This report, by GPU Secretary General, is a comprehensive account of the activities undertaken by the outgoing GPU Executive Committee, covering the period April 2015 to August 2018.
Executive Summary

It’s been three eventual years of tough yet fulfilling experience at the GPU. Statistical and documentary evidence show that the Gambia media has a difficult history. The period under review – 2015-2018 – is not an exception. The year 2015 was the eve of what turned out to be a decisive presidential election. The reality of challenges political contestations pose to the freedom and development of the media soon catch up with the newly installed Executive Committee. Old wounds were not healed when daggers were drawn to inflict new wounds. Climate of fear took strong roots. Journalists switched on survival-mode. Exit became the viable way out for many.

Internally, the GPU’s budgets were extremely tight. Organisational and structural weaknesses were apparent. So was the Union’s capacity to fund-raise, advocate and communicate. In the end, though, with perseverance, strategic planning and execution, so much of the storm was withered. This is evident in the significant growth and developments registered. The membership has increased. There's multiplicity of donors. Organisational and structural reforms resulted in strengthening of the capacity of the GPU to fundraise and advocate; guarantee checks and balances as well improved administrative and financial management systems. Permanent programmes staff have for the first time been hired.

Inheriting not more than TWENTY-FIVE THOUSAND DALASIS, with a liability of more than TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND DALASIS, the outgoing Executive is currently implementing and overseeing multiple projects and campaigns, raising more than TWENTY MILLION Dalasis. Up to three hundred thousand dalasis have been spent to repair the printing press, which has not been in order since 2012. Nearly one million dalasis have been injected into reviving the GPU School of Journalism, which had been dormant for two years. A micro-credit facility for journalists has been set up. In terms of capacity development, the Union averaged extraordinary two major outputs per month. The net for the Union’s engagements has been cast wider to cater for other professionals, including civil society, security officers, government officials, lawyers and lawmakers.

Indeed, the Gambia Press Union has received incredible amount of support from the government, civil society, and international and development community in pushing the agenda for the media sector. The journalists have been, in no significant way, uncompromising in their belief in democratic values. So much has been done. Yet, so much remains to be done.

Fortunately, there’s hope. Today, The Gambia is visibly enjoying an improved climate for freedom of expression. Citizens are becoming increasingly aware of their rights, and dutiful in holding duty-bearers to account. The media, both as an institution and a tool for good governance, is playing an important role in keeping the public informed and empowered. The GPU has been and shall remain the touchstone for that performance.

This report is a comprehensive account of the activities undertaken by the outgoing GPU Executive Committee since assuming office in April 2015. The first year in office marked a period of strategic
thinking and planning. The second year marked a period of fund-raising and minimal implementation of programmes. The third year, which coincided with the change of government, marked a period of so much of both.

As a way forward, of particular importance for us, as a nation, is to align the National Development Plan with the media reforms agenda. There is already in place a Comprehensive Media Sector Reforms agenda that could fit into the country’s development agenda. Media advocates, particularly the GPU, should pay attention to and trigger media development dialogues and advocacy in The Gambia. For, Gambia media, if well-prepared and provisioned, can catalyse a kind of democratic example that the World looks for in Africa. This is not a light burden on the shoulders of the incoming Executive Committee.

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Secretary General

Saikou Jammeh
1. State of the Gambia Media

Emerging from long and painful years of repression, The Gambia media is experiencing an unprecedented opportunity for freedom and growth. There is a cause for optimism. The emerging media boom after the dictatorship points towards an era of liberal press and more objective editorial content. Journalists are shaking off decades of political influence while efforts are advanced to break free from institutional and legal controls which have stifled press freedom in The Gambia.

a. **Print Media Sector:**

The number of weekly and daily print media outlets has increased. There are three new entrants on the newsstands – Seni-Gambia, The Trumpet and The Monitor. The Daily News, shut down by former government, has resumed operations. The Voice, a tri-weekly newspaper since its founding in 2008, has now joined three others – Foroyaa, The Standard and The Point - on the list of daily newspapers. However, the closure of The Daily Observer is a serious setback. And, the outlets are struggling financially. Newspaper access is low. There’s undue tax burden and business models are no longer sustainable. Plus lack of skills in business management, media outlets have weak management structures and tools.

b. **Broadcast Media Sector:**
Three new commercial radio stations have gone on air while the number of community radio stations remains nine. The monopoly of the state-owned broadcaster, Gambia Radio and Television Services, has ended with the opening of QTV and PTV. Star TV and Jammat TV have been issued with license for television broadcasting. All indications are that the space will be expanded as more licenses are under review for newspaper, radio and television outfits. The broadcast outfits are however faced with capacity challenges attributable to lack of content generation capacity. Other challenges include sustainability as advertising revenues are low. Concerns also include a lack of transparency in the digitisation process which may have a lasting impact on broadcasting.

c. **Online/Digital Media Sector:**

With the change of government, online media is gradually taken their place with more relevant and editorially verified content. The coming of Eye Africa TV, Fatu
Network and Kerr-Fatou are an important step in taking good journalism online. The challenge remains poor internet connectivity and low internet penetration rate.

d. **Training Institutions:**

![](image)

The learning and teaching of journalism and media has improved remarkably. The first home-grown bachelor’s degree holders are set to complete their graduation process this year. The GPU School of Journalism has revised its curriculum to cater for more students with improved quality. Private institutions such as Stratford College, IPAM and Insight Training Centre continue to provide training to journalists. The latter is implementing a three-year US-embassy sponsored programme for training of journalists.

e. **Media Organisations:**
Key media organisations have been registered during the period under review. Publishers have organised themselves into a group called Publishers Association of the Gambia (PAG) and broadcast station owners have also formed Broadcasters Association of the Gambia (BAG). Freelance Journalists Association, Women Journalists Association and Network of Community Radio Broadcasters have all been registered during the period under review. Steps are advanced to establish the Professional Editors Forum/Guild (PEG/F). These are important additions to the existing organisations and are expected to be helpful in promoting press freedom and welfare of journalists.

2 Media Law Reforms
Nearly two years after the new government assumed office, the Gambia remains a legal minefield for the media. There has so far been no significant repeal or amendment of any piece of the huge haul of laws and administrative codes that restrict freedom of expression and access to information. Although no journalist has been charged to court by the new government so far, the mere existence in the law books of anti-speech laws strengthens the residual fear in the media. Besides, two opposition leaders were recently questioned by the police for their remarks on the media. This was followed by the arrest of the political analyst over newspaper remarks. The president and vice president recently made statements that tend to undermine the intentions of the government to reform media laws. These actions have the potential to send a chilling effect in a sector whose history in written in blood. The GPU Executive Committee, since assuming office in 2015, has employed wide range of strategies to influence reform of media laws, including litigation, procession, policy statements, public sensitisation, advocacy and lobbying.

**a. Supreme Court of the Gambia**

On May 10, 2018, the Supreme Court of the Gambia delivered a ruling in the civil suit filed by the Gambia Press Union (GPU) against the Gambia Government, challenging the constitutionality of the following anti-speech laws:
1. Sections 51, 52, 53 and 54 of the Criminal Code which deals with sedition
2. Sections 178 and 179 of the Criminal Code which deals with criminal defamation
3. Sections 59 and 181 of the Criminal Code which deals with false news and false publication and broadcasting; and
4. Section 173 of the Information and Communication (Amendment) Act 2013 which deals with false publication on the internet.

The ruling, which brought an end to four years of legal battle at the country’s constitutional court, gave a partial victory in favour of press freedom. The court has declared unconstitutional criminal defamation and false publication on the internet. False news and false publication and broadcasting were however declared constitutional. A test of severability was applied on sedition. This means seditious libel doesn’t apply to criticism of government but it applies to criticisms directed at the person of the president or administration of justice or when it intends to incite hatred or violence.

b. Ecowas Court of Justice
On February 14, 2018, the Abuja-based Ecowas Court of Justice delivered a ruling on the legality of the laws of sedition, criminal defamation, false publication on the internet and false publication and broadcasting. In 2015, the Federation of African Journalists (FAJ) along with four Gambian exiled journalists, namely Fatou Camara, Lamin Fatty, Alagie Jobe and Fatou Jaw Manneh, filed a suit against the Gambia Government at the sub-regional court. The case was initiated and supported by the GPU, in collaboration with Media Legal Defence Initiative. Following three years of deliberations, the Ecowas Community Court, in its ruling, declared that the enforcement of these anti-free speech laws is a violation of freedom of expression and press freedom and are not in line with regional and international standards of freedom of expression. The GPU has since been engaging the government with the aim of full implementation of the recommendations of the Ecowas Court.

c. Legal Position Paper
After consultations that produced the Comprehensive Media Sector Reforms Framework, the GPU hired the services of constitutional lawyer, Hawa Sisay Sabally, to develop a Legal Position Paper on Media Law Reforms. This comprehensive study of laws that govern journalism had been subject to further consultative workshops before it was validated and submitted to the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure. We are happy to report that this was used by MoICI as reference in the final compilation of laws meant to be reviewed by the Government.

d. Freedom of Information Legislation
On June 28, 2018, the Minister for Information and Communication Infrastructure, Honourable Demba Ali Jawo, wrote to invite the GPU to hire a local lawyer who will work
with the international expert from Article 19, in the drafting of the bill on freedom of information. The GPU has since hired the services of Hawa Sisay Sabally. Work is in progress in this endeavour. Prior to this, the GPU had submitted a policy paper to the government, stating our position on the approach towards the enactment of an FoI legislation. Central to this position is the recognition that FoI issues impact and affect citizens far more than the media, hence the need to reverse perceptions and disinterest from other sectors through an FoI campaign that talks to the issues of interest to different sectors, including health, child rights, the disabled, local governance, education, women's rights among many other sectors. In line with that argument, the GPU, working closely with TANGO, has set up a CSO Coalition on Freedom of Information and the #R2KCampaigngmb. The GPU has now put in place a comprehensive strategy, a term of reference, an action plan and a project on proposal for the smooth operations of the Campaign.

### e. Constitutional Review

On December 13, 2017, the National Assembly passed the Constitutional Review Commission Act tabled by Minister for Justice. The President of the Republic assented to it on January 13, 2018. The Commission was inaugurated on June 5, 2018, tasked with the responsibility of drafting of a new constitution. The GPU was involved in the selection process of the Commissioners and our nominee, Amie Joof Cole, was duly appointed to serve as one of the seven commissioners. Informed by GPU broad consultations with media, government and civil society partners, in line with the Gambia Media Sectors Reforms Strategy, the GPU has designed a campaign called ‘The Constitution We Want’. The Constitution We Want campaign is premised on the need to promote media and free expression rights in the proposed Gambia constitutional review process and build the media and citizen voices on the need for comprehensive protection and advancement of media rights. This Campaign will bring together media organisations, media outlets and media training institutions on a common platform aimed at promoting media independence and protecting media and freedom of expression rights, in adherence to international standards and best practices.

### 3 Institutional Development
The executive members of the Young Journalists Association of the Gambia (YJAG)

The GPU’s overriding aim is to strengthen the capacity of media associations and media outlets to enable them sustainably and efficiently initiate, lead, and support initiatives for the development of the media sector. This is in view of the fact that strong institutions that underpin media freedom and independence are essential guarantees for a professional and vibrant media sector. To be able to do this, the GPU must first and foremost be strengthened and modernised. Since assuming office in 2015, the GPU Executive Committee has embarked on massive and innovative institutional development programmes. The Executive has also enhanced transparency and accountability at the GPU with improved engagement with the members and public through multiple communication platforms, including a Facebook Page, a Website, Twitter Handle, YouTube Channel and WhatsApp Group.

a) Secretariat

The GPU now has a functioning secretariat with full-time, permanent staff. The norm has been that the Executive Committee volunteers to manage day-to-day affairs of the Union. In January 2017, the Board formalised the setting up of a secretariat, appointing the Secretary General as Executive Director. The GPU Board has since appointed a Programme Manager, an Accountant and two Programme Officers. This ensures consistency with what obtains at our parent bodies, Federation of African Journalists and International Federation of Journalists. As an Organisational best practice, it also guarantees clear delineation of roles, where the secretariat takes care of day-to-day administration and programming while the
Board provides oversight and strategic leadership and policy direction. Funding has been secured to support the secretariat for five years in the form of payment of salaries and rental contribution. The Union now boasts of being a modern, knowledge-based institution with well-trained and motivated staff and a well-equipped secretariat.

b) Media Regulation:
In pursuant of our mandate to providing professional standards for the media industry, the GPU has had many initiatives aimed at promoting the freedom and responsibility of the media.

**Code of Conduct for Media Practitioners:** In 2013, in the shadows of an attempt by the then government to set up a commission, the GPU moved to constitute a committee that designed guidelines for media regulation. In March 2016, the Union developed and validated a Code of Conduct for Media Practitioners and launched it on October 28, 2016. This is an industry-wide Code that caters for all categories of professional media practitioners in print, radio, television and online. It is an important first step towards desirable and acceptable levels of ethical standards.

**Ethics Caravan:** In 2017, through funding from the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), the GPU embarked on a nation-wide caravan, visiting media house to distribute the code – one code per journalist – and sensitised the practitioners on the principles of the code.

**Media Council of the Gambia:** In October 2017, the GPU President and Secretary General conducted a study mission in Ghana. During this visit, hosted by Media Foundation for West Africa, we had discussions with Ghana Journalists Association, Ghana Broadcast Owners Association, Ghana Media Commission and individual journalists and media outlets. The aim was to learn from the Ghanaian experience on media regulation and come up with a model that would guide stakeholders in the establishment of regulatory framework for the media industry. Since our return, we have developed and submitted a Position Paper to the relevant authorities and stakeholders, including the MoICI, MoJ, and PURA. We have also had two sensitisation meetings involving (1) journalists and 2) media owners and editors. We have also had several bilaterals with MoICI, PURA, and MoJ. We are working with the government smoothen some edges before launching the Council. The GPU has funds to set up the Council and run it for one year. The Union will soon make calls for application for the position of Executive Secretary of the Council.

c) Printing Press
In May 2011, the US Embassy in Banjul donated to the GPU a Double Head HEIDELBERG MOZ E Printing Press and 20 KVA Generator. This gesture offered improved quality and regular printing of newspapers at below-market rates. However, the Printing Press suffered a major setback and had been out of order since 2012. After taking over, our Committee constituted a Task Force to look into the issue and to study the
financial viability of the printing press. In July 2016, the Task Force concluded its findings, stating that more than 300,000 Dalasis was needed for repairs. Without funds to commission repairs, the GPU Executive offered another printing press donated to the GPU in 1996 in exchange for repairs. The location of The Printing Press, which has been politicised and misrepresented, has been changed from The Standard Newspaper premises to a new, independent location at Garba Jahumpa Road, Bakau. It is now revamped and repaired and fitted with new parts. The GPU will soon inform the media owners of the commencement of the operations of the printing press.

d) GPU School of Journalism
In 2013, the GPU School of Journalism was formally registered. It is the first specialised formal journalism training institute in the country. The School graduated second class of students advanced diploma level in 2015. The alumni are now scattered across newsrooms, manning key positions. However, after the end of the project that supported the project, the school went into coma. It was a signature away from being de-registered. It was out of this concern that GPU Executive Committee put aside the Board and assumed leadership of the school. Mr Sang Mendy, a product of the school, was recruited to succeed Gibairu Janneh, who left for further studies. Mr Mendy and his team, with support from Gambia Media Support (GAMES) launched a successful ‘Save Our School Campaign’. Through a UNESCO-implemented EU sponsored project, the School curriculum was revised and brought to the standards of the UNESCO Model Curriculum for Journalism Studies in Africa. New courses have been introduced and lecturers were recruited. Previously offering two-year diploma programme, the School now offers Foundation, Certificate, Diploma and Advanced Diploma. The Institute that was enrolling about twenty students every two years now enrolls a minimum of FIFTY students every year without compromising quality. Plans are advanced in guaranteeing the autonomy of the school, having secured new, separate premises. Accounts are separated and a new board is being constituted that will provide oversight and strategic policy direction to the School. The premises is fitted with two computer labs and classrooms are fitted with modern technologies. The School has hired new recruits, including Demba Kandeh as Director of Training and Administration and Modou S. Joof, Musa Barrow, Abdoulie Sey, Muhammed Ndure and Ebrima Bah as a teaching staff. Nine senior journalists were trained to become trainers.

In August 2017, the School signed a memorandum of understanding with the School of Journalism and Digital Media at the University of the Gambia. This MoU allows students who graduate at the GPU School at advanced diploma level to benefit from credit waivers and graduate after two years, instead of undergoing a full four-year programme. The collaboration also formalises the use of GPU premises and facilities by UTG students and discussions are ongoing to deepen this understanding to cover exchange of students and lecturers.
c) **Credit Union Facility**

The GPU has done rigorous consultations for the setting of a credit union facility for media practitioners. The credit union aims to provide improved savings platform and access to micro-credit facility for media practitioners with a view to improving their living and working conditions. The setting up of credit union was unduly delayed. We are however glad to announce that the process has begun two months ago. So far, more than FIFTY people have signed up to the body.

f) **Plot of Land for GPU**

The GPU, with effect from September 2018, pays more than FIVE HUNDRED thousand Dalasis tenancy. Securing a plot of land has been the priority of the GPU and has engaged successive ministers on the issue. In 2017, we finally got a nod to go ahead with the application. On June 1, 2017, we submitted an application. The removal of Demba Jawo and deployment of Lamin Dibba from Lands Ministry to Ministry of Agriculture apparently affected the speed of the process of allocation of a plot of land to the GPU. However, we have engaged the new Minister for Information, Ebrima Sillah, who committed his support to securing a plot of land to the GPU. On July 19, 2018, we submitted a follow up letter to the Lands Ministry on the advice of Minister Ebrima Sillah. We continue to engage them to speedy up the process.

g) **Affiliates and Professional Media Organisations**

There has been proliferation of professional journalist organisations in recent times. While these in default are regarded as affiliates, in reality, very few have regularised their membership status with the Union. Even where there’s formalized relationship, the terms are not adequately defined or understood. The GPU Executive Committee has approved mechanisms aimed at facilitating formalised relationship with professional journalist organisations. A membership guidelines and form have been developed and shared with potential affiliates. So far, four out of potential EIGHT, have returned their forms. The GPU has an interest and a mandate to improve their institutional skills, capacity and competencies. The Union has previously organised capacity building programmes for Sports Journalists Association, Network of Community Radio Broadcasters and Women Journalists Association. We have also helped support WoJAG to raise more than 100,000 dalasis while the Network of Community Radio Broadcasters have equally raised similar amount. Plans are underway to dedicate a well-equipped office to Affiliates at the GPU premises and to hold regular capacity building programmes, especially in the area of leadership, fundraising and advocacy. This, we hope, will also serve as an incubation centre for leadership at the GPU.
4 Capacity Development and Outreach Programmes

a. Public Sensitisation

The GPU continues to raise the awareness of the public on such crucial issues as human rights, democracy, freedom of expression, access to information and journalism. Between 2015 and 2018, the Union has about TWENTY public sensitisation programmes for a wide range of professionals, including journalists, securities, lawyers, university students, lawmakers, civil society actors and government officials. These programmes helped in increasing public understanding of media and freedom of expression rights issues as well as the relationship between the press and the public.

b. Capacity Building

The GPU continues to provide long-term and short-term training courses for journalists on a number of areas of specialisation. Between 2015 and 2018, the Union and the School, organised an estimated FIFTY capacity building programmes, catering for all categories of journalists – print, broadcast and online – in a number of areas, including election reporting, media law and ethics, transitional justice, investigative
5 Advocacy and Welfare

a. World Press Freedom Celebrations

Commemoration of World Press Freedom Day – May 3rd - has become a regular feature on the GPU’s activity calendar. Set aside by the United Nations General Assembly in December, 1993, the Day provides an opportunity for journalists, governments and press freedom advocates world over to evaluate and renew commitment towards press freedom. May 3rd also serves as a reminder to citizens of the importance of press freedom – that in dozens of countries around the world, Gambia included, publications are censored, fined, suspended and closed down, while journalists, editors and publishers are harassed, attacked, detained and even murdered.

☑ 2015 WPFD:
The event was held at Kairaba Beach Hotel in the form of a public lecture. On the GPU’s invitation, regional director of the UN Office of the High Commission and Human Rights, Muhamane Gisse Gouro, flew from Geneva to commemorate the Day with us. He was joined by African Union Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression, Pansy Tlakula.

**2016 WPFD:**
This event marked the launch of the National Excellence in Journalism Awards, which has since become a permanent flagship event commemorating World Press Freedom Day.

**2017 WPFD:** This event, the first WPFD following the change of government, presented an opportunity to engage with the new government. Ahead of the event, the GPU developed a Position Paper on Media Reforms. On May 3rd, hundreds of aspiring and practicing journalists and civil society advocates marched from Kairaba Avenue to the Ministry of Information where a Position Paper was presented to the Minister. This was followed by a public lecture. A key highlight of the procession was the participation of officials from the public relations offices of the Drug Law Enforcement Agency and Gambia National Army while members of the Gambia Police Force provided the escort. The Special Guests were Lars Moller of Denmark-based non-profit called the Gambia Media Support and Suleiman Braimah, executive director of Media Foundation West Africa (MFWA).

**2018 WPFD:** This event was done in an innovative style. It was a public lecture on the theme ‘*Keeping Power in Check: Media, Justice and the Rule of Law*’. Alienor Salmon, a representative of the Director General of UNESCO Offices in Dakar, attended
the event. She was joined by such key national figures as the then Minister for Information, Demba Ali Jawo and the Executive Secretary of the TRRC.

b. National Excellence in Journalism Awards

Since its launch in 2016, the National Excellence in Journalism Awards has become a permanent flagship event of the World Press Freedom Day. The Awards is the highest national honour in journalism and celebrates high-impact stories in such areas as health, agriculture, business, human rights, children, women, among others. It also awards individuals and organisations that contribute to the freedom and development of the media.

c. Deyda Hydara Anniversary
Deyda Hydara, the co-proprietor and former president of the GPU, was shot dead by people that remain unknown. The GPU has since been advocating for investigations into his murder. In 2015, the GPU launched the Deyda Hydara Memorial Lectures Series, which was held in 2016 and 2017. Following the change of government, the GPU has had a series of engagements with the government. The Ministry of Justice had promised that Deyda’s case will be dealt with by the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC).

d. Chief Manneh Anniversary

Ebrima Chief Manneh, a reporter of The Daily Observer, disappeared in July 2006. The GPU has since been advocating for his release. In July 2015, the Union for the first time organised a symposium to commemorate the anniversary of his disappearance. The GPU continues to engage the government for investigation into his disappearances and to establish his whereabouts. Following the change of government, the GPU has had a series of engagements with the government. The Ministry of Justice had promised that Chief Manneh’s case will be dealt with by the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission.

e. Implementation of Ecowas Court Rulings

The GPU, in collaboration with our partners, filed a number of suits at the Ecowas Court of Justice against violations of rights of journalists, including 1) the government’s failure to investigate the
murder of Deyda, 2) the enforced disappearance of Ebrima Chief Manneh, 3) the torture of Musa Saidykhan and 4) enforcement of anti-free speech laws against journalists.

All four cases were decided in favour of the journalists.

Following the change of government, the GPU has had engagements with the government to implement the decision of the Ecowas Court Ruling. The Union, with support from MFWA, went on to hire the services Lawyer Hawa Sisay Sabally to write to remind the government of their commitment. In March 2018, Minister for Justice wrote and invited the GPU to arrange a meeting with the families of victims. Half of the amount was paid to the Manneh and Hydara families and the balance is expected to be paid before the end of this year. Following an initial deadlock, negotiations have renewed in the case of Musa Saidykhan.

f. International Day Against Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists

On November 2017, the GPU, in partnership with MFWA, with support from IFEX, has for the first time commemorated November 2nd as the International Day Against Impunity for Crimes Against Journalists. The event renewed calls for the government to address incidents of violations against journalists while the government authorities made assurances for the safety of journalists. The event also discussed incidents of violations on the rights of female media practitioners.

g. Payment of Legal Fees

The GPU continues to support journalists and media practitioners in trouble with the law. In 2015, the GPU paid the legal fees of Alagie Abdoulie Ceesay to the tune of TWO HUNDRED and TEN DALASIS. We also contributed HUNDRED and SIXTY DALASIS as payment of legal fees for Musa Sheriff and Sainey M.K Marenah.
During our tenure, the GPU’s sources of funding have been diversified. Previously dependent mainly on single source of funding for most of its programmes and administrative support, the Union Executive has since expanded its network of partners while strengthening relationship with
the existing partners. UNDEF, NED, IRI, Search for Common Ground, IMS, OSIWA, and OSF have all for the first time began to have relationship with the GPU.

I. GAMES-DANIDA

The GPU has for the past 10+ years been working with Gambia Media Support to win projects from DANIDA, the funding agency of the Government of Denmark. In 2011, DANIDA funded for four-year project for GAMES and GPU. The project phased out in December 2015. Through this project, the GPU:

- in 2013, set up the GPU School of Journalism
- conducted a two-year advanced diploma journalism course for 20 journalists
- in 2015, conducted human rights training programmes for 1) lawyers and 2) National Assembly
- in 2015, conducted a national forum on human rights
- in May 2016, conducted a forum on Unionism, coinciding with the maiden National Excellence in Journalism Awards
- rolled out communication courses for civil society actors

Note: Bulk of GAMES intervention is now focused on the Media Academy.
Following the change of government, the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA), in collaboration with International Media Support (IMS) and Gambia Media Support (GAMES), supported the GPU to launch a collaborative effort with the government, through the Ministry of Information and Communication (MoICI) to produce a Comprehensive Media Sector Reforms Framework. Through this effort, the GPU:

- received on a six-month secondment Vivian Affoah, Senior Programme Officer, MFWA
- in joint collaboration with MoICI, set up a Technical Committee on Media Reforms. This Committee developed the Comprehensive Media Sector Reforms Framework.
- conducted two committee meetings
- in joint collaboration with MoICI, launched the Comprehensive Media Sector Reforms Framework.
- in joint collaboration with MoICI, set up Media Reforms Committee and Media Reforms Secretariat.
- conducted two Media Reforms Committee meetings
hired the services of a lawyer to develop a position paper on media law reforms
conducted a consultative meeting for journalists on legal position paper
conducted a CSO consultative meeting on legal position paper
conducted a national validation exercise of the legal position paper

III. UNDEF

On March 21, 2017, the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF), approved a grant of US$220,000 for the GPU towards the promotion of an enabling environment for freedom of speech and media professionalism. Through this project, the GPU:

✓ conducted five sensitisation workshops on freedom of expression and access to information.
✓ organised and launched a CSO Coalition of Freedom of Information and launched #R2KCampaignGmb.
✓ hired the services of a lawyer to draft the freedom of information bill
✓ held World Press Freedom Day 2017 and 2018
✓ held National Journalism Awards 2017 and 2018
✓ developed and validated the Code of Conduct for Media Practitioners
✓ printed and distributed 600 copies of the Code of Conduct
✓ conducted a study mission to Ghana
✓ organised four consultative meetings on self-regulation with PURA, MoICI, MoJ, Media Chiefs and Journalists
✓ plans the setting up of Media Council of the Gambia
✓ plans the training of 25 journalists on investigative reporting
✓ more than 5 capacity development programmes will be held later this year and next year

IV. Article 19

The GPU’s longstanding partnership with Article 19 has continued. Through this collaboration, the GPU and Article 19:

✓ jointly organised a symposium on International Day of Access to Information
✓ jointly organised a symposium on Gambia’s Human Rights Situation during the 57th Ordinary Session of ACHPR.
✓ drafting a Freedom of Information Bill
✓ drafting a Broadcasting Bill
V. NED

In February, 2017, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) approved a grant of US$39,995 to the GPU. The one-year project aims to enhance the ability of the media to investigate and better report on freedom of expression abuse, governance, transparency, and on elections. Through this project, the GPU:

✓ In March, 2017, organised a five-day training for community radio broadcasters
✓ In June, 2018, organised a five-day training course for members of Women Journalists Association of The Gambia
✓ conducted a study mission to Ghana
✓ purchased 50 digital recorders for community radio broadcasters and women journalists
✓ conducted research on media laws

VI. OSIWA

In November 2017, the Open Society Foundation for West Africa (OSIWA), approved a grant of US$60,000 for the GPU. Through this project, the GPU:

✓ is conducting a two-month investigative journalism course for 25 journalists
✓ is conducting a one-month court reporting course for 25 journalists
✓ hired consultants to develop curriculum on investigative reporting and court reporting.
VII. OSF-MFWA

In January 2018, the Open Society Foundation, through the Media Foundation for West Africa, kick-started five-year core budget support of US$150,000 to the GPU secretariat. Under this project, which came on the heels of the Comprehensive Media Sector Reforms Framework, MFWA makes an annual transfer of US$27,000 to the GPU. Through this project, the GPU hired:

- a director
- a programme manager
- an accountant
- a programme officer

NB: Another programme officer under a different arrangement, though the project also pays contribution to rent and internet.

VIII. German Embassy

In 2015, the Government of Germany, through the German Embassy in Dakar, approved a grant of 18,500 Euros to the GPU. Through this project, the GPU:

- organised a training for journalists on human rights
- organised a training for armed and security forces on human rights
✓ commemorated the anniversary of the disappearance of Ebrima Chief Manneh in 2015
✓ commemorated the anniversary of the murder of Deyda Hydara in 2015

IX. UNDP-WANEP

In the run up to the presidential, legislative and local government elections, the UNDP supported the GPU to build the capacity of journalists on election reporting. Through this project, the GPU:

✓ organised eight training programmes on election reporting
✓ purchased a surround sound system and smart television set
✓ organised a one-month training programme for 40 journalists on transitional justice and conflict-sensitive reporting.

X. IRI

The GPU’s relationship with the International Republican Institute started in the run up to the presidential elections. Through IRI’s interventions, the GPU:

✓ in October 2016, facilitated the organising of a training workshop in Dakar for journalists and civil society actors
✓ organised a total of five training workshops on election reporting in the run up to the presidential, parliamentary and local government elections.
✓ organised a training workshop for National Assembly Members on Legal Position Paper

XI. IFJ

✓ organised capacity building for GPU Board and Staff on collective bargaining
✓ organised training for journalists on gender and safety.

Note: The GPU and IFJ are currently finalising discussions on an approved project on Digital Media Economy.

XII. EU-UNESCO

In September 2016, the EU approved a grant of 57,000 Euros for the GPU, implemented by UNESCO Regional Office in Dakar. Through this project, the GPU

✓ revised and adjusted the curriculum of the GPU School of Journalism to the UNESCO Model Curriculum for Journalism Studies in Africa
✓ sponsored four senior-level journalists to embark on a Post-Graduate Studies in Journalism at the London School of Journalism
✓ rolled out partial scholarship programme for 30 students at the GPU School of Journalism.
✓ sponsored the teaching of courses at certificate, diploma and advanced diploma levels at the GPU School of Journalism
✓ signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of The Gambia
✓ conducted a five-day training course on web design
✓ conducted a five-day training course on English Language
✓ conducted a ten-day training course on multi-media production
✓ fitted the GPU Computer Lab with 20 Apple Computers, 20 Canon Cameras, Laser Jet Printer, Screen, Projector and Smart TV.

XIII. MLDI

The Media Legal Defence Initiative (MLDI) works closely with the GPU. Through our various projects, the GPU:

✓ hired the services of Lawyer Combeh Gaye to represent Alagie Abdoulie Ceesay
✓ filed a civil suit at Supreme Court for the repeal of anti-free speech laws
✓ worked with Federation of African Journalists to file a suit at the Ecowas Court on the constitutionality of anti-free speech laws.

7 Attack on press freedom
Attack on journalists has increased in recent times. Police and political party supporters are the main sources. What is more worrying is the climate of impunity. Of more than ten incidents of violent attack on journalists, none has been prosecuted. The GPU has had a series of engagements with the relevant stakeholders to address the issue, whose urgency is emphasised by the fact that political contestations are beginning to set roots.

i. Mafugi Ceesay, Senior Reporter, The Voice Newspaper

On June 03, 2015, Mr Mafugi Ceesay, senior reporter of The Voice newspaper, was detained by unidentified Gambian military personnel while covering a meeting of President Yaya Jammeh at
Sukuta Village. He was simply taking notes when men in military uniform held him by the neck and dragged him out of the crowd. He was detained for the entire period of the meeting. His notebook, press card and voice recorder were seized. They claimed he did not have authority to cover the meeting, which in fact was held in the middle of the village and anyone who has interest or was strong enough could attend it. The GPU had made efforts to meet with the leadership of the Gambia Armed Forces to address the matter but to no avail. We issued a statement calling for the matter to be investigated. Instead of investigating the matter, the journalist was investigated. Five of his newspaper’s staff, including the editor and publisher, were invited for questioning and in the process were thoroughly screened by the National Intelligence Agency. The GPU had reported this matter during the 57th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights.

ii. Alagie Abdoulie Ceesay, Managing Director, Teranga FM

By far, the most brutal press freedom violation during our tenure involved Alagie Abdoulie Ceesay, the managing director of Teranga FM. He was taken away by plain clothes state security agents and detained incommunicado for 29 days, between July 2 and August 4, 2016, during which he was allegedly tortured. He was subsequently charged with sedition and false news. His bail application was turned down three times. After nine months of trial, he escaped and fled the country while receiving treatment at the Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital. The GPU had reported this matter during the 57th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights. The Union had also issued several statements condemning the brutal treatment meted out on him and his eventual prosecution. We had also written an Open Letter to Justice Minister following
deterioration of his conditions and pleaded for discontinuation of his trial. We had also hired the services of Lawyer Combeh Gaye as his defense counsel.

iii. Kebba Jeffang, Reporter, Foroyaa Newspaper

On Sunday March 05, 2018 Mr Jeffang came under physical and verbal assault from supporters of the United Democratic Party (UDP), Gambia Moral Congress (GMC) and National Reconciliation Party (NRP). This was at the UDP’s Manjai Bureau, during a press conference, jointly organised by the three parties. The accounts of several journalists that were at the scene of the attack suggest that the hall was crowded by party supporters who constantly harassed and intimidated journalists. The GPU had condemned the attack and had engaged leaders of the parties involved on the matter. Only the GMC leader responded positively. Mr Mai Ahmed Fatty, who was Interior Minister, had a meeting with Jeffang and the GPU at Kairaba Beach Hotel, where he publicly apologised.

iv. Alagie Manka, Freelance Photo-journalist
v. Yunus Salieu, senior reporter, Daily Observer
vi. Bakary Fatty, Agriculture Anchor, GRTS
vii. Momodou Sabally, Managing Director, GRTS
The four media practitioners were arrested and detained in the run up to the presidential elections of December 1, 2016.

On November 10, NIA agents detained Yunus Salieu, a journalist with The Daily Observer newspaper, and Alhagie Manka, an independent photojournalist, for using their phones to film supporters of President Jammeh and his ruling party on the same day Jammeh submitted his re-election nomination. Salieu was released on November 11 and Manka was released on November 16.

Similarly, on November 8, agents of the NIA, arrested and detained Momodou Sabally, Director-General of GRTS and Bakary Fatty, a GRTS agriculture reporter. The detention of Sabally and Fatty was widely believed to be connected to the state broadcaster's airing of footage showing an opposition candidate's nomination, instead of Jammeh's wife's agricultural event.
viii. Closure of Radio Stations
The crackdown on media, which came up in the run up to the presidential elections, intensified during the political impasse. Four radio stations were arbitrarily and unlawfully shut down. On January 1, 2017, personnel of the National Intelligence Agency ordered Teranga FM, Hill Top FM and Afri Radio FM to stop transmission with immediate effect.

A week later – Sunday, January 8 - another private station, Paradise FM, was shut down on similar orders. Although the Ministry had confirmed the revocation of the operating licenses of these radio stations, neither the Ministry nor the NIA gave any reasons for the closures. The GPU had condemned the closures as arbitrary and unlawful.

ix. Pa Modou Bojang, CEO, Home Digital FM
On June 18, 2018, Journalist Pa Modou Bojang was assaulted by the personnel of Police Intervention Unit (PIU) at Faraba Village, Kombo East. This was during clashes between police and villagers over mining activity. Journalist Bojang went to the scene in the morning for news coverage when he came under attack. He said he was physically assaulted before he was arrested and taken under six hours of detention at Brikama Police Station. The GPU had issued a statement condemning the attack and had engaged with relevant state authorities. The Union was assured that the matter is being investigated by the Faraba Commission.
x. GRTS News Crew - Louis Mendy and Modou Ceesay

On August 03, 2018, the GRTS News Crew covering the funeral proceedings of late Asombi Bojang, the mother of exiled ex-president, Yahya Jammeh, came under attack at the village of Bujinga in Foni. Journalists Louis Mendy and Modou Ceesay, who were assigned to provide news coverage for the public broadcaster, came under a string of intense verbal assault, allegedly, by former ruling APRC security and supporters. Ceesay was violently attacked, forcing the crew to run for their lives. The equipment got damaged in the process. The GPU had issued a statement condemning the attack and had engaged the police authorities who promised to look into the matter.

Recommendation
To the GPU:

✓ **Welfare Issues:** One of the greatest shortcomings of the GPU during our tenure has been lack of adequate programmes on welfare of media practitioners. The incoming Executive Committee should therefore lead bold interventions towards addressing deplorable working conditions of media practitioners.

To Media Practitioners:

✓ The GPU caters to all media practitioners. It is therefore important that we take ownership of the Union by signing up for membership and paying dues regularly.

✓ Media practitioners are also urged to abide by the Code of Ethics and embrace the Media Council of the Gambia.