

GDEI BAAT

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GAMBIAN DIASPORA EXPERTS INITIATIVE, INC.

BOARD MEMBERS

PRESIDENT
John Loum

PRESIDENT-ELECT
Fatou Njie-Jallow

SECRETARY
Isatou Jobe

TREASURER
Cherno Omar Kebbeh

EMBASSY LIAISON
Pa Sako Darboe

**DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE &
PROCESSING**
Jarra Jagne

**DIRECTOR OF ARTS & CULTURAL
AFFAIRS**
Mam Foon

**DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION &
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**
Abdoulie Sallah

**DIRECTOR OF ENERGY,
INFRASTRUCTURE & CLIMATE
SCIENCE**
Ndeye Marie Njie

**DIRECTOR OF HEALTH & HEALTH
SERVICES**
Gabou Mendy

**DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION,
TECHNOLOGY &
COMMUNICATIONS**
Saul Badjie

**DIRECTOR OF MEMBERSHIP &
PUBLIC RELATIONS**
Kunna Faal

**DIRECTOR OF SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**
TBD

FOUNDERS
Jarra Jagne
Veronica P.S. Njie-Carr

Greetings All,

It is with sadness that we join members of the Gambian Diaspora and all Gambians, in mourning the 17 Gambians who perished in the deadly high-rise apartment fire in the Tremont section of the Bronx, New York, USA on January 9, 2022. The victims ranged in age from 2 to 50 years and included at least two-family units and two university students. Sixty more were injured and many are still in hospitals. Many of the victims came from the Upper River Region and belonged to a very close-knit community. They all died of accidental smoke inhalation according to the Office of the Medical Examiner (OCME). Fire officials said the fire was caused by a space heater that malfunctioned. A funeral was held for 15 of the 17 victims on January 16, 2022. Hundreds of people, including many Gambians, were displaced and are currently living in shelters and with friends or relatives while the City of New York works on getting permanent accommodations for them. GDEI sends its heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and to the nation of The Gambia.

NEWSLETTER GOALS

- Increase membership engagement with board members
- Provide updates to keep members apprised of board activities

NEWSLETTER EDITORS

Saul Badjie, Managing Editor
Mam Foon, Creative Design & Graphics Editor
Jarra Jagne, Copy Editor
Veronica Njie-Carr, Editor-In-Chief

POINT OF VIEW

The Bronx fire tragedy brought out the best in everyone in the borough of the Bronx, New York City (NYC), and in The Gambia and the USA at large. We feel we cannot tell the story without making special mention of the Gambian Ambassador to the US, His Excellency Dawda Docka Fadera and the Gambian Youth Organization of the Bronx.

Ambassador Fadera traveled quickly to the Bronx from Washington DC to assist fire victims and to support and consult with NYC officials, New York state administrators and New York State representatives to congress and the senate. He was at press conferences alongside newly elected NYC Mayor Eric Adams, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul and New York Senator Chuck Schumer. He spent considerable amounts of time with community and religious leaders of Gambian residents of the Bronx, assisting as a liaison with NYC and New York state officials.

Ambassador Fadera has been very engaged with the Gambian diaspora in the US since his arrival in Washington DC in 2018. He has held numerous meetings in cities and states with large numbers of Gambian and Gambian-American citizens.

Ambassador Fadera met with GDEI founders at a nascent stage of the organization's development. He assured us of his support and has appointed a liaison, Mr Pa Sako Darboe who attends our meetings regularly. We are looking forward to a long and productive engagement with Ambassador Fadera and his staff in Washington DC.

We also commend the Bronx-based Gambian Youth Organization that jumped into action when news of the fire broke out. These young second-generation Gambian immigrants set up the first fundraiser for the victims on a GoFundMe page that grew to over \$1 million dollars from an initial goal of \$200,000 after four days. The organization also managed tons of material donations for fire victims at their small Bronx office just down the road from the scene of the tragedy. These youth certainly proved that our Gambian immigrant communities are hardworking and resilient, and the Gambian diaspora deserves genuine support from the Government of The Gambia.

Veronica Njie-Carr & Jarra Jagne, Founders of GDEI

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE GAMBIA APPOINTS A NEW VICE-CHANCELLOR

GDEI congratulates Professor Herbert Robinson's appointment as the new Vice-Chancellor of the University of The Gambia (UTG). Professor Robinson was appointed to the position in late November after a rigorous selection process and applications from a group of stellar academic scholars. GDEI commends the UTG Search Committee for choosing a qualified Gambian for the position.

Professor Robinson attended St Augustine's High school and later, The Gambia High School for Sixth Form. He worked for a short period at the Medical Research Council (MRC) before leaving for the UK. He obtained a BSc (Hons) in Quantity Surveying from the University of Reading, UK, a Master of Infrastructure Planning from University of Stuttgart in Germany and a PhD in Infrastructure Economics from South Bank University in the UK. He is a well-published scholar and has authored many books, book chapters and technical papers.

He worked as a Senior Quantity Survey/Senior Engineer in the Ministry of Works in The Gambia before leaving for Germany to pursue a Master's degree. His academic career started at Loughborough University in the UK followed by a long stint at London South Bank University where he attained full professorship in 2011. In 2012, he joined the United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (UN-IDEP)/ UN Economic Commission for Africa based in Dakar, Senegal.

Professor Robinson recently worked as the Director of Knowledge, Research and Learning at the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), a specialized agency of the African Union, based in Harare, Zimbabwe.

We welcome Professor Robinson and hope he will spearhead a much-needed acceleration of UTG's infrastructure, curriculum and research strength.



CONGRATULATIONS SCORPIONS!

For the past weeks, we were all riveted to our TV screens watching the rise of our low-ranked national soccer team, the Scorpions, at the Africa Cup of Nations (AfCon) soccer tournament. The tournament took place in Cameroon at different locations around the country.

Going into the tournament, our young men were ranked at #150 by FIFA and would never have made it into the tournament if the number of teams participating in AfCon had not been increased to 24. In fact, they were the lowest-ranked team in the whole tournament. We believe we have now gone from underdogs to being a well-respected football team under the tutelage of Belgian Coach Tom Saintfiet.

According to reports, Coach Saintfiet pulled together Gambians playing in 17 different leagues internationally, including six players from Italy and some from Germany, Sweden and Belarus. This was definitely a diaspora team. Some team members made it to Europe via the infamous "backway" risking their lives for better conditions.

During the tournament, Gambian stars such as Musa Barrow, Ebrima Darboe and goalie Baboucarr Gaye ploughed through an impressive three wins and a draw before succumbing to the highly ranked Indomitable Lions of host country Cameroon in the quarterfinals.

The young men returned home to cheering crowds and much-anticipated celebrations. We hope this will spur the start of major improvements in our soccer infrastructure through better government and private funding. There are lots of young, talented boys waiting in the wings to make the Scorpions even better. Go Scorpions!

SPOTLIGHT: PA SAKO DARBOE



I am Pa Sako Darboe, First Secretary at the Embassy of the Republic of The Gambia in Washington, DC. As the Embassy liaison at the Gambia Diaspora Experts Initiative (GDEI), I participate in the monthly meetings of GDEI and act as a liaison between the Embassy of the Gambia in Washington, DC and the GDEI. In that role, I provide or request information as it is required by the Embassy for onward transmission to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad.

Most importantly, I was able to organize a meeting between the GDEI and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Gambians Abroad to see if a collaboration can be made between the two, given the fact that the Gambia government has emphasized great importance on diaspora.

EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE

We are pleased to welcome the Education and Professional Development Sub-committee members, Dr. Haddy Njie, Dr. Peter K. Mendy, Dr. Cherno Omar Barry (Gambia Liaison), Dr. Michael Banutu-Gomez, Mr. Saul Badjie, and Dr. John Loum.

Members are already deeply engaged and have conducted a SWOT analysis to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to the Gambia's education system, which would inform key implementation priorities for the 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. We welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions before the next meeting scheduled for Saturday, March 5, 2022 at 1 pm U.S. EST.

COMMITTEE NEEDS

Volunteers are needed to serve on the following committees. If you are interested or know of someone who might be interested, please contact us at gambiandiasporaexperts@gmail.com

- Agriculture & Processing
- Arts & Cultural Affairs
- Communication, Information, & Technology
- Energy, Infrastructure, & Climate Science

MEDIA ACTIVITIES / INTERVIEWS

GDEI IS NOW ON SOCIAL MEDIA

- We are now on FB, at (20+) GDEI / [Facebook](#)
- Twitter: (20) Gambian Diaspora Experts Initiative, Inc. (@GDEI_) / [Twitter](#)
- Instagram: Diaspora Experts (@gambiandiasporaexperts) / [Instagram](#)
- LinkedIn: [//www.linkedin.com/company/gambian-diaspora-experts-initiative](https://www.linkedin.com/company/gambian-diaspora-experts-initiative)

NEW WEBSITE

www.Gambiandiasporaexperts.org

Please excuse us as we continue to build our website

PRESENTATIONS

GDEI Co-Founder Veronica Njie-Carr and President-elect Fatou Njie-Jallow participated in the Fifth Stake in The Nation Forum (SNF) under the Migration and Sustainable Development in The Gambia Project (MSDG). They both sent in recorded contributions to the workshop session titled “ Demand-led Matching and Deployment of Diaspora Professionals”

VERONICA'S PRESENTATION

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GvREttpazhUUA3ld1PjIBMSgdEi2FOMf/view?usp=sharing>

FATOU'S PRESENTATION

<https://necc.box.com/s/bkg1zns56v5y0rhtidp3du8ofbnhs270>

DONATIONS

Many thanks to all who sent their donations. Please keep them coming ...

Send donations to: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/gambian-diaspora-experts-initiative>

Mr. Chernó Omar Kebbeh at cokebbbeh@gmail.com

MEMBERSHIP

To become a Member, send an email to gambiandiasporaexperts@gmail.com. Associate and Regular membership structures are available.

We look forward to hearing from you.

**"YOU CANNOT CARRY OUT
FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE WITHOUT
A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF MADNESS.
IN THIS CASE, IT COMES FROM
NONCONFORMITY, THE COURAGE
TO TURN YOUR BACK ON THE OLD
FORMULAS, THE COURAGE TO
INVENT THE FUTURE. IT TOOK THE
MADMEN/[MADWOMEN] OF
YESTERDAY FOR US TO BE ABLE TO
ACT WITH EXTREME CLARITY
TODAY. ... WE MUST DARE TO
INVENT THE FUTURE."**

(PRESIDENT THOMAS SANKARA, 1986)