

CONSCIENCE INTERNATIONAL (CI)

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT



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The Gambia



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Mr. Shaka Ceesay

(Director)

Message from the Director

To partners and friends of CI, I am pleased to submit our 2012 Annual Activity Report. We have strived to make this report both informative and pleasant to read. As we move ahead of another milestone, it gives me great pleasure to share with you some of our recent experiences, challenges and achievements. I am happy to report that CI continues on a path of growth and recognition both nationally and internationally.

From our humble beginnings in 2003 in a gathering of young visionaries in The Gambia, we have continued to play the role of a catalyst in mobilizing and empowering marginalized communities through increased range of programmes and activities to address the root causes of issues like poverty, deprivation, exploitation and abuse that hamper the realization of their civic and human rights. From the marginalized beneficiary in remote villages to the Community Based Organizations (CBOs), we see the beginning of transformational changes taking shape as the communities we serve start walking with a new purpose and renewed vigor.

Provided the economic challenges that CI has encountered, the organization had struggled to survive and continue serving the community's demands according to its capacity with the heart of volunteerism which converted our ideas into tangible projects. Perhaps one of the most important CI activities implemented this year, one with far-reaching implications, is the establishment of the ICTs enabled Life Skills and Sexuality Education Center for Adolescent girls in Tanji in the West Coast Region of The Gambia. It is indeed gratifying to see this dream becoming a reality after three years of planning. However, much work remains to be done in sustaining the project to benefit more young people in the Region.

As always, the challenges have been many, but as our vision turns into a progressive mission, many mountains are moved on the way. We would not be reporting such progress if it were not for the generous support and contributions of our friends and supporters. I take this opportunity to thank our partners – UN Habitat (Youth Fund), the Embassy of The Kingdom of Netherlands, African Women Development Fund (AWDF), The British High Commission in Banjul etc. for sharing our collective dream and contributing their precious resources to the work of the organization.

I would also like to thank the members of the General Body for their guidance and support over the years and our team of staff/volunteers for their commitment and hard work.

We welcome your feedback, responses and reactions.

Director



About Us

Conscience International (CI) is an independent, non-partisan and non-profit human rights and development organisation working in The Gambia. The organization is registered under the 'NGO Decree No. 81 of 1996' with Registration No. A107 NGO, under the 'Office of the President' of The Republic of The Gambia.

CI works with communities of The Gambia with affiliated organizations in Sierra Leone and Liberia. We plan our activities based on analysis of the socio-economic contexts and the community dynamics of the area, with emphasis on community empowerment. Our programmes are unique in the sense as it is basically directed towards involving communities in every aspect including project planning, implementation, monitoring and management.

CI takes a human rights based approach to address development issues affecting the communities we serve, believing that all individuals have the right to live with dignity through the attainment of basic needs and the ability to exercise political, cultural and social freedoms. We don't give aid; we create change, empowering communities to stand up for their rights.

We work with marginalised communities at a local, national and international level through both programme implementation and advocacy efforts, supporting the mandate 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."* CI has Observer Status with the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights of the African Union (AU).

OUR VISION

To promote and to strive for a strong, democratic and human rights culture as a pillar for peace, stability, democracy and sustainable development.

OUR MISSION

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

OUR PROGRAMMES

- Human Rights & Peace Building Education
- Health Awareness
- Development & Human Rights Research
- Adult Functional Literacy and Numeracy Skills
- Vocational Training
- Environmental Sustainability

Hands Up for Your Rights: a women empowerment project



The project was implemented with initial support of The Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands and with continued support of the African Women Development Fund (AWDF). The project reached 40 community women groups and 25 school teams in the West Coast Region of The Gambia.

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.

Female students drop out of school due to early or forced marriage, rape resulting to unwanted pregnancy. There is a traditional concept in our communities that females are being nurtured or trained to become just domestic house wives. These violations of the women's rights are mostly perpetrated by their parents, guardians, caregivers, traditional leaders and in some cases, even teachers are involved in rape and sexual harassment of the female students thus the most serious part of it is that these are teachers or even relatives that the victims do trust.



CI believes that it is far more effective and desirable to eliminate or mitigate the high rate of gender based violence rather than having to address the consequences of the violence. As such, this program provided the target schools and communities more access to information on the prevention of gender based violence and other forms of indecent assault in the Western Coast Region of the Gambia.



Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) Enabled Life Skills and Sexuality Education for Adolescent Girls in Tanji

CI with support of UN Habitat through its Youth Fund implemented a 12 month ICTs Enabled Life Skills and Sexuality Education project for adolescent girls in Tanji and its surrounding communities.

This project reached both school-going and working adolescent girls/young women, but in some instances male participants were given the opportunity to enroll for the training in instances where the intervention group had male membership. Empowerment of both sexes is an important development reality, but girls were given a higher percentage of enrolment due to their marginalised position in society and lack of reproductive rights. The program directly benefited 70 adolescent girls between 10 and 19 years of age from Tanji, Madiana and Batakunkun communities in the West Coast Region of The Gambia.

Sexuality and power are at the root of most sexual and reproductive health problems. Good health therefore depends in part on having the personal power to negotiate effectively with others, not only within intimate

relationships but within the institutions of society as a whole. To manage their sexual and reproductive lives, people must be able to decide consciously whether, when, and with whom to become sexually active; to avoid nonconsensual sex, sexual violence, and abuse; to plan pregnancies; to avoid acquiring or transmitting sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS; to know when they need preventive and curative services; to go through pregnancy and childbirth safely; and to bear and rear healthy children. All these actions require knowledge of one's own and one's partner's body; the ability to talk about sex and reproduction with one's partners and with others; an understanding of infections and diseases, how to prevent them and how to recognize them and the ability to access health care. Actions also require the capacity to assert one's right to control one's body and the skills to ensure that one's needs are met and wishes and concerns are respected.

In The Gambia, ICT infrastructures are still limited even though mobile telephone penetration in rural areas has remarkably improved. ICT awareness and skills for rural women and youth, boys and girls and even the educated is lacking. CI believes that lack of access, skills and awareness has been very low yet ICT could play a major role in improving the socio-economic status of women and youth in The Gambia.





The Adult Functional Literacy and Numeracy Skills project was initially supported by The German Embassy covering the month of August 2011 to January 2012. The project was sustained through September 2012. Over 40 adults mostly women benefited from this project. The beneficiaries were mostly house keepers, petty traders and laborers. They were 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. The project had a volunteer Instructor who conducted classes three days a week.



The beneficiaries agreed and paid a monthly subscription fee of GMD 75 (US\$ 2.5) each in order to sustain the project. The subscription fee was used to buy the necessary teaching materials and also pay the Instructor's transport to and from the school. However, due to improper venue the project was temporarily closed in September 2012 during the raining season.



In December 2012 we secured bilateral funds from the British High Commission to run a three month adult functional literacy and numeracy programme in three areas within The Gambia;

Bunklin and Madiana of the West Coast Region and Lakrikunda German of the Kanifing Municipal Council commencing in January 2013. This project aims to teach marginalized groups, particularly women, how to read, write and exercise numeracy skills to break the cycle of illiteracy in The Gambia and provide the necessary tools to overcome poverty, gain access to rights and encourage the importance of education for future generations. We are also engaging in an adult literacy advocacy campaign and rights based workshops to create a platform for international partnership.



EVENTS OF THE YEAR

Graduation Ceremony

The ICTs and Sexuality Education Centre in Tanji graduated two badges of students who successfully completed their courses.

First Graduation

The first graduation ceremony of no fewer than 37 students was held on 18 July 2012 at the Tanji Youth Centre. The ceremony brought together local authorities and a cross-section of the community, who showed their appreciations to the graduates, staff, and volunteers of CI.

Speaking at the ceremony, Mrs. Fatou Sanyang, Deputy Governor of West Coast Region, hailed CI for their foresight in supporting the youths of Tanji and surrounding communities by giving them skills that will make them become self-reliant in life. She added that CI is complementing the government's efforts in providing marketable skills for Gambian youths, thus



empowering them to become self-reliant. To her, imparting knowledge to someone is not an easy task but their lecturers did their best to ensure that everything required during the three-month course was made available by giving them their utmost in terms of quality education. She commended the chief, the Alkalo and the community of Tanji for supporting CI to have a successful training.

Mr. Abodu Colley, Member of Parliament for Kombo South commended CI for such a project which is the first of its kind in the area. He advised graduates to be role models in the society and pass on the training to their peers in their respective communities.

Second Graduation

On Friday 12 December 2012, the second graduation ceremony of 33 students was held at the Tanji Youth Centre. Speaking at the graduation ceremony, Amy Sheppey, Programme Officer at CI, thanked UN Habitat through its Youth Fund for their support of the project to provide Information and Communication Technology (ICT) education, and to offer Sexuality Education for young women and men in Tanji. She explained that the project is vital for building skills for future careers, making informed choices and protecting themselves and their rights. Sheppey urged the graduating students to make good use of the knowledge gained and to undertake further training and seek jobs.



For her part, Sanna Kallio, Sexuality Education Instructor, admonished the graduates that they were now free to go and face another challenge, and wished them good luck. Amara Sadalah, ICT Instructor, disclosed that during the course, students were taught in the following areas; Microsoft Word, Excel, Publisher and internet, both theory and

practical. He wished all the graduates best of luck in their future educational pursuits.

Delivering the vote of thanks, Fatoumata Jallow, Graduand thanked CI for their efforts in educating them. She assured CI that they would make best use of the knowledge gained during the training.

Staff/Volunteer Professional Development

One of our priorities is giving our staff advanced learning opportunities, which results in better service to the organization. In this regard, CI staff participated in the African and International Human Rights Mechanisms Training on 14 November 2012 at CI's Library in Fajara. The objective of the workshop was to build the capacity of our staff and volunteers with knowledge and skills to effectively use the African and International Human Rights system in their work towards human rights promotion and protection.

On 19 November 2012, 5 staff of our organization attended a workshop on Fundraising and Resource Mobilization at its Library in Fajara. The training was specifically intended to broaden the knowledge of our staff team about the problems in fundraising and resource mobilization and to develop their skills in facing the challenges with confidence. The



Programme Officer of our organization participated in online fundraising webinars given by Funds for NGOs, and she also attended a workshop on Mental Health Advocacy organized by the Mental Health Advocacy and Leadership group (mhlap) hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO) – The Gambia.



Annual Staff/Volunteer Retreat

On December 21, 2012, 7 CI staff and volunteers got together for our annual Staff Retreat, an intensive day offsite gathering wherein we examined the state of CI (the event itself, our organization, and the impact of our work) at the Francisco Hotel and Restaurant in Fajara, The Gambia. We examined where we stood, where we wanted to



be, and how to get there.

Last year's offsite gathering was used to look at the challenges we were facing, the successes we achieved, and the goals we wanted to shoot for. We also brought in expert presentations to help us develop the skills we needed to succeed as an organization.

TRAINING MANUALS

ICT Enabled Life Skills and Sexuality Education Training Manual

CI has developed an ICT Enabled Life Skills and Sexuality Education Training Manual. The manual was developed based on the UN Habitat through its Youth Fund funded "Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) Enabled Life Skills and Sexuality Education project" for Adolescent Girls in Tanji. This manual consisted of two main parts which discussed more on ICT Enabled Life Skills and Sexuality Education. The manual provided basic information for the facilitators as well as trainers of what they should do during conducting a ICTs Enabled Life Skills and Sexuality Education training for Adolescent Girls/boys.

The purpose of this manual was to provide guidance for all facilitators or trainers before and during conducting the ICTs Enabled Life Skills and Sexuality Education training for Adolescent Girls/boys. CI and its affiliate organizations in Sierra Leone and Liberia will continue to use this manual for its training programs on ICTs Enabled Life Skills and Sexuality Education training for Adolescent Girls/boys in schools and communities in order to get feedback for the improvement of the manual. The manual was already developed as a final draft and will be reviewed step by step for content improvement.

Training Guide for Adult Functional Literacy and Numeracy Skills

CI has also developed a Teachers Training Guide for Adult Functional Literacy and Numeracy Skills. The manual was developed based on the support of the British High Commission through its Bilateral Fund funded "Adult Functional Literacy and Numeracy project" for community women of Bunklin and Madiana of the West Coast Region and Latrikunda German of the



Kanifing Municipal Council. The Guide provides basic information for the teachers of what they should do during instructing adult classes in the community.

CI and its affiliate organizations in Sierra Leone and Liberia will also use the guide for projects of this nature in order to get feedback for the improvement of the guide. The guide was already developed as a final draft and will be reviewed step by step for content

improvement.

VOLUNTEERING AND INTERNSHIPS

CI welcomes local and international interns and volunteers with various academic and professional backgrounds, to support our work in any of our programmes. Volunteers/interns are trained and provided with a full orientation session, performance plan and regular monitoring and feedback opportunities. Job roles are aligned with the interests, skills, knowledge and background of the volunteer as well as the needs of the organisation. This is a particularly good opportunity for those seeking a future career in human rights/development to gain on the ground experience working for a locally based NGO.

We do not charge a fee for volunteer/intern placements. However, we do give volunteers/interns the opportunity to bring donations/gifts but this is strictly at the discretion of the intern/volunteer. When funding stabilises we aim to provide a stipend for all our future volunteers.



In 2012 the Internship Programme showed a significant expansion. This year we received 5 interns/volunteers, representing a rise from the previous year. We are delighted with this increase in intern/volunteer numbers that not only represents that CI is continuing to be regarded as a perfect host for interns/volunteers but also the growing recognition of CI as high quality placement for interns from around the world.

Volunteer Recognition

Our volunteers are the heart and soul of our organization. During the year 5 volunteers/interns gave time of service to CI. Recognizing the efforts of these extraordinary individuals is essential. Thank-you cards were given during send offs, CI beneficiaries thanked the volunteers in addresses at trainings, appreciation gifts were given out to volunteers/interns, and holiday greetings were mailed to our volunteers/interns.



PUBLICITY, PROMOTION AND COMMUNICATIONS

Promotion and Awareness:

This year marked our “9 years in existence” (2003--2012) so this presented an excellent opportunity to promote our work. We updated our website, and hung banners and signboards in the communities we serve especially during trainings and outreach meetings. Our brochure was updated and published reaching different sectors in The Gambia and abroad. Our staff/volunteer team met on several occasions to organize strategic planning sessions to face the challenges of the future with renewed vigor. We participated in conferences/meetings both at home and abroad where the work of CI was presented to colleagues and partners.

Social Media:

Social media is a powerful tool and we continue to take advantage of its networking benefits. Our Facebook page “**Conscience International (CI)**” has been updated with a growing number of followers. Several of our staff and volunteers use LinkedIn to mention our name and promote our activities.

Website:

Our website www.conscience-international.net averages 500–600 visitors each month. It is used to provide information, promote our organization, boast our accomplishments, and communicate with stakeholders.

Print media:

We have continued to invite local newspapers to cover our activities/events ranging from press conferences to trainings and outreach meetings. News articles are also posted on our website.

FUNDRAISING

As demand for our services continued to increase, funding remained a priority. The ICTs Enabled Life Skills and Sexuality Education with support of UN Habitat and Hands Up for your Rights: a women empowerment project funding from the Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands and the African Women Development Fund (AWDF), now accounts for a higher percentage of our total income. We continue to develop our corporate fundraising strategy and are also developing partnerships with new local and international partners to intensify our fundraising and resource mobilization activities.



CHALLENGES

1. Funding constraints, including a heavy reliance on short term institutional funding and few avenues to develop a broader strategic plan to incorporate individual and corporate support.
2. CI's significant growth has led to challenges in both financial and human resources to expedite our operations.
3. Lack of permanent core support and limited access to funding information and opportunities.
4. Staffing challenges and the cost of providing good allowances to maintain them.

OUR TEAM

Shaka Ceesay, Director

Emma Morgaine Williamson, Co-Director

Phyllis M. Machuka, Finance & Administrative Manager

Mustapha Temitope Adeyemi, Programme Officer

Amy Sheppey, Programme Officer

Cyril Mbaegbu, ICT/Computer Skills Instructor

Amara Sadalah, ICT/Computer Skills Instructor

Miriam Schneider, Sexuality Education Instructor

Sanna Kallio, Sexuality Education Instructor

Aminata Bah, Gender Based Violence Support Trainer

Omar Sarr, West Coast Region Coordinator

Joseph Freeman, Adult Literacy Instructor

Fatoumata Darboe, Office Secretary

OUR FINANCIAL SUPPORTERS

Each year CI seeks support and funding for our various programs, projects and training that are vital to our mission.
Thank you to all our supporters!



British
High Commission
Banjul



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Kingdom of the Netherlands

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