

EMPOWERING AND EDUCATING CONSUMERS:

The Gambia Experience

By

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BACKGROUND

❖ The Country

- Smallest on the African continent
- Democratic governance with significant challenges

❖ People

- Small population (1.9 million in 2013), urbanized (58%)
- 10th highest population density in Africa
- High annual population growth rate of 3.3% (2003-2013)
- 51% adult (15+) literacy rate

❖ Economy

- Agriculture employs about 70% of population
- Agriculture accounts for about 20% of GDP
- Poverty rate is 48% (2012), per capita GNI \$510
- Services account for 67.7% of GDP (2011)

GOVERNMENT

❖ Institutions

- **Ministries (Health, Trade, Finance)**
- **Agencies (PURA, Standards Bureau, Competition Commission, Food Quality and Safety Authority)**

❖ Laws and policies

- **Consumer Protection Law**
- **Ban on advertising harmful products and services**
- **Inclusion of consumer groups in agencies and policy development**

CIVIL SOCIETY

❖ Consumer Protection Association of The Gambia (CPAG)

- **Founded in 2004**
- **Sits on the:**
 - * *National Codex Committee*
 - * *the Food Control Advisory Board, and*
 - * *the Food Compliance Committee*
 - * *National Electro-technical Committee*
 - * *the National Steering Committee of the EC-funded West Africa Quality Programme*

❖ Other Groups

- **Consumer Action Group**
- **Consumer Consortium**

STUDIES

❖ **Street Food Survey (2008)**

- **Conducted in partnership with NaNA and CI**
- **Provided recommendations on street foods**

❖ **Study on Consumer laws in Gambia**

- **A good start on consumer protection**

COMMEMORATION OF WORLD CONSUMER RIGHTS DAY

❖ About 6 annual WCRD commemorations on:

- Financial services
- Junk food
- Consumer protection

❖ Partners

- Gambia Competition and Consumer Protection Commission
- National Nutrition Agency (NaNA)
- Ministries (Trade, Health, etc.)
- Media organizations (radio, TV, print)

❖ Activities

- Workshops
- Radio and TV programs

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

❖ Workshops

- Relatively easy to organize
- Can be effective
- Limited in time and space

❖ Radio and TV programs

- Large reach
- Transient effect, unless repeated
- Can be expensive

❖ Print media

- Articles
- Press releases
- Impact limited by relatively low literacy rate and limited distribution

WHAT WORKS

❖ Partnership

- Mobilize resources
- Facilitate work with government agencies and CSOs
- Participation in policy and law development
- Facilitate work with other consumer organizations and NGOs

❖ Outreach and advocacy to

- Government agencies
- The public
- Development partners
- Facilitate resource mobilization

❖ Leveraging media

- Use multimedia approaches
- Leverage radio

CHALLENGES

❖ Institutional

- Weak institutions
- Few and weak consumer organizations

❖ Demographic

- Poverty makes people fall prey to cheap products
- Illiteracy
- Inadequate labeling of products

❖ Resource Constraints

- Difficulty in mobilizing resources
- Limited sources of funding (need to avoid conflicts of interest)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ **Strengthen institutions**
- ❖ **Develop Partnerships**
- ❖ **Build effective outreach and advocacy programs**
- ❖ **Mobilize resources**
- ❖ **Build capacities**
- ❖ **Strengthen networks and networking** (at national and international levels)

THE END

Thank you!