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Contact person :	Alagie Ceesay
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## **1 General information**

I and my family visited the finest Swiss bakery in Yundum, the Gambia, during our holiday in the Gambia. As a member of Baluo in Switzerland, I wanted to use the opportunity to see myself the activities, facilities, staff and take a firsthand impression of the bakery that Baluo is supporting. I contacted Alagie Ceesay (interim manager) and made an appointment. On the 3.7.2016 in the morning I set out with my family from Bijilo, where we stayed, to Yundum about 20 km apart. Although a Gambian myself, but having lived in Zurich for the last 16 years, I wasn't familiar with the directions anymore. So we lost the direction and it took many phone calls and assistance of bystanders to finally reach the Bakery. Luckily Alagie waited for us at the junction, which made the final journey straight forward.

## **2 Facility inspection**

The inspection started with our welcome to the facility which is integrated in the residence of Foday and Martina in the Gambia. We were led to the house section that houses the bakery infrastructure (the ovens, cooling rack, mixer, and the baker's table for kneading). In the corridor a half room was reserved for bags of dry bread. The rooms and floors were clean and a cleaning lady is specifically employed to ensure that the hygiene standards are met at all times. Generally the infrastructure of the compound in which the bakery is situated, is modern. For example the floor is tiled and the windows are from glass and the ventilation is good. There is enough light coming in and out of the building. The courtyard of the compound is clean and since the compound is fenced with a door that can be closed, the security is adequately guaranteed. We found one car and a motorbike on the facility. They are used for the transport of the bread and for the baker's and in some cases worker's mobility requirements. The surrounding of the facility gave us an impression of a tranquil and save environment to operate a business like a bakery with storage and equipment safety requirements.

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### 3 Result of Visit

The visit gave me, as a member of the executive member of Baluo society, firsthand information about the activities taking place on the ground. The workers expressed to me their challenges and shortcomings in facing the difficult business environment facing them. They complained about the oven that has a sealing problem, they lamented the small scale art of their production that means they cannot compete with the big players in the industry and human resource problem in term of personal inadequacies facing them to name but a few challenges. My presences in turn enable them to get glimpse of the people behind Baluo. That it is not only Swiss-born people who raise the funds but also Gambian-born people who are active in this self-help project to ensure Gambian youths have a perspective in their own country. I explained to them that through this new perspective, livelihoods will be secure and families will have breadwinners and that all will contribute immensely in creating a peaceful and a prosperous Gambia. Moreover, I have also signaled to them that since they are the direct beneficiaries of the project, they are also in debt to deliver the success expected from them by donors (Baluo members). I also enjoined them to see the project as a universal one, where achievement and commitment of every single worker count. I underscored the importance of initiating a transition that will carry the bakery away from a family affair to a private enterprise.

### 4 Required Actions

- First of all, I think we establish a functioning **management** that will seriously tackle the local problems on the ground. We cannot micro manage the project from Switzerland. A managing director who is prepared, skillful with basic qualifications, and willing to spend all his workings days to manage all the activities for the successful day to day operation of the bakery.
- The **generator** or source of power must be solved if the bakery has to fulfil its laid out objectives and goals. Unfortunately I could not inspect the generator, but was told that it was in good working condition.(state may'16)
- **Maintenance** of the generators periodically must be assured and I associate that to the filling of the managing director post to locally solve this recurring problem.
- **New oven** need to be acquired to replace the oven whose sealing is defect. One of the ovens currently running is not only affecting the quality of the breads, but also energy waster. I think since the energy costs in the Gambia are horrendous and scarce, the argument for the replacement of the oven with a new or a secondhand oven is indeed convincing.
- **Location** of the bakery in the establishing phase crucial and justified. My impression now is that it is firmly imbedded in the compound and barely recognizable from the outside. Even though it is a B2B business, I think it is paramount to locate it at a place of business activity for example in an industrial area or common in the Gambia along highways. Firstly this will change perception and provide the bakery with a new outside recognition as a working place and a production site. Secondly the bakery can also have an integrated bakery shop to sell to direct customers respectively serve as a retail shop for other pastry products. That will be further income for the bakery.

### 5 Conclusion

The visit was a success. The bakery is also a success despite the initial difficulties in the start phase. The simple output promises a successful business model if the the potential is utilized to the maximum. The figures on the day we visited were: **650 breads; all successfully distributed to the retailers; no single leftover respectively returns.**

My family and I were accorded a very dignified reception and the atmosphere was open and we had a sincere exchange of views. The visit also gave me the opportunity to meet Foday's mother and sister, who were present during the tour of the facility. We are grateful for their time and gesture.

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