

No kunda Village Development Association



NOVDA – Sembekening

Affirming kinship for progress and prosperity

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**No-kunda Village Development Association
(NOVDA- Sembekening)**

Special Report 2016 - 2018

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Executive Summary

This report is a special one spanning the three years of existence of No-Kunda Village Development Association (NOVDA) as a community development organisation. It documents both for contemporary reference and posterity, and the processes and procedures that NOVDA has employed in achieving part of its objectives. The report details NOVDA's raison d'être, the strategies it deploys as well as the challenges it has so far encountered in fulfilling its mandate.

The document has been prepared by means of contributions of the following position-holding members: Mr. Alagie S. Dampha, the National Coordinator of novda-Sembekening in Italy, Mr. Momodoulamin Sonko, the Treasurer, Mr. Dawda Dibba, the Mosque Project Manager, Mr. Sheriffo Dampha, the former P. R. O and Mr. Amadou Dibba, the Secretary-General. These members used data provided to them in accordance with their positions to compile this report. The Chairperson, Dr. Lang Fafa Dampha, edited the report. It is our hope that the information contained here will serve as a data bank for individuals and organisations interested in NOVDA's activities, vision and direction.

Introduction

No-Kunda Village Development Association (NOVDA) was founded by citizens of the village in 2016 as a charitable organisation in the United Kingdom. Among the objectives of the association are to promote cooperation, facilitate socio-economic progress and better standard of life in broader freedom for all the people of No-Kunda in The Gambia and the Diaspora. In addition, given the fact that a considerable number of NOVDA's members are based abroad in different countries, another objective of NOVDA is to protect citizens of the village that are outside the country and facilitate the repatriation of deceased members for burial in The Gambia.

In furtherance of its objectives as an autonomous and self-sustaining organisation, NOVDA, from inception in 2016, have initiated and supported a number of projects. The projects, as will be outlined below, are in different phases of advancement. This report, commissioned by the Chairperson of NOVDA, is primarily aimed at highlighting the progress o*--+r otherwise of all the various activities NOVDA have been engaged in, so as to document the association's experience as a new but growing entity and inform future decisions about projects that the association might venture into.

The report has been prepared by means of inputs in the form of data and operational experience in the delivery or execution of the projects by members engaged in one way or the other. Detailed information has been supplied by the Treasurer, covering the revenue and expenditure, as well as the various instances NOVDA intervened to provide aid to the people of the village. Also contributing to the report is the Coordinator of members in Italy, the Mosque Project Manager and the former PRO.

It should be noted that the initial plan was to get statements from national coordinators as regards the experience of the National Coordinating Committees in getting the cooperation of members concerning the payment of membership contributions and the sale of Membership cards and NOVDA T-shirts. This is because NOVDA's membership cuts across multiple countries in the Diaspora and the nature of some ventures, as will become clear in the following pages, involved the participation of such members who, needless to mention, are better

positioned to give account of their experiences. These statements were going to be synthesised or blended with the data available to the Central Committee, spanning the inception to the end of 2018.

However, this strategy had to be abandoned as, with the exception of the Coordinator in Italy, Mr. Alagie S. Dampha, none of the other coordinators contacted came up with anything meaningful. Nonetheless the report sent by Mr. Dampha proved useful as an epitome of experience elsewhere, as gleaned from conversations on the platforms.

It is worthy to note at this juncture that this is the first report of NOVDA in its fledgling existence, the reason being up until now, the teething issues of setting the association up through a sustained campaign of establishing contact with citizens of the village around the world, drafting and ratifying the governing document and assigning responsibilities, preoccupied the governing body of the association.

Among the projects are the following:

1. Establishment of NOVDA

- a. The constitution and 5-year Strategic Plan
- b. Setting up the structures of NOVDA
- c. Registration

2. NOVDA Masjid/mosque construction

3. NOVDA Fundraising programmes

- a. Membership contributions (voluntary)
- b. Emergency Fund
- c. Production and sale of NOVDA T-shirts and membership cards to members
- d. Soliciting donations from external donors

4. Revenue and Expenditure over the Period

Establishment of NOVDA

In early 2016, the evidently generally recognised need for some form of intervention to enhance the living conditions of the people of No-Kunda village and the ramshackle state of the village mosque, galvanised citizens of the village largely based in the Diaspora but with the cooperation and full support of many fellow citizens back home, to mobilise one another with a view to pooling resources and providing assistance of one form or the other. As it became necessary, the burning desire to rebuild the mosque became a major pre-occupation of leading members, who soon established platforms and fora/forums for all members to interact and brainstorm on the way forward.

This notwithstanding, the membership did not lose sight of the fact that other matters, such as food security, access to better health care, clean drinking water, promotion increasing literacy, etc. are just as important. As will be noted presently, NOVDA has since intervened in socially and economically beneficial projects, such as helping to restore the village's only borehole to functional status after a mechanical breakdown, as well as procuring two vehicles as ambulances when this became absolutely necessary.

The Constitution and 5-year Strategic Plan

As is the case with any formal organisation constituted by individuals, the need for a constitution as a governing document is fundamental. This task was undertaken virtually exclusively by members of NOVDA who contributed ideas and drafting skills to produce the constitution. Additionally, the document is needed to be able to register the association as a public interest charity with the Charity Commission of the United Kingdom. Following the initial drafting and review by foreign-based members of NOVDA, the document was sent to a select group of members in The Gambia for observations. This group made some observations and suggestions, some of which were incorporated.

With regard to the projects and operations NOVDA expects to engage in in the immediate future, a five-year Strategic Plan (2017-21), has been developed by the now executive members of NOVDA. The document details critical areas of intervention, with a particular focus on improving the living conditions of the people of No-Kunda village through facilitation of skills acquisition, provision of amenities and promoting economic activities, especially for women and youth. It goes without saying that all this would require finance, even as it has become increasingly clear over the years that membership contributions alone could hardly generate enough funds to support the kind of community development endeavours NOVDA has set itself.

Setting up the Structures of NOVDA

The constitution stipulated the creation of a number of bodies, including the Central Committee (CC), the Advisory Committee (AC), as well as National Coordinating Committees and Resource Mobilisation Ambassadors to help in the running, management and administration of NOVDA. Details of their functions and responsibilities are available in the document and may not be ideal to elaborate on here for the purpose of this report.

Through wide consultation among members under the direction of the Chairperson, members of the CC and AC were nominated and eventually selected to fill the positions on the two bodies. The National Coordinating Committees were selected by members in various countries where members are present in significant enough numbers. This was followed by the appointment of Resource Mobilisation Ambassadors by the Chairman to assist in raising funds for NOVDA's various projects.

Registration

Following the drafting of the constitution, the next preoccupation with regard to set-up was the registration of the association with the Charity Commission of the United Kingdom. The Secretary-General made two abortive attempts to accomplish this. In the first instance the reason given for the failure of the application was the lack of sufficient information supplied during the application process. In the second attempt, the Charity Commission cited disharmony between certain sections of our constitution and their requirements on what constitutes a charity. Thus, the fact that the supposed lack of our draft constitution to meet the criteria of a charity as outlined by the Charity Commission was not mentioned in the reason for refusal in the first instance misleadingly gave the impression that supplying the right information would solve the problem and secure registration, hence the failure of the second attempt to register.

It is worthy to note that application for registration itself is not charged by the Charity Commission, although the delay in securing registration has been a source of obstacle for NOVDA in terms of embarking on endeavours as a formally recognised entity. Eventually the CC decided to outsource the application process to an accountancy firm, SA Accountancy, based in Birmingham. The negotiations were handled by the Mosque Project Manager (MPM) and the Assistant Secretary-General. A fee of £600.00 was charged but after negotiation for a discount, the fee was reduced to £500.00 and a concession that payment could be delayed until such time as NOVDA felt able to make the payment without prejudice to its financial situation.

After some adjustments to the constitution, the firm submitted the application for registration in April 2018. By the end of 2018, however, the registration process was still ongoing as progress report was yet to be received from the firm. But as this report has been completed few months into 2019, it is pleasing to state here and now that the firm has finally succeeded in securing registration in March 2019.

NOVDA Mosque project

One of the triggers for the formation of NOVDA was the desire to find a solution to the evidently crumbling building that served for decades as the main mosque for the people of No-Kunda. A spirited fund-raising campaign launched in the UK soon spread to other countries in the Diaspora by means of social media. Contacts of citizens of the village from different parts of the world were collected mainly by the former Public Relations Officer (PRO), who set up a Whatsapp platform where members engaged and brainstormed, as well as encouraged one another to pay contributions towards a fund created to finance the reconstruction of the soon-to-be-demolished mosque.

In addition to membership contributions, which soon moved to the next stage of D5000.00 each, there were few goodwill donations from members of the public. These came in both cash and kind, the latter type being in the form of cement. In all some 1688 bags of cement were donated towards the construction of the mosque. This is worth over D400,000.00 in cash.

A critical component of the mosque construction project is the appointment of the Mosque Project Manager (MPM), whose job is to oversee and manage the mosque project. The Chairperson appointed Mr. Dawda Dibba, a member of the Central and Advisory Committees, as the MPM in February, 2017 with clearly spelt out Terms of Reference (TOR). The MPM has since received praise for distinguishing himself by diligently executing the functions of the role, ensuring consultation and transparency in the processes and procedures.

Since the demolition of the old mosque in 2017 and the commencement of construction on the new one in early 2018, a total amount of D3,363, 689.00 has been spent so far, of which amount nearly one-third (D1,100,000.00) has been paid to the contractor. The project itself is at an advanced stage, entering the latter stages comprising mainly of finishing works. However while estimates of the amount of money needed to complete the whole project is still substantial, the funds have significantly diminished, necessitating an intensification in our fund-raising efforts.

NOVDA Fundraising programme

a. Membership Contributions (voluntary)

Following a widespread and protracted sensitisation campaign among citizens of No-Kunda as already pointed out, an initial amount of the equivalent of D6000.00 per person was agreed as the contribution of all members in the Diaspora whose economic situation permits it. A bank account was opened in The Gambia by two of the pioneering members and a message was disseminated through the social media platforms for all those ready to make their payments to pay their contributions to the said account. Although this call elicited great response, it was not without some problems. It was not possible to get many people to pay quickly enough and there were coordination issues with some of the payments made through individuals. Such contributions either were not made into the designated account or, even if paid into the account, detailed information of the member or amount were not transmitted in a timely manner. However, this is not to say that there was any instance of embezzlement. Rather, it was often the case that the person through whom most of these payments were made would use the funds towards affairs of the ongoing construction project, or some other NOVDA-backed endeavour, as the case may be, virtually always in collaboration with the MPM. Nevertheless, this did not make for impeccable accounting. It should be noted though that steps have since been taken to arrest this practice.

As noted by Mr. Alagie S. Dampha, National Coordinator for members in Italy, getting some members in Italy to pay their contributions on time was by no means easy. Even as some elected to send their contributions directly to Gambia without so much as notifying them of such remittances, hence coordination difficulty in keeping accurate records as alluded to earlier.

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b. Emergency Fund (EF)

Even while the mosque construction project was going on, NOVDA have had cause to intervene financially in helping to sponsor the running of certain facilities like the borehole when it developed a mechanical problem; to provide some essential services like the village ambulance when this was no longer available, or providing support of one kind or the other when a member dies abroad. While these expenses were readily undertaken through separate fund-raising efforts, it became apparent that a much more assured way of preparing the association for such eventualities was imperative, as sudden attempts to collect funds from the membership, while they register some success, cannot always be relied upon as solutions to such suddenly emerging eventualities.

As such the EF was set up to cater to such needs as and when they arise. Again the Chairperson appointed an Emergency Fund Manager (EFM) in the person of Mr. Lang Njie, who until then had served in the Advisory and Central Committees. After some deliberation, it was agreed at the level of the CC that contributions into the EF be pegged at £5 a month for each member in the Diaspora. Contributions into the fund started in September 2017 and although some have kept up with their contributions, some members are behind with their payments. As at December 2018, the balance in the EF account stood at just over £1200.00 By and large the creation of the EF could be said to be a positive development as it allows for the steady pooling of funds that are sure to come in handy in the future.

c. Production and sale of NOVDA T-shirts and Membership cards

Amidst an increasing need to intensify fundraising in order to further NOVDA's various objectives, particularly the immediate one of completing the ongoing mosque construction, the printing and sale of custom-made NOVDA T-shirts were proposed. The proposal was deliberated on in the CC and members agreed to pass the proposal as a resolution. Fortunately for NOVDA, a member had the technical skills to produce the T-shirts provided he was supplied with the materials.

Another proposal was the production of membership cards for sale to NOVDA members. Again following deliberations on the proposal and approval by the CC, information about the modalities and the logistics were gathered and scrutinised. At the same time both fund-raising endeavours were publicised in the various platforms to much acclaim.

Overall the cost of 500 T-shirts, the cartridges required for printing both membership cards and T-shirts and miscellaneous items for membership cards amounted to D101,860.00, this being the sum of D55,000.00 spent on T-shirts, D41,280.00 on cartridges for both T-shirts and Membership cards and D5,580.00 on other materials for membership cards. As the sale of both membership cards and T-shirts were still in progress, it will perhaps be more helpful to give projected earnings from the sales.

Of the 500 T-shirts ordered, two were spoilt, leaving a remainder of 498. Of this some 139 T-shirts were left for members in The Gambia at the price of D150.00 each, 30 t-shirts sent to the US at the price of \$15.00 each, 50 T-shirts to the UK at the price of £15.00 each and 279 T-shirts to mainland Europe at the price of €15.00. The table below shows the breakdown of the distribution of T-shirts and expected proceeds:

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Table 1.1:

T-shirts Distribution and expected/projected revenue

Country	Quantity	Price	Sub-total			
			Euro (€)	Pounds (£)	Dollar (\$)	Dalasi (D)
Finland	5	€15×1	€75.00	£750.00		
France	85	€15×1	€1500.00			
Gambia	161	D150×1				D20,850.00
Germany	40	€15×1	€600.00			
Holland	3	€15×1	€45.00			
Italy	28	€15×1	€420.00			

Malta	10	€15×1	€150.00			
Norway	1	€15×1	€15.00			
Spain	40	€15×1	€600.00			
Country	Quantity	Price	Sub-total			
			Euro (€)	Pounds (£)	Dollar (\$)	Dalasi (D)
Sweden	10	€15×1	€150.00			
Switzerland	10	€15×1	€150.00			
UK	50	£15×1				
USA	30	\$15×1			\$450.00	
Remainder	25	£15×1		£375		
Total	498		€3705	£1125.00	\$450.00	D20,850.00

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Furthermore, a total of 723 membership cards have been produced. Of this 152 were sold in The Gambia at the price of D10 each, fetching D1520.00. 565 cards were sent to continental Europe at the price of €10 each. This is expected to yield €5650.00. Six (6) cards were sent to the USA at the price of \$15 each, amounting to \$90.00. Some 17 cards were distributed among members based there. At the price of £10 each, this would amount to £170.00.

Table 1.2: NOVDA Membership Cards Distribution and prices

Region/Country	Quantity	Price per card	Sub total
Continental Europe	565	€10	€5650.00
UK	17	£10	£1700.00
US	6	\$15	\$90.00
Gambia	152	D10	D1520.00

d. Soliciting Donations from External Bodies

Due to the importance of the availability of funds to the initiation and successful completion of community development projects of the kind NOVDA have taken it upon itself to intervene in, it has been recognised that while there is no denying the fact that true commitment to the noble and lofty cause of NOVDA necessitates members' own contribution of their hard-earned resources to the various endeavours, this source of funds needs to be supplemented by others, such as those from individual philanthropists, corporate entities and endowment funds.

However, this avenue is yet to be explored in earnest. This is due to the delay in securing charity registration for the association, a matter discussed in greater detail under Registration in page 4. This notwithstanding, some donation, both cash and kind, has been received towards the mosque reconstruction, as mentioned earlier.

Revenue and expenditure over the period

In light of the foregoing, it is necessary to give an account of the association's financial position, entailing the revenue and expenditure over the period since inception to the end of 2018.

A key source of revenue for the association since its inception is contributions from members. By their nature, these are entirely voluntary, depending on the goodwill and ability of members to pay the contributions as and when agreement is reached on the amount and after the message is disseminated among members.

Determining the amount of membership contributions falls within the purview of the Central Committee (CM), the de facto executive of the association headed by the Chairperson of NOVDA. This body has conducted spirited consultations by means of Social Media (Whatsapp and Telegram), due mainly to the fact that members are widely dispersed among different countries. The body has deliberated and taken decisions either unanimously or by means of simple majority. With regard to membership contributions, the CM has so far recommended the payment of periodic contributions since the initial payment of D6,000.00 (approximately £100.00 at the time). This was followed by the payment of D5,000.00 before the CC decided that the amount for periodic contributions should be reduced to D2,000.00 every two months to enable more people to keep up with their contributions as many were unable to make the initial payments. This notwithstanding however, it is still the case that some members are behind in payments, a fact confirmed by the testimony of the National Coordinator of members in Italy, Mr. Alagie S. Dampha. Even though we did not get the statements from other NCCs as expected, it is possible to extrapolate this experience through the identification of similar pattern in many other countries in the Diaspora through following discussions on the said issues in the various platforms.

It is worthy to note that the main driver behind the emphasis on membership contributions in the early stage of NOVDA is the commencement of the construction on the village mosque. This became imperative as the old mosque had dilapidated to a precarious state of disrepair.

Table 1.3 Showing NOVDA's Revenue in 2016 -18

Year	Amount	Description
2016	D670, 131.55	Total membership contributions and donations
2017	D1, 265, 084.60	Total membership contributions and donations
2018	D1, 054,213.77 D251 326.00	Total membership contributions and donations* Total amount generated from NOVDA T-shirt sales
Total	D3,240,755.92	

And so in early 2017, demolition of the old mosque began, paving way for construction to commence on the new one in early 2018.

With funds totalling approximately a million dalasi in early 2017, the decision to start the mosque construction project was not an easy one. But eventually the Central Committee, following the advice of the Advisory Committee, took the decision to commence work, while fundraising goes on in parallel.

As is clear from table 1.3 above, membership contributions, though voluntary and as such by no means reliable, constitute the bulk of NOVDA's revenue over the period under consideration. Other sources of funding, such as charitable foundations and corporate bodies, are yet to be meaningfully explored due mainly to the delay in securing registration with the Charity Commission in the UK.

It should be noted that there is one missing component with regard to revenue generated. This is the proceeds from the sale of Membership Cards. Although these have been distributed to various destinations, data is yet to be provided from all the locations. The only NCC that provided information on the sale of the cards is that of Italy. However, given that a total of 565 cards was sent to mainland Europe, 17 distributed among members in the UK, 6 sent to members in the US and 152 distributed among members in The Gambia, the fund-raising venture as noted above is likely to bear fruit.

Table 1.4 below shows that although revenue generated over the period has been substantial all things considered, the bulk of this has been spent, chiefly on the capital-intensive mosque construction project.

Table 1.4 shows NOVDA's Expenditure in the period 2016-18

Item/Service	Amount
Brick making	D218,025.00
Expense on sub-structure	D735,932.00

Cost of basalt	D266,000.00
Expenses during the roofing stage	D513,425.00
Item/Service	Amount
Electrical materials, gypsum and minaret design	D152,000.00
Wiring and minaret materials	D117,000.00
Metal frames and burglar-proofing	D165,000.00
Floor and skirting tiles	D96,307.00
Cartridges for T-shirt and Membership cards	D41,280.00
Cost of Plain T-shirts	D55,000.00
Charity registration and Membership cards	D36,580.00
Instalment payments to the building contractor	D1,100,000.00
Total	3,961, 549.00

Given the above picture of the financial state of affairs, it is apparent that the need for a multi-pronged fund-raising campaign to replenish the association's funds could not be greater. The more reason that at the time of putting together this report, efforts have begun to tap funding sources that have yet to be explored fully.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, NOVDA have been formed as a response to the felt needs of citizens of a rural community to initiate and sustain efforts to plug gaps in the socio-economic life of the people of No-Kunda village in the North Bank Region of The Gambia, West Africa. To do this the association needs funds and the first attempts to garner funds involved mobilising members to make contributions to the village development fund. The call to come together in this regard has had an enthusiastic response from the vast majority of No-Kunda people around the world and nothing has so far demonstrated this more than the appeals for contributions towards the reconstruction of the village mosque which had to be demolished.

However NOVDA's vision goes beyond one sphere of the life of the people and this would be demonstrated earlier on in the young life of the association when the need arose to procure an ambulance for the village and when a threat to the potable water supply to the village elicited a prompt response from NOVDA to save the situation, to cite but two examples of the association's involvement in improving the living conditions of the people of No-Kunda.

It is worthy of note though that while the first major project of NOVDA is at an advanced stage thanks to the incredible amount of co-operation the executive has been able to get

from the membership, more needs to be done by way of diversifying fund-raising efforts if NOVDA is to be able to realise its goal of ameliorating the living standards of the people of No-Kunda.