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NEW FORMALIZED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM LAUNCHED

On Tuesday 30 March 2021, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology in collaboration with the the International Trade Centre and partners launched the pilot to formalize apprenticeships in the agro-processing and construction sectors. The launch, which took place at GHE Campus in Brikama Kembujeh, was attended by apprentices, employers, industry associations and other key partners.

The pilot sees 75 young people from the LRR, CRR and NBR formally start new masons and food processor apprenticeships programs. Both programs have been designed to provide an alternative training pathway into employment and ensures that young people develop the skills and knowledge sought by employers in order to equip them to pursue their career in their chosen field.

Through the pilot, the apprentices will be supported by trained master craftsmen and will be independently assessed by NAQAA, with successful apprentices receiving national certificates. The food processor apprenticeship lasts 14 months and the mason apprenticeship 18 months. During this time, they will be training on-the-job and undertaking practical assessments. The pilot builds on the best of traditional apprenticeships but seeks to formalize the content, delivery, assessment and certification of the apprenticeship.

The apprenticeships have been developed by new Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) for the agro-processing and construction sectors. The SSCs are made of employers, employee representatives, and public sector and government partners. The development and delivery of the new apprenticeship programmes is a result of the collaboration and dedication of employers in both sectors, together with the critical support of GACCON and NACOFAG. Mr Momodou Ceesay, Managing Director of the Gambia Horticultural Enterprise, one of the industry partners, mentioned that “the only thing no one can take away from you is your knowledge and skills. Skills development is an empowering tool and supports sustainable national development.”

The pilot is facilitated by ITC in partnership with NAQAA and different private sector partners and overseen by MOHERST. Deputy Permanent Secretary Yusupha Touray highlighted that, “the Program is part of the National TVET Roadmap. The Roadmap is all about creating a robust and responsive technical and vocational education and training environment in The Gambia. The formal apprenticeship program is an important pillar of this system. It will help our young people to acquire the skills required by the job market. At the same time, it will support the key sectors of the economy to become more competitive and grow” he added.

The program will provide a critical pathway for young people to enter the workforce as well as an effective means for sectors to address ongoing skill shortages in critical areas. Yusupha Keita, the ITC Coordinator highlighted that “the formalized apprenticeship program will not only improve quality and relevance of the training but also facilitate access to skills training in the rural Gambia through the collaboration with master crafts persons.

The initiative is supported by the European Union through the Jobs, Skills and Finance for Women and Youth Programme implemented by the International Trade Centre (ITC) and the United Nation Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) in close collaboration with the Government of The Gambia.



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