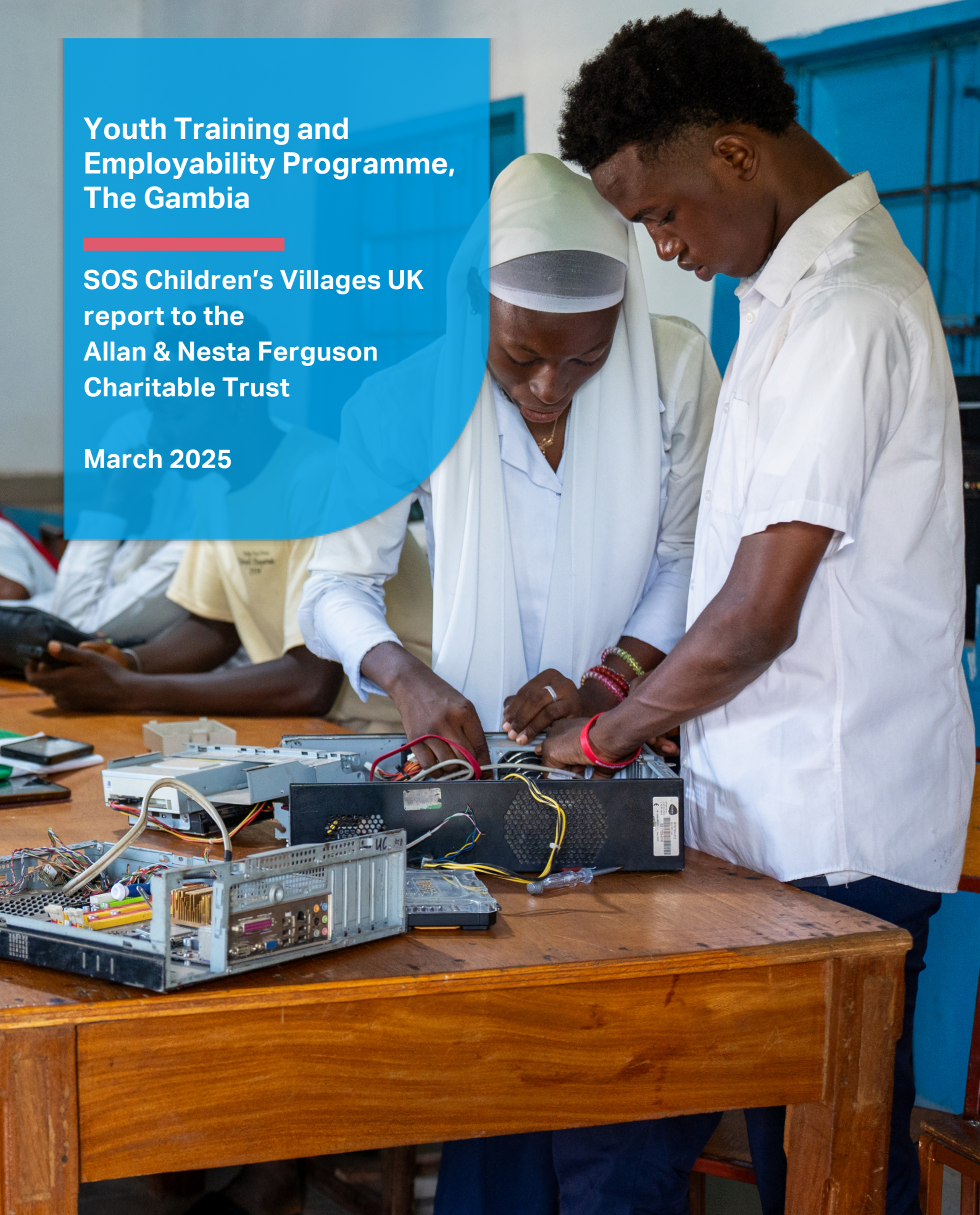


Youth Training and Employability Programme, The Gambia

SOS Children's Villages UK
report to the
Allan & Nesta Ferguson
Charitable Trust

March 2025



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES



Thank you to the Trustees of the Allan & Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust for your generous grant of £30,000 towards our Youth Training and Employability Programme in The Gambia, received in February 2024.

Your grant has helped 150 ambitious young people to gain the skills they need to transform their lives.

Project overview

The economic situation for young people in The Gambia is distressing: more than half of the country's youth are not in employment, education or training. In Basse, in the Upper River Region of The Gambia, 40% of people have never been to school at all and half of all adults in the region are illiterate. Many young people who want to study and learn skills can't access training because they don't have the basic education they need, it's too expensive or they can't travel to available training centres in other regions.

Women and girls face additional barriers to economic empowerment. Early marriage and pregnancy in Basse are common and 21% of 15-19-year-old women and girls have children. This severely limits their access to education and training.

SOS Children's Villages is empowering young people in Basse through free vocational skills and entrepreneurship training. Our programme reaches young people who need it most – those least likely to enrol in further education. We have a particular focus on educating women and girls who make up over 70% of students in the programme.

"I heard about YTEP and I said "let me try". Now I am working. People respect me. I love the job."

Fatou E Cott, 24, a Catering and Hotel Management Graduate, now employed as a chef in Basse.

Funds allocated to date

The Allan & Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust contributed to the cost of Year Five of the Youth Training and Employability Programme. Your grant helped to fund the following activities:

Skills training

150 young people completed nine months of practical classroom-based training in a market-relevant skill. Your grant of £30,000 funded the full cost of 27 young people to complete their course.

Students chose from one of five nationally accredited courses, listed below, and skilled tutors helped them to decide which course was the best match for them.



Social Work



Sewing and Design Skills



Literacy and Craftwork



Mobile and PC Repairs



Catering and Hotel Management

Entrepreneurship training

Self-employment is a vital route to earning an income in The Gambia. Students were trained in entrepreneurial skills to help them start their own businesses, including communication, risk management, bookkeeping, innovation, resource management and networking.

Cover image: students on the Mobile and PC Repairs course

The programme team makes sure that we give students the best possible chance of building a successful and sustainable business. They build partnerships with other stakeholders in the region to get insights on the economy. In 2024, the Project Manager engaged some national partners to deliver training to students. This included a workshop on business formulation from the Gambia Investment and Export Promotion Agency.

Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights education

Recognising that early pregnancy and marriage is a serious issue for girls in Basse, the programme delivers specific training in this subject. 148 young people increased their knowledge of Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights and know where to access further information. (Two out of the 150 students were unwell during the training and missed the sessions.)

Internships

Students who want to seek employment need to be able to demonstrate their skills. After their studies in 2024, students completed three-month internships. Past students have helped the programme to build an excellent reputation for hard-working and skilled interns and many organisations approach the programme to offer placements. Partners include The Gambia Tourism and Hospitality Institute, the office of the Governor of Basse, luxury hotels and restaurants as well as local hospitals. Many students are offered employment where they intern.

Students from Year 5 of the programme are now completing their internship logframes and will graduate in the Spring.

What has gone well in delivering the project

Programme Impact

We commissioned an independent review of the programme in 2024 and we are delighted with the impact of the programme. It is demonstrably increasing employment and self-reliance and meeting the needs of the community.

Highlights from the evaluation

- 75% of graduates are employed after training, compared to 16% who were employed before training.
- 68% of participants are self-employed after training, compared to 6% before training.
- On average, graduates are earning three and a half times more than they were before training.
- 70% of participants are independent and do not depend financially on a family member, compared to 23% before training.

Challenges faced in delivering the project

The review highlighted some areas for improvement that are already being considered by the team:

We aimed to train 200 students in Year 5. In total, 173 were enrolled in courses and 23 had to drop out, leaving 150 who completed their exams. The reasons that students leave the course include lack of funds to travel to the centre from neighbouring villages.

While the programme has been successful in recruiting women and girls and delivering community awareness on the importance and benefit of women's economic empowerment, early marriage and pregnancy are still a key reason for some young women to drop out of the programme. SOS Children's Villages has this year begun a women's economic empowerment programme in Basse to address this challenge.

Participants have cited a lack of start-up funding as a barrier to starting a business. We were not able to include loans or grants in the budget. Instead, the team tutored students on models of funding. They also shared examples of graduates who have set-up a business with small activities and grown by saving and investing small amounts of income.



"My name is Fatoumatta, I'm a disabled young person, but now I know that doesn't mean I can't do something for myself.

Thanks to Youth Training and Employability Project in Basse, I now have my own business, was elected a councillor for disabled people, won the National Heroes Award for Disabled Persons, and am working at the Women Empowerment Project (Orange House), where we make beads and diapers.

All I have and am doing now is because of the support from YTEP. Before people were taking care of me but now, I pay my bills, house rent, my shopping. If I was not educated or didn't have the knowledge I do now, I would be going out to beg on the street. But just look at me now!

I want others to benefit from the project just like I have. I will never forget YTEP."

Fatoumatta Fatty, Sewing and Design Skills graduate.

Total Expenditure Year 5

Activity	Cost
Delivering vocational, entrepreneurial and employability skills training to 150 young people	169,733
Sustainability actions to ensure the long-term future of the training centre in Basse	8,421
Promoting the benefits of skills training in the Upper River Region in The Gambia	2,803
Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning to inform SOS Children's Villages programmes	2,323
Total	183,230

Thank you Allan & Nesta Ferguson Charitable Trust for your life changing support of young people in The Gambia. We hope you enjoyed reading about the impact of your grant.

If you would like any further information about the programme or our safeguarding procedures, please contact Claire DeNetto, Senior Programme Funding Manager, SOS Children's Villages UK on 01223 222953 or claire.denetto@sosuk.org.