

Article 19:

- Supports legal reform.
- Strengthens the capacity of journalist through courses on International Standards and Safety Protocols.
- Encourages dialogue among interested parties on the importance of freedom of expression in fostering good governance.
- Provides expert analysis on laws and legal assistance.

WHY YOU CAN RELY ON US

Internal accountability

- Article 19 is registered with Companies House and The Charity Commission in the UK.
- We are governed by an international Board of Trustees which oversees the Executive Director and Senior Management Team.
- Our regional offices are managed by human rights and legal experts familiar with the local realities.
- Regular meetings are held between the Board of Trustees and Regional Boards who oversee and review our direction, work and impact.
- We are accountable to our donors by producing quarterly narrative and financial reports, and holding regular Monitoring and Evaluation visits to our projects.

External Accountability

- We hold government to account to their promises, obligations and actions by providing external checks on state accountability.
- We work with more than 90 partners around the world.
- We have observer status with the ECOSOC, the African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Council of Europe.

*Offering young journalists experience
Nov 2011*

GPU Gambia Press Union

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ARTICLE 19

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ARTICLE 19

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WHO WE ARE

Gambia Press Union champions press freedom and the right of journalists to practice their profession in The Gambia.

WHY WE DO WHAT WE DO

Gambia Press Union was established in 1979 by a group of private journalists under the leadership of the veteran Gambian journalist and publisher the late Mr. William Dixon Colley to defend freedom of expression. We have more than 200 registered members and are ourselves a member of TANGO, the International Federation of Journalists, the Commonwealth Journalists Association and the Federation of African Journalists Association.

WHAT WE DO BEST

We are particularly concerned with the anti-press legislation programme currently in place in The Gambia and advocate for a change in media laws as well as creating awareness in the press freedom arena.

- The Gambia Press Union through mass sensitisation campaigns and court action succeeded in having the government repeal the Media Commission Act.

- The GPU has organised and co-organised conferences, workshops and trainings on press freedom, freedom of expression, democracy and development.

- The GPU has set up a Media Monitoring Unit with a media researcher who uses newspaper reports to monitor the state of freedom of expression in The Gambia. GPU intends to publish a comprehensive report on the state of freedom of expression for The Gambia 2011. This will be made available to the public on the GPU and Article 19 websites.

Strengthening Freedom of Expression in The Gambia

"In the past few years Gambia Press Union has impacted greatly on the media fraternity, mainly in two areas; training and the defence of freedom of expression"

Sam Sarr, (Member of Gambia Press Union)

Sam Sarr, a member and beneficiary of the Gambia Press Union understands more than most the impact the organisation has had on journalists whose right to freedom of expression has been challenged and infringed upon.

In 2009 Sam Sarr the founder of Foroyaa newspaper was arrested with 6 other journalists. Sam Sarr and 5 of the other 6 journalists were sentenced to 2 years in jail for sedition and libel.

The journalists served 1 year of their sentence and were released early by presidential pardon following intense local and international pressure.

What role did the Gambia Press Union play in the journalist's acquittal?

The GPU campaigned for the imprisoned journalists, contacting regional organisations such as ECOWAS and mobilised international institutions. They found lawyers for the journalists, excluding Sam Sarr who decided to represent himself and secured funding for the legal fees through media rights organisations. The GPU also raised \$1000 as a one off payment for each of the journalist's families to help financially support them.

This year so far Gambia Press Union and Article 19 have been working in partnership to strengthen freedom of expression in The Gambia on the European Union funded Non State Actors Strengthening Programme.

The project focuses on training journalists on key freedom of expression standards; conducting safety and security trainings as well as producing customised training manuals on freedom of expression standards and safety norms for journalists.

This training is intended to enable journalists in The Gambia to protect themselves from the experience Sam Sarr and the other journalists endured. Journalists who are informed about their rights and safety protocols can work effectively on sensitive issues whilst maintaining their safety.

WHY YOU CAN RELY ON US

We look after our funds by using the Excel accounting system and producing quarterly financial reports.

We are organised by having an active board of five volunteers who are elected every three years at the annual congress at GPU.

We communicate by holding monthly general meetings and an Annual General Meeting to encourage the sharing of information.

GPU has a quarterly newsletter and an email list to communicate with members.

GPU connects with the public through various forms of media; radio and television sensitisations and via our website.

We engage with government through our sensitisations, campaigning and press releases.

We have held meetings with the Minister of Justice and the Minister of Information, Communication and Infrastructure.

We have also held debates with government officials at a one off forum organised by the Commonwealth Secretariat in August 2011 in The Gambia. The five day forum was focused on media and freedom.

Our donors are the United Nations Development Programme, European Union, Danish Foreign Ministry, and the State Department of the USA.

TRAINING ON SAFETY AND SECURITY FOR JOURNALISTS

ARTICLE 19

WHO WE ARE

ARTICLE 19 is an international organisation that defends freedom of expression and information. We fight for all hostages of censorship, defend dissenting voices that have been muzzled, and campaign against laws and practices that silence.

HOW WE WORK

Article 19 was established in 1987 and works in East Africa, West Africa, Central America, South America, Asia Pacific, Europe, Central Asia, the Middle East and North Africa. The organisation provides expertise on international human rights standards and seeks to champion freedom of expression and freedom of information as a fundamental human right.

Our organisation seeks to help national and international civil society, governments, journalists and human rights defenders by monitoring, researching, advocating, campaigning and litigating on behalf of freedom of expression.

OUR WORK IN WEST AFRICA

Article 19 asserts that the protection of journalists, media law reform and the development of freedom of information laws are vital in creating more accountable governments. Article 19, West Africa is working to protect journalists and human rights defenders to ensure an end to impunity and corruption. We also work to promote an environment that facilitates access to public interest information to increase development and public participation.