NGBV

NGBV NEWSLETTER

From April to July



Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter, where we highlight the ongoing efforts and achievements of the Network Against Gender-Based Violence.

Over the past months, our collective work has been driven by a shared commitment to creating safer, more equitable and gender sensitive communities. From community dialogues, young couples forums and youth empowerment initiatives to capacity-building programs for civil society organizations, each step we take is rooted in community ownership and the belief that sustainable change begins with local action.

This issue showcases inspiring stories of community leaders, young couples, adolescent girls, and religious and traditional leaders. All done to challenge gender based violence and harmful traditional practices such as Female Genital Mutilation and child marriage.

Supported by our partners and stakeholders, these initiatives are fostering awareness, reshaping social norms, and strengthening the resilience of Gambian communities.

As you explore this newsletter, I encourage you to celebrate the dedication and courage of all those working tirelessly for change. While challenges remain, these stories reaffirm that collective effort, rooted in respect and understanding, can transform social norms and uphold the dignity and rights of women and girls across The Gambia.

Thank you for your continued support and partnership in building a future free from violence and harmful practices.

Fallu Sowe
National Coordinator
Network Against Gender-Based Violence

Training for Grievance Redress Mechanism Committees Successfully Conducted Across Key Regions in The Gambia



The training of Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) Committees has been successfully carried out across several regions in The Gambia, bringing together a total of 350 participants 50 from each region including URR, CRR North, CRR South, NBR, LRR, WCR (Foni), and WCR.

This capacity-building activity was conducted in partnership with the Gambia Bureau of Statistics and the World Bank Group, with the goal of strengthening community-based systems to prevent and respond to gender-based violence (GBV), sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and sexual harassment (SH). The training focused on fostering survivor-centered, confidential, and accountable approaches to grievance handling, empowering local committees to effectively address cases within their communities.



The discussions generated several practical questions. In Kerewan, a participant asked, “How do we encourage survivors to report incidents when they fear community backlash?” The facilitator emphasized the importance of creating safe reporting channels and reassuring survivors that their information will be handled confidentially.

In Mansakonko, another participant raised a concern, stating, “Sometimes community members approach us for advice before they are ready to make a complaint. What should our role be at that stage?” Mr. Mbye explained that committee members should provide information on available services, listen without judgment, and allow survivors to make informed decisions.

In Janjanbureh, participants discussed cases involving young people and asked, “How do we address situations where harmful behavior is normalized by peers?” The facilitator highlighted the importance of continuous awareness raising and engaging young people in discussions on respectful relationships and consent.

In Kuntaur, a participant asked, “What should we do when a grievance involves someone who holds a leadership position in the community?” Mr. Mbye reminded participants that grievance procedures apply equally to all individuals and that cases should be managed through established reporting and referral pathways.



The refresher training successfully enhanced the capacity of Grievance Committee Members to identify, prevent, report, and respond to GBV, SEA, and SH cases in their communities. Through interactive activities and action planning, participants improved their understanding of survivor-centered principles, legal frameworks, and grievance procedures. They also shared challenges and practical solutions, developing community action plans to strengthen prevention, awareness, and referral systems. Despite ongoing issues like limited resources and stigma, the training emphasized the vital role of these members in fostering safe and inclusive communities. Continued capacity building and collaboration are essential for sustaining these efforts and supporting survivors effectively.

Refresher Training for Regional Ambassadors Enhances Efforts to Prevent SGBV/SEA/SH and Promote Justice under HISWACA Project

The Network Against Gender-Based Violence, supported by the World Bank Group and the Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS), recently held a series of intensive refresher training sessions for 105 Regional Ambassadors across The Gambia. These sessions aimed to strengthen local capacity in preventing and responding to gender-based violence (GBV), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), and Sexual Harassment (SH).

The training was conducted regionally, with 15 Ambassadors from each of the seven regions including Upper River, Central River North and South, North Bank, Lower River, Western Coastal, and Western Regions participating actively. The program commenced with participatory discussions on GBV, SEA, and SH, where Ambassadors reflected on their outreach experiences and shared observations from their communities and schools.

Participants demonstrated strong understanding of the prevalent forms of GBV, such as domestic violence, child marriage, sexual harassment, rape, and emotional abuse, which continue to affect women, girls, and vulnerable groups. They discussed challenges faced in their efforts, including stigma, social pressures, and resistance from community members, and shared successes like increased awareness and more open discussions around GBV issues.

In the first phase, Ambassadors led awareness campaigns, school dialogues, and community engagements that fostered greater understanding and willingness to discuss sensitive issues. Despite notable achievements, participants highlighted obstacles, including limited resources, and societal resistance to gender equality conversations. They stressed the importance of involving local leaders from the outset and engaging peers to increase participation.

One of the Ambassador said , “Many young people are now willing to discuss issues of violence openly, but some still fear reporting. We need more practical ways to build their confidence.”





Building on their experiences, participants collaboratively designed action plans for the next project phase, focusing on targeted activities like school sensitization, community dialogues, radio programs, and mentorship initiatives. They developed detailed budgets and explored strategies for resource maximization and sustainability, including strengthening monitoring and reporting mechanisms.

Participants also emphasized expanding outreach to underserved communities and integrating digital safety messages, especially regarding online harassment affecting young people.

The training culminated in each regional group presenting comprehensive implementation plans, demonstrating increased confidence and strategic planning skills. Facilitators provided feedback to refine these plans, ensuring readiness for execution.

Ms. Bah, the lead facilitator, highlighted the importance of trust-building, continuous engagement, and peer education in sustaining progress against GBV.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF NGBV REGIONAL AMBASSADORS ON THE HISWACA PROJECT

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) exercise across all regions in URR, CRR North, CRR South, NBR, LRR, WCR (Foni), and WCR highlighted notable progress in community efforts to combat Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), and Sexual Harassment (SH). Led by the Network Against Gender-Based Violence (NGBV) in partnership with the HISWACA Project, the exercise reviewed activities carried out by Regional Ambassadors during the first phase of the project.

The exercise brought together Ambassadors who conducted school and community awareness activities. It started with remarks from NGBV and HISWACA representatives, fostering open discussions. Ms. Isatou Bah, NGBV Programme Manager, praised the Ambassadors' dedication and emphasized that the review aimed to assess impact and identify areas for improvement. Mr. Sulayman Fatty of HISWACA encouraged honest sharing of successes and challenges.

Facilitated by Bah and Mbye, the sessions covered community sensitization, school outreach, community perception changes, stakeholder collaboration, and implementation challenges. Ambassadors reported conducting dialogues, youth forums, and engaging religious and traditional leaders, resulting in increased awareness of GBV and reporting mechanisms. Participants noted that involving local leaders boosted trust and participation.

School-based activities proved effective in engaging students and teachers on rights, consent, and gender issues. Despite some logistical and cultural challenges, Ambassadors observed positive shifts in community attitudes, including greater recognition of GBV issues and active involvement of young people as advocates.

Participants recommended more logistical support, ongoing training, and expanding outreach to parents, men, and community influencers. The exercise demonstrated that community-led interventions are vital in raising awareness and fostering action against GBV. The lessons learned will guide future efforts to create safer, more inclusive communities across The Gambia.



MEDIA ENGAGEMENT ON THE HISWACA PROJECT.

As part of its efforts to combat Gender-Based Violence (GBV), Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), and Sexual Harassment (SH), the HISWACA Project, led by the Network Against Gender-Based Violence (NGBV), has launched extensive media engagement activities across The Gambia. These initiatives aim to complement community interventions by leveraging traditional and digital platforms to raise awareness, promote reporting, and foster positive behavioral change.

Facilitated by Ms. Maimuna P. Mendy and Mr. Baboucarr Mbye, the activities included regional radio programs, television discussion and social media campaigns. Radio remained a vital communication channel, especially in rural areas.

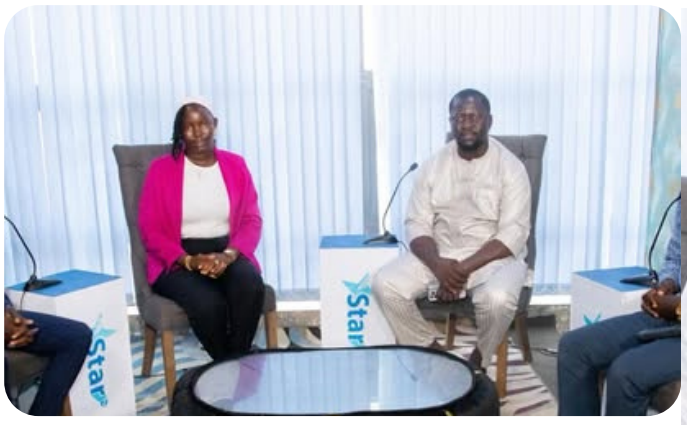


Ambassadors hosted programs in local languages, discussing forms of violence, survivor rights, and community responsibilities. Feedback indicated that radio effectively reached those with limited access to community sessions, notably women, older persons, and remote residents.

To deepen engagement, NGBV organized TV programmes featuring Ambassador and NGBV Project team These sessions provided in-depth discussions about causes, consequences, and prevention strategies, helping to normalize conversations on sensitive issues.

Recognizing the influence of social media, the project launched campaigns on, X (formerly Twitter). Interactive Twitter Spaces and awareness graphics expanded outreach to young audiences, encouraging participation and sharing vital information on reporting channels and support services.

Overall, these media activities significantly increased public awareness of GBV issues, strengthened community dialogue, and reinforced the importance of prevention and survivor support, complementing grassroots efforts and broadening the project's impact across The Gambia.







Empowering Communities to Prevent SEAH and GBV: Household Methodology Initiatives in The Gambia

In a significant step toward fostering safer and more equitable communities, facilitators and community gatekeepers in The Gambia recently came together to participate in household methodology activities. Supported by UNFPA The Gambia and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), these activities aimed to strengthen community-led efforts to prevent Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

The activities began with an introduction to the household methodology, focusing on its core principles and facilitation skills. A key part of this process was an engaging discussion titled "Who Does What?" which explored household chores and care work. Participants reflected on how responsibilities are divided within their homes, highlighting disparities and identifying opportunities for greater collaboration, fairness, and shared responsibility.



Following this, community members participated in mapping household roles and conducting a chore audit and analysis. Through group reflections, they examined how tasks and responsibilities are distributed among household members. This exercise aimed to uncover practical ways to promote gender equality, foster cooperation, and challenge traditional social norms that often perpetuate inequality and violence.

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Young Couples in The Gambia Lead Community Shift Against Harmful Traditions



In a significant step towards combating gender-based violence and harmful cultural practices, a three-day residential forum held in Albreda brought together 30 young couples from communities across the North Bank Region. The initiative, organized by the Network against Gender-Based Violence (NGBV) with support from UN Women and the Ford Foundation, aimed to foster dialogue, increase awareness, and empower couples to challenge entrenched social norms.

Participants engaged in discussions, practical exercises, and reflections on social and cultural drivers of harmful practices. Facilitators covered topics including gender-based violence, reproductive health, legal protections, and religious perspectives.

A young woman shared how the forum opened her eyes to the importance of mutual respect: “Many practices we thought were traditional are actually harmful. Respect and joint decisions are key to a healthy family.” Her partner added, “Men have a vital role in protecting our daughters and wives from harmful practices.”



The forum highlighted community pressures that sustain traditions like FGM and early marriage, emphasizing that collective action and community dialogue can encourage change. Participants discussed strategies such as joint decision-making and advocacy, noting that family unity is crucial to resisting outside pressures.

Legal protections, including the Domestic Violence Act and Sexual Offences Act, were also discussed, with religious leaders clarifying that true religious teachings promote dignity and justice. Baboucarr Mbye, a facilitator, stated that understanding the law empowers families to uphold protective legislation.

The event concluded with couples making commitments to advocate for change, with local officials praising the initiative’s impact. Participants expressed renewed motivation to act, emphasizing that positive change begins with couples. Organizers hope this community-led dialogue will lead to broader acceptance of cultural values that respect women’s rights



Gender based violence is not limited to physical harm. Any act that threatens dignity, safety, freedom, or wellbeing because of a person's gender is a form of violence.









Culture becomes meaningful when it protects people and strengthens communities. Harmful practices should not be confused with cultural identity.

The Dialogue With Male Household Heads And Young Men As Allies For Gender Equity, Elimination Of Harmful Traditional Practices And SGBV In Gambian Communities.



In a significant step toward ending harmful traditional practices, community dialogues held across the Upper River Region (URR), Central River Region (CRR), and Lower River Region (LRR) have united men, boys, religious leaders, and elders to confront issues like Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Child Marriage, and Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV).

> When I listened to the dialogue and the health experts, I realized the effects of FGM and Child Marriage on girls, and I believe it will benefit me tomorrow not to take my child to FGM," said Muhammed Touray a community leader.
>
> Muhammed Touray



These engagements are part of ongoing efforts to challenge and transform social norms that negatively impact women and girls in Gambian communities. Over three days, a total of 90 participants comprising community influencers, religious leaders, and youth shared experiences, reflected on the consequences of harmful practices, and committed to advocating for change.

Participants acknowledged that men and boys are pivotal decision-makers within households and communities. Many expressed their newfound understanding of the health, social, and legal implications of practices like FGM and Child Marriage. Health experts provided evidence-based information, highlighting the physical and psychological toll these practices take on girls and women, prompting many to reconsider culturally accepted norms.

Religious leaders played a vital role, with some delivering messages during sermons that emphasized the importance of protecting children from early marriage and FGM. This community-led approach fostered an environment of trust and openness, encouraging sceptics to embrace new perspectives.

The dialogues culminated in a pledge-signing ceremony, where 49 participants committed to actively advocating against SGBV, FGM, and Child Marriage in their communities. One Participant man emphasized his resolve, saying, "By Allah's grace I took this pledge that any child in my family under 18 years I will not give her hand in marriage," demonstrating a personal commitment to change.

This initiative demonstrates that community-driven conversations and awareness-raising can catalyze meaningful change. Moving forward, continued engagement with local leaders and sustained awareness campaigns are essential to eradicating harmful practices and fostering gender equality across Gambian communities.

Intergenerational Community Dialogues: Engaging Community and Youth Leaders for the Abandonment Harmful Traditional Practices in Gambian Communities

In a significant step towards ending harmful traditional practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), child marriage, and gender-based violence (GBV), the Network Against Gender-Based Violence (NGBV), with support from UN Women through the Ford Foundation, has successfully facilitated intergenerational community dialogues across The Gambia's Upper River, Central River, and Lower River Regions.

The three-day series of one-day community engagements brought together a diverse group of 120 participants, including community elders, religious leaders, women and youth representatives, adolescents, and traditional authorities. The initiative aimed to create a safe space for open, respectful discussions on issues often considered taboo, fostering mutual understanding and collective responsibility for social change.

Facilitators encouraged participants to share their perceptions, experiences, and concerns regarding SGBV, FGM, and child marriage. The dialogues revealed that while many community members recognize the harmful effects of these practices, deep-rooted cultural beliefs, misinformation, and social pressures continue to sustain them. Notably, misconceptions linking FGM to religious obligations and the belief that child marriage protects girls from immoral behavior were frequently discussed.

Health professionals provided vital insights into the physical and psychological consequences of FGM and early pregnancies, emphasizing that these practices threaten the wellbeing and rights of women and girls. Legal experts clarified that existing laws explicitly prohibit FGM and child marriage, underscoring the importance of community reporting mechanisms over informal settlements that often prioritize reputation over justice.
One of the most impactful aspects of the dialogues was the engagement between elders and young people. Participants reflected on the historical roots of harmful practices and the aspirations of the younger generation for safer, healthier communities. Religious leaders, including Imams, initially cautious, expressed appreciation for the evidence-based discussions and committed to incorporating these lessons into their teachings.

Participants also discussed the role of poverty, migration, and digital technology in shaping social norms and influencing youth behavior. Emphasizing positive parenting and open communication, community members proposed practical actions such as increased sensitization, collaboration with religious and traditional leaders, and community-led advocacy.





The dialogues concluded with a pledge-signing ceremony, where 70 of the 120 participants publicly committed to advocating for the abandonment of SGBV, FGM, and child marriage in their communities. This collective commitment signifies a promising move towards sustainable change driven by community ownership.
One participant shared, “Today’s session was exceptionally engaging. Everyone understood the importance of ending these harmful practices and is now committed to creating safer communities.”

Another emphasized, “We have a shared responsibility: if we see someone taking a child for FGM or marriage, we must report it. Our collective health depends on it.”

The success of these community dialogues underscores the importance of respectful, evidence-based conversations in transforming social norms. With continued community engagement, legal enforcement, and support from development partners, The Gambia is making strides toward protecting the rights, health, and dignity of women and girls.

As one community elder noted, “Change begins with understanding and respect. Together, we can build a future free from harmful practices.”

The community dialogues are part of a broader effort by the Network Against Gender-Based Violence, supported by UN Women through the Ford Foundation, to foster community-led solutions and promote gender equality across The Gambia.

Young Couples Lead Community Effort to Promote Gender Equality and End Harmful Practices in The Gambia

A three-day residential forum for young couples in Kartong, West Coast Region, has successfully taken a significant step toward ending harmful traditional practices and promoting gender equality in The Gambia. Organized by the Network against Gender-Based Violence with support from UN Women and the Ford Foundation, the event brought together 30 participants 15 couples from communities where practices such as Female Genital Mutilation, child marriage, and gender-based violence remain deeply rooted.

The initiative aimed to empower young couples with vital knowledge, foster open dialogue, and encourage community leadership on issues related to gender equality and the abandonment of harmful practices. Throughout the forum, participants engaged in interactive sessions exploring the health, social, legal, and human rights implications of FGM, child marriage, sexual violence, and intimate partner violence. They discussed models of positive, gender-equitable relationships based on mutual respect, shared decision-making, and partnership.

Discussions began with an exploration of the root causes and effects of gender-based violence. Facilitators helped participants understand how social norms and power imbalances perpetuate violence against women and girls. Ms. Halimatou Jallow Jesuorobo emphasized, “Violence is not a private family matter. It is a violation of human rights and a barrier to healthy family and community development.”

Participants engaged in practical activities, working in pairs to identify potential vulnerabilities for themselves and their children, including child marriage, sexual abuse, and emotional violence. They proposed preventive measures such as improved family communication, community awareness campaigns, and early reporting of abuse. One participant noted, “Children are more likely to report abuse when they feel safe, respected, and listened to within their families.”



Mr. Sowe led a detailed discussion on harmful traditional practices, emphasizing that many persist due to cultural, social, or religious justifications despite their harmful effects. He stated, “Culture should serve people, not harm them. Traditions that promote dignity, wellbeing, and social cohesion deserve protection, while those causing harm must evolve or be abandoned.”
Ms. Jallow highlighted the severe health consequences of FGM, including infections, chronic pain, childbirth complications, and psychological trauma. She stressed, “FGM/C has no medical benefit. Evidence consistently demonstrates it causes significant harm to women and girls.”

Religious Perspectives Facilitated by Oustass Jasseh, the session aimed to clarify GBV and Harmful Traditional Practices as a religious obligation. He explained that Islamic teachings promote justice, dignity, compassion, and mutual respect, emphasizing that “No religious teaching should be interpreted to cause harm or injustice. Protecting human dignity is a fundamental principle of Islam.”

Participants discussed the social and economic consequences of child marriage, including school dropout, teenage pregnancy, and limited opportunities for girls. One participant said, “Early marriage often interrupts girls’ education and limits their future, affecting not only the girls but also their families and communities.

Legal frameworks were also introduced, highlighting the importance of community involvement in enforcement. Facilitators clarified that laws criminalizing FGM, child marriage, and GBV are supported by religious and human rights principles.

The forum fostered a shared commitment among couples to promote violence-free homes, support survivors, and serve as role models for their communities. This grassroots effort complements national initiatives to end FGM, reduce child marriage, and eliminate GBV, emphasizing the importance of inclusive dialogue and collective action to advance gender equality and human rights in The Gambia.

This community-led initiative demonstrates the power of youth engagement and community participation in driving social change. As The Gambia continues its journey towards social justice, grassroots efforts like this are vital in shaping safer, healthier futures for women, girls, and families across the country.





When a girl is married early, her education is often interrupted and her future opportunities become limited. The consequences affect not only the girl but also her children and the wider community.



"Culture should serve people, not harm them. Traditions that promote dignity, wellbeing, and social cohesion deserve protection. Traditions that cause harm must evolve or be abandoned."







GPI 2.0 STRENGTHENS CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS THROUGH PEER SUPPORT IN THE GAMBIA

The Gender Promotion Initiative (GPI) 2.0 Project has taken a major step toward enhancing the capacity of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) across The Gambia. The project's innovative Peer Support Model was the centerpiece of the recent Peer Support Consolidation Mechanism Meeting, held from July 8th to 9th at Metzy Residence Hotel.



The two-day event gathered representatives from various CSOs to review progress, share experiences, and develop strategies for improved collaboration. Participants engaged in lively discussions, group exercises, and reflection activities that emphasized peer learning as a sustainable approach to organizational development. They highlighted that peer support is more than occasional technical assistance; it is a continuous process of mentoring, knowledge exchange, and joint problem-solving to strengthen institutional resilience.





A key part of the meeting was an introduction to the GPI Peer Support Model, which encourages experienced organizations to mentor others within their clusters. This structure aims to build stronger organizational systems, improve resource mobilization, and support policy development. During the session, organizations presented their mandates, core strengths, and institutional challenges, revealing common issues such as limited monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacity, staffing constraints, and inadequate ICT infrastructure.

Building on this, organizations developed tailored support frameworks focused on capacity building, partnership development, and resource mobilization. These frameworks are aimed at addressing identified gaps through practical activities like needs assessments, mentorship, proposal writing, and stakeholder engagement.

On the final day, participants created detailed action plans to implement support activities from August to December 2026. The meeting concluded with a hands-on refresher on monitoring tools, including a live demo of Kobo Collect, to enhance data collection and reporting. Overall, the event underscored the importance of peer collaboration as a key driver for sustainable institutional growth and progress toward gender equality in The Gambia.

EMPOWERING ADOLESCENT GIRLS THROUGH HUMAN RIGHTS, GBV PREVENTION AND SEXUAL REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH EDUCATION



A three-day empowerment training, organized by The Girl Agenda with support from UNFPA, was held as part of the Network Against Gender-Based Violence, FGM Cross-Border Project. The event brought together 50 adolescent girls to learn, share, and build confidence on critical issues affecting their lives and futures.

The program commenced with an engaging session on human rights, where participants learned about their fundamental rights, gender equality, dignity, and non-discrimination. Interactive discussions helped girls relate these principles to their everyday experiences within their families and communities, fostering a deeper understanding of their entitlement to respect and protection.

Following this, a comprehensive session on gender-based violence provided insights into its various forms, causes, and consequences. Participants explored ways to prevent GBV, the importance of reporting incidents, and accessing support services. A participant expressed her newfound awareness, stating, "Before the training, I thought violence was something I had to endure. Today I know my rights, I will help other girls report violence, and I encourage girls especially those with disabilities to access family planning and other health services without fear."

The training also addressed child marriage, highlighting its root causes and detrimental effects on girls' education, health, and future opportunities. Facilitators emphasized the importance of delaying marriage and keeping girls in school. Participants reflected on their own experiences, noting how early marriage had curtailed their potential and calling for greater community awareness and support.

The second day focused on harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation, menstrual health, and teenage pregnancy. Girls engaged in discussions that debunked myths surrounding menstruation, shared their personal challenges, and learned how to advocate for dignified menstrual hygiene management. One girl shared her struggles with severe cramps and pain, emphasizing the importance of understanding and managing menstrual health.

The session on teenage pregnancy explored its causes and consequences, stressing the need for responsible decision-making and access to sexual and reproductive health rights. Participants participated in affirmation circles, which provided a safe space for girls to recognize their strengths, build self-esteem, and foster peer support.

The final day was dedicated to leadership development, self-esteem, and assertiveness. Girls explored their personal strengths, learned communication skills, and understood the qualities of effective leaders. They discussed how to influence positive change within their families, schools, and communities. The training concluded with reflections on key learnings and a call for girls to continue supporting each other and advocating for their rights. This comprehensive training aims to empower adolescent girls to become confident, informed, and active participants in shaping their futures and communities.



The Coalition Against Gender-Based Violence , a broad alliance of civil society organisations, women's rights organisations, youth groups, community -based organisations, survivors, activists, and advocates, continues to monitor the constitutional challenge to the Women's (Amendment) Act, 2015 before the Supreme Court of The Gambia. Through evidence -based advocacy, community engagement, and policy dialogue, the Coalition remains committed to protecting the rights, health, dignity, and bodily integrity of women and girls, while keeping the public informed with accurate, factual updates on the proceedings.

During the hearing held on 7, 8 and 9 July 2026 , the plaintiffs concluded their presentation of witness evidence after no additional witnesses were called before the Court. The Supreme Court subsequently invited the defendants to open their defence.

The State, represented by the Ministry of Justice, commenced its defence by calling the Deputy Clerk of the National Assembly, who tendered the official Hansard as evidence of the legislative process that led to the enactment of the Women's (Amendment) Act , 2015. The Court admitted the Hansard into evidence.

The defence also heard testimony from a representative of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, while a witness from the Ministry of Health began giving evidence before the Court adjourne d. The hearing is scheduled to continue on Tuesday, 14 July 2026 .

The Coalition Against FGM respects the independence of the judiciary and the constitutional role of the Supreme Court in determining this matter. The Coalition encourages the public to rely on verified information and to avoid speculation while the legal process continues.

The Coalition further reaffirms its unwavering commitment to protecting the rights, health, dignity, and bodily integrity of women and girls in The Gambia. It continues to support the full implementation and enforcement of the Women's (Amendment) Act, 2015 , as a critical safeguard against female genital mutilation and remains committed to providing timely, factual updates throughout the proceeding

HUMAN INTEREST STORIES

Intergenerational Community Dialogues: Engaging Community and Youth Leaders for the Abandonment Harmful Traditional Practices in Gambian Communities



FGM can lead to many challenges and serious implications, especially during childbirth or labor. If the child doesn't face these implications, the mother might face them instead. That's why we need to stop FGM, because it has serious consequences for us. Wherever there are implications, we should stay away from them and avoid them.

The problem with FGM lies with those who practice it. If you see someone taking a child for circumcision or FGM, you should take responsibility and report that person to the nearest authority. We all care about our health, which is why we need to report these issues. If a girl is under 18, she should not be married off; she should be allowed to reach 18, complete her education, and have a better future. We need to protect her and prevent any problems or challenges that might arise in the future.

We thank the organization for organizing these kinds of conversations and engagements because some people didn't even know the risks and implications of these practices before. But after participating in this discussion, their understanding and knowledge have improved. When we go back, we can sit with our community members to teach them what we have learned here

Our stand will be the issue of child marriage and FGM, because communities do practice something's or do something's without knowing the why they do it, but if we go back we are going to have a dialogue with them to enlighten them with the effects of early Marriage such as the difficulties encountered in Labour and if the child didn't encounter difficulties in Labour it will be difficult after the childbirth for her to do some of her responsibilities in her martrimonial house because physically she is not matured



"FGM is a harmful practice that must be banned. It causes irreversible physical and emotional trauma, often performed on infants as young as two months old or even within their first week. Such actions remove vital parts of a child's body, leaving lasting scars and suffering. Every child deserves to grow up healthy, safe, and whole FGM denies them that right. "





"Today, our class was very interactive and engaging. I have attended similar training sessions before, but today's session was particularly interesting and important because all the topics were addressed fairly, and everyone participated actively. We discussed the importance of abandoning FGM and the dangers it poses to young girls, especially the health risks such as during childbirth. We also talked about child marriage, emphasizing that the law prohibits marriages below the age of 18. It is crucial to put an end to this practice to prevent potential negative consequences for young girls in the future."

The Dialogue With Male Household Heads And Young Men As Allies For Gender Equity, Elimination Of Harmful Traditional Practices And SGBV In Gambian Communities.

"This issue of child marriage, the dialogue focuses on that a lot, and the difficulties we encounter within our family, friendship and neighborhood just to remind people about the topics discussed including the FGM. There is a little misunderstanding when it comes to FGM, some people agree and some disagree. But at this point we all have to understand that the law is more powerful than the Gambia and that being the result we should all abide by the law"





"To be honest, before this discussion, I did not support the abandonment of FGM. However, after listening to the health practitioners here, I have gained a much better understanding of the negative implications FGM has on our girl child. I now have a much deeper understanding of the issue. The things I did not know before have been clarified, and this gathering has provided a platform for me to broaden my perspective."

Young Couples in The Gambia Lead Community Shift Against Harmful Traditions



"I am happy to be here as part of a couple. We have learned a lot about gender-based violence and understand how important it is to know the responsibilities related to it, including issues like FGM. FGM is a harmful practice that we need to talk about openly, especially because it affects women like us.

It impacts childbirth and can lead to other complications related to marriage. It is important for us to share this information with other young couples so they can understand the challenges women face due to FGM. This knowledge will help us work together to prevent such practices and support women's health and rights."

"No religious teaching should be interpreted in a manner that causes harm, oppression, or injustice. Protecting human dignity is a fundamental principle of Islam."





"Understanding gender issues will help me to maintain a peaceful environment in the market. I believe that this program will have a significant impact on both me and my partner, as it will enable us to communicate effectively whenever we face issues, engage in dialogue, and resolve matters amicably. The knowledge I gain from this program will also empower me to engage with my community, particularly young couples, to promote peaceful coexistence and address gender-based violence.

We recognize that gender-based violence is a prevalent issue in our community, and it is a collective responsibility for young people to come together and work towards addressing it. I am confident that the knowledge I gain here will be instrumental in helping me contribute positively to this cause in the long run."



"I was unaware that I was pregnant until my mother noticed changes and took me for a medical checkup. My pregnancy interrupted my education and affected my plans for the future. The most painful aspect of my experience was not knowing the whereabouts of the father of my child and having to rely on my family for support. Initially, I did not understand many things about my body and reproductive health. I learned about my sexual and reproductive health rights, gender equality, bodily autonomy and the different forms of gender-based violence. I also gained practical skills to identify abuse, report violence and support other girls facing similar experiences. I have learned lessons that will help me make better decisions in the future"

"I am survivor of child marriage, married while still a young girl, I endured years of intimate partner violence without knowing that I had the right to live free from abuse or make decisions about my own body and health. Like many young girls in the community, I had little access to information on SRHR and believed remaining silent was my only option. I was first married off at a very young age and became a widow shortly after the first marriage. I returned to my family home, but I was later pressured into another marriage arrangement. I experienced emotional distress, heavy responsibilities, and very difficult living conditions, which affected my physical and emotional well-being. However, the training gave me an opportunity to reflect on my experiences, understand my rights, and recognize the importance of protecting girls from harmful practices. I am committed to ensuring that my own child does not experience similar challenges. I have also vowed never to subject her through FGM knowing how harmful the practice is. I believe our parents should also have the opportunity to learn what we have learned because they play an important role in protecting girls"

