optimism and commitment in campaigning for quality global education is reflected in the many excellent contributions from The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Haiti and the UK.

The clarity of the expression of the barriers to education which include equality, peace, poverty and climate change also reflect the writer's aspiration, hope and determination. They also demonstrate the necessary liberating power of education.

These articles are strong motivators for the Foundation to maintain our commitment to the campaign for fair access to quality education for all our young persons wherever they are in our world.

**JERRY GLAZIER**



# From the Chief Executive's Desk



Welcome to this 26th edition of ENGAGE. One of our goals at the Foundation is to keep the conversation about global education alive.

You may remember that in our last edition we asked young people to share their ideas when we launched a new *Changemakers Challenge* – *Speak Out, the school I want to learn in*.

We are super excited that this edition has been taken over entirely by young people across the globe who we asked to think creatively about the theme of “Globally, do we need to consider whether our current education systems & curricula are best suited for life in today's world?”

Following the discussions in our last edition, where our contributors shared some of their thoughts and experiences of current education systems together with some interesting ideas on the future of education, it has been so interesting to hear what young people think about this theme.

We have had a great response and sadly we could not include every submission. Thank you to all the young people who participated and to their teachers, who, despite the current challenges in education every day, facilitated their discussions and supported their voices to be heard.

We have been blown away by the passion for learning that the young people shared with us. The diverse themes that are important to them: gender equity, health and wellbeing, preventing discrimination and bullying, the need for peace, climate change, good teachers and conducive learning environments. Creativity, fun and play are key to conducive learning and we agree with all of these.

It has given us much ‘food for thought’ and we know that some of these themes will continue to direct our work supporting access to quality education over the coming years.

We very much believe that the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 and universal access to education for everyone will facilitate the achievement of all of the other 16 SDGs. With 222 million young people without access to quality education there is still much more work to do.

It was quite astonishing to us that some students had not heard of the SDGs. As we are so close to 2030 there is much work to do on this, alongside creating a more just and equal world through the provision of access to education for all children everywhere.



There were several ideas which came out of this Challenge and it has been a great catalyst for further discussion and we are delighted that some of the schools have decided to have a day of learning around this theme.

Our core work is supporting educators to improve teaching and learning internationally. Our projects for the year ahead are underway. On pages XX we share a few updates on the project work you have been supporting.

There is much need for more fundraisers and donors, bigger contributions, and renewed commitment to building a better world for future generations. You can read about an easy way to support our work on the last page and you can find more fundraising ideas in our [fundraising resource](#).

Thank you to each and every one of you who are reading this issue now, to all of our amazing supporters, volunteers, ambassadors, partners and our staff for the effort they put into endeavouring to achieve *Education for All Children Everywhere*. Without you none of our work would be possible.

I hope you enjoy this issue as much as we have enjoyed hearing from these inspiring young people, who will one day be the future. I will leave you with Therese Jatta's quote “*Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all*”.

# The school I want to learn in

**THERESE JATTA, ST JOSEPH'S SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, BANJUL, THE GAMBIA**

Anthony J.D Angelo once said: *"Develop a passion for learning, if you do, you will never cease to grow"*.

Success is no accident. It comes from hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and, most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do.

First of all, what is a school? According to the Oxford Dictionary, a school is an institution at which instructions are given in a particular subject, or any institution for educating children. The school I want to learn in is the one that has a quality education, and this entails a lot of things.

Teachers are the most important resource when it comes to quality education. Not only teachers, but qualified ones for that matter, who have gone through the appropriate training and attained the required certificates to teach in schools. To begin with, education without teachers is no education at all, as they are the backbone of the educational system. Therefore, the need for good and qualified teachers should be well-valued, as we are the future leaders of the nation and we need the best education. Without them, students wouldn't be able to fulfil their dreams of success in their educational journey.

Quality education is not only limited to qualified teachers but also a conducive learning environment. An environment which is not overpopulated, with classrooms that are well-equipped and ventilated, with learning materials and libraries with modern books which can help us read and explore the world.

Moreover, I want to be in a school where gender equality is fully supported and practised. A school where our views as students are supported and respected regardless of our gender. A school where I would linger with pleasure and share my thoughts without being in a state of dilemma and pressure. Gender equality is vital and important, a school where my rights are being protected and respected as a lady. Although we might not be of the same gender, that should not deprive me from having the same opportunities as others.

Furthermore, as the saying goes, a hungry man is an angry man. Therefore, learning cannot take place on an empty stomach. Zero hunger in schools should be something that is highly prioritized as food is a basic need of life. Therefore, the school I want to be in, is a school that strives by all means to eradicate hunger in school. The need to eradicate hunger in schools is of great importance as we are all from different backgrounds. So, providing food for the students can help to ease the burden on parents who are not financially stable enough, to provide three square meals for their children daily. When there is zero hunger in schools students will be able to learn comfortably during classes and learning can go on smoothly without any complications.

In addition, I want to be in a school that caters for the good health and wellbeing of their students, as the saying goes "He who has wealth has hope, but he who has health has all". Health and wellbeing are one of the greatest things an individual can acquire in life. Therefore, the need for schools to cater for the wellbeing of their students is of high value as it can boost the appetite of the students to become more focused, because they are healthy and physically fit to be in school, and this can decrease the rate of absenteeism. So many students tend to be absent from school when they are sick, because they find it difficult to access health facilities. Therefore, by providing monthly check-ups, and vaccinations together with other preventive measures, this can make students really hungry for learning as they learn and stay in a healthy environment, together with them being physically healthy.

To end with, I want to be in a school that teaches me about climate change. First of all what is weather and what is climate? People often tend to mix their definitions. Weather is the day-to-day hour-to-hour condition of the atmosphere, while climate is the average weather condition of a place. Human activities such as pollution, deforestation, and environmental degradation are some of the major factors that can contribute to climate change and global warming, which is increasing at a very alarming rate. I want to be in a school where afforestation is highly practised, as deforestation is one major factor affecting our lives and the livelihoods of our nation, and the world at large. Therefore, the need to sensitize people to climate change is important as it is causing world concern. One possible effect is an increase in the warming of the earth's atmosphere as a result of the so-called greenhouse effect, and because prevention is better than cure, we need to come up with necessary solutions when the need arises.

In conclusion, the school I want to learn in is the one that helps in the improvement and betterment of education for our present-day generation. As educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all.



# The school I want to learn in

***RAKEY DRAMMEH, ST JOSEPH'S SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, BANJUL, THE GAMBIA***

I believe everybody should have a good start in life. Having a good education is a great path to success and schools tend to provide us with that.

But before hitting the nail on the head, I would like to give the definition of a school and its importance in our lives. 'A school is an educational institution designed to provide learning spaces and learning environments for the teaching of students under the direction of teachers. Schools help us with the education that provides stability in our lives and also shows us the importance of hard work, and at the same time helps us to grow and develop. For school actually means 'sincerity, capability, honesty, orderliness and learning'.

Firstly, the school I want to learn in is a school that will promote the talent of people for financial success. I want a school that not only focuses on academic achievements but also promotes the talents of people who will help both the person, the society, and the world at large, so that they can be self-employed even if they are without jobs.

Secondly, I want a school that will eliminate all discrimination and bullying. Discrimination occurs when a person treats members of a certain class unfairly because of their membership in those groups. This discrimination, when it occurs in a school, can cause students to have negative attitudes about school, and have lower academic motivation and performance. It can also lead to dropping out of high school. In the case of bullying, it can cause the student to be traumatised. He/she will lack self-esteem. It can result in depression, lower academic achievements and even suicide.

Thirdly, I want a school that has good and qualified teachers. If a school has qualified teachers, student performance will be outstanding. Teachers are the back bone of our nation, fostering creativity and building skillful individuals. A good teacher in a classroom is one of the most important resources you can provide for us students.

In addition, I want to learn in a school that moulds peaceful and just people for the future. Why is peace necessary to live in a just and free society? Just and inclusive societies are necessary to achieve the sustainable development goals



(SDGs). People everywhere need to be free of fear from all forms of violence and feel safe as they go about their lives, regardless of ethnicity, faith or sexual orientation.

Furthermore, I would like to learn in an institution that is able to promote good health and wellbeing. Health problems seem to arise out of nowhere these days. Health is more important than wealth. You can buy things, but with fragile health, days are no longer sunny. A school that can promote and protect my health, and the health of those around me, can help us make well informed choices, and enlighten us on practising personal and environmental hygiene, and vaccinating us, so that we can be free from sickness.

In conclusion, in today's world, with the hustle and bustle of city life, schools will be wonderful places to learn and grow if the qualities mentioned above are put into practice. Our journey through education is enriched by blending in play, fun and nature.





# Peace

MARTHA MENDY, ST JOSEPH'S SENIOR SECONDARY  
SCHOOL, BANJUL, THE GAMBIA



# The school I want to learn in

**HADASSAH E. M. MORRIS, ST JOSEPH'S SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, BANJUL, THE GAMBIA**

"A great career without a great education is only a dream". A school is an institution where knowledge is passed onto students for their betterment. A school is also an institution which is designed for learning and passing discipline and good morals to students. School is an educational centre but the school I want to learn in is an important choice. The school I want to learn in is a school of discipline, gender equality, quality education, clean water and sanitation, and partnership for the goals.

Firstly, discipline is one of the main goals needed to achieve in the school I want to learn in. Quoting from Google, "Discipline is the practice of training people to obey rules and it is also a code of behaviour". Being a disciplined student from an institution enables me to choose, persevere with actions, thoughts and behaviour which leads to improvement and success. If I attend a school where discipline is valued it will help me to stay focused on my goals. As a student going to school it is not all about learning, but it also teaches me to obey rules and creates a place which can build a future for me.

Secondly, gender equality is also another main issue. In some schools, a particular gender is not treated fairly, to be specific girls! People mostly have the thought that girls are meant for housekeeping and not schooling which is a wrong concept. Fundamental human rights like gender equality should be promoted in schools for a better learning environment. Education is a vital key and every single being has the right to it. Students, most especially girls, should be treated with dignity, love and respect because if they are treated like outcasts in schools, it will cause much harm to them. The school I want to learn in is a school that says yes to gender equality and disapproves of inequality.

Moreover, a school without quality education is like a sauce that has no taste. I will love to learn in a school where the quality of education is high and there are good teachers to impart knowledge to us, and not just collect salaries without doing their jobs. I need teachers that are nice but strict, teachers that will encourage me but make sure I succeed, teachers who love to do their jobs willingly without grumbling, and teachers who will always be there to correct me when I'm wrong.

However, clean water and sanitation is also an important factor to consider. Learning in a school where there is not only discipline, gender equality, good and quality education, is not the only thing I want, but also a school where there is clean water to sustain and promote good health and sanitation. Sanitation is having access to facilities for safe disposal of human waste, as well as having the ability to maintain hygienic

conditions through services such as garbage collection, industrial waste management and waste water disposal. If a school has these properties it will improve the wellbeing among students and teachers, and also promote cleanliness.

Lastly, I will like to learn in a school where there is partnership for the goals. Partnership for the goals actually means working together to achieve our goals. As the Gambian pledge says, "It is a combination of government and people working together in unison and harmony that will lead us to achieve the progress that we all desire". In order to achieve our goals we need partnership. A school might not have the resources to provide all the needs of the students in school, but if there are partnerships, like the collaboration of private agencies, philanthropists and well-to-do people, they will be able to sponsor the school or students by helping to provide for their needs. This could include technological facilities, reading books, and lots more, which will cause more hunger for learning. Without partnerships, not all goals will be achieved because the resources needed are limited but when we work together towards the same goals, we have the power to achieve them all. Sharing goals means sharing a vision.

In conclusion, the reason I will love to learn in a school that has these qualities is to turn into a star and future leader, that will also help others to achieve their goals without any complications in The Gambia, and the world at large. As Malcolm X said "Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it".





# The school and educational system I want

**ALPHA JOBE, NIORO JATABA SANKANDI SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, THE GAMBIA**

As a student, especially one from a third world country and learning in one of the most rural localities in the country, students' perception and demands on education and how they wish to be educated, may perhaps be somewhat less than what students in other parts of the world, or even other parts of this country maybe asking for, including myself. This is simply because, most of the basics of quality education are unavailable to us.

However, without the slightest intention of fantasising about the 'supposed' standard of education, and having completed part of my schooling career in the capital city of The Gambia, I have engaged with my colleagues on individual, personal and collective levels, to see what their ideas of education are and how they wish to be educated. I have merged these with mine to write this essay.

Disclaimer: do not be surprised that most of them do not demand more than their basic rights. To them, these are privileges and having them will miraculously enhance the quality of their education.

To kick off, a majority of us wish to have enough qualified, motivated teachers ready to handle relevant subject areas. We believe that we lack enough teachers, as one teacher teaching two or more subjects makes him or her ineffective in one or more of the subjects. There are several teachers whose performance in their second or third subjects are unsatisfactory.

Moreover, most of my colleagues also hold the belief that most of the teachers are not ready. In an attempt to explain this, a couple of them pointed out that teachers come to class just because they are employed as teachers. They don't have the passion. From my personal view, the government, through the Ministry of Education can improve the conditions of teachers. Teaching is seen as a poor man's job in The Gambia and thus most teachers are in the field because they have no choices. Motivations in the form of incentives can be a good form of encouraging them and thereby making them ready and passionate to teach.

As well as the issue of teaching staff, I would lament the lack of availability of standard facilities such as libraries and laboratories. We want a school with all the facilities we need in order to enhance our performance and opportunities. For instance, most of us have never even seen a microscope, and yet we have been taught the use of microscopes and even drawn and labelled them.

Furthermore, we wholeheartedly wish for the availability of stationery, especially books. I admit that there is a small



library in the school, but it has little or no relevant books for our syllabus. For our performance to improve, we need a standard library with books relevant to our areas of study, and even an Internet connection with computers.

The preceding paragraph draws my attention to the need for a science curriculum for the high school. Some of my colleagues revealed that they want to be medical doctors and nurses but the lack of a science curriculum has forced them to study the arts or commercial arenas, as those are the only choices available. We want a school that can provide us with any area or field of study we want to pursue.

In addition, we need a better environment than that which is provided for us. Our school's environment is somewhat noisy, as it is close to the road, and sometimes dangerous as we have encountered many road accidents at the school gate and on the way to school. The facilities are not well enough built to deal with the ever changing weather conditions. Extreme cold and hot seasons sometimes become very unbearable, and thereby rendering the environment not conducive enough for teaching or learning.

Importantly, we need a school and an educational system that promotes equity instead of equality, or selective ability/performance grouping. The award of privileges is driven by the fact that most of the time support is given to the better performing students, since there is not enough support for all students. I think the support should be given to those who need it in order to close the gap. But instead, the gap is widened when the entire focus is given to those performing better, and those that perform better do so because they have all the stationery and, in most cases, all the necessary support. We wish and hope for a school where support will be given according to need.

In conclusion, if these demands are met, I believe we can do better in our education to make a greater impact.



# The education system I want

**MUHAMMED BARROW, NIORO JATABA SANKANDI SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, THE GAMBIA**

My name is Mohammed Barrow. I am a grade 12 Commerce Student. I have some opinions and questions to pose to the education system of my country.

When I was in junior high my dream was to become a medical practitioner. It was like an undeniable dream. I grew to love science and performed well in it. I triumphed in all my internal and external examinations. However, the lame and centralised education system has rendered my dream in ruins.

I personally stand to question and challenge the Ministry of Education for not providing the facilities and teaching staff to have a science curriculum in our school. When I told our principle that I want to study science because my dream is to be a medical doctor, he unreservedly made it clear to me that the school cannot operate a science curriculum, since the ministry has not given any materials and teaching staff to handle this particular subject area. If one wants to do science, he or she must transfer to the urban centres. This was impossible in my case, as family conditions differ and I do not wish to discuss those here.

Unfortunately, this was my fate and I had to succumb to the circumstance and study commerce. Although I am doing well in it, it would have been better if I could have followed my dream.

My demand to the Ministry of Education is for them to decentralise educational developments and privileges across the country. This will enhance our chances of achieving our career goals.

Moreover, I am not the only one in this situation. A close friend of mine wants to be an automobile engineer, and his dream has also been shattered due to the education system's one way focus. The current system is very narrow and gives room only for a few career goals. A great number of students are compelled to abandon their dreams and look into other areas.

The system is not relevant to all career goals and this has to change if the government wishes to produce a diverse populace of learned individuals.

There are few that make it through the harsh and unmotivated system, and most end up getting stranded on the journey to self-realisation. For instance, studying a technical field in a technical high school, does not solve the whole problem for a person like my friend. Such students face the problem of furthering their studies, and if they do, it has to be abroad with exorbitant fees, and slim chances of scholarship.

The education system needs to provide diverse areas of studies to accommodate students' career goals.

This is the ideal education system I want.



# Let's preserve our world

**MUSA BANJA, KAUR SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL**

The world we are living in should be well taken care of by all in order to live in peace and harmony. This can only be done if we put all our hands on deck and protect and preserve the world. The world is like a human; it should be nurtured the way we nurture our sons and daughters to be good citizens of tomorrow.

Climate change is causing a lot of havoc across the globe and this can be dangerous to mankind. Still, people find it difficult to distinguish between climate change and global warming. The two are different. Climate change refers to the shifts in things like precipitation, wind patterns, and temperatures over a period, while global warming is the rising average

temperatures of the planet. The most threatening between the two is climate change which should receive greater attention from all of us.

Every leader from every nook and cranny of the globe should put climate change at the top of his or her agenda in order to preserve the world for generations yet unborn. Only in this way, could we have a safer place for our grandchildren to enjoy the fruits of our labour. Therefore, a concerted effort is needed to curb the menace for a better world.

The causes of climate change rely heavily on human activity, and is detrimental to man himself. Man keeps on deforesting the land without replacement. This could haunt him in the near future. The cutting down of trees for roofing, charcoal, fencing, and many other things, may cost us our lives or the lives of the generations yet to come. The burning of fossil fuels for electricity, and bush burning, are other activities man should avoid if he wants a better future for his children. If not, the future of the world is doomed and we may not have answers for children should they ask us questions tomorrow.

The negative effects that climate change can bring to us, if not averted, are enormous. It is responsible for the extreme weather conditions that we are experiencing right now in most parts of the globe. Other negative effects may include economic hardship, poor health, conditions and low level of food productivity across the globe.

Measures should be taken to address this unfortunate situation, and to have a world that is safe for all. We should start thinking about how to purchase renewable energy supplies in our homes to minimise, or even stop, the way climate change is hitting the world.

If not, it can cause a lot of negative impacts in our school systems. For example, in The Gambia children are eager to go to school because of the school feeding programme. If we allow climate change to hit the world, it will adversely affect our school roll, thereby causing many school dropouts.

In a nutshell, climate change should be everybody's business, in order to carve out a better future for all.





# Give peace a chance

**ISATOU SEY, KAUR SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL,  
THE GAMBIA**

Many see peace as the absence of war and violence, however, peace is beyond this notion. According to the United Nations (September, 2014) peace is more than just the absence of war. It also requires the need for concerted efforts to achieve the common vision of a life of dignity and wellbeing for all. Peace is key to the development and social wellbeing for all.

We should endeavour to give peace a chance in order to see a swift change. If this is not done, it can lead to negative issues, even in our schools. For example, it can cause loss of confidence and interest in learning, which lead to poor performance in students. A student without peace of mind at home, finds it difficult to stay in school and contribute in class discussions. Such students would be aggressive to both teachers and peers.

Peace needs the highest chance because it's absence can cause family disintegration and other social vices that retard progress. If families fall apart, triggered by the absence of peace, it can replicate at a national level. A disintegrated country cannot achieve any meaningful development. This can result in political unrest. As enshrined in our National Anthem, "that all may live in unity, freedom, and peace, each day", these lines should be read and echoed by everyone, to preach peace on a daily basis. One of the reasons why Africans remain poor is the frequent outbursts of wars. In fact, Africa is not poor. We only fail to give peace a chance. We tend to solve every misunderstanding with confrontation.

We can give peace a chance using different platforms. First, The Gambia being a religious country, it is prudent for our religious



leaders to preach peace in their congregations. If they do this, peace will forever reign. In addition, the school as an agent of socialisation can talk about peace during assemblies to change the mindsets of students in embracing peace. Furthermore, our politicians and tribal heads must show a high level of comradeship and tolerance in their activities so that their followers will follow suit to give peace a chance.

In conclusion, it is evident that without peace, nothing is possible in life. As a result, we should all endeavour to give peace a chance by making sure that all deterrents to peace are eliminated for meaningful development.

## Give peace a chance

**FATOUMATTA, ST JOHN SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF,  
THE GAMBIA**







## Give peace a chance

SANNA A NDOW, SUKUTA SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL,  
THE GAMBIA



# Give peace a chance

*MAMADOU SALIEU JALLOW, ST GEORGES TECH.  
JUNIOR & SENIOR SCHOOL, THE GAMBIA*





# A space to share our knowledge

## THE ICS SCHOOL, LONDON, UK

In our idea of the 2030 education system, there will be space to share our knowledge among students.

We want inclusivity in action, as we believe this will improve students' motivation. We would like to see improved competencies in teaching and learning in schools where technology and educational equipment is not so great. Students will become more independent and feel ready to teach what they know.

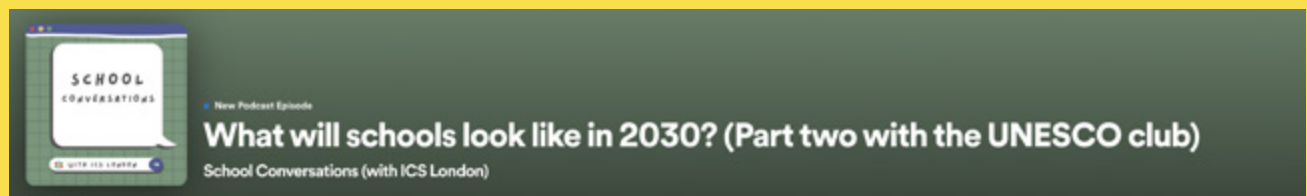
We would like to be able to identify what is really important because it would eventually reduce waste, confusion, and

offer a clear direction to school communities.

It is not going to be a very different education, but awareness towards common goals to improve the life on the planet will be a key aspect. Time will tell. The ICS school in London, submitted 2 episodes of podcasts which can be heard on Spotify here:

[Click here for Episode One](#)

[Click here for Episode Two](#)







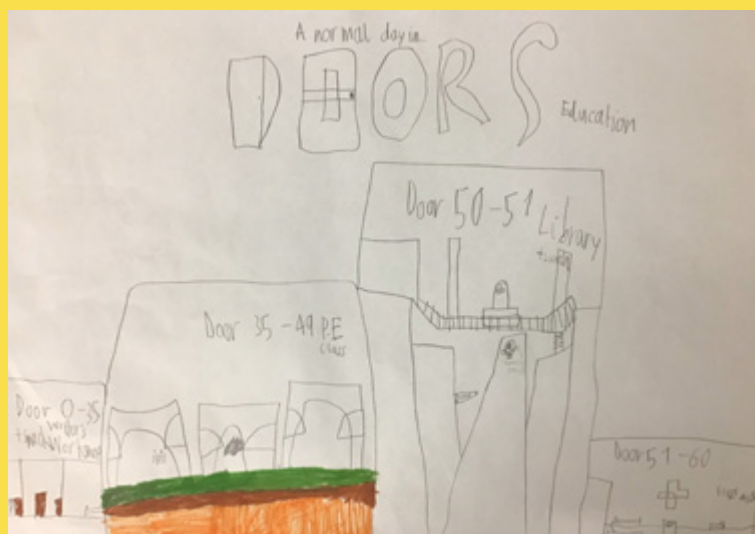
Ballet school by Alisa, Y2, THE ICS SCHOOL, LONDON, UK



Fun school by Ashmed, Y2, THE ICS SCHOOL, LONDON, UK



Sophie, Y3, THE ICS SCHOOL, LONDON, UK



Luka, Y4, THE ICS SCHOOL, LONDON, UK

# Our educational system

**AMADOU DARBOE, TAHIR AHMADIYYA SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL, THE GAMBIA**

Education is one of the greatest tools which can be used by an individual to change the living situation.

Unfortunately, most people, especially children, do not have this opportunity. The question is who can provide such opportunities to those who are disadvantaged? Poverty, religious and traditional beliefs contribute immensely to the denial of the right to education for children.

One of the greatest obstacles to education in The Gambia is poverty. Many families in The Gambia cannot afford to pay for their children's education, including school fees, uniforms, and books. As a result, many children drop out of school, or never enrol in the first place.

Poverty also means that families are often forced to prioritise other basic needs, such as food and shelter, over education. This can perpetuate the cycle of poverty, as education is one of the most effective ways to break out of poverty.

Another hindrance to education in The Gambia is religious beliefs. As the greater number of Gambians are Muslim, some parents decide to take their children to the local Islamic centres which are mostly poorly managed.

Some children are denied the right to education which is a fundamental right for them. Traditionally, most people believe that girls' education is not important, and as such they are either denied enrolment in school or withdrawn from school.

Despite efforts that are made to promote girls' education, the gap remains. Child marriage for instance, has led to many girls being denied the right to education especially in provincial Gambia. This continues to pose an actual threat to the wellbeing of girls' development as well as women's empowerment. There is dire need for proactive steps to be taken to address this issue.

There are no proper mechanisms put in place for the differently abled. The structures in schools are not conducive for the wellbeing and inclusion of the differently abled. Therefore,

this is structural discrimination against them. Even the way classrooms are built is not in line with good approaches.

In conclusion, the challenges facing The Gambia's education sector are significant, urgent action is needed to address them, especially in the rural areas.

It is crucial that all stakeholders, including the government, private sector, and civil society, work together to ensure that every child has access to quality education. Only then can The Gambia build a brighter and more prosperous future for all its citizens.





# The challenges facing our education system

**FATOU SANNEH, TAHIR AHMADIYYA SENIOR  
SECONDARY SCHOOL, THE GAMBIA**

Education is a solid tool in changing any given society. For there to be actual development, there has to be the provision of quality and relevant education in any country.

Although there has been significant effort and progress made in improving the educational system of The Gambia, there is still room for improvement, particularly in rural Gambia. Issues like access to quality education, adequate numbers of qualified teachers, as well as relevant teaching and learning materials, still constitutes a major challenge to the education system of The Gambia.

One of the biggest challenges in The Gambia's education sector is the lack of access to education, especially in the rural areas. Many children in these areas do not have access to basic education due to the lack of schools and teachers.

In some cases, children have to walk long distances to get to school, which can be very challenging, especially during the rainy season when roads become impassable. As a result, enrolment is commonly low in rural Gambia. The construction of more schools with adequate furnishing and in strategic locations will go a long way towards addressing this factor.

The absence of adequately qualified teachers means that many children are denied the opportunity to acquire basic literacy and numeracy skills, which can limit their prospects for the future.

Many teachers in The Gambia are poorly trained, which continues to hinder the acquisition of quality education that children need. This lack of training can lead to ineffective teaching methods and a lack of support for struggling students. This has in fact led to many students dropping out of school. Teachers should be provided with training to boost their knowledge and skills in dealing with students, otherwise our education system will collapse.

The lack of teaching and learning materials has remained a constant challenging factor for the advancement of education in



The Gambia. The lack of educational resource such as textbooks, computers, and educational materials, is also a significant challenge for children's education in The Gambia. Without these resources, children may not be able to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for academic success. To address this issue the government and other stakeholders should assist in providing, not just teaching and learning materials, but relevant ones for that subject.

In conclusion, the government, NGOs, parents and members of society should endeavour to create an enabling environment for the attainment of academic success by students. Failure to act immediately might make it even more challenging in the near future.

# A growing project working with primary students

## RATHFERN PRIMARY SCHOOL, UK

The year 5 students at Rathfern school have already started drawing pictures about how they would like to see education in the future, and these are displayed here. These are first drafts of the students creative thinking and they cover many issues, and they have raised many questions. So now they have decided to continue with the project for the rest of the term.

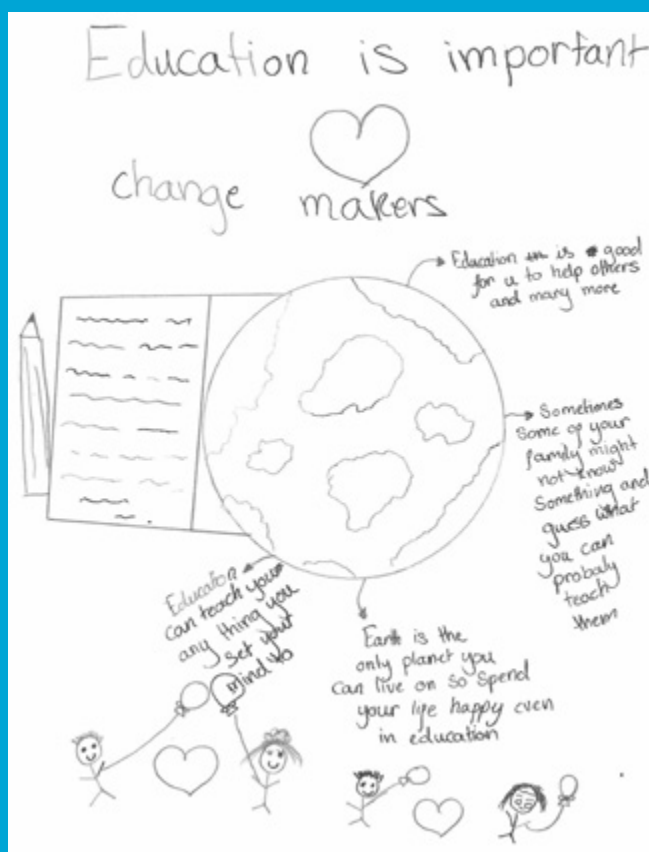
So far we have had two workshops where we have explored education, it's importance, the SDGs, where we are at today, and where they would like education to be in the future. We will have a day of learning in June where children take ownership of the future of education.

We have gathered all their ideas and will over the course of the next few months work with them to see their ideas into fruition. The main issue that came from our discussions was about race equality and how this is missing in the SDGs. These are the key ideas that they have identified and would like to create this term:

- The year 4 children are going to get in touch with a publisher and create stories that represent themselves. They would like to see more books published that they see themselves represented in.
- Creating stories digitally about equality. Write stories and poetry about race equality.
- Create a comic book that talks about race equality and where black people are represented.

- Make a digital story about fairness between boys and girls.
- Inclusion of boys and girls in the same games.
- They would like to see more chemistry related science and more experiments.
- Different styles of teaching maths.
- Create songs about the school environment.
- Support local people in need and to use our premises as a space for homeless people to come and learn or read.
- Write letters to the government about sustainability in schools.

Michelle Henderson-Vieira  
Nursery Teacher and Global Learning Lead  
Rathfern Primary School



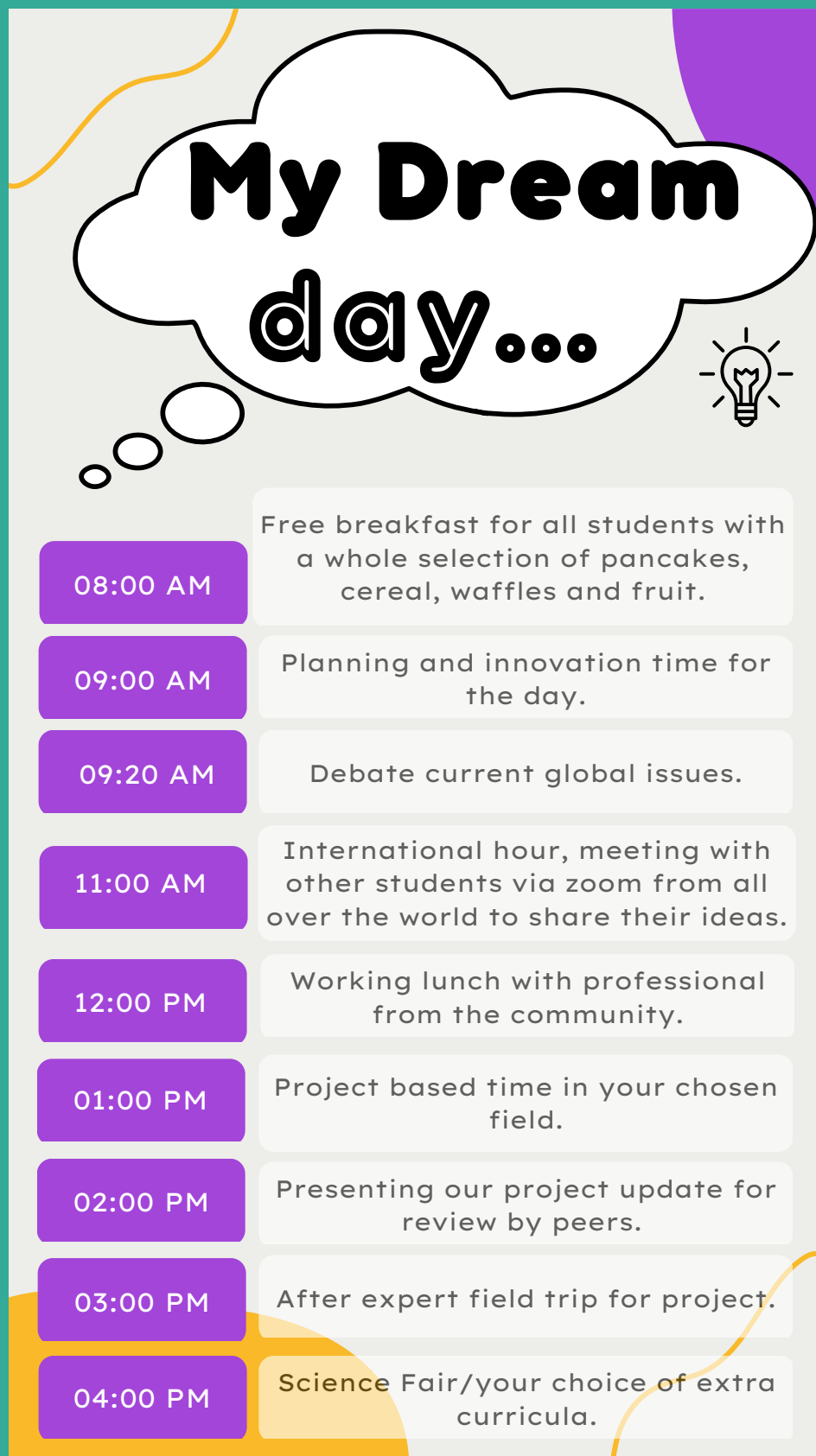




# My dream day

*DREAM DAY BY FAIMA ALI, DAMI LAWAL, LUBNA SARFRAZ,  
THE PORTSMOUTH ACADEMY, UK*

They designed their dream day collaboratively through the day.



# The school we want to learn in

*CIMA SCHOOL STUDENTS, LIMONADE, HAITI*

This video captures the essence of "The school we want to learn in". Their inspiring joint efforts created all of the pieces displayed in the clip below. This is their vision of an environment conducive to learning.

[Click here to watch the video on YouTube.](#)





# The education I want

**NGIAMA KANU, ROGBANEH GOVT. MUNICIPAL GIRLS SCHOOL OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, SIERRA LEONE**

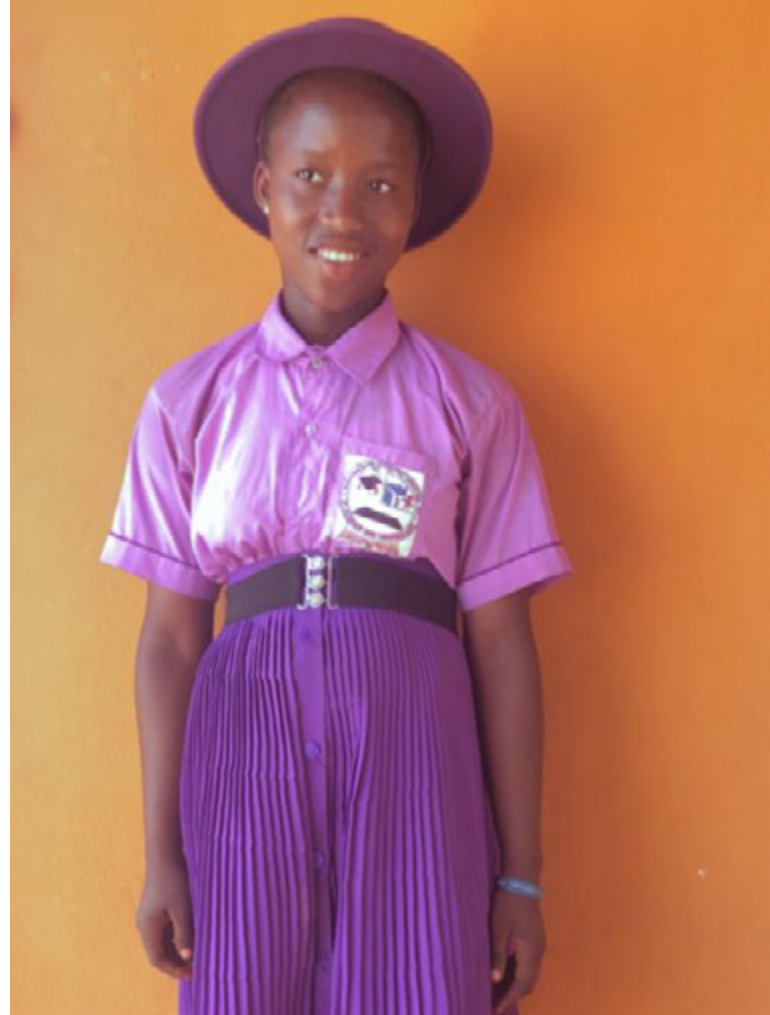
## WHEN I GROW UP

When I grow up,  
I want to be  
A farmer a teacher,  
I want to be a dancer.  
I'm hoping to stand on a stage and sing.

When I grow up, I want to be a lawyer,  
Or have lead role in the play Tom Sawyer.  
I'll be a comedian, and make people laugh!  
Or the CEO with a thousand staff.

What is my future?  
What will feed me?  
Academia or Creativity,  
A fashion designer or an engineer.  
Can I dream of both?

I cannot afford to go to school every day  
I fear I will never pass my exams,  
My future is bleak without free education,  
I'm gonna be everything, just you wait and see!



Music is an effective tool for supporting students in learning beyond reading and writing. Music gives students unique opportunities to express themselves creatively and build confidence. From maths and science to history, music can support any subject area and help keep students engaged in class.

Music education is vitally important for young people across the world. Music stimulates brain development and imagination, connects students with others, relieves stress and enables people to share a message or story.



# Coventry Schools and UNESCO ASPNet in Parliament

On Thursday 23rd March Taiwo Owatemi MP, hosted an event in Parliament to celebrate the work done by schools in Coventry. Coventry City Council signified their intention to begin the application process for all 133 schools in Coventry to join the UNESCO Schools Network ASPNet. This has been funded by an Economic and Social research Council (ESRC) project which has highlighted the way in which local histories can be used to empower young people and make connections from past to present and future and local to global. This work will build on the colonial legacies conference which was co-hosted by the University of Warwick and Coventry City Council as well as the UNESCO APSNet Connecting for Peace Conference in June 2022.

Ann Beatty, our CEO, is the UK coordinator for UNESCO ASPNet, we, at the Foundation, are looking forward to building strong partnerships between ASPNet schools. Together we will promote young people's voices being heard so they can impact their own and their communities' futures.

The UNESCO Associated Schools Network (ASPNet) connects more than 12,000 schools in 182 countries around a common goal to build peace in the minds of children and young people. Through concrete actions member schools promote the ideals of UNESCO valuing rights and dignity, gender equality, social progress, freedom, justice and democracy, respect for diversity and international solidarity. The Network operates at international and national levels with three clear priorities: education for sustainable development, global citizenship education and inter-cultural and heritage learning.

Thank you to all the schools who presented their high quality and rich and diverse projects to us: Lyng Hall, Westwood Academy, Blue Coats Choir and Bishop Ullathorne.

Speakers on the day included: Taiwo Owatemi MP, Shahnaz Akhtar, Research Fellow, Councillor Kindy Sandhu, Ann Beatty, UNESCO ASPNet Co-ordinator UK, James Bridge, Secretary-General UK National Commission for UNESCO, Lisa Hagan, Lyng Hall school, Samuel Roseveare, Director of Regional and National Policy University of Warwick.

You can find out more about UNESCO ASPNet here:  
<https://www.unesco.org/en/education/aspnet>

It's free to join and you will be connected to over 12,000 schools and colleges in 182 Countries, providing access to free resources and reciprocal learning projects.

If you would like to apply for your school to join the UNESCO ASPNet Network please email Ann Beatty [ann.beatty@stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk](mailto:ann.beatty@stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk)



James Bridge Secretary General UNESCO with students Westwood Academy



Lisa Hagan from Lyng Hall



Shahnaz Akhtar Warwick University



Taiwo Owatemi MP and Ann Beatty UNESCO ASPnet Co-ordinator with the choir



Trustees and Ambassadors at Parliament



# Project Updates

Here are some of the highlights of the past 6 months. Remember to check out our blog on the website for regular updates and more detailed information.

<https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/blog>

## Pre-election Training Sierra Leone

David Titus has worked as a school support officer providing training for principals and other teachers, he has served as a volunteer teacher and is a BAE graduate. Mabinty Sudan Bangura is also a graduate from Ipam, and has worked as teacher and with other girls' groups. Mabinty Fornah has been working as a lead facilitator in her previous organisation. Hellen R. Kamara is a university student who is pursuing a degree in Development studies. They will be going to schools and communities to train first time voters, youth and women.

Why are we educating people about the election?

In every election, voter and civic education are necessary to ensure that first time voters, youth and women alike, understand their rights, their political system, the contests they are being asked to decide, and how and where to vote. For an election to be successful and democratic, voters must understand their rights and responsibilities, and must be sufficiently knowledgeable and well informed to cast ballots that are legally valid and to participate meaningfully in the voting process and to both refrain from and keep themselves safe from violence.



## Mother Tongue Books and Alfa Kreyol Literacy

At the Foundation we believe that learning in one's mother tongue language and using books that tell contextual stories is important for a number of reasons. It is important for effective communication, better learning outcomes, cultural preservation, cognitive development and language proficiency.

At the Alfa Kreyol Literacy Programme in Limonade Haiti, the enthusiasm of the students is inspiring and contagious. Chancy the lead teacher told us that "more students wish to join now that the students have shared their progress and there is more demand than ever before for the literacy classes, sadly we are having to turn some people away."

We are proud that with your support we have been able to support the publication of local storybooks, designed by local teachers for us in schools in The Gambia.



More projects are starting in Cape Verde and Senegal this Spring.

You can sign up to our newsletter to keep up to date using the [link here](#).

## Guidance and Counselling Training, The Gambia

The Foundation supported a three day Guidance and Counselling Training for teachers in the Lower River Region, it concluded at Regional Education Directorate 4.

The General Secretary of the GTU, Marie Antoinette Corr, said the training was essential to build the capacity of teachers and she urged the beneficiaries to use the knowledge to impact the lives of the students in their respective schools. The Gambia Teachers Union (GTU) consider the importance of guidance and counselling in shaping the lives of students an essential part of their teachers' work.



## Special Education Needs Training

The Gambia Teachers' Union facilitated a two-day training for teachers from Special Needs Education Schools. Considering the crucial role these set of teachers play in shaping the children under their care, the training focussed on guidance and counselling, and the protection of children's rights.

Retired Educationist Sulayman A. Njie and Vivian Banjakay of the Gender Unit at the Regional Education Directorate 3, lead some of the sessions.



## SSF Young Ambassadors in The Gambia

Teacher Coordinators for the Steve Sinnott Foundation Young Ambassadors were selected from schools across the country and participated in training at the GTU Secretariat in Kanifing. The session prepared the coordinators for mentoring their students and coordinating the activities of the young ambassadors in their selected schools and across the country.

The Young Ambassadors will use all necessary platforms to advocate for equitable access to education and student empowerment. The schools identified for this phase were: St. Joseph's SSS, Latrikunda Sabiji UB/SSS, St. John's School for the Deaf, Banjulinding UB/SSS, Nioro Jattaba-Sankandi UB/SSS, and St. George's Tech. UB/SSS in Basse.

## Resource Centre, Haiti

Technology is one of the important tools that can connect our students with the Global Village. At Cima Hope Community School, we have a media centre that covers multiple branches where children and young people can learn about computers, languages and many other technologies. It's important to stay connected with the world to develop capacity and understanding of how the world works through new technologies and increase every student's chance of success in the world.

Rural schools should have the same standards as urban schools. A small country like Haiti cannot thrive with so many educational systems. We need one school standard for all children. All children are important because they are the ones who will lead us tomorrow. Let's do it right and do it completely.

Gabie Auriel, Cima Hope Community School, Haiti





# What can you do to support our work?



Sharon Crossman one of our fabulous supporters tells us why she purchased some of our charity gifts.

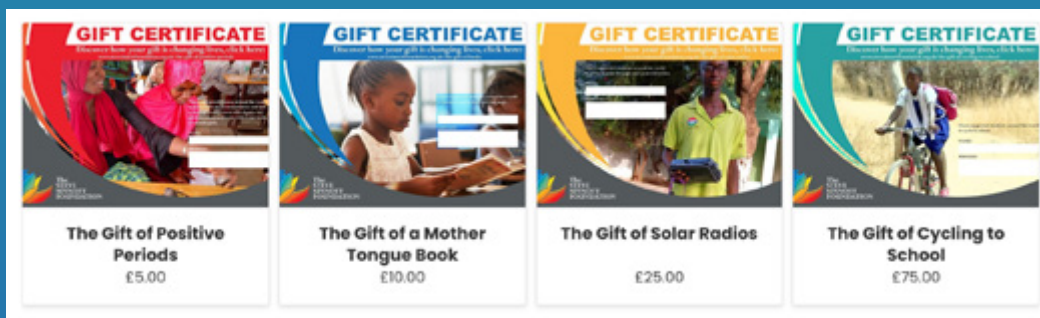
"I loved the idea of buying a bicycle to enable children to get to school and a radio to learn at home as Xmas presents.

Writing my Xmas list I had run out of ideas - many people don't need or want more 'things'. My sister, Anne, loves children and I knew she would love the idea of a child cycling to school

on a bike she had donated. Equally my son, who is a technological whizz, would be delighted by the practical impact of a solar radio in enabling a child to learn.

I was right - they were both delighted (definitely received a better reaction than to another wallet or scented candle!). To me the concept is so simple but a win for everyone - the environment, the children, the gift giver, and the gift recipient. A brilliant idea. I am recommending it to everyone."

<https://www.stevesinnottfoundation.org.uk/gifts>



The  
STEVE  
SINNOTT  
FOUNDATION