



International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Shalom

Education for All

May 2020

Introduction

“Every change calls for educational process that involves everyone. There is thus a need to create an “educational village,” in which all people, according to their respective roles, share the task of forming a network of open, human relationships. According to an African proverb, “It takes a whole village to educate a child.” We have to create such a village before we can educate. In the first place, the ground must be cleared of discrimination and fraternity must be allowed to flourish. (Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the [Launch of the Global Compact on Education](#) Vatican VA, 12 September, 2019.)



Credit CCO Public Domain

Call to Prayer

Loving God, at this time when the world bleeds from the wounds of climate change, migration and other issues, it becomes imperative that all be educated to act responsibly for the establishment of a just society. Help us in our efforts to educate with the conviction that the world can be changed through the transformation of persons.

Experience

The Gambia as a country has been faced with many challenges concerning education. One of the biggest challenges is ‘poverty’ which gives birth to broken homes and travelling through the back way. Going ‘back way’ has been a prevalent issue here in The Gambia. It means getting to Europe through irregular routes. The Gambia has one of the highest migration rates in sub-Saharan Africa. Many young people voluntarily pay money to risk their lives on the journey to a better life. Towards the end of 2019, a ship with over 150 persons on board left The Gambia, running out of fuel it capsized killing about 62 persons; the survivors were 82 Gambians and 6 Senegalese.

Although awareness of the dangers is continually spoken of in the country, some young people are convinced it is better to die trying than to remain home drowning in poverty. They fail to realize that you need education or skill before you go and live abroad, many who wants to try “the back way” have not pursued their education.

Isatou, a girl of sixteen in grade nine, from a family of five girls; said she never met her father, she only knows her mum and her other siblings from another father. She is always sad when others talk about their parents. Her mother has refused to disclose to her who her father is and has also refused to take care of her and to see her through school. She claims to come from Dobong, because that is where she grew up with her grandmother who is

struggling to see her complete her schooling. She confirmed that her grandmother rescued her from her mother who was maltreating her when she was in primary school. Isatou said even though she is now free from her mother's beatings, she is faced with hunger and hardship because her grandmother, who sells vegetables in the market, barely sells enough in a day. She is a very brilliant and well behaved child who works very hard and passes her examinations with good grades but she still believes that there is no good life for her in The Gambia. This is for two reasons. First, because of her family setbacks and second, for having no body to support her education. She said she struggles a lot to do some menial jobs to support herself in school and to help her grandmother to make ends meet. She is really hoping to travel out of The Gambia for a better living.

Reflection

"We are educators in all that we are and do. We continually choose ways of living and serving that call to growth. Responding to varying needs, we engage in a diversity of ministries, specific services through which we work for the enablement of persons."
(YASC # 23)

"Wisdom and understanding is better than having silver or gold."(Proverbs 16:16) "Nice and expensive items can be enjoyable, but there are very few things in life that can never be taken away, will never go out of style, and that truly make you a better person. An education is one of those things." (*What the Bible Says about Education*)

Action

- A world meeting endorsed by Pope Francis will be held at the Vatican on 15 October 2020. It has the theme: "Rebuilding the Global Education Pact." It is intended to be "a meeting to revive the commitment for and with the younger generations, renewing the passion for a more open education and inclusive, capable of patient listening, constructive dialogue and mutual understanding."
(Pope Francis, *The Invitation of Pope Francis*, Vatican, 12 September 2019).
You can read more about the pact at <https://www.educationglobalcompact.org/en/>
- Give quality time to your students; try to find out the root causes of their poor performances in school.
- Sensitize / support students to value education irrespective of the societal influence.

Closing Prayer



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Great Teacher, children need education to have the full and abundant life you came to give them. Bless parents and teachers with wisdom to create environment where students can flourish and understand life better. Give protection to children who cannot attend school because of conflict and natural disasters. Open our hearts to enlighten and care for children to reach their full potentials. Amen

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