

## **UNAFRI attends Roundtable meeting on Penal Reform in Africa**

The Director/ Head of Mission, Dr Masamba Sita and the Head of Research and Policy Development, Dr. Alhas Maicibi, were part of participants at the Penal Reform International workshop titled: From Recommendations to Reform: Roundtable on Penal Reform in Africa, held in Kampala, Uganda from 20 – 22 July, 2009.



*L- R: The Penal Reform International (PRI) Policy Director, Mary Murphy and the UNAFRI Director/Head of Mission, Dr. Masamba Sita, discussing in a lighter mood during the roundtable Penal Reform Meeting in Kampala, Uganda from 20 - 22 July, 2009.*

Presenting a Paper titled: *Toward a More Community Based Criminal Justice System: A Needed and Realistic Penal Reform in Africa*, Dr Sita expressed gratitude to the organizers for inviting UNAFRI to contribute to the meeting. He said it is time to move from recommendations to effective reform. He had indicated a number of elements to be taken into consideration for any realistic Penal Reform in Africa.

A key element was the effective involvement of local communities in the

administration of criminal justice, in order to make it a more community based Criminal Justice.

The Director identified the criminal justice system only as a sequence of a social process: the restorative justice process. After discussing extensively about the Criminal Justice System (CJS), he led participants to identify other sequences: the upstream and downstream of the CJS.

Dr Sita referred the upstream of the CJS than the informal justice (a wording that does not account for the African Social realities; because these are social structures like the family, neighbourhood, etc).

He informed that being sequences of the same social process; they are related. He drew the attention of participants to empirical material available at UNAFRI secretariat to support this relationship.

The Director informed that characteristic elements identified at both upstream and downstream of the CJS, if integrated in the CJS, will better its operation by solving a number of problems. These are: effective implementation of Community Service; Parole and Probation programmes for a successful social rehabilitation and reintegration of Prisoners in reducing recidivism and overcrowding in prisons.

Dr Sita concluded that the role of local community members at each of the sequence is meant to reestablish peace and security in communities through a successful social rehabilitation and reintegration of both the victims and offenders. And all the said process is cyclical in nature “prisoners are charged from local communities and returned to local communities after release”