



UNFPA ANNUAL REPORT 2024

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEmONC	Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care
FP	Family Planning
CBDs	Community-Based Distributors
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
GBoS	Gambia Bureau of Statistics
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
GDEI	Gambia Diaspora Expert Initiative
IMR	International Medical Response
AICS	Italian Agency for Development Cooperation
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
UNPRPD	United Nation's Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disability Fund
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
CEmOC	Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric Care
BEmOC	Basic Emergency Obstetric Care
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
FGM/C	FGM/C
GMIS	GMIS
EmOC	EmOC
ANC	ANC
MoU	MoU
RMNCAH	RMNCAH
LMIS	LMIS

FOREWORD



Ndeye Rose Sarr

UNFPA Country Representative,
The Gambia

In 2024, UNFPA The Gambia achieved significant milestones across its core mandate areas, demonstrating a strong commitment to improving the lives of women, girls, and young people. Our strategic investments in training healthcare providers on Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (CEmONC), procurement of essential and expanding access to Family Planning (FP) services through Community-Based Distributors (CBDs) have yielded significant results in enhanced service providers' knowledge and skills, safer delivery practices and improved maternal health outcomes.

We championed the elimination of harmful practices by upholding the FGM ban included in the 2015 Women's Amendment Act through policy dialogue, advocacy and coalition building. We continued to promote gender equality and women's political participation through a women's leadership joint project with UNDP and UNICEF funded by the Peacebuilding Fund... Furthermore, we amplified youth voices through participation in national and global dialogues such as the Summit of the Future, the Strategic Dialogue with Young parliamentarians and supported their leadership and development through capacity building activities.

We made key achievements in improving accessibility and use of population data through partnerships with government and development stakeholders, we have contributed in strengthening GBoS for conduct of the census and promoted digital tools (tablets) for real-time data collection and scaled comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), reaching both in and out of school adolescents and young people, and working to leave no one behind by ensuring inclusivity for persons with disability. Strong strategic partnerships, including new collaborations with Gambia Diaspora Expert Initiative (GDEI) and International Medical Response (IMR) and significant funding secured from Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (AICS), USAID in partnership with UNICEF, and the United Nation's Partnership on the Rights of Persons with Disability Fund (UNPRPD) which strengthened the country office capacity to deliver impactful programs. By year-end, we had significantly improved staffing levels, reducing the vacancy rate to 6%, ensuring greater operational efficiency.

2024 Milestones

- Strategic investments in healthcare training
- Advocacy for FGM ban enforcement
- Women's leadership project launch
- Youth participation in global dialogues
- Partnerships with GDEI and IMR
- Reduction of vacancy rate to 6%

01

CHAPTER



THE GAMBIA: SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS ON MATERNAL HEALTH, FAMILY PLANNING AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



MATERNAL HEALTH

Despite progress, maternal mortality in The Gambia remains high at 289 per 100,000 live births (Demographic and Health Survey data 2019/20). This high maternal mortality ratio is primarily due to inadequate access to emergency obstetric care services, particularly in rural areas. While the number of facilities providing Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric Care (CEmOC) is sufficient, the availability of Basic Emergency Obstetric Care (BEmOC) services is significantly deficient. Moreover, the distribution of emergency obstetric care facilities is uneven, with rural communities facing significant disadvantages

in accessing life-saving interventions such as caesarean sections. UNFPA's 2024 efforts have focused on strengthening health systems, capacity building for healthcare providers, and increasing access to emergency obstetric care. However, further work is required to accelerate progress towards achieving zero preventable maternal deaths. The rural-urban disparity in maternal mortality remains stark, with rural areas experiencing mortality rates twice as high as urban regions, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to improve maternal health outcomes nationwide.

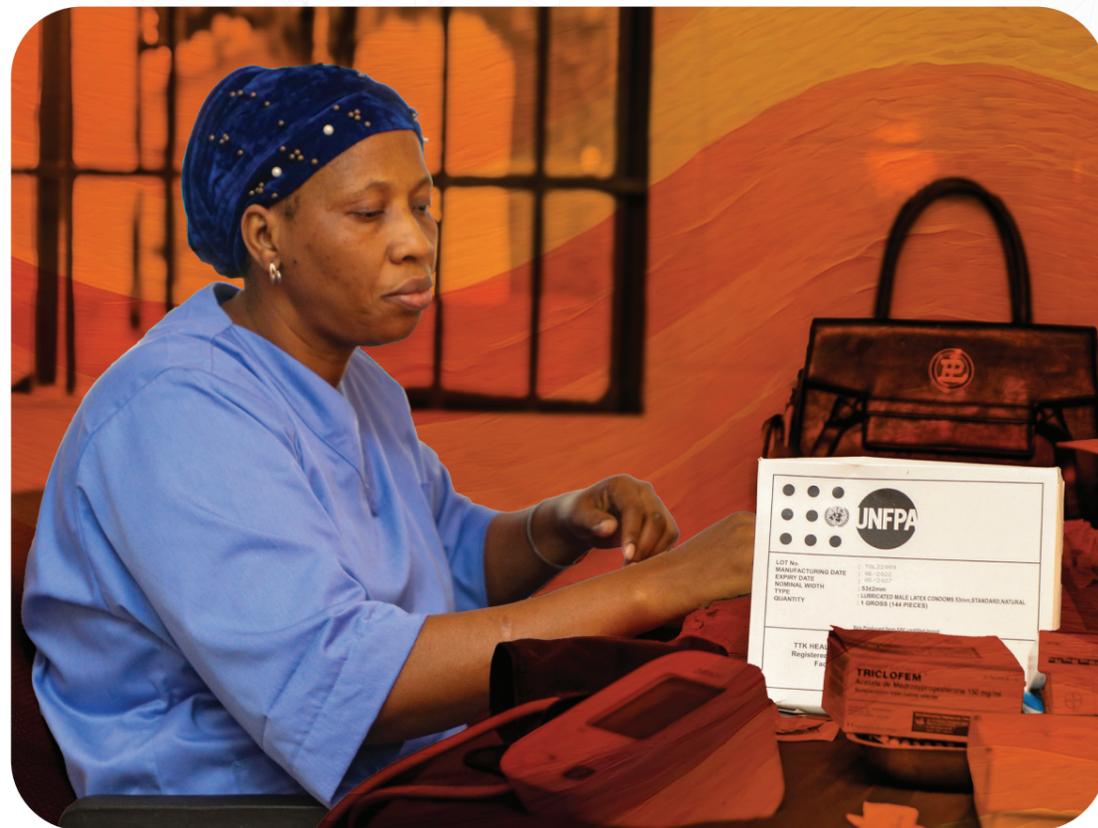
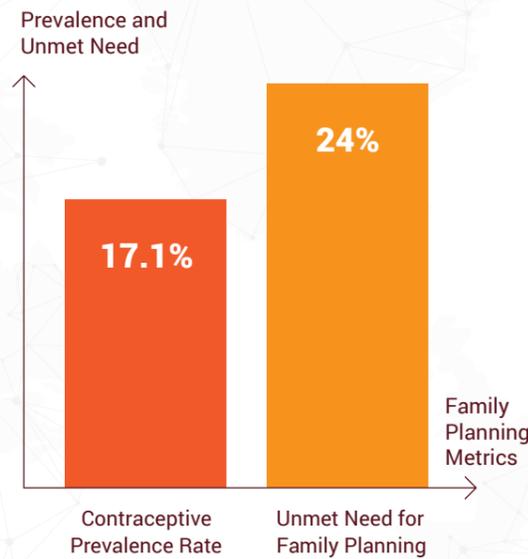


FAMILY PLANNING

Access to quality sexual and reproductive health services remains a challenge in The Gambia. The national contraceptive prevalence rate stands at 17.1% (DHS 2019/20), and there is a 24% unmet need for family planning services. Limited access to modern contraceptive methods, particularly in rural areas, exacerbates unplanned pregnancies and maternal health risks.

UNFPA has invested significantly in community-based distribution (CBD) of contraceptives to bridge this gap. Further data collection is required to assess the impact of trained CBDs on contraceptive uptake and unmet needs, as this initiative represents a critical step in increasing access to family planning services and empowering women to make informed reproductive health choices.

CHALLENGES IN THE GAMBIA



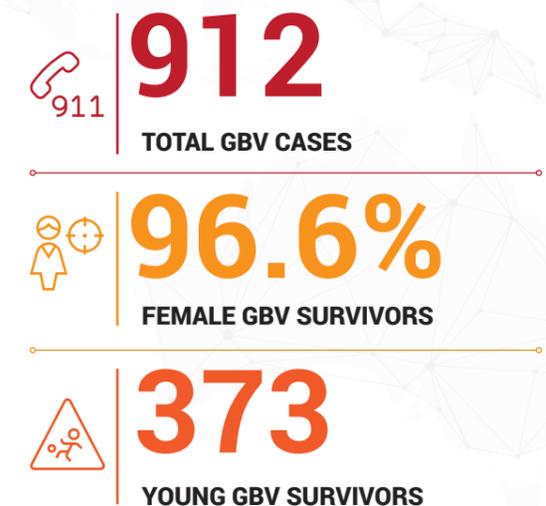
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)



Women constitute 51% of The Gambia's population of 2,422,712 (2024 Census). Although men can also be victims of gender-based violence (GBV), data consistently shows that women and girls are disproportionately affected. According to the 2019-2020 Demographic and Health Survey, 46% of women aged 15-49 have experienced physical violence at least once, an increase from 41% in 2013. Additionally, 7% of women have experienced both physical and sexual violence, and 7% of pregnant women aged 15-49 have suffered physical violence during pregnancy. Regional disparities persist, with Kerewan recording the lowest prevalence (33%) and Basse the highest (57%).

The high prevalence of GBV is fueled by deeply rooted gender inequalities, inadequate representation of women in decision-making, and limited access to resources. Harmful traditional practices such as early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), and societal norms that tolerate domestic violence further exacerbate the situation.

In The Gambia, GBV remains widely underreported due to stigma, fear of retaliation, and limited access to support services. Between January 2023 and November 2024, 912 cases of GBV were reported on the GMIS platform, with 96.6% of victims being female. Of these cases, 42% (373) involved victims below the age of 18, highlighting the vulnerability of young girls.





FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

FGM remains a pressing issue despite a decline in prevalence over the past decade. Currently, 76% of women and girls aged 15-49 have undergone some form of FGM, with rates significantly higher in rural areas—95% in the Upper River Region, 72.8% in Janjanbureh (Central River Region - South), and 49.7% in Kuntaur (Central River Region - North).

Community empowerment programs have led to 329 communities in the Upper River and Central River Regions publicly renouncing FGM, forced marriage, and all forms of violence against women and girls. However, in February 2024, national efforts to eliminate FGM faced significant opposition following an attempt to decriminalize the practice through the Women’s Amendment Bill 2024. This legislative attempt revealed deep societal divisions, with strong advocacy from both supporters and opponents of the ban. In response, a coalition of civil society organizations intensified advocacy efforts, scaling up public engagement, awareness campaigns, and strategic program interventions.

PREVALENCE OF FGM IN DIFFERENT REGIONS

Upper River Region

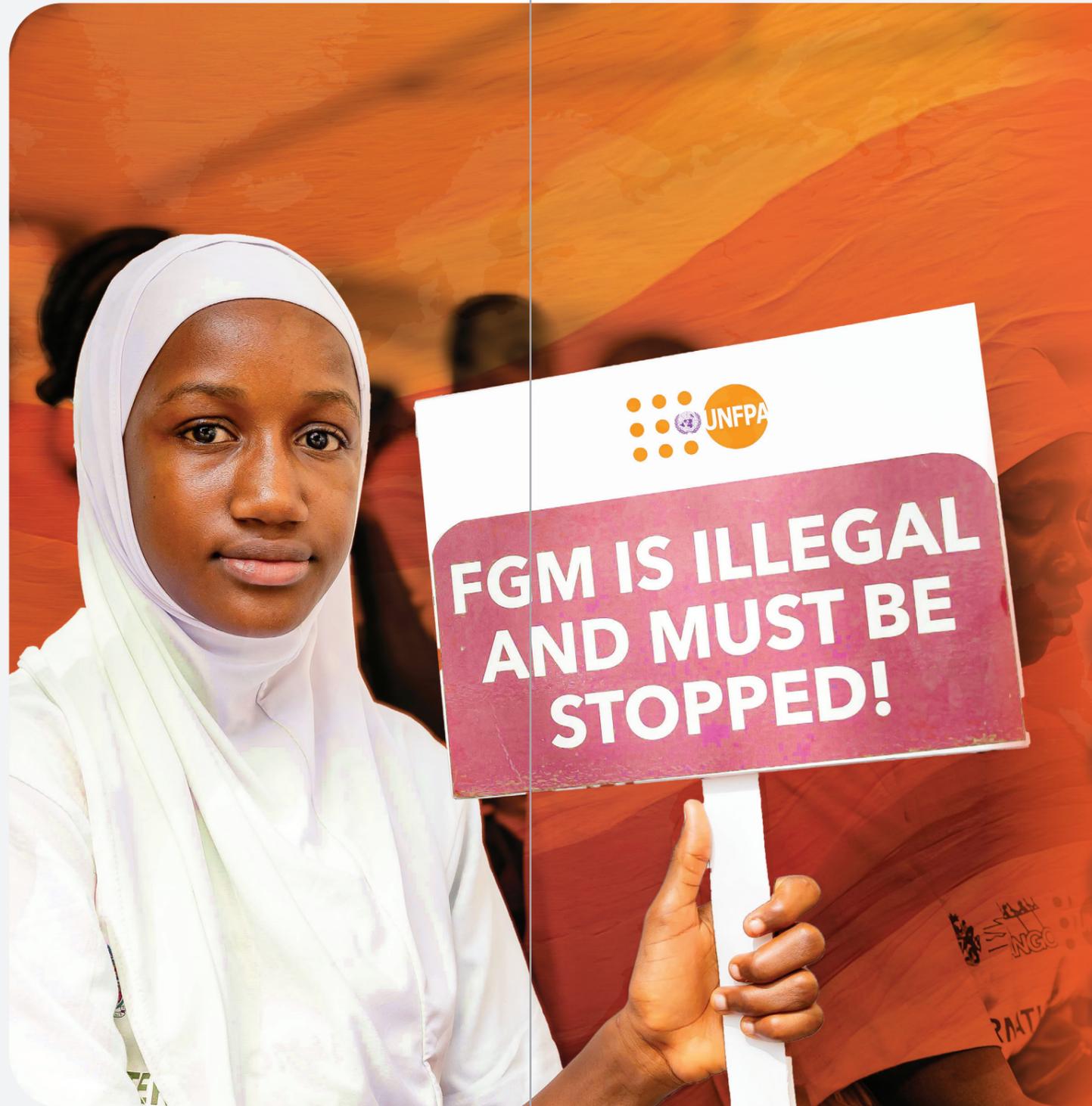
95%

Janjanbureh (Central River Region - South)

72.8%

Kuntaur (Central River Region - North)

49.7%



CONCLUSION

While notable strides have been made in improving maternal health, expanding family planning services, and combating GBV in The Gambia, significant challenges remain. Rural-urban disparities, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, persistent harmful cultural practices, and limited reporting of GBV cases continue to hinder progress. Strengthening multi-sectoral collaborations, investing in health system capacity, and intensifying advocacy efforts will be crucial in addressing these pressing issues and ensuring the rights and well-being of women and girls across the country.

CHALLENGES



Rural-Urban Disparities



Inadequate Infrastructure



Cultural Practices



Reporting Issues



Advocacy Efforts

02

CHAPTER

This section provides a snapshot of the key achievements and milestones of the UNFPA Country Office in The Gambia during 2024. These results underscore our commitment to achieving transformative outcomes in sexual and reproductive health, gender equality, and youth empowerment.



PROGRAM REPORT AND KEY ACHIEVEMENTS



1. ADVANCING MATERNAL HEALTH AND ENDING PREVENTABLE DEATHS

STRENGTHENING EMERGENCY OBSTETRIC CARE (EMOC)

Procure Equipment

Procured essential medical equipment and supplies worth over \$150,000, including 60 delivery beds, 10 oxygen concentrators, and 5 ultrasound scanners for the Ministry of Health.

Train on EmOC

Trained 10 service providers on EmOC signal functions, improving the capacity of facilities to manage obstetric emergencies.

Train on Ultrasound

Trained 12 healthcare workers on ultrasound scanning technology to enhance antenatal care (ANC) quality.

Support Audits

Supported Maternal Death Audit reviews in 8 hospitals.

ADDRESSING OBSTETRIC FISTULA

- UNFPA is also funding a National Fistula Prevalence Study to assess the fistula burden in the country. The study will involve interviews with fistula surgeons, service providers and fistula patients. Data on fistula surgeries from both the public and private health facilities will also be reviewed. The data collection is at an advanced stage and preliminary analysis has started. The study is expected to conclude by the end of first quarter 2025.

- The development of the First ever Fistula Elimination Strategy is at an advanced stage with the first draft completed. This draft will be reviewed by The National Fistula Task Force for comments and then will be validated at a meeting with stakeholders in the first quarter of 2025.

- Through the MoU signed between the International Medical Response, UNFPPA and the Ministry of Health, 30 doctors in fistula surgery, to build national capacity for fistula repair.



“ We find joy in each cry of a baby we help bring into this world ”

Midwifery is said to be the single most important factor in stopping mothers and babies from dying during childbirth. Central to the UNFPA mandate, midwives are the foundation for achieving the transformative goal of ending preventable maternal deaths, and their contributions are invaluable. In The Gambia, as in many other countries, midwives are at the forefront of providing essential healthcare services, making a significant impact on the well-being of mothers and their newborns.

May 5th annually is dedicated to celebrate the work of midwives everywhere. This year's theme Midwives: A Vital Climate Solution underscores the indispensable role of midwives in communities affected by

climate-related crises, disasters, floods, displacement, and extreme weather. Childbirth occurs no matter the circumstances a woman faces, whether she is at home or forced to flee due to conflict or disaster.

Ahead of the international day of the midwife, we caught up with Ebrima Jallow, a nurse midwife. Ebrima chose the path less travelled becoming a midwife—a profession traditionally associated with women. He however remains undeterred as he finds joy bringing comfort and safety to mothers and babies alike.

“ We find joy and confidence in each cry of a baby we help bring into this world. There's no greater feeling than knowing we've made a difference ”

Ebrima's days are filled with dedication and empathy. He said while he is on call, in a shift, they deliver up to 20 babies. His gentle demeanour and reassuring words transform the labour room into a place of trust, easing the fears of anxious mothers and families.

“ Sometimes babies come flat with no vital signs, you must resuscitate them. It's teamwork, you know everybody is in a hurry—give amber bagging, check the vitals, massage the back and then the baby all of a sudden screams alive. I have made it! So this is something that really excites us as midwives ”

Despite commendable progress made in improving the proportion of deliveries attended by skilled health professionals (84% of deliveries now take place in health institutions), the midwifery profession is not without challenges. Currently, out of the approximately 421 midwives deployed throughout the country, 295 are concentrated in Banjul and the West Coast Region. This disparity in distribution creates a situation where other regions are left with critical gaps in midwifery services, which needs to be urgently addressed as the needs in those regions stays greater and it's imperative to leave no one behind.

As part of its efforts to improve maternal health services, particularly in hard-to-reach areas, UNFPA Gambia has funded the training of 100 midwives. Additionally, UNFPA provided teaching aids to midwifery training institutions, ensuring students access to quality learning resources. Furthermore, furniture was provided to the Community Health Training Nursing School in Mansa Konko and the State Enrolled Training Nursing School in Bansang, enhancing the overall learning environment for nursing students.



TOWARDS ZERO FISTULA: ENHANCING FISTULA TREATMENT THROUGH CAPACITY BUILDING AND COLLABORATION

In 2024, a tripartite memorandum of agreement was signed between the Ministry of Health, The International Medical Response and UNFPA to build the capacity of surgeons in Gambia to perform successful fistula repairs. The capacity building was held from 14th to 18th October 2024 at the Edward Francis Small Teaching Hospital. This UNFPA-led capacity-building program, in partnership with the International Medical Response enhanced the surgical skills of 30 Gambian fistula surgeons. 8 women were operated on with 100% successful rate.

The National Task Force on Ending Obstetric Fistula established in 2019 but revitalized in 2022. The task force met 4 times in 2024 to advance dialogue and collaboration among stakeholders.

UNFPA gave technical assistance to the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Gender for a proposal to the ECOWAS initiative "Medical and Financial support for Women and Girls suffering from Obstetric Fistula in ECOWAS Member States". The \$245,000 grant project on "2023 ECOWAS Gender Centre Fistula Program.

The Project has funded the development of a Social Behaviour Change Communication Manual for health care workers. 60 health care workers have been trained on the use of the manual and on fistula case findings.



Agreement Signed



Training Sessions



Task Force Meetings



Grant Proposal



Manual Development



Worker Training

“ Restoring dignity and hope through partnerships and surgical training. ”



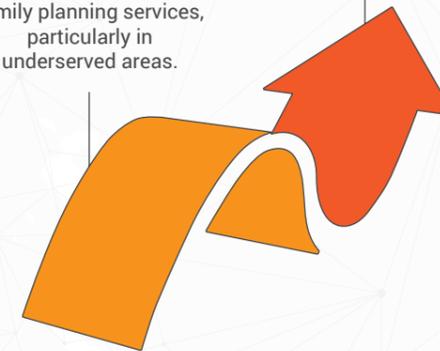
2. EXPANDING ACCESS TO FAMILY PLANNING

Strengthened Distribution

Strengthened Community-Based Distribution: Trained 68 community-based distributors (CBDs) across all regions to expand access to family planning services, particularly in underserved areas.

Contraceptive Access

Contribution to Contraceptive Access: While the national contraceptive prevalence rate stands at 17.1%, the investment in CBDs represents a significant step towards addressing the 24% unmet need for family planning.



FINANCING FAMILY PLANNING AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

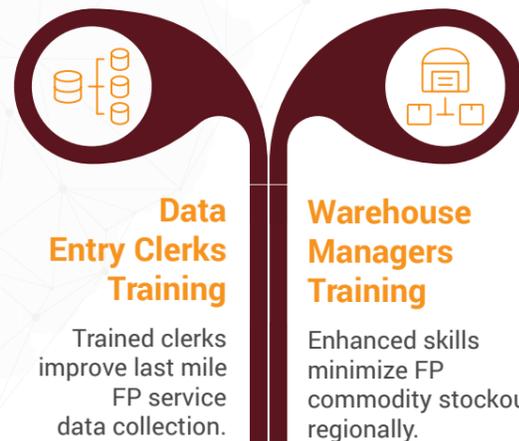
UNFPA Gambia country office organized a SMART Advocacy workshop bringing together key stakeholders and equipping them with the necessary skills to effectively advocate for the financing of reproductive health through domestic resource mobilization. Following the workshop, a task force was established to engage the government in advocating for the inclusion of Family Planning (FP) services in the national health insurance benefit package. The advocacy team also ensured the Ministry of Health created a budget line for FP in the national health budget.

The task force also advocated for the Ministry of Finance to allocate and disburse funds for FP services. As a result of these efforts, the government allocated D2.5 million to the Reproductive Maternal Neonatal Child and Adolescent Health Unit (RMNCAH). The government of the Gambia has committed to the 2023 compact agreement contributing 1% (\$18,017) of the total amount paid by UNFPA for contraceptives. Furthermore, the government has signed the 2024 Compact Agreement, pledging to fulfill its 2% commitment.



SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

Through the UNFPA Supplies Partnership, UNFPA supported the training of 30 data entry clerks to improve the supply chain in the last mile. These data entry clerks collect and input data for FP services in the last mile. UNFPA also supported the training of 30 warehouse managers and in-charges on LMIS across the country. Warehouse managers and In-charges managed FP supplies at the regional and facility level respectively. Enhancing the supply chain management skills of these managers and In-charges helps to minimize stock out of FP commodities.



Data Entry Clerks Training

Trained clerks improve last mile FP service data collection.

Warehouse Managers Training

Enhanced skills minimize FP commodity stockouts regionally.



3. ACCELERATING THE ELIMINATION OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARMFUL PRACTICES



Protection of the FGM Law: Successfully advocated against the repeal of the FGM Law, safeguarding the Women's Amendment Act of 2015.



Joint Program on FGM: Reached over 3,200 girls and community members with education, awareness, and skill-building initiatives on FGM, child marriage, and bodily autonomy. This includes 1000 schoolgirls who received Menstrual Hygiene Management kits.



LAHIDO Project: Launched the LAHIDO project in the Upper River Region, engaging over 700 residents in community caravans, and securing 60 parental pledges to end harmful practices.



Strengthened Protection Systems: Trained 100 security personnel to improve SGBV response, provided capacity-building for ex-circumcisers, and supported community dialogues, improved reporting mechanisms, and ethical media reporting.



Engaging Men and Boys: Trained over 800 men and boys as health champions to promote positive masculinity and challenge harmful norms.



Policy and Structural Change: Reached 680 individuals with policy advocacy for the FGM law and established the Regional Coalition Against Harmful Traditional Practices.



GBV Response: Provided comprehensive services to GBV survivors through nine one-stop centers, registering 918 cases, with the majority of survivors being adolescent girls (42%). Services include health, psychosocial, safety, and legal assistance.

Engaged in conversation with over 100 Security Sector stakeholders on gender equality and GBV during the 16 Days of Activism.

FGM and Gender-Based Violence Initiatives



FGM Law Protection Advocated against the repeal of the FGM Law.

Educated over 3,200 individuals on FGM and related issues.

Joint FGM Program



LAHIDO Project Engaged 700 residents to end harmful practices.

Trained personnel to improve SGBV response and reporting.

Protection Systems



Engaging Men Trained men and boys to promote positive masculinity.

Advocated for FGM law and formed a coalition.

Policy Change



GBV Response Provided services to GBV survivors through one-stop centers.



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When women and youth are empowered to lead, communities flourish, systems evolve, and the promise of inclusive governance becomes a reality.

”

4. CHAMPIONING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT:

WOMEN'S POLITICAL LEADERSHIP:

 Empowered 210 women and 40 men through networking, mentoring, and exchange of best practices and capacity building through the two National Women's Leadership Forums that promoted leadership development.

 Increased women's representation in local government by 15%, from 6% and District Tribunal appointments by 78.3% from 20%

 Engaged over 700 young people, including Persons with disabilities, to promote inclusive political participation in decision-making at the grassroots level.

 Conducted a national study with The University of The Gambia to address women's political participation barriers.

 UNCT Gender and PSEA Thematic Groups Leadership: UNFPA facilitated PSEAH training and assessment for 68 implementing partners and strengthened capacities of 16 UNCT Gender and PSEA Focal points (10 women and 6 men) on Gender Transformative Approach. Enhanced knowledge of UNCT staff members on intersectional gender issues (climate change and health) through Brown Bag lunches and deepened sensitization on PSEAH issues with Townhalls.

“The negativity directed towards women leaders was disheartening”

“The success of my first term solidified the community's trust, leading to my uncontested re-election”

Maimuna Jallow
Country's Youngest Councillor, Basse

THE RISE OF WOMEN LEADERS, CHALLENGING NORMS IN THE GAMBIA

Women in The Gambia have historically been marginalized from decision-making and the political sphere, despite efforts to encourage their participation. Societal norms, financial constraints, political party structures, and even gender-based violence often act as barriers to their involvement. Yet, a new generation of women is rising to challenge these norms and claim their rightful place at the table.

The recent National Women's Leadership Forum, organized by UN Gambia in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender through the Women's Political Leadership Project funded by the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, acted as a catalyst for this inspiring movement. Among the many stories shared, that of Maimuna Jallow, the country's youngest councillor, emerged as hope for other women.

Maimuna's political start was far from easy. She faced significant obstacles, particularly the financial burdens and prejudices associated with being a young, unmarried woman in politics. However, her unwavering passion for her community and the strong support she received from both men and women fueled her determination. Recounting her campaign experience, Maimuna shared the discouragement and hate speech she encountered.

she admitted, “but it ultimately strengthened my resolve to prove them wrong.” Her victory was not only a personal achievement but a symbol of hope for aspiring female leaders across the nation.

Maimuna's story resonated deeply with other women present at the National Women Forum, including Fanta Touray, the Balangarr ward councillor. Fanta's own remarkable achievement – running unopposed in her second term as councillor for Balangarr ward was

a testament to her dedication to community building and unity. “I focused on respectfully engaging with all residents, working to bridge divides,” she explained.

Both Maimuna and Fanta represent a new wave of Gambian women leaders. They are dismantling barriers, challenging stereotypes, and inspiring others to follow their lead. As Maimuna passionately declared, “I encourage all youths and women to engage in politics. Without women in politics, our issues won't receive proper representation.”

These women are trailblazers, paving the way for a more inclusive and equitable Gambia, where everyone, regardless of gender, has the opportunity to lead and flourish.



5. INVESTING IN YOUTH

National Action Plan on youth peace and security (YPS): UNFPA supported the development and validation of The Gambia's National Action Plan on Youth, Peace, and Security, aligning with United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2250 through community consultations. With UNFPA's support, over 2,000 young people across the country were engaged in the process.

Amplified Youth Voices: Led a national youth consultation, bringing together 250 young people in preparation for the Government of The Gambia's participation in the Summit of the Future at the United Nations General Assembly. A youth-led "Pact for the Future" was presented at the Summit of the Future by two Gambian youth sponsored by UNFPA.

Empowered Adolescent Girls: Trained 20 adolescent girls with leadership and advocacy skills, including STEM and career guidance during the celebration of

the International Day of the Girl Child in collaboration with UNICEF.

Developed Next Generation of Leaders: Empowered 35 young leaders through mentorship and leadership programs to participate in political processes through the National Youth Parliament.

Through the Sub-Saharan Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend (SWEDD) plus project, UNFPA supported the development of the Safe Space Curriculum and Mentors' Guide, along with a training of trainers for 45 facilitators under the Safe Spaces and He4She programs. Additionally, UNFPA facilitated the training of 45 staff from various SWEDD implementing partners on Grievance Mechanisms and GBV Case Management. Furthermore, UNFPA played a key role in developing the SWEDD Social and Behavior Change Communication flip chart, strategy, and evaluation framework.

FGM and Gender-Based Violence Initiatives



6. LEVERAGING POPULATION DATA FOR DEVELOPMENT:

Successful Digital Population and Housing Census: UNFPA provided technical and financial support to the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS) in the execution of the country's first digital Population and Housing Census. Through a formalized south-south cooperation brokered by UNFPA, The Gambia and Senegal signed an agreement through the Agence Nationale de la Statistique et Demographies (ANSD). UNFPA undertook monitoring field visits and supported GBOS in identifying national and international census experts as monitors to ensure the accuracy, completeness, reliability of the census data and responsible to certify the authenticity, credibility, and transparency of the census process.



7. SUPPORTING COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION (CSE):

Training of Peer Educators: Trained **260** out-of-school girls and **180** in-school girls as Peer Health Educators (PHEs).

Extensive Community Outreach: Trained PHEs conducted social mobilization activities that reached **3,769** adolescents, and engaged over **5,000** young people in various activities including Menstrual Hygiene sensitization, youth center outreaches and career boot camps

Promoting Inclusivity: Utilized the audio version of the CSE manual to train **20** Persons Living with Disabilities. Trained **20** persons living with HIV to serve as advocates for SRHR.





8. LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND:



Research on Disability Inclusion: Validated a study in partnership with The University of The Gambia, the Gambia Federation of the Disabled, and the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, which explored the lived experiences of over 1,000 persons with disabilities.



EMPOWERING YOUTH & WOMEN: UNFPA AND ITC LAUNCH HOSPITALITY & GBV SUPPORT CENTERS

UNFPA, ITC, and partners have officially launched the Mansakonko Hospitality Training Center and a One-Stop-Shop Entrepreneurship and GBV Support Center in Farafenni—two groundbreaking initiatives aimed at boosting skills, creating jobs, and addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in The Gambia.

With funding from the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security and the United Nations Migration Multi-Partner Trust Fund, the Mansakonko center is equipping young Gambians with skills in Professional Cookery, Room Services, and Food & Beverage Management, enhancing employability and economic independence. Over 65 youth have benefited from specialized training and coaching to improve service delivery and job prospects. UNFPA is also integrating GBV awareness training to empower trainees beyond technical skills.

Meanwhile, in Farafenni, a new One-Stop-Shop Entrepreneurship and GBV Support Center is providing women and youth with business training while serv-

ing as a safe space for GBV survivors. The facility offers counseling, psychosocial support, and access to health and legal services, ensuring that economic empowerment goes hand-in-hand with social protection.

These initiatives mark a bold step towards economic resilience and gender equality, reinforcing UNFPA and ITC's commitment to creating opportunities while tackling social challenges across The Gambia.



Hospitality Training



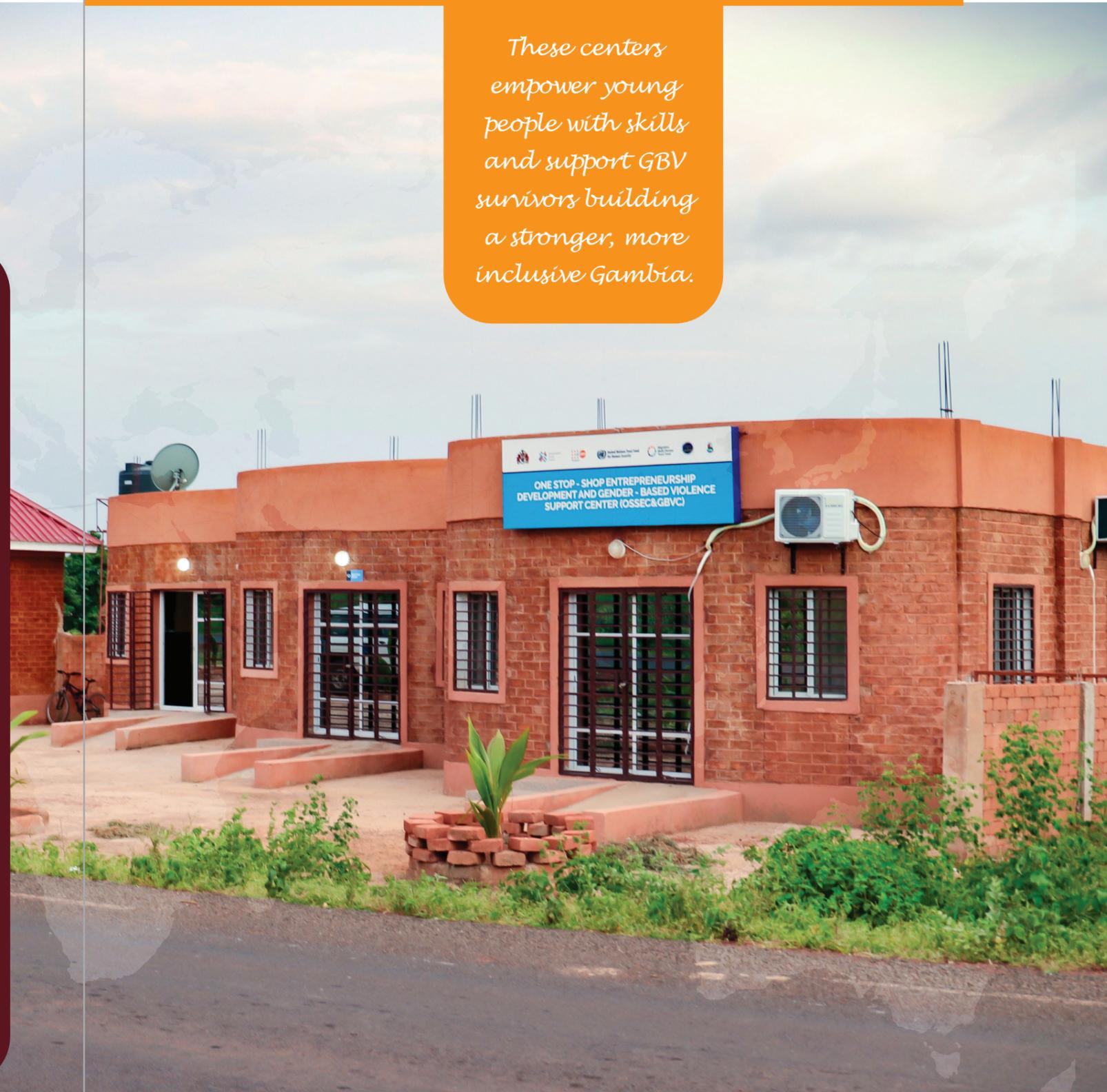
Entrepreneurship Center



GBV Support

“

These centers empower young people with skills and support GBV survivors building a stronger, more inclusive Gambia.



03

CHAPTER



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS, RESOURCE MOBILIZATION & COMMUNICATION

New Strategic Partnerships: UNFPA established new partnerships with the Gambia Diaspora Expert Initiative (GDEI) to improve maternal health outcomes and with the International Medical Response (IMR) to enhance fistula treatment capacity. Both partnerships were signed as a tripartite memorandum of understanding with the Gambia Ministry of Health.



SIGNIFICANT FUNDING SECURED

€900,000

mobilised through Agenzia Italiana per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo (AICS) for a cross-border project aimed at accelerating the prevention and elimination of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and promoting reproductive health in The Gambia and Senegal.

\$117,000

funding through a UN to UN agreement with UNICEF (from USAID) for a joint project focused on strengthening advocacy against the repeal of the FGM ban by the National Assembly.

\$549,000

mobilized through the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) to support the rights of persons with disabilities, with a particular focus on women and children.



COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL MEDIA

In 2024, UNFPA The Gambia focused on strategic communications to drive social change, particularly in addressing harmful practices like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Community engagement remained central to shifting perceptions and fostering informed discussions, while digital platforms were effectively utilized to reach diverse audiences. This approach led to increased engagement and followership across social media channels. The Country Office X (Twitter) account grew from 10,000 followers in 2023 to 11,000 in 2024, with a 0.4% increase in audience engagement from December 2023 to January 2024, indicating improved content resonance. While audience growth on Instagram (3.1K followers) and Facebook (10.4K followers) has been gradual, event-based content continues to perform particularly well on Facebook.

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Every contribution brings us closer to a safer, more equal world for women, children, and the most vulnerable.

KEY SUCCESSES



1. INCREASED AWARENESS

- UNFPA facilitated 40 live radio panel discussions across nine community radio stations in July 2024.
- An estimated 500,000 listeners were reached across six regions of the country through community radios programs, focused on the health complications of FGM and fostered critical dialogue within communities.

During the campaign to retain the law banning FGM in The Gambia, a social media campaign was launched to raise awareness by leveraging various platforms. Three social media influencers embarked on a three-month campaign using their platforms to engage different audiences through songs, comedy, and other creative content. A diverse pool of UN Volunteers were also mobilized to take part in this online campaign. Meanwhile, a popular television show, Ask Bajen, was also utilized to intensify the campaign, alongside media engagements featuring the UNFPA Representative and sessions facilitated for partners and civil society organizations.



2. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- The radio discussions featured diverse panels that included health workers, FGM survivors, religious and community leaders, and legal experts. Their participation enriched the conversations and increased community involvement.
- Audience engagement was evident through interactive listener participation, with people calling in, sending messages, and sharing their perspectives on social media.

Through these efforts, UNFPA The Gambia successfully advanced conversations on FGM, fostered awareness, and empowered communities with information to challenge harmful practices.



SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL CHANGE: USING COMMUNITY RADIOS TO DRIVE UNFPA'S MANDATE

Leveraging community radio outreach during the 16 Days of Activism, UNFPA broadcasted impactful programs on gender-based violence (GBV), focusing on FGM in high-prevalence areas. These programs significantly raised awareness on FGM's health consequences and promoted access to UNFPA-supported support services, building on prior capacity building for community radio journalists. This initiative demonstrated the effectiveness of renewed focus on social and behavioral change communication.