



EFSCRJ Policy Paper

The Importance of Whistleblowing and Calling on Public Officials to Blow the Whistle

Introduction

This document is our first Policy Paper emphasizing the critical role of whistleblowing in safeguarding integrity, transparency, and accountability within public institutions. The Policy is coming against the background of persistent and widespread incidents of bribery and corruption, abuse of office, mismanagement of public resources, and disregard of the rule of law across the Gambia Government as confirmed by official inquiries, assessments and audits, conducted the National Assembly, National Aidt Office, the Gambia Police Force and the courts.

EFSCRJ is committed to combating corruption and other malpractices within the public sector as a means to ensure the full protection and fulfilment of the rights and needs of citizens. This Policy is conceived in furtherance of our 2025 resolution for transparency and accountability in response to the grossly low level of transparency and accountability in the Government. The general poor service delivery, limited opportunities, the incident of crime and drug abuse as well as the increasing incidence of irregular migration or 'Backway' all point to an ineffective governance situation characterized by weak and inefficient policy and institutional environment. At the core of this malaise is the deepseated culture of malpractices prevalent and widespread across the public sector for which there are no consequences.

Whistleblower Policy

The Policy seeks to create a culture of good governance, the adherence to the rule of law, efficient performance and delivery by public institutions and officials and the full enjoyment of the rights by citizens. To achieve this aim, the Policy hereby encourages every public servant to realise his or her duty in ensuring transparency and accountability as a legal and ethical duty.

Whistleblowing is recognized by international law as a fundamental human right. It is also recognised as an indispensable tool in combating corruption and other malpractices by exposing them to the right authorities or entities. Every public official has a duty to uphold this right and use this tool in serving the public. Whistleblowers, often insiders, expose illicit or unethical activities, thereby preventing harm, protecting institutional integrity, and promoting public good. The Policy calls on public officials to embrace their ethical responsibilities and contribute to a more just and equitable society by reporting wrongdoing.

Policy Objectives

Whistleblowing is a vital mechanism for safeguarding public resources and ensuring accountability in government and public institutions. By implementing these policy objectives, the EFSCRJ aims to create an environment where whistleblowers are protected, valued, and empowered to speak out against wrongdoing, ultimately leading to more transparent and ethical governance.





1. Promote a Culture of Transparency and Accountability

- Encourage public officials and employees to report misconduct, corruption, and unethical behaviour without fear of retaliation.
- Foster a culture where whistleblowing is seen as a civic duty and a critical tool for maintaining integrity in public institutions.

2. Strengthen Legal Protections for Whistleblowers

- Enact and enforce robust whistleblower protection laws that safeguard individuals from retaliation, including job loss, demotion, harassment, or other forms of discrimination.
- Ensure that whistleblowers have access to legal recourse and support if they face retaliation.

3. Establish Clear Reporting Mechanisms

- Create secure, accessible, and anonymous channels for whistleblowers to report misconduct, both within organizations and through independent oversight bodies.
- Ensure that these mechanisms are well-publicized and easy to use, encouraging more individuals to come forward.

4. Provide Incentives for Whistleblowing

- Offer financial rewards or other incentives for whistleblowers who provide information that leads to the successful prosecution of corruption or other illegal activities.
- Recognize and publicly honor whistleblowers who take significant risks to expose wrongdoing.

5. Enhance Training and Awareness

- Implement training programs for public officials and employees on the importance of whistleblowing, their rights as whistleblowers, and the procedures for reporting misconduct.
- Raise public awareness about the role of whistleblowing in combating corruption and promoting good governance.

6. Ensure Independent Investigation and Follow-Up

- Establish independent bodies to investigate whistleblower claims thoroughly and impartially.
- Guarantee that investigations are conducted promptly and that findings are acted upon, including prosecuting wrongdoers and implementing corrective measures.

7. Protect Anonymity and Confidentiality

- Guarantee the anonymity of whistleblowers to the fullest extent possible, ensuring that their identities are protected throughout the investigation process.
- Implement strict confidentiality protocols to prevent leaks that could expose whistleblowers to retaliation.

8. Encourage Public Officials to Lead by Example

- Call on public officials, especially those in leadership positions, to set an example by reporting misconduct and supporting whistleblowers within their organizations.





- Highlight the role of public officials in fostering an environment where whistleblowing is encouraged and valued.

9. Monitor and Evaluate Whistleblower Policies

- Regularly assess the effectiveness of whistleblower protection laws and reporting mechanisms.
- Make necessary adjustments to policies based on feedback from whistleblowers, legal experts, and civil society organizations.

10. International Cooperation and Best Practices

- Collaborate with international organizations and other countries to share best practices and strengthen global standards for whistleblower protection.
- Advocate for the inclusion of strong whistleblower protections in international agreements and treaties related to corruption and governance.

Policy Positions

1. Safeguarding Integrity and Transparency

Whistleblowing is a crucial mechanism in safeguarding the integrity and transparency of public institutions. It entails the act of disclosing information on illicit or unethical activities within an institution to authorities, CSOs such as EFSCRJ, the media or the public.

Whistleblowers, who are often insiders, play a pivotal role in uncovering wrongdoing that could otherwise remain hidden, thus preventing harm to the public, protecting institutional integrity, and promoting accountability. EST. 2024

2. The Role of Whistleblowing in Society

Whistleblowing serves several fundamental purposes in society. Primarily, it acts as a deterrent to wrongdoing. When individuals within an organization understand that their unethical actions may be exposed by colleagues, they are less likely to engage in such behaviour. This creates a culture of accountability and compliance with legal and ethical standards.

Furthermore, whistleblowers contribute to the public good by exposing activities that may endanger public health, safety, or the environment. Instances such as environmental violations, public health hazards, financial fraud, and corruption can have far-reaching consequences. By bringing these issues to light, whistleblowers help avert disasters, save lives, and protect natural resources.

3. Promoting Transparency and Accountability

Transparency and accountability are the cornerstones of a healthy democracy and the foundation for good governance. Whistleblowers ensure that public entities are transparent in their operations and answerable to the people they serve. This is particularly vital in government institutions where public trust is paramount. When public officials engage in



corrupt practices, mismanagement, or abuse of power, it undermines the public's confidence in their governance. By revealing such malpractices, whistleblowers provide a check on power and promote a more transparent and accountable governance structure. This, in turn, fosters trust in public institutions and reinforces the democratic framework.

4. Protecting Whistleblowers

Despite the critical role they play, whistleblowers often face significant risks, including retaliation, job loss, and legal action. It is essential to have robust protections in place to encourage individuals to come forward with information without fear of reprisal. Legal frameworks such as the Whistleblower Protection Act in the United States, the Public Interest Disclosure Act in the UK, and similar laws in other countries aim to shield whistleblowers from retaliation and provide them with mechanisms for reporting wrongdoing safely.

The Gambia does not have such a law and EFSCRJ hereby advocates for a similar law to be enacted to encourage and protect whistleblowers to enhance good governance.

Institutions in the public sector should also adopt internal policies that support whistleblowers, including confidential reporting channels, anti-retaliation measures, and clear procedures for investigating and addressing reported concerns.

5. Calling on Public Officials to Blow the Whistle

Public officials hold positions of trust and responsibility, making their role in whistleblowing particularly significant. As stewards of public resources and guardians of the public interest, they have a moral and ethical duty to expose wrongdoing within government institutions. Their insider knowledge and access to critical information place them in a unique position to identify and report misconduct.

6. The Ethical Responsibility of Public Officials

Public officials are entrusted with the welfare of citizens and the effective administration of government functions. When they witness unethical behaviour, corruption, sexual harassment, or abuses of power, remaining silent is not an option. Their ethical responsibility extends beyond personal loyalty to colleagues or superiors; it encompasses a broader commitment to the public good. By blowing the whistle, public officials help ensure that government actions align with the principles of fairness, justice, and legality. This not only prevents harm but also upholds the integrity of the public service.

7. Encouraging a Culture of Integrity

Creating an environment where public officials feel empowered to report wrongdoing requires a cultural shift within government institutions. Leaders must foster a culture of integrity, where ethical behaviour is valued, and transparency is prioritized. This can be achieved through:



- **Education and Training:** Providing regular training on ethical standards, whistleblower protections, and reporting mechanisms helps public officials understand their duties and the support available to them.
- **Leadership Example:** Leaders must model ethical behaviour and demonstrate a commitment to transparency and accountability. When leaders themselves uphold high standards, it sets a positive example for others to follow.
- **Clear Reporting Channels:** Establishing confidential and accessible reporting channels ensures that public officials can report concerns without fear of exposure or retaliation.
- **Support Systems:** Offering support services, such as counselling and legal advice, can help whistleblowers navigate the personal and professional challenges they may face.

8. Strengthening Anti-Corruption and Access to Information

EFSCRJ welcomes the creation of the Access to Information Act 2021 and the Anti-Corruption Act 2023 as significant steps promoting transparency and accountability. To make these laws more effective and relevant, we strongly urge the creation of a Whistleblower Protection law.

Conclusion

Whistleblowing is an indispensable tool for promoting transparency, accountability, and integrity within both public institutions. Public officials have a crucial role to play in this process. By stepping forward to report wrongdoing, they uphold their ethical responsibilities, protect the public interest, and contribute to a more just and equitable society.

To support whistleblowers, it is essential to have robust legal protections and institutional policies in place. Additionally, fostering a culture that values ethical behaviour, and transparency will encourage individuals to come forward without fear of retaliation. Together, these measures will ensure that whistleblowing remains a powerful force for positive change.

Issued on 10 March 2025

.....

Where to Blow the Whistle:

If you have information of wrongdoing such as corrupt acts, abuse of office, professional misconduct, sexual harassment among others in your institution, organization, company and indeed anywhere, you can report to EFSCRJ:

- **Email:** efscrj@proton.me
- **Contact Madi or Alieu on – Tel:** 9995093 / 7973611 / 7559034

2025: THE YEAR OF TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

