



NHRC'S STATEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2025

On this International Women's Day, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) stands in solidarity with women-led organisations and all women and girls in The Gambia and across the globe to commemorate this important day, observed annually on March 8th.

International Women's Day is a time to honour and celebrate the extraordinary contributions of women in all areas of development, from education, health, employment, business, environment, agriculture, science and technology, governance, and media. It also serves as a crucial reminder to governments, policy makers and leaders of the ongoing challenges that hinder women's full enjoyment of their fundamental human rights and their enduring struggle for gender equality, equity and justice. Women's unqualified participation and representation in governance and decision-making bodies remain essential for building a more just and inclusive society

The global theme for this year's celebration, 'Accelerate Action', underscores the urgency of taking immediate, bold and decisive steps toward achieving gender equality. It calls for increased momentum and urgency in addressing the systemic barriers, discrimination, and biases that women face, both in personal and professional spheres.

On this occasion, the NHRC takes this opportunity to celebrate the achievements of women who continue to break through the glass ceiling and other systemic barriers, and challenge negative societal norms in male-dominated spaces. The Commission also recognises the resilience of rural women, whose tireless efforts sustain their families and communities despite immense socio-political challenges they continue to face.

However, we acknowledge that women and girls in The Gambia continue to face significant obstacles in all spheres of development and in the enjoyment of their fundamental human rights and freedoms. Despite making up 51 per cent of the population and about 56 per cent of the electorate, women remain significantly underrepresented in key decision-making spaces both in the public and private sector. Women hold less than 10 percent of the elected positions in the National Assembly and make up just 10 percent of Cabinet Ministers. Additionally, while women dominate the informal economy, their presence in

the formal sector remains minimal. There remain significant gaps in the implementation of legal and policy frameworks aimed at enhancing women's socio-economic empowerment at all levels, both the professional and private realm. Deep rooted patriarchal norms, gender-based violence, and harmful traditional practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and child marriage, continue to undermine their human rights and limit their potential. The NHRC on this occasion reiterates its call to the Government to intensify political, economic and social efforts towards the fulfilment of commitments it has made under several international and regional instruments and Guidelines such as the CEDAW, Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Maputo Protocol and the SDGs, particularly Goals 1 and 5 on the reduction of poverty and gender equality respectively.

As we mark this Day, we call on the Government to accelerate action by:

- Enforcing laws that protect women and girls from discrimination and violence.
- Strengthening policies that promote women's economic empowerment and leadership.
- Investing in gender-responsive education, healthcare, and employment opportunities.
- Collaborating with all stakeholders to dismantle structural barriers to gender equality, equity and justice.
- Introducing systems and mechanisms that will enhance women's representation and participation in key decision-making roles

The NHRC remains unwavering in its commitment to fostering a Gambia where women and girls can live freely, equally, and without fear of discrimination or violence. We will continue to champion human rights and advocate for the full realisation of women's rights as enshrined in national and international legal frameworks. We remain convinced that no country whose women are excluded from participation in public affairs and are not empowered to reach their maximum potentials can achieve its developmental aspirations.

We call on all in the public and private sector to accelerate action for women's equality.

Happy International Women's Day.