



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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**Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination
against Women**

**Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under
article 18 of the Convention**

Fourth and fifth periodic reports of States parties due in 2010

Gambia*

[Date received: 1 October 2012]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|--|
| AATG | Action Aid The Gambia |
| ACDHRS | African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies |
| ACHPR | African Charter on Human and People's Rights |
| ADB | African Development Bank |
| ADWAC | Association for Development of Women and Children |
| AFP | Association of Food Processors |
| AGSP | Ambassador's Girl's Scholarship Programme |
| AIDS | Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome |
| APWGA | Association for the Promotion of Women and Girls |
| AWE | Association of Women Entrepreneurs |
| BAFROW | Foundation for Women's Research and the Environment |
| BPFA | Beijing Platform for Action |
| CEDAW | Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women |
| CDDP | Community Driven Development Project |
| CIWS | Core Indicator Welfare Survey |
| CPA | Child Protection Alliance |
| CPAP | Country Programme Action Plan |
| CPD | Country Programme Document |
| CRC | Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| CRR | Central River Region |
| CSIP | Community Skills Improvement Project |
| CSO | Civil Society Organisation |
| CST | Commercial Sex Tourism |
| DMC | Disaster Management Committee |
| DPO | Disabled Persons Organisations |
| EBF | Exclusive Breast Feeding |
| ECOWAS | Economic Commission of West African States |
| ECD | Early Childhood Development |
| ECOFEPA | ECOWAS Female Parliamentarians Association |
| EDF | European Development Fund |
| EFA/FTI | Education for All/Fast Track Initiative |
| EMNCH | Emergency Maternal New-born Child Health |

| | |
|-----------|---|
| EMOC | Emergency Obstetric Care |
| EMOP | Emergency Operations |
| ESSP | Education Sector Strategic Plan |
| EU | European Union |
| FAWEGAM | Forum for African Educationalist-Gambia Chapter |
| FIOH | Future in our Hands |
| FLAG | Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia |
| GAMCOTRAP | Gambia Association on Traditional Practices |
| GAMWORKS | Gambia Association for the Management of Public Works |
| GAWFA | Gambia Women's Finance Association |
| GBoS | Gambia Bureau of Statistics |
| GEM | Gender Empowerment Model |
| GER | Gross Enrolment Rate |
| GFFPA | Gambia Family Planning Association |
| GFSI | Girl Friendly School Initiative |
| GIG | The Gambia is Good |
| GRTS | Gambia Radio and Television Services |
| GTU | Gambia Teacher's Union |
| HIPC | Highly Indebted Poor Countries |
| HMIS | Health Management Information System |
| HIV | Human Immunodeficiency Virus |
| ICPD | International Conference for Population and Development |
| IDD | Iodine Deficiency Disorder |
| IMR | Infant Mortality Rate |
| IPT | Intermittent Preventive Treatment |
| ITN | Insecticides Treated Bed nets |
| KAP | Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices |
| KM | Kilometre |
| KMA | Kanifing Municipal Authority |
| LGA | Local Government Authority |
| LLIN | Long Lasting Insecticide Nets |
| LRR | Lower River Region |
| MDG | Millennium Development Goals |
| MICS | Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey |

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|----------|--|
| MMR | Maternal Mortality Rate |
| MoBSE | Ministry for Basic and Secondary Education |
| MTR | Midterm Review |
| NACCUG | National Association of Credit Unions of The Gambia |
| NaNA | National Nutrition Agency |
| NAWFA | National Association of Women Farmers |
| NBR | North Bank Region |
| NEDI | National Enterprise Development Initiative |
| NEPAD | New Partnership for Africa's Development |
| NERICA | New Rice for Africa |
| NESPAWEP | NEPAD Spanish African Women's Empowerment Project |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organisation |
| NOWEPSO | Network of Women in Peace and Security in the ECOWAS Space |
| NPAGW | National Policy for Advancement of Gambian Women |
| NSF | National Strategic Framework |
| NSGA | Nova Scotia Gambia Association |
| OVP | Office of the Vice-President |
| PLHWHIV | People Living with HIV |
| PPTCT | Prevention of Parent to Child Transmission |
| Pro-PAG | Pro Poor Advocacy Group |
| PRSP | Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper |
| PTA | Parent Teacher's Association |
| RCH | Reproductive Child Health |
| SDF | Social Development Fund |
| SMC | School Management Committee |
| SWAGAM | Society for Women Against Aids in Africa-Gambia Chapter |
| TANGO | The Association of Non-Governmental Organisations |
| TARUD | The Trust Agency for Rural Development |
| TBA | Traditional Birth Attendant |
| U5 | Under 5 Mortality |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNFPA | United Nations Population Fund |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |

| | |
|--------|--|
| URR | Upper River Region |
| UNSCR | United Nations Security Council Resolution |
| VDC | Village Development Committee |
| VISACA | Village Savings and Credit Associations |
| WASDA | Wuli and Sandu Development Association |
| WDC | Ward Development Committee |
| WHO | World Health Organization |

1. Introduction

1. The Committee considered the combined initial, second and third periodic report of The Gambia (CEDAW/C/GMB/1-3) at its 697th and 698th meetings, on 15 July 2005 (see CEDAW/C/SR.697 and 698). The fourth report was due in May 2006. The failure in meeting this target date is regretted. This report is a combined report for the 4th and 5th periodic reporting period. It highlights progress made since 2005 and responds specifically to some of the issues raised by the Committee during its 697 and 698 sessions.

2. Responses to Concluding Comments, Observations of the Committee: A/60/38, paragraphs 171-220

2.1 Domestication of the Convention into national legislation

2. **The National Constitution of The Gambia:** The initial, 2nd and 3rd report highlighted the equality and non-discrimination provisions contained in the 1997 Constitution of The Gambia which is the supreme law of the land and the legal basis, from which all laws come in force. Chapter IV, section 17, provides for the protection of the fundamental human rights and freedoms of all persons in The Gambia irrespective of his or her colour, race, gender, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property birth or other status. Section 28(1) and (2) provides for the promotion and protection of the human rights of women in the statement that “women are to be accorded full and equal dignity of the person with men as well as having the right to equal treatment with men including equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities”. Other sections make general provisions to protect the right to life, personal liberty, and protection from slavery and forced labour, inhuman treatment and protection from deprivation of property.¹

3. **The Women’s Bill 2010:** The enactment of the Women’s Bill by the National Assembly on the 13th April 2007 is a major milestone in the quest to attain gender equity and equality. Efforts to domesticate the Convention and other human rights instruments related to the rights of women culminated in the drafting of a Women’s Bill in 2007. To get it to the level where it is today that is the Bill went through several participatory processes of consultations and review. These entailed:

- **Review of National Laws and Policies:** A comprehensive review of national laws and policies of The Gambia was carried out with a view to determining how far they conform to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa. The review report highlighted the gaps and proposals for improvement of policies, legal and legislative frameworks vis-à-vis the rights of women and the proposed legal framework for the drafting of the women’s Bill and made recommendations for future legislative and policy directives to ensure complete fulfilment of all the legal and international obligations under CEDAW and the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of women in Africa. The outcome of the review formed the basis for the

¹ 1997 Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia, see sections 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22.

drafting of a comprehensive legislation that seeks to implement and make applicable the provisions of these instruments on women's rights. Recommendations for amendment of all laws that are not in conformity with the Convention have been forwarded to the Law Reform Commission.

- **Consultations:** Consultations were held with key stakeholders at regional and national levels to build a national consensus on the Women's Bill. The stakeholders included policy makers, women community leaders, women councillors, National Assembly Members, religious leaders, members of the legal profession and Cadis. Multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary technical and advisory committees were also set up to provide technical oversight. The consultative meetings generated tremendous debate and exchange of candid views and ideas ranging from conventional to religious and customary perceptions on the role and status of women. In a predominantly Muslim country however, it is pertinent to note that certain issues relating to customary and religious prescriptions still remain very polemical especially those related to personal law.
- **Validation:** The draft Women's Bill 2007 was validated at a national workshop at which all the stakeholders indicated above were represented. The critical issues raised by the CEDAW Committee relating to "adoption, marriage, divorce, burial and devolution of property on death ..." were thoroughly debated to reach consensus on the concepts.
- **Approval by Cabinet:** Cabinet approved the Draft Women's Bill (2007) for submission to the National Assembly.
- **Enactment of the Women's Bill:** The National Assembly enacted the Women's Bill at its sitting of the 13th April 2010. The Bill is divided into 12 parts with 78 sections:
 - Part one deals with interpretation;
 - Part two specific rights for women in the 1997 Constitution;
 - Part three deals with Government commitment;
 - Part four deals with temporary special measures;
 - Part five prohibits discrimination in employment, family responsibilities and work;
 - Part six deals with education and training of women and girls;
 - Part seven deals with health and reproductive rights of women;
 - Part eight deals with the plight of rural women and addresses their strategic needs such as land, credit and empowerment;
 - Part nine deals with the sanctity of marriage and family life, e.g. monogamy, polygamy, inheritance;
 - Part ten deals with additional rights such as participation in peace processes, food security, sustainable development, positive cultural participation, rights for elderly women, women with disability, women in distress, etc.;
 - Part eleven deals with women and institutional mechanism, e.g. strengthening the Bureau and Council through capacity building,

providing resources and identifying sources of funding, procedures and practices for proper administration; and

- Part twelve deals with miscellaneous procedures, periodic reviews, and penalty for offences, etc.

4. In supporting the Bill the National Assembly Members called for increased sensitization so that people would know about its existence and to avoid misinterpretation. To speed up the process of enacting the Bill the section on Violence against Women and Girls had to be removed to be dealt with in a separate bill.

5. The Convention and related domestic legislation are made an integral part of legal education and the training of judicial officers, including judges, lawyers and prosecutors, so as to firmly establish in the country a legal culture supportive of women's equality and non-discrimination. A number of interventions have been undertaken to ensure that a pool of men and women have the necessary competencies, knowledge, skills and tools to ensure a just and equitable legal system. These include:

- Public education and advocacy for the enactment of the Draft Women's Bill (2007) by the national women's machinery and NGOs;
- Capacity-building training workshops for law enforcement agents conducted by the Female Lawyers Association of The Gambia (FLAG);
- The Gambia participated in a study for the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre in January 2009, to identify existing provisions in the laws of The Gambia that discriminate against women, as well as assess the gender gaps in the laws. The study also proposed measures to be taken to address the legislative dimensions of gender inequalities and discriminations against women in The Gambia. This study fed into a subregional study to develop an advocacy strategy for the full domestication of CEDAW by ECOWAS countries. The study was launched in Banjul, The Gambia, in 2009;
- Cadis and legal practitioners underwent a three month training programme starting in September 2009 on different aspects of Islamic law, including family law, law of inheritance and succession, judicial review, Islamic law of property, sources of Islamic law, ethics and conduct and the 1997 Constitution of the Republic of The Gambia, among other important areas of concern. The training, which is the first of its kind, according to judicial officials, brought together Cadis from different parts of the country to address the need to have an effective and efficient Cadi court system in The Gambia and to have uniformity in the judicial system of the country. An outcome of the training was the adoption of the Malicki school of thought to be applied in all Cadi courts throughout The Gambia as the Cadi's were dispensing justice based on their different schools of thought and this move put in place mechanisms for the effective dispensation of justice in The Gambia;
- The World Bank Capacity Building and Economic Management project supported the institutionalisation of the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) and training of members in private practice and those at the public bar, and the bench, in ADR. The ADR system was launched in January 2008. This is a good move as women operate in informal spaces and generally do not report cases

of violence and other violations of human rights to the relevant authorities. It is expected that this is a more cost effective system of restorative justice particularly for women. There are limitations to the system however, as it can be of special disadvantage to women who often remain in a position of powerlessness in this still highly patriarchal society. A female victim may find her perpetrator making amends to her father, husband or family without much consideration being given her.

2.2 Amendment of section 33(5) of 1997 Constitution and implementation of measures aimed at eliminating polygamy

6. The Committee's concern that: (i) the 1997 Constitution explicitly exempts from prohibition of discrimination on grounds of gender. The areas governing personal status, particularly with regard to adoption, marriage, divorce, burial and devolution of property on death, in contravention of articles 2 and 16 of the Convention, resulting in continuing discrimination against women; and (ii) about the widespread practice of polygamy does not take into consideration the socio-cultural realities of Gambian life. In setting standards and norms care must be taken not to infringe on the religious beliefs of people as this would not only be an infringement of their rights but could also result in a backlash and the rejection of the instruments. Personal law is applicable to Muslims and Islam has prescribed for matters of adoption, marriage including polygamy, divorce, burial and devolution of property on death. The problem is the non-application of Shariah (Malicki School of thought) when dealing with matters of this nature and the lack of knowledge for the majority of women about their rights in Islam. These are the main issues that have to be addressed to ensure that women fully enjoy their rights. In formulating the Women's Bill due cognizance was given to issues of adoption, marriage including polygamy, divorce, burial and devolution of property on death and the participatory consultative processes that were used during its development has resulted in a consensus and acceptance of the clauses contained therein with respect to these matters.

2.3 Introduce measures without delay to modify or eliminate negative harmful cultural practices and stereotypes that discriminate against women, in conformity with articles 2 (f) and 5 (a) of the Convention

7. **Policies and programmes:** The Government supported by its partners is taking firm measures to mainstream gender in development and has formulated policies that are designed to contribute to the realisation of this goal. The National Policy for the Advancement of Gambian Women (NPAGW) 1999-2009 was the main reference point for all stakeholders to address the needs and interests of Gambian women with regard to participation, access, ownership and rights for the attainment of a just and equitable society. The NPAGW specifically targeted women and covered 18 thematic areas which were designed to "right the wrongs" and to reduce the huge inequalities and inequities between men and women and between boys and girls due to the patriarchal nature of Gambian society. Success in implementation of the Policy was mixed with some sectors such as education and health doing much better than the other sectors. A mid-term review of the NPAGW in 2006 accorded the Bureau the opportunity to incorporate strategic issues such as rural development, HIV and AIDS and ICT. A major outcome of the key

recommendation of the mid-term review of the NPAGW is the formulation of the Gender Policy 2010-2020.

8. **The Draft Gender and Women's Empowerment Policy 2010-2020** has been validated at a workshop including all stakeholders. The Policy provides a vision for social transformation in which all women and men, boys and girls have a role to play in the process. It provides a framework for mainstreaming gender in national and sectorial plans and programmes and for monitoring and evaluation. It covers the following thematic areas and is expected to accelerate the process of creating a culture of gender equality in all institutions by influencing social change within the family, the community and the nation at large:

- Capacity Building for Gender Mainstreaming;
- Poverty Reduction, Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods Development;
- Gender and Education;
- Gender and Health, Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS;
- Gender and Health and HIV/AIDS;
- Gender and Human Rights;
- Gender and Governance;
- Gender and the Environment.

9. **Other policies and programmes** which have mainstreamed gender include:

- The National Population Policy and Plan of Action 2007-2011;
- The National Health Policy "Changing for Good" 2001-2006;
- The National Health Policy "Health is Wealth" and Health Master Plan 2007-2020;
- The National Reproductive Health Policy 2007-2014;
- The National Nutrition Policy 2000-2004;
- The National Education Policy 2004-2015 "Rethinking Education for Poverty Reduction" and The Education Sector Strategic Plan 2006-2015;
- The National Youth Policy 1998-2008;
- The PRSP 11 which covers the period 2009-2011 is built around the attainment of the MDGs. Gender and women's empowerment strategies have been incorporated the MDG based Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper II, 2006. The PRSP merges all the priorities of the different policies, including internationally agreed Covenants and targets such as Millennium Development and Education for All Goals;
- The UNDAF 2007-2011 jointly implemented by the UN Agencies in The Gambia addresses key priorities of the Government in relation to the MDGs such as women's empowerment, generation and utilisation of disaggregated data and gender information, safe motherhood and RCH rights at the national and subnational.

10. **Capacity-building:** The Women's Bureau has provided capacity-building not only for its staff but for Council in the form of training, workshops, exchange programmes among others, with resources particularly from the UN System to enable them carry out their oversight, coordinating and advocacy, technical backstopping and monitoring functions effectively. This has resulted in greater consistency and coherence of actions with commendable results.

11. **FGM/C:** The main issue related to negative harmful practices is FGM which is widely practiced in The Gambia. UNFPA/UNICEF has supporting the development of a National Plan of Action to Accelerate the Abandonment of FGM/C. A Committee has been set up by the Vice-President of The Gambia and Minister of Women's Affairs to develop a plan of action on the elimination of the practice. UNICEF in partnership with The Gambia Government through the national Women's Bureau and Tostan launched a 3 year Community Empowerment Programme (CEP) initiative in The Gambia (2006-2009), in May 2006, directly targeting some 80 Mandinka and Fula communities and some 63 adopted communities/villages in the Upper River Region (URR). The CEP programme/strategy is based on the Tostan experiences in Senegal and elsewhere, where the basic education programme complemented by "organized diffusion" in the communities, eventually led to the abandonment of FGM/C in numerous Tostan intervention communities. The overall goal of the CEP is to contribute to community-led development in The Gambia that will lead to the abandonment of FGM/C. It has five inter-related specific objectives, which together helps to bring the project closer to its goal. The project specific goals are generally found to be consistent with the international and national Conventions and Declarations and national development priorities as enshrined in the current PRSP.

12. **CSO's Participation:** CSOs such as The Foundation for Research on Women's Health, Productivity and the Environment (BAFROW), The Gambia Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children (GAMCOTRAP) and Association for the Promotion of Women and Girls Advancement (APGWA) champion the fight against FGM/C with appreciable results. GAMCOTRAP has organized "Dropping the Knife" ceremonies where the circumcisers make public declarations that they will no longer engage in the practice and that they will protect the girl child not only from FGM/C but other harmful practices such as FGM. These ceremonies organized by GAMCOTRAP have taken place on the 6th May 2007, at the Independence Stadium in Bakau, when 18 circumcisers from 63 communities publicly dropped their knives at a spectacular event. Another successful ceremony was held on the 5th December 2009 in Basse in the Upper River Division, where 60 circumcisers from 351 communities also made similar public commitments to a large crowd consisting of the traditional chiefs, community leaders, women leaders and communities. The event in Basse can be described as a major breakthrough for this is an area where the strong adherents to the practice originate from and live. The CSO has sustained a grassroots sensitization and awareness creation campaign with the main intention of total eradication of the practice. They also celebrate the day of "Zero Tolerance against FGM" on the 6th February to bring attention and synergy to eradicating the practice.

13. These measures notwithstanding there are still a significant number of persons (72.9%) who claim that they will make their daughter undergo the practice² (See

² The Gambia Multiple Indicators Cluster Survey 2005/2006.

tables 1 and 2). This is an indication of the entrenched nature of the practice. The data shows that the education, wealth and location influence people's behaviour as the respondents with higher levels of education, who were not poor and who lived around the urban areas that want the practice to discontinue. Persons with no education (76.9%), persons with primary education (71.9%) want the practice to continue as compared to 57% of persons with secondary education. Only 48.7% of the richest persons want the practice to continue as compared to 73.2% of the poorest quintile. By location 59.7% of urban dwellers want the practice to continue as compared to 79.5% of rural dwellers. By ethnicity Mandinka's (89.2%), Jola's (80.7%) are more likely to continue the practice than Wollofs (10.4%) who are least likely to continue. Legislation alone is not enough. Evidence from neighbouring countries and at the global level that have legislated against the practice indicates that people with entrenched beliefs will resort to other measures that will enable them to practice what they believe in. Cases have been reported of people travelling from nearby Senegal where it is banned to The Gambia and from Europe and the America's to their countries of origin for their children to undergo the practice. There is also the issue of downsizing the age so that the children are circumcised in the first week of birth to prevent child protection laws from stopping them later on. It is a question of attitudinal change and beliefs and it is expected that the Plan of Action will address these issues bringing all stakeholders on board. This emphasizes the need for sustained sensitization, awareness creation and behaviour change communication for people to give up the practice.

Table 1

Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C): percentage of women aged 15-49 who have had any form of female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C), type of FGM/C among those who have had FGM/C, the percentage who have had the extreme form of FGM/C (infibulations), and the percentage distribution among women who have heard of FGM/C according to attitudes towards whether the practice of FGM/C should be continued, The Gambia, 2006

| | Had any form of FGM/C* | Number of women aged 15-49 | Percentage distribution of women who believe the practice of FGM/C should: | | | | Like daughter to be circumcised | | | | Total | Number of women aged 15-49 who have heard of FGM/C |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|--|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|------|------------|--------------|-------|--|
| | | | Continue | Discontinue | Depends on situation | Don't know/Missing | Yes | No | Don't know | Total | | |
| LGA (Local Government Area) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Banjul | 44.8 | 324 | 31.3 | 65.6 | 1.2 | 1.9 | 30.7 | 69.3 | .0 | 100.0 | 324 | |
| Kanifing | 70.4 | 2 872 | 55.5 | 38.2 | 4.7 | 1.6 | 57.9 | 41.5 | .6 | 100.0 | 2 872 | |
| Brikama | 87.0 | 2 549 | 83.7 | 15.3 | .5 | .4 | 84.0 | 15.6 | .4 | 100.0 | 2 549 | |
| Mansakonko | 95.9 | 531 | 93.5 | 4.6 | 1.4 | .5 | 94.0 | 5.8 | .2 | 100.0 | 531 | |
| Kerewan | 60.8 | 1 012 | 58.7 | 27.9 | 13.0 | .4 | 59.1 | 40.7 | .3 | 100.0 | 1 012 | |
| Kuntaur | 68.7 | 547 | 63.4 | 17.7 | 17.9 | 1.0 | 67.6 | 32.2 | .2 | 100.0 | 547 | |
| Janjangbureh | 77.2 | 891 | 74.6 | 18.8 | 5.3 | 1.3 | 75.8 | 24.2 | .0 | 100.0 | 891 | |
| Basse | 99.0 | 1 258 | 92.2 | 2.3 | 3.7 | 1.8 | 97.4 | 2.5 | .1 | 100.0 | 1 258 | |
| Residence | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Urban | 72.2 | 4 251 | 59.7 | 34.4 | 4.6 | 1.3 | 61.5 | 38.0 | .5 | 100.0 | 4 251 | |
| Rural | 82.8 | 5 731 | 79.5 | 14.5 | 5.0 | .9 | 81.3 | 18.5 | .2 | 100.0 | 5 731 | |

| | Had any form of FGM/C* | Number of women aged 15-49 | Percentage distribution of women who believe the practice of FGM/C should: | | | | Like daughter to be circumcised | | | | Number of women aged 15-49 who have heard of FGM/C |
|--|------------------------|----------------------------|--|-------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------|-------------|------------|--------------|--|
| | | | Continue | Discontinue | Depends on situation | Don't know/Missing | Yes | No | Don't know | Total | |
| Age | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15-19 | 79.9 | 2 282 | 72.3 | 22.1 | 3.9 | 1.7 | 74.4 | 25.2 | .4 | 100.0 | 2 282 |
| 20-24 | 78.2 | 2 023 | 69.8 | 24.2 | 4.8 | 1.3 | 72.1 | 27.7 | .2 | 100.0 | 2 023 |
| 25-29 | 77.2 | 1 915 | 69.9 | 23.7 | 5.7 | .7 | 71.6 | 28.0 | .4 | 100.0 | 1 915 |
| 30-34 | 78.4 | 1 352 | 71.6 | 23.1 | 4.7 | .7 | 72.8 | 26.9 | .3 | 100.0 | 1 352 |
| 35-39 | 79.5 | 1 047 | 72.2 | 22.0 | 5.2 | .6 | 73.5 | 26.0 | .5 | 100.0 | 1 047 |
| 40-44 | 77.7 | 822 | 72.6 | 21.9 | 4.6 | 1.0 | 73.7 | 25.9 | .5 | 100.0 | 822 |
| 45-49 | 74.2 | 540 | 69.5 | 23.6 | 5.9 | .9 | 71.2 | 28.5 | .2 | 100.0 | 540 |
| Education | | | | | | | | | | | |
| None | 81.1 | 6 083 | 76.9 | 16.4 | 5.6 | 1.1 | 78.8 | 20.8 | .4 | 100.0 | 6 083 |
| Primary | 80.2 | 1 173 | 71.9 | 22.5 | 4.1 | 1.6 | 74.3 | 25.5 | .3 | 100.0 | 1 173 |
| Secondary+ | 71.2 | 2 726 | 57.7 | 37.9 | 3.5 | .8 | 59.0 | 40.8 | .3 | 100.0 | 2 726 |
| FGM/C experience | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No FGM/C | .0 | 2 166 | 3.4 | 80.2 | 15.1 | 1.3 | 2.7 | 96.9 | .4 | 100.0 | 2 166 |
| Had FGM/C | 100.0 | 7 816 | 89.1 | 7.8 | 2.1 | 1.0 | 91.6 | 8.1 | .3 | 100.0 | 7 816 |
| Wealth index quintiles | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Poorest | 75.4 | 1 707 | 73.2 | 17.1 | 8.6 | 1.1 | 75.1 | 24.6 | .3 | 100.0 | 1 707 |
| Second | 86.1 | 1 896 | 82.6 | 12.9 | 3.6 | .9 | 83.7 | 16.0 | .3 | 100.0 | 1 896 |
| Middle | 85.9 | 2 012 | 80.9 | 14.1 | 4.2 | .8 | 82.8 | 16.8 | .4 | 100.0 | 2 012 |
| Fourth | 81.6 | 2 139 | 73.1 | 21.9 | 4.1 | .9 | 75.7 | 24.1 | .3 | 100.0 | 2 139 |
| Richest | 63.9 | 2 228 | 48.7 | 45.4 | 4.3 | 1.6 | 50.2 | 49.4 | .4 | 100.0 | 2 228 |
| Ethnic group of head of household | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mandinka | 96.5 | 3 514 | 89.2 | 8.4 | 1.6 | .8 | 90.9 | 8.7 | .4 | 100.0 | 3 514 |
| Wollof | 12.1 | 1 295 | 10.4 | 70.7 | 17.6 | 1.4 | 9.7 | 90.1 | .2 | 100.0 | 1 295 |
| Fula | 87.8 | 1 985 | 79.5 | 14.9 | 4.3 | 1.3 | 82.4 | 17.2 | .3 | 100.0 | 1 985 |
| Jola | 90.8 | 1 086 | 80.7 | 15.5 | 2.8 | 1.0 | 82.9 | 16.7 | .4 | 100.0 | 1 086 |
| Serer | 45.5 | 386 | 32.6 | 59.5 | 6.5 | 1.4 | 33.6 | 65.9 | .5 | 100.0 | 386 |
| Other ethnic group | 79.5 | 1 716 | 71.2 | 23.9 | 3.7 | 1.1 | 73.7 | 26.0 | .3 | 100.0 | 1 16 |
| Total | 78.3 | 9 982 | 71.1 | 23.0 | 4.8 | 1.1 | 72.9 | 26.8 | .3 | 100.0 | 9 982 |

Source: MICS 111 2005/06.

* MICS indicator 63.

Table 2
Percentage of women with at least one living daughter who has had female genital mutilation (FGM/C), The Gambia, 2006

| | <i>Daughter had any form of FGM/C</i> | <i>Number of women aged 15-49 years</i> |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| LGA | | |
| Banjul | 30.1 | 135 |
| Kanifing | 54.4 | 1 364 |
| Brikama | 67.6 | 1 290 |
| Mansakonko | 79.4 | 306 |
| Kerewan | 47.2 | 615 |
| Kuntaur | 57.1 | 335 |
| Janjangbureh | 68.1 | 546 |
| Basse | 91.4 | 747 |
| Residence | | |
| Urban | 55.9 | 2 023 |
| Rural | 69.4 | 3 314 |
| Age | | |
| 15-19 | 39.4 | 173 |
| 20-24 | 43.2 | 740 |
| 25-29 | 59.1 | 1 229 |
| 30-34 | 69.4 | 1 084 |
| 35-39 | 74.1 | 908 |
| 40-44 | 75.7 | 732 |
| 45-49 | 72.1 | 471 |
| Mother's Education | | |
| None | 69.5 | 4 038 |
| Primary | 57.7 | 538 |
| Secondary+ | 41.3 | 761 |
| Wealth index quintiles | | |
| Poorest | 61.3 | 1 097 |
| Second | 72.3 | 1 116 |
| Middle | 71.2 | 1 079 |
| Fourth | 67.2 | 1 080 |
| Richest | 47.5 | 964 |

| | <i>Daughter had any form of FGM/C</i> | <i>Number of women aged 15-49 years</i> |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| Ethnic group of head of household | | |
| Mandinka | 81.6 | 1 846 |
| Wollof | 7.1 | 722 |
| Fula | 71.7 | 1 122 |
| Jola | 68.4 | 545 |
| Serer | 24.4 | 196 |
| Other ethnic group | 71.7 | 905 |
| Total | 64.3 | 5 337 |

Source: MICS 111 2005/06.

2.4 Design and implement comprehensive education and awareness-raising programmes targeting women and men at all levels of society, with a view to creating an enabling environment for the transformation of discriminatory stereotypes and allowing women to exercise their rights under the Convention

14. The 1997 Constitution of The Gambia commits the Government to providing basic education for all of its citizens. The expanded vision of Basic education in the National Education Policy 2004-2015 incorporates early childhood development (ECD), Grades 1-9 of the formal school system and adult and non-formal education. The values outlined in the National Education Policy, 2004-2015, are grounded on a non-discriminatory and all inclusive provision of education, underlining in particular gender equity and targeting the poor and the disadvantaged.

15. **Gender mainstreaming strategies** contained in the ESSP 2006-2015 are:

- Minimising educational costs, especially for girls;
- Increasing the number of child-friendly school environments;
- Equal gender participation at the PTAs, governing boards and management levels of schools.

16. *Minimising the costs of schooling*: Scholarship schemes and other incentives are provided to promote girls education. In the public schools, schooling is tuition-free up to Grade 9. The scholarship Trust Fund pays for all the girls from Grades 7-12 in Education Regions 3-6. The President's Empowerment of Girls Education Project (PEGEP) pays for all the girls in public schools from Grades 7-12 in Regions 1 and 2 and also contributes tuition fees for girls in the private schools. However, these funds are supplemented by regional initiatives and incentives of various types, including special scholarship packages that cover a wide range of costs from fees, uniforms, books to mentoring.

17. The *Child Friendly School Initiative* supported by UNICEF promotes gender equality in enrolment and achievement and eliminating gender stereotypes. It provides a healthy and protective environment for children through the provision of adequate water and sanitation facilities and discouraging corporal punishment and harassment. It promotes child-centred learning and encourages family and community-based local partnership in education. The CFSI is a powerful tool both

for helping to fulfil the rights of children and providing them an education of good quality.³

18. Equal *gender participation in school management* is being promoted through the School Management Structures (former PTAs). The SMC brings on board people who know the most about the learners and their educational needs, as well as about local values and realities and is the route to more responsive system. It provides the space for community participation and is more equitable as poor households have a stronger and more effective voice in local community institutions in which they play a role in framing priorities and in holding school providers accountable.

19. **Access to Education:** Tremendous success has been gained in expanding access to education across all levels. Schools have been brought nearer to home within 3 km-5 km from the community. Building schools closer to the homes of the students contributes to providing safety and security for them especially the girls as they have to walk shorter distances to and from the school. In addition they do not have to leave their homes and communities with all the attendant risks. Under the Third Education Sector Project Phase 1 (1998-2006) and Phase 2 (2006-2011), the Ministry of Education was able to build classrooms throughout the country supported by different donors to improve access to quality education for all Gambians (see table 3).

³ UNGEI, 2006.

Table 3
Projects and programmes that have contributed to increased access to education for girls*

| <i>Project title</i> | <i>Funding partner</i> | <i>Life line</i> | <i>Description</i> |
|--|------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Third Education Sector Project Phase 2 | World Bank IDA | Sept. 2006 March 2011 | Improve conditions for teaching and learning in basic education by a) improving performance of students, teachers and schools; b) strengthening capacity building and performance management, and enhancing monitoring and evaluation; and c) continuing expansion of effective access to under-served communities. |
| The Gambia AfDB Education 111 Project | AfDB | May 2003-2009 | Increase access to quality education and skills development of the poor, particularly girls in remote regions of The Gambia. |
| The Gambia Third Education Programme Project | BADEA | 15th June 2003- 30th Dec. 2009 | Improve education buildings in the Southern Western Region of The Gambia where there is high population density. |
| Girl Friendly School Initiative and ECD School Readiness | UNICEF | 1st Jan. 2007- 31st Dec. 2011 | Increased and sustained enrolment rates in lower and secondary schools for boys and girls, gender parity sustained and retention and performance increased. Strengthened national capacity to develop quality assurance/performance monitoring system and relevant curriculum including life skills, increased enrolments in pre-schools and reduce HIV risks and vulnerability. |

* Joint Semi-Annual Donor Review and Supervision, Sectoral Development and Implementation Progress Report, The Republic of The Gambia. PCU. MoBSE, 1st Nov. 2008-30th April 2009.

20. *Additional resources* from the EFA/FTI have greatly contributed to the provision of additional classrooms and provided the impetus to accelerating access to basic education. It has helped to close the gender gap through the development of appropriate policy, provision of sex disaggregated data and gender information, capacity building of senior management and provided the needed finance to close the funding gap. Generally, resources are more equitably distributed and better utilized for programme implementation.

21. *The School Curriculum*: Reviews and updates of the curriculum have also resulted in a more relevant and, therefore, more responsive curriculum to stakeholders needs.² The Life Skills Unit of the MoBSE developed a Life Skills Manual in 2008 for Grades 4 and 5 of the Lower Basic Cycle with the support of UNFPA and the World Bank. HIV/AIDS has been mainstreamed into the life skills programme.

22. *Awareness creation and sensitization* activities through platforms such as the weekly televised Education Forum, radio programmes and community meetings have increased public interest and knowledge on girl's education.

23. **Adult and Non-Formal Education:** The Community Skills Improvement Project (CSIP) sponsored by the African Development Bank continued to deliver training for women and out of school youths with the view to enhancing self-employment ventures and entrepreneurship development. The project targeted 40,000 women and youth in 250 communities but was able to reach 32,377 (80.94%). The total number of participants who are now classified as literacy graduates is 12,678, representing 32% of the target.⁴ The Integrated Functional Literacy Project sponsored by the Islamic Development Bank has designed a curriculum for 400 contact hours for 2,000 young men and women and produced didactic materials the national languages in thirteen subject areas including agriculture, literacy, numeracy, health, nutrition, environment, forestry, live skills, livelihood skills, gender, governance, peace and security and human rights. Facilitators have been trained in the use of these materials and it is expected that the service providers will use them in their functional literacy classes.

24. The World Bank is also supporting the Government of The Gambia, through the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education to implement the Non-Formal Education (NFE) Component in the 3rd Education sector. The programme is strengthening the capacity of literacy providers (CSOs, CBOs and NGOs) in order to develop effective and sustainable literacy, numeracy, life skills and income generating programmes. The majority of the beneficiaries of this programme are women.

25. **Tertiary level:** The gender and development course run by the Management Development Institute (MDI) contributes to the availability of a core of people with knowledge and skills in gender mainstreaming thus facilitating gender analysis and gender monitoring in the various sectors. The University of The Gambia (UTG) has introduced gender studies as a compulsory subject. The UTG has contributed in no small measure to the participation of girls at the higher levels of education. In 2008, girls' enrolment constituted 21.58% of the total as compared to 10% when the university was first established.⁵ To give girls and young women a fair chance to participate in education at the tertiary level, programmes such as the ACCESS are run by the University of The Gambia, the RIFT (Remedial Instruction for Female Teachers) by The Gambia College and the extra mural classes by the GTU.

26. **CSOs involved in Education:** The MoBSE has expanded the space for CSO participation in education at all levels ranging from policy formulation, implementation, service delivery, infrastructure development and monitoring and evaluation. This has increased public interest and involvement in education leading to a broadening and deepening of participation at all levels by key players such as the Education for All Campaign Network (EFANet), ChildFund, Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), Peace Corps, Future in Our Hands (FIOH), GAMCOTRAP, SIMMA, Association for the Promotion of Women's and Girls Advancement (APWGA), Foundation for Women's Research and the Environment (BAFROW), Women in Service and Development (WISDOM), Forum for African Women, Educationalist-Gambia (FAWEGAM), National Women's Framers Association (NAWFA), Pro-poor Advocacy Group (Pro-PAG), Gambia Teacher's Union (GTU), Girls Guide Association, Gambia Home Economics Association and Faith Based organizations.

⁴ CSIP Contribution to the BPFA Report.

⁵ PRSP 11, Department of State for Finance and Economic Affairs, 2006.

27. *Mother's Clubs*: The FAWEGAM-Mother's Clubs play a role in closing the gap between boys and girls in schools by generating income to cover the indirect cost of school fees, give guidance and counselling to families and girls to promote the retention of girls in school and engage in environmental cleanliness of the school.

28. *The American Girls Scholarship Programme (AGSP)* is jointly implemented by Education for All Campaign Network, FAWEGAM and BAFROW. From its inception in 2005, 1,600 girls in the Western region have benefited from the programme which covers school fees, uniforms and books and mentors the girls to enhance their performance in schools. As a result of the declining enrolment of boys the scheme now covers 225 boys in the region.

29. *Partnership between the MoBSE and the Madrassa proprietors*: The partnership with the General Secretariat for Islamic/Arabic Education and the MoBSE has contributed to boosting enrolments and enhanced access particularly for Muslim girls. It has broken the misconception that Muslim girls should not go to school as the Secretariat is not only advocating for girls education but is actually making provision for them within their educational system.

30. *Advocacy and Campaigning*: The EFANet has implemented two projects (2006/2008) on inclusive education targeting girls and children with special needs and with support from Save the Children Sweden in collaboration with FAWEGAM, the CPA and the Special Needs Education Unit. Under the 2008 project, A Child Friendly Version of the Sexual Harassment Policy has been developed by FAWEGAM with funding from Save the Children Sweden and disseminated to stakeholders.

31. *Celebration of Events*: The celebration of key events such as the Global Week of Action (GWA) in Education in April each year calls attention of the Government and donors to promises made in Dakar and the need to keep to those promises to make EFA a reality by 2015. The GWA celebrations in 2005 focused on the gender parity goal and brought public attention to the fact that the country had missed the first target of the gender parity goal of the MDGs. It is clear that with sustained advocacy, the political will and the implementation of good plans, the CEDAW and other commitments will be realized.

2.5 Violence against women and girls

32. The Women's Bureau has proposed the drafting of a separate Bill on gender based violence to deal in detail with issues not covered under the Women's Bill. It is expected that the drafting process will commence upon the enactment of the Women's Bill. There is an ongoing consultative process with CSOs on the integration of the provisions of the Bill in their awareness-raising activities particularly on gender based violence.

33. The Government is, however, aware of the need to increase and sustain public awareness campaigns on gender based violence particularly on domestic violence, which is based on socio-cultural perceptions of the woman's place and role in the family and as sex partners. The Gambia Government, through the Department of Social Welfare and the law enforcement authorities, have continued efforts to support victims, enforce existing laws and actively involve traditional institutions in

the fight against all forms of violence. Due to their consistent follow-up on cases of violence there have been convictions on gender based violence.

34. In the Behavioural Surveillance Survey of 2005, female respondents who had been sexually active during the past twelve months were asked about forced sex. Out of 857 sexually active women who responded to the questions, 59 (6.9%) had been forced to have sex, showing a reduction in the incidence from 18.4% as reported in the Survey of 2002 to 6.9% reported in the Survey of 2005. The figures reveal that the incidence is more prevalent in the Peri-Urban areas.

35. A Study on “the relationship between Violence against Women and Girls and HIV/AIDS” commissioned by AATG and undertaken by Worldview in 2006 ascertained the extent to which this phenomenon exists in The Gambia. The Study examined policies that took cognizance of the inter-relationship between the two pandemics and also programmes aimed at mitigating them; as well as the challenges and obstacles related to the problem. The Study Report and the accompanying video documentary have been widely disseminated to create awareness of the problem and to advocate for the involvement of more stakeholders to come together to harness resources and synergies to address the problem of VAWGs.

36. The Study revealed a number of constraints that were serving as barriers towards the eradication of the problem. The culture of silence is identified as the biggest barrier towards addressing the issue of violence against women. Shame, fear and the lack of knowledge of existing legislation is identified by 40% of respondents respectively. Subjugation of women and societal values and norms are constraints for 30% of respondents and inadequate follow-up mechanisms by 25% of respondents. Only 10% of respondents regard the lack of data and harmful practices as constraints. Yet the absence of data is one of the major barriers for without data the empirical evidence cannot be provided to show the extent to which VAW exists in The Gambia. There is need for sensitisation so that women can come forward and document their cases (see graph 1). The 2005/2006 MICS shows that location, education, wealth and ethnicity also influence people’s attitudes on wife battering. Rural respondents (82.5%) believe in wife beating more than urban respondents (62.4%). Persons with no education (81.7%) and with primary education (73.9%) believe in the practice compared to 56.8% of persons with secondary education. The poorest people (86.1%) believe in wife beating as compared to 52.7% of the richest quintile. By ethnicity, Mandinkas are more likely to beat their wives according to 76.6% of respondents as compared to 66.8% for Wollofs (see table 4).

Table 4

Attitudes towards domestic violence: percentage of women aged 15-49 who believe a husband is justified in beating his wife/partner in various circumstances, The Gambia, 2006

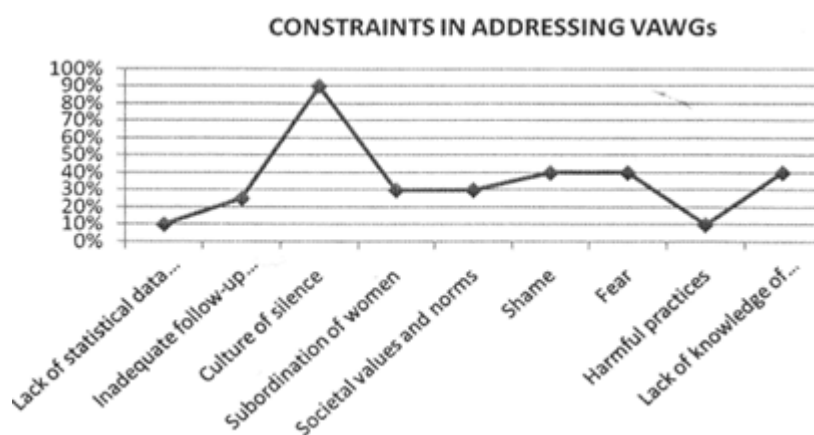
| | <i>Percentage of women aged 15-49 who believe a husband is justified in beating his wife/partner:</i> | | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | <i>When she goes out without telling him</i> | <i>When she neglects the children</i> | <i>When she argues with him</i> | <i>When she refuses sex with him</i> | <i>When she burns the food</i> | <i>For any of those reasons*</i> | <i>Number of women aged 15-49</i> |
| LGA | | | | | | | |
| Banjul | 26.4 | 35.3 | 16.3 | 32.8 | 8.0 | 48.2 | 324 |
| Kanifing | 34.7 | 35.5 | 20.9 | 42.5 | 8.9 | 58.8 | 2 872 |
| Brikama | 60.7 | 57.1 | 40.7 | 60.5 | 18.3 | 74.2 | 2 549 |
| Mansakonko | 55.8 | 49.4 | 39.3 | 59.3 | 18.2 | 76.6 | 531 |
| Kerewan | 69.6 | 58.8 | 55.7 | 71.1 | 21.7 | 82.6 | 1 012 |
| Kuntaur | 78.6 | 62.4 | 48.7 | 93.3 | 19.1 | 96.9 | 547 |
| Janjangbureh | 56.7 | 51.6 | 33.3 | 65.1 | 17.8 | 72.8 | 891 |
| Basse | 89.3 | 82.9 | 56.1 | 91.5 | 21.1 | 97.3 | 1 258 |
| Residence | | | | | | | |
| Urban | 40.3 | 39.5 | 24.5 | 46.8 | 9.9 | 62.4 | 4,251 |
| Rural | 69.3 | 62.9 | 46.9 | 72.5 | 20.5 | 82.5 | 5,731 |
| Age | | | | | | | |
| 15-19 | 55.0 | 51.0 | 37.0 | 55.8 | 16.3 | 71.1 | 2 282 |
| 20-24 | 55.0 | 51.0 | 34.4 | 58.9 | 15.7 | 72.6 | 2 023 |
| 25-29 | 56.2 | 52.6 | 36.8 | 62.8 | 14.9 | 75.2 | 1 915 |
| 30-34 | 58.2 | 53.9 | 37.9 | 62.4 | 15.5 | 73.8 | 1 352 |
| 35-39 | 59.7 | 55.0 | 39.3 | 66.5 | 16.2 | 75.6 | 1 047 |
| 40-44 | 61.0 | 57.3 | 40.5 | 70.1 | 18.2 | 79.0 | 822 |
| 45-49 | 61.1 | 56.9 | 42.9 | 66.7 | 16.4 | 76.2 | 540 |
| Marital/Union status | | | | | | | |
| Currently married/ in union | 62.4 | 57.4 | 41.3 | 67.8 | 17.2 | 78.5 | 6 839 |
| Formerly married/ in union | 47.9 | 45.5 | 29.5 | 58.5 | 13.2 | 69.1 | 459 |
| Never married/ in union | 44.6 | 42.9 | 28.5 | 46.1 | 13.3 | 63.2 | 2 671 |
| Education | | | | | | | |
| None | 66.6 | 60.0 | 44.7 | 71.8 | 18.2 | 81.7 | 6 083 |
| Primary | 55.1 | 52.0 | 34.3 | 59.3 | 15.9 | 73.9 | 1 173 |
| Secondary+ | 36.4 | 37.6 | 22.4 | 39.6 | 10.9 | 56.8 | 2 726 |
| Wealth index quintiles | | | | | | | |
| Poorest | 72.6 | 64.4 | 51.4 | 79.4 | 24.3 | 86.1 | 1 707 |
| Second | 68.7 | 61.4 | 47.8 | 72.0 | 21.3 | 81.9 | 1 896 |
| Middle | 63.9 | 58.2 | 41.2 | 64.7 | 15.5 | 79.3 | 2 012 |
| Fourth | 55.6 | 51.3 | 34.7 | 60.4 | 13.4 | 74.4 | 2 139 |
| Richest | 30.2 | 34.0 | 16.9 | 37.2 | 7.9 | 52.7 | 2 228 |

Percentage of women aged 15-49 who believe a husband is justified in beating his wife/partner:

| | When she goes out without telling him | When she neglects the children | When she argues with him | When she refuses sex with him | When she burns the food | For any of those reasons* | Number of women aged 15-49 |
|--|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Ethnic group of head of household | | | | | | | |
| Mandinka | 59.4 | 55.0 | 39.4 | 63.2 | 15.8 | 76.6 | 3 514 |
| Wollof | 46.9 | 43.7 | 32.3 | 55.6 | 15.8 | 66.8 | 1 295 |

Source: MICS 111 2005/06.

Graph 1
Constraints in addressing VAWGs



37. Impunity: Without breaking the culture of silence it would be difficult to put an end to impunity as incidents of violence would go unreported or swept under the carpet. With the majority of women not knowing where to go and what to do this limits the chances of putting these nefarious acts to an end. It is expected that the role played by the Bureau and Council in creating awareness complimented by efforts of CSOs such as Action Aid The Gambia (AATG), BAFROW, GAMCOTRAP and the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights (ACDHRS), the Consortium on VAWS consisting of Worldview, AATG, The Trust Agency for Rural Development (TARUD), Gambia Family Planning Association (GFPA) and The Gambia Red Cross Society (GRCS) will not only inform and educate people on women's human rights but will lead them to take action. The Gambia Radio and Television Services (GRTS) has played a supportive and important role in creating air time to broadcast programmes on VAWGs during popular shows such as the Women's Forum, Yorr Yorr and Women's Magazine. Private and community radio stations also give similar support.

38. The Female Lawyers Association (FLAG) is playing a prominent role to end impunity by providing legal aid to victims of violence. FLAG plays an advocacy role and carries out community based sensitization activities to inform and educate members of the public of its roles and functions so that people know where to go and what to do to seek redress. FLAG has also conducted a Capacity building workshop for law enforcement agencies. Recently in December 2009 in a landmark

legal case FLAG was able to secure the liberty of young girls who were wrongfully arrested and charged for being out in the streets at night. Similarly they have secured the release of an 18 year old girl who was incarcerated three years ago when she was a minor and was put behind bars for allegations.

39. Violence against Girls Media Surveys have been undertaken by AATG as part of a wider survey conducted in eighteen countries.⁶ The media survey aims at compiling and reviewing cases of violence against girls as hindrances to their access, maintenance and achievement at school in a number of national media selected by ActionAid Country Offices. Quarterly reports of the Media Survey are published in hard copy and on the Internet and are widely distributed and shared with relevant stakeholders. The second issue covering the period of October to December 2009 shows that 31 cases of VAWGs were carried on persons some as young as 2 years in different parts of the country. Typology of cases ranged from infanticide, incest, rape, defilement and indecent sexual assault. The reports cover only the legal aspects of the cases and are focused on a summary of facts, testimonies, pleas of the parties/judgement and the sentence. The articles are not analytical enough to give a wider idea of the scale of VAWGS phenomenon and do not show the action other stakeholders including government, NGOs, justice, parents, the community and so on for the protection of the survivors.

2.6 Legislation on the prohibition of trafficking, to implement effectively legislation on the exploitation of the prostitution of women and to prosecute offenders

40. The Trafficking in Persons Act, 2007 has been promulgated. The Act establishes a National Agency against Trafficking in Persons and makes it an offence for a person to engage in the trafficking in persons, which is defined as:

- The recruitment of, provision of, transportation of, transfer of, harbouring of, receipt of, or trading in, persons;
- The use of threat, force or other forms of coercion, abduction, kidnapping, fraud, deception, the abuse of power, or a position of vulnerability; or
- The giving or receipt of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation within or across national borders. It also includes:
 - Placement for sale, bonded placement, temporary placement, placement for service, where exploitation by another person is the motivating factor; and
 - “Transportation of another person within and across an international border for the purpose of exploiting that person’s prostitution”.

41. The Act also criminalises the use of victims of trafficking, concealment of trafficking and the exportation and importation of persons from and into The Gambia. Its extensive provisions include the right of a victim of trafficking, “irrespective of his or her immigration status”, to bring civil action and to compensation, restitution and recovery; the provision by Government of temporary care and counselling of victims and their rehabilitation. In addition to the

⁶ Burundi, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

prohibition of child trafficking in the Children's Act, Government has established a National Taskforce on Trafficking in Persons, which has formed a working group that meets regularly to plan and implement anti-trafficking campaigns. A shelter has been constructed for trafficking victims and a 24 hour trafficking hotline (number 199) established. The Gambia's anti-trafficking efforts are, however, handicapped by the continued lack of prosecutions due to some extent to the lack of public awareness and cooperation. To address this, Gambian law enforcement officers have been participating in anti-trafficking training sessions sponsored by NGOs and international organisations and more public sensitisation on the issue is being undertaken.

42. Tourism is regarded as the third income earning sector of The Gambia. It also has its threats. Recognizing the negative impact that tourism can have on people, the Responsible Tourism Partnership which is a national partnership between government, CSOs and the private sector has developed a Responsible Tourism Policy for The Gambia. Following the enactment of the Tourism Offences Act, 2003, a Commercial Sexual Exploitation Plan of Action has been developed as an outcome of the Study on Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children. The setting up of a Child Sex Tourism (CST) Task Force under the Gambia Tourism Authority to address the problems associated with child sex tourism as well as the development of a Tourism Code of Conduct in 2005 and a brochure on the Tourism Offences Act are other outcomes of the study. Training has been provided for workers in the Tourism sector on Child Sex Tourism. Other measures include the establishment of a Tourism Security Unit within the Police Department.

43. The Social Welfare Department in collaboration with the University of The Gambia and SOS Herman Gmeiner has conducted training up to diploma level for Social Workers. Sensitisation and awareness creation workshops are conducted for teachers, law enforcement agents, nurses, social workers, religious and community leaders as well as children. Other measures undertaken by the Government to ensure a child friendly environment include: the establishment of a Child Welfare Unit at the Police Headquarters and the provision of Child Welfare Officers in all Police Stations; the establishment of 12 Community Child Protection Committees, 5 Neighbourhood Watch Groups and the Children's Court in the Kanifing Municipality; the creation of a Juvenile Detention Centre; and the provision of the Social Welfare hotline and the Shelter for Women and Children.

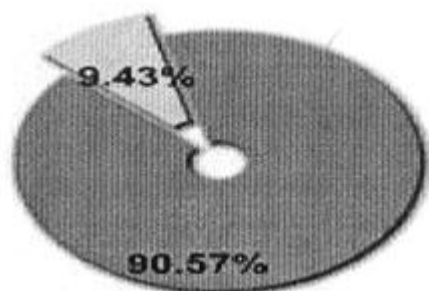
44. The Gambia is also a signatory to the United Nations Convention against Trans-National Organized Crime, the United Nations Trafficking Protocol, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Labour Organization's Convention 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour.

2.7 Temporary special measures in accordance with article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation 25, to accelerate the increase in the representation of women in elected and appointed bodies in all areas of public and political life and at all levels

45. Affirmative Action by the top leadership has resulted in a Cabinet with 5 out of 15 (33%) ministerial positions being held by women. The 2nd and 3rd highest positions in the Government are held by women: the Vice-President and Minister of Women's Affairs and the speaker of the National Assembly which has been held by women in the current and last legislative councils.

46. With respect to the National Assembly, there is provision for 5 nominated members and the President has mostly nominated women to these positions. Currently there are four female National Assembly members — two are elected members and two women nominated, one of whom is the speaker.

Figure 1
Percentage of women in the National Assembly⁷



47. In the current administrative system there are in top decision making positions three (3) female Permanent Secretaries, four (4) Deputy Permanent Secretaries, several Principal Assistant Secretaries and numerous Heads of Departments and Technical Directors in various sectors. In the diplomatic field there are 3 women heads of missions out of 19 and there are two deputy heads of mission for the first time in the history of The Gambia.

48. The Judiciary has benefited from the application of affirmative action policies. The recent appointments of high court judges in September 2009 led to an increase in the number of female judges to 8 out of 11 (72%). This is a remarkable achievement as it far exceeds the recommended 50%. The Child Unit is also headed by a female state counsel who is also the gender focal person at the Ministry of Justice. The President of the Bar Association is also a woman.

49. Measures to improve the participation of women in democratic political elections resulted in remarkable outcomes in the 2007 local government (LGA) elections. For the first time in the political development of the country, 20 women contested the elections and out of this 15 won their seats. For women to participate in politics they need to have the confidence, the resources and the backing of their party and the support of the electorate. The women who were awarded party symbols contested and won the elections had all taken part in the Capacity Enhancement Training workshops 2007-2008 organised by the Women's Bureau and supported by UNDP⁸ (see table 5).

⁷ <http://www.whrnet.org/docs/issue-women-politics.html>.

⁸ Report on Capacity Assessment of Women in Decision Making, UNDP, Women's Bureau, January 2008.

Table 5
Comparison between women and men area councillors countrywide

| <i>Areas</i> | <i>Number of males</i> | <i>Number of females</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|----------------------|------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Banjul City Council | 5 | 4 | 9 |
| KMC | 13 | 4 | 17 |
| Mansakonko Council | 11 | 1 | 12 |
| Kuntaur Council | 9 | 1 | 10 |
| Brikama Council | 21 | 3 | 24 |
| Janjangbureh Council | 11 | 1 | 12 |
| Kerewan Council | 16 | 0 | 16 |
| Basse Council | 13 | 1 | 14 |
| Total | 99 | 15 | 114 |

Source: UNDP Governance and Gender in Development, The Gambia, Medium Term Plan, 2005-2009 (Source 2008 LG Elections).

50. In building women's leadership capacity it is important to look at what is working for the community and is sustainable and can be built upon. The Capacity Needs Assessment of Women in Decision Making which was an integral component of the UNDP support to the Gambian Government to achieve MDG3 Gender Equality and the Advancement of Women for poverty reduction was successful in this respect.⁹ The interventions include:

- Development of a short term action plan for capacity building;
- Sensitization and awareness creation on the social benefits of women's effective participation in decision making;
- Training of selected women in community leadership, networking and advocacy skills; and
- Establishment of the regional information centres established in all the regions to facilitate access to gender related information and materials for the women and all other stakeholders within the region.

51. The Follow-up Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment and Women in Decision Making Project (2008) focuses on building on the gains made in the previous project.

52. Within the framework of decentralisation, the Local Government Act (LGA) 2002 provides for female representation in Village Development Committees (VDCs) and Ward Development Committees (WDCs) and calls for equal male and female representation on these committees. The Women's Bureau has decentralised its activities and the staff and women councillors work with these structures including others on the ground such as the Multidisciplinary Task Forces (MDFTs), the Population Task Forces (PTF) and the Technical Advisory Committees (TACs) and CSOs to mainstream gender into their activities. The Gender Focal Points

⁹ Evaluation of the Capacity Enhancement of Women in Decision Making Project, Fatou Kinteh, UNDP July 2009.

Network has been revitalized to better facilitate gender mainstreaming efforts. In May 2006, the President endorsed the creation of a National Women's Federation, which aims to improve organisational effectiveness and participation of women in the private sector, through: strengthening women's groups at all levels; better coordinated programmes and activities; facilitating linkages for economic opportunities; and contributing to peace building. The provisions of the LGA Act 2002 notwithstanding however, women's participation in local government is very limited. There are no women governors, no female chiefs with only one female deputy governor (see table 6).

Table 6
Local Government 2008

| <i>Positions</i> | <i>Total number of men and women</i> | <i>Number of women</i> | <i>Number of men</i> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Governors | 5 | | 5 |
| Deputy Governors | 5 | 1 | 4 |
| Chairpersons of councils | 5 | | 5 |
| Mayors | 2 | | 2 |
| Chiefs | 48 | | |
| Ward Councillors | 114 | 15 | 99 |
| Alkalolu | 1 873 | 4 | 1 869 |

Source: Report of Capacity Assessment of Women in Decision Making, UNDP, Women's Bureau, 2008.

2.8 Situation of women in the formal and informal sectors of the labour market, including the percentage of women, as compared with men, in the various sectors of the economy, and their respective wages, as well as information on legislation to guarantee equality of rights between women and men in the labour market, and its effective implementation

53. Women constitute 45% of the economically active population of which 16.40% are in the Fisheries Sector, 22.07% in Manufacturing, 41.33% in Hotels and Restaurants, 2.66% in Financial Services, 6.95% in Storage and Communication, 39.97% in Commercial, Social and Personnel Services and 43.49% are in the Wholesale and Retail Sector.¹⁰ More recent data contained on the first Core Indicator Welfare Survey (CIWS 2008) conducted by the National Planning Commission and The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBoS) in The Gambia shows that the economically active population constituted 64.1% of the surveyed population. Out of which about 60% were working or are fully employed, about 5% were under employed, 12% were unemployed and 23.9% were economically inactive. The highest proportion of the employed population was found in the predominantly rural areas, 93.9% compared to 40.1% in the urban areas. More males (66.5%) were reported to be working than females (53.2%).

54. This high employment rate in the predominantly rural areas could be attributed to the fact that agriculture is the main economic activity where most people work whilst in the urban settlements; most people work in the formal sector whose absorptive capacity is smaller than the agricultural sector. The CIWS indicates that

¹⁰ Population and Housing Census 2003.

56% of the working population was engaged in agriculture and the proportion was highest in the rural (83.8%) as compared to 16.4% in the urban areas. Agriculture is the mainstay of the economy and is regarded as “the prime sector for investments to raise income, improve food security and reduce poverty and, therefore, meet the Vision 2020 objectives and MDG1 targets”¹¹ (see table 7). It aims to do this among other objectives by “reducing disparities between rural and urban incomes and between men and women, curbing rural-urban drift and accelerating the pace of development of the rural sector.

55. Women constitute the majority (65.5%) of the agricultural sector workforce compared to their male counterparts (47.5%) out of a working population of 56% who are engaged in agriculture.¹² Important structural changes for women in the agricultural sector during the period under review include diversification of agricultural production into sesame growing and the adoption of short cycle species such as the New Rice for Africa (NERICA); rearing of exotic breeds and use of animal traction. The potential impact of NERICA on boosting production, reducing poverty and increasing food security is acknowledged by FAO.¹³ A boost in horticultural production has resulted in the growing of high value tropical and off season fresh fruit and vegetables for both the domestic/tourist and export markets. Most of this growth is due to greater private sector involvement and investment as well as organised communal village based women vegetable growing schemes supported by donor funds such as the gardens in Bakau, Banjulnding and Sukuta (see table 7). The Peri-Urban Small Scale Improvement Project covers small holder production credit schemes for mixed farming systems with low input for fattening of small ruminants, poultry and rabbits and egg and diary production. The Banjulnding Women’s Garden in the Western Region practices intensive breeding of exotic cattle in peri-urban areas. The scheme was promoted by the ITC under the PROCODEL Project which ended in 2005.

¹¹ PRSP 11.

¹² Light Poverty Study, Core Indicators Welfare Study, National Planning Commission, 2008.

¹³ FAO Assistant Director-General Hafez Ghanem in Africa’s Food Challenge, <http://www.food.org/news/story/en/item/35770/icode>, FAO Media Centre, 2009.

Table 7
Ongoing and completed projects that have benefited women

| <i>Project title</i> | <i>Funding partner</i> | <i>Life line</i> | <i>Description</i> |
|--|------------------------|------------------|--|
| Rural Finance and Community Initiative Project | IFAD | 1999-2006 | Increase food security through rural finance and local initiative |
| Lowland Agricultural Development Project | AfDB/IFAD | 2001-2006 | Expand rice production to improve food security and welfare |
| Peri-Urban Small Holder Project | AfDB | 2002-2007 | Increase on a sustainable basis the production of marketing of livestock and horticultural production in West and North Bank Regions |
| Programme for the Increase of Food Production | JICA | 1997-2007 | Improve food security through increased area and productivity |
| Managing Water and Energy Services for Poverty Reduction to Rural Gambia | UNDESA | 2004-2006 | Construction of boreholes in 5 villages for water supply and establishing vegetable gardens with the distribution network for irrigation |
| Special Programme for Food Security | FAO Italy IDB | 1999-2009 | Increase food security through production of short cycled species of crop and live stock |
| Multinational NERICA Dissemination Project | AfDB | 2004-2009 | Improve food security through increased rice production |
| Rural Finance Project | IFAD | 2006-2012 | Strengthen micro-finance institutions to enable them deliver financial services to economically active poor people |
| Farmer Managed Rice Irrigation Project | AfDB | 2005-2008 | Facilitate sustainable income improvement and increase rice production |
| Participatory Integrated Watershed Management Project | AfDB/IFAD | 2006-2013 | Reduce rural poverty by increasing total land productivity on a sustainable basis through sound environmental and natural resources management |
| Irrigated Rice Development Project | KFAED | 2002-2008 | Increase rice production and productivity in CRR North through the development of 1,206 hectares of swampland for irrigated rice production |
| Gambia Lowland Government Project | IDB | 2007-2011 | Develop rural infrastructure in Western Region |

Source: National Investment Brief, Gambia, December 2008 in www.sirtewaterandenergy.org/docs/reports/Gambia.

56. The tourism industry in The Gambia contributes 16% of the GDP supporting over 10,000 direct and indirect jobs.¹⁴ The absence of gender disaggregated data makes it difficult to assess the number of women working in the sector. The Tourism

¹⁴ PRSP 11, p. 66.

Master Plan (2005) provides the basis for improvement and orderly expansion of tourism in order to increase employment and economic benefit derived from the sector and proposes strategies, some of which have a direct bearing on women. These include:

- Improving Gambian handicraft and its marketing through training;
- Building the capacity of small and large professional associations in the industry to enable them to provide higher quality service to the industry;
- Fostering public/private partnership for the development of the sector;
- Improving access to investment finance through the establishment of an investment bank;
- Encourage responsible tourism through awareness building and education programmes;
- Improving the infrastructure and utilities at the TDA and the airport.

57. Some of the successes within the tourism sector in relation to the strategy include:

- The training and other capacity building activities undertaken during the Fight against Social Exclusion (FASE) 11 and the CSIP have led to the production of an improved quality of products;
- Partnerships between women and the sector are also felt in the provision of accommodation, transportation and cleansing services of high profile business women who own and manage hotels, tour operator-businesses and travel agencies;
- A number of women also run their SMEs in and outside the *bengdulas*¹⁵ such as hairdressing salons, juice pressing, tailoring, manicure and pedicure businesses that cater for a wide range of tourist needs and interests;
- Some women have senior level jobs such as managers, “sous-chefs”,¹⁶ accountants in the industry.

Employment

Formal Sector Employment

58. The Gambia’s formal sector is very small, employing just over 20% of the labour force. Women constitute 21% of the civil service labour force where the majority is in support rather than managerial position.¹⁷ Employment in the formal sector are gender biased in favour of men, as education is a prerequisite for participation and women are generally excluded due to their low levels of illiteracy. Having said this there is no discrimination in wages when women have the same qualifications and are doing the same job.

¹⁵ *Bengdula*, Mandinka word literal meaning “meeting place” which has been applied to the Crafts Markets.

¹⁶ “Sous-Chef”, French expression meaning the chef who is second in authority in the kitchen or restaurant, ranking below the head.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

59. In The Gambia both men and women enjoy equal remuneration for doing the same type of work. Pay levels are in accordance with the integrated pay scale which clearly enumerates the different categories of pay by grade. The parastatals have their own grading system as well as the NGOS but all of these are in line with government rules and regulations. Public officers are divided into the following categories and grades indicated below. As men predominate in the decision making positions, they mostly occupy the higher grades (8-12). They also predominate in all sectors as indicated in paragraph 53 above:

- Category V officers in Grades 11 and 12;
- Category IV officers in Grades 7 to 10;
- Category III officers in Grades 4 to 6;
- Category II officers in Grades 2 to 3;
- Category I officers in Grade 1.

60. There is nothing inhibiting equal opportunity in employment between women and men in the 1997 Constitution, Public Service Commission Regulations, and labour laws. In the formal public sector, recruitment is carried out in line with the qualifications and experiences required for a particular job. The minimum qualifications for appointments and promotions in the public service are stipulated in Government's Scheme of Service. The processes are guided by a number of instruments such as General Orders, Public Service Regulations, etc., which are updated periodically. A review of the policies and regulations in the mid-nineties removed discriminatory clauses which provided benefits to men to the detriment of women such as in the provision of allowances for the employee and the number of dependents the person was entitled to for rural or overseas postings and for study abroad. All these have been standardized and both men and women benefit equally. Affirmative action recruitment policies indicate a preference for female candidates. The problem is that women with their generally low levels of qualification do not fit the job profiles.

Informal Sector Employment

61. It is difficult to provide data on the informal sector as there is a scarcity of recent data to show who is involved, the level of activity, areas of operation, income derived and contributions to the household and national economies. It is evident that women play a key role in this sector of the economy. Household surveys have been undertaken and labour surveys to determine the level of women's participation in the informal sector but the data is not readily available to inform this report. However, women are involved in a wide variety of activities which include but are not limited to petty trading, market vendor, selling of street foods, vegetables and fruits, food processing, cross border trade, tie and dye, soap making, dress making, hair dressing, ice making, home help, weaving, pottery, charcoal and wood selling.

62. Informal workers typically lack the social protection afforded to formal paid workers, such as worker benefits and health insurance, and typically work under irregular and casual contracts. However, the precise relationship between informal employment and the intensity of poverty appears only when informal workers are disaggregated by subsectors of the economy, status of employment (i.e., employer, self-employed, worker), and gender. The majority of women in the informal sector

are own account traders and producers or casual and subcontract workers; relatively few are employers who hire paid workers. Average incomes of both men and women in the informal sector are lower than those in the formal sector. Even when men and women are involved in the same type of activity, male traders tend to have larger scale operations and to deal in non-food items while female traders tend to have smaller scale operations and to deal in food items.

63. In spite of the low levels of income and hard work that goes into informal sector activity, women still carry on with these activities and are sometimes over-concentrated in some activity, for example soap making and tie-dye or horticultural production. They complain about a lack of markets but with so many of them involved in producing the same product the marketing becomes a major challenge. Efforts to diversify have included capacity building activities for the women under the FASE, CSIP and other projects to make them more competitive.

Special projects and programmes for women

64. The long term goal of PRSP 11 (2007-2011) is to eradicate poverty by significantly increasing national income through sustained economic growth and reducing income and non-income inequalities through specific poverty reduction priority interventions. It also aims at “empowering local communities and women to influence and share control over priority setting, resource allocation and implementation towards achieving the PRSP goals and objectives”. Gender mainstreaming is one of the components of Pillar 5 of the PRSP. CSOs and LGAs involvement is critical to the successful implementation of the PRSP 11. The Pro-poor Advocacy Group (ProPAG) plays a unique role in ensuring effective and popular participation during the budget consultations as well as in facilitating the ward and village development plans that fit into the overall national strategy. A UNICEF funded study conducted in 2007 by ProPAG on gender budgeting in key government ministries, LGAs and selected CSOs reveals that there is a major gap in this area as most of the institutions do not practice gender budgeting due to lack of knowledge, technical expertise and inadequate capacity.

65. The Government recently developed a Poverty Reduction and Growth Strategy (PRGS) for 2007-2011 that merged the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with the Medium Term Plan, 2007-2011. The new strategy seeks to accelerate economic growth and reduce poverty. Funds from the Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative (HIPC) from which the country benefited in 2004 and 2008¹⁸ went directly to soft loans and subventions for women’s groups, training of farmers and provision of water facilities for communities. The social and economic gains derived from women’s access to savings and credit has clearly impacted on the quality of their lives and that of their families as it has promoted entrepreneurial development through investment in on and off farm activities as well as education of their children, among other things.

66. Access to productive resources including credit has been identified as a means of getting women out of the poverty trap. During the last ten years, the Social Development Fund (SDF) has greatly facilitated women’s access to micro-credit by disbursing funds totalling to 100 million Dalasis (about US\$ 3.8 million) 2000-2010 to Intermediary Micro Finance Institutions (IMFI) consisting of NGOs and CBOs

¹⁸ Revised Final PRSP 11, National Planning Commission, 2008.

who are registered with the Central Bank of The Gambia. The Gambia Women's Finance Association (GAWFA), the National Association of Credit Unions of The Gambia (NACCUG) and the VISACAs have emerged as key players in the field of micro credit. CSIP support women groups with credit facility through the SDF from 2004 to date. Most of their clients are the rural poor, and 70% of these are women with about 90% of the lending going to women owned small enterprises. The repayment rates for microfinance loans have been in the range of 80% to 90%, indicating that loans to small borrowers with little collateral assets can still be successfully managed with the right institutional setting.¹⁹ Capacity building activities are provided to enhance service delivery.

67. The Women's Bureau facilitates access to micro credit through revolving loan schemes supported by four separate initiatives: (i) the Republic of China on Taiwan; (ii) a Gambian philanthropist; (iii) the Aji Oley Jack Memorial Fund; and (iv) the National Enterprise Development Initiative (NEDI) — a joint venture of the Women's Bureau, National Youth Council and National Youth Service Scheme.

68. Under Phase 11 of the Fight against Social Exclusion (FASE) Project (2005-2006) approximately 16,109 (95% women) direct beneficiaries and 120,000 indirect beneficiaries received enhanced income derived from higher quality of products and better managed enterprises as a result of the skills and business training and credit. In addition about 2,908 associations, trade organisations and SMEs also benefited from the Project. Partnerships were developed with organisations involved in the fight against poverty such as the LGAS, SDF, CSIP, Government institutions and CSOs.²⁰

69. The NEPAD Spanish African Women Empowerment Project (NEPAD SPAWEP) implemented by the Women's Bureau seeks to enhance the capacity of the Bureau to give support to 25 women gardens all over the country, provide 40 labour saving devices as well as building of a storage and processing plant, training and IEC. The aim of the project is to eradicate poverty amongst women (target 100,000) by supporting them to improve and increase production capacity both in terms of quantity and quality, and to enable them through time saved by using labour savings devices to participate in self-development and other social and economic activities.

70. Plans to build a national women's multi-purpose complex that will provide Gambian women with skills, enterprises and micro-finance to improve their economic wellbeing are well underway. A Feasibility Study of the Project was undertaken in 2006 and the Report validated in April 2007, and disseminated later to all stakeholders. The Gambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCCI) and the Gambia Tourism Authority have indicated interest in supporting the project.

71. The trade faire organised by the EU National Authorising Office and the GCCCI provide a platform not only for the private sector and CSOs to showcase their work but also a market for them to sell their produce and to network and build partnerships with people in a similar trade or with similar interests. In addition to participating in the local trade fair, some individuals/organisations also participate at the regional and international levels.

¹⁹ PRSP 11.

²⁰ End of Project Evaluation, Fight against Social and Economic Exclusion, UNDP, ILO and The Government of The Gambia, September 2006.

72. GAMJOBS, under the Ministry of Trade and Employment, facilitate job creation and employment in all sectors for women and youth. It is also supporting projects on micro finance, training in food production, processing and enterprise development.

73. CSIP provided 21 multi-purpose centres and 18 youth workshops constructed countrywide, equipped with solar and other equipment and handed over to the communities. Reports show that 72,303 have learnt various types of skills over the period out of which 31,990 (44.24%) mastered the skills whilst 72.6% are utilising the skills.²¹

74. AATG and VSO spearheaded a campaign on the food crisis of 2008 and engaged The Gambia Government to develop an action plan to mitigate the adverse consequences of the food crisis. As women were the hardest hit by the crisis participatory approaches ensured that the poorest rural communities including the women were involved in the consultations that led to the development of the plan. Awareness raising was used to lobby and mobilize the NAMS on hunger and poverty and its link to the food crisis. World Food Day is used as a major event for awareness raising and advocacy at all levels and efforts are made to support fair trade, respect local food production and contribute to the elimination of hunger. Special attention is paid to the issue of local consumption which is critical to poverty eradication as it saves money, provides healthier foods and promotes sustainable development in a country where the majority of the population is engaged in farming.

75. Concern Universal through its Small Holder Irrigation for Livelihood Enhancement (SMILE) and The Gambia is Good (GIG) projects have greatly increased women's access to low cost technologies for drawing water and markets. The LIFE project implemented in 2004-2009 with 80% female participation promoted the development of new gardens, rainy season vegetable production, compost manure making, planting of live fencing trees for gardens, orchards and woodlots and provided training in gender awareness, bush fire control and use of bio-pesticides.

76. Umbrella organisations such as NAWFA and the Women's Nako²² Organisation play a key role in advocating for women's access, ownership and control of productive resources including land. The Gambian Horticultural Producers and Exporters Association (GAMHOPE) and the Kotu Fruit Sellers Society are examples of initiatives that promote women's participation in the horticultural sector.

77. The Association of Food Processors (AFP) adds value to Gambian products by processing or preserving them into a variety of cereals and preservatives of adult consumption and for complimentary feeds for infants. The products are now sold in supermarkets and shops and are packaged and labelled to monitor their shelf life. Support has been provided to the Association of Food Processors (AFP) through SCAPE under the capacity building component of the NEPAD SPAWEP.

78. The Association of Women Entrepreneurs (AWE) plays a proactive role in entrepreneurial development and in supporting women owned small and medium

²¹ Beneficiary Impact Assessment of CSIP, December, 2008.

²² Mandinka word meaning vegetable garden.

sized businesses to play a visible and active role in the activities of the Association. In August 2009, the AWE intervened during escalating food prices and scarcity to import essential food items and sell them at affordable prices.

79. ASSET — the Association of Small Scale Entrepreneurs in Tourism has a membership of 80 small scale responsible tourism organisations in The Gambia. Females comprise 44.7% of the membership (649 females and 800 males)²³. ASSET provides assistance to its members in product development, marketing, training, access to finance, coordination of member activities and representation of the member organisation to government. Its awards ceremonies particularly to its female members have lifted their profile and promoted standard-setting among the members.

2.9 Efforts to decrease the high maternal and infant mortality rates, and increase women's access to health services, including health-care facilities and medical assistance by trained personnel, especially with regard to prenatal and post-natal care

80. Primary and secondary health care have expanded significantly and increased immunization has reduced mortality rates. Physical access continues to improve with the upgrading and building of new facilities and staffing them with trained health personnel. This has increased the geographical access and has reduced the distance to the nearest health facility. The PRSP Progress Report 2007 indicates that over 85% and 97% of the population are within 3 km and 5 km of a basic health facility and primary health care post respectively. Antenatal care coverage country wide is as high as 96% as well as the RCH awareness of 96%.²⁴

81. The cost of public health care services remains relatively cheap, as Reproductive and Child Health Services including family planning are provided free of charge. A minimal user charge of D5.00 (US\$0.25) is paid for out-patient consultations and treatment at all public health facilities. However, diagnostic investigations (lab, x-ray, ultra sound) are charged. Micro-nutrient deficiencies which are a major cause of morbidity and mortality are being addressed through a nutrition supplementation programme. Insecticide treated bed-nets are provided free of charge to pregnant and lactating mothers and children under 5 and IPT. These and other interventions such as increased number of births attended by trained antenatal personnel which rose from 52% in 2001 to 67% in 2006 have greatly contributed to the decline of the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) from 730/100,00 live births in 2001 to 556/100,000 live births in 2006; the Neonatal Mortality Ratio was 31.2/1,000 live births in 2001 down from 60/1,000 live births, the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) was 75/1,000 live births, down from 97/1,000 in 1993. The U5 Mortality Rate was 99/1,000 live births down from 134/1,000 live births in 2001. The Obstetric Fistula Prevalence is 0.5/1,000 women of reproductive age.²⁵ However, the lack of trained, skilled and motivated personnel and inadequate medical equipment has limited the impact of these interventions.

²³ ASSET Database 2009.

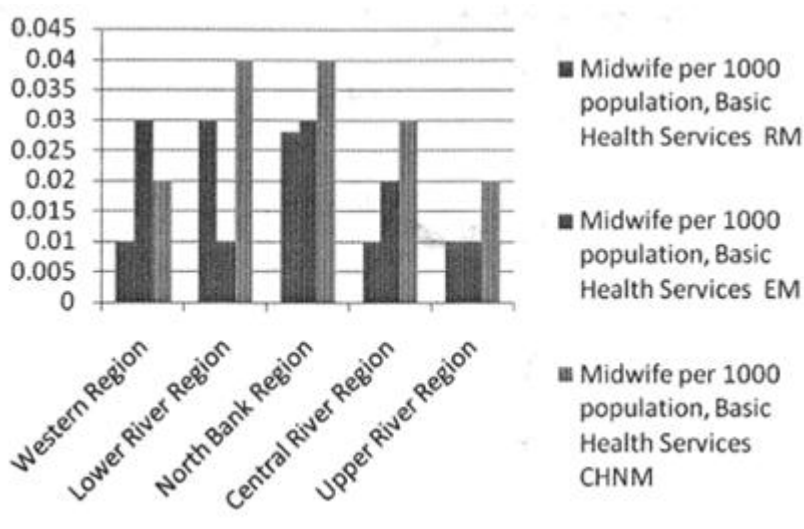
²⁴ Paper presented by Ramou Cole Ceesay as the health contribution to the BPFA + 15 Report.

²⁵ Presentation on Maternal Mortality at the 1st Celebration of the Pan African Women's Day, by Ramou Cole Ceesay.

82. The high importance accorded to women's reproductive health is captured in the following statement: "every pregnancy is considered at risk".²⁶ The single and most critical intervention for safe motherhood is to ensure that a competent and skilled health worker is present at every birth, and that transport is available to a referral facility for obstetric care in case of emergency. The indicators are the proportion of births with a skilled attendant and the proportion of institutional deliveries. The skilled attendant at delivery is also used to track progress towards the MDG target of reducing the MMR.

83. The number of births attended by trained personnel is 67% which compares favourably to the figure in Sub Saharan Africa.²⁷ The MICS 2005/2006 indicates about 47% of the births in the year preceding the MICS were delivered with the assistance of a nurse/midwife. Doctors assisted with the delivery of 6% of births and auxiliary midwives with about 5% of deliveries.

Graph 2
Availability of Midwives by Region²⁸



84. NGOs complement and supplement government efforts to realize these goals. The Gambia Family Planning Association (GFPA) runs a RCH at its headquarters in Kanifing/NEWFOY that offers quality services to pregnant women, child delivery and immunization. BARFROW runs the Well Woman clinics and provides counselling and reproductive health services for women. The Sheik Abdullah Jah Foundation has trained TBAs and community health nurses in RCH and provided them with equipment to carry out their work effectively. Technical support is provided through a mobile ambulance service as a result the capacity of the TBAs and Community Health Nurses is strengthened through supervision of their work and observation of clinical services that are being carried out by the team of medical experts.

²⁶ Revised PRSP Report, National Planning Commission, 2008.

²⁷ Paper presented by Ramou Cole Ceesay as health contribution to BPFA + 15 Report.

²⁸ Ditto 21.

85. The Gambia Nutrition Policy, 2000-2004 aimed at mainstreaming nutrition into all aspects of development and at attaining the basic nutritional requirements of the Gambian population with emphasis on women and children. The Policy has been reviewed and a new Nutrition Policy 2010-2020 has been validated to take on board emerging issues in nutrition and nutrition related areas. The new policy is yet to be adopted. The National Nutrition Agency (NaNA) was established by an Act of the National Assembly in 2005. NaNA, which is located under the Office of the Vice-President, is mandated and charged with the responsibility of coordinating all nutrition and nutrition related activities in the country. Since its establishment, NaNA has recorded the following achievements:

- Formulation and enactment of the Food Act 2005, leading to the enactment of the Breastfeeding Promotion Regulation and the Food Fortification and Salt Iodization Regulation, 2006;
- Revitalization of the National Codex Committee (NCC), which is made up of governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with food production, quality, safety and trade;
- Coordination of the activities of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), The Gambia for the protection, promotion and support of optimal Infant and Young Child Feeding practices;
- Instituted mechanisms to reduce micro-nutrient deficiencies, namely the salt iodization and vitamin A supplementation programme as well as the intensification of IEC promoting Iron Deficiency Anaemia (IDA) control;
- Design and implementation of the Baby Friendly Hospital and Community Initiatives for the prevention and management of infant, young child and maternal malnutrition. In the BFCI communities, the Village Support Groups play a key role in transmitting messages and providing support to mothers on practices of infant feeding. In these communities there is early initiation of breastfeeding within the first hour. Most of the communities demonstrate “a cleaner environment, healthier children, healthier pregnant women and above all, unity as a result of shared involvement and commitment of the initiative”;²⁹
- Mainstreaming nutrition into many sectoral policies, including the PRSP.

86. Reduction of Child Mortality: The Gambia in using the integrated management of neonatal and childhood illnesses (IMNCR) has attained achievements in the reduction of neonatal and infant mortality and morbidity of the six killer childhood diseases: Pneumonia, Malaria, Neonatal Tetanus, Diarrhoea, Malnutrition and Meningitis. The Gambia attained over 90% immunization coverage for all antigens for children under one year of age and is the only country in Africa to introduce Pneumococcal Conjugate vaccine into its routine EPI services. A sustained sensitization campaign on EBF has resulted in 48% of women who gave birth within the previous two years to initiate breastfeeding their babies within one hour after birth and 90% within one day after birth.³⁰ Operation Save a Baby spearheaded by the First Lady of The Gambia has mobilized support from the private sector and the

²⁹ Marfo Biersteker, Sagnia and Kabiru in *Africa's Future, Africa's Challenge* by Marito Garcia, Alan R. Pence, World Bank, Judith L. Evans, World Bank Publications, Publisher, Amazon.com.

³⁰ MICS, 2005-2006.

public. It provides support to the paediatric ward by providing equipment and other essentials for at risk babies. It also provides incentives to mothers.

87. Government efforts to reduce MNCR lead to:

- Expansion of Emergency Maternal Obstetric Care (EMOC) in major health facilities;
- Training of service providers on EMOC;
- Training of Nurse Anaesthetic and Pre-operational Nurse Midwives;
- Provision of ambulance to all health facilities;
- Expansion of hospitals and health facilities and outreach services throughout the country;
- Free reproductive child health services for all;
- Other development partners in supplementing Government efforts by providing equipments supplies contraceptives training and providing technical assistance to disaster victims, etc.

Infant mortality rate

Total: 68.72 deaths/1,000 live births;³¹

Male: 75.07 deaths/1,000 live births;

Female: 62.18 deaths/1,000 live births (2008 est.).

Table 8

Infant Mortality Rate

| <i>Year</i> | <i>IMR</i> | <i>Rank</i> | <i>% Change</i> | <i>Date of information</i> |
|-------------|------------|-------------|-----------------|----------------------------|
| 2004 | 72.02 | 37 | -3.88 | 2004 |
| 2005 | 73.07 | 35 | 1.46 | 2005 |
| 2006 | 71.58 | 36 | -2.04 | 2006 |
| 2007 | 70.14 | 31 | -2.01 | 2007 |
| 2008 | 68.72 | 29 | -2.02 | 2008 |

Malaria

88. The Gambia has taken strong and sustained action to fight malaria and this has yielded positive results. The National Malaria Control Programme has developed effective partnerships with WHO, UNICEF, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria, the Medical Research Council (MRC), local and international NGOs and foundations, and various governments departments that have led to a reduction of the incidence of malaria. Interventions include insecticide-treated bed-nets (ITNs) which are being used by 63% of the population and are given free to pregnant women and children under 5 — including intermittent preventive treatment (IPT), and indoor residual spraying. The most substantial change in measures to prevent malaria has been the increase of coverage of ITNs, which increased threefold

³¹ www.indexmundi.com/the_gambia/infant_mortality_rate.html.

between 2000 and 2006. According to the MICS 2005-2006, 49% of under 5s in Gambia are now reported to be sleeping under ITNs.

89. The Centre for Innovation against Malaria (CIAM) works towards reducing the burden of malaria and improving the health and well-being of Gambians. The key areas of interest for CIAM are research and behaviour change communication. Under the Programme of Collaboration with the Institute for Health, Research and Development of Denmark (DBL), 2006-2008, CIAM has conducted a number of activities which include:

- An evaluation of a Pilot Programme to Deliver Intermittent Preventive Treatment (IPT) of Malaria in Pregnancy in the Two Health Divisions in The Gambia;
- A review of access to and coverage of the programme to prevent PMTCT of HIV followed by a national survey of antenatal care delivery, coverage and access in The Gambia;
- Trained health professionals in monitoring and research skills.

HIV/AIDS

90. As in most of West Africa the incidence of HIV is relatively low in The Gambia. In 2004, the prevalence rate for HIV-1 was estimated to be 2.1% and 1.0% for HIV-2.³² There has been a downward trend observed in 2007 sentinel survey HIV-1 1.2 and HIV-2 0.9. There are more females (54%) with HIV than males (46%). The low prevalence rate of HIV has resulted in its invisibility for many Gambians not been “visible” as they have not directly “touched” by the diseases and this has created a challenge for reduction and reversal of the trend. Some progress has been made in various aspects of addressing national capacity in gender, socio-cultural factors and human rights. UNAIDS supported NGOs and the National AID Secretariat, NAS. GAMNAS (Gambia National Association of Aids Societies), the umbrella body organisation, gives support to people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHIV). Advocacy programmes on HIV are supported countrywide and they equally support the provision of antiretroviral therapy, in all RCH clinics countrywide. Added to the health sector programme, traditional medicine is also incorporated including the HIV and AIDS treatment. There are plans to set up HIV treatment hospital.

91. There has been an unprecedented increase in external resources and donor support to scale up and sustain the response to HIV. Notable key partners are the Global Fund and the UN Agencies. The Gambia has recently benefited from Round 8 of the Global Fund and NAS and Action Aid are key recipients of the fund which they will implement in collaboration with sub-recipients such as Child Fund, Catholic Relief Society (CRS), Gambia Family Planning Association (GFPA), Hands on Care, Gambia Red Cross Society (GRCS), Santa Yalla³³ and Association for the development of women and children (ADWAC). In addition to resources from the Global Fund, CSOs have also mobilized resources from their traditional partners to stem up the HIV/AIDS campaign.

³² Annual Gambia HIV Sentinel Surveillance in Antenatal Clinic: Results 2005, 2006.

³³ Santa Yalla is an association of PLWHIV.

92. Various studies: sentinel surveillance, behavioural sentinel surveillance, socio-cultural, Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) have been undertaken to inform and strengthen the national response and have resulted in gender sensitive programming. Women's groups are also represented on all key policy structures such as the National AIDS Council, Country Coordinating Mechanism and Divisional AIDS Committees, thus enabling them to influence policy at these levels.

93. Home based care services support feeding, clothing and scholarship awards through CSOs such as Hands on Care, GRCS and organisations supporting PLWHIV. Mutapola, an organisation of Women LWHIV, has built capacity of their members by providing them with life and livelihood skills. The following organisations are engaged in advocacy, peer education, awareness creation and HIV/AIDS prevention activities at all levels — GAMNAS, Society for Women against AIDS in Africa, Nova Scotia Gambia Association (NSGA), Youth in Development and Change (YIDAC), Wordview, GAMCOTRAP, BAFROW, Network for AIDS Services Organisations (NASO), Youth against AIDS Network and the Girl's Guides Association among others.

Tuberculosis

94. TB mostly affects the productive ages 15-45 years with a male to female ratio of 2:1. An increased number of TB patients are found to be infected by HIV. TB cases detection rate rose from 64% in 2006 to 78% in 2008. The cure rate rose from 67% in 2003 to 78% in 2008 and treatment success rate rose from 67% (baseline) to 84% in 2008, respectively for both cases.³⁴ The current burden of TB in the country is unknown but a nationwide TB prevalence survey is being planned for support in the next round of the Global Fund.

95. Shelter Gambia, in collaboration with the Department of Social Welfare, is providing surgery to women with VVF. In addition to the medical support, the women are provided in house training on life skills and livelihood skills during the three months of their admission to enable them to lead independent lives after they are discharged from the Shelter Gambia Home. Even though the numbers are small this is a significant contribution to uplifting the dignity and self-esteem of women who were being stigmatised as a result of a health condition and reintegrating them into society.³⁵

2.10 Access to water and sanitation

96. Fetching water is primarily the responsibility of women and girls in The Gambia due to the gender division of labour. With 85.1% of the population having access to an improved source of water and only a 21 minute average time taken to reach the water source (except for households with water)³⁶, the drudgery associated with this role has greatly reduced. Even though there are disparities in access between settlements, the ease of access to water has provided several benefits. The health benefits include prevention of diarrhoea and reduced absenteeism from the workplace. The time saved associated with closer location of the facilities translates into increased production, higher school attendance particularly for girls and more

³⁴ TB/HIV Surveillance System, Ministry of Health.

³⁵ GRTS interview with Orla Klippe, Coordinator of Programme, September 2009.

³⁶ The MICS 2005/2006, UNICEF/The Government of The Gambia.

leisure time for women to participate in socio-political activities.³⁷ The Government of The Gambia, with the support of Saudi Sahelian Programme (SSP), United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), European Commission (EC) and other bilateral donors has made a significance progress in the provision of clean and portable drinking water supply for schools and communities within the country.

97. Increased access to improved sanitation by 93% of households in urban areas of The Gambia and 78% in the rural areas³⁸ has also yielded benefits for women and girls. An improved sanitation facility is defined as one that hygienically separates human excreta from human contact.³⁹ It is a crucial stepping stone to better health as inappropriate disposal of human excreta is associated with a range of diseases including diarrhoea. The risk of faecal contamination is reduced for women who have the responsibility of disposing of children's excreta when they dispose of these safely and wash their hands with soap and water after disposal. Access to improved sanitation is fundamental to gender equity as it protects women's dignity and security. There is evidence that improved sanitation in schools through the provision of separate toilet facilities for girls has contributed to increased enrolment and retention of girls in schools.

98. Water sanitation and Health (WASH): Hand washing with soap and water to improve the health of the people in general cannot happen in the absence of clean and portable water supply for the people. The Gambia was among the first countries in the world to launch the International Year of Sanitation on 15 October 2008 with the theme of commemorating Global Hand Washing Day, which seeks to improve the personal hygiene and well being of the communities at large. The concept was based on the evidence presented, that diarrhoeal infections are among the leading cause of 60% to 70% of under-five child deaths. The practice of hand washing with soap is among one of the most effective and inexpensive ways to prevent diarrhoeal related illnesses and pneumonia. The campaign on hand washing reinforces the call for improved hygienic practices and to integrate hand washing in the way of life of every child and adult. This is a significant contribution to meeting MDG 4 of reducing deaths of children under the age of 5 by two thirds by 2015. The campaign is supported by UNICEF and Sankung Sillah and Sons who have provided 15,000 bars of soap and hand washing materials which were distributed to more than 220 schools between 2008 to date.⁴⁰

2.11 Implementation of the Children's Act and to undertake awareness-raising measures throughout the country on the negative effects of early marriage on women's enjoyment of their human rights, especially the rights to health and education

99. Since the enactment of the Children's Act, the Government has undertaken significant measures to ensure an enabling environment for its implementation. These include:

- The establishment of a Child Welfare Unit at the Police Headquarters;

³⁷ The Gambia's Water and Sanitation Study, NAWEC, SNC Lanvin, 2005.

³⁸ Ditto 27.

³⁹ The WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation.

⁴⁰ Fatou Sima, Meteorologist/Head of Climatology, Department of Water Resources.

- The provision of Child Welfare Officers in all Police Stations;
- The establishment of seven Community Child Protection Committees;
- The establishment of Children’s Court in the Kanifing Municipality;
- The creation of a Juvenile Detention Centre;
- The provision of the Social Welfare hotline; and
- The Shelter for Women and Children.

100. Television and radio programmes undertaken by the Child Protection Officer have given visibility to their activities and has greatly contributed to greater awareness of the general public to child protection issues.

101. Organisations such as the Child Protection Alliance (CPA), Children’s Parliament, the Children for Children Organisation (CFCO), Young People in the Media and Voices of the Young play key roles in influencing policy, implementing programmes and creating awareness on issues affecting children. Their participation in national, regional and international forum has greatly influenced the children’s agenda for “nothing for us without us”.

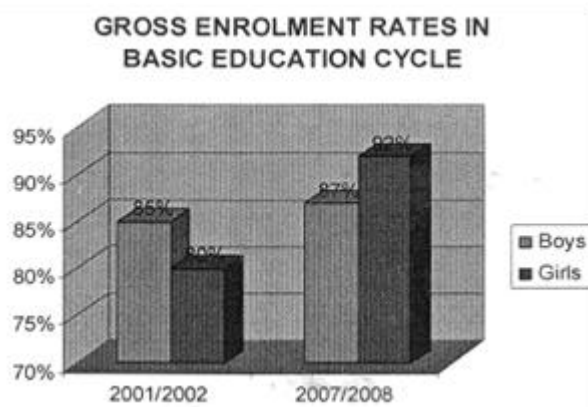
102. With respect to education as already indicated in 2.4 above, significant progress has been made in increasing enrolment and retention of girls in school. At the lower basic cycle, the Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) increased from 82% to 92% from 2001/2002-2007/2008 taking into account the Madrassa enrolment.⁴¹ During the same period, the GER for girls increased appreciably from 80% to 92% and boys slightly increased from 85% to 87%. In the upper basic cycle, the GER increased from 43% to 65%. This growth in enrolment represents an average annual growth rate of 15%, which exceeds the target of 12.7%. However, the period 2005/2006-2007/2008 witnessed a drop in GER for boys from 62% to 58% whilst that of the girls slightly increased from 56% to 60%. The gender parity index in 2006 was 1.03% at the lower basic level and at the upper basic cycle was 0.91%.⁴² The trend changes for adult literacy however, where the literacy rate is higher for men 60% than for women 42.5% and 46% nationally⁴³ (see graphs 3 and 4 below).

⁴¹ This includes only the officially recognized Madrassa.

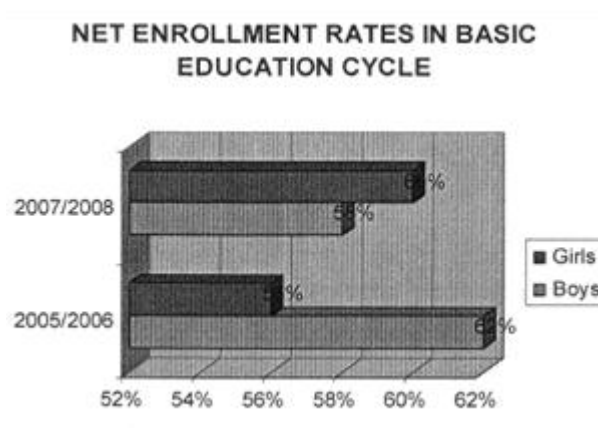
⁴² MoBSE, EMIS in The Gambia’s Education Sector Medium Term Plan, 2008-2012.

⁴³ PRSP 11, Department of State for Finance and Economic Affairs, The Gambia, Nov. 2006.

Graph 3
Gross Enrolment Rates in Basic Education Cycle



Graph 4
Net Enrolment Rates in Basic Education Cycle



Early marriage

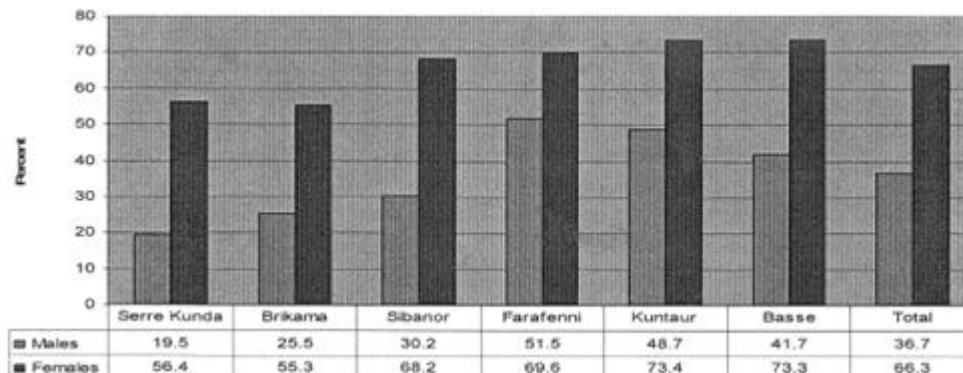
103. The Children's Act Part IV Heading A Section 24 states "Subject to the provisions of any applicable personal law, no child is capable of contracting a valid marriage, and a marriage so contracted is voidable." Section 27 of the 1997 Constitution provides that marriages should be the product of "complete and equal respect" between men and women and should be entered into voluntarily by men and women of "full age and capacity".

104. However, challenges remain because in some cases children are being forced into marriage despite the fact that child marriage is prohibited under the Children's Act 2005. Early marriage for girls is still practised though the median age at marriage has increased from 16 to 17 years since 2002. A Behavioural Surveillance Survey (BSS) on HIV/AIDS was conducted by National AIDS Secretariat (NAS) in 2005. The study subjects were randomly selected from the 15 to 49 years age cohort in six areas of the country. As the figures below indicate, significant percentage of more females, 66.3%, were married compared to males, 36.7%. Among all female respondents of the BSS study the medium age at first marriage is 17.3 years; whilst

among males it is 24.5 years. Most married males and females are currently living with their spouses, 84.5% respectively.

Graph 5

Currently married respondents by location and sex



105. Awareness creation and sensitization activities by the National Women's Council and Bureau and CSOs engaged in working with children have contributed to the reduction of the incidence. Education of the girl child education and ensuring they stay and complete schooling can reduce early marriage for girls and increase their median age at marriage. The Mothers Clubs engage with persons within their communities and have physically intervened to stop them from giving away their daughters in marriage.

2.12 Put in place a comprehensive system of data collection and of measurable indicators to assess trends in the situation of women and of progress towards women's de facto equality and report statistical data and analysis, disaggregated by sex and by rural and urban areas, indicating the impact of measures and the results achieved

106. In the area of research, several surveys have been conducted since the last report. The Gambia Bureau of Statistics (GBOS) commissioned a study on ICT scan, reviewing the status of access to ICT by women, the challenges and way forward. A National Study on Gender and Women's Empowerment at the household level was also commissioned in 2005 funded by UNFPA. The study is in its final stage and will provide empirical evidence on the situation of Gambian women and girls and gender equality. This is in line with the implementation of the recommendations of the CEDAW Committee which observed that the last report did not provide data to back the report.

107. Monitoring and Evaluation System (M & E): The Women's Bureau supported by the Community Skills Improvement Project is developing a national gender and women's empowerment monitoring and evaluation system. This will ensure proper monitoring of stakeholders intervention and the availability of timely information. The system will be made accessible to partners through the Internet via the Gambian Women Website to be set up and funded by UNDP. A database will also be set up as part of this M & E system and training provided to members of the Gender Focal Point networks and staff of the Women's Bureau. In 2007 a monitoring and

evaluation coordinator and assistant were recruited by Government and were trained with support from CSIP/ADB.

108. A computerized Health Management Information System (HMIS) has been completed and the networking component is expected to be pursued soon. This is to ensure availability of reliable data.

2.13 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention and to accept, as soon as possible, the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention concerning the meeting time of the Committee

109. There is no evidence that the Optional Protocol to CEDAW has been ratified. This will be followed up diligently and the status of the Protocol in respect of its ratification will be reported upon.

2.14 Utilize fully in its implementation of its obligations under the Convention, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which reinforce the provisions of the Convention, and include information thereon in its next periodic report

110. The Government of The Gambia, at the highest levels, has committed itself to attainment of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and other national, regional and international commitments related to gender equality and women's empowerment. One indicator of this commitment is the submission of the periodic reports on progress made to the BPfA. The BPfA + 5, + 10 and + 15 Reports have been submitted. The latest BPfA Report "From Commitment to Action" was submitted in November 2009 and highlighted achievements made, progress made in the 12 Critical Areas, challenges and constraints, made recommendations for the way forward. The role of the Women's Machinery in implementation of the framework was analysed and strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats identified. The process was participatory and involved all stakeholders including Government, CSOs, the private sector, local government authorities and women's organizations. The CSO's also produced an alternative report to the Government Report.

111. In addition to the country report The Gambia also participated in the Africa Review of the BPfA which consisted of a review of the region's performance based on responses from member States to two sets of questionnaires administered by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) to collect qualitative and quantitative data and information. The questionnaire was validated at a workshop involving all stakeholders before submission. The Fifteen-Year Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Africa (BPfA) + 15 Synthesis Report, 1995-2009, [E/ECA/ARCW/8/5](#) was presented at the Eighth Africa Regional Conference on Women (Beijing + 15), held in Banjul, The Gambia, from the 16-10 November 2009. The meeting provided a platform for African Governments to review progress made in implementing the BPfA, fifteen (15) years after its adoption. In this context, Africa, supported by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), reviewed its performance in delivering the outcomes agreed upon in 2004 in Addis Ababa at the Seventh Africa Regional Conference on Women (Beijing + 10). During that review meeting, member States "renewed their commitment to gender equality, equity and empowerment of women and suggested concrete steps to address the gaps between commitment and implementation". The African ministers in charge of gender and women's affairs together with other world

Governments further reconfirmed and recognized the importance of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action at the forty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York in 2005. They emphasized the need for effective implementation of the BPfA.

112. The Beijing + 15 review takes place against a backdrop of frameworks put in place to accelerate the implementation of the commitments to gender equality, equity and empowerment of women, which are central to the BPfA. At the global level, the United Nations Security Council adopted resolutions 1820 and 1888 in 2009 to strengthen the implementation of its resolution [1325 \(2000\)](#), which calls on Member States to address the issues of gender, peace and security. At the regional level, the African Union (AU) has a gender policy designed to strengthen national gender policies and to ensure a harmonized delivery framework in order to accelerate the implementation of gender equality commitments such as the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa. The AU back to back meeting held from the 13-14 and 21st November 2009 respectively provided the opportunity for AU experts and Ministers of Women and Gender Affairs to adopt key documents such as the African Union Women's Trust Fund Feasibility Study, the African Union Commission Gender Action Plan and the Roadmap for the African Women's Decade 2010-2020.

113. At the subregional level, the regional economic communities (RECs) have complemented the global and regional frameworks by integrating various resolutions and commitments into their policies and programmes of action. For instance, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has put in place a gender policy and action plan to guide its members in accelerating implementation. It has also established the ECOWAS Gender Development Centre, which is based in Dakar and is responsible for the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming activities in the ECOWAS subregion. The Women's Bureau serves as the national focal point to the EGDC and has jointly implemented programmes in The Gambia that were designed to harmonise gender mainstreaming activities within the subregion.

2.15 Integration of a gender perspective and the explicit reflection of the provisions of the Convention in all efforts aimed at the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals

114. Concerted efforts of the Government have resulted in the development of policies and programmes that set clear targets for reducing poverty, hunger, illiteracy, disease, discrimination against women and environmental degradation as well as requisite national, regional and global partnerships in support of such efforts. In spite of these efforts the 2005 MDG Progress Reports and The Gambia European Community Cooperation Joint Annual Report (2008) indicate that progress towards achieving the MDG targets is mixed. Indicators show that targets for reducing hunger; attainment of universal basic education, provision of basic amenities (water and sanitation); reducing maternal mortality and environmental sustainability are achievable. The targets for the attainment of poverty reduction, child mortality, communicable diseases including HIV/AIDS and gender equality are less likely to be attained.

115. The MDG Needs Assessment for Poverty Reduction in The Gambia 2007-2011, conducted by the Ministry of State for Finance and Economic Affairs in

November 2006, had the objective of assessing what The Gambia requires during the five year period (2007-2011) to keep the country on track in terms of meeting the MDG targets by the year 2015. The assessment was based on the MDGs and was further broken down to sector level. It includes an assessment of the current development situation in view of the MDGs, setting development targets for 2011 that are in line with reaching the MDG targets by 2015, and outlining the needs in terms of human and non-human resources. The needs assessment includes estimating in financial terms the cost of implementing PRSP 11 programmes, what The Gambia as a country can finance, and what financing gap remains for which The Gambia will need assistance from her development partners. The needs identified were costed for the period 2007 to 2011. It provides an important framework for implementation of the MDG.

2.16 Ratifying the treaties to which it is not yet a party, namely, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families

116. The Government of The Gambia has signed and ratified:

- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment ratified on 6 June 2006 without reservation;
- The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime ratified on 5 May 2005 without reservation.

117. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families (ICMR) has not yet been signed and ratified even though The Gambia has always employed seasonal workers in its farming communities and migrant workers in its health and education sectors. The category of workers detailed in the ICMR range from unskilled to skilled, itinerant, project-tied, those in specified employment, self-employed migrant workers, and seasonal workers and specifically addresses the human rights of migrant workers and members of their families based on their vulnerability as non-nationals in states of remunerative employment and states of transit. Taking into consideration regional integration processes and the impact of global migration for employment, it is important that the Convention be signed as it emphasizes the need to “harmonize” the attitudes of States through the acceptance of basic principles concerning the treatment of migrant workers and their families.

2.17 Wide dissemination in The Gambia of the present concluding comments, the Convention and the Optional Protocol thereto, the Committee’s general recommendations and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

118. Intense sensitization and Awareness Campaigns have resulted in wide knowledge of the CEDAW, BPfA, the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the CRC and other instruments. The Africa Review Meeting of the BPfA + 15 Review Meeting held in Banjul also

contributed to the engagement and dialogue as there was extensive media coverage on GRTS — the National Radio and Television Station, the private media both print and electronic and in the traditional media. The concluding remarks were specifically not tabled for dissemination but some aspects of it were covered during the discussions. It is important that the momentum should be maintained to ensure that by 2015 and beyond commitments made will be attained. There is high political will and commitment strengthened by the strategic location of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in the office of the Vice-President which has given women's affairs a high visibility and prominence on the development agenda. In addition the space has been provided for CSO participation and this has broadened the engagement, dialogue, consultative processes that can influence behaviour change.

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