



THE REPUBLIC OF THE GAMBIA

MINISTRY OF GENDER, CHILDREN AND SOCIAL WELFARE
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**THE GAMBIA COUNTRY REPORT
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE BEIJING
DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION
(BPFA)+30**

October 2024

Preface

This National Report provides an assessment of the progress registered and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) in The Gambia for the period 2020 to 2024. The Report highlights the Government's efforts in advancing the rights and well-being of women and girls to achieve gender equality and progress for all. Additionally, it also objectively analysed the strategies employed by the Government and other relevant stakeholders in implementing and monitoring the 12 critical areas of concern of the BPfA and the SDG targets.

The Report is structured along the lines highlighted below:

Section 1:

Highlights the core elements of the country-level review process, main achievements of measures with a transformative potential, challenges and setbacks over the past five years.

Section 2:

Provides a macro analysis of priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks, with a focus on the past five years (i.e. 2020 to 2024, or five years since the completion of the last report); as well as new and emerging priorities for the future.

Section 3:

Covers the detailed analysis of measures taken to advance gender equality across the twelve critical areas of concern of the BPfA and the relevant SDGs with a focus on the last five years (i.e. since 2020 or the completion of the previous report). This section used the thematic clusters and guiding questions provided by the UN Women Beijing+30 guidance note for the comprehensive national-level review to reflect on how the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda can be implemented in a mutually reinforcing manner to accelerate progress for all women and girls.

Section 4:

Highlights the national processes and mechanisms in place for the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Section 5:

Provides progress on the availability of data disaggregated by sex and gender statistics, relevant to the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action implementation.

Section 6:

Presents. Lessons learnt, forward-looking reflections on future challenges and priority actions that are needed to accelerate the implementation of the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda, notably as part of the Decade of Action for sustainable development.

List of acronyms and abbreviations

| | |
|--------|--|
| BPFA | Beijing Platform for Action |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| CDDP | Community Driven Development Project |
| CIWS | Core Indicator Welfare Survey |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| CRR | Central River Region |
| CSIP | Community Skills Improvement Project |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| CST | Commercial Sex Tourism |
| DMC | Disaster Management Committee |
| DPO | Disabled Persons Organisations |
| ECOWAS | Economic Commission of West African States |
| ECD | Early Childhood Development |
| EMNCH | Emergency Maternal Newborn Child Health |
| EMOC | Emergency Obstetric Care |
| EMOP | Emergency Operations |
| FGM | Female Genital Mutilation |
| GBoS | Gambia Bureau of Statistics |
| GER | Gross Enrolment Rate |
| GFSI | Girl Friendly School Initiative |
| ICPD | International Conference for Population & Development |
| KMA | Kanifing Municipal Authority |
| LGA | Local Government Authority |
| LRR | Lower River Region |
| MICS | Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey |
| MMR | Maternal Mortality Rate |
| MoBSE | Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education |
| MoGCSW | Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare |
| MoJ | Ministry of Justice |
| NBR | North Bank Region |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NHRC | National Human Rights Commission |

| | |
|--------|--|
| NSF | National Strategic Framework |
| RF-NDP | Recovery-Focused National Development Plan (2023-2027) |
| SDF | Social Development Fund |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SGBV | Sexual and Gender-Based Violence |
| TRRC | Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission |
| TVET | Technical and Vocational, Education and Training |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Funds |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| URR | Upper River Regions |
| WHO | World Health Organisation |

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Section One: Highlights and Introduction

The Gambia remains committed to fulfilling its obligation towards the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. As part of the global commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, The Gambia is conducting a comprehensive national review to assess its progress in gender equality over the past five years (2020-2024) since the completion of the national report on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action. This review aims to:

- **Evaluate progress:** Assess the implementation of the Beijing Platform’s twelve critical focus areas and identify challenges encountered.
- **Identify gaps and strategies:** Take stock of achievements, pinpoint areas for improvement, and outline strategies to address gaps and challenges.
- **Renew commitments:** Reiterate commitments to gender equality, prioritize actions, and mobilize resources and partnerships.
- **Align with the 2030 Agenda:** Review and align national efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals, ensuring a gender-responsive approach.

1.1. Country analysis

1.1.1. Country context

The Gambia is located midway on the bulge of the West Africa coast and stretches over 400 kilometres inland from west to east on either side of the River Gambia, varying in width from about 50 km near the mouth of the river to about 24 km upstream. The country is bound to the north, south, and east by the Republic of Senegal and to the west by the Atlantic Ocean. The Gambia’s national poverty rate decreased from 48.6 percent in 2015 to 45.8 percent in 2019, but it rose to 53.4 percent in 2020, primarily due to the impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19).¹

According to the 2024 preliminary census data, the population of The Gambia is 2,422,712, with females making up 51 percent compared to 49 percent of males. The population of The Gambia is predominantly youthful, with 40.8 percent under 15 years of age and only 3.0 percent aged 65 and over.²

The report is prepared at a pivotal moment in The Gambia’s transition, as the country embarks on an ambitious and comprehensive reform agenda. Key areas of focus include:

- Constitutional Review
- Institutional Reform
- Security Sector Reform
- Civil Service Reform

¹ World Bank ‘Securing a Robust and Inclusive Recovery: The Gambia Poverty and Gender Assessment’ (2022).

² GBOS ‘The Gambia 2024 Population and Housing Census: Preliminary Report’ (2024).

- Transitional Justice
- Land Reform Commission
- Criminal Justice and Media Law Reform
- Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC)
- Addressing impunity

The report is framed within a specific backdrop and context that must be understood to fully grasp the magnitude and nature of the challenges faced by the new administration. After over two decades of systematic dismantling of state institutions, particularly in governance, the administration was confronted with significant hurdles. Recognizing this unique context, especially given the limited human, material, and financial resources available, is essential to appreciating the decisions made to prioritize rebuilding efforts towards a peaceful, just, and inclusive society in The Gambia.

Available data highlights notable progress in women’s health, education (particularly for the girl child), and addressing gender-based violence (GBV), including protection from harmful traditional practices. However, challenges persist in the areas of politics, administration, and economic development, with the percentage of non-literate women remaining significantly higher than that of men.

The establishment of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare in 2019 now fully operationalized reflects the Gambian Government’s strong political commitment to addressing gender disparities, underscoring the priority given to this issue at the highest levels. By conducting this review, The Gambia seeks to inform its future gender equality policies and initiatives, ensuring that the country continues to make progress towards a more equitable and inclusive society.

1.2. Preparatory process for the country-level review process

The Gambia’s National Review for Beijing+30 was a participatory and inclusive process that engaged a diverse range of stakeholders, including government entities, the private sector, civil society organizations, and research institutions. The all-inclusive approach ensured a participatory, transparent, and thorough review process. The focus on evidence-based review through the involvement of critical stakeholders, which culminated into producing tangible lessons and solutions towards the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Gambia.

Key informant interviews were conducted with representatives from government, the private sector, and civil society organizations working on women’s empowerment, social justice, gender-based violence, human rights, and women’s leadership.

The Directorate of Policy Development, Strategic Planning and Reporting leveraged the potential of technology and created a google document shared with relevant institutions to share their responses for consolidation into the final report. In-house technical reviews were also conducted by the Directorates of the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare to ensure the quality and comprehensiveness of the review.

Furthermore, the national review relied on existing sources of information, including the UN Women Beijing+30 Guidance Note and a desk review of relevant literature and reports. High-quality, disaggregated data on gender, age, and other factors informed the review process.

1.3. Measures with a transformative potential

The Gambia Government has taken a major step in creating interlinkages and synergies between the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by implementing programs with transformative potential to improve the well-being of women and girls. The Gambia Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) is one of such initiatives designed by the Government through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare. An Act of Parliament in 2020 established the Women Enterprise Fund to respond to the challenges faced by women in accessing finance and increase their economic empowerment. The Fund focuses on those measures that can best be delivered through collective action, thus complementing the national efforts and strategies that are in place to support women.

Some of the examples undertaken by the Government and which have the potential to transform the lives of women and girls in The Gambia include:

A. The Gambia Women Enterprise Fund (WEF): Empowering Women Through Financial Inclusion

The WEF was established by an Act of Parliament in 2020. The WEF, spearheaded by the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare, addresses the barriers women face in accessing finance and aims to enhance their economic empowerment. The WEF complements existing national strategies and efforts to support women's development and well-being.

The Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) supports women's groups in vulnerable situations by offering cash loans at a minimal 5% interest rate, compared to 17% interest rate of Commercial Banks, to help them engage in entrepreneurial activities. To obtain a loan, groups must complete a WEF loan application form and submit it through a Regional Committee, which appraises the forms and recommends successful applicants for approval by the WEF Board of Directors. Loans are guaranteed by three executive members of the group, who sign a bond of agreement with the WEF. Before funds are disbursed, the groups undergo comprehensive training in financial literacy and entrepreneurship provided by WEF officers.

As of March 31, 2024, the Gambia's WEF has utilized a revolving fund totaling GMD 65,620,000.00 and supported 620 women's groups, reaching 63,000 women nationwide. The fund finances both agricultural and non-agricultural activities. Some groups operate collectively, while others allocate part of their funds for group activities and loan the remainder to individual members based on requests. Beneficiaries have leveraged the resources to grow their businesses, enhance the economic well-being of their communities, and generate employment. Many, who now own poultry farms and food processing businesses, were previously unemployed. Through the WEF, they have achieved self-employment and created jobs by hiring youth and other job seekers as farm managers, operators, sales assistants, and cashiers.

The success stories from the project highlight how women, empowered by the WEF, have achieved significant milestones in their enterprises, benefiting not just themselves but their wider communities. With sustained support, the WEF can further contribute to reducing and eradicating poverty among women in The Gambia.

The WEF's primary funding comes from the Government of The Gambia, which subsidizes the fund with GMD 10,000,000 annually, alongside GMD 1,000,000 to support operational costs. Other key partners include the Central Bank of The Gambia, which provided a GMD 15,000,000 loan at a 2% interest rate, repayable quarterly over 24 months. The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) has supported financial literacy training for 50,000 women and funded the WEF loan and Women Resource applications. The World Bank has contributed to the development of key operational documents for the WEF, including the validated 2023–2032 strategy plan, the WEF Operations Manual, Loan Manual, and Monitoring & Evaluation Framework.

Additionally, the WEF implements Subcomponent 1.4 of the Sub-Saharan Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend Plus Project (SWEDD+), which is aimed at expanding economic opportunities and financial inclusion for adolescent girls and young women aged 15 to 24. This component focuses on building their employability and facilitating their participation in income-generating activities, with funding of USD 6,000.

Launched in late 2024, this sub-component has successfully registered 303 beneficiaries from vulnerable households, including school dropouts, victims of gender-based violence, and individuals facing societal discrimination, empowering them to reintegrate into society through meaningful business enterprises.

While the government celebrates the fund's achievements, it acknowledges the growing demand for the WEF and underscores the need for increased funding to ensure its sustainability and broaden its reach to more women entrepreneurs. So far, the fund has received approximately 2,000 applications, but only 620 have been approved due to financial constraints. The limited portfolio restricts the fund's ability to scale its impact, emphasizing the importance of securing additional funding sources. Moreover, the financial literacy training provided in collaboration with donor agencies has proven highly effective and remains a critical area for continued development.

B. The Family Strengthening Programme (FSP) for social protection

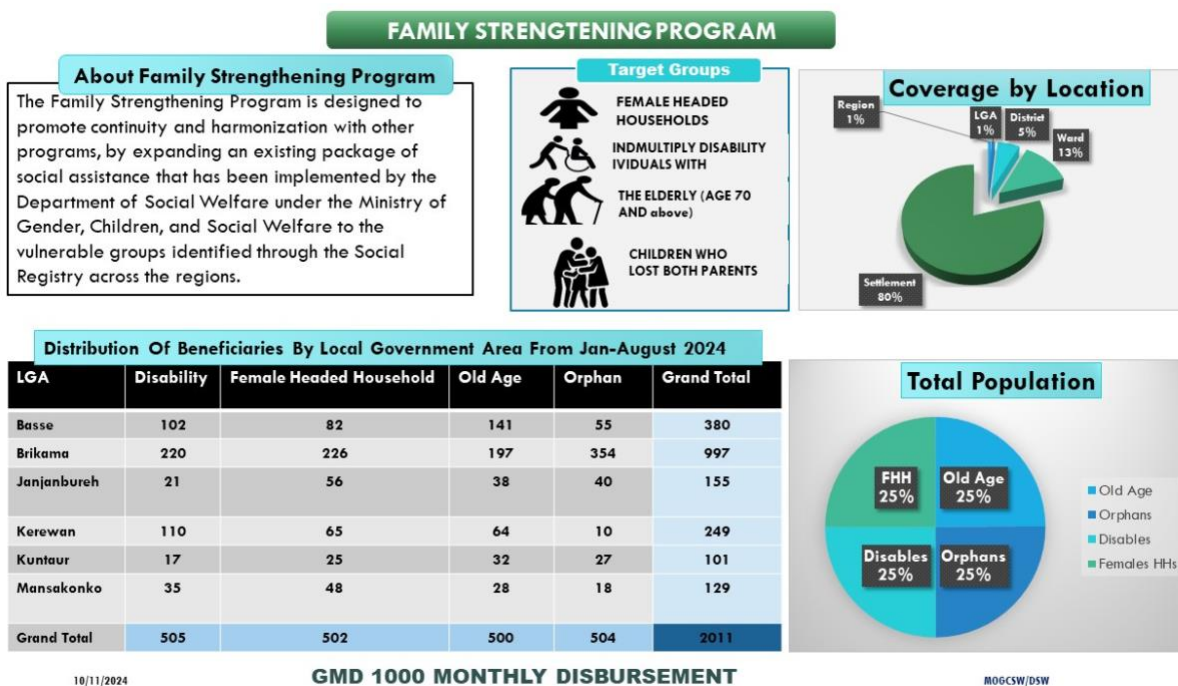
The Family Strengthening Program (FSP) is a notable initiative by The Gambia Government aimed at creating synergies between the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs). This transformative program targets vulnerable populations with the goal of increasing their short-term access to essential goods and services while enabling longer-term investments in human and productive capital.

The Gambia has traditionally relied on external development partners to fund social protection programs. However, there is a growing recognition of the importance of transitioning to a government-financed model. This shift is essential for ensuring the long-term sustainability and political viability of social protection initiatives in the country.

Implemented by the Directorate of Social Welfare (DSW) under the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare, the programme is coordinated by the National Social Protection Secretariat (NSPS) under the Office of the Vice President.

The program offers cash assistance of GMD 2,000 to families and GMD 1,000 to individuals on a quarterly basis. In addition to financial support, beneficiaries receive training through Social Behavioural Change Communication (SBCC), aimed at enhancing their living standards by improving financial capacity, fostering independence, and building resilience to economic shocks through income generation and asset accumulation. According to the program guidelines, this support can last for up to three years, after which a re-evaluation of the beneficiary’s situation is conducted. However, in practice, beneficiaries are selected quarterly based on their relative needs at the time of payment.

Figure 1: Distribution of beneficiaries within the reporting period:



Although no formal impact evaluation of the program has been carried out, anecdotal evidence indicates that it is linked to some positive socioeconomic effects, albeit limited. Observations suggest that beneficiary households and individuals have experienced enhanced food consumption and nutrition, greater access to education and healthcare, improved economic security, increased social empowerment, and a stronger presence within their communities, as well as reduced anxiety.

A key lesson from the FSP is the importance of integrating social protection measures with capacity-building initiatives. This not only enhances their economic independence but also contributes to community resilience. By addressing both immediate needs and long-term development goals, the program effectively improves the overall well-being of families, providing a model that other countries can adapt to enhance their social protection frameworks.

1.4. Upholding the Principle of Leaving No One Behind

The Gambia is committed to the principle of leaving no one behind, ensuring that the perspectives of children, persons with disabilities (PWDs), girls, women, and men are integral to policy formulation, legislation, resource allocation, planning, and the evaluation of policies and programmes. This commitment focuses on promoting gender equality, empowering individuals socially, economically, and politically, protecting children, and providing social support to all vulnerable groups in the country. Such an inclusive approach to development underpins The Gambia's poverty eradication strategies, aiming to reduce inequalities and exclusion while mitigating the risks of marginalizing vulnerable populations.

To fulfill its promise of leaving no one behind, various initiatives implemented by the Gambian government play a crucial role in this commitment. For instance, the Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Fund directly supports victims, ensuring they receive necessary assistance. The Sub-Saharan Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (Swedd+) Project (2024-2028) focuses on empowering women, thereby enhancing their opportunities and well-being. The Family Strengthening Program and the Disability Fund provide essential social protection, while the establishment of women and girls' empowerment centers, youth safe spaces, and one-stop centers for GBV victims create safe environments for marginalized groups. Additionally, the Second Chance Education Program ensures that those who have missed educational opportunities can still pursue their education, and the COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) addresses the unique challenges posed by the pandemic. Collectively, these programs contribute to the overarching goal of inclusive development by targeting vulnerable populations and ensuring that no one is left behind.

These programs and interventions have been funded through government resources and donor contributions as part of the government's ongoing efforts to address the challenges faced by Gambian women, children, youth, persons with disabilities, and older persons.

Additionally, the government enacted the long-awaited 2021 Persons with Disabilities Act³ as a crucial step toward safeguarding and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. For the first time in the history of the civil service, a workplace sexual harassment policy is being developed, spearheaded by the Secretary General and Head of the Civil Service.

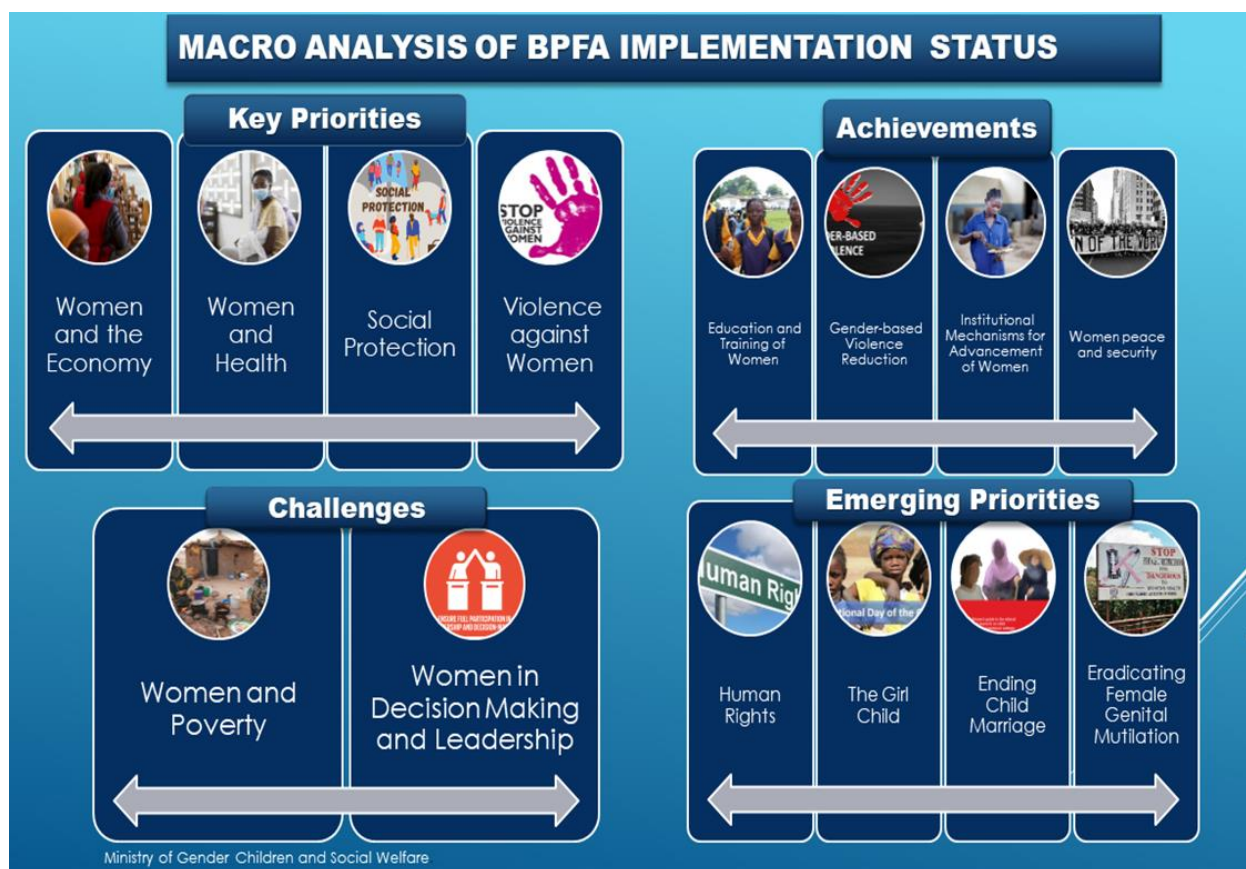
In June of this year, the government provided financial and technical support to uphold the law banning Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) after a National Assembly Member introduced a private member's bill to lift the ban.

³ Persons with Disabilities Act, 2021. The Bill was passed by the National Assembly on 6 July 2021, which was assented to by President Barrow on 25 July 2021. See 'Situational Analysis of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in The Gambia: Country Report' for the UNPRPD project in The Gambia, available at https://unprpd.org/new/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/CR_Gambia_2021-9a7.pdf.

Section Two: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks as well as new and emerging priorities for the future

The Gambia has registered major strides in implementing key priorities of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action between 2020 and to date. However, significant challenges persist that constrain the achievement of the desired results in implementing the BPfA and ensuring the accelerated achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Thus, this section provides a macro analysis of national priorities, achievements, challenges, and setbacks, with a focus on the past five years (i.e. 2020 to 2024); as well as new and emerging priorities for the future in implementing the three mutually reinforcing frameworks; the BPfA, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Agenda 2030.

Figure 2: Macroanalysis of BPfA Implementation status in The Gambia



Key Priorities: The diagram identifies four main areas of focus: Women and the Economy, Women and Health, Social Protection, and Violence against Women. These priorities aim to enhance the socio-economic status of women, ensure their access to healthcare, provide safety nets, and address violence against women.

Achievements: The Gambian Government has made notable progress in several areas, including education and training for women, initiatives for gender-based violence reduction, the

establishment of institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, and efforts to promote peace and security for women. These achievements reflect a commitment to fostering gender equality and empowering women in various sectors.

Challenges: Despite these advancements, significant challenges remain. Issues related to women and poverty, as well as the representation of women in decision making and leadership roles, hinder the full realization of gender equality in The Gambia. Addressing these challenges is crucial for achieving sustained progress.

Emerging Priorities: This report also identifies emerging priorities that require immediate attention, such as human rights, the welfare of the girl child, ending child marriage, and eradicating Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). These areas highlight the need for continued advocacy and targeted interventions to protect and empower the most vulnerable segments of society.

Overall, this macro analysis underscores the importance of a comprehensive approach to gender equality, emphasizing the need for ongoing commitment, collaboration, and targeted actions to address the challenges faced by women in The Gambia.

See section three for a detailed discussion of the key priorities, achievements, challenges, and emerging priorities.

Section Three: Analysis of measures taken to advance gender equality across the twelve critical areas of concern of the BPfA and the relevant SDGs

This section reviews the 12 critical areas of concern, which have been clustered into the following six dimensions.

3.1 Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

Critical areas of concern:

Women and poverty

Women and the economy

Human rights of women

The girl child

3.1.1 ADVANCING GENDER EQUALITY IN THE WORLD OF WORK

Over the past five years, what actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)?

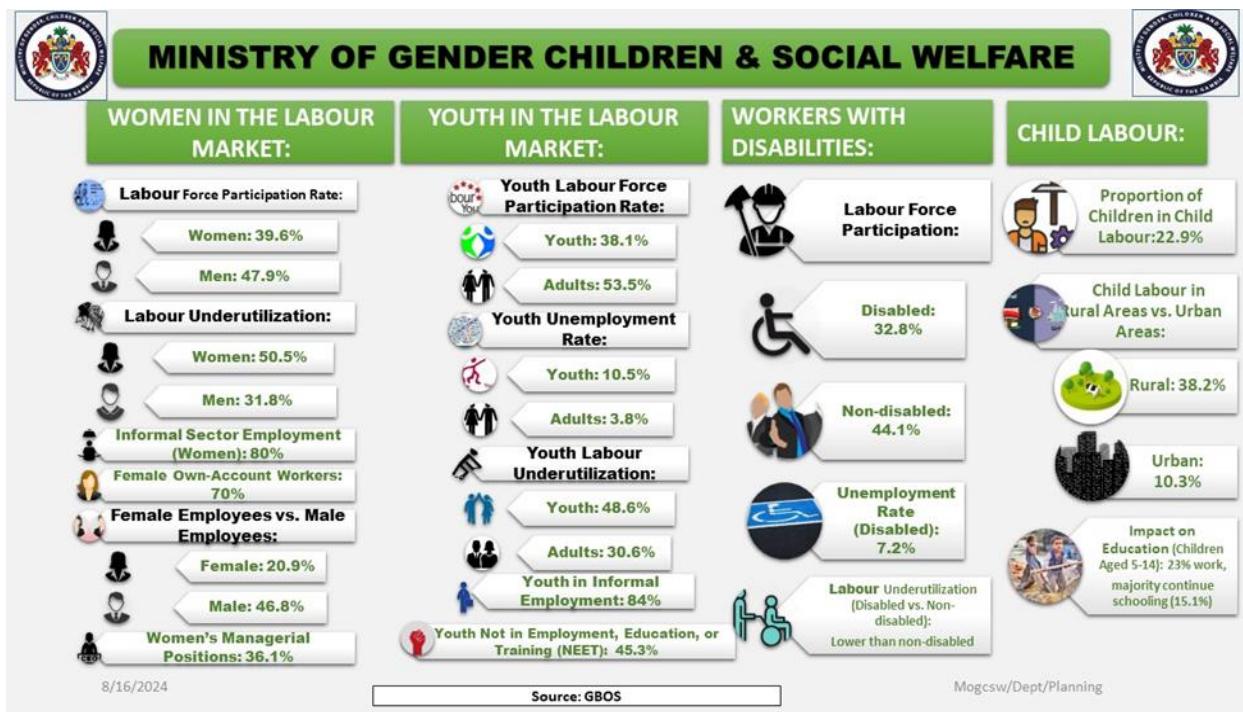
Promoting gender equality and women empowerment remains a key component of a sustainable development agenda that seeks inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work environment. As a result, the government of the Gambia has employed strategic efforts to ensure that women and the girl child are empowered, and their rights are protected through inclusive policies and legislations. The National Development Plan 2018-2021 highlights women empowerment as one of the key enablers of its strategic priorities, and provides a national framework geared toward gender mainstreaming in all sectors. This policy also seeks to promote capacity development for women entrepreneurs to ensure their active participation in the economy. A 2020 amendment to the Women's Act introduced a provision to Section 15, mandating that every public institution, authority, and state-owned enterprise allocate at least thirty percent of appointments to women.

Similarly, the subsequent National Development Plan; the Recovery Focus National Development Plan 2023-2027 (Yirwa) reiterated the government's commitment toward the promotion of gender equality, by empowering Gambian women economically and politically. In line with these national development plans, Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies have initiated sectoral policies and programmes to improve women's participation in the labor force. Policies aligned to the National Development Plan includes the newly developed National Gender Policy (NGP) 2023-2032 by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare. This policy succeeds the National Gender and Women Empowerment Policy of 2010. By reflecting on current challenges, the NGP seeks to promote gender equality in all spheres of the Gambia society notably, in the labour force. The development of a Sexual Harassment Policy by the Ministry of Public Service, Administrative Reforms, Policy Coordination and Delivery under the stewardship of the Secretary General and Head of the Civil Service shows the government's commitment to ensuring a safer work environment for all and to advance gender equality.

As part of the programme initiatives undertaken by the Government of The Gambia, the Ministry of Trade, Industry, Regional Integration and Employment launched the She Trades Gambia Hub program in 2021 aims to support women businesses to thrive in international trade, by enhancing the capacity and skills of women entrepreneurs. Similarly, the Women Enterprise Fund(WEF) established in 2020 by the Ministry

of Gender, Children and Social Welfare through the Women Enterprise Act of 2020 is also part of initiatives that seek to promote women’s active participation in the economy especially in the informal sector and also to promote entrepreneurship among women for economic empowerment. The WEF supports women enterprises by giving loans and financial literacy training to women entrepreneurs.

Figure 3: Infographic representation of Gambia’s Labor Force (GLF) 2022-2023



The info graph above shows women’s labor force participation in the Gambia is low compared to men’s participation rates. The average rate of male labor force participation is at 47.9 percent, while women participation recorded 39.6 percent. The data also reveals significant underutilization of women’s labor with 50.5 percent, while that of men stands at 31.8 percent. The GLF indicates that women’s employment in the Gambia tends to concentrate in the informal sector with 80 percent and women own account works accounting to 70 percent and only a minimal number of women in the formal sector makes it to top managerial positions with 36.1 percent.

While The Gambia has developed and implemented several important policies and legal instruments relevant to achieving inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work, challenges persist. Participation of persons with disabilities in the labour force is slightly low with 32.8 percent when compared to 44.1 percent of non-disabled workers making it difficult for the country to fulfill SDG indicator 8.5.2 unemployment rate by sex, age and persons with disabilities.

Additionally, meeting the target and objective of SDG 8.7 “Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms” and eliminating all forms of discrimination against the girl child as stipulated in article L.1 of the Beijing Declaration has been constrained by the proportion of children active in the labour force (22.9 percent), child labour in rural areas (38.2 percent) and 10.3 percent in urban areas which in turn impact the education of children engaged in child labour at the rate of 23 percent.

The Gambia is currently on Tier 2 in the 2024 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report issued by the U.S. Department of State. This ranking indicates that while The Gambia does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, the country is making significant efforts to comply with those standards. The National Agency Against the Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP) has adopted a multi-sectoral approach to combating human trafficking. This strategy includes raising public awareness through radio talk shows and providing training to civil society organizations, law enforcement officers, diplomats, and legal practitioners, among others. A hotline (1123) was launched to facilitate the reporting of trafficking cases. Additionally, NAATIP offers free weekly counseling services to support victims in their reintegration into society, collaborates with Immigration Services to provide residential permits for victims, and provides financial assistance to aid their reintegration.

The recently adopted Labour Act on 12 June 2023 prohibits worst forms of child labour. The Gambian government is currently making strides toward strengthening its framework for child protection, including a new Child Labour Policy. The policy aims to create a holistic approach to protecting children from all forms of labor that could be detrimental to their health, development, and well-being. Child labor remains a significant concern in The Gambia, especially in informal sectors such as agriculture, street vending, domestic work, and fishing. Many children are engaged in these activities, often under hazardous conditions and without adequate protection or oversight. The new Child Labour Policy is expected to address these issues by providing clear guidelines, regulations, and enforcement mechanisms to ensure that children are not exploited or subjected to conditions that can impair their growth and development.

In addition to the development of the Child Labour Policy, efforts are underway to repeal the Children's Act of 2005, which was subsequently amended in 2016. The decision to repeal the existing legislation is rooted in the need to modernize and adapt it to the evolving landscape of child protection in The Gambia. The primary objective of this repeal is to ensure that the new act will incorporate and accommodate new and emerging child protection issues that have surfaced in recent years. These include matters such as digital safety for children, trafficking, sexual exploitation, and the impact of climate change on children's rights.

The repeal of the Children's Act aims to create a more comprehensive and forward-looking legal framework that aligns with international standards and best practices, such as those outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). By doing so, The Gambia seeks to strengthen its child protection mechanisms and ensure that all children, regardless of their circumstances, have the opportunity to grow, develop, and thrive in a safe and supportive environment. The process of repealing and replacing the existing Children's Act involves extensive consultations with a broad range of stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, community leaders, and international partners. This inclusive approach is intended to ensure that the new legislation is comprehensive, contextually relevant, and responsive to the needs and rights of children in The Gambia.

In addition, the Government made overall increased efforts, including identifying significantly more victims and providing training to officials on the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) and standard victim identification procedures. Notably, the Government secured its first sex trafficking

conviction in 2023. Authorities prosecuted at least six suspected traffickers. The court convicted one sex trafficker, sentencing them to 15 years in prison and imposing a fine, marking the first conviction of its kind in six years.

In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?

The Gambia is one of few countries in the region harnessing the National Social Protection Policy 2015–2025 to recognize unpaid care and domestic work as well as propose specific actions to reduce, redistribute, or support it.⁴ Government has introduced social protection programmes that assist mothers, including pregnant and lactating women, as well as elderly individuals who care for children. These programmes promote work-life balance and provide essential support to caregivers, recognizing their vital role in the family and community. The burden of childbearing and household gender roles embedded in the patriarchal structures also affects women’s active participation in the formal work force. By strengthening social safety nets, the Government seeks to alleviate the burden of unpaid care work and enhance the overall well-being of caregivers and their families.

3.1.2 GENDER DIGITAL DIVIDE

In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce the gender digital divide?

The Government of the Gambia’s establishment of the Ministry of Digital Economy in the year 2022 to coordinate efforts towards building the digital economy and improving the situation of digital divide in the country shows its commitment to make The Gambia a major hub for technological innovation. This move ensures that all citizens, regardless of gender, have equal access to digital resources. As part of efforts to improve the gender digital divide, The Gambia has initiated several programmes, developed strategies and partnerships with key stakeholders. One significant effort was the development of the Digital Development Strategy for The Gambia in 2023-2028. This strategy led to the launch of the Digital Transformation for Africa and West Africa Regional Digital integration programme (DTFA/WARDIP), a \$50 million regional digital transformation program aimed at enhancing digital infrastructure and connectivity. The digital transformation project focuses on expanding broadband access, developing digital e-government solutions, supporting e-commerce, and digital financial services, digital literacy and women’s participation in ITC.

Figure 4: Gender Digital Divide

⁴ UN Women ‘Putting gender equality at the center of social protection strategies in sub-Saharan Africa: how far have we come?’ (2021) Policy Brief No. 24.

Men (110%), Women (100%) and Difference (10%)

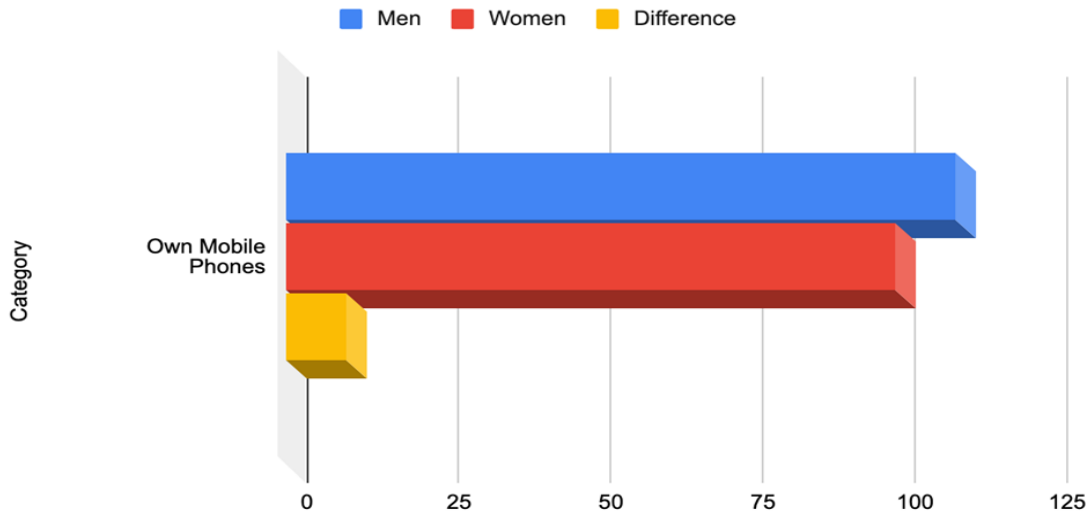
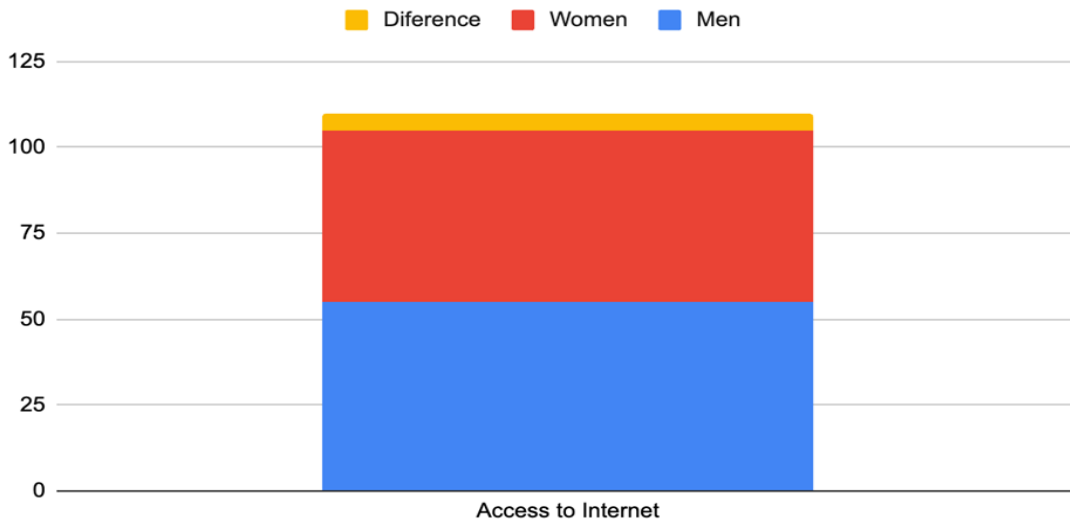


Figure 5: Access to Internet



Regardless of efforts to improve the ITC infrastructures, the digital divide in the Gambia remains high, particularly access to digital resources and internet connectivity. Studies such as the Afrobarometer, shows that women and girls are less likely to have access to digital devices and the internet compared to their male counterparts, impacting their ability to benefit from digital opportunities in education, employment, and entrepreneurship. For instance, the Afrobarometer survey 2021 indicates that 10% more men than women in the Gambia own mobile phones, and 17% of men own computers compared to 11% of women. This disparity is also visible for access to the internet where 5% more men have access to the internet compared to women, exacerbating the gender digital divide.

3.1.3 MACROECONOMIC AND FISCAL POLICY ENVIRONMENT

In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPFA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?

Noting the importance of gender equality to macro-economic growth, the government of the Gambia has undertaken major policy actions geared toward promoting gender sensitive budgeting and public investment to reduce gender inequality. This includes the development of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy NFIS 2022 by the Central Bank of the Gambia. This strategy aims to facilitate access to formal financial services to 70% of the adult population by 2025 with special focus on vulnerable groups, including women and youths in the country.

Legislation was also passed to promote women's active participation in the economy. This includes adoption of the Women Enterprise Act 2020. This Act provides the legal framework for the establishment of the Women Enterprise Fund under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare.

3.2 Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

Critical areas of concern:

- Women and poverty
- Education and training of women
- Women and health
- Human rights of women
- The girl child.

3.2.1 POVERTY AMONG WOMEN AND GIRLS

In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

The Gambia has implemented a number of programmes, strategies and interventions through Government funding and donor contributions, as part of Government's efforts to reduce or eradicate poverty among women and girls. Recognizing the crucial role of financing with a gender perspective in addressing the challenges of gender equality and the empowerment of women, the Ministry through the Sub-Saharan Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (Swedd+) Project (2024-2028) is implementing an economic and financial inclusion of girls and young women, through the formation of cooperatives, capacity building on income generating activities and programs. The 25 million USD project is being jointly implemented with the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education. So far, a USD 4.01million has been disbursed. The project has gained a satisfactory rating on progress registered based on the World Bank Mission's report of April 2024. The Gambia launched the Women Enterprise Fund (WEF) in 2020 which aims to help women improve their skills and income, raising the standard of living for their families and communities.

The WEF provides economic empowerment for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) for women groups and has recently been extended to individual women. For the past three (3) years, WEF has provided soft

loans to women-owned businesses, including start-ups and financial literacy programs for women entrepreneurs. In the year 2024 alone, the Ministry through WEF has made a disbursement of up to 8,400 women across three regions in the country. This includes the West Coast Region with 4,200 women, the North Bank Region with 2,700 women, and 1,500 women in the Central River Region. This brings the total amount of disbursement to D66, 320,000 and a recovery of D46, 105,751 amounting to 69.5% as of 31st March 2024. The World Bank in 2023 supported the WEF with strategic plan, loan manual and a gender-sensitive monitoring and evaluation (M & E) framework. As outlined in the strategic plan (2023-2032), by 2032, goal of WEF is to become a fully-fledged financial institution, endowed with adequate capacities and resources to provide financial services which support Gambian women's access to finance.

The Gambia has also benefited from the 50 million African Women Speak (50MAWS) project through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare. The platform is intended to empower millions of women in Africa to start, grow, and scale up businesses by providing a one-stop shop for their specific information needs. The 50MAWS platform aims to facilitate a dynamic and engaging exchange of ideas among women entrepreneurs, using in-built social media functionality to connect them with one another in ways that will foster peer-to-peer learning, mentoring and the sharing of information and knowledge within communities, and access to financial services and market opportunities between urban and rural areas, and across borders and between countries.⁵

Furthermore, the Nafa programme has targeted over 17000 households in the Gambia. The Three- and half-year project was funded by the World Bank through the Social Safety Net Project to the tune of US\$ 30 million. Targeting Women and Girls: The Nafa program specifically aimed to include female-headed households, although challenges were noted regarding the equitable distribution of benefits. Reports indicated that some female breadwinners were unintentionally excluded due to the prioritization of household heads, which often meant that benefits did not reach women and children effectively. This highlighted the need for more targeted interventions to ensure that women, particularly those in vulnerable situations, received the support intended for them.

Nafa Quick Initiative: Launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Nafa Quick program was a four-month cash transfer initiative that provided support to over 78,000 households in the poorest districts of The Gambia. Funded by the World Bank with a total allocation of \$30 million, this program aimed to help families meet their basic needs during a critical period marked by economic hardship and food insecurity. The program was designed to be quasi-universal, ensuring that a broad segment of the population, including many women-led households, received assistance.

Another initiative implemented by the Gambia to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls is the Building Resilience through Social Transfers (BReST). This initiative, funded by the European Union through UNICEF, focused on improving the nutritional status of lactating women and children under two years old in the poorest districts. This project aimed to build resilience and improve health outcomes, emphasizing the importance of nutrition for women and children during critical developmental periods.

3.2.2 ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls?

To improve access to social protection for women and girls, several initiatives have been implemented. The Directorate of Social Welfare (DSW) under the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, Social Protection Secretariat, and National Nutrition Agency has expanded its coverage, providing social safety

⁵ 50 Million African Women Speak (50MAWS) project.

nets and support services for vulnerable women and girls, including those with disabilities. The National Nutrition Agency (NaNA) focuses on nutritional support for pregnant women, nursing mothers, and children, improving their nutritional status and reducing stunting.

The National Social Protection Policy (2015-2025) was also formulated which provides a comprehensive framework to develop an inclusive social protection system in The Gambia⁶. This policy emphasizes preventive, protective, and transformative measures designed to safeguard the lives of vulnerable groups, with a particular focus on women and girls. The NSPP highlights the importance of gender-sensitive approaches in social protection initiatives, recognizing that women and girls often face distinct challenges that require tailored solutions.

Contributing to achieving the outcome on inclusiveness and care for persons with disabilities and older persons, the Ministry created a Disability Fund, designed to offer financial support to persons with disabilities. Government has allocated 4 million Dalasis which is being used for the operation and providing the much-needed support to the persons with disability. Through the grant, the Ministry has provided financial support to organizations supporting Persons with Disabilities. Ten Organizations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs) each received D50,000.00. Additionally, the Gambia Federation of the Disabled, the umbrella body, was awarded D200,000, and the National Disability Advisory Council received D300,000.00.

As part of efforts to ensure no one is left behind, the Ministry is implementing a new initiative called Family Strengthening Programme (FSP worth 30 million Dalasis) with technical support and overall coordination by the National Social Protection Secretariat, Office of the Vice President. This program provides support in response to inclusive development for greater equity and social protection for the most vulnerable population in line with the aspirations of the National Social Protection Policy. This program aims to enhance both immediate and long-term welfare by increasing access to essential goods and services and fostering investments in human and productive capital. A key feature of the program is the monthly cash transfer of GMD 1,000 per beneficiary in 2024, with the possibility of increasing it in 2025. This offers consistent financial aid to help meet their daily needs and reduce economic pressures specifically targeting older Persons aged 70 and above, Persons with Disabilities, Orphan Children aged 10 and below, and Female Headed Households. This year, the target for the FSP is to reach 2,000 beneficiaries. The government has disbursed over GMD8 million out of the 30 million allocated to Empower Vulnerable Gambians.

In addition, UNICEF has been a vital partner in enhancing social protection systems for children and women in The Gambia. Collaborating closely with the Gambia Government, UNICEF's initiatives focus on ensuring that every child has a fair chance in life. This includes providing access to essential services and establishing social safety nets that protect children and women from the impacts of poverty and vulnerability.

The World Food Programme also formulated a Country Strategic Plan (2019-2024), which provides a strong focus on developing gender-responsive social protection systems⁷. This plan emphasizes nutrition-sensitive safety nets for vulnerable populations, particularly pregnant and lactating women and girls, as well as children under five. By strengthening the capacity of national systems, the WFP aims to ensure that these groups receive adequate support to meet their nutritional needs and improve their overall well-being.

⁶ National Social Protection Policy 2015-2025

⁷ World Food Programme Country Strategic Plan 2019-2024

The WFP's initiatives highlight the importance of integrating gender considerations into social protection efforts to achieve better outcomes for vulnerable populations through the following programs:

Crisis Response and Food Assistance: Provided food and cash assistance during crises, such as the floods in July 2022, which affected many households, including Female Headed Households. This support is crucial for maintaining food security among the most vulnerable populations.

School Feeding Program: The WFP runs school meals programs targeting children aged 3-12 in vulnerable communities. This initiative not only addresses immediate nutritional needs but also encourages school attendance, which disproportionately benefits girls by reducing the barriers to education.

Nutrition Support: offers nutritional supplements to pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, as well as young children, to combat malnutrition. The program is designed to improve the health and nutritional status of women and girls, thereby enhancing their overall well-being and productivity.

Livelihood Support: supports smallholder farmers, many of whom are women, by providing market information and purchasing locally produced food for school feeding programs. This approach helps to boost the local economy and empowers women in agricultural roles.

Capacity Strengthening in Social Protection: The National Social Protection Secretariat received support in enhancing its capacity and coordination, including the establishment of the National Cash Transfer working group, which aims to improve the targeting and effectiveness of social protection interventions for vulnerable groups, including women and girls.

Addressing Climate Change: The Gambia is a disaster-prone country due to its geophysical conditions and climate extremes. It ranks as the 34th most vulnerable country to climate change and stands 143rd out of 181 countries in terms of preparedness.⁸ Initiatives aimed at helping communities adapt to climate change also benefit women, who are often the primary caregivers and food producers. Food insecurity impacts households led by women (14.8 percent) more significantly than those led by men (13 percent).⁹ Thus initiatives such as the World Food Programme's integrated risk programs that support climate-adapted agricultural practices, which are essential for ensuring food security in the face of environmental challenges.

Improving social protection systems in the Gambia is essential, particularly for women and girls, by addressing the interconnected issues of food security, nutrition, and economic empowerment.

3.2.3 IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?

In the past five years, The Gambia has undertaken various initiatives aimed at improving health outcomes for women and girls. These efforts have been crucial in addressing the unique health challenges faced by this demographic cohort, particularly concerning maternal health, reproductive rights, and gender-based violence. This narrative report outlines the key actions taken by the Gambian government and its partners to enhance the health and well-being of women and girls in the country.

The Gambia has transitioned from the National Health Policy framework of 2012-2020 to the current National Health Policy 2021-2030, titled 'Building Partnerships for Quality Health Care for All.' This new policy takes a comprehensive approach to advancing health care, focusing on quality, equity, and universal

⁸ University of Notre Dame *ND-GAIN Country Index: The Gambia* < <https://gain-new.crc.nd.edu/country/gambia>>.

⁹ WFP 'State of Food Security in the Gambia: Comprehensive food security and vulnerability analysis, 2021' (2022)

health coverage. It aligns with the Recovery-Focused National Development Plan ‘YIRIWAA’ (2023-2027) and the SDGs, aiming to improve health outcomes for all demographics and ensure inclusivity. The policy addresses the challenges and gaps identified in the previous framework, including ensuring equitable health service delivery, increasing health investments, and strengthening health infrastructure. The 2021-2030 policy prioritizes emerging health needs, such as improving non-communicable disease management, enhancing maternal and child health services, and strengthening the health system's capacity to respond to public health emergencies. It incorporates innovative strategies like expanding digital health technologies, improving health financing models, and reinforcing community health programs to achieve comprehensive health coverage. The updated policy places a strong focus on maternal, child, and reproductive health services, with the goal of reducing maternal and infant mortality rates and improving the overall quality of sexual and reproductive health care. Key interventions include expanding access to emergency obstetric and neonatal care, increasing the availability of skilled birth attendants, and broadening reproductive health services to reach all segments of the population, particularly the most vulnerable.

A significant milestone in improving health outcomes for women and girls was the launching of The Gambia Investment Case on Sexual and Reproductive Health in October 2023. This initiative, spearheaded by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in collaboration with the Gambian government, aims to tackle critical issues such as unmet family planning needs, preventable maternal deaths, and gender-based violence, including harmful practices like female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. The Investment Case outlines the need for increased funding and resources to enhance maternal health programs, train healthcare personnel, and strengthen health systems to ensure quality care for expectant mothers.

The Gambia has made strides in reducing maternal mortality, which has declined from 433 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2013 to 289 in 2019.¹⁰ However, the country still faces challenges, as maternal mortality remains a pressing concern. The Investment Case emphasizes that with an estimated investment of USD 38 million, the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) could be reduced to 141 per 100,000 live births by 2030, representing a 51% decrease from the 2022 baseline. This ambitious goal highlights the government’s recognition of the need for sustained efforts to improve maternal health outcomes.

3.2.4 IMPROVING WOMEN AND GIRLS’ EDUCATION AND SKILLS

In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?

The Government of The Gambia recognizes the importance of gender equality and the need to bridge existing gaps in education fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) and skills acquisition. The government's education budget has seen a slight rise, demonstrating a commitment to enhancing educational infrastructure, particularly in marginalized and rural areas. The Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) received 15.6% of the budget in 2021, 17.13% in 2022, and 17.50% in 2023. While this gradual increase in funding for basic and secondary education in The Gambia is commendable, further efforts are still needed.

Empowering girls in these areas is a strategic investment in the nation's sustainable development. Thus, education outcomes and skills for women and girls have improved through various program interventions including:

The ECOWAS Scholarship of Excellence for Girls Program: The Gambia continues to benefit from the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre’s support in promoting girls’ education in specialized technical

¹⁰ GBoS ‘The Gambia Demographic and Health Survey 2019-2020’ (2021).

and professional training through the award of Excellence Scholarships. Since 2009, the ECOWAS Gender and Development Centre (EGDC) has partnered with the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare to provide over 100 scholarship packages to students pursuing academic and vocational disciplines. In 2022, 48 female students received scholarships, and in 2023, 22 more have been awarded support in science, technical, and vocational fields. This program reflects the shared commitment of ECOWAS and the Government of The Gambia to achieve gender equality and close the gender gap in education. It aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 4 and 5, the Dakar Framework for Action, and the Recovery-Focused National Development Plan (2024–2028).

Additionally, the Women’s Amendment Act, 2020 also provides that educational placements and school enrollments, including the awarding of scholarships and bursaries, should allocate a minimum of fifty reserved for women among eligible candidates.

The Second Chance Education Programme: provides children who could not pass exams that could enable them to transit to the next level of education. These people are given the second chance to transit to their next level of education through the provision of remedial classes. Currently, 1015 people benefitted from it.

Re-Entry Programme for Girls: enables drop out girls to go back to school. Girls who dropped out as a result of pregnancy, early marriage or economic difficulties re-entered back to schools of their choice and sponsored to continue their education. From 2004 to date, 5768 girls have re-entered back to school.

Support Program for Women Processors of Agricultural, Fishery and Artisanal Products: this is an ECOWAS Gender Development Centre supported project aimed to address the root causes of poverty and inequality as well as the universal need for development by meeting the aspirations of all populations. The programme provides training to develop the skills and abilities of women involved in food processing and handicrafts to improve the management of their business and the marketing of their products.

3.2.5 ECONOMIC RECOVERY FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC

What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?

In the past five years, The Gambia has implemented a range of actions aimed at ensuring that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic addresses and closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and health. These efforts are particularly important given the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on women and girls, who often bear the brunt of economic downturns due to their roles in informal employment and caregiving.

In 2024, the government enacted the first-ever Law on Social Assistance, marking a significant milestone in establishing a legal framework for social assistance and setting standards for service delivery to the poor and vulnerable. This law aims to fill gaps in the social protection system by addressing economic, discriminatory, and social vulnerabilities related to poverty and deprivation. It also establishes a Social Protection Agency to oversee the implementation of these protections.

Other key initiatives, include She Trades Gambia Hub project aimed at enhancing digitalization and market access for women, particularly those involved in horticulture. This project focuses on sustainably increasing the income of women producers and processors who were disproportionately affected by the pandemic. By providing training and resources to improve their market access, the initiative seeks to empower women economically and reduce gender disparities in income and employment opportunities.

COVID-19 Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP): Launched by the United Nations in The Gambia, the SERP focuses on protecting health services, providing social protection, and supporting jobs and small enterprises. It aims to mitigate the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic and ensure a resilient recovery by addressing inequalities and promoting gender equity.

Multi-Country COVID-19 Crisis Response Program: Funded by the African Development Bank, this program provided \$14.1 million to strengthen health systems and build treatment centers. It also included social programs targeting vulnerable households, distributing essential food items to over 200,000 families, with a focus on supporting local businesses, including women-led SMEs.¹¹

Support for Vulnerable Households: The Gambian government, through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, provided direct support to vulnerable households, including cash transfers and food supplies. Initiatives included assistance to 1,000 households with children under five and targeted support for families in the Greater Banjul Area.

Tourism Sector Relief Fund: In response to the significant impact of COVID-19 on the tourism industry, the government established a \$1.85 million fund to support informal sector workers and businesses. This fund provided one-off payments to around 6,000 workers, helping to alleviate the financial strain on this critical sector.

Project on Reducing Gendered Impacts in Fisheries: Launched in partnership with the World Food Programme, this project supports women in the fisheries sector by providing infrastructure such as boreholes, fish smoking houses, and cold storage facilities. It aims to improve the livelihoods of women working in this vital industry.

These programs reflect a comprehensive approach by the Gambian government and its partners to address the immediate challenges posed by COVID-19 while laying the groundwork for sustainable economic recovery and resilience. Given that a significant portion of the workforce in The Gambia is employed in the informal sector, which includes many women, the government has prioritized the protection and economic empowerment of these workers. Such initiatives served as resources to help women transition to more formal employment opportunities, thereby enhancing their job security and financial stability.

The Gambia has also taken steps to improve health outcomes for women and girls, particularly in reproductive health services. The government has worked to ensure that essential health services remain accessible during the pandemic, including maternal and child health services. This is part of a broader strategy to address the health disparities that have been exacerbated by COVID-19, ensuring that women receive the care they need .

Recognizing that financial inclusion is critical for economic recovery, The Gambia has initiated efforts to improve access to financial services for women. With about 69% of adults lacking access to transaction accounts, the government is working on policies to enhance financial literacy and access to banking services, particularly for women and small enterprises¹². This is aimed at empowering women economically and enabling them to contribute to the recovery process.

¹¹ Gambia Horticulture Project: Empowering Women through Market Access," UNDP Gambia, 2023
Social Protection Response to COVID-19 in The Gambia," Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs, The Gambia, 2021

¹² Financial Inclusion Policies and Programs in The Gambia," Central Bank of The Gambia, 2022

3.3 Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

Critical areas of concern:

- Violence against women
- Human rights of women
- Women and the media
- The girl child

3.3.1 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Over the past five years, which forms of gender-based violence, and in which specific contexts or settings, has your country prioritized for action?

Gender-based violence (GBV) is globally recognized as a serious breach of fundamental human rights. Research increasingly sheds light on the significant health impacts, long-term effects, and demographic consequences of such violence. The Gambia's 2019-2020 Demographic and Health Survey reveals that 46% of women aged 15-49 have faced physical violence at least once since turning 15, with 11% reporting such violence in the year before the survey. This figure rose from 41% in 2013 to 46% in 2019-2020. Among these women, 39% experienced only physical violence, 2% only sexual violence, and 7% endured both physical and sexual violence. Additionally, 7% of women aged 15-49 who have been pregnant have faced physical violence during their pregnancy. This chart highlights the percentage of women experiencing physical violence has increased by 5% from 2013 to 2019-20.

Figure 6: Gender-based violence

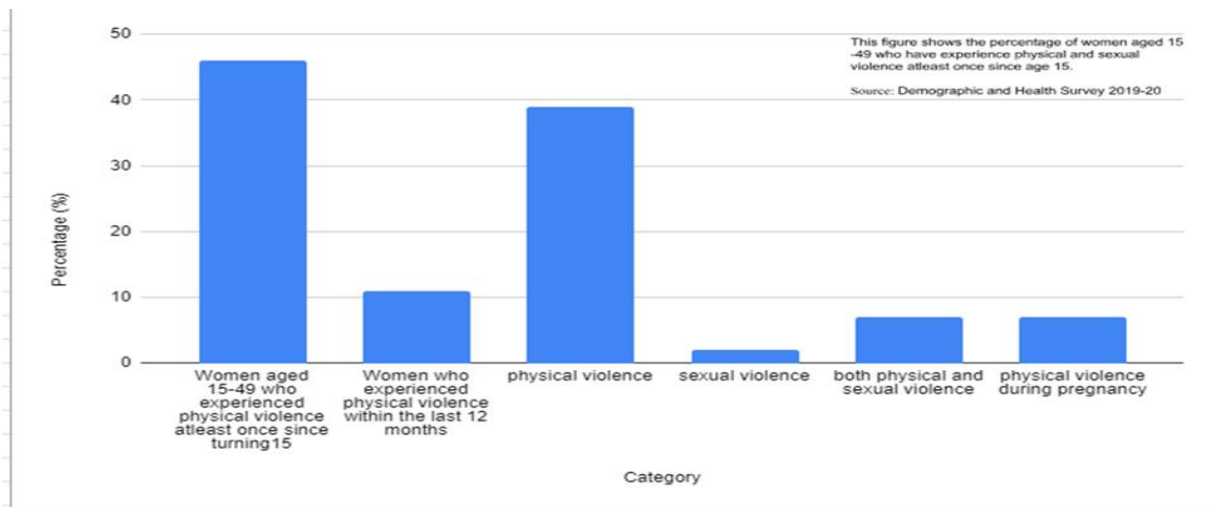
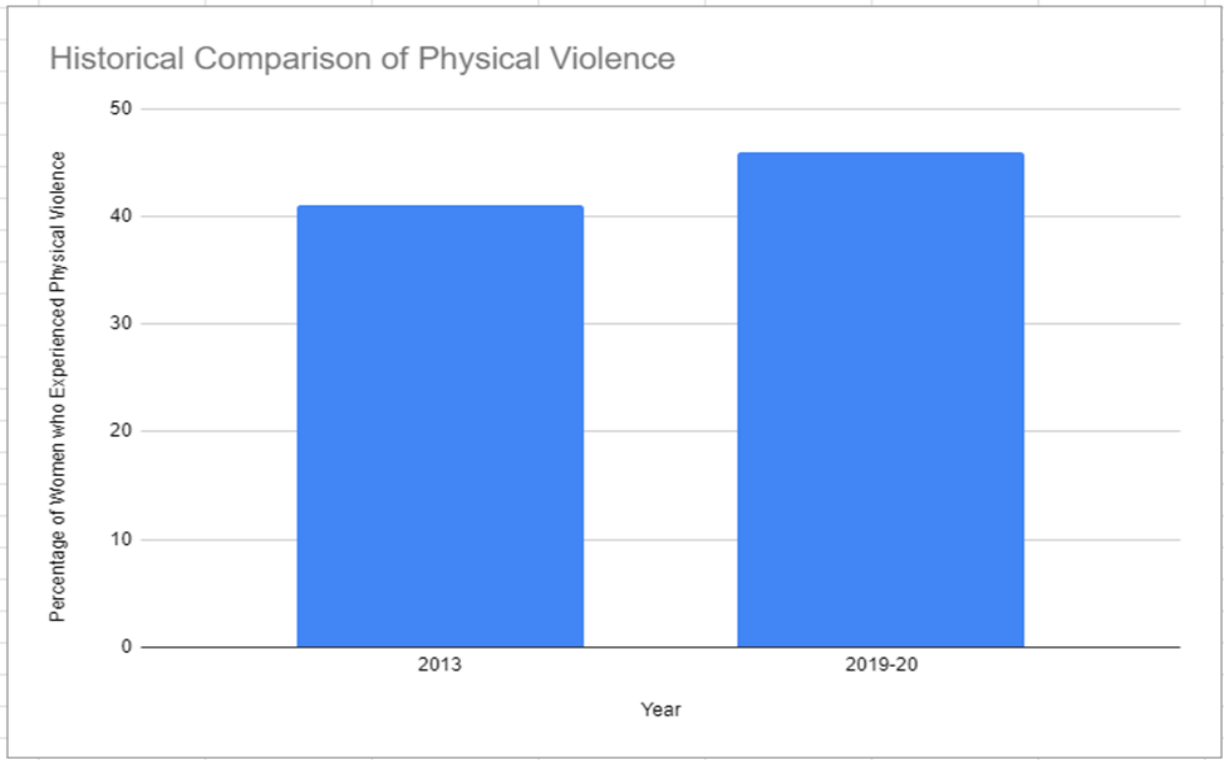


Figure 7: Historical comparison of physical violence



Data source: Source: Demographic and Health Survey 2019-2020

The Gambia has long acknowledged the need to address gender-based violence (GBV). Women and girls in the country endure physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, which negatively impacts their health, economic opportunities, and social relationships. To combat GBV, the country has established various laws, including the Constitution of The Gambia (1997), the Sexual Offenses Act (2013), the Domestic Violence Act (2013), the Women Act (2010), amended in 2015, the Trafficking in Persons Act (2007), and the Children’s Act (2005) among others. These laws clearly prohibit various forms of violence and abuse against women, girls, and children, and offer protection for victims. While the Government of The Gambia addresses several types of violence, it focuses its efforts particularly on domestic violence, sexual violence, female genital mutilation, and child marriage.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In The Gambia, 46% of women have ever experienced physical violence since age 15. In the 12 months prior to the survey, 11% of women have experienced physical violence (DHS, 2019/2020). Physical violence varies by LGA, from a low of 33% of women in Kerewan who have ever experienced violence, to a high of 57% in Basse. The most common perpetrator of physical violence among ever-married women is the current husband or partner (53%). Among never-married women, the most common perpetrator of physical violence is the mother or stepmother (53%). 9% of women aged 15-49 have ever experienced sexual violence, while 2% have experienced sexual violence in the 12 months prior to the survey. Divorced, separated, or widowed women are more likely to have ever experienced sexual violence (16%) than married (9%) and never married (8%) women. Reports of sexual violence are highest among women in Banjul (11%)

and lowest in Kerewan and Mansakonko (7% each). The most common perpetrator of sexual violence against ever-married women is the current husband or partner (50%).

Table 1: Data on domestic violence

| Background characteristic | Emotional violence | Physical violence | Sexual violence | Sexual violence | Physical and sexual and emotional | Physical or sexual | Physical or sexual or emotional | Number of ever married women |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|--|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Age 15-19 | 12.0 | 13.4 | 1.7 | 1.2 | 1.2 | 13.9 | 17.4 | 105 |
| 20-24 | 16.0 | 13.5 | 3.7 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 16.0 | 22.7 | 245 |
| 25-29 | 15.9 | 12.4 | 3.0 | 2.2 | 2.1 | 13.2 | 20.2 | 379 |
| 30-39 | 15.3 | 7.5 | 2.3 | 0.7 | 0.7 | 9.1 | 18.2 | 620 |
| 40-49 | 8.5 | 4.3 | 1.5 | 0.5 | 0.5 | 5.4 | 10.1 | 413 |
| Local Government Area Banjul | 16.0 | 10.8 | 5.6 | 3.8 | 3.8 | 12.5 | 19.0 | 21 |
| Kanifing | 15.2 | 7.6 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 1.3 | 7.6 | 16.3 | 328 |
| Brikama | 14.4 | 8.7 | 2.9 | 1.0 | 1.0 | 10.6 | 18.1 | 783 |
| Mansakonko | 15.9 | 9.1 | 1.9 | 0.2 | 0.2 | 10.8 | 18.2 | 72 |
| Kerewan | 11.7 | 7.3 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 7.3 | 13.6 | 173 |
| Kuntaur | 10.8 | 10.5 | 2.4 | 0.9 | 0.9 | 12.0 | 15.7 | 95 |
| Janjanbureh | 10.9 | 7.2 | 3.6 | 2.1 | 1.8 | 8.8 | 13.3 | 113 |
| Basse | 12.5 | 14.4 | 2.7 | 0.1 | 0.1 | 17.0 | 22.5 | 177 |

Source: The Gambia Demographic and Health Survey 2019-20 [FR369]

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

In 2015, the Government of The Republic of The Gambia enacted the Women’s (Amendment) Act 2015, which bans female circumcision. Specifically, Sections 32A and 32B of this Act make it a criminal offense to perform, arrange, or assist in the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), and outline the penalties for such actions.

The 2019-2022 Demographic and Health Survey indicates that Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) remains prevalent in The Gambia, with 73% of women aged 15-49 having undergone the practice despite its criminalization. The widespread prevalence of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) both in The Gambia and globally underscores the urgent need to strengthen efforts for its eradication. It highlights the importance of employing effective strategies to shift perceptions and norms within communities that practice FGM/C. 73% of women aged 15-49 have undergone the procedure, a modest decrease from 75% in 2013. Additionally, 65% of these women were circumcised before the age of 5. Despite these efforts, the prevalence of FGM/C in The Gambia has only seen a slight reduction from 75% in 2013 to 73%.

Figure 8: Age at circumcision

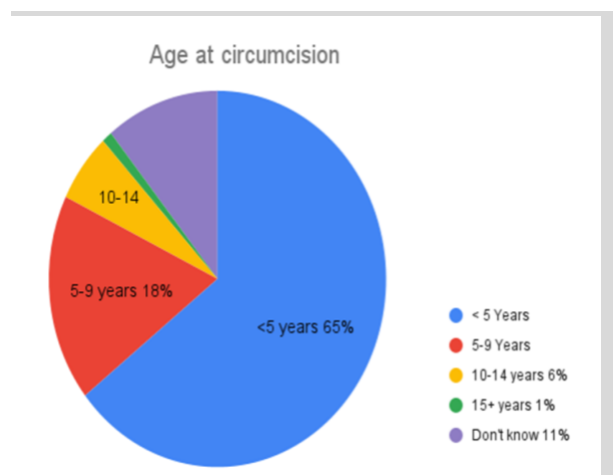
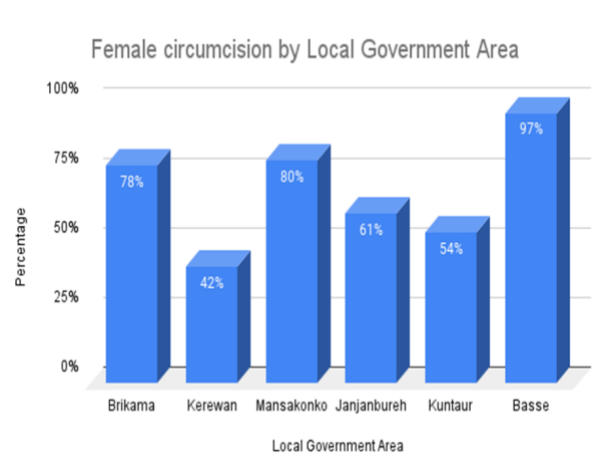


Figure 9: Female circumcision by LGA



Source: The Gambia Demographic and Health Survey 2019-20 [FR369]

Recent efforts to overturn the anti-FGM law were sparked by a few religious leaders and National Assembly members following the first prosecutions and convictions of practitioners under the Women’s Act. In August 2023, the Kaur/Kuntaur Magistrates’ Court convicted three women for performing FGM on eight adolescent girls. This landmark ruling was the first conviction of its kind since the law banning FGM was introduced eight years earlier.

On 15 July 2024, the National Assembly rejected the Women’s (Amendment) Bill 2024 and all of its related clauses. In September 2023, a Private Member Bill introduced by the National Assembly member for Foni Kansala proposed repealing the Women’s Amendment Act 2015 to remove the ban on FGM/C in The Gambia. After the National Assembly Select Committee on Health and Gender conducted extensive consultations with MDAs, CSO coalitions, and other stakeholders, the Committee presented its findings to the National Assembly. The Assembly’s decision has put an end to the prolonged debate across various sectors of society regarding the fate of the Bill. However, after a bill to lift the ban on female genital mutilation (FGM) was defeated in the Assembly, proponents of the practice have filed a lawsuit against the

Attorney General in the Supreme Court. They are requesting that the court declare the prohibition of female circumcision unconstitutional.

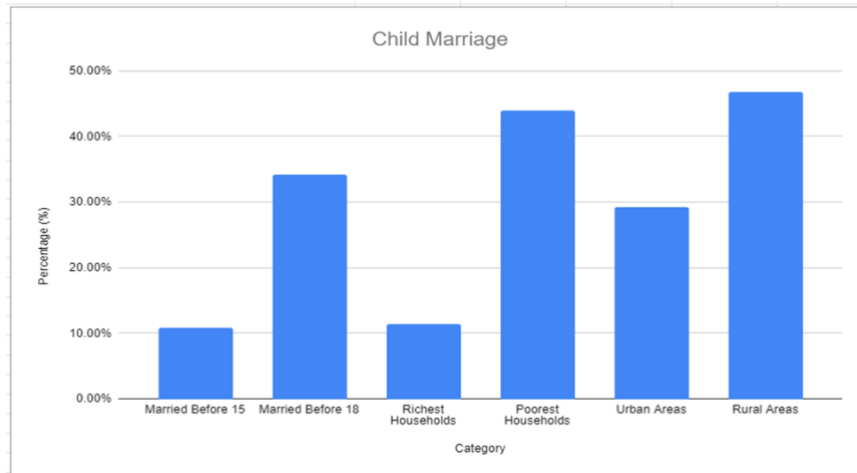
CHILD MARRIAGE

Marriage before the age of 18 constitutes a human rights violation, yet it remains a reality for many children. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights upholds the principle of free and informed consent to marriage, acknowledging that true consent cannot be given by individuals who are not mature enough to make an informed choice about a life partner. The Sustainable Development Goals recognize child marriage as a harmful practice that should be eradicated by 2030. Specifically, Goal 5 of the SDGs emphasizes gender equality and includes a target to end child marriage by 2030.

In July 2016, The Gambia amended its Children's Act 2005 to prohibit child marriage and set 18 years as the minimum legal age for marriage for both boys and girls. This was preceded by intensive awareness-raising efforts by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and relevant Government agencies on the harmful effects of child marriage. The Government and CSOs are now popularizing the law against child marriage, building the capacity of law enforcement agencies and community-based child protection structures, and encouraging the reporting of incidences of child marriage to the relevant authorities. Recently, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), in collaboration with various stakeholders, conducted a training session for National Assembly Members on child rights. This important milestone was designed to increase awareness of children's rights and guide the integration of these rights into legislative and policy-making processes.

Yet child marriage remains a grave concern for government due to its continuity despite the provision of legal back up to end the practice. The Chart below depicts the prevalence of child marriage in The Gambia, showing the disparities between wealth groups and geographic locations, with poorer and rural communities seeing much higher rates of Child Marriage.

Figure 10: Child marriage



Source: MICS 2018

PRIORITY ACTIONS TO ADDRESS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND STRATEGIES

In the past five years, what actions has your country prioritized to address gender-based violence?

In the past five years, the Government of the Gambia has tackled the effects of negative social and cultural contexts on GBV by advancing gender equality, improving legal frameworks, and enhancing services for survivors, while also engaging in community dialogue and raising awareness. Government forged partnerships with civil society and local communities to foster a safer and more inclusive environment. This approach has been influenced by the stigma surrounding GBV, which often deters survivors from reporting incidents or seeking help due to fears of retaliation, social exclusion, or disbelief.

Additionally, issues such as poverty, lack of education, and limited access to healthcare worsen women's vulnerability to GBV. In response, the Gambia has concentrated on empowering survivors through vigorous community mobilization and grassroots efforts to encourage them to speak out against violence.

Significant steps have been taken towards protecting the rights of women and girls by consulting with all stakeholders, including state and non-state actors, to formulate Acts such as the Trafficking in Persons Act, the Children's Act 2005, the Sexual Offences and Domestic Violence Acts 2013, and a Strategic Plan to support these efforts. Thus, the Gambia has prioritized the following key actions to address gender-based violence

Development of a National Gender-Based Violence Policy, Strategy and Costed Action Plan-

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare in 2024 developed a National Gender Based Violence Policy, Strategy and Costed Action Plan. This Policy, Strategy, and Action Plan places a strong operational emphasis on prioritizing both gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual harassment, recognizing their profound negative effects on women and girls in the Country while also acknowledging the vulnerabilities and adverse consequences of violence exposure faced by men, boys, and persons with disabilities.

Creation of a Gender Management Information System (GMIS)- On combating Gender-based Violence (GBV), significant strides have been registered with the provision of shelters to temporary host survivors, one of which (the Orange Center in Bakoteh) equally host the GBV and Child protection helpline (199) linked to the GMIS. The GMIS was developed through a collaborative effort involving UNFPA, UNDP, ITC, UNICEF, and key national partners, including the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, and the Network against Gender-Based Violence. Launched in January 2023, the GMIS is designed to create a comprehensive database for recording, managing, analyzing, and disseminating GBV data within The Gambia.¹³ The GMIS platform categorizes gender-based violence into various types, such as child marriage, denial of resources, female genital mutilation, intimate partner violence, physical assault, psychological abuse, rape, and sexual assault. Since its inception in January 2023, the GMIS has recorded 310 GBV cases.

Supporting One-Stop Centers to strengthen The Gambia's GBV response mechanism- The One-Stop Centres in The Gambia have faced various challenges over the years. To help the Gambia government address these issues and enhance the response to gender-based violence (GBV), especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNFPA, with support from the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), is backing the creation and renovation of three One-Stop Centres. This support enables the centers to offer extensive health, legal, and psychosocial services to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV). The strategy aims to improve the country's GBV response system and promote the wellbeing, health, and dignity of all survivors, especially women and girls.

Creation of Gender-Based Violence Fund-The Government of The Gambia has made a significant stride in combating gender-based violence by establishing the country's first Gender-Based Violence Fund. The Government of The Gambia has committed funds towards this initiative as enshrined in the Sexual Offences Act of 2013. This fund aims to provide victims with financial support, counseling, and legal assistance. Managed by the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, it highlights the government's commitment to addressing gender-based violence and promoting gender equality. This initiative is a major step in providing crucial support to victims and signals a strong stance against such crimes in The Gambia. Advocacy breakfast meeting for more budgetary increment for SGBV programmes.

Establishment of the National GBV Advisory Committee: The National GBV Advisory Committee is established to oversee the disbursement of the GBV Fund and other issues related to GBV response and coordination in the country with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare serving as the Chair and membership of the committee comprises of different stakeholders including, the Police, Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice and representative from the Civil Society.

Orange Centre - On June 22, 2021, the Gambia Women Empowerment Centre, or "Orange Centre," was inaugurated by First Lady Madam Fatoumatta Bah-Barrow and other dignitaries. Supported by UNFPA and funded by the UN Multi-Partner Trust Fund, this is The Gambia's first fully integrated center for protecting women and girls. UNFPA has worked with the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Health and civil society organizations to

¹³ The Point Newspaper. *Gender Ministry, UN team brief journalists on GMIS*. 30 August, 2023

improve GBV response systems, including establishing a National GBV Helpline (1313) and supporting One-Stop Centres in key health facilities. The Orange Centre offers essential health, psycho-social, and legal services, including clinical management of rape and temporary overnight stays for GBV survivors. It uses an integrated approach to ensure care is provided with dignity and safety.¹⁴ Connected to the GBV Helpline-1313, the center is a key component of the GBV referral pathway, supporting UNFPA's efforts to deliver survivor-centered care.¹⁵ The center is operated by the Network against Gender-Based Violence (NGBV), with oversight from the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare and the Ministry of Health, through ongoing strategic partnerships. Government also envisages to look for avenues to increase the funding package for GBV to cater for new cases and increase the popularization of the GBV helpline.

Establishment of GBV Courts-The delay in the litigation process discourages people from reporting cases, therefore the Ministry is working with relevant stakeholders on establishing a special court for SGBV which will be piloted in two regions in the country and work is in progress to set up a forensic lab for processing evidence of SGBV.

A specialized Government Sexual and Gender Based unit has been established at the Ministry of Justice to monitor, investigate, prosecute, and provide support for counseling victims of sexual and gender-based violence most especially as it relates to women and children.

While the Gambia Government is still committed to these initiatives and programs to meet the demand in other regions of the country. However, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare is still constrained with resources to support the operation of most of the initiatives mentioned above and is highly dependent on UN partners (UNFPA and UNICEF), and other philanthropists for support.

3.2.2 TECHNOLOGY-FACILATED GBV

In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence?

The Gambia has one of the highest mobile phone concentrations in Africa with an Internet Penetration rate of 19.01% according to the trends in Africa report on Cyber Crime and Cyber Security.¹⁶ This depicts the rapid technology transformation in the country.

As the Internet and multimedia services expand, there is a growing global trend in cybercrime opportunities. Currently, The Gambia is witnessing a gradual advancement in ICT development within both the public and private sectors. These vulnerabilities heighten the risk of cyberattacks, enabling criminals to access personal information, intellectual property, and sensitive government data, potentially for financial gain or other malicious objectives.

Therefore, the Government has launched public policy initiatives aimed at converting the country into a knowledge-based economy while ensuring overall safety, security, and prosperity. These public policies include the National Development Plan NDP 2018-2021.

¹⁴ UNFPA news. Women Empowerment Centre to provide integrated care to survivors of Gender-Based Violence. 22 June 2021

¹⁵ UNFPA News. Supporting One-Stop Centers to strengthen The Gambia's GBV response mechanism. 29 August 2020.

¹⁶ Cyber Crime & Cyber Security: Trends in Africa Report, 2016.

The steps taken by The Gambia reflect ongoing efforts. These measures encompass the development of a Cybersecurity policy and strategy, strategic action plans, an institutional governance framework, and the Cyber Crime Bill (CCB) 2019, among others. While the Cybersecurity strategy and CCB 2019, which is before the National Assembly have not yet been enacted into law, they are anticipated to be implemented in the near future. In terms of cybercrime laws, The Gambia enacted the Information and Communications Act (IC Act) in 2009. The IC Act is comprehensive legislation that attempts to address not only the rapidly evolving nature of the communications industry, but also the convergence of technologies. The main components of the Act include protection against child pornography, penalties for reprogramming telecommunication, and personal data protection. Technology and online spaces are increasingly being misused and weaponized against women and girls on the basis of their gender. This form of violence invades their homes and bedrooms, their phones and workspaces. It may occur online but also manifests in physical spaces, including femicide. Known as technology-facilitated gender-based violence, this kind of digital violence is committed and amplified through the use of information and communications, technologies or digital spaces against a person based on gender.

The Ministry of Communications and Digital Economy is developing a Child and Vulnerable Groups Online Protection Policy. A taskforce is set up to provide technical support.

INTERNET POLICY AND REGULATION

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) in The Gambia are regulated as public utilities by the Public Utilities Regulatory Authority (PURA), which was established by an act of parliament in 2001. In order to create a sound and level playing field for the development of ICTs in the country, the government introduced a policy framework in 2009. The Information and Communication Act 2009 was passed by parliament and regulates the telecommunications sector. The Act, among other things, restricts freedom of speech online, and it was amended in 2013 to include even harsher punishments.

After decades of digital stagnation that has encamped the progress of digitization in The Gambia, the road to recovery and democratic sustenance was put into effect in the December 2016 Presidential elections. In 2018, two years after the inauguration of the coalition government, the National Development Plan (NDP) 2018-2021 was enacted in Parliament with the goal of “delivering good governance and accountability, social cohesion and reconciliation and a revitalized and transformed economy for the wellbeing of all Gambians.” The NDP outlines eight Strategic Priority areas complemented by the seven cross-cutting enablers in which ICT is a catalyst for development.

Cybersecurity Action Plan- The Ministry of Information and Communication Infrastructure ('MOICI') announced, on 17 March 2020, that it had launched a public consultation on its broadband and cybersecurity policy and strategy documents. In particular, the cybersecurity action plan ('the Cybersecurity Plan') outlines strategies aimed at building a robust national capacity to identify, detect, respond to and manage threats to critical information infrastructures, and the broadband policy ('the Broadband Policy') addresses, among other things, the need to build The Gambia's cybersecurity capability and affordable access to broadband

Gambia Information and Communication Technology Agency Act 2019-The Gambia Information and Communications Technology Agency Act 2019 (ICTA) which establishes an agency for information and Communications Technology aims to encourage the optimum use of information and communication technologies and enforces standards for information technology planning including data security and risk management.

Access to Information Act 2021- The Gambia now has an Access to Information Act, after the Bill was passed unanimously by the National Assembly in July 2021 and signed into law by the President of the Republic a month later. The legislative framework grants the citizens – and everyone else – the legal right of access to information that the government and private entities keep for or on behalf of the public.

RF-NDP- The Gambian Government has identified ICTs as a priority sector in the Recovery Focused National Development Plan (RF-NDP) which is currently being formulated. In this regard, digitization of the economy is one of the main pillars of this development plan.

National Cybersecurity Strategy 2020 to 2024- Its overall mission is to determine, identify, analyze and address the immediate cyber security threats against people, entities, and critical national infrastructure of The Gambia. This will be achieved through adequate provision of protection for our critical national infrastructure and over time become a self-sufficient country attending to its cyber security needs. The Gambia now has Development and approval of Universal Access fund (UAF) to ensure universal access to quality broadband services.

The country is actively revising its Information and Communication (IC) Act with support from the World Bank Group and is developing a new Communications Bill that aligns with international standards for media freedom and freedom of expression. This upcoming legislation is carefully crafted to eliminate outdated, restrictive laws, offering greater protection for journalists. The Bill, which will soon be presented to the National Assembly, aims to enhance journalist safety and remove barriers to free expression, strengthen mechanisms to protect journalists from harassment and violence.

3.4 Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

Critical areas of concern:

- Women in power and decision-making
- Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- Human rights of women
- Women and the media
- The girl child

3.4.1 TEMPORARY SPECIAL MEASURES

In the past five years, what actions and measures has your country taken to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?

Although the 30% quota system has not yet been legislated, the Gambian government has established institutional mechanisms to fulfill its commitments to gender equality and women's

empowerment. The Women's Amendment Act of 2010 revised section 15 and introduced a new subsection (2), which mandates that every public institution, authority, or state-owned enterprise must ensure that at least 30% of all political and public offices, positions, and appointments are reserved for women. Similarly, for all other cases, a minimum of 30% must be allocated to women.

Chapter V of the Draft Constitution 2024 extensively outlines the fundamental human rights and freedoms. This includes a comprehensive enumeration of specific rights such as the right to life, protection of liberty, protection from slavery and servitude, right to human dignity and protection against torture, right to privacy, right to fair administrative action, right to fair trial, freedom of expression and the media, access to information, and religious freedoms. It also includes a legislated quota in the National Assembly, mandating that seven women represent each administrative area, with seats allocated to political parties that participated in the National Assembly elections.

In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?

The enactment of The Gambia's Access to Information (ATI) Act passed by the National Assembly in 2021 represents a significant achievement by the government in enhancing women's access to expression and participation in decision-making, particularly in the media and through information and communication technologies (ICT). This groundbreaking law is a crucial step toward enabling the right to access information, empowering citizens, especially women, to obtain essential information from public institutions and participate more effectively in the democratic process.

On 5 August 2024, the newly appointed Commissioners for the ATI Commission were sworn in. The ATI law grants the commission oversight responsibility for its implementation. Two women are part of the five-member commission, including the Chairperson of the ATI Commission. Their combined efforts will be instrumental in reducing misinformation, promoting open governance, and expanding opportunities for women's active participation in media, communication, and governance.

3.4.2 INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Please describe your country's current national women's machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and describe the measures that your country taken over the past five years to establish and/or strengthen it.

The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare established in January 2019 by the Government is mandated to coordinate policies and programs on Gender, Children, and Social Welfare issues. This Ministry comprises key Directorates namely, the Directorate of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment, the Directorate of Social Welfare, the Directorate of Children Affairs, and the Directorate of Policy Development, Strategic Planning, and Reporting. These structures within the Ministry enhance the coordination of a holistic approach to protect and empower the most vulnerable groups particularly women, children, and persons with disabilities.

The Directorate of Gender Equality and Women Empowerment within the Ministry coordinates, policy actions, programs, and activities geared toward protecting and empowering Gambia women. It also partners with stakeholders, both nationally and internationally, to ensure that gender perspectives are mainstreamed into policy actions and interventions through advocacy. The Directorate is also a key coordinator of the national gender machinery designed to ensure gender is mainstreamed in all sectoral policies in the country.

In the past five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors? (e.g. gender focal points in the Executive, Legislature or Judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits, consultations with women’s organizations)?

The Government of the Gambia through the coordination of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare promotes the establishment of gender mainstreaming mechanisms which ensures gender sensitivity in policy, program development, and planning. This mechanism identified as the National Gender Machinery consists of all government ministries, departments, and agencies. At the regional level, this machinery consists of local government institutions and community structures while at the National level gender focal points are appointed to ensure that gender perspectives are mainstreamed at all sectors of the government. Regional Gender officers are appointed to work with local government institutions and community structures to ensure that gender is mainstream in all regions of the country. The national gender machinery also partners with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations (CBOs), the private sector, and international partners in its mainstreaming efforts.

In terms of tools applied in the mainstreaming of gender equality across all sectors, advocacy and capacity building is part of the key tools applied. The National Gender Machinery conducts advocacy activities locally and internationally to promote gender mainstreaming. Capacity building programs on the other hand targeting policy makers, planners, and programmers from all sectors both at the national and at the decentralized community levels are conducted to promote and enhance gender mainstreaming efforts of the government. These capacity-building programs are in the form of both short tailor-made or long-term training on areas such as gender analysis, planning, gender-responsive budgeting, initiative, and rights-based approach. The Directorate conducts advocacy breakfast meetings with the National Assembly and other relevant stakeholders to lobby for more budgetary increments for SGBV programs.

If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women’s rights and promote gender equality?

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), established by the NHRC Act 2017, promotes and protects human rights, investigating violations and ensuring that state institutions uphold human rights standards. These comprehensive actions and programs reflect The Gambia's commitment to improving the lives of women and girls across various sectors. Within its mandate, NHRC provides guidelines, develop policies and Standard Operating Procedures for sectors to guide their functions and activities relevant in upholding the human rights of citizens and non-citizens residing in country in line with the Gambia’s legal instruments and international regulations.

The Gambia National Human Rights Commission is a critical stakeholder of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare and has over the years implemented programs and activities, initiated measures to address violations of women’s rights and promote gender equality. The Commission has collaborated with MOGCSW in grassroots sensitization and community mobilization to end harmful traditional practice such as FGM and Child Marriage. It conducts frequent sensitization and popularization outreach programs on existing laws and mechanisms in place to protect and promote the rights of women and girls in the country.

In response to recommendations from the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission (TRRC), the NHRC conducted a national study on sexual harassment in the workplace in 2021, with the aim of establishing a baseline of the prevalence and nature of sexual harassment in The Gambia. The study employed both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, including desk reviews, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys with 123 workers from the public, private, and NGO sectors. The findings were alarming, with 85% of respondents acknowledging the existence of sexual harassment in the workplace. Furthermore, 74% of the workers surveyed reported personally experiencing some form of sexual harassment, underscoring the widespread nature of the issue.¹⁷ As a result, a generic Sexual Harassment Policy in the workplace was developed to be adopted by the public service, private and non-profit sectors.

Additionally, the government has established a Thematic Committee on the Human Rights of Women to provide guidance on gender-related issues and submit complementary reports to international treaty bodies, such as the CEDAW and CRC Committees, as well as during the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

3.5 Peaceful and inclusive societies

Critical areas of concern:

Women and armed conflict

Human rights of women

The girl child

3.5.1 WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY AGENDA

In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?

The government of The Gambia through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare over the past five years made significant strides in promoting peace, inclusive societies, and advancing the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, particularly in the context of its democratic transition which led to the implementation of the following activities and initiatives:

¹⁷ National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) ‘Study on Sexual Harassment in the Workplace in The Gambia (2021).

The Second-Generation National Action Plan (2021-2026): developed The Gambia's National Action Plan to operationalize the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1325 on Women's Peace and Security. The Plan, with succinct strategies, aims to increase the involvement and participation of women in Peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and early warning systems in the Country. It also aims to enhance gender equality and build the capacity of partner organizations to support peace and security efforts in The Gambia. The plan outlines specific goals, including increasing women's involvement in decision-making and eliminating gender-based discrimination.

Following the development of the second-generation NAP, a series of activities were organized by the working group on women's peace and security to popularize it. A national dissemination targeting National Assembly members, women leaders, peacebuilding and peace advocacy organizations to popularize the resolution and as well mobilize community and national level commitment in implementing the pillars of the NAP. The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare has mechanisms such as mid-year/end-of-reviews to monitor and evaluate initiatives aimed at increasing women's participation in peace and security, including regular reviews of the NAP.

Peacebuilding Initiatives: The Peace Building Project (2023-2025) collaborative effort involving the International Trade Centre (ITC), UNDP, and UNESCO is highlighted as a key initiative focusing on national peace infrastructure and addressing issues such as hate speech and social inequalities. The project supported local networks and peacebuilding organizations implementing various community and national-level programs to build, promote, and sustain a peaceful and inclusive society. For instance, the CSOs organize a nationwide caravan and regional dialogues with religious and opinion leaders, women, men, boys, and girls on hate speech. The Gambia government's collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs) has been crucial in promoting peace and security. CSOs play a key role in advocating for women's rights and addressing community tensions, helping to create a more inclusive and responsive approach to conflict resolution.

Women in peace-building networks were set up at the regional level and trained on mediation, early warning, the role of women in conflict resolution, and other relevant topics as part of the country's peace-building process.

Community Peace Committees (CPC): These are 17 member committees identified by community members, the composition of the CPC includes women, opinion leaders, and local authorities. They are trained by TOSTAN in conflict analysis, mediation, resolution, Peace and human security, and social mobilization. These committees have prevented and mediated several conflicts within the community as well as cross-border community conflicts such as land disputes. Aspart of Measures that support local women's peace initiatives and indigenous processes for conflict resolution. Cross-border women promote peace between the two communities (Dasilimeh in Gambia and Touba Trangil in Senegal) that were involved in a land dispute, through the cross-border program initiated a community garden for the women as a peace-building mechanism to resolve the conflict.

In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action

and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?

As previously mentioned, the Gambian Government has developed the Second-Generation National Action Plan (2021-2026) to address pressing issues, particularly in the context of national development and peacebuilding. However, the implementation of this National Action Plan (NAP) has faced significant challenges that hinder its effectiveness.

One of the primary constraints is inadequate funding. The financial resources allocated for the NAP are insufficient to meet the ambitious goals set forth in the plan. This lack of funding limits the ability of various stakeholders to carry out essential activities and programs that align with the NAP's objectives.

Additionally, national stakeholders have limited capacity to effectively utilize the Comprehensive Reporting Framework (CRF) for monitoring and reporting purposes. This limitation affects the stakeholders' ability to track progress, assess impact, and make informed decisions based on reliable data. Without a robust monitoring system, evaluating the effectiveness of implemented strategies or identifying areas requiring adjustment or additional support becomes challenging. Moreover, ineffective coordination among stakeholders involved in reporting activities has further compounded these challenges. Disjointed efforts can lead to duplication of work, gaps in information sharing, and missed opportunities for collaboration. A cohesive approach is essential to ensure that all stakeholders are aligned in their efforts and can leverage each other's strengths.

To address these issues, there is an urgent need to increase funding from both the government and partner organizations. Enhanced financial support will not only promote the visibility of the resolution but also facilitate the development of the National Action Plan on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250, which focuses on youth, peace, and security.

Furthermore, operationalizing the UNSCR 1325 Secretariat is critical for coordinating the implementation of The Gambia's National Action Plan. The Secretariat, with its pivotal role in bringing together various stakeholders, ensures that efforts are synchronized and that the NAP's goals are pursued effectively. By strengthening coordination and enhancing resource allocation, The Gambia can move closer to achieving the objectives outlined in its National Action Plan, fostering sustainable peace, security, and development for all citizens.

3.5.2 PROTECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE GIRL CHILD

In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?

Several programs and policies have been implemented to address gender-based violence and improve the overall well-being of women and girls in the Gambia. The Sexual Harassment Policy, implemented by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, addresses violence in and around schools, promoting child-friendly environments and life skills education. Gender Focal Points (GFP) have been designated in all sector ministries, departments, and agencies to mainstream gender issues in sector policies, plans, and programs. Significant efforts have been made to address child marriage, with the 1997 Constitution and the Children's Amendment Act 2016 prohibiting

marriage under the age of 18 years. The 1997 Constitutional provision states that a person under the age of 18 is a child and therefore cannot marry or be given off in marriage. In addition, the Children's Amendment Act 2016, equally prohibits any marriage under the age of 18 Years. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare, the Government has launched an Ending Child Marriage Campaign, the National Gender Policy 2023-2032, and Green Recovery Focused and National Development Plan (NDP) 2023-2028, which engage different sectors of Government, Civil Society, Development Partners, media, children, religious and traditional leaders in a joint effort to eliminate child marriage in The Gambia.

The Gambia Police Force's Gender and Child Welfare Unit investigates and prosecutes all sexual and gender-based violence and child protection issues, including Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). The Unit supports adolescent girls and women against harmful traditional practices, using prevention, protection, and promotion approaches. The National Human Rights Commission, established by the NHRC Act 2017, promotes and protects human rights, investigating violations and ensuring that state institutions uphold human rights standards. These comprehensive actions and programs reflect The Gambia's commitment to improving the lives of women and girls across various sectors.

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare is responsible for the coordination of FGM activities through the Directorate of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and is also involved in raising awareness creation on the harmful effects of FGM, advocating for the enforcement of the FGM laws and capacity building of service providers including the social workers and law enforcement officers. In addition, the Directorate coordinates and monitors the activities of stakeholders working on FGM and gets reports from the actors through the national steering committee on FGM.

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare with support from UNICEF has developed a Communication Strategy (2021-2026) for children on the move in The Gambia. The Communication Strategy has been designed to address issues of protection needs for children on the move in The Gambia. The Strategy will particularly target children, women, young people, parents and guardians, men, first-line officers, and law enforcement officers, with information to raise awareness and understanding of the risks along migratory routes and how these risks can be minimized.

The Judiciary established the Children's Courts to settle cases relating to care, management and settling of disputes regarding child custody and child related issues. The Children's Courts ensured the mainstreaming of child-sensitive justice protocols within rule of law and supporting children in conflict with the law, while assisting them through diversion programmes and other alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. This has also contributed to strengthening the referral systems and supporting child victims, witnesses and parties seeking legal redress.

The national child protection systems have been strengthened through the provision of critical social services to support all children at risk or victims of violence; and enhancing coordination among the Child Agencies.

A Psycho-Social Support Manual for children in need of protection aged 6-12 and 13-17 was also developed in 2020. The Manual program aims to empower and support children in need of care and protection, including children on the move to feel good about themselves and confident in their abilities to cope with everyday challenges.

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Case Management of Vulnerable Children in The Gambia was developed in 2021. Standard Operating Procedures (2021) is aimed at promoting a harmonized response and set minimum standards for an integrated response, through the coordination among key actors involved in the protection and assistance of migrant children and those victims of trafficking in The Gambia. This is particularly relevant given that the Trafficking in Persons Act 2007 codifies offenses related to human trafficking and prescribes penalties for those found guilty. The Act also provides clear guidelines and procedures for identifying and prosecuting perpetrators. Furthermore, it gives legal backing to the various actors involved in anti-trafficking programs, enabling them to conduct advocacy initiatives. In terms of early identification, proactive investigations and collaboration with the inter-agency task force have made the early detection of victims more efficient.

As part of its anti-trafficking efforts, the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons (NAATIP), with support from international partners like UNICEF, has also organized a series of training programs for law enforcement officials to enhance their capacity to prevent and detect human trafficking. NAATIP also conducts awareness campaigns in communities near border posts to educate them on the dangers of human trafficking.

Since 2018, the National Agency Against Trafficking in Persons of The Gambia, in collaboration with the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons in Nigeria, has been working towards a bilateral partnership focused on joint efforts to combat human trafficking, particularly of women and children, between the two countries. Additionally, the Department of Social Welfare, in partnership with NAATIP, conducted awareness-raising activities in border villages such as Amdalie and Giboro to highlight the risks of human trafficking.

The Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare (MoGCSW) through the Directorate of Social Welfare (DSW) also developed the Child Protection Guide in 2020 guaranteeing the rights of all children in the country to a life free from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. In The Gambia, many actors are engaged in Child protection from both the formal and informal child protection systems and across all sectors.

3.6 Environmental conservation protection and rehabilitation

Critical areas of concern:

Human rights of women

Women and the environment

The girl child

In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?

The Gambia ranks 148th out of 182 countries on the Notre-Dame Global Adaptation Initiative's (2021) Country Index, which rates both vulnerability to climate change and resilience.¹⁸ In response to the climate crisis, the Government ratified the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 1994 and in 2021 formulated The Gambia's Long-Term Climate Neutral Development Strategy 2050. The Strategy aims for net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 with strengthened adaptive capacities in agriculture, energy, infrastructure, health, coastal management, and other sectors. Detrimental effects of climate change can be felt in the short-term through natural hazards, such as landslides, floods and hurricanes; and in the long-term, through more gradual degradation of the environment. In many of these contexts, women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men—primarily as they constitute the majority of the world's poor and are more dependent for their livelihood on natural resources that are threatened by climate change.¹⁹

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognises gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG 5), combating climate change and its impacts (SDG 13), and protecting biodiversity and the environment (SDGs 14 and 15) both as individual goals and as prerequisites for achieving the 2030 Agenda as a whole.

¹⁸ Notre-Dame Global Adaptation Initiative's (2021) Country Index.

¹⁹ Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change. UN Women Watch: www.un.org/womenwatch.

Section Four: National institutions and processes

Please describe your country’s national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5.

The Ministry of Gender Children and Social Welfare Strategic Plan (2021-2025) and the National Gender Policy (2025-2034) with its corresponding Strategic Plan (2025-2030) are the main strategic documents guiding the country towards achieving gender equality. These mutually reinforcing plans map out the strategic direction of MOGCSW within the framework for programming, learning, and resource allocation for the period 2021 to 2034. The policy framework intends to strengthen the structures for the coordination and harmonization of gender and women’s empowerment sectors in the country. The Strategic Plan and National Gender Policy recognizes the important roles played by women, children, and people with disabilities within the national development priorities as stipulated in the Recovery Focused National Development Plan (2022-2026). The framework further aligns with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially Goal 5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls and its corresponding targets illustrated below:



This alignment sets the basis and framework for action to protect the rights and address the needs and aspirations of children, women, and other vulnerable people – implementing long-term social protection and inclusion programs that would build the human and social capital, and spur sustainable social development. As well as build a systemic response to the needs and rights of

vulnerable people, but also the cultivation of gender equality with democratic ideals and values. Both the MOGCSW Strategic Plan (2021-2025) and the National Gender Policy (2025-2034) are implemented mainly through donor support as well as monies appropriated by the Gambia National Assembly.

Figure 11: Policy Priorities National Gender Policy-2025-2034

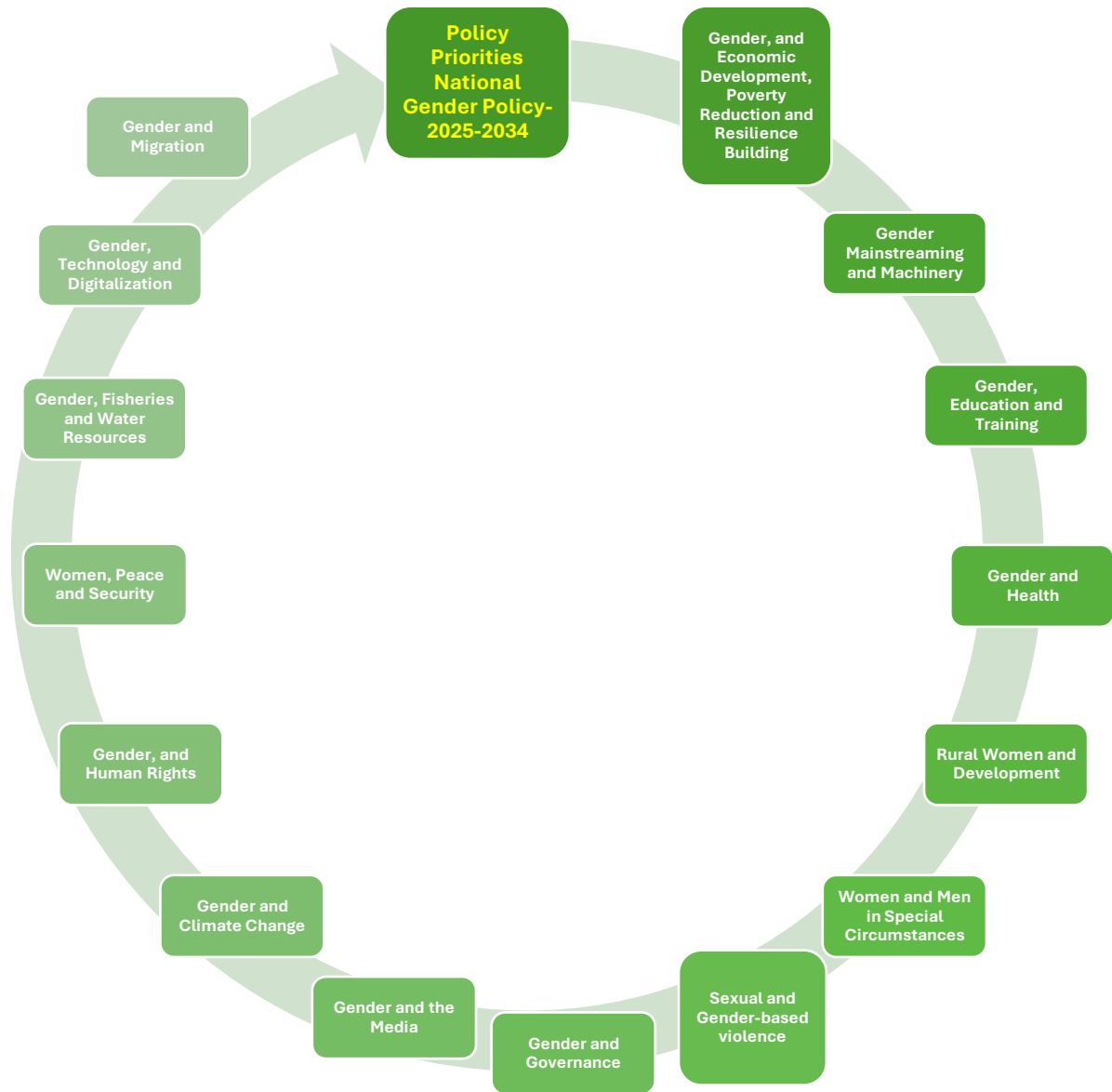
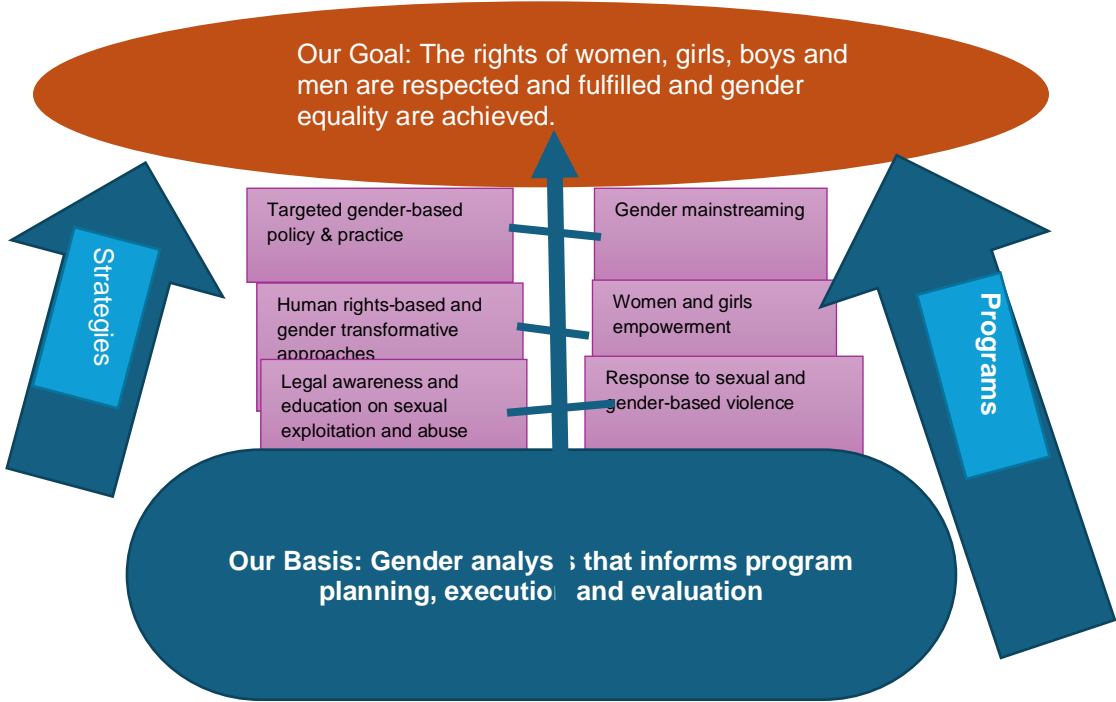


Figure 12: Ministry of Gender Strategic Plan 2021-2025 Priority



Please describe your country’s system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.

The Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare tracks the proportion of the national budget invested in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women through the resources allocated by the Government through the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs to fund programs and activities from the Government Local Fund (GLF). The Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs introduced the concept of the Citizens’ budget which simplified and made information regarding the government’s expenditure accessible and easier to understand by the general public. The Citizens Budget intends to promote transparency, accountability, and civic engagement by presenting key financial information in a format that is clear and comprehensible to the average citizen²⁰. The Gambia Government allocated D97 million representing only 0.23% of the national budget to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare for the 2024 fiscal year.²¹.

The NHRC, in August 2024, developed a CRPD-compliant Budgeting Guidelines to support the effective implementation of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2021.

²⁰ Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs Citizen Budget 2024

²¹ Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs Citizen Budget 2024

What formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

The Gambia continues to work in collaboration with its supporters and donors to fulfill its mandate in implementing and monitoring the critical areas of concern of the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda through straightened partnership. Through the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare, the Government maintains the strategic support started on the ground, builds the capacity of the relevant stakeholders, and shares its best practices in the process of implementing the BPfA and other international protocols. Grassroots concerns and interests are reflected at all levels of the process through advocacy, community engagements, sensitizations, capacity building, and training. The Ministry of Gender also utilizes the community knowledge and influence of its National Women's Council through the Women Councilors representing women in all districts of the country and the National Disability Council as mechanisms to ensure that women and girls from marginalized groups' concerns and perspectives are included in the implementation and monitoring of the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda.

Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report.

Answered in section 1

Please describe your country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.

In October 2024, the Government of The Gambia submitted its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) report in line with paragraph 5 of the annex to Human Rights Council Resolution 16/21. This report was created through a national consultative process that involved stakeholders from various ministries, departments, agencies, civil society, UN agencies, and the media, and it underwent national validation. The report outlines the measures adopted, progress made, and challenges faced during the review period of 2020-2024. Following this submission, The Gambia is preparing to engage with the UPR Working Group in January 2025.

Additionally, the government is currently reviewing the concluding observations, comments, and recommendations from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) regarding its sixth periodic report. The Inter-Ministerial Working Group on treaty body reporting has initiated discussions aimed at drafting The Gambia's seventh periodic review of the status of CEDAW implementation.

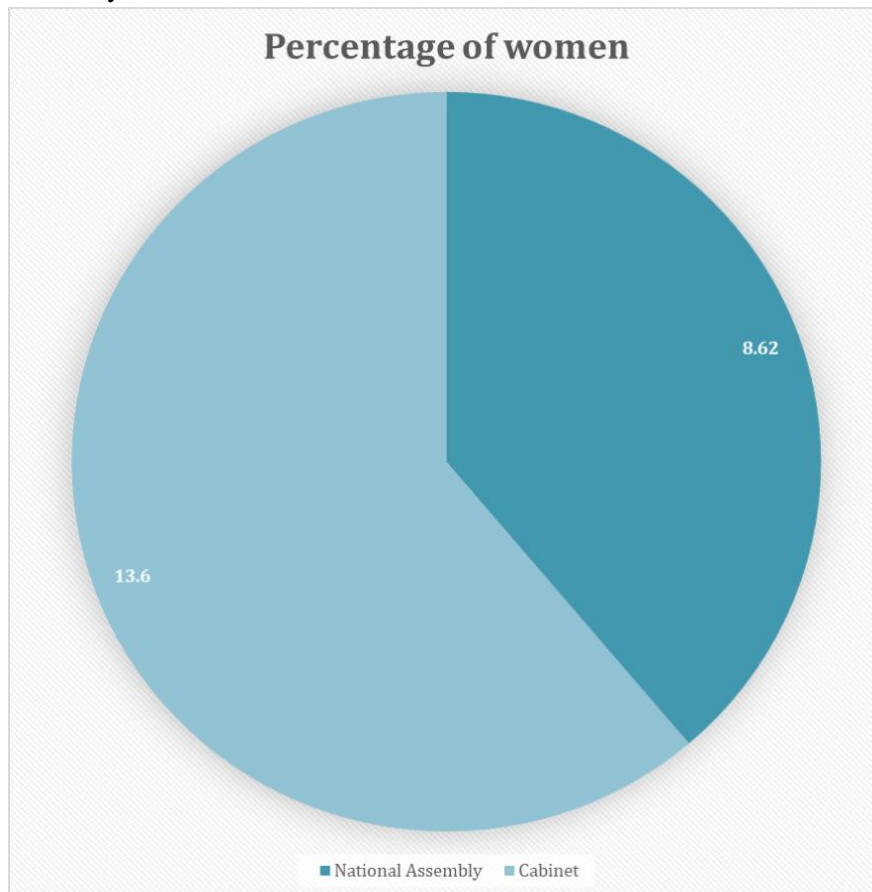
Section Five: Data and statistics

What are the most important areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?

The Gambia remains committed to implementing and monitoring progress on gender-specific indicators of the SDGs as manifested in the Country's Voluntary National Review Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, commissioned in June 2022. Thus, the country achieved the most progress over the past five years in providing gender statistics at the national level through major surveys such as the Multi-Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), The Gambia Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS), Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education-The Gambia, Education Statistical Yearly Book, and the Gambia Bureau of Statistics Labour Force Survey as illustrated in the graphs below:

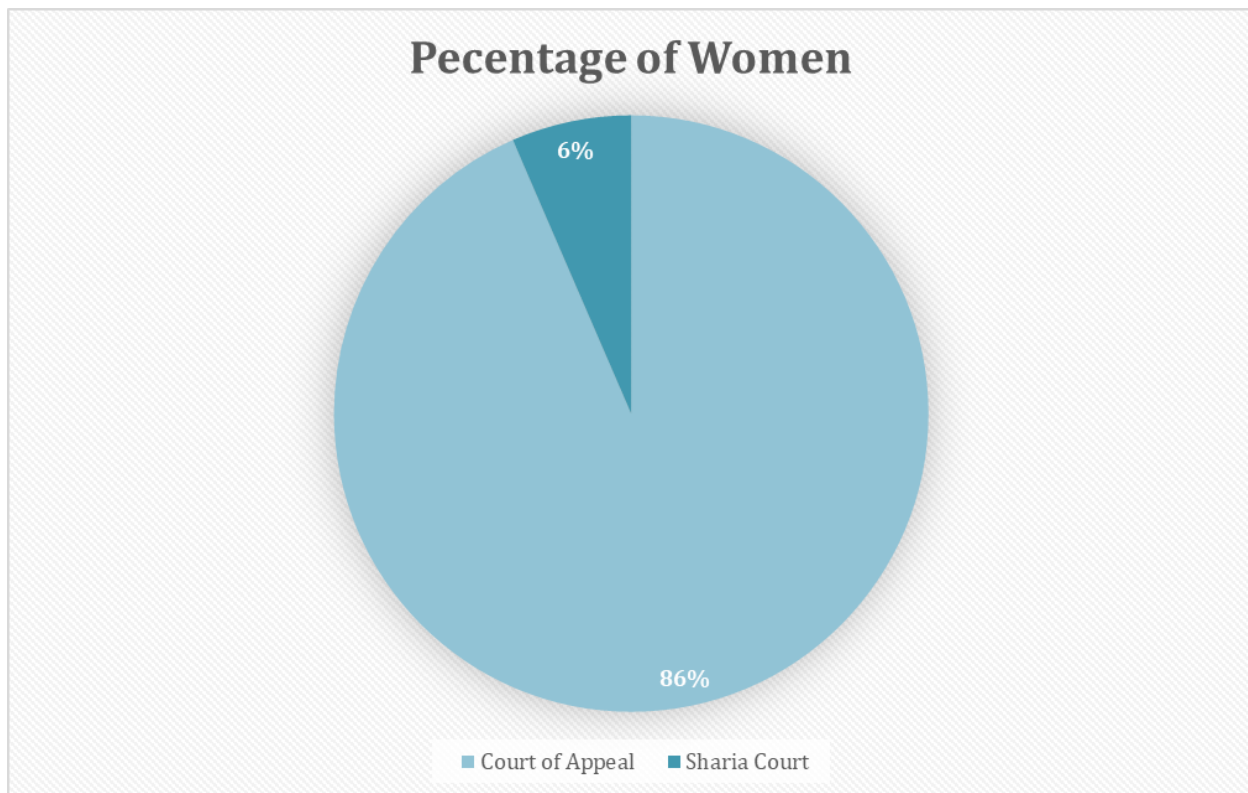
Figure 13: The distribution of women in various political bodies in The Gambia

The distribution of women in various political bodies in The Gambia, highlighting the low representation in the National Assembly and Cabinet.



Source: Gender Profile The Gambia

Figure 14: Percentage of women in the judiciary



Source: Gender Profile The Gambia

The lack of legal quotas and weaknesses in the Women’s Act hinder gender representation. Additionally, fear, high costs of electioneering, and cultural norms impede women from running for office. Limited female role models contribute to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions.

Large gaps persist in Political Empowerment and Decision- making:

The Gambia faces significant challenges in political empowerment and leadership for women, ranking in 132nd position in the Global Gender Gap report 2023 in the political empowerment indicator (scores is equal to 0.073). Additionally, The Gambia ranks 166 out of 186 positions in the Inter-Parliamentary Women in Parliament ranking due to the low number of women members of parliament.

Over the next five years, what are your country’s priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?

The Gender and Women Empowerment Policy 2010–2020 underwent a midterm review and evaluation in 2018. The findings highlighted the inclusion of emerging issues, which led to the creation of the Ministry of Women, Children, and Social Welfare, as well as the expansion of the Gender Management Information System (GMIS), which tracks policy implementation with measurable indicators. Additionally, the Gender Policy Implementation and Monitoring Committee convenes regularly to assess sector-level progress, identify gaps, and provide recommendations to the Ministry for appropriate action.

Table 2: Global gender ranking for The Gambia

| Indicator | Ranking/Score |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Global Gender Gap Report 2023 - Political Empowerment | 132nd position (Score: 0.073) |
| Inter-Parliamentary Women in Parliament Ranking | 166th position out of 186 countries |

Source: Gender Profile The Gambia

What gender-specific indicators has your country prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

SDG Goal 1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Indicators

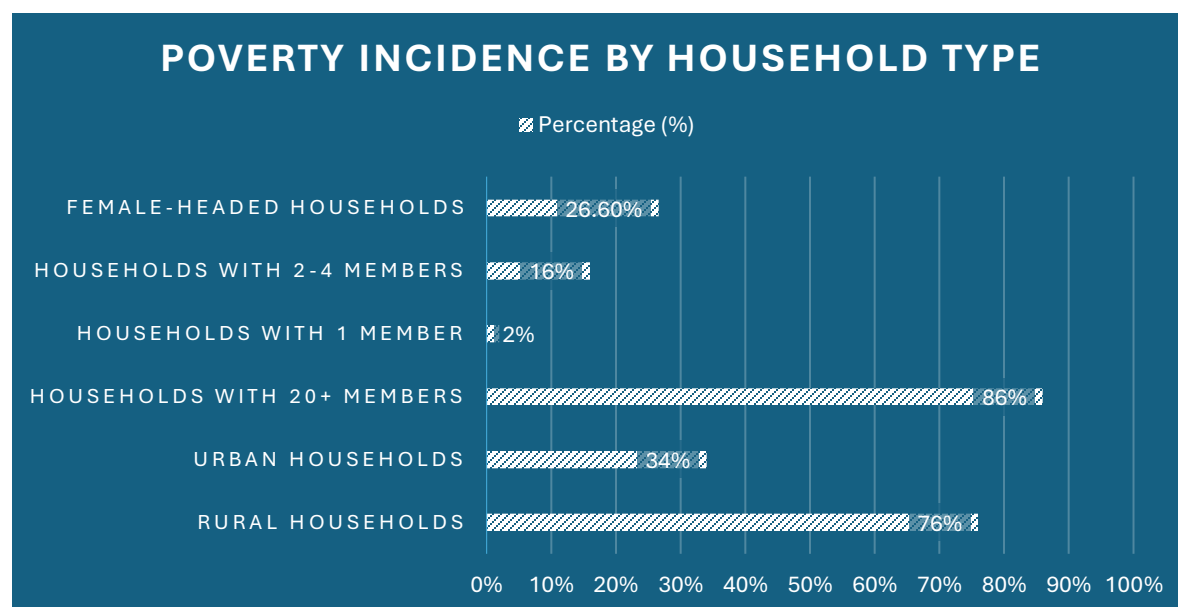
1.1.1 Proportion of the population living below the international poverty line by sex, age, employment status and geographic location (urban/rural)

1.2.1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age

1.2.2 Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions

1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work-injury victims and the poor and the vulnerable

Figure 15: Poverty Incidence by Household Type



Source: World Bank Group (2023) Poverty & Equity Brief, 2022. The Gambia Poverty and Gender Assessment

About 76% of households in rural areas live below the poverty line compared to about 34% of those in urban areas. The incidence of poverty is higher among larger households and those with more children.

About 86% of households with 20 or more household members are poor, compared to just 2% for households with 1 member and 16% for households with 2 to 4 members. Additionally, female-headed households are poorer, according to the Integrated Household Survey 2019-2020, 24.6% of female headed households are below the poverty line²².

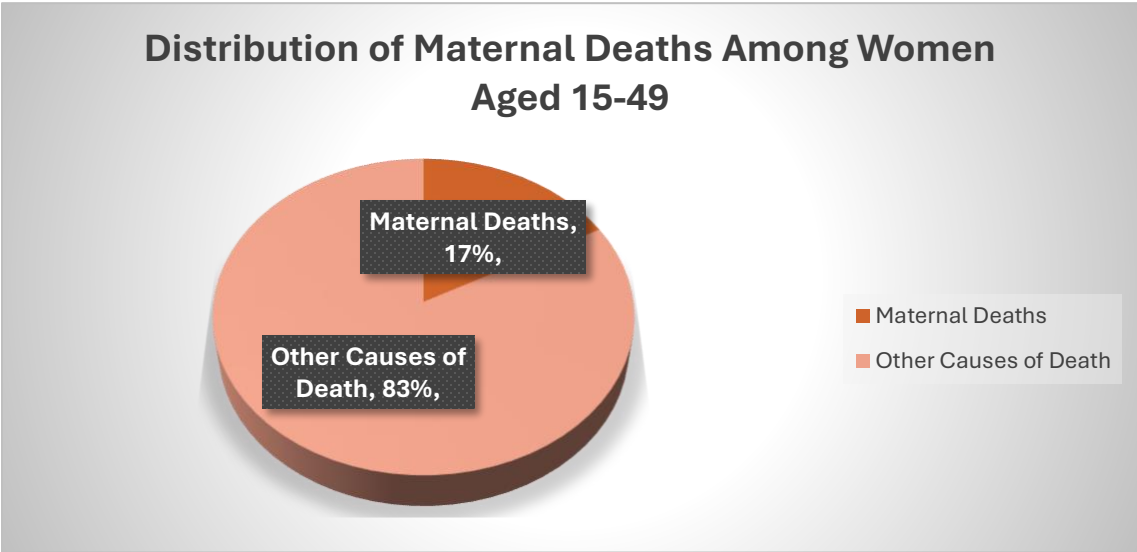
SDG Goal 3. Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages

Indicators

3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio

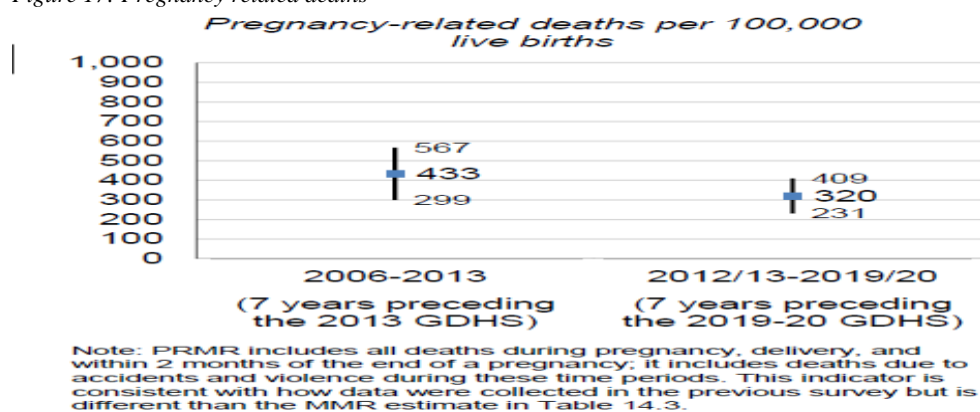
3.1.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel

Figure 16: Distribution of Maternal Deaths Among Women Aged 15-49



²² World Bank Group (2023) Poverty & Equity Brief, 2022. The Gambia Poverty and Gender Assessment.

Figure 17: Pregnancy related deaths



Source: GDHS-2019-2020

Maternal deaths represent 17% of all fatalities among women aged 15-49. The estimated maternal mortality ratio for the seven-year period prior to the 2019-20 Gambia Demographic and Health Survey (GDHS) is 289 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.²³ This means that for every 1,000 births in The Gambia, approximately three women die from pregnancy-related causes (excluding accidents or violence) during pregnancy, childbirth, or within 42 days after the end of a pregnancy. Given the current fertility and mortality rates, the lifetime risk of maternal death is estimated at 0.014, indicating that out of 1,000 women aged 15, about 14 are expected to die before reaching the age of 50 due to complications from pregnancy, childbirth, or within two months postpartum.²⁴

SDG Goal 5: Advance Gender Equality and Empower all Women and Girls

Indicators

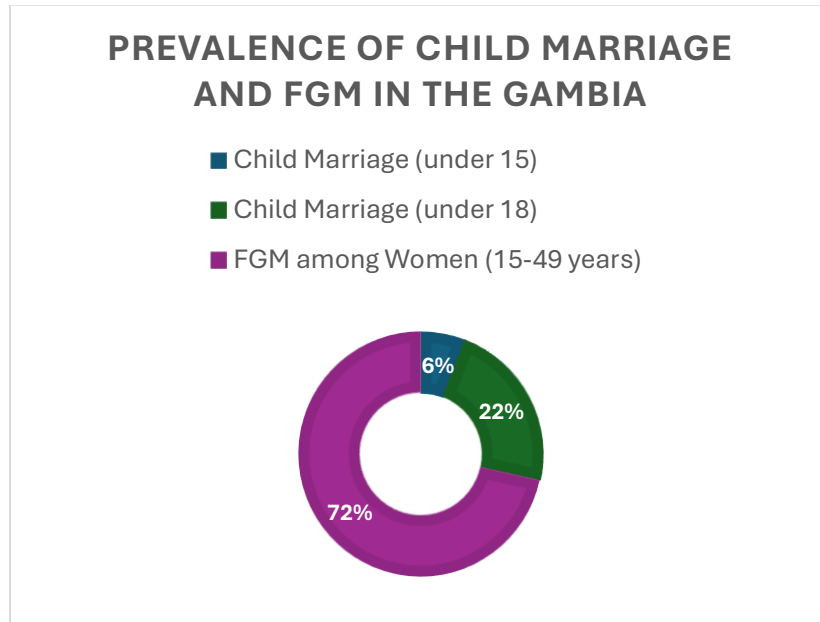
- 5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age
- 5.2.2 Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence
- 5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18
- 5.3.2 Proportion of girls and women aged 15–49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation, by age

Gender Based-Violence: In The Gambia, prevalent forms of GBV include rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment in the workplace, intimate partner violence, female genital mutilation (FGM), harmful traditional practices, and more. Despite legal prohibitions, child marriage persists in The Gambia, affecting 6% of girls below 15 years old and 23% below 18 years old. FGM remains widespread in The Gambia, with a prevalence rate of 73% among women aged 15-49.

²³ GDHS-2019-2020.

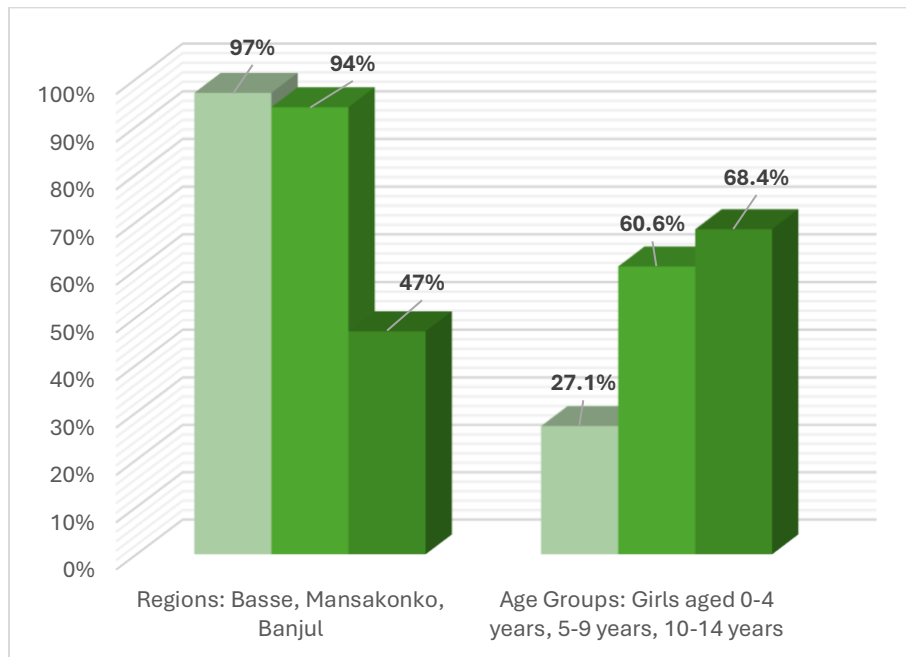
²⁴ Source GDHS-2019-20

Figure 18: Prevalence of Child Marriage and FGM in The Gambia



Female Genital Mutilation

Figure 19: FGM prevalence



Source: GBOS GDHS 2019- 2020

The proportion of women who are circumcised is highest in Basse and Mansakonko 97% and 94%, respectively and lowest in Banjul 47%. Estimates of FGM prevalence show that the prevalence

amongst girl's increases with age for girls aged 0-4 years estimated at 27.1%, 60.6% for girls aged 5-9 years and 68.4% for those aged 10-14 years.

Section Six: Conclusion and next steps

The Gambia recognizes gender equality and women's empowerment as key factors for attaining social and economic development. The Government made significant strides with respect to empowerment of women. Notable in education is the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls, Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) for girls; and protection of women against violence, ban on FGM, female representation at the National Assembly – including the current Speaker of the National Assembly, and successfully litigated cases by the female lawyers' association that resulted in two landmark decisions on the enforcement of the Women's Act's provision on the equitable sharing of joint property (CCA 2015) MOGCSW Strategic Plan 2021-2025).

Although significant progress has been made in advancing women's rights, we acknowledge that further efforts are needed, particularly in the area of political participation. The Gambia has yet to achieve the 30% representation target at all levels of government, and we remain mindful of this responsibility. The ongoing constitutional review process offers a renewed opportunity to address and improve this shortfall.

In sum, The Gambia faces significant challenges in promoting human rights and the welfare of women and girls. Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach that includes strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing women's economic opportunities, and challenging cultural norms that perpetuate gender inequality. Continued advocacy and support from both governmental and non-governmental organizations are essential to advance the rights of women and girls in The Gambia.

The Gambia's priority actions to accelerate the implementation of the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda, notably as part of the Decade of Action for sustainable development to end violence against women and girls, economic empowerment of women, and poverty eradication, build an inclusive society, improve the educational outcome for women and girls through quality education system at all levels. In addition, advancing social protection and social services to promote the well-being of marginalized groups and strengthen gender-responsive institutions in the country.

Lessons learned

Given the current status of the implementation progress of the three mutual frameworks i.e. the BPfA, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Agenda 2030, as extensively discussed in this national report, the team derives key lessons from these processes.

Stakeholders' engagement: The importance of stakeholder engagement at various levels in the planning and implementation of policies and programs relevant to BPfA, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Agenda 2030 is crucial for their success. Additionally, effective coordination of efforts proved to be an effective and efficient strategy in consolidating the gains registered in the implementation of the critical areas of concern. Moreover, localizing and integrating these frameworks in national development blueprints, sector programs, and activities is critical for translating global ambitions into actionable and context-specific initiatives. This also signifies the importance of community engagement, local resource mobilization, and innovative strategies as critical approaches to achieving the SDGs. By tailoring the goals to local realities, the country can attain effective and sustainable development outcomes.

Next Steps

The Government of the Gambia through the Ministry of Gender, Children, and Social Welfare to:

- implement more robust monitoring mechanisms to track the implementation of the BPfA, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Agenda 2030.
- Organize community outreach initiatives using existing local structures such as the Women Council, Regional Technical Advisory Committees (TACs), Multi-Disciplinary Technical Facilitation Teams (MDFTs), Multi-Disciplinary Technical Facilitation Teams (MDFTs), Community Management Committees (CMC) and cluster-based approach to mobilize communities in popularizing BPfa at the grassroots level.