



**ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT
OF
CONSCIENCE INTERNATIONAL (CI)
THE GAMBIA OFFICE**

EDITION 2011

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Message from the Director

Dear Friends,

As I write this message, there is much change and promise of progress and development around us. There are promising strategies employed by our government and we expect rapid growth in all areas, as the development sector continues to do its best for bringing about social change in The Gambia.

Conscience International (CI) encourages volunteers to contribute their time, skills and energies to enhance the work being carried out at the grass root level. We are happy to record that in the eight years since our inception, we have grown from an idea to a progressive mission; forging new collaborations, partnerships and programs in order to reach the communities we serve.

Young people are the strength and asset of a nation, and it is in the age bracket of 18-35 years that the maximum number of our volunteers/interns comes. Their contribution directly impacts the lives of many with whom they interact. It is heartening to note that the ratio of women volunteers/interns is steadily increasing.

Our mission is directed towards bringing about positive social change. Through our training workshops we influence volunteers and groups/communities within which they work, and encourage them to contribute to the development sector. By consolidating activities and expanding our collaborations, we strive to add value to the work we do.

I would like to thank all our committed volunteers, partner NGOs, supporters, trainers and the Conscience International (CI) team for all their hard work and dedication, in particular Fatoumata Darboe, Phyllis Machuka, Emma Williamson and Mustapha Temitope Adeyemi.

Best wishes

Yours Sincerely

Shaka Ceesay
Director

Introduction

Conscience International was born out of discussions initiated by a group of young and talented visionaries of peace, human rights and development, meeting in Banjul on July 24th, 2003. Conscience International, referred to as CI, is functioning as a legally registered International Non Governmental Organization and is registered under the NGO Degree of 1996 of the Republic of The Gambia. Since 2008, CI has been working as a registered Community Based Organization in Sierra Leone. In 2011, CI extended its work to the people of Liberia as a legally registered NGO, Conscience International Liberia (CIL). CI has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights of the African Union (AU).

CI works to maximize the knowledge, respect and observance of human rights and to enhance the awareness of human rights, environment and development work through linkages with national, sub-regional, regional and international like-minded entities.

The promotional activities of CI stem from Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is one of the bases of CI's mandate i.e. to give meaning and actuality to this article which states that "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and **conscience** and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

The direct beneficiaries of CI programs are organized local community groups - women groups and children. We basically work to promote and protect the human rights of women, children and the marginalized in our society. Since its inception in 2003, CI has worked with community women groups, the youth and children (especially the girl child) in schools throughout The Gambia. Our projects have continued to be very effective in regards to the promotion of women and children's rights. The majority of the community women groups we work with are in the rural areas and most of them have no formal education. We have also continued to use schools as an entry point to effect positive changes in the minds of the young and the general population of The Gambia.

Activities

Volunteering and Internship

With its “Volunteering and Internship” program, Conscience International (CI) gives people from all over the world the chance to join hands with us and work towards positive social change. Volunteers and interns are placed within Conscience International (CI) and are trained through orientation sessions to give them a clearer understanding of the work we do. Their placement is always matched according to their time, skills, knowledge, interests, background, etc.

During the volunteering period, CI takes care of the monitoring and regular evaluation of the volunteers, so at every stage the volunteering can be adapted according to the expectations of CI as well as of the volunteer. A volunteer performance plan, impact assessments, follow ups and feedback forms make sure that both CI and the volunteer can get the maximum of benefits out of the volunteering period.

To date, CI has continued to receive volunteers both locally and internationally. For 2011, CI placed 4 volunteers, 2 of them being international volunteers, making a significant progress.

Adult Functional Literacy and Numeracy Skills

The Adult Functional Literacy and Numeracy Skills project is still going well. Over 50 adults mostly women benefit from this project which was initially supported by The German Embassy. The beneficiaries are mostly house keepers, petty traders and laborers. They are interacting, making friends, reading and writing for the first time in many cases. They are able to identify letters, numbers, write their names, telephone numbers etc. It is wonderful to see what this project is doing in trying to change the social status of these women and men. We now have a volunteer instructor who conducts classes three days a week. The beneficiaries agreed to pay a monthly subscription fee of seventy five dalasis (D 75) each in order to sustain the project. The

subscription fee is now being used to buy the necessary teaching materials and also pay the instructor's transport to and from the school.



16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence

Gender based violence continues to be a great concern and challenge in our everyday social life at different levels of societies. Awareness creation and capacity building in our various institutions and communities on such issues is another form of our contribution as an NGO to complement the existing efforts of the state to fulfill the development aspiration of the nation.

It is against this background and in line with the global campaign against gender based violence that Conscience International (CI) in collaboration with the African Women Development Fund (AWDF) commemorated the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence in The Gambia from 25 November to 10 December 2011. The campaign from the 25th November to 10th December aimed to highlight the connections between women, violence, and human rights in The Gambia.

As part of the activities of the campaign, Conscience International (CI) launched the 16 days of activism against Gender Based Violence by organizing a press conference at its Headquarters in Fajara on 28th November, 2011 whereby journalists from nine (9) print media houses were invited to cover the event these included: Gambia News & Report, Digest Newspaper, The Point Newspaper, Foroyaa Newspaper, Daily News, The Market Place, Daily Observer Newspaper, Today Newspaper and The Gambia Press Union.

CI and partners conducted lectures on Gender Based Violence on 29 & 30 November for community women and students at its Headquarters in Fajara. The lectures focused on basic principles and concepts of local and global women's rights instruments protecting the fundamental liberties and birth right of girls and women. This training was to assist the participants in increasing their level of awareness and understanding on women's rights and gender related issues.



The following topics were discussed during the lectures: Women's rights concepts and principles, Gender and Development, Domestic and gender based violence, Sexual related violence and discrimination against women, Religion and gender based violence and Remedies to gender based violence.

A March pass from Traffic Light to CI Headquarters in Fajara was also organized on December 10, 2011 (International Human Rights Day).

Monitoring and Observation of The Gambia 2011 Presidential Elections

Election observation and monitoring is one of our issues of urgent concern in promoting good governance, respect for the rule of law, democracy, peace and legal protection of human rights. In this regard, 5 volunteers of CI were granted Observer Status by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) of The Gambia to observe and monitor the 2011 Gambia Presidential Elections held on 24th November, 2011.

The CI observer Team had the opportunity to cover the Kombo area during its election observation and monitoring process.



The Team has acquired a wealth of experience in Election Observation and Monitoring and recommended that the elections were free and fair.

Training on the African Human Rights Mechanisms

The Training Unit of CI conducted training on the African Human Rights Mechanisms for its volunteers and representatives other Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in its Library at Fajara, The Gambia on November 4, 2011.



The workshop which was supported by CI witnessed the participation of ten (10) Civil Society Actors working on issues such as children's rights,

women's rights and education in The Gambia. The objective of the workshop is to build the capacity of representatives of CSOs with knowledge and skills to effectively use the African Human Rights system in their work towards human rights promotion and protection.

Other activities

The Director of CI, Mr. Shaka Ceesay participated in the training on Regional and International Human Rights Mechanisms jointly organized by the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACHDRS), Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR – East Africa) and Conectas on 14 – 18 October 2011 at Kairaba Beach Hotel, Banjul, The Gambia.

Our volunteers and interns participated in the three-day NGO Forum preceding the 50th Ordinary Session of The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on 19 – 21 October 2011 at Kairaba Beach Hotel, Banjul, The Gambia. The volunteers and interns were very much involved in the preliminary sessions and group discussions in order to build networks and share relevant information with colleagues in the human rights and development arena of Africa.

During the Training on Regional and International Human Rights Mechanisms for Civil Society Actors in Africa, participants came up with a potent and promising idea of finding a way to lobby State Parties to the African Charter to respect the recommendations of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Thus, on Monday, October 31, Conscience International (CI) and two organizations namely: Campaign for United States of Africa (CUSA) and Youth Care Foundation (YCF) met at CI Headquarters in Fajara - The Gambia to deliberate on how to further the initiative. Hence the birth of "**Recommendation Plus**". Recommendation Plus is a network of African Civil Society Actors with its Secretariat currently hosted by Conscience International (CI) headquarters in The Gambia. The aim of the network is to lobby State Parties to comply with the Recommendations of The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. To date, the network has a membership of 25 human rights and development organizations from all over Africa. Since its inception in October 2011, R+ has continued to document and distribute information about human rights on the African continent to concerned bodies and individuals around the world, along with recommended actions for publicizing and protesting them.

FUNDING

CI has no regular funding partner. The year 2011 has been a difficult financial year for most NGOs including CI due to the credit crisis, but thank God for the wonderful support we are still receiving from our supporters. The success with many small-scale projects has kept CI in business to date. The expansion of CI for now depends on the successes of projects acquired. In 2011, CI received only three (3) small grants from The German Embassy, The African Women Development Fund (AWDF) and Ms. Mira Kremers (Germany).

CHALLENGES

In 2011, the organization faced some challenges as here.

1. Lack of core support for the necessary costs of running the office and personnel.
2. Lack of funds to facilitate the necessary programs as contained in our strategic plan.
3. Lack of information and communication technology such as internet facility and land phones.
4. The organization is constrained by the lack of adequate essential materials and office equipments such as Computers, Photocopy Machines, Printers, and Cameras etc. in this vain the office implementation of the proposed plan of action will however not be the task of CI alone.

In summary and with thanks

We acknowledge and appreciate the support of all our donors, without whose support the organization would be unable to progress. In addition, CI is able to function in the year 2011 due to the commitment brought by its volunteers and make dreams happen. Our thanks are due to them for ensuring that the organization is progressive and a perfect match for social change.

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