



THE PROMOTION OF BIOLOGICAL SECURITY

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THE GAMBIA

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INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Research on infectious agents is critical for the development and availability of public health and medical tools that are needed to detect, diagnose, recognize, and respond to outbreaks of infectious diseases of both natural and deliberate origin.
- ❖ This necessitated global efforts in the promotion of biological security which has been a critical discourse and pertinent public health concern in the public sport light in recent years
- ❖ The expansion of infrastructure and resources dedicated to work with infectious agents have raised concerns regarding the need to ensure proper biosafety and biosecurity to protect researchers and the community.
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- ❖ It is significant to note that, natural outbreak is a threat to global security, public health, and safety by undermining national economies leading to collapse of governments

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- ❖ There has been an increased in international effort in the formulation of comprehensive legal framework backed by modern practices and improved infrastructure in minimizing the risk of contractions of deadly pathogen or accident release of biological agent.
- ❖ The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC) (1972) effectively prohibits the development, production, acquisition, transfer, stockpiling and use of biological and toxic weapons which The Gambia is a signatory.

RATIFICATION OF BIOLOGICAL WEAPON CONVENTION BY THE GAMBIA

- ❖ The Gambia being a signatory to biological convention weapon has ratified the following treaties of the biological weapon convention
- ❖ Ratification on deposit with Moscow-10 June 1997
- ❖ Signature on deposit with Moscow – 02 June 1972
- ❖ Ratification on deposit with Washington -01 August 1997
- ❖ Signature on deposit with Washington -09 November 1972

WOMEN PARLIAMENTARIANS PREVENTING THE PROLIFERATION OF WEAPON OF MASS DESTRUCTION

- ❖ The National Assembly of the Gambia with the financial support of the Foreign Ministry, PGA organised a parliamentary workshop for women parliamentarians on the theme preventing the proliferation of weapon of Mass Destruction
- ❖ Participants were drawn from 12 countries in Africa
- ❖ Experts of the UNSCR 1540 committee made a wonderful presentation
- ❖ Specific international framework analysed in some depth include the biological weapon convention and UN security council resolution 1540(2004)
- ❖ The Banjul plan Action was adopted, including number of specific measures and steps

THE LEVEL OF GAMBIA'S CAPABILITIES

- ❖ Biological security is underdeveloped in The Gambia especially within the public system.
- ❖ There seems to be disparities in biosafety and biosecurity training and facilities for laboratory workers within the public and private (notably the Medical Research Council)
- ❖ There is limited awareness of international biosafety and biosecurity best practices for safe, secure, and responsible conduct of activities within the public health system.
- ❖ There are no elements of a comprehensive national biosecurity system in place
- ❖ Biological risk management training and educational outreach are not routinely conducted to promote a shared culture of responsibility, reduce dual use risks, and mitigate biological proliferation and deliberate use threats

THE LEVEL OF GAMBIA'S CAPABILITIES

- ❖ There is no system in place to identify, hold, secure, and monitor dangerous pathogens.
- ❖ There is no system in place for the safe transfer of biological agents, while country-specific biosafety and biosecurity legislation, laboratory licensing and pathogen control measures are non-existent.
- ❖ There is no record of a training needs assessment being conducted and therefore no comprehensive training or a common training curriculum available for implementation
- ❖ The country does not have sustained academic training institutions that train those who maintain or work with dangerous pathogens and toxins. In the human health laboratories, used samples are generally handled and treated as other types of clinical waste
- ❖ National guidelines are in existence for health care waste; however, their implementation is generally weak

ACTION PLAN AND IMPLEMENTATION STATUS OF BIOLOGICAL SECURITY IN THE GAMBIA

- ❖ In a bid to promote biological safety, the Gambia government together with World Health Organisation (WHO) conducted a joint evaluation initiative to assess the public health conditions and to develop a national action plan for health security
- ❖ After the Joint External Evaluation (JEE), it was revealed that, The Gambia has zero mechanism in place to curb and control toxic biological outbreak.
- ❖ The evaluation further indicated that there are no legal frameworks to support the validation and implementation of these specifications in the Convention. This resulted to the development of national action plan for health security.
- ❖ The summary of Plan activities at the national level includes conduct risk assessment, mapping of laboratories, development of legal framework, monitor the implementation of biosecurity activities, established platform for information sharing, train laboratory personnel on biological security assessment.
- ❖ As it stands, the national action plan for health security has been finalized and costed but suffers a great degree of funding for its implementation

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CHALLENGES CONFRONTING THE PROMOTION OF BIOLOGICAL SECURITY IN THE GAMBIA

- ❖ There is no mechanism for monitoring and developing an updated record and inventory of pathogens within facilities that store or process dangerous pathogens and toxins.
- ❖ There is no legislation or regulations on biosecurity
- ❖ The country has no regulatory body for licensing laboratories.
- ❖ No guidelines on laboratory biosafety in human and animal health.
- ❖ Regional laboratories do not have access controls to minimize potential inappropriate removal or release of biological agents.
- ❖ There is inadequate leadership and inadequate funding to support the sector, as well as partner-driven parallel programmes without collaboration or coordination. No specific agents have been identified for human and agricultural pathogens of concern
- ❖ The Gambia needs to conduct a needs assessment and develop a curriculum for training relevant laboratory staffs

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRIORITY ACTIONS

- ❖ Develop and enact appropriate legislation and regulations on biosafety and biosecurity for regulation of dangerous pathogen and toxins.
- ❖ Establish a multi-sectoral national coordination (particularly leverage existing capacity at MRC), oversight and enforcement mechanisms for response and control of dangerous pathogens
- ❖ Provide adequate funding for the establishment of Biosafety and Biosecurity programmes and training of the relevant human resources.
- ❖ Implementation of a comprehensive, sustainable and legally embedded national oversight programme for biosafety and biosecurity, including the safe and secure use, storage, disposal and containment of pathogens found in laboratories and a minimal number of holdings across the country, and involving research, diagnostic and biotechnology facilities within all sectors.
- ❖ Establish an information security system for all sensitive documentation in facilities where dangerous pathogens and toxins are stored.
- ❖ Secure sustainable funding and an oversight and enforcement mechanism to support biosafety and biosecurity programmes/initiatives at the ministry level