Tracer study report

How the partnerships between Games (Gambia Media Support) and Gambia Press Union (GPU) / Media Academy for Journalism and Communication (MAJAC) have contributed to change in the Gambia.

By Nina Lauritzen and Maria Haahr, advisors at CISU – Civil Society in Development

1. Aim of the tracer study and content of this report

The aim of this tracer study is to analyse changes, with a specific focus at the target group level, which has occurred during the partnership between the Danish NGO Games (Gambia Media Support) and its' Gambian partners and how CISU, through its' capacity building services and the Civil Society Fund, has contributed to these changes.

In November 2018 CISU conducted a 5 days visit to Gambia, where we met with current and former participants as well as the leadership of the Gambian partners. Before that we met with board members and key volunteers from Games.

The tracer study uses the timeline method (see attachment G) in combination with other qualitative methods as the main way of collecting data. The study focuses on the period from 2007-2018, which is the period where CISU has supported interventions in the partnership.

2. Key changes in the Gambian context during the period

First contacts were made between Danish journalists and Gambia Press Union in 2002. Two years later the GPU President Deyda Hydara was killed, one of several examples of prosecution and jailing of journalists under the rule of President Jammeh 1994-2016. The crackdown on media and civil society was intensified in 2013-2015, where many CSOs were forced to close down, journalists jailed or forced into exile and the government tried to control the media by different restrictions.

Surprisingly Jammeh lost the election in December 2016, and from 2017 a new coalition is in power. Gambians report of optimism and feeling of "never again", but also worrying tendencies of restrictions in freedom rights, some stemming from laws from the former government still in place. The young students also mentioned "misconceptions of democracy" as a key issue of youth in Gambia today, meaning that many confuse democracy with "I can do what I want". The Gambia is therefore at a crucial point in the establishment of its' new democracy, where CSOs, media and media institutions undoubtedly have a crucial role to play. Another issue shaping the Gambia is irregular migration, which was happening in high number during the years under dictatorship and still is today. With 60% of the population of 2 million people being under 25 years old, this issue is of great importance to the future of the Gambia.

3. Introduction to the organisations

Gambia Media Support (Games)	Gambia Press Union (GPU)	Media Academy for Journalism and Communication (MAJAC)
Founded in 2006 by a group of Danish journalists following conversations with Gambia Press Union and visits to the Gambia. Support to GPU and now also	Founded in 1978, GPU is one of the oldest unions in the country. During the dictatorship of Jammed, GPU functioned more as a protector of its members	Established in 2012 as GPU Journalism School. In 2017 the decision was made to separate the school from the union, and MAJAC was founded. The school

MAJAC remains the dominant activities today. Games have 65 members, many working in the field of media. Many members, including board members, have been active since the foundation of Games. Besides its own support, Games have also been involved in linking GPU and other NGOs, including Danske Fødevare- og Landbrugsjournalister, International Media Support, Danish Journalists Union (DJ) and DJ Kommunikation.	and an advocate for freedom rights than a traditional union. Today GPU has 400+ members and the number is rapidly growing. Issues of media law and freedom rights as well as training, now mainly in cooperation with MAJAC, remains key priorities, but GPU also has a clear aim for strengthening its capacity in areas of social welfare and labour rights. GPU has 5 employed staff and a board, which plays an active role in the daily activities.	moved into its own building in September 2018, and a board was appointed in February 2019. The school teaches four different levels (foundation, certificate, diploma and advanced diploma) each lasting one year with classes three days a week. There are 108 students in total, 62 women and 46 men, and 21 employed staff, some part-time.

3.1 Interventions supported by CISU in the partnership

The first contacts between Danish journalists and GPU were made in 2002. In the following years a number of visits took place, in 2006 Games was established and the following year the first CISU-funded project took was launched:

1) **2007-2008** "Partnership GPU-Games": Strengthening GPU as an organisation for better protection of its members and foundation for professionalization of the media. Hiring of staff and workshops for journalists.
2) **2009-2011** "Media for Development – Development for Media": establishment of forum of excellence and training of trainers. Democracy and advocacy as focus areas, close cooperation with CSOs.
3) **2012-2015 "**Media for advocacy – advocacy for media": Broader focus on communication – GPU School established, former students trained as teachers, 1st batch of students graduated
4) **2016-2017:** "Building capacity for advocacy": Capacity building of GPU: daily management, income generating activities, advocacy for freedom of speech for key duty bearers. When the former dictator lost power in December 2016/January 2017, focus was changed to use the window of opportunity and subsequent need for media training for community radios.
5) **2017**: "GPU in transition": Focus on strengthening GPU and making it able to offer journalism training, which was now highly demanded. GPU School of Journalism becomes a separate entity, MAJaC.
6) **2018-2019**: "Kick-off the Media Academy for Journalism and Communication": consolidation of MAJAC as an independent organisation and development of model for cooperation with donors.

4. Games and Gambia Press Union: partnership for media freedom and journalistic education

4.1 Common ideals and solidarity as driving forces

It is clear from conversations with GPU and Games that common ideals of freedom rights, especially freedom of speech and freedom of assembly, and a free press are key motivating factors for the partnership in combination with a common striving for "good journalism". Collegial solidarity seems to be a driving force for Games, especially during the years of dictatorship and persecution of GPU members, and it appears to be of "added value" to GPU that the support comes from fellow journalists. This translates into two different paths in the partnership: The first path is focused on the fight for a free and independent press in the Gambia and therefore mainly externally focused. The second path is about ensuring quality education and training of journalists and media personnel and is thus more internally focused towards the media itself.

CISU has supported both paths through the Civil Society Fund by supporting the capacity building of GPU and advocacy activities as well as trainings and the establishment of a journalism school.

> **Key changes at GPU**
> Survival and growth of the organisation despite harsh political conditions.
>
> Journalism and communication courses and school established.
>
> Training and facilitation of network of CSOs in the Gambia.

4.2 The first path: The struggle for freedom of speech and media freedom

"One of the most important contributions was that the Games/GPU support allowed us to keep speaking up during the struggle years with people in jail. We are well respected throughout the country, because we stood fast during those years. Back then people feared giving money to GPU, therefore Games was a crucial supporter." (attachment E)

This quote from the session with staff and board members of GPU/MAJAC summarizes what GPU have experienced as the main contributions from Games in this path: solidarity, perseverance and relatively stable funding. These points are made by several people from all three organisations. During the dictatorship GPU and its members were prosecuted by the government. Several were imprisoned, others exiled themselves, including the newly elected GPU president, who is now back in the country, and it was without a doubt a distressful time for Gambian journalists and CSOs. Therefore, the main change for GPU during the partnership is that the union managed to survive and grow under these circumstances.

> **Key contributions from Games**
> Professional competency in journalism and participatory teaching methods.
>
> Solidarity and perseverance.
>
> Access to funding, mainly through CISU, but also other sources.

4.3 The second path: Professional capacity building and journalism training

The second path focused on "Good Journalism" is linked to the fight for media freedom by an understanding that in order to claim itself as professional media demanding freedom rights for all, the journalists and media professionals in Gambia needed and still need to have a higher level of training, skills and knowledge. This understanding is shared by GPU, Games and MAJAC and a similar rationale lies behind the effort to train CSOs.

This focus has an obvious strong connection to GPU being an organisation of journalists. Likewise, the professional identity as journalists is clearly very important and a key driving force and motivator for Games volunteers, i.e. shown in many mentions of advancement in this regard in the timeline session with this group (see attachment B).

Trainings have been a key component in all interventions supported by CISU in the partnership. Starting from workshops of a shorter duration in the first project, the trainings developed into a full journalism education for the first class starting in 2010 and today a journalism and media school (MAJAC). When speaking to former and current students, it was interesting to observe how almost everybody referred to the participatory teaching style and high emphasis on practical learning at MAJAC as something highly valuable and different from the university and other schools. Some former students also referred directly to specific Danish guest lecturers, but the majority didn't, which indicates that this way of teaching, though initially introduced by Games' members on short term teaching missions, is perceived as an integrated part of GPU and MAJAC today. The same is the case with the classes in critical thinking, another characteristic for the GPU/MAJAC approach according to many participants.

4.4 A meeting place and capacity builder for CSOs during troubling times
The two larger projects "Media for Development – Development for Media" and "Advocacy for Media – Media for Advocacy" had training of CSO's as major activities. The timeline sessions proved that this training for CSOs really created a strong cooperation between GPU, the participating CSOs, networks (sports journalists, female journalists, agricultural journalists and community radios) and TANGO (the national NGO network).

It is referred to as a strong feeling of being allies in a time, where civil society and media were really under attack; *"We really have to work together"* as one participant put it. *"We were there for each other"* as another expressed, but it was still a hard time: *"Showing support to each other did not stop journalists/NGO workers being arrested, detained or closed down."* (attachment C). The network had a strong mitigating effect, but life under dictatorship was hard. This strong alliance is also active today, and now joint measures are taken to counter attempts from the current government of restriction freedom of assembly coming from a shared feeling of "never again".

The specific capacity building in communication and project management is mentioned as very useful, also today some years after the training. Another success has been human rights training for the armed and security services to better understand good governance and democracy. This started in the final years of the Jammeh rule and is considered by GPU as a contribution from their side to the downfall of the regime.

In summary GPU and Games have not only been working <u>in</u> a context, but <u>with</u> the context, actively trying to change it to the better – and succeeding in doing so. This has been possible by the long-term partnership between the two organisations, which means that there were already established relations and ways of cooperation to build on in the fight for democracy and human rights under dictatorship as well as during the fragile period of democratic transition. In other words, this partnership supports and links the two strategic goals of CISU, namely that *Popular engagement and cooperation at all levels of international development* can lead to *Meaningful results of development cooperation* in ways that would have been very difficult to obtain without engagement of the civil society.

5. Changes at target group level

The GPU-Games partnership is characterized by having a relatively small target group and a big emphasis on equipping people to act as catalysts afterwards. This strategy appears to have been successful in many ways:

5.1 Former students are now in key positions

The journalism education at GPU benefitted the students at an individual level leading to good jobs in the media, university and government of the Gambia. This is of course important for the individual, but what is much more important from a civil society point of view is that these former students describe how the education, critical thinking classes are mentioned specifically, have shaped not only their professional attitude and working methods, but also their worldview and understanding of citizenship and democracy. In other words, there is clear indication that these interventions have had an impact on Gambian society far exceeding the capacity building of individual participants.

> **Key changes for target groups**
> Journalists: Former students have good jobs and are influencing Gambian media today based on values and skills learned/reinforced at GPU.
>
> CSO staff: methods and network valuable during dictatorship and useful still today
>
> GPU staff: many have been trained and are using the knowledge in GPU work

5.2 CSO representatives and GPU staff

The session with CSO representatives, who participated in the trainings, also showed how the trainings assisted them in their work today in a wide range of areas, i.e. local news, swimming classes for kids and advocacy work, in other words also acting as a catalyst. In the same way, those GPU staff and board members, who participated in trainings during the project, are also actively using the skills today.

6. MAJAC and the young generation

6.1 New generation of journalists and communicators

The session with current students at MAJAC was in itself an illustration of the transition that the Gambian media and with them GPU and MAJAC are going through at the moment: some students have a background as journalists and personal experiences of working during under the dictatorship and during the last two years characterized by transition, whereas the newest class, consisting mainly of young people, don't. This clearly affects their view on the media and the overall situation in the Gambia. All agree on the need for and vision to contribute to ethical and professional journalism in the country, but the young expressed a more optimistic view, whereas the more experienced students were more cautious. This is not surprising, but illustrates how MAJAC and GPU are trying to merge the past, present and future in their work and how personal experiences affects the view on how to do this.

6.2 Women are coming – but change takes time

Gender roles in the media was another topic that came across as very important for the current students. Participants seem to agree that things are changing. Currently the vast majority of editors and senior staff are men, which is also the case for the senior class at MAJAC, but more and more women are getting trained and the participants think this will also translate into more influence in the future. WOJAG (Women Journalists Association of the Gambia) is a small organisation, which has taken part in trainings and been supported by GPU. The chair of the organisation is also a student at MAJAC and reports of progress for

women in the media, but still a way to go for gender equality in the media field both in terms of positions and influence and in getting to a point, where female journalists get the chance to cover "hard" topics such as politics and business and not only social and cultural matters.

Members of Games also reported how the topic of female representation was discussed earlier on in the partnership with GPU wanting to base selection of the students solely on merits and Games wanting to also actively promote more gender equality in the media. A decision was made to base selection on merits and to prioritize female candidates in the cases, where two candidates were equally qualified. Gender wasn't much of a topic in the meetings with the organisations today. The leadership of all three organisations is dominated by men, but with women in key positions.

6.3 Migration as a key concern for young people in the Gambia

The session with the current students made it obvious that migration is a key topic for the country, especially young people today. One participant explained how the status of who has left, who is planning to and who have made it to Europe is always on the table, when a group of young people meet. UNICEF statistics[1] places the Gambia as one of the African countries with the highest rate of irregular migration supporting this finding. It is beyond the scope of this report to describe this issue further, but migration is clearly among the many good reasons to support civil society building and free media in the Gambia.

7. Transitions at all levels

A tracer study is different from other reviews and evaluations in that it looks at change over a longer period of time. Looking at the partnership between the organisations in this case, it is clear that the long-term nature of the partnership is important both in terms of changes for the target groups and in terms of intra- as well as inter-organisational relations. Because the partnerships have been going on for a long time, transitions are now happening at many levels.

The key transitions and topics can be summarized this way:
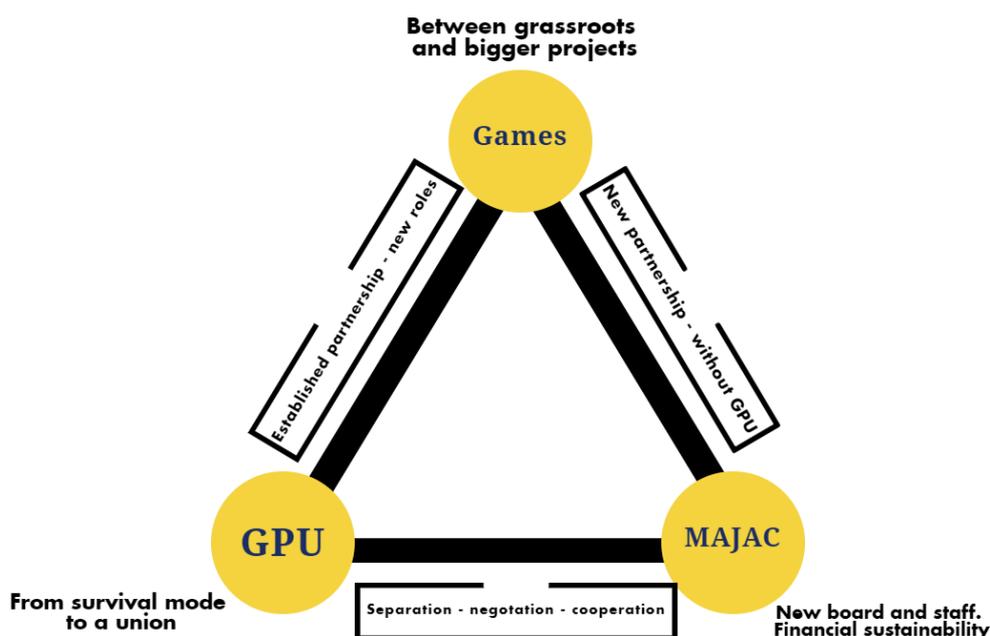
7.1 Games: Different ways to go and new ways of volunteering

The timeline session with Games volunteers highlighted how the organisation is currently in a decision-making process of which way to go for the future. On one hand some expressed a desire of going "back to the grassroots" and let GPU/MAJAC continue with other partners, when it comes to bigger projects – "We have been sucked into project thinking" as one participant put it.

On the other hand, there is also a wish to "not abandoning GPU and MAJAC before they are ready", which will lead to new and bigger projects in the partnerships.

Another key transition for Games will be to be working with two instead of one partner in the future. How will this influence the future direction, priorities and resources of Games?

Games volunteers describes the organisation as a "humblebee" (able to fly even though it should be impossible) and a "cork" (always managing to stay afloat). Things are going well in many ways; the situation for Gambian media and freedom rights is better than before (though still fragile) and the journalism school is now established. How will this influence the identity of the organisation?

During the partnership many Games volunteers have travelled to the Gambia as journalism trainers at GPU/MAJAC. With the partners being stronger and more capable of doing trainings themselves, this need will inevitably decrease and other needs, i.e. in the area of union-building and resource mobilization will increase. How will this affect Games' possibilities to recruit the right volunteers and maintain the strong sense of partnership and solidarity?

7.2 GPU – from survival mode to a union

GPU was established as a union, but in reality, it is only after the downfall of the former regime that it is now possible to work on many of the "traditional" tasks of a trade union, i.e. labour rights. This means many new tasks and ways of working for GPU. The leadership of GPU talks about this a high priority, but our conversations with different people in the organisation showed that it is still an ongoing process to establish, how this will be done, and how union-building activities will be prioritized compared to issues such as advocacy and protection of members.

Another consequence of this transition mentioned by GPU will be that the organisation changes from being a broad organisation connecting media persons to a union, which means that the media employers must form their own organisation. This process is ongoing, and the future will show, how strong this organisation gets, whether it will be possible for the media to fight a shared battle for media freedom, while at the same time establish a system for negotiations of collective agreements.

This study also indicates a transition in the relationship between GPU and Games. GPU is a much more mature and stronger organisation, i.e. showed in how some of the key staff members talked about how they have now started to negotiate with Games about the number of missions from Denmark needed in each project in relations to other financial needs in the project.

7.3 MAJAC – Own organization and identity

MAJAC is currently in a process of establishing itself as an independent organisation from GPU. Many steps have already been taken and during our visit, the plan was to have the board formally established in December 2018. This has been a long process and is perceived by GPU and MAJAC as of high, strategic relevance, who will be on the board. Another topic has been the financial setup between GPU and MAJAC, which has also been a topic of negotiation between the organisations. With a growing number of students

and new staff recruited, who haven't been part of the long-term GPU-Games partnership, MAJAC appears to be forming its own independent identity rather quickly at the moment.

All these examples of organizational transitions, happening alongside transitions at a more personal level for many of the people involved, are not surprising. On the contrary they prove that transitions are necessary for CSOs to stay relevant in their context.

8. Key contributions and attributions from CISU

Access to funding: the fact that CISU as the manager of the Civil Society Fund has been able to provide a continued opportunity to apply for funding is the most important contribution from CISU from the viewpoint of the organizations in this study.

Capacity building services, mainly directly related to interventions either during the writing of applications or when adjustments have been needed, has also contributed to the results of these partnerships. The frequency of the contacts with CISU have varied, but the consistent availability of CISU's capacity building services along with the funding have helped making it possible to implement all interventions with some adjustments but still overall successfully in a very volatile context.

CISU policies and Civil Society Fund guidelines: the timeline sessions indicate that these policies and focus areas have also had some influence on interventions, i.e. in the case of gender, where CISU's focus on equal access appear to have sharpened the organizations' awareness of this topic. Especially the Games' volunteers also express a critical view on some policies and guidelines, and in a more indirect way the policies in some ways appear to have made the partners more aware of their own priorities by acting as something to play up against so to speak.

9. Key learnings for CISU

CISU's role in the partnership between Games and its' Gambian partners have been two-fold: capacity building services and fund management.

9.1 CISU's capacity building services

Games has used the advisory service at CISU as well as taken part in some training courses. Looking back the Games members recall some beneficial training courses, but refers mostly to meetings with the CISU advisors, when asked about CISU's capacity building services. Some key learnings are:

- Flexibility and availability (i.e. the possibility to call an advisor or grant manager with questions) is appreciated and have created a relation between Games and CISU, where issues have been discussed openly and adjustments made along the way.

 - Personal relations between the advisor and the member organisation have some influence on the outcome of the advisory sessions. This observation supports the current CISU procedure once a year to reconsider whether an advisor should continue with the same organisation or not.

 - The importance of the changing political context in this partnership is evident. There seems to have been fruitful discussions on how to react to this between Games and CISU, and this leads to reflections of how CISU can ensure that this will always be the case and how we can support the applicants in making solid context analysis under the conditions that the CISU advisors will never be able to be expects on specific contexts.

9.2 The Civil Society Fund and CISU's role as fund manager
Games and its partners have been successful in getting positive replies to their application to the Civil Society Fund with only one (the first one) out of seven applications getting rejected. Games talked about how after the first rejection, they learned to understand "the CISU way" and how to match their ideas with the funding guidelines, but at the same time keeping a critical approach to "project thinking", the unwillingness to support running cost and (in the first years of the partnership) a lack of understanding of the media's role in democratic development. Despite these criticisms, CISU is described in positive terms as a fund manager, mainly because of the following:
 - Flexibility and availability is as important in fund management as it is in advisory services, especially when contexts are volatile, and CISU has showed this all the way.
 - The new modality "Citizen Participation" introduced in January 2017 has been very meaningful to partnerships like these with focus on freedom rights and citizens' participation in the democratic development of their country. For Games this was a new opening, which has led to two interventions so far.

Key learnings for CISU

Long-term partnerships clearly have value in civil society building – CISU must continue to advocate for support to this, despite "project thinking" in the development community and ever-changing conditions.

Flexibility and availability in fund management and advisory services is important, especially in fragile contexts.

Context analysis: further reflections on how CISU can support the members and applicants in making thorough context analyses would be beneficial.

The Citizen Participation Intervention: new modality gave new opportunities and focus.

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10. Thanks
We would like to thank volunteers, board members and staff of Games, GPU and MAJAC for their openness and willingness to share experiences, thoughts and learnings with us and for help in organising our visit to the Gambia and the time line sessions.

11. Attachments:
Attachment A: Terms of Reference for the tracer study
Attachment B: Timeline session with Games
Attachment C: Timeline session with former students and CSOs
Attachment D: Group session with current students at MAJAC
Attachment E: Timeline session with staff and board members of GPU and MAJAC
Attachment F: Meeting with TANGO, The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations
Attachment G: The timeline method

12. Sources:
1: See: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/23698/new-gambia-new-migration_en