



MTHE Meets with EU Ambassador to SL

18th July, 2024

The Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MTHE) has held a crucial meeting with European Union Ambassador to Sierra Leone (SL), H.E. Manuel Alexander Muller, seeking support for its (MTHE's) Technical, Vocational, Education and Training (TVET) subsector. This meeting underscored the strides made in the TVET area and the pressing need for continued support to further enhance its impact.

MTHE's Minister, Dr. Haja Ramatulai Wurie, highlighted several achievements of the TVET subsector. She proudly announced that MTHE has made significant progress with the implementation of the World Bank Funded Skills Development Project (SDP), which ended in June 2024. Through this project, the Ministry was able to successfully train about 20,000 individuals, with 49% of them being women, in diverse skills across the country. This achievement is a testament to MTHE's commitment to promoting gender equality in the workforce.



She further stated that the SDP had also supported the institutional strengthening of the National Council for Technical, Vocational and other Academic Awards (NCTVA), including the review of the NCTVA Act. This had been crucial in ensuring the effective management and regulation of TVET institutions in the country. Dr. Wurie also announced the operationalization of 11 Government Technical Institutes (GTIs) in 10 districts across Sierra Leone. However, she emphasized the urgency for the remaining 6 districts (Bombali, Portloko, Bonthe, Karene, Falaba, and Koindu) to have their own GTIs as well. This, she believed, would provide more opportunities for the youth in these districts to acquire technical and vocational skills.

The Minister went on to inform the representatives that Cabinet has approved the transformation of the GTIs into community colleges. These colleges would maintain the delivery of TVET training and be affiliated with universities for the award of degrees. This move is a major step towards ensuring that TVET graduates are not only equipped with practical skills but also with higher educational qualifications.

Dr. Wurie also mentioned that MTHE has taken a proactive step in conducting a labor market survey to ensure that skills development is targeted at meeting the existing needs of the labor market. This would help bridge the gap between the skills of TVET graduates and the demands of the labor market, ultimately reducing the rate of unemployment in the country.

The Minister then turned her focus to the policies that had been developed to strengthen the capacity of the TVET subsector. These included the TVET Policy, the Dual Apprenticeship Policy, Quality Management System, and National Qualifications Framework. These policies aim to improve the overall quality of TVET education in the country and ensure that the needs of both the students and the labor market are met.

She then highlighted the following key areas of possible support from EU to MTHE:

- Establishment of 5 TVET centres of Excellence (1 in each region of Sierra Leone)
- Enhancement of NCTVA and MTHE's capacity across the country for effective TVET delivery and sustainability
- Strengthening of the capacity of TVET policy implementation
- And development of a framework for sustainable TVET financing

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MTHE's Director of TVET, Abdul Senesie, emphasized the need for EU's involvement in making the TVET subsector more attractive. He highlighted some of the challenges faced by the TVET subsector in Sierra Leone, noting that despite Government's efforts in improving the quality of technical education, the subsector still lacks the necessary resources and infrastructure. He further stated that the indirect support provided by EU through various agencies had not yielded the desired results, stressing that the agencies often dictate the direction and goals for the TVET subsector, without consulting the key stakeholders. This, he said, has resulted in a lack of alignment between the agencies' objectives and the actual needs of the TVET subsector.

MTHE's Director of Research, Planning and Development, Sia Fasuluku, spoke about the Erasmus+ programme, noting that there is a great need for the popularization of the programme in all parts of Sierra Leone, especially among students. To achieve this, she proposed a plan to hold university info-sessions, targeting one university at a time in order to properly raise awareness among the student populace about the Erasmus+ programme. She pointed out that Sierra Leone is eligible for six actions of the Erasmus+ programme, but since the country is pushing towards TVET, they should focus on the action for "Capacity Building on TVET, Capacity for Higher Education, and the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Programme." She stressed the importance of creating an alumni association, as there are now many Sierra Leoneans who have received these scholarships and could serve as valuable resources for future students.

She further shared that MTHE had also developed a Post-Secondary Inclusive Disability Policy that needs to be widely publicized, adding that one of the policy's recommendations is to have a disability unit in all tertiary institutions, using the disability unit at Fourah Bay College as a prototype that could be replicated in other institutions. She emphasized that while promoting the Erasmus+ programme, MTHE would also be bringing awareness to disability issues, and advocated for the inclusion of more women in the sciences to participate in the programme.

MTHE's Director of Science Education, Fatmata Kaiwa, highlighted the challenges faced by tertiary institutions in the country, acknowledging that one of the significant obstacles hindering the growth of science education in Sierra Leone is the lack of adequate laboratory equipment. She stressed that if the country wants to encourage students to pursue science options, it is imperative to have the necessary equipment. She also pointed out that sophisticated equipment requires trained technicians to operate them effectively.

She further mentioned that through collaboration with the Science Granting Initiative for Sub-Saharan Africa, the National Science Technology and Innovation Council was able to secure funds from the African Centre for Technology Studies to support research. However, she pointed out some of the challenges with the Grant Management System for these grants, noting that the current system provided by the Uganda Council for Science and Technology is not suitable for the Sierra Leone Science Council; hence, they are working towards developing their own grant management system to receive calls, process proposals, and award grants efficiently. However, it requires the council members to be trained on using the grant management system effectively.

EU's Ambassador to Sierra Leone, H.E. Manuel Alexander Muller, expressed his gratitude to the MTHE team for their warm reception and the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the Ministry's priorities. He emphasized the importance of investing in the country's youth as it is an investment in the future. Ambassador Muller also commended MTHE for their dedication to building the human capital of Sierra Leone, and encouraged them to maintain close communication with the EU Delegation.



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