



FUTURE IN OUR HANDS THE GAMBIA

NEWSLETTER

JUNE 2020: SPECIAL EDITION

NEWS IN SHORT

- **SPECIAL INTERVIEW WITH BUBA MS FABURAY- OUTGOING COUNTRY DIRECTOR**
- **FIOHTG GETS NEW HR OFFICER & ACTING COUNTRY DIRECTOR**

Education For All Through Community Development



BUBA MS FABURAY, OUTGOING DIRECTOR OF FIOHTG



Buba M.S Faburay was born in Sibanor Village under British Colonialism. 7 years later, Dawka K. Jawara took over as Prime Minister of the Gambia in 1965. Mr. Faburay would be among the lucky ruralites to attend school despite the existence of a few and a distrust of Western education by many parents at the time. He would later become a development worker to improve the living standards of ruralites. He worked with ActionAid International until the Jammeh regime asked the organisation to shut down. His passion and profession would bring him to FIOH in 2006 starting with a monthly salary of GMD5000 but hard work, trust and patience would earn him an increase in salary and the position of Country Director for the organisation. As he goes into retirement, our Newsletter Editor spoke to him about his life and work.

Editor: Mr. Faburay thank you for this opportunity. Many people have heard about you but they don't know much about you. You hardly talk about yourself except when sharing stories of the good old days when a bag of rice was very cheap; when children had discipline. [laughs] Lets talk about you today. Who is Buba Faburay?

Faburay: I was born in Sibanor Village in the West Coast Region in 1958. I did my primary education in Sibanor but with the limited schools then, I had to move to the Kombos for secondary education and tertiary education too.

Editor: You were born before independence, how did you come to be schooled knowing that many parents were re-

luctant to send their kids to 'Western schools'. Even those who would want to, had limited access to schools.

Faburay: That is true. Western education was seen as otherwise. In fact it was believed by many Muslims that sending your child to Western schools would make him a Christian. I will thank my father who saw that Western education would become key one day. He was not part of those who saw western education as bad. He had 3 children and he sent all of us to school including my sister. And I was the youngest. He was a great thinker.

Editor: Indeed he was, considering the popular thinking at the time. However, people would be sent to school and they may drop out or may not take it seriously. What kept you motivated?

Faburay: You see, we had good teachers who would fit in the community very well. Our teachers were motivating. They would go house to house asking parents to send their children to school. Eventually, the mindset of many people changed. [Editor interjects: So Education for All Campaign is not new?]

Faburay: It was happening. In fact there were elders including my father who used to try and convince other parents to send their children to school. My father and some elders were going around to do the advocacy. And for Sibanor, almost all my age mates went to school.

Editor: How was it like being a student in those days?

Faburay: That is why it is said our generation is better. We were interested in learning. After school, we would take our lunch and go back to school. That tells you how much we wanted to be in the school. We used to compete a lot. A good result leads to competition. We used to have vegetable gardens and we would go early in the morning, water our beds from very deep wells and go home; then we would prepare for school and return to school in the morning. Also, there were a lot of extracurricular activities and parents were there to cheer us. They responded to calls from the schools. People from the community would support any work. They made the mud blocks and built the classrooms. Essentially, there was community participation in schools. The people saw the school as theirs!

Editor: What happened after primary

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

“Retirement is not the end of the road. It is the beginning of the open highway.” – Author Unknown



Faburay: There was no university and the absorption rate in middle and high school was low. There were no scholarships or only a few existed and our parents could not afford it. I had to start some informal work here and there. However, I was able to attend College later where I was selected as a ‘badge manager’; I was a student leader. So God decided that I should lead. In 1980, I started working with ActionAid when it was housed at 32 Leman Street in Banjul. Then it had few Gambian employees and all the heads were white men.

Editor: ActionAid was a household name. We can see structures established by AAI. How was it like working with an international organisation being managed by foreigners having recently emerged from colonialism?

Faburay: Well, they had their problems but they always wanted to give you your due. That is why I could move up. My first appointment was to drive and assist in field-work. At the time, AAI prioritized schools as schools were very limited. It was a priority. A lot of Community Learning Centers were established and later handed over to government as primary schools. I was eventually transferred to the regions as AAI expanded.

Editor: How long did you work at AA?

Faburay: I worked with ActionAid International for 20-23 years. ActionAid was like a school for us.

Editor: That is almost my age. [laughs]. After 23 years, you decided to leave AAI. Why?

Faburay: We had a [problem] with the government about our Rights Based Approach and we were asked to close within 72 hours. I was part of the negotiation team but government had their demands. It wanted the head who was a Sierra Leonean national to leave. Also, government wanted us to put our hands off Rights, they did not want the RBA. The Head office which was based in London was angry and they wanted to close too. This is why I left. Part of the demands was to have a Gambian director, thus Malamin became the first Gambian director. I left during the crisis and I went into consultancy services for sometime.

Editor: You would later join FIOH. How and when did you join FIOH?

Faburay: I saw a vacancy advert one day on the papers. I applied and I was called for an interview. Already I had been interviewed at the Peace Corps, went through all the stages and was waiting for the outcome. so I was contemplating who to join if I get both jobs. FIOH offered me the position and I decided to join FIOH on 16th January 2006 while Peace Corps interview result was still pending. I always remember the date because FIOH was registered as NGO 16. I cannot forget that date.

Editor: How was FIOH like as an international organisation?

Faburay: The national staff had no say. All the units were headed by the ‘Tubabs’ only. A lot of the systems we have now were missing. We had a HR policy of 3 pages. FIOH was more interested in constructing schools then. Most of the funds were coming from Sweden and from MoBSE too. In addition to this, they had small funds for women empowerment. With that they built centers in Sanghajor, Besse, Bullock, Kerr Mama. A lot of work was done building schools and later on empowerment of women. A lot of things but you know the Swedish-led organisation was not interested in publicity. They just wanted the job to be done and because of that there was less media coverage of our activities.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE

“Retirement's the most wonderful thing. I get to enjoy all the things I never stopped to notice on the way up. After an extraordinary life, it's time to enjoy my retirement.” – Patrick Macnee



Editor: How and why did the Tubabs leave? Why FIOHTG?

Faburay: Forum Syd, the donor had wanted them to leave and allow Gambians to takeover. We were given guidelines as to the way forward. The first workshop was in Tanji and we divided tasks amongst ourselves. We had to draft a constitution and register FIOHTG. I was part of some of the Committees including the one responsible for the drafting and registration. Subsequently, we sent an advert out for the position of the Director. I was not interested in the position. In fact I was in the Interview Panel too. That is how Yahya Sanyang became the Director.

Editor: I heard that you are one of the longest serving senior employees and you did not start as a Director. What portfolios did you hold previously?

Faburay: I was once called Project Evaluator and my responsibility was to evaluate projects you know. That portfolio was renamed Monitoring and Evaluation and I became M&E Officer under the Planning and Reporting Unit. I became a Programme Officer and Senior Programme Officer before becoming the Director. I was also called the Ombudsman as I was tasked with mediating disputes and addressing staff grievances. I had a lot of caps. [laughs]

Editor: Wow! You have been in a lot of positions. I understand what it means when you say I know the field and the work. But tell me how and when did you become the Director?

Faburay: There was a big problem between the Directorate and our main partner. The organisation was going to close if the problem was not solved. The Directorate was not in good terms with the staff and the Donor was not going to give any funds until the problem at the Directorate was solved. For months, nothing was implemented. The staff

engaged the Board and told them. We had contracts but they could not be finished because there was no money. This is how the Board intervened to solve the leadership crisis. Eventually, I was recommended and the Board decided to entrust me with the Directorate. So I became Director under very difficult circumstances.

Editor: It must have been challenging to assume the Directorate at the time? What were the challenges and how did you address them?

Faburay: Yes it was very challenging but today I am very proud and happy considering the challenges we have addressed. In those days, when a team is out on trek, the rest had to wait because we had a few vehicles. Under my leadership, 6 vehicles have been bought and we got additional ones from our partners. We had projects we could not finish but under my leadership, we completed all of them. We decided to establish a Management Fund to help the organisation better. There were few or no scholarships. Today we have a scholarship package to build capacity. When I joined FIOH it was just basic salaries that I was receiving. I think the DSA was 100 or 200 dalasis. It was later that transportation allowance was added. But many changes have been instituted

Editor: When I look around, I see age differences, different beliefs and professional backgrounds, how do you manage to lead this diverse team? What is your management philosophy?

Faburay: In management, you manage people based on their strengths. If you want to manage people based on their weaknesses you have a problem with them. Know what their strengths are and manage them on that, then help them on their weaknesses. I create an environment for people, I don't show them that I am the boss. Never claim or show that you know everything, People are not animals. Give them their due and they will do their best. Managing people is not difficult except you don't do what is expected, otherwise you don't have a problem. The order of the day is not to force people. I repeat don't show them you are the boss. [Editor interjects: "It is a democratic world". Laughs] Unless you are told, you don't know I am the director. This is my philosophy.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE



My secret is lead by example. If you don't do that, you will not succeed. Supervise and help people on their weaknesses. Encourage teamwork, delegate responsibility. That is how you bring people up. Look at how I worked with Jainaba, you and everyone else. I made sure I delegate to people especially in areas where they have strengths. It isn't difficult to lead people. It is the way Gambians are leading. Remember the position you occupied today would be occupied by another tomorrow.

Even at home, I tell my people please advice if you think that what I am doing is wrong. Bring the ideas. I am just the team leader. All the achievements I mentioned were attained through teamwork. I don't believe in shouting on people. I wish you find me in the village. When I used to go on trek, my colleagues know that I can sleep anywhere in the field. I would not go to the lodges. I am happier in the village.

Editor: Lets talk about time management. Everyone says you are always on time. With your age, work, family and other commitments, what is the secret behind it? It looks unusual for Gambians of your age and position to be very respectful of time.

Faburay: I have always been like this. There are few things that people look into about you and time is one of them. I do everything on time including my prayers. When the Trans-Gambia Road was very bad and we had to use Banjul -Barra crossing point, I would always come here on time and the Swedish used to joke that I am a Swedish. I am always on time because I always prepare in advance. My wife will tell you, any dress I will use tomorrow, it will be

out tonight. I do all arrangements before going to bed. I give out the fish money, hold discussions if there are any so that when I wake up in the morning, I have no business with anyone.

Even before I have a car, I had a motorcycle but I was always on time. You know when people see you coming late as director, you cannot ask anyone to come early. You lead by example. Some people say it is the attitude that matters.

I was once promoted to the position of Coordinator at a meeting at Action Aid. When they reported the successes in my area, the Director said he never knew it. When you work, do a good job. Your reward will come. When you work with a clean heart, the rewards always come. See, with Covid-19 everyone is going for the money. I was being paid GMD 5000 when I started but within months, they increase the salaries.

Editor: How do you feel when you reflect on decades of service and life in general

Faburay: I am very thankful. No staff will say that I have asked for money from them. My purpose of being here is to make a difference in the lives of the people. Even if you look at what we did in communities, Alhamdulillah! That is why we are sitting in all these Committees in the country. People, organisations and even the government know that we are impact-driven. And let me tell you, I am the first director who is leaving office without being forced out or having had a problem with the Board or the staff. The records are there. So I am very happy.

At home, some of my children have graduated from university; Alhamdulillah. They are responsible. So I'm thankful to Allah. I think I have contributed my quota. I am still strong and I can do a lot of things—Alhamdulillah. And I am very careful when I deal with people especially the young people. These are people growing up and they can be anything tomorrow and they will always remember. People are going to say you did this to me. I don't want to harm anyone in my life. And alhamdulillah.

CONTINUED ON THE NEXT PAGE



Editor: You look healthy and strong may God continue to protect you. Having worked for almost half a century, what is the secret? How do you balance work and life?

Faburay: I don't overuse myself. I avoid anything that can destroy my health, I don't get close to drugs and intoxicants. I used to smoke but I have stopped that long ago. I don't abuse myself too. I eat the best food I can. I can stay home for days without going out. So I like to have enough rest. 10.00 clock is the latest I stay awake. At 10.00 I am off to bed. Those who know me very well don't call me at night because they know I sleep early. So eat healthy food that you can afford, sleep well and have enough rest and never abuse drugs and don't get close to intoxicants. And when it is time to work, do it well.

Editor: What advice would you give to your successor and the employees?

Faburay: Support each other, being a big organisation doesn't matter. What is important is to work together and you will move to another level. The moment you start work-

ing against one another, forget it all will collapse. I told Jainaba to be open to people. She has been in HR and she knows the work. Create space for people, don't keep them in a bottle, listen to them, and allow them to grow. Be ready for criticisms, don't worry about the negative ones but listen to the positive ones. The moment you think you know everything, you start to make mistakes. I repeat support one another. I have done my part and I trust that you people can move the organisation to another level.

Editor: **I know you have a lot to share but knowing your busy schedules I should let you go. Thank you for sharing with us. Wishing you all the best that life got to offer. It's a small country and we are still together.**

Faburay: You are always welcome. Thank you very much. And support Jainaba.

Editor's Note: We wish Faburay well in his retirement. We will do our best as expected to get to another level.

“As your life changes, it takes time to recalibrate, to find your values again. You might also find that retirement is the time when you stretch out and find your potential.” – Sid Miramontes, Retirement: Your New Beginning

FIOHTG GETS NEW HR OFFICER & ACD

The Board of FIOHTG has appointed Jainaba T. Sarr as the Acting Country Director (ACD) of the organisation following the retirement of Buba M.S Faburay. Madam Sarr holds an advanced degree in Management and has a wealth of experience in administrative management. She had worked as the Human Resources Officer of the Organisation before assuming the post of Head of Programmes. Meanwhile, Mr. Kemo S. Kinteh is now the Human Resources Officer of the organisation. Mr. Kinteh holds a degree in Administration. In our next edition, we shall bring you more details about the changes. Don't miss it!

“Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past and present are certain to miss the future” -John F. Kennedy



CONTACT INFORMATION

WEBPAGE: www.fiohtg.org

TEL OFFICE IN KOTU: +220 4460360, +220 446 6868,
+220 7303698

MAILING ADDRESS: P.M.B 352, Serrekunda P.O, The Gambia

VISITING ADDRESS: Kotu South

E-MAIL: office@fiohtg.org

FACEBOOK: Future In Our Hands The Gambia



Do you have a story or an event for the next newsletter?

If so, we would like to hear from YOU!

Thank you for your support!