INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANTS RATE GAMBIA'S REVIEW MODEL 'HIGH'
FOREWORD BY COMMISSIONER AMIE JOOF-COLE

On behalf of the Chairperson, Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow, QC (JSC) and the entire members of the Constitution Review Commission (CRC), The Gambia, I am pleased to present this latest edition of the Commission’s monthly Newsletter.

This is the fourth Edition of the Newsletter produced by the CRC’s Communications Department, which is headed by Sainey Marenah, and with the support of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The monthly newsletter is one of several outreach tools deployed by the CRC to inform and elicit stakeholder feedback to the Commission’s engagements and activities as we walk the complex journey together towards delivering a draft for the new Constitution for the Republic of The Gambia and a report in relation to the process of drafting the Constitution.

The review of a national Constitution is a collective enterprise and this latest edition of the monthly newsletter contains articles on various activities of the CRC. It highlights the Commission’s engagements during the time under review, its progress and challenges as it continues to make significant strides towards the drafting of a Constitution.

As part of its deliberate strategy to consult widely and harness best practices within and outside our shores so as to deliver a document that meets international standards and local aspirations, the CRC recently received two international consultants from Ghana and Kenya. Both Consultants, who have good track records in the review and drafting of Constitutions in Africa, are members of the Technical Committee on Constitution Drafting and Report Writing of the CRC.

The Commission also continues to collaborate with local and international partners including ECOWAS, European Union (EU), the United Nations (UN), and other key stakeholders as part of efforts to enrich the review process. Consistent with its terms of reference, the overarching objective of the CRC is to deliver a draft Constitution and a Report that will engender public debate and comments before finalisation.

We wish to use this opportunity to congratulate fellow Gambians for their enthusiasm, support and contributions so far, and also to encourage them to continue to support the Commission as it tackles its challenging assignment. A National Constitution as the fundamental law of the land is the “document of the people.” The CRC cannot deliver anything less to Gambians.

The Commission wishes to reiterate its gratitude to development partners and all stakeholders, for their support so far, and to remind them that drafting a Constitution is only part of the on-going national transition process. The CRC remains committed and determined to deliver a draft Constitution, which The Gambia and its partners will be proud of. With the cooperation and support of Government, the good people of The Gambia and development partners, the Commission will produce a document that will reflect, as far as possible, the will of the people and best practices, and which will also help lay the foundation for genuine and meaningful democracy to steer The Gambia’s development into the future.
Looking back in retrospect, it would be fair to say that there is stakeholder buy-in to legitimize and give a seal of approval to the CRC process. The Commission understood very early in the day that it was important to take a holistic approach to building a new Constitution for The Gambia - one that is firmly anchored on shared values and ideals and on principles of inclusion, equity, diversity, transparency, participation and ownership. We have every reason to celebrate the integrity of the process thus far.

Context does matter and constitutional building does not take place in a vacuum! The CRC Act (2017) prescribes that in scripting the new Constitution, it is important to ‘adhere to national values and ethos’ and promote ‘national unity, cohesion and peace’. Admittedly, we are coming out of a political dispensation characterized by human rights violations and abuses. The ‘never again’ slogan of the TRRC continues to resonate in everybody’s mind and in every household! As a country, we are becoming more gender sensitive than before. The rights of people with disability is gaining prominence for very good reasons. The youth constituency has become a formidable force to be reckoned with and wants to stand up and be counted. Stakeholder groups have submitted interesting position papers outlining the Gambia that they want for themselves, their children and grandchildren. This is thus a defining moment for The Gambia – one that should set us on a good trajectory to democratic governance and development with a human face.

Expectations are high that the CRC will deliver a good governance framework that will pave the way for the relevant statutes to emerge. Without doubt, managing the expectations is the tricky bit given the multitude of contradictory and nuanced opinions proffered by the Gambian people drawing from their value systems, religious inclinations or political convictions. Gambians are eager to lay their hands on the first draft to interrogate the extent to which their desires/opinions are reflected in the provisions of the new Constitution. These are all geared towards ensuring that we come up with a Constitution that will stand the test of time.

On a final note, I would like to thank two of my able staff who are leaving the CRC - my able Executive Assistant, Ajaratou Isatou S. Conteh and the Head of Programs - Mohammed Hassan Loum for their immense contribution to the success of the constitutional building process. The pair are also featured in this edition.
Dear Readers,

On behalf of the Commission and the editorial team, I warmly introduce to you yet another edition of the CRC Newsletter. Just like the previous editions, each publication takes a different outlook in terms of the Commission’s engagements and the personalities featured.

Fundamentally, this edition seeks to keep the public fully aware of the activities already undertaken and accomplished by the Commission. It also endeavours to bring to the spotlight the great men and women who work relentlessly day and night to deliver what many are already describing as an ‘historic lofty project.’

What actually elates me about this edition is the multitude of interesting interventions that the CRC has rolled out thus far. From the editor’s point of view, two stories in this publication stand out given their relevance and impact on the review process. The first one is the story on the final reports delivered by three out of five Technical Committees. Clearly, each of these committees fastidiously looked at different thematic areas and shared their findings with the Commission to inform the decision-making process.

Secondly, the visit by two prominent international legal consultants: Justice Dr. Willy Mutunga and Professor Albert Fiaadjo from Kenya and Ghana respectively is another important development worth highlighting. It is yet another pointer of how consultative and thorough the constitutional building process has been.

In this edition, we are indeed pleased to inform our growing readership that the CRC has engaged with a number of international bodies that have shown keen interest in the Gambia’s transitional justice programme of which the CRC is a key plank, namely: the UN Electoral Assistance Group, AU/ECOWAS Multi-sectorial Team.

However, there are additional fascinating and insightful stories that are lined up for your reading enjoyment. In conclusion, we want to assure you that this September edition will not only bring a different angle to the stories already shared but will also bring you up to speed with the Commission’s engagements. To be on top of the Commission’s undertakings, we recommend that you read this and subsequent editions of the CRC Newsletter. This is because it is reliable, consistent, and transparent in its own right. While you anxiously look forward to the next edition, be rest assured that we will come your way with more updates on the works of the CRC.

We thank you for your interest and wish you a pleasant read!
MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM

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CRC RECEIVES IN AUDIENCE LAW STUDENTS FROM USA

On Tuesday August 27, 2019, a six-member research team from the University of Pennsylvania Law School in the United States of America visited the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC), as part of their research undertaking in selected institutions that are part and parcel of the transitional justice program in The Gambia. Warmly receiving the student delegation in audience, the CRC Secretary, Mr. Omar Ousman Jobe thanked the students for choosing the Commission among a host of other institutions. Continuing, Mr. Jobe introduced members of the CRC at the meeting held at the CRC Conference room.

Speaking on behalf of the student delegation, Meroua Zouai outlined in brief the purpose of their visit.

He said: “The reason for our visit is to understand and analyze The Gambia’s transitional justice process and compare it with how others have done theirs.”

Responding to questions from the visiting students, Secretary Jobe explained the rationale for the establishment of the CRC - its mandate to deliver a draft new Constitution and a report for The Gambia.

He maintained that a Constitutional building process in any jurisdiction is highly political and involves negotiations with different stakeholder groups to foster ownership and buy-in. And being cognizant of this fact, the CRC has consulted extensively using various methodologies and ensuring that the process was as inclusive as inclusive could be.

From the outset, the Commission took the deliberate decision of making the review process inclusive and participatory for every Gambian irrespective of their location. Secretary Jobe emphatically said that marginalized groups in the society, especially Persons with Disability (PwDs) are brought to the heart of the CRC’s broader strategic outreach approach. In its comprehensive outreach strategies, Secretary Jobe said the Commission has reached out to 106 communities during its in-country consultations. Gambians living in the diaspora (Europe, Middle-East, America and Africa) were also engaged in face-to-face dialogues. The student researchers from the USA took turns to ask important questions pertinent to the scope and content of their research areas. They expressed delight and appreciation of The Gambia’s Constitutional Review process and described the model as unique and highly inclusive.

In her vote of thanks, Fatoumatta Waggeh (a Gambian student residing in the US) expressed delight and thanked the CRC management for accommodating the research team and sharing vital information on the review process.

“We are quite excited about the monumental work in progress at the CRC. As researchers, our principal mission to The Gambia is a fact-finding venture purely meant to dissect theoretical assumptions with a view to matching our hypotheses with realities,” Fatoumatta said.
A five-member delegation embedded in a Multi-Sectoral Team on Technical Assessment Mission to The Gambia, met with the Constitutional Review Commission on Thursday August 29, 2019 to assess the level of youth participation in the ongoing review process.

The delegation is tasked to provide technical assistance to The Gambia on youth participation in the political process.

The delegation comprised of Mr. Serigne M. Kah, from the Democracy and Good Governance Directorate and Political Affairs of the ECOWAS Commission; Ms. Makda Mike Tessema, representative from African Governance Architecture Secretariat under the AU Commission; Mr. Chaan Tutlam from African Centre for Human and People’s Rights (ACHPR); Ms. Kijala Shako, Director of Fikira Mwanga in Kenya; and Mr. Robert Gerenge, Electoral Advisor at the African Union Commission.

Welcoming the team to the CRC Secretariat, the Secretary, Mr. Omar Ousman Jobe gave the delegation a brief background of the CRC; its mandate as per the CRC Act; the different processes that have been leveraged to include all strata of Gambian society in the public consultations, particularly the young people. Continuing his submission, he dilated on the use of music as one of the key approaches taken by the Commission to attract more youth participation in the Constitutional review process. The interventions he said included music caravans, concerts with CRC staff being provided a platform to communicate with them on the importance of the review process.

Secretary Jobe informed the delegation that the young people submitted a Position Paper through the National Youth Council after embarking on their own consultations with the youth constituency across the country.

Ms. Mikda Mike Tessema, head of the delegation, underscored the importance of their visit to the CRC, saying they visited the Commission to learn about the level of youth participation in the ongoing Constitutional building process.

Also speaking at the occasion, Mr. Sainey MK Marenah, the CRC Head of Communications described youth participation in the Constitutional building process as quite fascinating and overwhelming. He recognized the significance the Commission attaches to youth involvement, citing that the Commission has a youth Commissioner who represents the interest of the youths. Mr. Marenah also stated that the CRC Communications Department has created various communication mediums such as Facebook, Twitter, the CRC Newsletter and the CRC website where the public is being informed regularly on the activities of the Commission.
INTERNATIONAL CONSULTANTS RATE GAMBIA’S REVIEW MODEL ‘HIGH’

As the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) prepares to deliver the first draft of the Third Republican Constitution - after months of internal and external consultations with Gambians, the Commission with support from UNDP engaged two seasoned legal luminaries, in the persons of Professor Albert Fiadjoe and Justice Willy Mutunga from Ghana and Kenya respectively. These two legal experts have a well established track record on Constitutional Law.

In an interview with these two legal pundits, Prof. Albert Fiadjoe said The Gambia’s Constitutional review model has greatly impressed him. He said Constitution building is a ‘very difficult and challenging national exercise’. He expressed admiration over the composition of the CRC, saying that it is broad-based, thus guaranteeing excellence for national ownership of the final product. On competence assessment of the Commissioners, Prof. Fiadjoe said the distribution is very well-balanced cutting across several important disciplines and constituencies.

Asked what he makes of the CRC’s methodology of eliciting public views and submissions, he opined that the strategies devised by the Commission are extremely professional and all-inclusive. He admitted to the fact that the involvement of Gambians in the diaspora was a good initiative. He also extolled the multiplicity and variety of information gathering tools and methodologies.

Prof. Fiadjoe recognised the strength of the CRC’s research teams and described the research reports as impressive - giving a lot of food for thought. “From the evidence so far, the CRC is on a trajectory of success,” Prof. Fiadjoe concluded.

For his part, Dr. Willy Mutunga, one-time Chief Justice of Kenya said, the CRC’s review process is unique and exhaustive.

“The mode of soliciting submissions and in the process reaching out to Gambians abroad is critical to coming up with a new draft Constitution that will reflect the needs of the people,” Justice Mutunga remarked.
HISTORIAN SAYS THE CRC PROCESS WILL MAKE IT INTO HISTORY BOOKS

E.F. Small did not rest on their laurels in agitating for the end of colonial rule in The Gambia. According to him, it was in 1951 that another Constitution was born. This particular Constitution recognized the establishment of political parties. In the same year, the Democratic Party (DP) was formed by Rev. J.C Faye. In 1954, another Constitution was drafted. Also, for the first time, the position of Speaker was established and filled through an election by elected council members. In 1960, another Constitution was adopted which provided for Universal Adult Suffrage and extension of franchise to people residing in provincial Gambia.

The 1960 Constitution was a milestone in the history of Gambia’s Constitutional development, because the name of the Legislature was changed to House of Representatives. Two years later, the 1962 Constitution came into force. This Constitution stood out, because it reduced the powers and influence of the chiefs. Subsequently, in 1965 the Independence Constitution came into effect,” Mr. Ceesay, informed the CRC’s Communications Team.

Asked what distinguished the 1965 Constitution, 1970 Constitution and the 1997 Constitution in respect to context, substance and methodology, Mr. Ceesay indicated that there is indeed some degree of disparity among these periods of Constitutional development in The Gambia.

“For the Independence Constitution (the 1965 Constitution), there was no public participation. It was designed and developed by Sir John Paul and no one else was involved,” Mr. Ceesay emphatically outlined. He also recognised the fact that in the process of building the Republican Constitution, very limited public engagement and consultations were done. This, Mr. Ceesay said, was so because the authorities were obsessed with attaining Republican Status.

Mr. Ceesay however said that the 1970 Constitutional building process contrasts sharply with the 1997 Constitution in two fundamental ways: the context and the environment in which they were developed. He admitted that there was some form of public participation in developing the 1997 Constitution, but of course this must not be exaggerated.

He drew a clear distinction between Constitution and the current Constitutional
Review Process in terms of methodology and context thus: “In spite of some elements of public participation, the 1997 Constitution was developed in a climate of fear, terror and blackmail which ultimately delivered numerous indemnity clauses.” According to the renowned historian, the purpose and intention of the drafters of the 1997 Constitution were pure, but the Junta regime tampered with the document for political gains. He also hailed the ongoing Constitutional building process as participatory, open, and free from fear, intimidation, and blackmail.

This process, he added is the first comprehensive consultative process he has ever witnessed in the country. For this reason, Mr. Ceesay expressed confidence that the outcome of the CRC process will be owned by Gambians, because it is transparent and inclusive.

The historian also argued that the strategies and methodologies employed by the CRC is the best inclusive approach ever in The Gambia’s Constitutional development history.

In his words, “I think this current Constitutional review process of The Gambia will make it into the history books.”

The National Youth Council (NYC) mobilized young people to engage the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) and other transitional justice institutions like the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC), the Security Sector Reform (SSR) and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on what they called ‘National Youth Dialogue on the ongoing reforms in The Gambia’.

The initiative funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-The Gambia was meant to receive feedback from citizens, especially the youth, on the various reform mechanisms and development issues in The Gambia for necessary improvements, while increasing understanding.

Participation and ownership of the reform processes. It was also aimed at providing young people with the needed capacity and information to enhance their full participation in the ongoing reform processes, as well as provide a platform for institutions leading the various reform processes to engage and directly interact with youths across the country on the progress, challenges and opportunities, and further receive feedback and recommendations for improvement.

The dialogue, which attracted over a hundred participants, was initially held in the Kanifing Municipality, the West Coast Region and the Lower River Regions.

Subsequent dialogues were held in the
Continued from page 8

Central River Region, the North Bank and the Upper River Regions.

The events took the form of peer youth-led discussions on the reforms and also a panel discussion where representatives from the various transitional justice reform institutions were engaged by young people on their level of preparedness vis-à-vis expectations from the public.

Speaking at a panel discussion during one of the sessions, the CRC Head of Communications, Mr. Sainey M. K. Marenah said the Commission attaches great significance to the involvement of young people in the review process. This, he said, is evident by the presence of a Youth Commissioner at the CRC and that the majority of staff working at the CRC Secretariat are young people.

Commenting further, Mr. Marenah said the Commission, from inception, engaged musicians as the vehicle to get its messages across to the youth. During the in-country consultations the Commission engaged young people in plenary sessions, focused-group discussions and school consultations to ensure that they participated.

‘We recognize that young people are crucial stakeholders in the review process, hence the need to reflect their needs and wishes,’ he concluded.

The Executive Director of the National Youth Council (NYC) Mr. Lamin Darboe opined that the forum was intended to provide young people with the requisite capacity and needed information to enhance their full participation in the ongoing reform processes.

The dialogue Mr. Darboe opined will provide platforms for institutions leading the various reform processes to engage and interact with the youth on the progress, challenges and opportunities linked to transitional justice. The engagement also allowed transitional justice institutions to receive feedback and recommendations from young people on ways of improving the governance architecture in the country.

CRC PARTICIPATES IN INTERNATIONAL PEACE DAY CELEBRATION

The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) one of the country’s transitional justice institutions led by their partners - the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission, in collaboration with the Catholic Relief Services and Caritas, recently participated in celebrations marking International Peace Day.

The theme of the day was: ‘Effective Action for Promoting Social Cohesion through Transitional Justice Systems’. The day was observed by a march past, speeches and a football match with a view to inculcating the culture of tolerance and peaceful co-existence in the country.

International Peace Day is meant to reflect on peace in our society. In the context of The Gambia, the significance of the day goes without saying. The country recently migrated from a “painful” past and has now embarked on a journey towards reconciliation, justice and peaceful co-existence.

The event was held at the Serrekunda Mini-Stadium. The CRC delegation led by Mr. Sainey MK. Marenah; the CRC Head of Communications was quite elated to be associated with the event.

In thanking the TRRC and its partners for inviting the CRC to the occasion, Mr. Marenah reminded the gathering of the significance that the CRC attaches to peaceful co-existence and social cohesion in the country.
Commissioner Yankuba Dibba is a career Development Practitioner and Civil Society Leader with decades of combined practice and team leadership within government, non-government organizations and civil society. He is currently the CEO of the Organisation for Islamic Cooperation Secretariat (OIC), The Gambia.

Mr. Dibba brings to the CRC considerable executive and management experiences from a wide range of work settings and environments at both local and international levels.

On his appointment as Commissioner, Mr. Dibba, said “this is a legacy project for me and it is both a challenge and an honour. Considering the recent past history of The Gambia, being entrusted with the responsibility of writing a New Constitution, places huge responsibility on the CRC. I am therefore humbled to have been chosen as one of eleven Commissioners to undertake this onerous task. The assignment offers me a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, which is as engaging as it is enriching”.

Mr. Dibba started his professional career as a teacher, then moved to the Information and Broadcasting Department and later worked for decades with Civil Society Organisations (CSO). He has been the Executive Director of The Gambia Family Planning Association for over two decades. During this period, Mr. Dibba was contracted by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) as Resident Administrator in post-war Liberia and Sierra Leone to restructure and put in place new management structures in the Planned Parenthood Associations of the two post-war West African countries, assignments he successfully accomplished.

Mr. Dibba also played key roles in corporate governance in many Gambian institutions. He is the current Chairperson of the Board of Directors for Gambia Investment, Export Promotion Agency (GIEPA), Vice Chairperson, Gambia Radio and Television Services, (GRTS). He has in the past been Chairperson of other institutions including GAMWORKS, TANGO and Njabakunda Senior Secondary School.

Commissioner Dibba has a Master’s degree with Distinction from the University of Cardiff in Wales. He is also an MBA candidate of the University of Leicester, in the United Kingdom. He is an alumni of the University of London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine; and of top business schools including Columbia University in the USA, Witwatersrand University in South Africa and Sasin University in the Kingdom of Thailand. He also holds a Post-Graduate Diploma in Mass Communications from Cairo, Egypt.

Commissioner Dibba is a proud husband and grandfather.
MEET THE COMMISSIONERS

Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow
Chairperson

Hawa K. Sisay-Sabally
Vice Chairperson

Commissioner Salimatta Touray

Commissioner Amie Joof-Cole

Commissioner Fatoumatta Jallow

Commissioner Gaye Sowe

Commissioner Janet R. Sallah-Neji

Commissioner Lamin S. Camara

Commissioner Yankuba Dibba

Commissioner Yankuba Manjang

Commissioner Dr. Melville George
MEET THE SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

RAYMOND SARR
HEAD OF HUMAN RESOURCES

SAM ALI ASHCROFT
HEAD OF FINANCE

OMAR OUSMAN JOBE
SECRETARY

SAINEY M.K. MARENAH
HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS

MOHAMMED HASSAN LOUM
HEAD OF PROGRAMMES
PICTORIAL: CRC AT WORK
INTRODUCING CRC HEADS OF DEPARTMENT

The CRC Head of Programs - Mohammed Hassan Loum

The CRC Head of Programs - Mohammed Hassan Loum commenced work with the CRC on the 16th October 2018. He was the first Bilingual Secretary at the ECOWAS National Coordinating Committee Secretariat under The Gambia’s Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (MoFEA) from 2010 to 2013. In 2013, Mr. Loum was then employed as the first Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at the Projects in the MoFEA until 2015, when he joined the Department of Water Resource’s Climate Change Early Warning Systems Project Phase II also as a Project Monitoring & Evaluation Officer.

Mr. Loum has a B.A in Development Studies (Honors) and French (double majors) from the University of The Gambia (2006). He is the holder of Master’s Degree in French (Lettres et Langues) from the University of Limoges, France (2010). Mr. Loum speaks in English and French fluently.

Mr. Mohammed Hassan Loum came to the CRC with a wealth of experience in project and program planning, management, monitoring & evaluation. Mr. Loum was instrumental in developing a unified Monthly Progress Reporting (MPR) template which was used by all staff under the CRC Programs Department. Mr. Loum successfully facilitated the coordination of the CRC Household Survey, data entry and analysis of results of the CRC Household Survey. He also ensured the development of qualitative reports for all of the CRC Consultative Processes. During his tenure as the Head of Programs, Mr. Loum ably stewarded the units under his department.

Sharing his experience working with the CRC, Mr. Loum said: ‘The CRC has been an important learning curve and experience for me. I have had the opportunity to meet with new people, discover new relations, make new friends and establish long-lasting relationships. The journey has been short but indeed very testing. Now that we are reaching the end of the tunnel, and the light is visible to all, we should not be complacent. We should ensure that we work to finish, in a strong collaborative and collective spirit, hoping always for the best results. As I leave the CRC, I sincerely thank all CRC staff for their cooperation, especially staff of the CRC Program: Department; CRC Heads of Departments for their strong support. The CRC Secretary for his strategic guidance and good mentorship; and the CRC Chairman and Commissioners for the unique opportunity to contribute towards a monumental national development initiative’.
INTRODUCING CRC HEADS OF DEPARTMENT

Mr. Raymond Sarr, is the CRC Head of Human Resources and Administration. Mr. Sarr brings wealth of experience to the CRC. Throughout his career, Mr. Sarr have been instrumental in demonstrating insight and shrewd judgment with the ability to devise innovative solutions to any dilemmas or discrepancies ensuring that tasks are delivered accurately and on time. He also possess excellent communication and interpersonal skills with a natural flair for working with policy documents, approaching any task in an analytical and meticulous manner.

Sarr, who holds BSC (Hons) Economics Management and Law at the University of Buckingham and Master of Humanities in International Maritime Legislation at the International Maritime Law Institute University of Malta, previously served as Senior Human Resources Manager at both Social Security and Housing Finance Corporation (SSHFC) and Gambia Maritime Administration. He was also Part of the interim Management to oversee the operations and Management of a 5 Star Hotel (Ocean Bay) owned 100% by the Social Security and Housing Finance Corporation in charge of General Administration, Human Resources, Purchasing and negotiating contract with Tour Operators.

Sharing his experience with CRC Communications team on the CRC process, Mr. Said: 'I am quite happy and elated to be part of this legacy project. I try to make CRC a place where everybody wants to be and I have to say this does not happen by accident, it happen by design. Working with people from diverse professional backgrounds has enable me to share and learn from their experiences.'
UN ELECTORAL ASSESSMENT TEAM VISITS CRC

A two-member team of officials from the United Nations on Wednesday, September 18, 2019, visited the offices of the Constitutional Review Commission, as part of the UNDP’s Electoral Assessment Mission to The Gambia.

Mr. Mansour Sadeghi, Electoral and Political Analyst of the Electoral Assistance Division Department on Political and Peace Building Affairs, and, Ms. Mathilde Vougny of the UNDP Brussels Office, were in the country on a fact-finding mission aimed at assessing the electoral needs before, during, and after the next election cycle which starts in 2021.

The two UN officials were at the seat of the CRC to learn about the work of the Commission with special attention to elections and to be updated on the efforts that the CRC is making in its drive to script a new Constitution for the country.

Mr. Mansour Sadeghi in his words: “The CRC is playing a key role in the new democratic dispensation of The Gambia.”

For his part, the CRC Secretary, Mr. Omar Ousman Jobe welcomed the visiting delegation to the CRC.

He explained the principal mandate of the Commission which he said is to draft a new Constitution for The Gambia and also a report that justifies the choices made by the Commission. He also talked about the various strategies deployed by the CRC in soliciting the views and aspirations of Gambians, saying, the CRC has consulted with a considerable number of Gambians, at home and overseas before embarking on the drafting process.

Commissioner Gaye Sowe in his intervention told the visiting UN officials that the CRC developed an ‘Issues Document for possible areas of Constitutional Reforms’ and the issue of elections are captured in the said document thereby giving Gambians the opportunity to contribute towards that important subject matter in constitutional development.

“We have also consulted with officials from the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) as a key stakeholder in the electoral process of the country. They have expressed their views and concerns which the Commission is currently reviewing,” Commissioner Sowe concluded.
This year’s International Day of Democracy provided the opportunity to remind Gambians that democracy is all about people. It goes without saying that democracy is built on inclusion, equal opportunity and participation. It is against this backdrop that democracy is described as the fundamental building block for peace, sustainable development and human rights.

In The Gambia, the day was spearheaded by the Commonwealth Partnership for Democracy (CP4D) and the Westminster Foundation for Democracy. These two institutions co-hosted the event at Ocean Bay Hotel on September 14, 2019, based on the theme ‘Participation, Inclusion and Equality.’

The event was attended by practitioners working in governance and sought to instill the culture of tolerance and democracy in The Gambia.

The CRC was represented at a panel discussion on ‘National Conversation on Democracy’ by Mr. Sainey MK Marenah, CRC’s Head of Communications. Mr. Marenah highlighted how the CRC is contributing in producing a crucial document that will inform the country’s governance systems in a way that will foster social cohesion.
CONSULTANT: CRC IS A LEARNING PROCESS

As part of its mandate to review and draft a new Constitution, the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) is tasked to produce a comprehensive written report on how the Commission arrived at a conclusion and all other issues raised during the public consultations with Gambians. It is against this backdrop that, the CRC contracted a seasoned consultant in report writing for a duration of four months.

In an exclusive interview, the consultant hired by the CRC to review the reports produced by staff from the Communication and the Program Department, Mr. Lawrence Bruce began by expressing deep satisfaction on the level of cooperation accorded to him in the execution of this important task. He, in not so many words, outlined his functions at the Commission.

Mr. Bruce said he feels proud and motivated to work with the Constitutional Review Commission to contribute his quota in the history Gambians are making. He expressed delight working with a group of experts, and professionals from diverse backgrounds with whom he would cross-fertilize ideas and ultimately come up with a befitting report that truly reflects the demand of Gambians.

Asked whether he is impressed with reports compiled by the Note-Takers during the consultations, Mr. Bruce described the CRC note-takers and researchers as hardworking and cooperative with the ability to articulate themselves well.

Mr. Bruce also recognized the speed at which he works with his team to finish the report writing within the stipulated timeframe.

In conclusion, he reiterated the fact that he is glad to be part and parcel of what he termed as a ‘history making project’. He confessed that serving the CRC as a consultant has given him an opportunity to know and appreciate the history of The Gambia, more especially the Constitutional review process.

“Working with the Commission is a learning process for me, because I have read divergent views of Gambians on national issues,” he noted.
The CRC’s Technical Committee on Public Finance Management tasked with the responsibility of reviewing, analyzing and making recommendations in relation to Public Finance Management submitted its report to the CRC Commissioners at a brief ceremony at the CRC Secretariat in Kotu.

The Committee, since its inauguration, four months ago has been working tirelessly to complete its assignment. The Committee reviewed and analyzed existing institutional arrangements, laws and policies of The Gambia, relevant to Public Finance Management, taking into consideration existing local as well as global contexts.

The Committee’s work is meant to support the CRC in developing a draft new Constitution that will be able to sustain a better quality of life for the people; lay the foundation for a competitive economy; promote an effective and efficient Public Services and Public Financial Management.

The Public Finance Management Committee, chaired by Commissioner Fatoumatta Jallow and assisted by Commissioner Salimata Touray is composed of some notable personalities in the public finance management sector in the persons of Alhaji T.S. Alieu Njie; Mr. Alpha Amadou Barry; Mr. Mammour Jagne; Mr. Anthony Ademola Taylor and Mr. Momodou Ceesay.
In its drive to craft a progressive and an all-inclusive Constitution for The Gambia, the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) developed a Media and Communications Strategy to enable it to reach out to every Gambian both at home and abroad and every strata of the society.

The CRC Communications Department under the leadership of Mr. Sainey M.K. Marenah has built strategic and solid partnership with the print and electronic media including the public, private and online television and radio stations. The CRC also built partnership with community radio stations across the length and breadth of the five administrative regions of The Gambia.

Regular press releases and conferences are organized - with the media being updated on the CRC activities, future plans, schedules as well as issues that are of public interest.

The Commission also worked with the media throughout to cover meetings with keys stakeholder institution. One hundred and six (106) communities meetings and 30 schools were consulted across The Gambia. The intention was to popularize its activities and solicit the opinions of Gambians as to what they would want the new draft Constitution to address.

The media and members of the public were also updated on the CRC external consultations where Gambians in the diaspora were equally consulted in an effort to craft an all-inclusive Constitution.

The CRC also created social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and a website to promote and support the CRC communications, civic education and consultations with the different stakeholders including the youth and Gambians in the Diaspora. The Commission continues to receive overwhelming response and support from Gambians and development partners.

Monthly newsletters are also published by the Commission to further inform the public and other partners of the day-to-day activities of the Commission. Pamphlets, stickers, facts sheet, handouts, etc. and other visual materials such as billboards, symbols and logos are also created to help the CRC popularize the review process and enable Gambians to take ownership.

Since the inception of the CRC, press conferences, Radio and TV interviews have become a regular feature where we interface with the people directly. This has been possible largely due to the partnership and cordial relationship the CRC has been able to forge with individual journalists and media houses covering the Constitutional review process.

We, at the CRC certainly recognize that we
have a shared journey not only with the Gambian people and other stakeholders, but also, specifically with members of the media who continue to give support to the history Gambians are making.’ Mr. Marenah, who, together with his team has been leading the media engagement efforts; concluded.

Right: Marenah and Linguist Sainey Dibba

CRC TC ON LAND AND ENVIRONMENT PRESENTS REPORT

After three months of painstaking research and consultation, the Constitutional Review Commission's Technical Committee on Land, Environment and Natural Resources on Thursday, September 12, 2019 presented its report to the Commission at the CRC Secretariat.

The report is expected to aid the Commission to make informed decisions on the subject-matter as part of the Constitutional drafting process. The presentation ceremony was chaired by Justice Cherno Sulayman Jallow, Chairperson of the CRC.

The Technical Committee on Land, Natural Resources and the Environment, was tasked to:

• review, analyse and make recommendations on issues identified by the CRC relating to land, natural resources and the environment;
• identify and analyse additional issues relevant to the theme of the Committee for consideration by the Commission;
• Review and analyse the existing laws and policies of The Gambia relevant to land, natural resources and the environment.
• Review the existing institutional arrangement for the management, conservation, and equitable use of land, natural resources, and the environment.
• take into consideration the existing national and global contexts, and advise whether any such laws or policies are fundamental for Constitutional recognition;
• Review international best practices, instruments/obligations.

The Committee is chaired by Commissioner Lamin S. Camara, and assisted by Commissioner Dr. Melvin George. Other Committee members include Mr. Gallo Saidy, a Civil and Sanitary Engineer; Ms. Ndey Sireng Bakurin, an Environment Management and Sustainable Development Expert; Dr Raymond Jatta, an Economist; Mr. Momodou B. Sarr, an Environment Management Expert and Mr. Lamin Komma, an expert on land related matters.
CRC RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

The CRC research team under the Programmes Department has been an instrumental arm of the Commission in delivering research products that informed the work of the Commission. A wide spectrum of research topics related to constitutional building were ably handled by the researchers under the supervision of Commissioners.

During the recently concluded CRC in-country and external consultations, the researchers were highly visible in spearheading focus group discussions with Gambians. In this special edition, the CRC Communications Department spoke to some of the researchers on their individual viewpoints for working with the Constitutional Review Commission. The following testimonies below constitute their reflections and experiences.

Mrs. Fatou Jallow, a Researcher at the CRC passionately expressed how conducting comparative studies and other related research works continue to expand her knowledge on matters revolving around the judicial operations of other countries. “This work is overwhelmingly rewarding. I feel so great being part of this noble and worthy exercise.” As a researcher, my professional skills continue to develop as my job avails me the opportunity to learn from Commissioners on various fields of work. Working at the Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) has been a wonderful experience for me. Working side by side with my colleagues also to attain a purpose is quite overwhelming.” She confessed.

Mr. Nasiru Deen, a Researcher at the CRC said: “As a young graduate beginning my professional career, I am pleased that the Constitutional Review Commission offered me the opportunity to contribute to the Constitution making process. As a researcher, he said, "I conduct research on Constitutional law, human rights and policy issues." Other activities that Mr. Deen engaged in included engaging/consulting with Gambians nationwide to enhance public participation in the Constitution building process, and also to analyse quantitative and qualitative data on specific areas for Constitutional review to present a clear picture of the opinions of Gambians on key issues.

“The Constitutional review process has been a great opportunity for me to learn, grow and most importantly, participate in this historic process. I believe I have become a better person and a better professional as a result,” Mr. Deen underscored.

Mr. Alieu Gako, a researcher who believed that "a Constitution defines who we are and what we seek to achieve as a nation" also shared his experiences, saying that working at the Constitutional Review Commission as a researcher has developed him both professionally and academically. Mr. Gako’s research works focused on comparing and contrasting the 1965, 1970 and 1997 Constitutions. According to him, in conducting research he often looks at best practices on Constitutional building process elsewhere and then make recommendations to the Commission on issues he thinks are worthy of consideration. He further alluded that the experience he generated working with the Commission has widened his horizon on how Constitutional building process works as well as crafting a research paper of any sort.

Mr. Ebrima Jarju: Another researcher, said working with the CRC has accorded him the opportunity to interact and learn from people with vast knowledge and experience. "I count myself lucky to be part of the amazing CRC family. Most importantly, it is an honour to serve my country through the CRC on this historic Constitutional review process. I will forever remain grateful," Ebrima stated.

Mr. Jarjue’s research works focused on various constitutional topics including Public Interest Litigation, and Secularism and accordingly came up with recommendations for Commissioners to consider.
Meet the CRC Executive Assistants who work behind the scenes to make administrative and other works achievable. Their inputs and dedication to work is integral in driving the review process to another level. As we sought their opinions about working with the Constitutional Review Commission, they passionately and outspokenly disclosed how they feel to be at the heart of the ongoing work at the Gambia’s Constitutional Review Commission.

In this special edition, we feature two of our Executive Assistants who incessantly work assiduously to complete their daily assigned tasks. Here, they reflect on and recount their individual encounters and experiences vis-à-vis the CRC consultations and other related works.

Ms. Fatoumatta Ceesay, an Executive Assistant at the Constitutional Review Commission said working with the CRC gave her the opportunity to achieve her professional aspirations and has positioned her in a better stead career-wise.

In Ms. Ceesay’s words, “As an Executive Assistant at the CRC, I accurately leveraged my knowledge of management, administrative and analytical skills to perform the duties assigned to me. The CRC is not only a professional institution, but an academy. Here you’re constantly engaged in other duties and have to be on your toes, multi-tasking.”

Ajaratou Isatou S. Conteh also an Executive Assistant said her work amongst others is to take minutes during Commission meetings, as well as cover senior management meetings.

She said: “Working for the CRC has been a real eye opener for me. Hitherto, my perception of the rural woman is one of a mixed-bag. This is based on the fact that, my visit to rural Gambia was only limited to the regional capitals, i.e. during outreach programmes to communities in rural Gambia.”

However, Madam Conteh continued that overtime her perception changed upon meeting the rural woman in their abode and in between laughter and crying heard their stories – stories related to their challenges, their hopes, their aspirations and their fears.

She passionately narrated this anecdote, “One story that still remains deeply embedded in my mind and which to date gives me goose pimples is this story about two women in Kiang who mistaken for bush pigs, were nearly shot by a hunter.”

The Constitutional review process, according to Madam Conteh is quite a formidable one - more so the internal consultations. She also submitted that many a time we think people in rural Gambia do not understand the issues.

“All one has to do is to strike conversations with them on any issue. This was clearly manifested at the internal consultations during the focus group discussions - FGDs. A situation where women were able to make a distinction between rights and privileges, calling for term limits, and a first degree as necessary qualifications for the Office of the President, free education, free medical care, access to roads and potable drinking water amongst a host of issues.”

In conclusion she said, “My hats off to the Gambian woman, but more so to the rural Gambian woman.”
PICTORIAL: FLASHBACK CRC IN-COUNTRY CONSULTATION
ABOUT THE CRC

The Commission
The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) is established by an Act of the National Assembly in June, 2018. The Commission’s main functions are to review and analyze the current Constitution, draft a new Constitution for the Republic of The Gambia and prepare a report in relation to the new Constitution. The Commission’s report will outline the processes engaged in reviewing and drafting the new Constitution and provide the rationale for the provisions contained in the new Constitution.

The Members of the CRC were appointed on the 1st June, 2018 and they were sworn into office by the President on the 4th June, 2018.

The Commissioners
The Constitutional Review Commission (CRC) comprises 11 Members made up of a Chairperson designated by the Chief Justice, Vice Chairperson nominated by the Minister of Justice and 9 other Members nominated by the President. All of them were appointed by the President.

Our Mandate
The main functions of the CRC are to review and analyze the current Constitution, draft a new Constitution for the Republic of The Gambia and prepare a report in relation to the new Constitution. The report will outline the processes engaged in reviewing and drafting the new Constitution and provide the rationale for the provisions contained in the new Constitution.

Our Core Values
The CRC is an independent body. Pursuant to the Constitutional Review Commission Act, 2017, the CRC, in carrying out its work, is not subject to the direction or control of any person or authority. As an institution, it is guided by the following core values:

- Inclusiveness
- Independence
- Integrity
- Participation

Our Guiding Principles
In carrying out its work, the CRC is required by the Constitutional Review Commission Act, 2017, to have regard to national values and ethos and safeguard and promote the following:

- The existence of The Gambia as a sovereign independent State;
- The Gambia’s Republican systems of governance, including democratic values and respect for and promotion of the rule of law and fundamental rights and freedoms;
- The separation of powers;
- National unity, cohesion and peace;
- The importance of ensuring periodic democratic elections based on universal adult suffrage, including the introduction of term limits for serving in the office of President; and
- The Gambia’s continued existence as a secular State.

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