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FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE



Ms. Ndéye Rose Sarr
UNFPA Country Representative

In 2023, UNFPA The Gambia concluded its 8th Country Programme and outlined the 9th Programme of Cooperation with The Gambia Government. The year ushered in remarkable progress and achievements in advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in The Gambia. Despite unprecedented challenges, including the trickle effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impact, UNFPA's commitment to delivering transformative results and reaching the most vulnerable remained unwavering.

This Annual Report highlights UNFPA The Gambia's efforts to empower women and girls, promote gender equality, and enhance access to reproductive health services, including maternal health and emergency obstetric and newborn care. The report captures the resilience, dedication, and collaborative spirit of the UNFPA The Gambia team, its partners, and the various communities it serves.

UNFPA The Gambia played a leading role in strengthening maternal health services and the capacity to deliver Basic Emergency Obstetric and Newborn Care (BEmONC) services including access to skilled birth attendants, especially in remote communities. UNFPA also worked closely with the government and partners to promote access to a wide range of contraceptive methods as outlined in the national family planning strategy to provide contraceptive choices to women.

Recognizing the importance of empowering women and girls, UNFPA The Gambia implemented programs that focused on gender equality, women's leadership, and the prevention of gender-based violence. The agency supported the establishment of a women's empowerment centre, provided training to women on entrepreneurship and income-generating skills, and advocated for the enactment of laws and policies that protect women's rights.

UNFPA The Gambia also addressed the needs of vulnerable populations, including adolescents, young people, and people with disabilities. Through its programmes, the agency provided comprehensive health education, promoted youth-friendly health services, and supported initiatives aimed at promoting the rights of people with disabilities.

Despite all these gains, the country witnessed calls for the repeal of the Women's Amendment Act 2015 to legalise the practice of FGM in The Gambia. This is a threat to the rights and welfare of women and girls in The Gambia. UNFPA will continue to work with partners, including CSOs to ensure that the FGM ban remains to protect women and girls from this harmful practice.

I look forward to a renewed commitment from everyone-government, the private sector, and civil society to realise the goals set in our new Country Programme.

Through resilience, dedication, and unwavering commitment, UNFPA The Gambia advances sexual and reproductive health rights, empowers women and girls, and fosters gender equality, even amidst unprecedented challenges. Together, we strive for transformative change and a future where every individual can thrive.



Ms. Ndéye Rose Sarr
UNFPA Country Representative

CHAPTER

01



PROGRAMME
REPORT

FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE



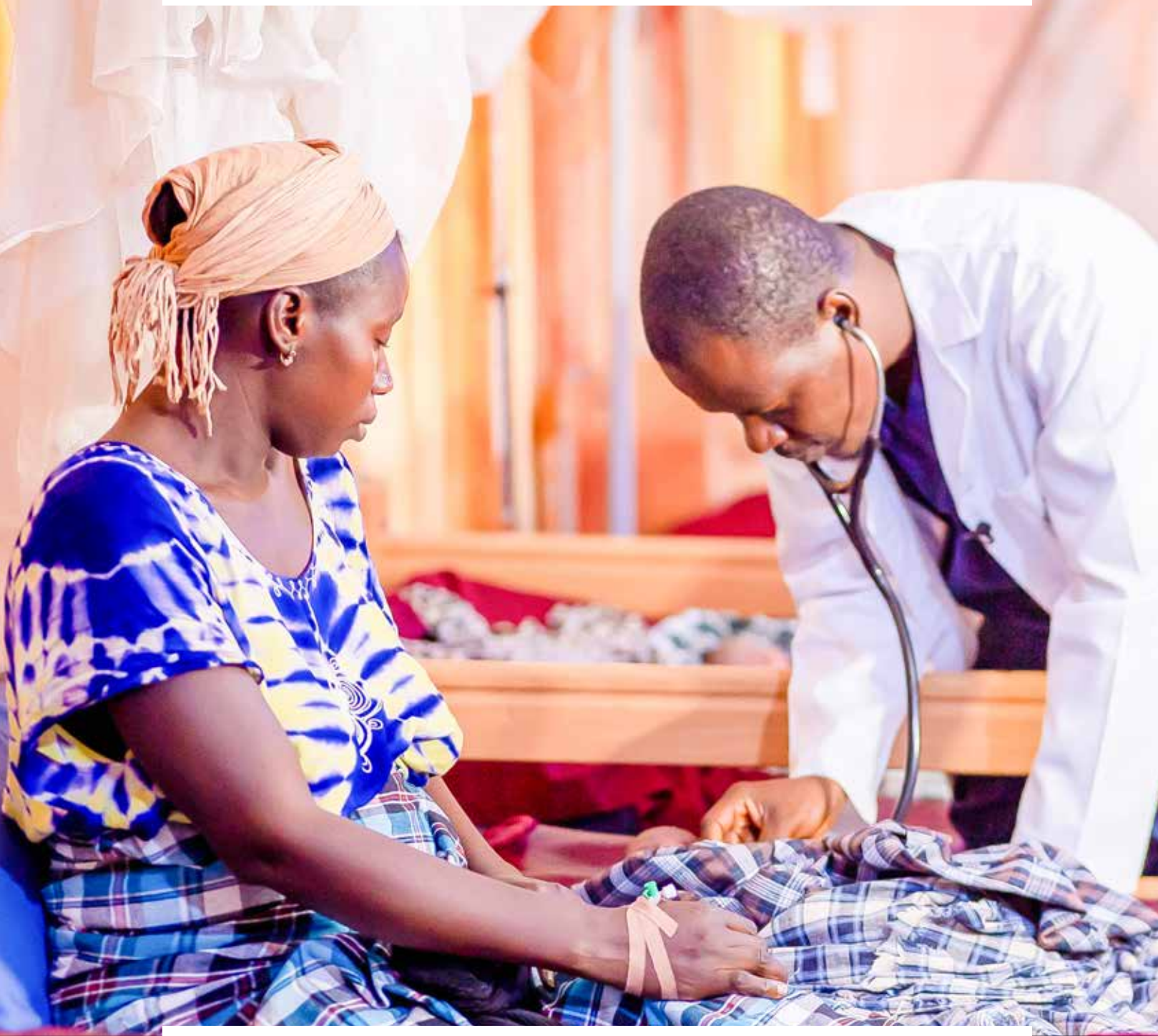
FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE

PROGRAM
REPORT





ENDING PREVENTABLE MATERNAL DEATHS





In The Gambia, maternal health remains a crucial concern, with a high maternal mortality ratio (MMR) of 289 per 100,000 live births, as indicated by the Demographic and Health Survey (2019/20). Rural-urban disparities in maternal mortality are evident, with rural areas experiencing a two-fold higher MMR compared to urban areas.

The high maternal mortality rate is attributed to sub-optimal availability, utilization, and quality of emergency obstetric care, along with low coverage of skilled birth attendants. National data shows that while facilities providing Comprehensive Emergency Obstetric Care are adequate, those offering basic obstetric care services are severely lacking. Furthermore, the distribution of Emergency Obstetric Care facilities is inequitable, with rural areas considerably disadvantaged. This results in significantly lower

access to life-saving interventions such as cesarean delivery in rural areas compared to urban areas. In 2023 we provided the Ministry of Health through the support of China Aid with over \$200,000 worth of Medical equipment and supplies for health facilities across the country and 10 healthcare professionals received training on Emergency Obstetric and New-born Care (EmONC) Signal functions. To improve access to maternal and reproductive health services, especially in remote and underserved areas, through funding from UNFPA, 100 midwives were trained and deployed to train with the help of UNFPA funding, to deploy them to health facilities. UNFPA continues to back the execution of Maternal Death Audit reviews in all hospitals and major health facilities. We supported Ten women who underwent successful fistula surgery and have reintegrated fully into their communities.

KEY RESULTS

 The provision of medical equipment and supplies, along with training for healthcare professionals on EmONC signal functions, has contributed to improved emergency obstetric care and access to life-saving interventions, especially in rural and underserved areas.

 The training and deployment of 100 midwives to health facilities have enhanced increased access to skilled birth attendants and quality maternal care, contributing to better maternal outcomes.

 The support for Maternal Death Audit reviews in hospitals and major health facilities facilitates the identification and addressing of gaps in care, which can help prevent future maternal deaths and improve overall maternal health outcomes.



THE OBSTETRIC FISTULA HELPLINE: EMPOWERING WOMEN WITH KNOWLEDGE AND SUPPORT

IMPACT STORY

In The Gambia, an estimated 335 to 1,052 cases exist, with many more women silently enduring its devastating effects. In a compassionate and determined effort to raise awareness about the devastating condition of Obstetric Fistula, UNFPA The Gambia embarked on a nationwide campaign to inform and support affected women. In partnership with Her Excellency the First Lady of The Gambia, Madam Fatoumatta Bah-Barrow, and influential health officials, UNFPA engaged key stakeholders, including media partners and QCell, to spread this crucial message.

The 2023 campaign launched by UNFPA The Gambia employed various channels to reach affected women and raise awareness about the availability of free repair surgery. Interviews with national media outlets shed light on the condition and the importance of seeking timely treatment. Additionally, an SMS campaign implemented by QCell played a crucial role in disseminating information to a wider audience. As a result of these efforts, over 150 inquiries about treatment options were received, demonstrating the campaign's success in reaching women in need.

UNFPA led a National Taskforce for the Eradication of Obstetric Fistula and is an active member of the global coalition aiming to eliminate this condition worldwide by 2030. This initiative aligns with UNFPA's mission to ensure healthier futures for women and girls, recognizing that the elimination of Obstetric Fistula is a fundamental step toward achieving gender equality and women's empowerment.





CHINA AID - PROVIDING HEALTH ASSISTANCE TO THE GAMBIA

PROJECTS



THE CHINA AID PROJECT

Under the China-Aid project, the Gambia received assistance through the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to combat COVID-19. The project aimed to strengthen and improve the nation's ability to prevent and respond to the virus. The project, valued at USD 620,000, was implemented in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. It involved providing necessary equip-

ment and supplies to the Ministry to ensure the continuity of maternal and healthcare services. In addition to medical equipment and supplies acquired over the previous two years, the project secured 40 delivery beds and three anesthesia machines in 2023 to support emergency obstetric care. Notably, the China-Aid project is the primary supplier of delivery beds to the Ministry of Health and will continue to support the country's healthcare system until March 31st, 2024.





ENDING UNMET NEED FOR FAMILY PLANNING



Family planning, particularly the use of contraceptives, has the potential to improve both maternal and child health outcomes. By enabling consistent contraceptive use, women can postpone motherhood, prevent unwanted or mistimed pregnancies, and avoid excessive fertility (having too many pregnancies too close together), leading to improved maternal health and well-being. Conversely, unregulated fertility can contribute to a rapid population growth rate that exceeds available resources, leading to adverse environmental and socio-economic effects.

Despite an increase in contraceptive use in the country, with a current prevalence rate of 19%, overall

utilisation remains low even when services are available free of charge in all public health care facilities. To address this, UNFPA collaborates with the Gambia Family Planning Association and community volunteers to provide necessary commodities and services to communities nationwide. During the reporting period, three youth centres located in Bansang, Njaba Kunda, and Bundung Pakanding received support to enhance their operational capacity and adhere to WHO guidelines for delivering youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, including HIV support. These centres also offer counselling and provide contraceptives to young individuals. Additionally, UNFPA facilitated the procurement of contraceptives, resulting in 120,145 couple-years of protection.

KEY RESULTS



The establishment of youth centres and the provision of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, including HIV support, help to address the specific needs of young individuals and improve their access to contraceptives and other reproductive health services.



Through the provision and promotion of contraceptive use, UNFPA's efforts resulted in 120,145 couple-years of protection. This contribution helps prevent unwanted pregnancies, reduces maternal and infant mortality rates, and improves overall maternal health and well-being.

Using contraceptives helps moms and kids stay healthier by preventing unplanned pregnancies and spacing out births





ENDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARMFUL PRACTICES



In the Gambia, the prevalence of FGM is 75.79% (15-49 years) while child marriage stands at 34.8%. According to the 2019/20 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) report, the lifetime physical and/or sexual violence from their intimate partners is 33.3%. "Nearly 4 in 10 married women have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence by their current partners. In addressing this concerns, In 2023, UNFPA in collaboration with UNDP and ITC, funded the establishment and operationalization of the GMIS center. Gender-based violence (GBV) is a widespread

problem that goes unreported in the Gambia due to a culture of silence that considers it to be a private family matter outside of the jurisdiction of law enforcement. Incidence reports of cases from Gender Information Management Systems (GMIS) in the Gambia indicate this violence ranges from physical abuse, sexual violence, domestic violence, psychological violence, intimate partner violence, child defilement, and harmful practices like forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting.

KEY RESULTS



The GMIS center facilitated significant improvements in coordination among GBV service providers in the country, leading to an increase in the number of GBV survivors receiving timely and appropriate support.



The digitalization of comprehensive data collection and analysis by the GMIS center resulted in a thorough and accurate understanding of reported cases of GBV in The Gambia.



Seventeen women secured electoral seats, largely attributed to training programs covering political processes, leadership skills, confidence building, gender-sensitive advocacy, networking, and mentorship. This marks the highest number of women elected in The Gambia's history.



Thirty frontline security personnel underwent a Training of Trainers (ToT) session on the GBV case management protocol for the Police. The training ensures that police officers and other frontline security personnel are equipped with the necessary expertise to effectively address, document, and report GBV cases.



Scale-up of community-level interventions in addressing social norms, empowering the people and community in protecting the rights of women and girls, led to the Enforcement of the FGM legislation through the prosecution and sentencing of the perpetrators (the cutter and the child's parents). This is the first-ever prosecution and sentencing of perpetrators in the Gambia.

The GMIS (Gender Management Information System) Centre was established as part of national and international efforts to respond to a high Gender-Based violence (GBV) burden in The Gambia using a strategic, integrated, and fully digitalized approach for GBV response, data collection, reporting and coordination of referrals. We supported the development of a new GBV Police training manual incorporating a GBV Case

management protocol and trained 30 Officers from the security sector as ToT on the GBV Police Training manual and case management protocol. Community-level interventions were scaled up to address social norms and empower the people and community in protecting the rights of women and girls. These interventions have contributed to and instances resulted to

KEY RESULTS



The GMIS centre, along with the training of security sector officers has led to improved data collection, reporting, and coordination of referrals for GBV cases. This resulted in a more efficient and effective response to GBV, providing better support and protection for survivors.



Community Intervention has positively impacted increased awareness and understanding of the harmful effects of FGM, and has contributed to the enforcement of the FGM legislation through the prosecution and sentencing of the FGM perpetrators, a first-ever prosecution and sentencing of perpetrators in the Gambia.

GMIS is a vital digital platform in the fight against gender-based violence (GBV), offering evidence-based support to survivors and guiding strategic interventions through ethical data collection and sharing.



EMPOWERING VOICES THROUGH GENDER INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

The Gender Management Information System (GMIS), established by UNFPA The Gambia, is a crucial tool in addressing gender-based violence (GBV) and promoting gender equality. Through ethical data collection, the GMIS enhances evidence-based programming and advocacy, amplifying the voices of those affected by GBV.

In collaboration with the Network for Gender-Based Violence (NGBV), the GMIS ensures that interventions and services for survivors are strategically prioritised where they are most needed, maximising the impact of limited resources. Operating fully digitally, the GMIS provides GBV response, comprehensive data collection, real-time monitoring and evaluation, and effective coordination among different actors and service providers involved in addressing GBV.

The GMIS's impact extends beyond its digital walls. Data generated by the centre is disseminated through well-attended GBV Case Conferencing and media briefings, keeping stakeholders, media, and the community informed about GBV issues and responses. This transparency holds stakeholders accountable and drives progress.

The GMIS is a lifeline for survivors and a catalyst for change. By providing accurate and timely updates on GBV issues, the GMIS enables stakeholders to make informed decisions and develop evidence-based policies to combat GBV. For the reporting year, the GMIS recorded 310 cases of GBV, with 100% of GBV survivors in need of medical attention receiving necessary services and 99.6% of survivors receiving psycho-social support and counselling at One Stop Centers.



Ancha Ceesay
GMIS volunteer



UNVEILING VOICES OF CHANGE: EX-CUTTERS SPEAK OUT AGAINST FGM IN THE GAMBIA

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) remains a grave violation of human rights affecting many girls and women in The Gambia. However, there is a growing movement within religious circles advocating against FGM, emphasizing a compassionate understanding of Islam.

Former circumcisers, like Binta Ceesay and Mama Jabbi, have joined the fight against FGM after being sensitized about its harms. Binta, once a cutter, now advocates for education and sensitization to end FGM. Mama, with extensive knowledge of the tradition, now educates her community about the dangers of FGM.

Their stories reflect a growing awareness and determination to end FGM in The Gambia. More sensitization and community engagement are crucial to achieving this goal.

In the village of Same Madina in the Central River Region of The Gambia, Binta Ceesay had once practiced FGM as a circumciser. The ex-cutter is now a beacon of hope for young girls in her community, with her renewed beliefs about FGM. Her journey towards change was rooted in her understanding of the issues around FGM, thanks to sensitization activities carried out in her community. Binta reveals that she is now free from the chains of this harmful tradition.



"While the government's laws should be respected, they are not the reason why we stopped. It's important to sensitise [people], just like it was done for us. If people understand the issues, they won't have a problem with them. But if they don't, they can cause harm and face legal consequences. To prevent this, more training and sensitization is needed to educate them about the dangers of FGM for the future of our young girls".

Binta emphasised the urgent need to end the practice to ensure healthier and more dignified futures for girls. She highlighted that FGM poses significant dangers to the health and wellbeing of girls and must therefore be eradicated.



"If FGM ends, girls will "... simply be healthy, as there are no health benefits to FGM", "Men are generally unaware of FGM since their wives can take their child for the practice without their knowledge. It's primarily a concern for women".

Mama Jabbi, from Niani Kunting village in the Central River Region, was once part of the deeply entrenched cultural practice.

"I inherited the tradition of cutting. I have extensive knowledge about it".

She explained how the tradition was highly valued in her community, mostly for reasons she has since realised are unjustifiable.



"In the past, elders would wait until girls were grown to perform FGM to discipline them and instill respect for elders and society. Now, they are performing FGM on infants and young children. If you perform FGM on an infant, what moral values will she learn? It is now up to parents to discipline their children and teach them respect."

Mama vividly recalls her days as a circumciser, with FGM deeply ingrained in her community's beliefs. However, as she performed these procedures, she witnessed firsthand the physical and emotional agony the girls endured.



"The dangers faced by our mothers became clear to me during a session with Tostan. I believe that anything harmful to us should be stopped".

With renewed determination, these two women champion community initiatives to end FGM. Armed with knowledge and empathy, they educate their communities about the dangers and long-term repercussions of the practice. Their story of change and hope illuminates a path toward a brighter, more equal future for young girls. They are living proof that change is possible, but their message remains clear: More sensitization and community engagement are needed to end FGM in The Gambia.

CHAPTER

02



PROGRAMME
ENABLERS





GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT



EMPOWERING WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING: ACHIEVEMENTS AND INSIGHTS FROM THE GAMBIA

To advance gender equality and uphold the human rights of women and girls in The Gambia, collaborative efforts were undertaken with UN agencies and civil society organisations (CSOs) to address barriers and boost women's political empowerment. This included establishing support mechanisms for women in decision-making roles. The office organised training programs nationwide, focusing on political processes, leadership skills, confidence-building, gender-sensitive advocacy, and networking. As a result, 58 women expressed interest in running for electoral positions, and 17 women secured seats, marking the highest number ever recorded in The Gambia. Through funding from the PeaceBuilding

Fund, we played a pivotal role in bridging the gap in campaign funding for women by implementing economic livelihood initiatives. This involved setting up the Women Resource Center and Gambifoods Processing Centre to generate funds and provide mentorship for women in politics. Support was extended to establish the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), The Gambia Chapter, creating a platform for women leaders to connect and offer mutual support. These initiatives underscore the significance of prioritising women's empowerment to establish an inclusive and equitable landscape for decision-making. The activities supported Women's Political Participation and Leadership yielding significant outcomes.

KEY RESULTS



Increased Participation in Electoral Processes: Through nationwide training programs, 58 women expressed interest in running for electoral positions. A record-breaking 17 women won seats in elections, marking the highest number of female representatives in The Gambia's history.



Bridging the Funding Gap for Women Candidates: Economic livelihood initiatives, such as the Women Resource Center and Gambifoods Processing Centre, have been established to provide financial support and mentorship for women in politics.



Establishment of Support Networks: The African Women Leaders Network (AWLN), The Gambia Chapter, was established to provide a platform for women leaders to connect, share experiences, and support each other in their leadership journeys.



Promoting Men in Alliance Building: efforts have been made to engage men in building alliances to protect the rights of women and girls. The first-ever men's conference hosted discussions, dialogue sessions, lectures, and campaigns aimed at promoting positive masculinity and fostering behavioural change regarding harmful traditional practices.



THE IMPACT OF GAMBI FOODS: AWA GAYE'S INSPIRING JOURNEY OF EMPOWERMENT

IMPACT STORY

Awa Gaye shines as a symbol of women's leadership, a rare sight in the realm of local government elections. In 2023, she challenged the prevailing norms of limited political participation despite facing social-cultural stereotypes, discrimination, and economic constraints. Awa's journey took a transformative turn through her involvement at the Resource Center for Food Processing in Kerr Jarrga. Her pivotal role in the center started a significant transfor-

mation in her political career. Initially established as a skills center, the initiative evolved into Gambi Foods, a thriving processing powerhouse, thanks to support from UNFPA through the UN Peacebuilding Fund. The center now focuses on uplifting women and families in the region, symbolizing hope and opportunity.

"We shared the center with six communities in JOKADU, all united in our pursuit of skill development," Gaye

noted at the center's launch. "With support from Maa Foundation and UNFPA, we realised the transformative power of processing agricultural products, a turning point for our community."

Today, Gambi Foods serves as a training ground for over 80 women, providing skills, mentorship, networking opportunities, and knowledge essential for success in the processing industry. With a workforce predominantly comprising women, the center has unlocked the potential of previously underutilised resources, leading to economic prosperity and community development. Gaye emphasised the center's impact on political par-

ticipation, stating, "With the economic empowerment facilitated by our center, women are empowered to engage in political activities, amplifying their voices and representation within our community".

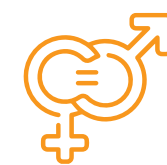
As the center continues to grow, partner organisations are committed to ensuring its success. "We are just beginning this journey, but already, we see the transformative impact of our work," Gaye concludes. "With continued support and collaboration, our center will serve as a catalyst for positive change, empowering women and uplifting communities for generations to come."



STRENGTHENING SUPPORT FOR GBV SURVIVORS: ENHANCING CAPACITY FOR LASTING IMPACT

UNFPA The Gambia, in collaboration with key stakeholders, is revolutionising GBV services through an integrated approach. They have developed a survivor-centred national and regional referral pathway, providing training for service providers, and fostering partnerships with the police. This comprehensive system ensures survivors' security,

safety, and access to information, while equipping professionals with the skills needed to address GBV effectively. Through this holistic approach, survivors receive the care they need, including managing FGM complications, prioritizing their physical and emotional well-being throughout the process.



EMPOWERING COLLABORATION: UNFPA THE GAMBIA LEADS GENDER INTEGRATION EFFORTS WITHIN UN COUNTRY TEAM

Within the UN Country Team (UNCT), UNFPA The Gambia leads the Gender Thematic Group, a collaborative platform for gender mainstreaming in The Gambia. The country office conducts targeted training and capacity-building activities for UN sister agencies, government partners, implementing partners, and executing organisations. These efforts aim to shift societal attitudes and organisational culture towards gender and GBV mainstreaming in country programs. UNFPA's Gender and GBV special-

ists serve as lead trainers, sharing best practices and evidence-based approaches, advocating for gender-responsive programming, capacitating other agencies to integrate gender perspectives effectively, and supporting collaborative efforts that strengthen the impact of gender-focused initiatives. Through the thematic group, events such as the 16 Days of Activism 2024 in The Gambia and PSEAH campaigns are well-coordinated and implemented for an impactful campaign promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.



INVESTING IN YOUTH



The Gambia faces significant youth unemployment, with over half of its population under 24. Despite this challenge, UNFPA has strategically transformed this demographic into an opportunity through targeted investments. These efforts have empowered Gambian youth to engage in politics, take on leadership roles, and contribute to decision-making. UNFPA's impact is evident in the positive changes seen among young people, showcasing the transformative power of its initiatives.

Over the past year, UNFPA has supported various youth-led initiatives, including the annual Youth-

Connekt Summit in The Gambia. This flagship event brought together 300 youth for discussions on economic empowerment and sexual and reproductive health and rights. UNFPA's commitment extends to strategic policy development, such as its contribution to the Gambia Plan of Action for Youth, a framework for enhancing youth well-being. Additionally, UNFPA has supported technical skills development as seen in its facilitation of robotics training, where 20 participants ranked impressively (33 out of 192 countries) in a global robotics competition in Singapore. Overall, UNFPA's approach has produced tangible results, unlocking the potential of The Gambia's youth.



EMPOWERING DEVELOPMENT THROUGH POPULATION DATA

DATA-DRIVEN ADVOCACY: BUILDING EVIDENCE FOR DIALOGUE AND ACTION

UNFPA The Gambia, in partnership with the University of The Gambia, has conducted extensive nationwide data collection and research on gender, GBV, sexual and reproductive health, and other key issues. This research has informed policy-making, strengthened laws against GBV, and highlighted barriers to women's political participation. The collaboration also focused on collecting detailed administrative data on Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) to support their inclusion and support in all spheres. UNFPA The Gambia organised sensitization, dialogue, and advocacy activities to raise awareness and promote behavioural change regarding GBV and harmful social norms. During the year, UNFPA The Gambia is supporting the Gambia Government, through the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS), in conducting the country's first-ever digital population and housing census. This includes facilitating South-South cooperation with the Agence Nationale de la Statistique et de la Démographie (ANSD) of Senegal, training enumerators, and ensuring quality data collection.





PROJECTS UN PEACEBUILDING - GENDER PROMOTION INITIATIVE 2.0 (GPI 2.0)

FOSTERING VIBRANT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: PROTECTING AND EXPANDING NON-STATE ACTOR PARTICIPATION

The country program is actively cultivating a dynamic civic movement for gender equality by expanding the space for civic engagement. Recent efforts to repeal the FGM Law in The Gambia revealed a need to enhance the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to effectively engage with the government and communities on critical policy matters. Through a participatory, localised approach, the program aims to strengthen CSOs in areas such as policy advocacy, coordination, program implementation, financial management, and monitoring and evaluation. This initiative will not only make CSOs more sustainable for donor funding but also empower grassroots organisations and the broader civic space to effectively engage with the government and drive necessary social norm changes.

SUPPORTING THE PROVISION OF COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH EDUCATION (CHE)

UNFPA's commitment to comprehensive health education (CHE) for young people is evident in its efforts to cultivate informed decision-making, promote bodily autonomy, and foster healthy relationships. Through collaboration with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, UNFPA trained 390 teachers on integrating CHE into school curricula, enhancing their capacity to deliver effective education.

Beyond classrooms, out-of-school initiatives have also flourished. Over 300 In School Peer Health Educators (PHEs) and 139 girls from All Girls Clubs received training on Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health (AYSRH), becoming advocates for their peers. These initiatives reached over 1,600 young people through school outreaches and community road shows, empowering them with essential knowledge and awareness. UNFPA's efforts exemplify its dedication to CSE, contributing to the empowerment and well-being of young people.



LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

Delivering adolescent The Gambia faces significant challenges in the well-being of its youth, especially young women and girls, with issues such as early marriages, teenage pregnancies, and gender-based violence prevalent. Despite legal prohibitions, FGM remains widespread. Limited access to sexual and reproductive health services exacerbates these challenges, highlighting the need for urgent interventions.

UNFPA The Gambia is actively working to enhance sexual and reproductive health services for young people by providing tailored technical assistance and training. In 2023, UNFPA trained 60 service providers to deliver adolescent and youth-friendly SRH services and supported the operationalization of three youth centres. These centres provided services including HIV support, counselling, and social mobilisation activities, reaching over 10,000 individuals and effectively disseminating crucial sexual and reproductive health information and services.

UN HSTF

The UN Trust Fund on Human Security project in The Gambia, titled "Localizing SDGs - Improving the livelihoods of vulnerable women and youth around the Senegambia Bridge," aims to support communities affected by the bridge's construction. Key components include the construction of Entrepreneurship and hospitality training centres, scheduled to launch in 2024, to promote entrepreneurship and skill development in rural areas, with a focus on women. The project integrates a GBV one-stop centre within the Entrepreneurship Centre, offering survivors support and economic empowerment opportunities.

Capacity-building programs for local government authorities focus on legal frameworks and policies, promoting human security and the inclusion of vulnerable groups in decision-making. Community engagement initiatives facilitate interactions between local authorities and citizens, promoting participation in local governance. The project also supports mainstreaming the human security approach into The Gambia's development framework, assisting in strategic planning and capacity-building efforts for government and UN officials.



THE YOUTH HEALTH ENHANCEMENT TO HARNESS THE DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND (YE4DD) PROJECT

HUMAN IMPACT STORY FOR UN HSTF



The YE4DD project funded by the Italian Cooperation is a cross-border project in Guinea, Gambia, and Guinea-Bissau. Its primary objective is to improve access to youth-friendly, maternal, sexual, and reproductive health information and services. The project focuses on addressing unique vulnerabilities among young people, empowering them, and cultivating a cohort of youth leaders. Additionally, the project seeks to contribute to the elimination of social and cultural constraints, promoting responsible and controlled fertility and promoting gender relations grounded in principles of equality and social justice.

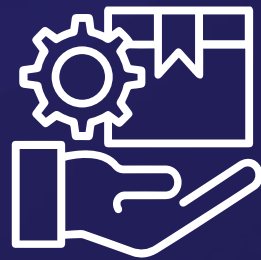
This year marked significant progress in youth-focused initiatives supported by the project. 60 service providers from six facilities underwent specialised training to deliver adolescent and

youth-friendly services. This training marked the first of its kind for the selected participants and is anticipated to be instrumental in meeting the diverse needs of young people. Furthermore, a group of twenty young people underwent training in robotics coding, programming, and strategy. They successfully competed in the FGC Robotics Competition in Singapore, ranking 33 out of 192 countries. Beyond the competition, they conducted outreach programs and workshops, influencing over 100 students and fostering interest in STEM fields within local schools and communities. The YE4DD project further supported the annual YouthConnekt Summit in The Gambia, engaging 300 young participants in discussions on socio-economic transformation, economic empowerment, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.



CHAPTER

03



ENHANCED
SERVICE
DELIVERY





ADVANCING THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



The Gambia parliament passed the Disability Act, the country's first legislation dedicated to protecting the rights of persons with disabilities. UNFPA supported the government, CSOs, and stakeholders in enhancing legal and institutional capacities to ensure the rights of PWDs are upheld. The UNPRPD assisted the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare in developing a disability

policy, strategy, and costed action plan aligned with the CRPD. This initiative resulted in the creation of a National Disability Policy and Strategy, a costed Action Plan for mainstreaming disability in policies and programs, and capacity-building for the Advisory Council to promote equal opportunities for persons with disabilities, including women and children.

KEY OUTCOMES



Improved Legal Framework: The enactment of the Disability Act and the development of a National Disability Policy and Strategy provide a solid legal and policy framework for protecting and promoting the rights of persons with disabilities.



Enhanced Institutional Capacity: The capacity-building efforts for government agencies, civil society organisations, and other stakeholders strengthen their ability to implement and enforce the Disability Act and related policies effectively.



Improved Policy Analysis: The capacity-building of the Advisory Council enhances its ability to conduct policy and legal analysis, leading to more informed decision-making and better promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities, including women and children.



Comprehensive Action Plan: The development of a costed Action Plan ensures that resources are allocated efficiently to support the implementation of the Disability Act and related policies, enhancing the overall impact of disability rights initiatives.

CHAPTER

04



ADVOCACY, RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND COMMUNICATION



In this chapter, we delve into UNFPA The Gambia's country office efforts in advocacy, resource mobilisation, and communication, comprising a year of impactful initiatives. As we navigate the

diverse challenges and opportunities in the realm of sexual and reproductive health, we showcase the strategic endeavours undertaken to advance our mission in 2023.



LAUNCH OF THE GAMBIA INVESTMENT CASE ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

The Government of The Gambia, in collaboration with UNFPA The Gambia country office, launched the Gambia Investment Case on Sexual and Reproductive Health. This event, attended by development partners, civil society, and stakeholders, underscored the potential of the investment case to positively transform the country's health landscape. The report provides compelling evidence of the need to invest in sexual and reproductive health, particularly focusing on the three transformative result areas for women and girls in The Gambia.

During the launch ceremony, UNFPA Country Representative Ms. Ndeye Rose Sarr emphasised the importance of allocating resources to sexual and reproductive health, urging stakeholders to unite for the well-being of women and girls. Minister Baboucarr Boye, representing the Vice President, officially launched the Gambia Investment Case, reaffirming the government's commitment to promoting women's access to sexual and reproductive health services and commending UNFPA for its pivotal role in championing the well-being of women, girls, and young people in The Gambia.



WORLD POPULATION DAY AND RELEASE OF THE 2023 STATE OF WORLD POPULATION REPORT LAUNCH

The country office, in collaboration with the National Population Commission Secretariat (NPCS) and Implementing Partners, observed World Population Day 2023, coinciding with the launch of the 2023 State of the World Population Report (SWOP). The gathering, attended by policy-makers, regional representatives, and stakeholders,

aimed to spotlight global population trends and evidence related to various issues. The event delved into the challenges and opportunities these trends present for development, particularly within The Gambia. The launch of the 2023 State of World Population Report (SWoP) was a significant component of the commemorative activities.



ENHANCING ADVOCACY TO COMBAT FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION DURING THE 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM.

In 2015, The Gambia instituted a ban on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), criminalizing the practice. However, since the change in government in 2016, FGM has persisted in communities in secrecy. In August 2023, three women were sentenced for performing FGM on infants, receiving fines. This led to a backlash, with a radical Islamist raising funds to pay the fines and a parliamentarian proposing to repeal the law banning FGM. In response, the country office, in collaboration with UNICEF, initiated advocacy efforts through national dialogue

and policy interventions. Discussions with the President's office addressed the potential implications of repealing the law on women's rights, resulting in a joint press release by the UNCT and a Development Partner Group (DPG) countering anti-FGM rhetoric. Additionally, the Country Office organized training programs for community stakeholders, emphasizing the harmful effects of FGM and Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and enhancing advocacy through accurate messaging.



ALL MEN'S CONFERENCE: HARNESSING MEN'S INFLUENCE TO ERADICATE FGM AND CHILD MARRIAGE

The All-Men Conference, organized by the Country Office, aimed to harness the influence of men to end FGM and child marriage, strengthen their involvement in the campaign against gender-based violence, and provide a platform for open dialogue and collective action to address

societal norms and promote positive masculinity. The conference which brought partners together facilitated a dynamic exchange of ideas and perspectives on critical issues, including gender-based violence and the pivotal role men play in achieving gender equality.



BUILDING NEW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCE MOBILISATION

In 2022 the country office's total investment in the Gambia was estimated at USD 4.5 million. This comprised investments of USD 1 million from core resources and USD 2.5 million from other sources of funding (non-core). Through concerted efforts, entailing reinforced partnerships and increased investments to realise our three transformative results, the country office successfully secured USD 2.5 million from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund. This financial support, acquired through the Gender Promotion Initiative (GPI 2.0) project, will enhance the institutional capacity of civil society organisations to advance gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly in rural areas, and foster solidarity among such organisations. The CO continues to work with its Implementing Partners (IPs) to deliver life-changing support in the areas of sexual and reproductive health, Family planning,

Gender equality and prevention of gender-based violence.

The Country Office is strengthening partnerships with private sector entities to fulfil its mandate in the country, culminating in two successful partnership agreements. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the QGroup of companies and Nafa Financial Services aims to enhance the well-being of women, girls, and young people in The Gambia, marking a significant milestone as the first formalised collaboration between the Country Office and the private sector within the country.

With dedicated efforts from our partners and generous support from our donors, UNFPA The Gambia continues to change the lives of women, girls and youth nationwide.



VISIBILITY

In 2023, The UNFPA Country Office intensified awareness-raising efforts and stakeholder engagement through strategic content across social media platforms, generating over 307,000 Twitter impressions and sharing 18 human interest stories. Capacity-building initiatives included training for media stakeholders on population issues, focusing on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender-based violence (GBV), particularly female

genital mutilation (FGM). Media engagements were facilitated for the Representative to emphasize UNFPA's stance on SRH issues like FGM, child marriage, and obstetric fistula. Additionally, UNFPA supported the production of a song addressing GBV, child marriage, and FGM, which garnered significant online engagement and was adapted into a play during an annual edutainment show, reaching over 3000 young people.





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