



ISSUE 04 / VOL 001 / NOVEMBER 2019

Our Reform

Our Reform is a bi-monthly newsletter from the Office of National Security that seeks to keep the Security Sector informed with regard to Security Sector Reform process in The Gambia.

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MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER

It is my pleasure to welcome you to yet another edition of Our Reform newsletter. The past two months since the last edition have been replete with activities geared towards enfolding the gains made by the SSR project since its inception in December 2017. In this regard, the EU organized a multi stakeholder roundtable on future SSR support to The Gambia in the final quarter of October 2019 and the UN on the request of the GoTG also organized a dialogue on the coordination of international assistance to the national SSR process in the middle of November 2019. Furthermore, the PSS Project is planning to undertake a coordination mission to The Gambia from the 9th- 13th December.

All of these initiatives intended to assess the achievements of the activities implemented under the SSR project throughout the period from its inception seeks to harness the gains made in order to pave a way forward on the on-going project. This is good as it gives us time to pause and reflect on the broader SSR picture.

Essentially, many reforms are intangible in nature. In fact, the real reforms of the security sector are not big managed activities, as the most difficult reforms are often those that relate to behavioural and attitudinal change. It augurs well to say that with the absence of ex-President Jammeh, the staff across the security sector were released to behave differently; and the evidence is that they have been behaving well. The country should be proud.

An absence of local ownership of SSR in post-authoritarian countries is largely as a result of capacity gaps on the part of local actors. This was clearly outlined in the SSR Assessment Report produced in 2018 after a lengthy situational and institutional assessment of the security sector of The Gambia.

This lack of capacity is exactly the problem that SSR is meant to address. If the security of citizens in a given country is to be enhanced, and if the provision of security is to conform to democratic norms, then it is essential to build the capacity and legitimacy of the institutions and actors that comprise the security sector in that country.

The difficulties of state building and transformation cannot be underestimated. The imperative of local ownership is both a matter of respect and a pragmatic necessity. The bottom line is that reforms that are not shaped and driven by local actors are unlikely to be implemented properly and sustained. In the absence of local ownership, SSR is bound to fail. Local ownership is therefore more than an important theme. It should constitute the fundamental framework and point of departure for security reform. It should be a primary objective and outcome of all external programmes to support SSR.

On this note, I thank you once again and wish you enjoyable reading of some of the giant strides being made in the SSR process of our beloved country, The Gambia.



**Momodou Badjie, National Security Adviser
Office of National Security**

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SSR should serve the interests of citizens in four ways. First, it should ensure that the security services respect human rights and are not themselves a threat to citizens. Second, it should lead to the government and the security services becoming more responsive to the security concerns of citizens. Third, it should enhance public safety by raising the efficiency and effectiveness of the security services and related institutions. Fourth, it should attend to the needs of the most vulnerable groups in society.

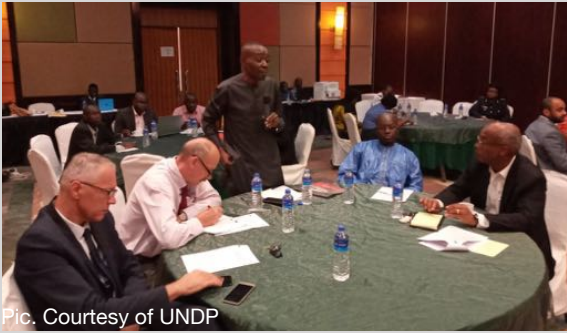
All of these attest to the undisputed fact that SSR is both a democratic project and a democratising project. Yet, whereas it has its technical components, it is not a purely technical endeavour itself as it is not simply concerned with making the security services more efficient and effective. The democratic and democratising nature of SSR is a theme that pervades this edition of Our Reform newsletter.

The underlying assumption is not that local actors will necessarily develop good policies. Rather, the assumption is that a process-oriented approach that respects and empowers local actors is more likely to yield good results in the long-term than a product-oriented approach that undermines local actors and is not sustainable. In alignment with this veritable reality is the overarching message of this 4th edition of Our Reform newsletter.

Happy reading!

- Rohey Samba-JALLOW
Communication Strategist for SSR

DIALOGUE ON THE COORDINATION OF INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE OF THE NATIONAL SECURITY SECTOR REFORM (SSR) PROCESS IN THE GAMBIA



Pic. Courtesy of UNDP

November 26th, 2019

Donor support for SSR “seeks to increase the ability of partner countries to meet the range of security needs within their societies in a manner consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of governance and the rule of law”. It was on this premise that the government of The Gambia requested the support of the UN to organize a dialogue on the coordination of international assistance to the national SSR process. The event brought together national and international stakeholders to exchange views on current coordination challenges and agree on ways to ensure that international assistance to SSR is fully aligned to short and long term national priorities; and also enhance predictability and harmonization of international support to SSR. This included mapping of current assistance and identifying tools and mechanisms for joint analysis, planning, implementation, as well as monitoring, reporting and evaluation.

LAUNCH OF SSR HANDBOOK

DCAF-The Gambia with support from the European Union on Tuesday, 26th November, 2019 launched an SSR Handbook for Gambian journalists to assist in reporting on the SSR process in The Gambia. Development and publication of a standard of this nature has not been previously attempted and successful adoption will change the process of how journalists assess SSR issues, thus providing them with the means to understand SSR governance and report accurately on .



Pic. Courtesy of DCAF



LAUNCHING OF GPF FEMALE NETWORK

The Gambia Police Force on Saturday, 23rd November, 2019, launched its first ever female network . The main objective of the network is to create a platform for

female officers to network and collaborate within the Police in a bid to mainstream gender issues within the Police Force. For successful SSR, it is imperative to mainstream gender. A 3-stage capacity building program, sponsored by UNDP, was designed to address gender gaps and ensure that the existing nature of the security sector structures, which are largely insensitive to the diverse needs of service men and women alike, are efficiently and effectively transformed. The advance course on gender responsive SSR was completed in July 18, 2019.



Pic. Courtesy of GPF

EU Strategic Vision to Support the Security Sector Reform in The Gambia.



Panel discussions

Multi-stakeholder roundtable on future SSR support

The European Union Delegation to The Gambia organized a multi-stakeholder roundtable on Wednesday 30th October 2019 requesting security institutions among other stakeholders to prepare a briefing to articulate their institution's vision for SSR in the Gambia to present at the roundtable. The roundtable was geared towards enhancing

understanding of some of the main challenges within the Gambia's SSR process. The platform gave participants the opportunity to harness strategies towards a shared national objective to guide the reform process towards the achievement of clearly designated activities.



Presentations by SSR stakeholders

The European Union is the main funder of the SSR process in The Gambia. As part of its results based approach, the SSR process in The Gambia must address the core components of how security institutions operate: their purpose, size, management and governance structures must be

balanced with resources, national development priorities and the interests of civil-society. Delivering reform across these areas is often politically and institutionally contentious; a constitutionally robust and time-bound framework for executive-level decision-making can serve to mitigate the challenges and obstacles that will inevitably arise.



Presentation by working groups

Security Sector Reform of The Gambia. Where Are We Now?

Since independence The Gambian security institutions have been regime-centric, rather than public welfare sensitive; regulated by a defective constitution and lacking sufficient subordinate laws, regulations, techniques and procedures.

This was especially the case under former President Jammeh's 22 years of authoritarian rule. Over time, the security apparatus became ethnically imbalanced and politicized, void of sound democratic principles, and suffered from severe degeneration of capacity. There is also inability of the Oversight bodies to efficiently exercise their functions.

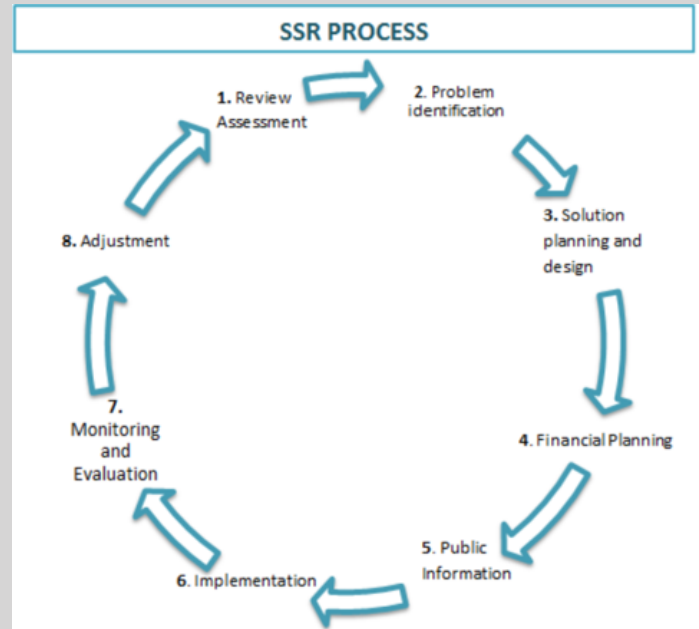
The future of all aspects of public safety and development in The Gambia depends on stability, which implies effective and efficient security apparatus. Hence, the decision of the government to prioritize security sector reform as part of its national development plan and political reform measures.

The Gambia's SSR Project Objectives are premised on:

1. Reformation of security sector and establishment of civilian and democratic oversight mechanism that guarantees non-recurrence of serious human rights violations by the security forces.
2. Development of a national security sector reform strategy with focus on the security sector governance, while ensuring institutional and sector-wide coherence

Project Components/Activities:

1. Conduct a public and institutional assessment of the security sector.
2. Identify problems, challenges and gaps.
3. Complete a programme design that incorporates democratic oversight and identifies what is required by the Security sector to operate sustainably.
4. Conduct a forensic audit of the security sector
5. Implement the SSR programme and coordinate actors.
6. Address all the issues surrounding the possible "right-sizing" of the security sector.



KEY RESULTS & INDICATORS

Expected Impacts

- Trust and confidence of the public in the Security Sector restored.
- Respect for Human Rights and rule of law conforms with international standards and best practices
- Security Sector fully subordinate to democratic civilian control and security Institutions are more efficient and effective
- National Ownership drives the SSR process

Expected Results (by 2021)

- 1 Urgent capacitation of Security Sector has been achieved
- 2 The foundation has been laid for professionalisation of the Security Sector
- 3 Enhanced M&E frameworks for security institution
- 4 Enhanced Oversight, accountability and respect for Rule of Law
- 5 National Security Policy of the Gambian developed.
- 6 Office of the National Security established and operationalized.

THE GAMBIA FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Fire Brigade was established as a unit of The Gambia Police Force in 1949 by the Brigade Act of 1948. Later on in 1968 a cadet Fire Officer Mr. Z.B. King was appointed. In 1978 Mr. King became Chief Fire Officer.

In 1979 Mr. Bakurin was appointed as a Cadet Fire Officer and in 1982, the Fire Service became a Department under the Ministry of the interior. In 1993 the Fire Brigade was renamed the Gambia Fire and Ambulance Service and now the Gambia Fire and Rescue Service.

In 1999 Mr. King was appointed as the Inspector General of Police (IGP) and the Deputy Chief Fire Officer Roger Bakurin became Chief Fire Officer on the 1st June, 1999.

The department later became a premier emergency response department under the Ministry of Interior. The department is now headed by a Chief Fire Officer, who is the technical adviser to the Minister of Interior on public safety and emergency matters.

The Gambia Fire and Rescue Service is operational in the Kanifing Municipality under the direct supervision of an Assistant Chief Fire Officer and in the 6 Administrative Regions by Divisional Fire Officers.

GFRS is duty bound by Law to protect life and property from destruction by fire, render humanitarian services and assist in the protection of the environment through response and creating awareness.

The Gambia Government through the ministry of interior and the members of the communities should work together to ensure that standards of service are consistent across the country.

The Gambia Fire & Rescue Services Security Sector Reform Agenda - November 2019.

The Gambia Fire & Rescue Services (GFRS) is the premier emergency response department. From its inception as a unit of the Gambia Police Force (GPF) in 1949, it has evolved into a first rated essential service provider in its own right. That is, it has progressively given Fire and Rescue coverage to the Gambian community and beyond into neighboring Senegal.



Today, the GFRS has evolved without any central leadership and policy direction, there is a lack of coordination, cooperation and consistency among the stakeholders which is directly hindering its ability to meet the challenges of today and beyond. The public policy framework governing the GFRS, along with its operations and practices, need to be modernized to reflect public needs, expectations, operational demands and fiscal challenges. To do this, the fire and rescue service needs a long-term commitment from the government and all stakeholders to make the changes needed to ensure that firefighters and officers can continue to effectively protect their communities.



Pictures courtesy of Gambia Fire and Rescue Services



Outcomes of the SSR Agenda: With its core objective to become a competent fire and rescue service provider that is supported by sustainable resources, the following are the expected outcomes of the SSR process:

- I. Revised legal framework with adequate governance structures.
- II. Enhance capacity through a sustained and comprehensive training and staff development program.
- III. Gender responsive fire and rescue service provider
- IV. Strengthened community empowerment on public safety
- V. Enhanced environmental protection

REFORM OF THE STATE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (SIS)

From the National Intelligence Agency to the State Intelligence Service

REFORM OBJECTIVES OF THE STATE INTELLIGENCE SERVICE (SIS):

To holistically transform the National Intelligence Agency (NIA)/ SIS to a Professional, Accountable, Apolitical and Effective Institution that will safeguard the integrity of the State as well as the welfare and wellbeing of all citizens and non-citizens within The Gambia against Internal and External threats.

The State Intelligence Service (SIS) is currently undergoing a series of reform activities whose aim is to provide ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE in the best interest of the state and the people. Such a product must be timely, credible and professionally produced and delivered. Hence the need for continuous capacity enhancement in terms of professional training and the provision of the required equipment, materials etc.

In the context of the ongoing Security Sector Reforms (SSR), the following achievements have been registered so far:

- 1) The SIS Draft Bill was in June 2019 reviewed by a multi-stakeholder group with the support of EU/DCAF. The stakeholders were drawn from various security institutions, the Ministry of Justice and the Office of the President. The MOJ is currently working on the draft SIS Bill.
- 2) Following the formulation and adoption of the National Security Policy (NSP) and SSR Assessment Report, Strategies for their implementation are being crafted at the Office of National Security (ONS). Consequent to a request by the SSR Strategy Drafters, the SIS has submitted its costed institutional inputs to the said Strategy.
- 3) The SIS has also submitted its institutional inputs to the CRC as well as its proposals for inclusion in the joint Security Sector submission to the same body (i.e. CRC).
- 4) In spite of the continued subsistence of the NIA Decree, the service has since done away with all manner of operational excesses like detention and torture.
- 5) The service is therefore guided by international best practice in pursuit of its CORE MANDATE of Information gathering/ collection, Intelligence production and Dissemination.
- 6) With the support of development partners, staff are being exposed to more professional enhancement and awareness creation on cross-cutting issues like Human Rights.

7) Furthermore, plans are well advanced to update/develop/ implement personnel policies like Recruitment, Training, Promotion and Gender policies etc.



IAG Chris Jagger and SIS staff during motivational lecture at SIS

ACTIVITIES TO ACHIEVE THE SIS REFORM AGENDA:

- Enactment of the Draft S.I.S Bill
- Undertake outreach programs
- Human capacity building with particular focus on specialized training
- Provision of modern Service Support equipment to aid operations such as Open Source Monitoring and harvesting, Cyber Security etc.
- Infrastructural development to enhance staff motivation and work environments, especially for those in hard to reach areas etc.
- Expansion of the External Security Directorate with SIS presence in all Strategic Gambian Foreign Missions.
- Development of a Strategic Plan
- Establishment of a functional Gender Unit
- Mobilize resources for effective operation
- Develop a secure Internal Communications Systems and a comprehensive Intelligence database.
- Acquire required equipment and gadgets for information/ intelligence gathering/production.
- Share information/intelligence

C A P A C I T Y E N H A N C E M E N T T O U R S T O G H A N A

A critical finding of the SSR Assessment report indicated the need for the heads of the institutions to benefit from sharing experiences with regional counterparts and beyond on security sector governance. This forms part of efforts to build capacity for the service chiefs and public management, oversight, monitoring and control bodies, in order to ensure an effective reform. In this regard, the Office of National Security (ONS), in collaboration with ECOWAS and the UNDP Country Office (Gambia) facilitated a study visit of the Heads of the Security Sector institutions to Ghana for 8 days in the 4th quarter of 2019.

The primary objective of the study visit to Ghana was to enhance capacity of national institutions and their key staff in order to avail them an opportunity to share experiences and benefit from lessons learned from their Ghanaian counterparts in the areas of rule of law and security sector governance. Four priority areas of analysis were considered during the study visit to Ghana:

1. Presentation on Security Sector Reforms; The Ghanaian Experience;
2. National Security Architecture;
3. Experiences from other security institutions and lessons;
4. Current Security Challenges

The official opening of the study tour was held at the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (KAIPTC) and attended by the Honourable Bryan Acheampong, Minister of State for National Security, among other dignitaries.



GAF Chief of Staff, Governor NBR, Director SIS

The Government and the people of The Gambia aspire to reform the security sector following a comprehensive assessment to identify the gaps and malfunctions that beset the security sector



Farewell Dinner by Ghanaian Officials

The capacity enhancement tour was closed with a symposium, which served to stimulate debate on the destabilizing influences that impede the progress of nationally owned SSR processes, one of which was cited as international and bilateral partners through their support, mirroring practices that are not tailored to national realities. The emphasis was to “brew SSR in The Gambian pot,” with the change in the old Gambian Constitution regarded as the first line of reform.



Meeting with Minister of Defence, Ghana Ministry of Defence



A five man delegation from the Gambia Prisons Department accompanied by the United Nation Development Program (UNDP) Security Sector Reform (SSR) specialist in the Gambia left the shores of the Gambia to the Republic of Ghana on a capacity enhancement tour as part of the ongoing Security Sector Reform programs exclusively in favor of Gambia Prisons Service. The team left the Gambia on Sunday the 27th of October 2019.

The week-long activities were started by a meeting with the Director General of Ghana Prison Services who formally welcomed the delegation and introduced the senior command of Ghana Prisons. After the meeting, the Director General and delegation proceeded to the Senior Officers Mess at the headquarters for a presentation on the scope,

STUDY VISIT BY GAMBIA PRISONS OFFICIALS TO GHANA PRISON SERVICES TO LEARN GOOD PRACTICES

legal mandate, functions, vision, mission, governing body, management structure and the establishment of Ghana prisons. Ghana Prison Service comprises forty-five (45) Prison Establishments located in all the ten regions of Ghana.

The delegation visited AWUTU OPEN CAMP situated 27km from Ghana Prisons headquarters in Accra. The main idea behind the camp concept is to prepare the would-be-soon freed prisoners for seamless re-integration prior to their discharge. The camp engages inmates on various trainings in agriculture e.g. food production, animal husbandry, and aquaculture. The produce from the farm is used to supplement government's subvention to the prisons and some of the products may also be put on sale to the public or be supplied externally upon request/order.

The delegation also visited Ankaful maximum central prison, which house a capacity of 2000 inmates of high risk offenders under the category of rape, murder, manslaughter etc. A formal school is created to teach inmates who are interested in acquiring basic education instead of learning skill. Gardening is also practice but with a small number due to the nature of the prison.

On the 3rd day of their tour, the delegation paid a visit to the Communicable Disease Prison, a facility built in 1948 with a capacity of 60 inmates who are affected with communicable disease like Tuberculosis and leprosy drawn from the 45 prisons across Ghana to avoid transmitting the disease to their colleague.



Meeting with DG Ghana Prison Service



DG Ghana Prison Service and his Deputy

Other prison facilities visited included James Camp Prison, Ankaful Main Prison Camp and its Annex, Nsawam Security Prison, which has five prisons establishments under its regional command namely: (i) Nsawam male prisons, (ii) Koforidua local prisons, (iii) Akusu male and female prison, (iv) Forifori camp and (v) Nsawam male prison.



Visit to Maximum Security Prison- Ankaful



Ghana Prisons Senior Correctional Centre (Juvenile Wing)



Visit to Nsawam Female Prison



Visit to NSawam Prison in Cape Coast



Awutu Open Camp Prison



Visit to Ankaful Main Prison Skills Training Centre



Visit to Communicable Disease Prison Prison



Visit to Ankaful Main Prison Skills Training Centre



The study tour by Gambia prison officials was intended to expose them to the management of prison services of an acknowledged recognized country that respects Human Rights and upholds acceptable standards of incarceration. The study tour group benefited from lessons learned and experience shared, which would be customized to the Gambian context in line with acceptable international standards as part of ongoing security sector reforms.

The Gambia Prisons Services (GPS) was a small department under the Ministry of Interior established by an Act related to the custody of prisoners formulated in January 1954. Since its enactment, it has steadily grown in size and scope but with little human resource capacity to conform to International standards especially on the protections of rights and privileges and effective management of incarcerated offenders. Additionally, the laws that enacted the prisons service are not compatible with modern incarceration standards and respect for human rights in developing countries. These emerging concerns for such incapacities and incompatibilities became even more pronounced in the last 22 years of dictatorial regime under the Jammeh administration which used prison centers as dumping ground for political opponents with wide spread arbitrary arrests and detentions.

In this regard and given the desire for a new dispensation under democratic control of security services, the SSR project seeks to transform the security to facilitate the development and promotion of good governance that is founded on democratic principles. Prison sector reform is therefore part of broader SSR and can involve structural and functional reform among others. Thus it is a process designed to improve the professionalism, effectiveness and efficiency of the State's prison services and the making and implementation of policies to promote its democratic control.

DEFENCE REFORM AND GENDER



COL SAIT NJIE, DIRECTOR OF TRAINING & DOCTRINE DEFENCE HEADQUARTERS.

As you may be already aware, the Gambia Armed Forces is already in receipt of the SSR Assessment Report which made some disturbing revelations bordering on functional and structural flaws including lapses on gender equality and mainstreaming. However, it is not all bad but not all rosy too with GAF when it comes to gender equality or mainstreaming. Going by the SSR Assessment Report document, Women represent about 9% of total strength. At the decision-making level, women have a significant presence of about 13% of the total strength of commissioned officers-from Lieutenant to General. In nutshell we have female officers at the hierarchy of GAF carrying ranks ranging from Second Lieutenant to Brigadier General, some of whom are holding very senior appointments in charge of directorates. It can therefore be argued that there exists a gendered hierarchy within the structure of GAF; which is commendable.

In the domain of training and operations GAF Women are not left behind despite some challenges. As I speak to you two senior female officers have just returned from an Intermediate Staff Course conducted at the Horton Academy in Sierra Leone. This is the first time that we are sending female officers to pursue such courses and from reports so far received they did very well just like their male counterparts. Operationally, our gallant

Women are taking part in Peace Support Operations in Darfur and elsewhere. This is not only in compliance with UNSCR 2151 (the first UN Security Council resolution on SSR) which underscores 'the importance of women's equal and effective participation and full involvement in all stages of the security sector reform process, given their vital role in the prevention and resolution of conflict and peace building' but also as part of GAF's reform drive aimed at making the Force more gender-responsive. For instance, in the new pledges made to UN to deploy a battalion of 850 personnel, 250 are Women representing over 29%. This is by far more than the 15% women participation that the UN envisages to achieve in 2020.

All these achievements registered so far in gender mainstreaming in GAF will form a good basis for Gambia's Defence Reform agenda. It is therefore expected that the ongoing SSR will provide a renewed impetus to the GAF's transformation and restructuring efforts. But, to arrive at a successful Defence Reform, there must be a renewed commitment to gender equality. However, such commitment must not be politically motivated. It is also important that the Defence Reform be free from profiling of any nature. In short the defence reform should ensure that the right people with the required expertise are correctly placed to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in the Force while taking gender perspectives into consideration.

Source: Eleanor Gordon 2018, Gender and Defence Sector Reform: Problematizing the Place of Women in Conflict-Affected Environments available at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17502977.2018.1516389>, accessed 16 April 2019.

LIVING IN THE GAMBIA AS A PERSON WITH DISABILITIES – THE REALITY!

As a person with disabilities living in The Gambia, every day is a risk! There is risk from the environment. There is risk from living in poverty, a high percentage of persons with disabilities fall into the category of 'poor' or 'very poor'. There is a risk from inaccessibility to services, to education and to health provision. In fact, there is a risk associated with all avenues of life, if you are a person with disabilities.

One of the major issues for persons with disabilities is the way they are perceived by members of the general public. For instance, disability is wrongly seen as a transmittable disease; these same people will go out of their way to avoid contact with the disabled. In rural areas, any disability is often viewed as bringing shame on that disabled person's family – even to the extent that the disabled are kept hidden.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), one in seven people worldwide are disabled: one in eighteen of those are seriously disabled. That is to say they are either deaf, visually impaired or physically disabled. But the main disability is not even recognized by many as a disability at all. That is mental ill health! This covers a huge range from depression to more specific illnesses such as Autism, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder etc. In many immediate families and, more widely, in extended families there is generally at least one family member who is a person with a disability.

It is said that each and everyone of us has some form of disability from being addicted to some form of lifestyle, like gambling or drinking to having OCD (Obsessive Compulsion Disorder). How many of you reading this have a thing about how you arrange things, can't bear to see a picture hanging crookedly, always have to use the same cup or glass for a particular drink. The list is endless but it's a list that has boxes most of us tick.

It is also true to say that many persons with a disability were not born disabled but became disabled following an illness or an accident. No able-bodied person is immune from that possibility yet that does not prevent the able-bodied from discriminating against their fellow disabled brothers and sisters.

So how do we as a nation do better for our disabled? How do we reduce the risk for persons with disabilities? We start by changing mindsets, by improving the environment, by improving accessibility to services able-bodied people take for granted. We start by making everyone feel secure, part of an inclusive society. We start by acknowledging every person's Fundamental Human Rights. These are clearly laid out in the Draft Constitutional Review document, released on 15th November 2019. The main tenet is that everybody is equal and that discrimination, in any form, against any person, is unconstitutional and even illegal.

Persons with Disabilities spend most of their lives feeling insecure and unequal for many reasons. They are at the end of the queue – always! Alongside other marginalized groups. And this has to change. And changing public opinion and attitudes is key to any approach. The media has a huge role to play in this respect. The use of sign language interpreters and the use of sub-titles on television programmes is but one example. Others could include producing audio tapes of newspaper items for the visually impaired. These two measures alone would go a long way to reducing the feeling of exclusion from activities that the able-bodied see as normal. Improving access to all building, both public and private institutions thus reducing the risk of exclusion through inaccessibility is very important. Similarly, improving access to public services such as hospitals, schools offices etc.



Pic courtesy of GFD

Did you know that less than 10% of children with disabilities attend school (That figure could be as high as 30,000 children but there are no statistics to support this so one has to extrapolate from known statistics using 1:18 as a benchmark. However, no matter how high the figure – it is too high!)

The environment makes persons with disabilities feel insecure because of the state of the roads and footpaths that inhibit their mobility, particularly wheelchair users are forced onto the roads because of poor pavements which are also a trip hazard to the visually impaired. The communities in which we all live are seen as unsafe. How often do you see a person with disabilities out at night?

Solutions? Introduce neighbourhood policing at night. Set up Safe Neighbourhood Groups and empower communities to have control of their local environment. The Gambia Police Force to work in close collaboration with these groups to better learn and understand the difficulties that certain communities face on a daily basis.

As I have stated already, persons with disabilities are viewed as different; not the same as you or I and this creates anxieties and tension. Government and Public Servants make them feel insecure because they are viewed as second class citizens. The same applies to The Gambia Police Force, The Gambia Armed Forces and Gambia Immigration Service, none of which until recently has had any policies on how to deal with Persons With Disabilities. At the very least there needs to be a recognized person in each of these organisations' buildings who is trained on how to meet the needs of any disabled customer.

Lastly, changing the mindset of Security Sector officers and staff via training to regain the trust between the public and themselves. The Security Sector have to be encouraged to engage with the public more, via roadshows, on a regular basis – which should, by the way, be disability friendly events.

Hopefully, with the enactment of the Disability Rights Bill, the introduction of a Gambia Human Rights Policy (still work in progress) and the launching of the National Human Rights Commission, plus the Revised Constitution, the lives of persons with disabilities will improve. I sincerely hope that the Security Sector Reforms will also have a telling impact as well.

For Change to happen – People and Organisations have to Change too!

Rod Hawes, Executive Director
Gambia Federation of the Disabled (GFD)

PRESS RELEASE



Document Examination and Fraud Detection Training for GID

Banjul, 15 November, 2019 - SECURITY SECTOR REFORM: French National Police and UN International Organization for Migration (IOM) trains The Gambia Immigration Department on document safety and fraud detection at Tanji GID Academy from the 11th to the 15th November, 2019.

The Government of The Gambia in collaboration with the French National Police have conducted a one-week training of 20 Gambia Immigration Department officers on document safety, fraud detection and identification in Tanji GID Academy from the 11th to the 15th November, 2019. This training was conducted with support and active participation of the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The training carried out by two French Police experts specialized in immigration issues was undertaken as ‘a training of trainers,’ as the officers selected had already received previous basic instruction with IOM. The program was focused on the acquisition and the validation of the techniques in order to be able to detect forgery, false identification of documents and profiling of individuals. The 20 trainees are now technically and convincingly instructive for future GID recruits and fields officers who will need, in turn, to be taught on these techniques.

This is the second training to be effected by the French-Gambia Cooperation towards applying the principles of good governance to safety provision and oversight in a democratic context. As part of a more comprehensive Security Sector Reform program, this training by the French Government is part of collaborative and consistent efforts towards reorienting the state security apparatuses to better meet both state and human security needs of the Gambian people.

The Checking of our borders and therefore the security of The Gambia is a major issue and the most important of all is how to respond well in terms of technicality and professionalism, making reference to irregular migration, human trafficking and terrorism, something which has led to the loss of lives and resources and still continue to pose threats around the sub region.

The training program will therefore augmented the skills of the GID training officers in an on-going process of cooperation between the French National Police, the IOM and The Gambia Immigration Department. The support by the French Government to The Gambia Government security institutions will continue extensively. In the near future there will continue to be programs that are dependent on the security sector reform needs of the various security outfits.

- Ends -

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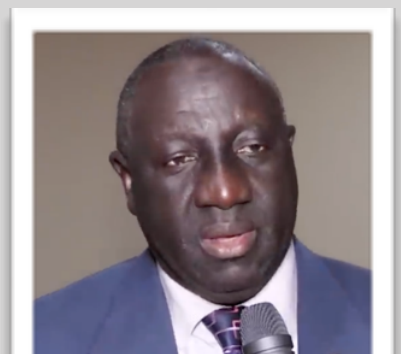
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Momodou Badgie
National Security Adviser, ONS

Positioning the country and its security services to meet the changing human security needs of Gambians

Your Feedback Please!

Our Reform – the newsletter of the Office of National Security dedicated to Security Sector Reform is for everyone who is interested in our work.

As the objective of SSR is to increase both the effectiveness of the security sector and the level of accountability of the actors involved in it, we would like to receive your feedback, comments and suggestions for our new features.

Email: communication.ons@gmail.com

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Office of National Security
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Banjul, The Gambia

Communications
+220 9947744, +2207264918
communication.ons@gmail.com

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